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Preface

MALCOLM ALLBROOK

A few years ago, in the final throes of completing my doctoral thesis on the former Western Australia Chief Protector of Aborigines and colonial artist Henry Prinsep (1844–1922), I attended the annual Christmas party of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society.¹ Each year Marie Louise Wordsworth, a long-time member, threw open her lush garden overlooking the Swan River at Peppermint Grove and generously allowed her visitors to examine her fine collection of Western Australian art and furniture. Among her possessions were paintings, objects and ephemera from the Prinsep estate that she had purchased on the death of Prinsep's youngest daughter Emily.² She invited me to inspect them and, opening a beautifully made jarrah bureau, there lay my subject's quills, pens, pencils and paper—and a pair of his wire-framed spectacles. Brazenly perhaps, I could not resist the chance to try them on and just for a moment I was able to see the world through his lens; gazing at his oil painting of karri forest next to the bureau, I realised that he was short-sighted and had what I took to be severe astigmatism. I already knew about the persistent stomach ulcers and respiratory problems that plagued his last years, and from the numerous images of him with cigar in hand, I assumed he would have been accompanied by the stench of tobacco. But I had not realised that he was also beset by poor vision, a burden for one who saw himself primarily as an artist, a calling that far outweighed his dedication to being a colonial civil servant. Such insights, even if seemingly inconsequential to the historical record, can add much to the quality of a biographer's understanding, as the English historian Kathryn Hughes observed in her 2017 book *Victorians Undone: Tales of the Flesh in the Age of Decorum*. She reminds her readers of Thomas Carlyle's exhortation to remember that the past was populated by living people with a corporeal presence: 'Not abstractions were they, not diagrams and theorems, but men, in buff or other coats and breeches, with colour in their cheeks, with passion in their stomach, and the idioms, features and vitalities of very men.'³

1 My PhD thesis was later published under the title *Henry Prinsep's Empire: Framing a distant colony* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014).

2 Many of the paintings and furniture were later purchased by the National Library of Australia. In 2011 they formed a part of the NLA exhibition *Out of the West: Western Australian Art 1830s–1930s*.

3 Thomas Carlyle quoted by Kathryn Hughes. *Victorians Undone: Tales of the Flesh in the Age of Decorum* (London: 4th Estate, 2017), x.

Biographers spend a lot of time with their subjects. As a writing project develops, they come to fill the waking hours and haunt the dreams and, after a while, something akin to an obsession with a long-dead figure might play tricks on the mind. Many biographers have written about the sense of intimacy that accompanies their quest, the interplay between historical evidence and imagination, the sometimes blurred boundaries between the two spheres, and the temptations to allow the latter to compensate for the gaps in the record. My research on Prinsep had the advantage of an extraordinary archive, which the subject himself had accumulated, maintained and organised. At the time of his death the archive—papers, family records, paintings and drawings, photographs, and the ephemera of daily life—was housed under one roof, but by the time I arrived, it had fragmented into innumerable smaller collections, portions of it in the state and national libraries, in art galleries, in private collections or in the homes of descendants. At times I wondered whether the book would become more a record of the archive than a biography, even toying with the idea that a biography of the archive might be more achievable than one of the man. My confusion though was resolved when I recognised biography to be infinitely more than an alpha to omega account, but rather an examination of a life in all its complexities, shades and forms. Furthermore, the author is also an actor, perhaps not the protagonist, but by being the creator of the biographical work, the one who sifts the information and decides what should be highlighted, excluded and ordered, and how it should be interpreted.

My initial interest in Prinsep related to his role as Western Australian Chief Protector of Aborigines, a position he held for nearly a decade in the government of Sir John Forrest and, after his departure to the federal sphere, during the first unsettled years of the state government after Federation. Prinsep was the architect of a law that, in the hands of his successors, became notorious for its impact on Aboriginal family life and the freedoms of individuals. His Aborigines Act of 1905 laid the foundation for an ever-more oppressive regime that, by the time it was finally repealed in 1972, had intruded upon the life of almost every Aboriginal person in the state, bringing untold misery as families were split and successive generations institutionalised. The judgement of history has not been favourable to those such as Prinsep who designed and implemented these laws. In the words of the former prime minister Kevin Rudd, they brought ‘indignity and degradation’ on to a ‘proud people and a proud culture’, resulting in a system that was a ‘deep assault on our senses and on our most elemental humanity’.⁴ Yet a century before Rudd’s apology to the Stolen Generations, Prinsep had approached his task with an almost blasé lack of concern for its consequences. Forrest had refused to allow the laws to proceed on the grounds that they would ‘make prisoners of these poor people in their own country’,⁵ but Prinsep conceived his laws as engineering a ‘complete separation’ from a way of

4 Kevin Rudd, ‘Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples’, 13 February 2008, viewed online at info.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people/apology-to-australias-indigenous-peoples.

5 John Forrest quoted in Allbrook, *Henry Prinsep’s Empire*, 2014, 273.

life he deemed ‘savage’. In a futile effort to persuade Forrest, he argued that future generations would praise his foresight and thank his government for preserving ‘the health & morality of the coming race’, and preventing ‘the ancient & interesting aboriginal race from sinking into a degraded grave & infamous memory’.⁶

The judgement of history has been much kinder to Prinsep the artist than to Prinsep the civil servant. Learning his craft under the tutelage of luminaries such as the British painter and sculptor George Frederick Watts and the portrait photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (who was also his aunt), by the time he left England he was a skilled artist and photographer. Using a variety of media—pen and ink, watercolour and oils, portrait and landscape painting, photography—he portrayed life in the still young colony from his arrival in 1866 until the 1920s. As an artist, he was at the forefront of those representing Western Australia at home and abroad, as the colony grew from a small outpost of empire to one that penetrated the entire land mass of Australia’s western third. Reading his diaries, which he maintained from the day he left England until a few days before his death (when his wife Josephine, née Bussell, took over the task), as well as his vast accumulation of letters, one is struck by his dedication to the artistic life, which was an almost daily pursuit and occupied a large portion of his time. It is clear that art, rather than civil service, defined his identity, and one can imagine that he would be dismayed to learn that he is remembered in Western Australian history chiefly for his dubious contribution to Aboriginal affairs administration.

Thus I was left with two conflicting images: one the visual artist who portrayed the people and places of his new home with sensitivity and compassion, the other the seemingly callous bureaucrat whose laws consigned generations of Aboriginal people to subjugation and control. I had little interest in attempting to reconcile or explain these contradictions, or even to delve into the personality that produced them. I was after all undertaking a PhD in history, and a multi-volume biography was clearly beyond the scope of the exercise. So too was an attempt to psychoanalyse my subject, even though there were aspects of his family history—his removal as an infant from the family home in Calcutta, India, to boarding school in England, the early death of his mother, and a distant and austere father—that might have made it a tempting exercise. What I needed instead was a historical narrative to provide an arena in which I could begin to understand and order Prinsep as a historical figure. It took me some time to realise that the resolution lay in Prinsep’s archive; while he did not, like Manning Clark, go to the extent of directing future biographers, his archive provided hints as to how he saw his life and his legacy.⁷

6 H.C. Prinsep to John Forrest, 17 November 1900, State Records Office of Western Australia, AN 3005 Cons 255 376/07.

7 Mark McKenna, in his biography of Manning Clark, describes how his subject had left directions for future biographers: ‘As Clark worked his way through his papers towards the end of his life, he was conscious that historians and biographers would use them in the future—so conscious that he could not resist the temptation to direct the biographer.’ Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark* (Carlton, Vic.: Miegunyah Press, 2011), 31.

A modest man, he probably never imagined that one day a biographer might go to the trouble of documenting his life. But he did have a strong sense of family history and legacy, and there is recurring evidence in his diaries and letters that it was for future generations that he arranged his archive, and that he wanted them to know and understand the history of his family. Thus I found my defining narrative in the generations of Prinsep's family whose lives spanned India, much of the British imperial world, and Australia. In the lives and work of his forebears, the artists, photographers, novelists and journalists, we find a family tradition of cultural and social capital, while in the preceding 3 generations of East India Company civil servants lay the tradition of governing colonised peoples. Thus rather than focusing on the biography of an individual, the study instead evolved to use biography to illuminate a complex history of mobility, exchange and the transmission of cultural capital. And through the family archive Prinsep so carefully compiled, the imperial world was reassembled as a network founded just as much on sentiment as on commercial links and connections.

Each of the articles in this edition of the *Australian Journal of Biography and History* uses biography to illustrate historical themes and to add texture to historical episodes. Patricia Clarke examines the role of 4 women journalists who were amongst a group of 8 recruited by the Australian Government to tour operational bases in eastern Australia during a critical phase in the Pacific War. The journalists—Constance Robertson, Patricia Knox, Iris Dexter and Lynka Isaacson—were required to report on women's services with the aim of encouraging more women to enlist and thereby release men for service overseas. They were amongst a very small proportion of women who were not only full-time paid journalists, but amongst the third of women over 14 who were employed full time. While Clarke writes of the group as a collective and in the process relates an important episode in the history of journalism, she is also alert to the gendered aspects of the story. Through the lives of these women, she considers wider questions of education and employment of Australian women in the immediate pre-World War II and war period. In the field of journalism, women faced systemic barriers to employment as well as individual discrimination; the women described in Clarke's article went to great efforts to attain equality in the workplace, yet they were often restricted to weekly publications while the dailies remained the province of men.

Lyndon and Lyne Megarrity, in their article on the 2 wives of the Queensland businessman and later premier Robert Philp (1899–1903, 1907–08), use the biographies of Jessie (née Bannister; 1856–90), and Mina (née Munro; 1867–1940) to illustrate the changes in the role of elite Queensland women over the relatively short period of a decade. Philp was a powerful man both in the world of business and politics, but Jessie had virtually no involvement in public life. Yet a decade later, Queensland society had changed to allow much greater level of participation in public life by women. The contrasting experiences of Jessie and Mina, the authors

show, 'mirrored the transition of elite women from being mostly confined to the domestic world to having a more influential place in Queensland society in the early twentieth century'.

Two articles consider the problems of developing biographies of those who are essentially invisible in the historical record. The 'first-fleeter' Sarah Bellamy has drawn some attention from historians, and Melanie Nolan, Christine Fernon and Rebecca Kippen discuss her seemingly 'insignificant life' to illustrate various aspects of the initial British colonisation of the continent. As with many convicts, Bellamy's historical record is sparse and she appears only periodically in official and newspaper reports, which, by their nature, document moments of crisis rather than the course of a life. Yet even these faint echoes suggest an eventful life, and have made her an attractive subject for historical fiction. Alternative methods though can add precision to these 'unthinkable histories'. Collective biography and quantitative methodologies in particular help to build sharper images of the lives of women such as Bellamy before and after their transportation. In demographic terms we find that she was perhaps 'typical' of the small number of women convicts arriving at Botany Bay in 1778. Thus we can conclude that, rather than being exceptional, Bellamy's biography reflects that of many of the first European women transported to Australia. She does not yet feature in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, but the 'triangulated' methodology of documents, collective biography and prosopography now makes her inclusion imperative. The biography of the Boonwurrung man Kurrburra (1797–1849) forms the subject of the contribution by Ian Clark, Rolf Schlagloth, Fred Cahir and Gabrielle McGinnis. Kurrburra has also been largely invisible to Australian history, yet a broadening of the search for sources, a re-reading of the records of official protectors of Aborigines such as George Augustus Robinson and William Thomas, and accounts by contemporaries such as William Barak, has allowed the authors to build a sharper image of their subject. By setting out to consider the whole of Kurrburra's life rather than simply the moments of contact (or conflict) with colonial society, their subject can be re-presented as one who was respected and important in his Aboriginal community, and who managed, negotiated and sought to control his interactions with the colonising forces.

Sophie Scott-Brown, in her article on the British historian Rafael Samuel, considers the utility of biography in relation to intellectual history, and the relationship between what she terms 'cultural persona' and the empirical personality. She argues that conventional approaches to intellectual history have failed to account for performance as a medium of history making, and this, she suggests, was at the heart of Samuel's commitment to democratising history; bringing history to the people, and recognising vernacular history as a potent medium of history making. Because intellectual history has tended to emphasise historians' products rather than their 'doings' or performances, Samuel's contribution to British historiography has often been minimised or even overlooked entirely. Biography, with its traditional concern

for the individual, can illuminate those ‘powerful personalities’ such as Samuel who leave unconventional records of themselves, who are in a sense ‘outsiders’ in their approaches, methods and associations.

By contrast, the biography of the anthropologist Leonhard Adam reveals a figure who some, such as the historian Greg Denning, viewed as something of an outsider, but whose works on Aboriginal art, particularly his *magnum opus* were highly successful, and indeed went to a number of editions. Michael Davis considers Adam as an outsider, concluding that his career after his arrival in Australia as a refugee was characterised by a willingness to work across disciplinary boundaries, an approach that perhaps made his practices unusual rather than alien. At the same time, Adam bore the scars of his Jewish ancestry in the context of Nazi rule of his homeland, and the loss of his career as a result. His arrival in the infamous prison ship *Dunera*, and initial internment in Australia, perhaps gave him a prevailing sense of being on the outside of Australian life and always looking in, but Davis suggests that such a perspective might have influenced his practice as an anthropologist.

In his study of the Australian delegation to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, David Lee looks at the collective who between them forcefully asserted Australia’s position, and thus contributed to the country’s consolidation as an independent nation-state during the inter-war period. The men, who included the war-time prime minister Billy Hughes, a former prime minister Joseph Cook and 3 diplomats—John Latham, Robert Garran, and Frederic Eggleston—all had long and distinguished careers, and were much honoured for their contributions to the nation. Lee, however, focuses on the period leading up to the peace conference, its proceedings, side meeting and immediate aftermath, using biography to explain how the members of the delegation were so effective.

In the final article, Stephen Wilks considers political biography as a form and a genre, arguing that biographers of major political figures should endeavour to contribute to the closely related field of political history, and thus seek to establish their subject’s place in history. Arguing that biography is founded on human agency, and that political history is ‘rich in interpersonal interaction’, Wilks concludes that biography provides scholars with ‘a platform for exploring the tortuous chains of decision, chance and error that characterise the political past and the legacies it imparts’.

ARTICLES

In the days of print: Four women journalists in World War II

PATRICIA CLARKE

Early in 1943 at a critical point in the Pacific campaign in World War II, the Australian Government arranged a tour for selected women journalists to operational bases in eastern Australia stretching from Wagga Wagga and Uranquinty in south-western New South Wales to Cairns and Mareeba in north Queensland. The purpose of the tour was to gain publicity for the women's services with the aim of increasing enlistments to release servicemen to fight in New Guinea. It was a break from government policy under which women journalists were confined to reporting war activities situated close to the headquarters of the organisations they worked for. But it was still a far cry from accrediting women journalists to report from overseas battlefields, a goal they had long pursued without success.

The 8 women nominated for the tour came from the major daily newspapers and magazines in Sydney and Melbourne—from the serious broadsheets to the popular tabloids and the women's magazines. They were Constance (Connie) Robertson who represented the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Melbourne *Age* and the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC); Iris Dexter, *Woman*; Alice Jackson, *Australian Women's Weekly*; Rita Dunstan, *Sydney Daily Telegraph*; Patricia Knox, Melbourne *Argus*, Adelaide *Advertiser* and *Examiner*; Kathleen (Kay) Paine, *Sydney Sun* and Melbourne *Herald*; Chrissie (Mrs Laurie) Seaman, *Sydney Daily Mirror*; and Helen (Nell) McMahon, Melbourne *Sun-News Pictorial*. Lieutenant Lynka Isaacson, a veteran journalist serving with the Australian Women's Army Service, was in charge of the tour.

The 4 women who are the subject of detailed analysis in this article are Constance Robertson and Patricia Knox, who represented the daily papers of record in Sydney and Melbourne respectively; Iris Dexter, who represented a weekly women's magazine on nationwide sale; and Lynka Isaacson, who had been a senior journalist on the weekly *Leader* and from the beginning of the war was foreign editor of the *Age*. They all earned their living in a career where women were a small minority and they were working women when, even in wartime, less than one-third of females over 14 years (the school-leaving age) were in the workforce or in the services.¹

1 Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1942–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1965), 221–22. At 30 June 1943, only 29.9 per cent of Australian females over 14 were employed or in the services. The comparable figure for males over 14 was 89.6 per cent.

Each of their life stories is unique, collectively they are part of the social history of Australia. Robertson and Dexter began work in their early to mid-teens; Isaacson had the background and confidence to go straight to the managing editor of the *Age*, Geoffrey Syme, to ask for a job; and Knox had the advantage of being a daughter of the managing director of the *Argus*. Under the journalists' award they were all paid at the same rate as male journalists in an era when most working women were paid only a percentage of male rates, but this was largely negated through gender discrimination in the restricted range of jobs open to them.² Discrimination extended to the law. In the mid-1930s Dexter was denied a divorce although the judge accepted that she had been subject to repeated violent attacks by her husband.

These random facts plucked from 4 life stories raise questions about, for example, the education system, the varied paths into journalism, employment standards and pay, and the divorce laws. A study of their working lives points to the status of women reporters in the hierarchy of journalists, the historic reasons for the gender-based discrimination against women journalists, the efforts women made to be accepted on an equal basis with male colleagues and the disparaging attitude to female colleagues intrinsic to most male journalists of the era. It also considers the different histories, characteristics and policies of the publications the women wrote for, whether this influenced what and how they wrote, and the different skills required to write for dailies and weeklies.

Background

During World War II, despite strenuous efforts by women journalists, the Department of Information backed by military authorities maintained a ban that prevented them from travelling overseas to report the war from battlefields. This invidious position was in striking contrast to the Boer War at which Australia had a woman correspondent, Edith Dickenson, who reported for the *Adelaide Advertiser*.³ She was a forerunner of Australian women war correspondents and was not equalled for many years. In World War I, Louise Mack, a former editor of the *Bulletin*'s women's page, became the first British female war correspondent when she reported firsthand the German invasion of Belgium,⁴ and Katharine Susannah Prichard reported on Australian nurses and the casualties they nursed in a war hospital on the French coast,⁵ but no other Australian women reporters got near the frontline.

2 Jeannine Baker, 'Australian Women Journalists and the "Pretence of Equality"', *Labour History*, no. 108 (May 2015): 1–16.

3 Patricia Clarke, 'Australia's First Female War Correspondent: Edith Dickenson at the Boer War', in *Reporting from the Wars 1850–2015: The Origins and Evolution of the War Correspondent*, ed. B. Turner, D. Barredo and S.J. Grattan (Wilmington, Delaware: Vernon Press, 2018), 39–62.

4 Patricia Clarke, *Pen Portraits: Women Writers and Journalists in Nineteenth-Century Australia* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 234–37.

5 Katharine Susannah Prichard, 'Best Hospital at the Front', *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 28 February 1915, suppl., 1.

In 1941 Constance Robertson, editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald's* women's department, sought permission to go to the Middle East to report on war work being undertaken by women in World War II. She gained some support from the Minister for the Army, Percy Spender, who in passing on her request to the Minister for Information, Senator Harry Foll, said that her proposal had 'substance and merit'. He acknowledged, however, the ban the government had imposed on 'womenfolk engaged on work of this nature proceeding to theatres of war'. The Department of Information supported Spender's request, but Foll was adamant. Although he acknowledged that the press would welcome a woman's angle on the life of Australian women on active service, he believed 'our official correspondents' could cover all assignments 'including the work of the nurses and the V.A.D.s'.⁶ All Australia's official correspondents throughout World War II were male. Women journalists continued to be banned from reporting not only from overseas fronts but also from Australia's northern cities and towns even in 1942 at the height of the Pacific War when Australian troops were fighting on the Kokoda Track to keep Japanese forces from taking Port Moresby and Japanese planes were bombing Darwin, Townsville and Broome. They were confined to reporting how women were contributing to the war effort on the home front close to the head offices of their organisations.⁷

In October 1942, the prime minister, John Curtin, announced, as part of a comprehensive plan to make the best use of manpower (the universally used term for men and women in this context), that the government was preparing for a compulsory call-up of women for national service to release men for combat.⁸ Women were needed in manufacturing and rural sectors of the economy as well as in the services. They had begun to enlist in the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS), Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) and Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) from the time they were formed in 1941, but both the AWAS and the WAAAF needed 5,000 more women to enlist towards their immediate targets of 20,000 each.⁹

Brigadier Errol Knox the director general of Army Public Relations, a wartime position he held concurrently with his role as managing director of the Melbourne newspaper group the Argus & Australasian Ltd, saw the opportunity to use the skills of women journalists to help in this objective. The result was the plan for a conducted tour by accredited women correspondents from 8 February to 11 March

6 National Archives of Australia (NAA) SP112/1, 353/3/18, barcode 26832, Proposal to send Mrs Constance Robertson overseas to cover activities of Australian women in War Work.

7 NAA SP112/1, M 101, barcode 935116, Accredited War Correspondents, p. 48.

8 'Women Will Be Called Up. New Man-Power Drive. Longer Work Hours', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 October 1942, 5.

9 'Services Need More Women', *Examiner* (Launceston), 28 January 1943, 3.

1943 covering operational bases in New South Wales and Queensland. At all the bases members of the women's services were replacing men in specialist occupations previously regarded as men's work.¹⁰

Importance of news in wartime

In 1943 daily newspapers, weekly periodicals, radio bulletins and newsreels were the main sources of news and, in wartime, access to news was important for the functioning of daily life. Home delivery of morning papers was widespread, evening papers were widely read in cities on the homeward trip on trains and trams, and city dwellers who did not buy papers could hardly avoid the pervasiveness of news posters, the cries of newsboys and displays at news kiosks. News reached country people, who were out of reach of the dailies, through the weekly editions of the major city dailies. The *Sydney Mail* had a wide circulation in country New South Wales while the *Australasian*, the stable mate of the *Argus*, and the *Leader*, which was associated with the *Age*, provided a choice for Victorian country readers, and there were similar weekly editions in other states. Although radio stations ran frequent news broadcasts, often hourly, the contents were compiled from news agencies, official bulletins and press reports supported by some actuality broadcasts.¹¹ Even the ABC did not have a completely independent news service until 1 June 1947.

Newspapers and magazines were also widely used by the government for 'their ability to raise funds and disseminate wartime propaganda',¹² and they carried much government advertising to encourage recruitment and raise money through War bonds and other means. The *Australian Women's Weekly* was credited with playing a key role in maintaining morale on the home front, adopting slogans such as 'Make do and mend' and 'Keep the home fires burning'.¹³ Its value to the government lay in its circulation, which rose from about 0.25 million in 1935 to 0.5 million in the early war years; by the end of the war, in a population of about 7 million, it sold 650,000 copies a week.¹⁴ Each copy was believed to be read by most members of a household and often forwarded to those serving in the armed forces. Newsprint was rationed for all publications, a cause of constant complaints of unfair allocations.

10 NAA SP109/3 395/04, barcode 267070. Tour by Accredited Women Correspondents, 4–7.

11 Bridget Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations: The Story of Australian Commercial Radio* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 318–33.

12 Bridget Griffen-Foley, 'The Fairfax, Murdoch and Packer Dynasties in Twentieth-Century Australia', *Media History* 8, no. 1 (2002): 94.

13 Griffen-Foley, 'Fairfax, Murdoch and Packer', 94.

14 Helena Studdert, 'Case-Study Women's Magazines', in *A History of the Book in Australia 1891–1945*, ed. Martin Lyons and John Arnold (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2001), 281; 'The Australian Women's Weekly. Depression and the War Years. Romance and Reality', *Refractory Girl*, Winter 1973, 9.

It resulted in the Sydney *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraphs* changing from broadsheet to tabloid size in 1942, although the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age* and the *Argus* and similar dailies in other states remained broadsheets.

Tour by accredited women war correspondents

Although no doubt flattered by their designation as war correspondents and issued with shoulder flashes in green and gold reading 'War Correspondent' to wear on their Army issue uniforms, the journalists chosen for the tour were aware that it was a propaganda trip and they were expected to fulfil a particular role. At least some of them would have believed it was a poor substitute for getting to New Guinea and other battlefields. Although they were reporting from within Australia, the locations of their articles were never disclosed; all their dispatches were headed 'Somewhere in Australia'. Their articles were subject to 3 levels of censorship in a similar way to stories originating in New Guinea. They were sent first to Melbourne to the censorship headquarters of the Department of Information that exercised civilian censorship, then to Defence censorship headquarters also in Melbourne. After that, 'if deemed necessary', they were subjected to further censorship at General MacArthur's South West Pacific Allied Headquarters located in Brisbane; although in the case of the women journalists' articles, arrangements were made to delegate this third step to a representative in Melbourne.¹⁵

Iris Dexter decided the tour was a good subject for gentle satire. Each week, in addition to her articles as a senior reporter on *Woman*, she wrote a weekly column under the pseudonym 'Margot Parker', in which she took a humorous look at the foibles of personal relationships and at the public's rather bemused adaptation to war regulations as they impeded more and more on daily life. The tour presented her with a new subject in the experiences of her invented friend, Frenzia Frisby, recently accredited war correspondent. She introduced Frenzia puffed up with importance, as she prepared to leave for 'Somewhere in Australia'.

For a long while I have put up with Frenzia, The Girl Reporter. This indicates my devotion and tolerance. But I feel now, with this Frightening New Turn the war has taken, that I can no longer cope with Frenzia The War Correspondent.

My eyes have assumed a blazing green incandescence because I am not the one to be dashing around in khaki officers' uniforms, hobnobbing with Squadron Leaders, looking important in Staff Cars and setting the jaw interminably.

15 E.G. Bonney, Chief Publicity Censor to State Publicity Censor, TP Hoey, 3 February 1943; Hoey to Bonney, Parliament House, Canberra, 6 February 1943, NAA SP109/3, 395/04, Tour by Accredited Women Correspondents; John Hilvert, *Blue Pencil Warriors: Censorship and Propaganda in World War II* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1984), 146.

As she travelled around the city with Frenzia, who immediately cast her in the role of batman, she observed her becoming sterner and more military:

She began calling trams Transport immediately, and got into them very gravely, twitching her jaw muscles at people and looking as though She Knew Something They Didn't Know ...¹⁶

The group's crowded itinerary ranged from night flying training operations at a wartime airfield at Uranquinty near Wagga Wagga in inland New South Wales, the Balmoral naval base and Concord Military Hospital in Sydney, observation and defence installations along the New South Wales coast to the steelworks at Newcastle. Their Queensland itinerary took in Macarthur's headquarters in Brisbane, war industries in Toowoomba, the garrison city of Townsville and the leave centre on Magnetic Island, hospitals and leave centres throughout north Queensland, Mareeba on the Atherton Tableland, and coastal defences around Cairns. By chance, the group was inspecting a far northern coastal defence outpost in the first week of March 1943 while the battle of the Bismarck Sea was under way. They watched in the control room as WAAAF personnel plotted the course of the battle, a pivotal naval engagement of the Pacific War that ended Japanese hopes of regaining the initiative in New Guinea and eliminated any possibility that Australia could be invaded. On the situation maps and blackboards around the room the journalists saw 'the complete story at a glance of the war in the South West Pacific'. Patricia Knox described the scene:

In one of the largest operational rooms of the Air Force in the North of Australia I watched WAAAFs at work. I saw them write on a board the details of a certain operational mission—the mission that day was the Bismarck Sea. Later I saw the first reports come in from the aircraft—"Two ships left burning" and we knew that the RAAF had found its target. It is from these rooms that the history of the war in the air is written.¹⁷

Caroline (Lynka) Isaacson

The tour began when the journalists converged by train from Sydney and Melbourne at Wagga Wagga where Lieutenant Lynka Isaacson met them together with WAAAF Section Officer Hunter and Lynka's daughter, AWAS Private Barbara Joan Isaacson, who was assigned as a photographer.¹⁸ It was a tour that required all Isaacson's experience and organisational and interpersonal skills in addition to her knowledge of the diverse roles of women in the services and what would or would not pass the censors. A talented and versatile woman who had succeeded in several branches of journalism at a time when there were few opportunities open to women, she was suited to the challenge.

16 Margot Parker, 'Uniform Makes the Woman', *Woman*, 22 March 1943, 9.

17 Patricia Knox, 'Women Can Keep Secrets', *Argus*, 5 April 1943, 6.

18 NAA VF391191, B884, barcode 6237011, Isaacson, Barbara Joan.



Figure 1: Lt Lynka Isaacson, Directorate of Army Public Relations, and liaison officer Captain Henry Steel during a tour by women journalists to Queensland and the Atherton Tableland in March 1943.

Source: Pte Barbara Joan Isaacson (Australian War Memorial PO5161.013).

Born Caroline Jacobson in Vienna on 14 September 1900, a daughter of a director the Royal Holland Shipping Line and a French mother, and always known by her childhood pet name of Lynka (even enlisting in the Australian Army under that name), she had a cosmopolitan education and spoke 7 languages. At age 18, she had just enrolled in a medical course in London when she met Australian-born Lieutenant Arnold Isaacson, 37, a commercial traveller in Victoria before World War I, who had seen service with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) at Gallipoli,

the Middle East and France.¹⁹ A few months after they met they were married on 30 March 1919 at Dalston Synagogue, Islington. Two children were born in London before the family migrated to Melbourne in 1926.²⁰

After her husband's business as an importer's agent failed in 1928, and although she had no newspaper experience, Lynka went straight to the top approaching Geoffrey Syme, managing editor of the *Age*, to ask for work on the women's pages. Her confident manner, her stylish appearance and her contacts in Melbourne society won the day, and she progressed quickly to editor of the women's pages of the *Leader*, the rural weekly associated with the *Age*. During the 1930s she developed the section by encouraging readers to contribute household hints to 'The Spare Corner' column that became so popular she edited several editions of selected contributions for publication.²¹ A frequent speaker at country events, she gathered a community of followers who flocked to Melbourne for annual picnics she organised. In the early part of World War II, when male journalists began to enlist in the forces, she moved to the post of foreign editor of the *Age*, a job that would have been well out of the reach of a woman in peacetime.

During the 1930s, Isaacson was active in moves to resettle Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany and she supported the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonization that sought a homeland for persecuted European Jews. At first the League's plans involved a vast tract of land in the East Kimberley, but when that was ruled out by the Australian Government, the remote south-west of Tasmania, now the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, was favoured. In pursuit of this scheme Isaacson became associated with an idealistic young man, Critchley Parker Jnr, whose death from starvation and exposure occurred while he was attempting to map the outline of the proposed Jewish settlement in the rugged, mountainous south-west of the state. His letters and journal addressed to Lynka were found near his body at the foot of Mt Mackenzie near Bathurst Harbour.²²

Deeply affected by this tragedy, Isaacson abandoned her hard-won position at the *Age* and enlisted in the AWAS as a private in August 1942, putting her age back 2 years to come within the enlistment range. She was promoted rapidly through the ranks and by the beginning of 1943 was a lieutenant (at times acting captain) in

19 NAA B2455, barcode 7368134, Isaacson, Arnold, Lieutenant.

20 Denis Warner, *The Pathfinder: In the Air—on the Ground: The Peter Isaacson Story* (Melbourne: Information Australia, 2000), 15–16, 23–4.

21 *The Leader Spare Corner Book: A Unique Collection of Home and Household Hints and Kitchen Recipes: For Australian Women* (Melbourne: David Syme & Co., published in many editions, 1929 to 1940).

22 Harold A. Freeman, 'The Charismatic Caroline Isaacson', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* XVIII, part 4 (2007): 506–17; Hilary L. Rubinstein, 'Critchley Parker (1911–1942): Australian Martyr for Jewish Refugees', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* XI, part 1 (November 1990): 57–64; Critchley Parker Jnr, Transcript of diary/notebook, State Library Victoria (SLV), MS Box 4128/8; I. N. Steinberg, *Australia: The Unpromised Land* (London: Gollanz, 1948), 133–37.

the Directorate of Army Public Relations.²³ She met the journalists as they arrived at Wagga Wagga, those from Melbourne at 0049 and those from Sydney at 0949 on 6 February 1943.

The tour was so circumscribed by a highly controlled and packed itinerary and layers of censorship that it was impossible for one correspondent's story to differ markedly from that of another. Most featured newsworthy young women in the AWAS, WAAAF and WRANS who were being trained to work in specialised technical positions, some highly secret, rather than the bulk of servicewomen who worked as clerks, nursing orderlies, telegraphists, signallers, drivers and in mess rooms and stores. The stories of the more challenging jobs were popular because they were more likely to appeal to young women considering enlisting and who would welcome a change from their unexciting lives and civilian jobs. Newly enlisted servicewomen faced the upheaval of leaving their homes, travelling to places they may not have heard of, perhaps in another state even on the opposite side of the continent, and they were thrust into work that was vastly different from their peacetime occupations. The journalists invariably portrayed them as adaptable, happy and cheerful women even in the most adverse circumstances.

At a northern outpost, Patricia Knox found AWASs, clad in shirts, trousers and tin hats, working in heat so severe that even standing still meant a constant bath of perspiration, yet they were 'sunburnt, bronzed and happy'.²⁴ Servicewomen stationed near an airfield where RAAF recruits were taught to fly told Iris Dexter that the responsibility of their work as they 'manned' searchlights or tracked aircraft was the reason they 'wouldn't be doing anything else' despite 'the camouflaged tents, the dust, the flies'.²⁵ Young women taking over positions previously done by servicemen were described in gendered language as a matter of course: they manned searchlights and ack-ack guns, they did men's jobs, and even the worldly-wise journalists appeared to accept that a man was always in charge. The ack-ack girls north of Cairns hoped it was only a matter of time before 'the Number One Man (the gun-position officer)' would be a girl. Constance Robertson added:

Indeed, if they had their way, the girls would be operating the guns ... It is inspiring to see these girls, who so short a while ago were in shops, offices and homes, now in the pits doing a skilled job on instruments, the efficient management of which means successful action by the anti-aircraft guns. They all asked for the job because they felt they would be in the thick of things, would really be at battle stations.²⁶

23 NAA B884, V388729, barcode 6244809, Isaacson, Lynka Caroline.

24 Patricia Knox, 'AWAS Girls Man AA Instruments', *Argus*, 31 March 1943, 6.

25 'Iris Dexter Tells of the Women Who Go to War', *Woman*, 1 March 1943, 14–15.

26 Constance Robertson, 'Girls Guard Coast. Co-operation with A-A Gun Crews', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 March 1943, 11.

Near Uranquinty, all 3 journalists noted without comment (or any comment they made was censored) that WAAAF servicewomen were padlocked by the male sergeant in charge inside the operational structure where they worked in a secret bush location, because their work was so 'hush hush'. In their former lives, one of the servicewomen was studying animal husbandry, another was a university student in botany, a third was an interior decorator and a fourth was a stenographer.²⁷

Connie Robertson: 'An institution in Sydney journalism'

Constance Robertson suited both the standing and the conservative mould of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. She was a highly competent and experienced journalist who kept ahead of trends in society, but always within boundaries acceptable to her mainly middle-class readers and the paper's management. She was noted for her quiet manner unlike her predecessor Mrs Vera Hamilton who was known as 'Machine-Gun Kate' because of her commanding presence and incisive speech.²⁸ At 48, with a wealth of experience behind her and holding a prize job as head of the women's department of a prestige newspaper, Robertson was an obvious choice for the tour and she became the unofficial leader of the group.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* was, from the time it began in 1838 as the *Sydney Herald*, the dominant newspaper in New South Wales. It prided itself on being a Tory or conservative publication that sided with the Protestant ascendancy and the property-owning sectors. John Fairfax, the sole owner from 1853, was described as 'a political conservative, a committed Christian and a deacon of the Congregational church'. After he died in 1877, 'the conservative tradition' he imprinted on the paper continued under his son James Reading Fairfax. It was still alive during the reign of Warwick Fairfax snr (later knighted) from 1930 to 1976, covering the period when Robertson was head of the women's department. Like his predecessors, Fairfax continued their tradition of taking 'their responsibilities as a member of the fourth estate very seriously'.²⁹

27 Constance Robertson, 'WAAAFs Work in Secrecy. Locked Up on the Job', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February 1943, 4.

28 Gavin Souter, *Company of Heralds: A Century and a Half of Australian Publishing by John Fairfax Limited and Its Predecessors 1931–1981* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1981), 155.

29 Collen Ryan, *Fairfax: The Rise and Fall* (Carlton, Vic.: The Meigunyah Press, 2013), 2, 4.



Figure 2: Iris Dexter boarding a Douglas C-47 aircraft during the 1943 women journalists' tour of northern bases.

Source: Pte Barbara Joan Isaacson (Australian War Memorial PO5161.012).

The *Sydney Morning Herald* was first referred to as 'Granny' in 1851 in the Legislative Council. The name stuck; as newspaper historians Victor Isaacs and Rod Kirkpatrick wrote:

it seemed to suit an institution with very strong views about what was 'right and proper'. Politically the paper espoused the established order. For more than 110 years from its founding it could be relied upon as the upholder of conservative views on politics, society and economics. The firm line represented the views of the Fairfax family, and their editors some of whom in the late nineteenth century were ministers of religion.³⁰

30 Victor Isaacs and Rod Kilpatrick, *Two Hundred Years of Sydney Newspapers: A Short History* (North Richmond, NSW: Rural Press, 2003), 6.

The paper was also conservative in design, maintaining classified advertisements on its front page until wartime newsprint rationing, as well as the feeling that it was becoming 'old fashioned', forced a redesign. News was placed on the front page for the first time on 15 April 1944.³¹

Constance Robertson suited the *Herald*. She was competent, responsible and measured, and she had an impeccable journalistic pedigree. She was born in Sydney on 16 October 1895, the eldest child of Constance and Alfred Stephens. Her father, a former editor of country newspapers in Queensland, was then at the beginning of his editorship of the *Bulletin's* Red Page, which he transformed into the country's most influential and widely read literary outlet. After he left the *Bulletin* in 1906, he began a literary monthly journal, the *Bookfellow*, a venture that drained resources from his family and eventually ruined him. Educated by her father, Connie Stephens began work at the *Bookfellow*, according to her biographer, at the age of 13, running errands, typing and filing, but also observing her father's work in managing contributors and editing and producing the *Bookfellow*. She met many of Sydney's literary figures, including poet and journalist Mary Gilmore, who partly financed the *Bookfellow* and who was editor of the Women's Page in the *Worker*. Gilmore became Connie's model.³²

When the *Bookfellow* ceased, Connie Stephens got a job as a proofreader on the afternoon Sydney daily the *Sun*, but she had picked up enough knowledge of editing at the *Bookfellow* to take the step into journalism. She became 'social editress' of the popular *Sunday Sun* and, soon after, she was put in charge of the daily *Sun's* women's pages and she began the paper's successful women's supplements. The boom years of the 1920s were a good time for women's pages. Backed by increased revenue from advertisements for new appliances and furniture and furnishings for the home and new fashions in clothes, the women's sections of newspapers went from strength to strength.³³

By 1927 Connie's reputation was so well established she was chosen to represent the women's sections of all Australian evening papers, as one of only 2 women journalists to report the historic opening of Federal Parliament in Canberra.³⁴ She retired in 1928 when, at the age of 32, she married sports journalist Bill Robertson, but even on their honeymoon to Hawaii, she covered the first Pan Pacific Women's Conference and her articles made the front page of the *Sun*. She soon resumed work, continuing until the birth of her only child, a daughter Margot, on 5 June 1929. Six months later she was back at work in a new job as editor of the weekly *Woman's*

31 Isaacs and Kilpatrick, *Two Hundred Years of Sydney Newspapers*, 14.

32 Valerie Lawson, *Connie Sweetheart: The Story of Connie Robertson* (Port Melbourne, Vic.: William Heinemann Australia, 1990), 46–57.

33 Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, 251.

34 *The Opinion*, June–July 1935, 18.

Budget, taking her baby with her in a basket that she placed in a filing cabinet drawer while she worked.³⁵ When *Woman's Budget* was incorporated in a new magazine, *Woman*, established by Associated Newspapers Limited in 1934 to compete with the *Australian Women's Weekly* begun just the year before, Robertson became editor.

Two years later, she moved to the prestigious position of women's editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* where she remained for 26 years, becoming an institution in Sydney journalism. She established a formidable reputation presiding over a staff of 8 who worked under constant pressure to meet her exacting standards while they wrote about society balls and weddings and climbed up rope ladders in their high heels to get stories of celebrities arriving by ship.

Chic, black-haired and quiet, Robertson was a versatile journalist who could turn her hand to all aspects of journalism. She was credited with doing layouts and checking page proofs 'on the stone', a newspaper term for the last stage before the paper was printed. Gavin Souter in his history of the *Herald* wrote: 'She prided herself on getting hard news as well as "social" news into the women's section and had a flair for recognising and passing on new trends in fashion, home design and cooking.'³⁶ She included articles on social issues and literary subjects and, reflecting her own and her staff's status as women employed to do skilled work, she featured stories on women performing work usually considered male preserves. Her own life was an example of the paradox in the lives of women journalists of the era: they were working women yet what they wrote was directed at stay-at-home housewives.

Robertson's tour articles portrayed enthusiastic young women cheerfully learning new technical jobs they could hardly have dreamed of in their previous existence as typists, stenographers, milliners and salesgirls, and adapting to communal life in barracks or under canvas in strange parts of Australia often far from their homes and in different climate zones. An article from the early part of the tour about AWAS trainees learning to operate searchlights at an army camp where they were accommodated in tents was typical:

The enthusiasm of these [AWAS] surmounts the heat, the swirling clouds of red dust, the flies, the glare, the mosquitoes, the ants, and even the spiders. ... The girls grin, wipe the red mud packs from their faces, and carry on. They are so busy at their job and so eager to learn that they have no time to use the perfect mirror of the searchlight for make-up.³⁷

35 Lawson, *Connie Sweetheart*, 100.

36 Souter, *Company of Herald*s, 386.

37 Constance Robertson, 'Army Women Train. Learning to "Man" Searchlights', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 February 1943, 4.

She also included an observation that would have been reassuring to parents anxious about their daughters stationed on bases where they were greatly outnumbered by men at a time when rumours were spreading of the rate of pregnancy among servicewomen. Young women between the ages of 18 and 21 had to have the consent of a parent or guardian to be accepted in the services. Robertson wrote:

Living quarters vary according to the camp or station where the women are located, but all barracks for members of the WAAAF or the AWAS are in separate compounds all of which are out of bounds to the male personnel of the camp ... Social life is planned on a common basis. Men and women enjoy picnics, sports, dances, picture shows, and concerts together. Romances seem to thrive ... engagements rings are worn with a flourish.³⁸

Patricia Knox

Patricia Knox aged 22 was probably the youngest of the group of women journalists chosen to go on the tour. Whether she was favoured over more senior colleagues on the *Argus* because of her father's dual roles as managing director of the paper and head of Army Public Relations or not, she would have felt under pressure to prove her value. The *Argus* demanded high standards from its journalists. The founder of the paper Lauchlan Mackinnon set out to make it an elite newspaper modelled on *The Times* in London, distinguishing it from its competition the *Age* that was regarded as 'the workingman's paper'. Until the last few years of its existence when it was acquired by the London Daily Mirror group, the *Argus* was regarded as the epitome of conservative thinking, but even critics of its 'abject Toryism', such as the foundation editor of the rival *Sun News-Pictorial*, Montague (Monty) Grover, praised the impeccable quality of its reporting standards.³⁹ Readers who detested its conservative opinions were said to buy it for 'its excellent, up to date and thorough handling of its news'. Journalist C. E. (Ted) Sayers, who expressed these views at a symposium on the 'life and death' of the *Argus*, characterised the paper as 'conservative, comfortably conscious of its leading place in the industry, in the number of its readers, in the quality and scope of its display advertising, and the better-class small classified advertising'.⁴⁰

38 Constance Robertson, 'Army in Blue Jeans. Servicewomen at Work and Play', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1943, 7.

39 Montague Grover quoted in Sybil Nolan, 'Manifest Editorial Differences: *The Age* and *The Argus* in the 1920s and 1930s', in *The Argus: The Life and Death of a Great Melbourne Newspaper 1846–1957*, ed. Muriel Porter (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing, 2003), 83–84.

40 C. E. Sayers, quoted in Nolan, 'Manifest Editorial Differences', 85.



Figure 3: Patricia Knox (centre) who represented the Melbourne *Argus* on the 1943 tour by women journalists with liaison officer Captain Henry Steel and Lt Lynka Isaacson on board an aircraft.

Source: Pte Barbara Joan Isaacson (Australian War Memorial PO5161.014).

Other journalists made similar points. George Godfrey described it as ‘the leading newspaper in Australia’, which drew ‘tremendous reputation and popular support from the conservative elements in the community’.⁴¹ In peacetime the paper was a fierce opponent of Labor Party policies, but during World War II it supported the Curtin Labor Government. Errol Knox, as managing director, argued that it could do what it liked in its leaders, but that all news items must be strictly objective. During wartime even in editorials ‘the *Argus* and Knox loyally, though not uncritically,

41 George Godfrey quoted in Nolan, ‘Manifest Editorial Differences’, 84.

supported the Curtin and then the Chifley government'.⁴² During the war Knox, in his role as head of Army Public Relations, undertook several missions overseas on behalf of the Prime Minister John Curtin and General Douglas MacArthur.⁴³

Patricia Monica Knox, was born on 28 September 1920 in Sydney, the eldest child of Errol Galbraith Knox and his English wife, Gertrude Mary Coore, whom he met during his service in World War I.⁴⁴ After enlisting as a private in the AIF, Knox transferred to the Royal Flying Corps where he reached the rank of major and was twice mentioned in dispatches and was appointed MBE. Patricia grew up in Sydney, where her father moved rapidly up the journalistic ladder. From a postwar job with *Smith's Weekly*, he became news editor of the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*. In 1922 he was appointed managing editor of the Sydney *Evening News* and within a year had doubled the paper's circulation. In 1929 he became a director of the newly formed Associated Newspapers Ltd, but resigned two years later when the *Evening News* closed. During the 1930s Great Depression he had a variety of publishing interests, including editing 2 editions of *Who's Who in Australia* and 3 editions of the *Medical Directory for Australia*.⁴⁵ In 1937 the family moved to Melbourne when Errol Knox was appointed managing editor of the Argus & Australasian Ltd. Three years later he became managing director and was credited with bringing the paper 'to financial strength from a position of collapse'.⁴⁶

The move to Melbourne coincided with Patricia finishing school at Loreto Catholic School for Girls, Kirribilli, Sydney, and she soon had a job as a young journalist on the women's section of the *Argus*. In 1941–42, as male reporters were called up for war service, she was one of the younger female reporters and some female administrative staff who were moved to general reporting duties,⁴⁷ a move that would have been unlikely for women in peacetime.⁴⁸

Knox's articles on the tour were those of a well-trained reporter so assiduous in sending off stories that it is possible to trace the progress of the tour solely through her articles. The *Argus* published 22 articles under her byline and its weekly counterpart the *Australasian* published a much longer, illustrated, wrap-up article. Most of her articles were also republished in one or more New South Wales regional papers including the *Northern Star*, Lismore; *Daily Advertiser*, Wagga Wagga; *Border*

42 A. R. Chisholm, "'Knocker' Errol Knox", in *Men Were My Milestones: Australian Portraits and Sketches* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1958), 134–42.

43 *Argus*, 18 October 1949, 3.

44 Peter Knox, 'The Knox Family Story', Knoxetal, www.knoxetal.com.

45 Sally O'Neill, 'Knox, Sir Errol Galbraith (1889–1949)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Searle (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 628–29.

46 'Sir Errol Knox Was Dynamic Figure in Newspaper Industry', *Argus*, 18 October 1949, 3.

47 Jim Usher, ed., *The Argus: Life & Death of a Newspaper* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), 54.

48 Patricia Clarke, 'Women in the Media', in *Companion to the Australian Media*, ed. Bridget Griffen-Foley (North Melbourne, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014), 497.

Morning Mail, Albury; *Daily Examiner*, Grafton; *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*; *Western Grazier*, Wilcannia; and in the *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advocate* in Queensland and the *Canberra Times* in the Australian Capital Territory. Her articles were about 500 to 1,000 words in length.

There was an inevitable similarity between the articles written by journalists on a controlled tour, but, partly because she wrote many more words and partly because of a perceived closer identification with younger servicewomen, Knox's articles had more details of the feminine touches—the flowers in jam jars and the improvised curtains in isolated camps and makeshift quarters.⁴⁹ She was assiduous in noting the civilian jobs of women thrust into very different wartime roles; for example, the milliner who became a first-grade electrical fitter in the WAAAF, the former salesgirl who was vulcanising vital parts of aeroplane engines worn down by constant friction and the former doctor's receptionist who was winding armature coils and testing bomb release machinery.⁵⁰

Although she did not make any comment on gender discrimination, she noted that it was also part of the duties of the WAAAF timekeepers, who checked pilots and planes on night flying training in and out from the airfield, and the WAAAF signals clerks and transport drivers who drove the fire and ambulance vehicles, to make tea and toast for the trainee pilots who were exclusively male.⁵¹ She also wrote more about servicewomen doing mundane jobs, those who waited on table, helped in the kitchen, made beds and cleaned bedrooms, washed up and did laundry in the officers' clubs. She described them as doing a 'thankless job, and not one to be coveted' in a 'hot and sticky climate amid mosquitoes and flies'.⁵²

From the destination 'Somewhere in Australia' in 1943—in fact a street in the Townsville suburb of Mysterton—Knox described one of the more unusual improvisations of the war, the blocking off of a street of Queensland-style stilt houses, the forced evacuation of its inhabitants and the transformation of the houses into the United States Army 12th station hospital:

Two rows of weatherboard houses on opposite sides of a street have been taken over, and the hospital set up in them. The staff has adapted very easily to these unorthodox surroundings. The street is closed at both ends, with large notices reading 'No road' and 'No Thoroughfare' ... The cottages on one side of the street have all been joined by ramps so that patients can be wheeled from one to another. In one is the operating theatre ... On the other side of the street the houses have been left separate. Some are wards, other hospital offices, pathology department, Red Cross recreation room and kitchen and messroom.⁵³

49 Patricia Knox, 'Work of WAAAF and AWAS. Living far from Home', *Argus*, 25 February 1943, 4.

50 Patricia Knox, 'These Girls Do Men's Jobs. Fitter Who Was a Milliner', *Argus*, 2 March 1943, 6.

51 Patricia Knox, 'Dust and Concerts: WAAAFs at Work and Play', *Argus*, 26 February 1943, 6.

52 Patricia Knox, 'Messwomen Do Grand Job in North', *Argus*, 7 April 1943, 10.

53 Patricia Knox, 'From Street to Hospital. Metamorphosis in the North', *Argus* 10 April 1943, 10.

During its 2 years' operation, the hospital treated over 23,000 casualties. After it closed the houses were restored before they were returned to their owners who had been given only one week to evacuate as Townsville was transformed into a garrison city early in 1942.⁵⁴

Iris Dexter

Iris Dexter, 36, senior reporter on the weekly magazine *Woman*, looked the part of a stylish, sophisticated journalist, and her private life—married to one man, living with another—reinforced the slightly bohemian aura the public tended to attach to women journalists. She was born Iris Chapman Norton in the Sydney suburb of Haberfield in July 1907 to Wykes Strange Chapman Norton, engineer, and Eva Grace Norton, formerly Robey. When she was 15, Iris began work editing comics for the *Sunday Times* children's section and the following year she moved to editing work on a new weekly film magazine, *Photoplayer*, and filling in as editor of *Theatre Magazine*. In 1928, at age 21, she married Harry Norman Dexter, a sports journalist on the *Sun*, who was a member of a well-known family of racing writers, but the marriage was short-lived. In a 1935 legal case, Iris applied for a divorce on the grounds of constructive desertion, alleging she had been driven out of her home in December 1930 by her husband who was often drunk and had assaulted her on many occasions. *Truth* newspaper reported the case in salacious detail, delighting in having a 'pretty' young journalist and a racing writer as protagonists. It devoted headlines to Iris's evidence of her husband's violent physical attacks and her disclosure that soon after she left him she met cartoonist and commercial artist George Aubrey Jack Dolphin (Aubrey) Aria,⁵⁵ with whom she had lived from March 1931. Aria gave evidence that he and Dexter wished to marry. The judge found constructive desertion proved but refused to use his discretion to grant a divorce citing the need to maintain morality.⁵⁶ Dexter and Aria were not able to marry until 1951 after Harry Norman Dexter divorced Iris on the ground of desertion stating that she would not give up journalism for a domestic life. In the same year Harry Dexter, who was based in Melbourne as the Sydney *Sun*'s sports and racing writer, married journalist Nancy Nugent whose column in the Melbourne *Age*, 'Nancy Dexter takes note', became well known for its discussion of feminist issues.⁵⁷

54 Darryl McIntyre, *Townsville at War 1942: Life in a Garrison City* (Townsville, Qld: City of Townsville, 1992), 2.

55 'George Aubrey Aria', Design & Art Australia Online, last updated 11 January 2015, www.daao.org.au/bio/george-aubrey-aria/.

56 'Pretty Wife Tells of Husband's Treatment. Beat Her with a Razor Strop. Judge Puzzled in Strange Case', *Truth*, 5 May 1935, 17; 'Dismissed. Miss Iris Dexter Loses Divorce Case', *Truth*, 23 June 1935, 24.

57 Sybil Nolan, 'Dexter, Nancy Nugent (1923–1983)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 17, ed. Diane Langmore (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 315–16.

At the time of her marriage in 1928, Iris, who was working as publicity manager for Hoyts Theatres Ltd, told an interviewer she believed women were especially suited to publicity work, she had grown up with the industry, understood it from a newspaper angle and was attuned to its newness.⁵⁸ From 1929 to 1932 she had a regular film review column, 'At the pictures. Latest Talkies reviewed', in the *Sydney Mail*. During the 1930s when journalism jobs dried up, she worked in the advertising section of a department store,⁵⁹ but continued contributing to newspapers and periodicals, and she listed her occupation as journalist on electoral rolls from the time she enrolled to her death. As a freelancer she contributed to *Smith's Weekly*, the *Sunday Telegraph*, the *ABC Weekly*, the *Sun* and the *Guardian*. In October 1940 Dexter was appointed to *Woman* and by 1943 she was described as the paper's ace reporter.

Woman was a down-to-earth magazine designed to appeal to housewives and working girls coping with the problems of day-to-day life who looked for escapist entertainment, succinctly written news stories and practical help. The fashion section often featured ways to enhance or remake an existing garment and cookery recipes made the most of limited supplies of rationed meat, butter and sugar. Slightly more daring than similar women's papers in its approach to social subjects, from 1941 *Woman* included a regular sex education page by Dr Norman Haire, a medical practitioner and sexologist, who wrote under the name of 'Dr Wykeham Terriss', and a column centred on relationships by left-wing writer and humanist Alan Marshall. Haire's articles discussed sex education, pregnancy, childbirth, gynaecological problems and venereal diseases more openly than some similar publications. His series on venereal diseases (VD) published early in 1943 reflected public concern particularly in wartime conditions and backed up the anti-VD propaganda campaigns by the federal and state governments. Nevertheless, they provoked strong criticism from some readers, including Mrs C.J. Gordon of Grafton, who also criticised Marshall's articles. Letters poured in to the Editor in defence of the two writers,⁶⁰ and in the following issue the Editor took over the 'Wykeham Terriss' page to point to the advantage of open discussion of VD and the need for public education. A supporting comment by the Anglican Bishop of Goulburn, Dr E.H. Burgmann, was highlighted in a box in a prominent position on the page.⁶¹

Alan Marshall, whom the letter-writer coupled with Haire, offered readers of *Woman* commonsense advice on relationships in advance of conservative opinion, often encouraging women to be assertive not submissive, in his column 'Allan Marshall Says'. He was well known for his book *I Can Jump Puddles*, in which he described his experience of growing up crippled but undaunted following poliomyelitis contracted when he was 6. From the mid-1930s, Marshall became aligned with

58 'Bernice May' (Zora Cross), *Australian Woman's Mirror*, 11 September 1928, 10.

59 Isobel Wood, 'Margot Parker Was a Woman Ahead of Her Time', *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 April 19874, 25.

60 *Woman*, 8 March 1943, 14.

61 'Morality the Best Safeguard', *Woman*, 15 March 1943, 8.

left-wing views, in 1938 being elected president of the Victorian Writers League that was regarded as a communist-front organisation. His left-wing political attitudes were popular during the period in World War II when Russia was an admired ally, but during the Cold War he came under frequent surveillance by the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation.⁶²

Iris Dexter's reports of the 1943 tour needed to differ from those in the dailies as by the time her articles were published, all their news value had disappeared. Instead of competing, she employed her more arresting style of writing and often centred her articles on a striking character. In the tropics, she wrote, the sun brought out 'the choking reek of furry weeds and the undergrowth steams like vegetables in a pot'.⁶³ Near Uranquinty the camp was:

a sunstruck sweep of dust, rock, sagging gums, iron huts, camouflaged tents, and equipment. By night its lights slice the sky training on aircraft provided as targets ... The crew in training was wearing khaki drill skirts and shirts, fly veils, short socks, shoes so dusty they looked like suede, and AWAS felt hats discoloured around the bands with sweat.⁶⁴

In north Queensland, Dexter found a suitable person to feature—a WAAAF squadron leader in charge of the largest concentration of servicewomen in Australia who rode around her scattered outposts on her bicycle. She described her striking personality in an article titled 'Starkie of the Waaferies':

She is short, tanned as polished penny, can't be bothered with make-up, wears her pretty dark hair in a rumpled short cut, is outspoken, and has a galvanising direct approach to people and situations. In a climate that makes newcomers woolly-witted and apathetic, she is an energising reproach.⁶⁵

Dexter also wrote a feature story about their tour leader Lynka Isaacson, who heard during the tour that her 22-year-old RAAF bomber pilot son, Peter Isaacson, had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. 'His photographs went everywhere with us,' Dexter wrote. 'They were the first things unpacked and placed on bedside tables by his mother.' Peter Isaacson had survived 45 missions over European targets with RAF Bomber Command and had already been awarded the Air Force Cross and Distinguished Flying Medal, making him one of the most highly decorated airmen of World War II.⁶⁶

62 John McLaren, 'Marshall, Alan (1902–1984)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 18, ed. Melanie Nolan (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2012), 130–31.

63 Iris Dexter, 'Veterans Don't Giggle Now', *Woman*, 5 April 1943, 15.

64 'Iris Dexter Tells of the Women Who Go to War', *Woman*, 1 March 1943, 14–15.

65 Iris Dexter, "'Starkie" of the WAAAFeries and the "Kids" She Commands', *Woman*, 19 April 1943, 16–17.

66 NAA A12372, R/35959/H, barcode 30697755, Isaacson, Peter Stuart; Iris Dexter, 'Making War a Family Affair', *Woman*, 12 April 1943, 15.

When the group reached the tropics, Dexter turned to her invented character Frenzia Frisby in her 'Margot Parker' column to picture the journalists' adjustment to communal living in a variety of accommodation ranging from officers' quarters to makeshift barracks, tents and airport hangars:

One of the things about the tropics is mosquito nets. This has not gone unnoticed by all the people who are now pretty busy in the tropics. And you may be sure it has not entirely escaped the keen, inquiring mind of Frenzia Frisby ... In a revealing little brochure, entitled *Through the North with a Remington* ... which she is now preparing, she dwells pretty feelingly on the mosquito net in its various moods ... Frenzia Frisby says that this is the sort of thing that never gets into communiqués.⁶⁷

In another article, contemporaries could have identified the quirks and idiosyncrasies of Dexter's fellow travellers as 'Margot Parker' shared her conclusions 'on all this Girls Together stuff in the Quarters':

The idea is not to borrow the shoe polish, talcum powder, astringent lotion, soap flakes, pills, bobby-pins, cigarettes and cottonwool of others. At first. This powerful scrupulousness lasts for several days, after which everyone relaxes and becomes totally irresponsible and unselfish. It is all this comradeship, this one for all and all for one spirit, which will, Frenzia thinks, be *The Making of many a girl who is now effortlessly sleeping in her own bedroom, undisturbed by sleep-talkers, girls who've lost tooth-paste caps, and those who hum 'Elmer's Tune' over and over and over again.*⁶⁸

Frenzia concluded that 'dormitory life fosters a spirit of Communism unguessed at by Those Accustomed to Privacy and Seclusion'.

Gender discrimination

A story that the women on tour would remember but which the censors would not have allowed past their blue pencils, as it could have disclosed to the enemy not only the parlous state of Queensland railway tracks but also the effect of the weather in delaying a trainload of troops destined for New Guinea, occurred on their journey by train from Brisbane to Townsville. The group departed on the night of 21 February for a journey of 2 nights and one day north on Queensland's narrow-gauge railway. The names of all stations on the journey had been removed as they had from railway stations, towns and streets throughout Australia to impede any enemy troops who might land. When the train was approaching Townsville it was stopped by major flooding and had to return to Bowen, 170 kilometres to the south, creating an emergency requiring all Lynka Isaacson's skill in arranging accommodation and effecting a rescue so the journalists could resume their tight itinerary.

67 Margot Parker, 'Reverie inside a Mosquito Net', *Woman*, 29 March 1943, 9.

68 Margot Parker, 'Let's All Be Girls Together', *Woman*, 5 April 1943, 9.

Journalist Major Frederick Howard, public relations liaison officer in the Directorate of Public Relations, South West Pacific Area,⁶⁹ described the women's dilemma in terms that convey the prejudice and contempt many male journalists harboured towards women journalists. In a letter to a fellow journalist he wrote: 'First of all—the Women ... they had to return to Bowen, where they spent two or three days of idleness with the Air Force. I only hope they behaved themselves in that Eveless Eden.'⁷⁰ In his diary he described the RAAF station where the women journalists were billeted as 'the most desolate' he had seen. 'Mournful quantities of rain' had turned the ground into a 'semi-swamp of dun earth and gravel' while the aircraft of the amphibian squadron stationed at Bowen were 'shabby and patched' adding to the general air of 'misery and decrepitude'. He concluded: 'No other place, surely, could be more sunk in warm, wet neglect.'⁷¹ Then, returning to his denigration of the group of women journalists, he wrote in a letter to the Assistant Director, PRO, Major R.J. (Reg) Denison: 'Three days there for Les Femmes must have meant hell for little Lt Isaacson.'⁷²

As the obvious rapport of Howard's correspondents indicates, most male journalists held similar opinions. Their views dated back to the emergence of women as competitors. In the nineteenth century, only a few women wrote for newspapers, the more fortunate being engaged to do a series of articles, but most were casual contributors with little security and paid per line. Most wrote for the general reader not specifically on women's topics. Louisa Atkinson's articles, published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* from 1860, the first long-running series by a woman to be published in a major Australian newspaper, were on the natural environment. The pioneer social reformer and writer Catherine Spence wrote on general interest issues including law and electoral reform, usually under a pseudonym. Feminist Alice Henry, the first woman journalist to be taken on the staff of a metropolitan newspaper and trained on the job, was a versatile general reporter.

Towards the end of the century, the situation of women who wrote for the press changed when editors began employing women to write and edit the newly emerging columns of women's news. Soon most women writers were employed in this work. For many this meant relegation to the social columns, graphically described in a *Bulletin* article as 'the deadly, dreary ruck of long dress reports and the lists of those who "also ran" at miscellaneous functions'.⁷³ Women's sections on newspapers and periodicals built up small empires. Although women journalists were paid at the

69 NAA B883 Howard, Frederick James, VX128412, 6210898.

70 Australian War Memorial (AWM) PRO 3644. Lt Col Fred Howard Collection, Lt Colonel FJ Howard letter, 1 March 1943.

71 AWM PRO 3644 Lt Col Fred Howard Collection, Diary 22 February to 15 March.

72 AWM PRO 3644. Lt Col Fred Howard, Field HQ, New Guinea Force, to Major JR (Reg) Denison, Assistant Director PRO, 3 March 1943; David Dunstan, 'Howard, Frederick James (Fred) (1904–1984)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 17, ed. Diane Langmore (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 552–53.

73 *Bulletin*, 30 May 1912, 22.

same rate as men, this was largely nullified as they were overwhelmingly employed on lower grades. Even women's page editors, responsible for considerable staffs and exercising far wider skills than middle-range male reporters were often graded lower than the industry average. The employment of women journalists in this confined field entrenched the view that not only was this work particularly suited to women, but also it was the only journalistic work they were capable of doing.⁷⁴ This view of women journalists permeated the profession, as the correspondence of Frederick Howard indicates.

After the tour

The women stuck in Bowen were eventually rescued by Captain Henry Steel, a British Army liaison officer whom Howard described as 'an amiable rogue', who got several small planes to fly the group from Bowen to Cairns where they resumed their tour in reverse. The rescue turned out to be the start of a romance for Steel and one of the rescued journalists. In February 1944 at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, Patricia Knox married her rescuer, Henry Alfred Steel, by then a major. An officer in the British South Staffordshire Regiment, he had been deployed in 1940 in charge of British Public Relations at Malayan advanced headquarters and he had several narrow escapes from capture during the retreat down the Malay Peninsula.⁷⁵ At the British surrender in February 1942, he and another journalist were the last newspapermen to leave Singapore. The small ship on which Steel escaped was bombed as it left, and he made his way from island to island to Australia where after he recuperated he was attached to the United Kingdom Liaison staff. After the Japanese surrender, he was the first newspaperman to return to Singapore, parachuting in on 4 September 1945.⁷⁶ On 2 December 1947 he relinquished his commission in the British Army and became a public relations consultant in Melbourne where he and Patricia and their son lived.⁷⁷

After her discharge from the AWAS, Lynka Isaacson had a brief spell as a fashion writer for *Vogue* until she was appointed women's page editor on the *Argus*, but increasingly she found the 'trivia of the women's pages' boring and she resigned in 1948. From May 1947 until it ceased in September the following year, Isaacson was honorary editor of *Australian Jewish Outlook*. Then, following a short period as owner/editor/reporter of the *Dandenong Ranges News*, she became editorial director of her son Peter Isaacson's rapidly expanding chain of suburban newspapers. While visiting Europe in 1961, the Melbourne *Herald* commissioned her to cover the trial

74 Clarke, 'Women in the Media', *Companion*, 495–98.

75 'Narrow Escape from Japanese in Hunt for News', *News* (Adelaide), 13 March 1942, 6; 'World War II Unit Histories & Officers', www.unithistories.com.

76 Athole Stewart, 'First Man Back to Singapore', *Argus*, 6 September 1945, 16.

77 Warner, *The Pathfinder*, 168.

of Adolph Eichmann who had been captured in Argentina and brought to Israel to face trial on war crimes and crimes against the Jewish people. She described the first day of the trial as 'a stupendous and unforgettable experience, heart-stirring in the extreme'. Just before Eichmann was sentenced to death in December 1961, she interviewed Mrs Eichmann in Linz, Germany. Isaacson was on her way back to Melbourne where she intended to set up an Australian-Israeli association when she died suddenly in Genoa on 23 January 1962 at the age of 62 from a heart condition.⁷⁸

Iris Dexter finally achieved the aim of Australian women reporters in getting overseas but not until shortly after the war ended.⁷⁹ Interviewed in Perth on her way to Asia to gather human interest stories from newly released civilian evacuees and Australian prisoners of war in Java and Singapore, she contrasted the ban on Australian women reporters with the numbers of American women correspondents who reported World War II overseas—127 American women reporters were accredited just to the war in the Pacific.⁸⁰ Dexter continued to work for *Woman* until it ceased in 1951, then for its successor *Woman's Day* and as a feature writer for the Sydney *Sun* and the *Sunday Sun*. After her death in Sydney on 24 March 1974, it was her work as the 'wry, wise, sometimes astringent, always affectionate' Margot Parker that was remembered.⁸¹

Connie Robertson continued her long reign at the *Sydney Morning Herald* in the postwar era. As women returned to more traditional roles, the women's pages reverted to an emphasis on homemaking skills and the social circuit, although Robertson also introduced her readers to some overseas influences including Dior fashions, new homemaking ideas such as seagrass matting and exotic foods like moussaka.⁸² She retired in 1962 still editing women's pages that were a mirror of Australian society, slow to encompass change. When she died on 3 March 1964 at the age of 69, the influence of the women's liberation movement was beginning to reverberate around the world to be reflected eventually in the demise of old-style women's pages.⁸³

78 Patricia Clarke, 'Caroline (Lynka) Isaacson 1900–1962', *Media Legends*, 123.

79 *Western Mail*, 7 September 1945, 27.

80 Fay Anderson and Richard Triembath, *Witnesses to War: The History of Australian Conflict Reporting* (Carlton Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2011), 118.

81 Isobel Wood, 'Margot Parker Was a Woman ahead of Her Time', *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 April 1974, 25.

82 Souter, *Company of Heralds*, 386.

83 Patricia Clarke, 'Constance Robertson', halloffame.melbournepressclub.com/article/constance-robertson.

Conclusion

The tour by women journalists in 1943 led to a slight but temporary break in restrictions on women reporters. In October 1943, Australian journalist Lorraine Stumm, who represented a British newspaper at General MacArthur's headquarters in Brisbane, grabbed an opportunity to go to New Guinea to witness some of the first Allied air attacks on Rabaul. Australian Army Public Relations, unwilling to overrule MacArthur, took action once she reached Port Moresby and she got no further than watching Liberators take off at daybreak on their bombing mission. Following publicity arising from Stumm's trip to New Guinea, *Australian Women's Weekly* editor Alice Jackson was also allowed to visit New Guinea briefly. Although she was away only 7 days, she wrote many articles about Australian and United States hospitals and units.⁸⁴ Army Public Relations, which may have been disappointed that she did not find it worthwhile competing for stories with other journalists on the 1943 tour, also offered Jackson an 'exclusive' tour of defence outposts in Western Australia designed to publicise service personnel serving at remote locations.⁸⁵ Other women had to wait until the end of the war to get overseas. Many seized the opportunity and soon their stories from war-ravaged countries began appearing in the papers.

World War II opened opportunities for women in general reporting as male journalists left to join the armed services. Some retained their jobs after the war, but most of the gains were lost. By 1948 the ratio of female to male journalists on the *Sydney Morning Herald's* editorial staff had fallen to one in 13, appreciably lower than before the war. In the 1950s, women were not only a small percentage of the journalistic workforce but also most were still employed on the women's pages. An *Argus* journalist described the 1950s as an era when reporting innocuous social news was 'the bread and butter of women journalists' work'.⁸⁶ In the 1960s, a few women's page editors ventured cautiously into controversial subjects such as equal opportunity in employment and a few women secured jobs reporting parliament and the courts. Widespread social changes and the influence of the women's liberation movement in the 1970s led to dramatic changes in the role of women in the media and the material they wrote for women. The old staples of women's reportage disappeared as the women's pages changed to more sexually neutral lifestyle sections with a wider agenda on social issues. Despite resistance by more conservative publications, by the end of the decade old-style women's pages had virtually disappeared.⁸⁷

84 Jeannine Baker, *Australian War Reporters* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015), 111–12.

85 Denis O'Brien, *The Weekly* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1982), 91.

86 Janette Conway, 'The '50s World of an *Argus* Woman Cadet', *The Argus*, ed. Usher, 61–2.

87 Clarke, 'Women in the Media', 497.

This article has looked at the lives of 4 women journalists at a moment in time in the continuing history of women in the media. It reveals their status in 1943 in the journalistic hierarchy, it explains historic reasons for the gender-based discrimination against women journalists and it recounts the efforts women made to be accepted on an equal basis with male colleagues. It documents the disparaging attitude towards female journalists among males ranging from the Commonwealth minister who referred to them as 'womenfolk engaged on work of this nature' to the denigration of them and their work by Fred Howard, in civilian life chief leader writer on the Melbourne *Herald* and chair of a television program 'Meet the Press'. The attitudes they revealed were intrinsic to most male journalists of the era and were reflected in the *Journalist*, the monthly publication of the Australian Journalists Association.

The content of what the women wrote on the 1943 tour is now of historic interest only. It reveals, however, the assumptions they made, their style of journalistic writing when newspapers and periodicals were the main source of news, the gendered language that was accepted without question, and the aspects of life they thought worth recording. What they wrote reveals glimpses and insights into society and ordinary life in wartime Australia, nearly 80 years ago.

What a difference a decade makes: Jessie and Mina, the two wives of Queensland Premier Sir Robert Philp (1851–1922)

LYNDON MEGARRITY AND LYNE MEGARRITY

My Dear Dorothy,— In spite of the fact that we are well into the middle of April, that we are having cooler weather, and that many of our *absentees* are returning, Townsville continues as dull as ever; there is not a ball nor private dance even in participation, and the only dinners given lately have been strictly masculine ones, at which we have not been able to have a peep. They have been given for the special purpose of entertaining ... Robert Philp, and other celebrities who have been for a few days in town.¹

As the above quote from an 1889 edition of the *Queensland Figaro and Punch* implies, Queensland public life in the late nineteenth century often excluded women. Aside from reporting attendance at balls, participation in concerts and the unlucky ones caught in law disputes, the lives of women were not a major theme of the print media of the age. However, as the population grew, and Queensland developed more educational and cultural institutions, a small but increasing group of elite British-Australian women developed a respected place in public life, especially in relation to charitable work. Arguably, this outcome reflected the subtle influence of female suffrage, which encouraged a greater role for women outside the home.

The lives of Jessie and Mina, the first and second wives of Robert Philp, mirrored the transition of elite women from being mostly confined to the domestic world to having a more influential place in Queensland society in the early twentieth century. The first Mrs Robert Philp, Jessie, lived entirely in the mid to late Victorian era, and did not enjoy the same freedoms and increased expectations of the second Mrs Robert Philp, Mina, born just over a decade after Jessie in 1867. As this article will show, that decade made all the difference to their quality of life and the values and assumptions that they developed as the wives of Robert Philp, a merchant who later became premier of Queensland (1899–1903, 1907–08).²

1 'The Lady in Townsville', *Queensland Figaro and Punch*, 27 April 1889, 12.

2 General biographical details for Sir Robert Philp in this article are found in Lyndon Megarrity, 'The Life and Times of Sir Robert Philp', *Queensland History Journal* 23, no. 5 (May 2017): 328–43.

In order to tell the life story of Jessie, this article has drawn heavily on the Philp Family Collection at the Fryer Library (University of Queensland). This archival source contains the only known selection of letters by Jessie Philp, written between 1874 and 1890.³ Although there are many gaps in her correspondence, enough material survives to provide historians with some understanding of her personality, attitudes and relationships. Published in 1990, a history of the Campbell family compiled by descendants also provides useful biographical details about Jessie and her extended family.⁴

While some contemporary newspaper articles mention Jessie, it is mostly in passing. Mina, by contrast, enjoyed a much higher profile as the wife of a major Queensland politician, and it is possible to trace her activities and interests through the Brisbane press. Unfortunately, unlike Jessie, it is impossible to know much about Mina's inner world, because no known collection of her letters has survived. Despite these limitations, sufficient primary source material on both Jessie and Mina exists to enable historians to compare and contrast what is known of their life experiences and set them within their historical context.

This article aims to assist with the current historiographical emphasis on ensuring that the lives of women in the colonial and early Federation era are better understood.⁵ While there are now many biographical portraits of pioneering women in the professions such as teaching and nursing, and the diaries and memoirs of rural women have given insights into the isolation and challenges of bush life, numerous female stories remain hidden from view.⁶ This is largely because during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the cultural model of the male breadwinner and the female domestic caregiver privileged men as public figures.⁷ Nevertheless, private correspondence, newspaper reports and other sources can help historians create biographical narratives that highlight the agency of women and girls, and the limits of that agency, in a very masculinist cultural environment.

3 Philp Family Collection, UQFL28, Fryer Library, University of Queensland (hereafter 'PFC').

4 Allison Campbell and Morag B. Campbell, *The James Campbell Story* (Brisbane: Watson, Ferguson & Co., 1990).

5 See Malcolm Allbrook and Melanie Nolan, 'Australian Historians and Biography', *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, no. 1 (2018): 12–13.

6 For Queensland examples of women's biography, see Heather Grant, *Great Queensland Women* (Brisbane: State of Queensland, 2005); Helen Gregory, "'The Hearts That Made the Nation': Fleshing Out the Stereotype', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 20, no. 5 (February 2008): 159–68; Trisha Fielding, *Neither Mischievous Nor Meddlesome: The Remarkable Lives of North Queensland's Independent Midwives 1890–1940* (Townsville: North Queensland History Press, 2019).

7 See Penny Russell, 'Gender and Colonial Society', in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, vol. 1, *Indigenous and Colonial Australia*, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 462–86; Glenda Strachan, 'Women, Work and the Role of the Male Breadwinner Concept', *Queensland Journal of Labour History*, no. 28 (Autumn 2019): 45–57.

'Much beloved' by her 'multitude of friends': Jessie's story

Jessie Bannister Campbell was born on 1 March 1856 in Mary Street, North Brisbane. She was the eldest daughter of prominent Brisbane plasterer and lime cement merchant James Campbell and his wife Isabella (née Mitchell).⁸ Of Scottish origin, the Campbell family arrived in Queensland in 1853 and prospered in the colony due to the success of patriarch James's business interests, which later included milling timber and branching out into shipping. They were later joined by many of James's relatives from the home country. The Campbells were at the centre of a network of Scottish families who settled in Brisbane and attended the Creek Street Presbyterian Church. Jessie's father was prominent in the local community as a spokesman for Scottish migrants.⁹

An early photograph of Jessie was taken circa 1866, posing with her younger sisters Helen ('Nell', b. 1858) and Isabella ('Bella', b. 1862). We see a quietly confident girl who is protective of her sisters (Figure 1). She happily holds Bella's hand and gazes proudly at the camera lens. Jessie knows she is dressed well; her hair is carefully styled, and her boots and spats are clean and little worn. Perhaps this photograph was taken to send to her Scottish relations—perhaps it rested on the piano at home, on view for family visitors. The photo of the 3 sisters mirrors the growing social and economic status of their father, described around this period by their Aunt Jessie:

Well to begin with James. He has got another son since I wrote last, so that is seven of his family he has got. He carries on his trade and is employing a great many here sometimes 40 or 50 at a time. He also keeps a Lime and Cement store. He would do exceedingly well only for the heavy losses he meets with. It is hard to be in business. James is very steady and pushing ...¹⁰

8 Jessie Bannister Campbell, Queensland Birth Certificate, 1856/B/20.

9 For the life of James Campbell, see A. L. Lougheed, 'Campbell, James (1830–1904)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/campbell-james-5490/text9337, originally published 1979, accessed online 19 January 2020.

10 Letter from Jessie Campbell (sister of James) to her uncle and cousin, undated circa 1860s, Campbell Family Papers, OM 90-41, John Oxley Library.



Figure 1: The Campbell sisters circa 1866. L to R: Jessie, Isabella (Bella) and Helen (Nell).

Source: State Library of Queensland.

It is not known where Jessie received her education, but it is likely that she attended the Brisbane Central Girls School, not far from the Normal School attended by her older brother John Dunmore Campbell.¹¹ The extent of her formal education remains a mystery, but it is more than likely that she also learned to play a musical

11 'Death of Mr. J.D. Campbell', *Brisbane Courier* (hereafter *BC*), 21 June 1909, 5. For Brisbane Central State Girls School, see Queensland State Archives, 'Brisbane Central State Girls School', www.archivessearch.qld.gov.au/Search/AgencyDetails.aspx?AgencyId=10552#bookmarkDescription.

instrument: the Campbells enjoyed regular concerts in the family home.¹² It was as a schoolgirl that she met Robert ('Bob') Philp, who arrived in Brisbane with his Scottish family in 1862 aged 10 and briefly attended the Normal School, earning the nickname 'Scotchie'.¹³ 'Dear Jessie,' Philp later wrote, 'think of me as the Boy who loved you but a very short time after we met when you were going to School & who has never ceased to love you.'¹⁴

Indeed, most of the information that exists concerning Jessie's experiences as a young woman is found within her letters to 'Bob' Philp, the young businessman who ultimately co-founded the shipping and trading company Burns, Philp & Co. For the most part, Jessie's correspondence reveals the values and expectations of women in late nineteenth-century colonial Australia. Girlhood was mainly viewed as training for the day when a woman would marry, look after the household and raise a family. A strong influence on Jessie's attitudes was the example of her mother, Isabella, who raised 5 sons and 3 daughters between the 1850s and the 1880s; she would later provide advice and assistance to her eldest daughter when she herself became a mother.¹⁵ It is likely that Jessie's outlook was also coloured by the romantic fiction of her era. As historian Alan Atkinson reflected:

Worldwide [from the 1840s onwards], there was now a flood of cheap works of fiction, whose authors asked no more of their readers [than] an interest in courtship, marriage, and womanly sacrifice ... in such ways women learned new things about womanhood. Reading novels was done silently and alone, but in imagination it drew women together.¹⁶

The earliest surviving letter from Jessie to Robert is dated 17 February 1874, when Jessie was visiting her relatives in Maryborough.¹⁷ The letter depicts a young 17-year-old girl, fully involved in an elite community of mostly young colonists of Scottish heritage, many of whom were linked by family and business ties. As she gently teases her male correspondent, there is a strong sense of Jessie testing the boundaries of the submissive, genteel behaviour expected of a young, marriageable, church-going woman in the 1870s while still remaining defined by them:

12 Jacqueline Whiteley, 'Two Families of Early Brisbane: A Study of the Families of Andrew Petrie and James Campbell Through Three Generations, 1830–1910' (BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1963), 90. In her correspondence, Jessie encouraged Robert Philp to get involved in the Townsville musical scene, insisting that 'you could sing if you would cultivate your voice a little'. Jessie Campbell to Bob Philp, 25 May 1877, PFC.

13 W. Street, 'Normal School: Recollections of Days in 1863', *BC*, 3 June 1922, 17.

14 Bob Philp to Jessie Campbell, 13 May 1877, PFC.

15 'Mrs James Campbell', *Week* (Brisbane) (hereafter *Week*), 1 March 1918, 25. 'I had serious thought of packing up & leaving today for Townsville but Mother would not hear of it & says I not to mention it again till Baby [Isabella Mary Philp] is alright.' Jessie to Robert Philp, 4 July 1879, PFC. See also Allison Campbell and Morag B. Campbell, *The James Campbell Story* (Brisbane: Watson, Ferguson & Co., 1990), 2–10.

16 Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: A History*, vol. 2, *Democracy* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004), 149.

17 This is likely to have been her Aunt Jessie, who married George Stupart of Maryborough in 1869. See Campbell and Campbell, *The James Campbell Story*, 10.

Dear Robert, I received your letter yesterday & was rather surprised I must own at seeing it. I do not know what to say to you about it, but I suppose I must not scold, as it would be more than 'human nature' can bear, to be kept so long without a letter from me ... I gave [Philp's brother John] a good scolding for talking in church, but I am afraid it did not do him much good ... I met Gavin ... at a party last week, I refused to be introduced to him, and I never let on I saw him; he told Miss Marshall that he was ashamed to look me in the face & it would give a lesson in future not to be so foolish ... I have had plenty of riding both here & at the Bay and also plenty of flirting/rather too much, for it was getting serious but that is over now ... Mother wants me home again ... The [Maryborough] people would like to keep me longer, but when I take it in my head to go they can't stop me, I am so fond of my own way you know ... I am not going to answer any serious questions yet.¹⁸

In January 1875, Robert Philp moved to Townsville as local manager of James Burns' general store. By 1876, Burns decided to leave the north and installed Philp as his partner in what was to become the mercantile and shipping firm Burns, Philp & Co. (established 1883). Meanwhile, Philp remained in touch with Jessie. Mary K. Brice, Jessie's granddaughter, relates the family story that when Jessie and her mother began their trip to Scotland in February 1876, 'Philp ... was on the wharf to see her [Jessie] off ... another admirer of Jessie's was actually on the ship, travelling to Scotland too'. Robert was consequently afraid that Jessie 'may be lost to him!'¹⁹

There are two potential candidates who may have hoped for a shipboard romance with young Jessie. The first was a young businessman associated with Burns and Philp, Adam Forsyth, who, along with 'Mrs and Miss Campbell', is listed in the newspapers as travelling on the same steamship journey to England.²⁰ Some time after her return from Scotland, Jessie wrote to Philp about a tense encounter with the Forsyth brothers back in Brisbane. James Forsyth accused Jessie of having spread rumours about his brother Adam, the nature of which decorum appears to have dictated that she not reveal:

I was indignant of course, but ... Mother gave it to him hot & he [James] is very sorry he made such a fuss about it now ... I can never feel the same towards him again, I think it was most ungentlemanly ... I will tell you all about it & all my little troubles some day.²¹

18 Jessie Campbell (at Maryborough) to Robert Philp (Brisbane), 17 February 1874, PFC.

19 Mary K. Brice, 'Jessie Bannister Philp: 1856–1890' in Allison Campbell and Morag B. Campbell, *The James Campbell Story* (Brisbane: Watson, Ferguson & Co., 1990), 42–43.

20 The Brisbane to Sydney leg of the journey began on 19 February 1876 on board the *City of Brisbane*. A. Forsyth and the Campbells were among the passengers, and they were also on the list of passengers for the Sydney to England trip of the *Osyth*, departing on 26 February. See *Week*, 26 February 1876, 11; 'Departures', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 March 1876, 6. If the story is true, then Philp is likely to have said goodbye to Jessie on the Brisbane wharf. The fact that Philp is listed in the newspapers as departing Brisbane in March on the *Egmont* steamer suggests that the story may have veracity. See 'Departures', *Week*, 11 March 1876, 11.

21 Jessie to Bob, 8 June 1877, PFC.

The other possible cabin romancer was 'Davy Reid' (who may have been the Captain David Reid that later worked for Burns, Philp & Co. in the New Hebrides and Torres Strait islands).²²

But absence appears to have made the heart grow fonder. On a short visit to Brisbane around May 1877, Robert asked for Jessie's hand in marriage, and she accepted. Philp wrote that he was 'sorry for Davy Reid but then you know Jessie my claim is a much better one than his. Certainly he is much handsomer & has a great many accomplishments I am without'.²³ Jessie replied: 'So you think David Reid is much handsomer than you, he may be in the eyes of some but not in mine.'²⁴

Not long after the engagement, Philp returned to Townsville for the rest of the year, feeling that the business depended on his presence and commitment. Jessie was upset by their long separation:

I do not know what to do with myself after tea; I do not care to go out; & it seems so long till bed-time. I miss you so much, & sometimes when I think how short a time you were here & all that happened I can hardly realise my happiness. Oh Bob, I thought you would never come back to me & many a sleepless night & miserable day have I had thinking over my unkindnesses to you ... some day when you know me better you will not think I was so cruel as I seemed to be.²⁵

Adding to the couple's stress, a fire in October 1877 burnt down Philp's business premises in Townsville,²⁶ underscoring Robert's reliance on his older partner, James Burns, to financially back him during commercial setbacks. Nevertheless, Jessie was able to console herself by forging links with her future father-in-law ('I saw your father last Sunday evening at church ... I think he is wearying to see his youngest boy. I know you are the spoilt bairn')²⁷ as well as looking forward to a traditional 'white wedding':

I hope you will need to come down, but it will perhaps be better for you if you don't require to come. I would be very unwilling to part with you. It would be nice to see you so soon, but ... [January] will be here before you know where we are. If you do happen to pop in we won't shut the door.²⁸

22 The Scottish-born Captain David Reid did not make his permanent home in Australia until 1887, but his obituary makes it clear that prior to this he made several voyages to Australia. Dying at the age of 76, he was roughly the same age as Jessie in 1876. 'Obituary: Captain D. Reid', *Kyogle Examiner*, 9 September 1932, 4. In her letters, Jessie guesses that Davy Reid learned of her engagement to Robert Philp from James Burns in Sydney, suggesting a business or shipping connection. See Jessie Campbell to Robert Philp, 14 June 1877, PFC.

23 Bob (Townsville) to Jessie, 27 May 1877, PFC.

24 Jessie to Bob, 8 June 1877, PFC.

25 Jessie to Bob, 11 May 1877, PFC.

26 'Destructive Fire in Flinders Street', *Northern Miner*, 3 October 1877, 3.

27 Jessie to Bob, 14 December 1877, PFC.

28 Jessie to Bob, 5 October 1877, PFC.



Figure 2: Jessie in her wedding dress, 1878.

Source: State Library of Queensland.

That Jessie's marriage to Robert was a love match tends to be confirmed in her correspondence. She shares her excitement with her sisters ('Nell & Bella admire my ring very much & think you have displayed very good taste with it & the locket'),²⁹ and delights in sharing a somewhat 'saucy' Scottish dialect poem with her fiancé:

I dinna like love ava
That's written in a caird
I'd rather hast by word o'mow
In oor Rail yaird. ('At the back of the
door would be better,' Jessie added.)³⁰

A few days before becoming Mrs Robert Philp, Jessie's friend Madam Sloan wrote to her and reflected on what looked like the recipe for a happy marriage:

You will forgive me for writing to you won't you? But really I could not resist sending my congratulations, especially as I consider you have obtained (in the person of your future companion for life) what very few young ladies succeed in getting[:] that is a perfect gentleman in every respect ... I'm sure if he had reached all over the colony he could not have found such another darling as yourself ... just ask him. I know he will agree with me.³¹

²⁹ Jessie to Bob, 25 May 1877, PFC.

³⁰ Jessie to Bob, 31 May 1877, PFC.

³¹ M. Sloan (Jane Street, South Brisbane) to Jessie Campbell, 28 January 1878, PFC.

Jessie married Robert on 1 February 1878 at the bride's parents' house, Ballymore, in the Brisbane suburb of Kelvin Grove.³² The couple settled in Townsville, building a home, 'Ellerslie', at the site where the Cathedral School (in the modern-day suburb of Mundingburra) has operated since 1958.³³ In all, Jessie Philp gave birth to 9 children, including an unnamed stillborn child (1880)³⁴ and James Cleveland Philp, who died aged 5 months in 1884.³⁵

Born on 28 December 1851, Robert Philp was over 4 years older than Jessie, typical of male–female age gaps in Australian colonial marriages at this time.³⁶ That age gap probably felt wider at the time of their wedding, with Bob being 26 and Jessie not yet 22. Nevertheless, she was confident enough to share her opinions on Philp's business activities from time to time.³⁷ For example, Jessie did not believe it made good business sense for Philp to involve his firm in the recruitment of indentured Pacific Islanders to work as canecutters in the sugar industry:

I think you have made a great mistake in going in to the labo[u]r trade. I think you will have plenty of trouble & expense with very little profit.³⁸

Jessie's words were prophetic. The reputation of Burns, Philp & Co. was damaged in 1884 by scandals involving two of their recruitment vessels. The *Hopeful's* captain and boatswain were convicted of murdering two recruits, and the *Heath* was seized by the Queensland Government and its 'cargo of Islanders repatriated after it was discovered that they were recruited in a deceptive manner'. Burns, Philp & Co. soon abandoned the trade.³⁹

Philp paid little heed to Jessie regarding his business, but he deferred to her over some household matters. The Philp home in Townsville was evidently a place where young bachelors enjoyed extended stays, probably while gaining experience working with Bob Philp. Some of these men were undoubtedly Jessie's brothers or cousins, and she did not want them to be exposed to bad influences:

32 'Marriage', Brisbane *Telegraph* (hereafter *Telegraph*), 5 February 1878, 2.

33 Ellerslie appears to have been officially part of the suburb of Aitkenvale during Philp's time, but the boundaries have subsequently changed over the years. For Ellerslie's history, see "'Sap" Visits a Townsville Garden', *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 4 October 1938, 5; Jess Cornelius, *The Cathedral School of St Anne and St James, Townsville, 1917–2017*, comp. Toni Lanphier (Preston, Vic.: Bounce Books, 2017), 51–56.

34 'Births, Marriages and Deaths', *BC*, 27 August 1880, 2. The stillborn child was the male twin of the surviving child, Colin.

35 'Births, Marriages and Deaths', *BC*, 2 August 1884, 1.

36 Beverly Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia: Volume 3: 1860-1900: Glad, Confident Morning* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), 118.

37 '[I] see Joe has not done so well with his cattle after all, he will never make much at buying and selling I am afraid. Mrs Pen [Philp's housekeeper] would do better.' Jessie to Bob, 15 February 1883, PFC.

38 Jessie to Bob, 23 March 1883, PFC.

39 Lyndon Megarrity, 'Robert Philp: North Queensland Pioneer', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 18, no. 4 (November 2002): 148–49. The *Hopeful* officers received life sentences but were pardoned in 1890.

Harry [possibly Jessie's brother Henry Edwin Campbell] says in his letter to mother that Downey is not all nice, & that he marched about the house as if it was his own home. Neither he nor Robert can get on with him at all & I think it is not very kind of you keeping him there & making them uncomfortable. You will please me greatly by sending him off to fresh lodgings, besides Mrs Pen [Philp's housekeeper] has quite enough to do just now without him & if there is anything I dislike it is a cheeky boy about the house. The boys don't need any bad examples set them at home, they see enough at the store. You don't see these things I know, but Harry has complained two or three times now about him.⁴⁰

Jessie had put her foot down, and Bob complied: 'Am glad you intend to send Downey away'.⁴¹ By pleasing Jessie, he was also pleasing Jessie's family, and that was important to her.

After Jessie and Robert's marriage, Jessie spent a number of extended holidays in Brisbane with the Campbell clan, taking her young children, including Isabella Mary ('May') (b. 1879), Colin (1880) and Charlie (1882) with her for company. By 1882–83, Jessie was travelling to Brisbane with a housemaid, Lucy Penwarn, who helped mind the children. Aged about 15 or 16, Lucy was not always popular with her mistress ('she is such a poor hand with the children ... I always get the heavy end of the nursing'),⁴² but her very presence reflected the Philp family's growing prosperity and the social expectations that came with Philp's role as an up-and-coming businessman:

May went to town [in Brisbane] with her Auntie Bella this afternoon, & came home in a great state of excitement. 'Ah Mother I saw such a beautiful town & such beautiful dolls[,] one as big as this (stretching out her arms) if you buy it I shall take such care of it.' I said I have no money ... Willie Brown told her to take it & say that her father's name was good.⁴³

Jessie's southern journeys were partly designed to escape the Townsville summer and the uncomfortable wet weather that sometimes accompanied it. 'You can tell my friends I am not coming back 'til after the wet season,' Jessie told her husband, 'Two wet seasons are too much of a good thing altogether'.⁴⁴ But she also valued the

40 Jessie to Bob, 2 February 1883, PFC.

41 Jessie to Bob, 15 February 1883, PFC.

42 Jessie to Bob, 18 February 1883, PFC. A 'Lucy Pemwarn' is listed as travelling with Jessie and the children on their return trip to Townsville. See 'Shipping', *BC*, 24 April 1883, 1. Other relevant sources indicate that 'Pemwarn' was a misprint, and her real name was 'Lucy Florence Penwarn'. In 1914, 'Lucy' inserted a death notice for her father Joseph Penwarn in the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (16 October 1914, 4), and 'L.F. Penwarn' thanked 'Hon. Robert Philp, Aitkenvale friends and others for their tokens of kindness and sympathy in her recent sad bereavement' (*Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 29 September 1914, 2). Her Queensland Death Certificate (1957/C/576) shows that Devonshire-born Lucy Florence Penwarn died on 19 December 1956 at the Eventide Home in Charters Towers, aged 89, signifying a birthdate of either 1867 or 1866. She had been in Queensland for 76 years, which fits in neatly with the period that Lucy was working for Jessie in the 1880s.

43 Jessie to Bob, 29 December 1882, PFC.

44 Jessie to Bob, 15 February 1883, PFC.

support of her parents during difficult times with the children. Regardless of social position, young mothers in Jessie's era were united by the potential terrors of infant sickness, for which the remedy was often trial and error:

Charlie has been very ill this week. He was very feverish & out of sorts all day Monday ... I asked father what ... to do, to give another pack or a warm bath. Father advised the hot bath, & mother took baby while Lucy & I went to prepare it but before I was out at the door, Mother called out oh Jessie he is in convulsions, & when I turned to look, I was terrified that we were going to lose him. Mother could scarcely hold him & his eyes were just starting out of his head. We had him into the bath in a few seconds, but he was not more than an hour out of it, when he took another fit & poor mother & I were just kept going the whole night with hot flannels & water to prevent the fits coming on again ... I sent for the [Doctor] the first thing in the morning & when he came out he said we had done all we could & that there was nothing better than the hot fomentation & just to be very careful what we gave him to eat & not let him get any more cold (he had a dreadful cough & the Dr was afraid of congestion of the lungs) & if we saw any more signs of the fits returning to give him the same treatment ... Can't tell you how I felt all that night, but one thing I was thankful for, that I was beside Mother. I would have lost my presence of mind, if I had been alone.⁴⁵

Perhaps due to the higher social standing of the Campbell family within Brisbane circles compared to the Philp clan, Jessie got away with some sharpness in her letter writing. For example, in responding to a letter in which Robert had gently suggested that she send at least some of their children back to Townsville, Jessie wrote: 'You say I must send May or Colin [Philp] back to keep the folks downstairs quiet. What is wrong with them & what makes you think there will be a big row some of these days?'⁴⁶

In what appears to be a subtle hint to his wife Jessie to return to Townsville from her Brisbane holiday in early 1883, Philp enclosed a poem by William Thomson in one of his letters: 'O! gin I had a [100] he'rts they'd beat for thee, they'd beat for thee'.⁴⁷ The records are silent, but it can be speculated that the possible reason for Philp's subsequent departure from Townsville may have been at least partly due to his wife's preference to be close to her relatives. In 1886 Robert Philp was elected to Queensland Parliament and chose to reside in Brisbane with his family from then on.

There is little surviving correspondence by or to Jessie Philp after 1883, so there are gaps in her life story. Newspapers indicate that she went on a holiday in 1885 to New Zealand with her husband and the children, as well as her brother John Dunmore Campbell and his wife Mary (née Cameron).⁴⁸ Jessie also spent some time in Sydney, possibly due to Robert Philp's need to consult James Burns over Burn,

⁴⁵ Jessie to Bob, 25 January 1883, PFC.

⁴⁶ Jessie to Bob, 18 February 1883, PFC.

⁴⁷ See Bob to Jessie, 3 February 1883, PFC.

⁴⁸ 'Townsville', *Week*, 10 January 1885, 18; 'Along the Wharves', *Evening News* (Sydney), 15 January 1885, 4; Campbell and Campbell, *The James Campbell Story*, 21.

Philp & Co. matters. On 19 April 1887, while temporarily residing in Sydney, Jessie gave birth to her third daughter, Jessie Blanche, providing a new sister for May and Elsie (b. 1884). Another daughter, Doris, was born on 7 December 1888 in the Philp family home at 'Barooka' in the Brisbane suburb of Milton.⁴⁹

As her private papers reveal, Jessie was a 'people person'. She kept a little black notebook in the 1880s which included the 'Visiting Days' (e.g. '1st and 3rd Tuesdays') of a large range of acquaintances and friends. This list included the wives of a number of Queensland politicians, such as Lady McIlwraith, Mrs A. Norton and Mrs Macdonald Paterson.⁵⁰ She was also not above gossiping about the ladies of Townsville:

I had a letter from Pollie Maffey yesterday asking me to get her a nice dress before I came back. I don't envy her her choice [of husband?]. I'm sure, unless he improves very much, she won't have a very happy time of it⁵¹ ... Surely that report is not true about Miss Love Bob? I would be sorry to see such a nice girl [throw] herself away on an old man ...⁵²

While her letters reveal a wide variety of personal passions, such as attending public lectures,⁵³ watching regattas,⁵⁴ dancing with her husband,⁵⁵ listening to music and concerts,⁵⁶ Jessie generally does not appear to have gone to many of the grand balls and society events that were covered in the Brisbane press. A notable exception was her attendance, with Robert, at the Brisbane Mayor's Ball in September 1889, commemorating 30 years of municipal government.⁵⁷

49 Record of R. & J. Philp children's names and birthdays, PFC; Elsie Maude Philp, Queensland Birth Certificate 1884/C/7952; Jessie Blanche Philp's birth notice, in *BC*, 3 May 1887, 4; Doris Margaret Philp's birth notice, in *BC*, 12 December 1888, 4.

50 Misc. item 23, in PFC. While there is no name on the book, internal evidence identifies it as belonging to Jessie. Among other clues, there is a list of recipients for 'Baby's photos' which include 'Mother ... Maggie [Margaret, the spouse of Philp's older brother, John Philp Jnr], Aggie [Robert Philp's sister Agnes], Bob [Jessie's name for her husband], Miss Pen [short for Lucy Penwarn?], Mrs Burns [presumably James Burns's spouse], Nell [sister Helen], Self, Bella [sister Isabella] ...' There are references in her letters to taking her children to be photographed at Matthewson's photographic studio in Brisbane: Jessie to Bob, 9 March 1883, PFC; Jessie to Bob, 30 March 1883, PFC; Jessie to Bob, 1 August 1879, PFC. In a list of expenses 'Pd Thursday 22nd Dec/87' a 'Lucy', probably Lucy Penwarn the maid, is listed as having been paid '2/6'.

51 Jessie to Bob, 2 February 1883, PFC.

52 Jessie to Bob, 15 February 1883, PFC.

53 'I have been to hear several of [Professor William] Denton's lectures, they are really splendid. He is talking of coming up our way [i.e. North Queensland] to look for [specimens,] shells &c. but don't know whether he will lecture or not.' Jessie to Bob, 23 March 1883, PFC. Denton was giving a series of geological lectures within a Darwinian, evolutionary framework. See 'Professor Denton's Lectures', *Bacchus Marsh Express* (Vic.), 12 May 1883, 3.

54 'Father took Nell & I for a drive this morning & we waited to see one boat race on our way home. Brisbane was very gay & nearly ... every body had turned out to see the Regatta [a reference to the Anniversary Regatta, commemorating the official Separation of Queensland from NSW on 10 December 1859]'. Jessie to Bob, 10 December 1880, PFC.

55 'I see you & Jim have been showing off your fine figures at the Ball. I might have honored you with a waltz if I had been there, but will reserve it for some future occasion.' Jessie to Bob, 4 July 1879, PFC.

56 'Father took Bella & I to the Flower Show last night which was a great treat to me ... We had also the pleasure of hearing a fine brass band with several good singers, Miss Fanny Atkinson amongst the number.' Jessie to Bob, 19 January 1883, PFC. 'Father is going to take me to a concert on Monday night. This will be the first [she has attended while visiting Brisbane], so I have not been very dissipated have I?' Jessie to Bob, 4 July 1879, PFC.

57 'The Mayor's Ball', *BC*, 6 September 1889, 5. Another function Jessie attended: 'Lady Norman's Reception', *BC*, 17 May 1889, 6.

For the most part, however, Jessie increasingly seems to have become content being a relatively private person in comparison to her increasingly famous husband. Her final surviving letters were written to her eldest daughter May, who, along with her father and sister Elsie, was visiting Robert's older brother John Philp Jnr and his wife Margaret in Townsville (John worked as an accountant at the Hollis Hopkins store).⁵⁸ 'Do not forget to take Elsie out to see your little brother's grave & try to get a few flowers before you go,' she reminds her daughter: Elsie was the twin sister of James Cleveland (Cleve) Philp, who died in Townsville as an infant in 1884.⁵⁹ Jessie clearly found much personal meaning in maintaining strong ties with the extended family and raising thoughtful daughters:

I took the boys [Colin and Charlie] to the River on Saturday & brought Aunt Elizabeth back with us for a few days. The boys did enjoy themselves & eat oranges till they could hardly move. Tell Aunt Maggie [Margaret Philp], Aunt Elizabeth was asking for her & wished to be kindly remembered to her. I suppose you have seen Mrs Pen ... How does Auntie feel with two big girls in the house? I hope you help her all you can ... I had to go to the dentist again today & he hurt me very much, but I think the worst is over now. I am afraid Father [Robert Philp] will be getting short of clothes, if he stays away much longer. Has he a respectable hat? ... Your loving mother Jessie B. Philp.⁶⁰

Towards the final months of 1890, a heavily pregnant Jessie spent much of her energy nursing her infant daughter, Doris, who had caught scarlet fever, known for its painful red rashes and other symptoms such as nausea, sore throat and difficulty in swallowing. Shortly after the birth of her ninth child on 7 November, Jessie 'herself was seized with scarlet fever, and despite everything that could be done by the medical attendants' she died on 21 November at 'Baroona', Milton. Jessie Bannister Philp was 34 years old. According to the Brisbane *Telegraph*, 'Mr. Philp has been unremitting in his attention to his wife, waiting on her day and night and some anxiety is now expressed on his account'.⁶¹ It was also especially traumatic for Jessie's eldest daughter Isabella Mary (May):

On the back of May's Bible, beside the pressed petals of a red poppy, she has written in childish round hand: "The last words my mother said were: "Oh, this terrible sickness!" The last words I heard her say were: "Have you got all you want. Good-bye."⁶²

58 'Mr. J. Philp', *Week*, 14 January 1910, 17; 'Mrs Margaret Philp', *Daily Standard*, 2 February 1935, 3. Margaret's maiden name was MacDiarmid.

59 Jessie to Isabella Mary Philp [aka 'May'], 26 May 1890, PFC.

60 Jessie to May, 2 June 1890, PFC.

61 *Telegraph*, 21 November 1890, 5.

62 Brice, 'Jessie Bannister Philp 1856–1890', in Campbell and Campbell, *The James Campbell Story*, 44.

The news of Jessie's death quickly reached her old friends in North Queensland. According to the *Townsville Herald*, Jessie:

was much beloved by the multitude of friends she had in Townsville. During a residence extending over many years the gentleness, kindly disposition, and gracious bearing of the deceased lady, her unostentatiousness and her benevolence excited universal admiration. The breaking up of 'Ellerslie', her home at Aitkenvale, and her departure with Mr Philp and her family to Brisbane ... was much regretted, and the time when she would again take up her residence in Townsville was always anticipated with the liveliest pleasure. The grief for a lady so much loved and respected is sincere and universal.⁶³

After her untimely death, Jessie's husband and the children moved into his father-in-law's residence in Kelvin Grove, where his sister-in-law Bella took care of the children. The youngest child, Helen Bannister Philp (known as Ivy), was adopted by Jessie's sister Nell and her husband, James Forsyth.⁶⁴ Something of the impact that Jessie's death had upon Robert Philp can be seen in a letter he wrote to his eldest daughter soon afterwards: 'remember May your dear mother sees and knows all your thoughts and actions. Do nothing that will displease her'.⁶⁵

Jessie Philp has generally not attracted much attention from biographers. Apart from some colourful correspondence, what we know of her is largely the cold, bare facts: Jessie Campbell married the fledgling Queensland businessman and politician Robert Philp, she enjoyed a privileged family life in Townsville and Brisbane, but died following childbirth at the early age of 34.

Still, Jessie was significant to Queensland history for a couple of reasons. First, she was a representative of a group of elite Scottish families that were highly dominant in Queensland colonial politics and business for several decades. Female correspondence and participation in social events were part of the social glue that brought Scottish families such as the Campbells, the Petries, the Scotts, the Taits, the Philps, the Munros, the MacDiarmids and the Forsyths together in Queensland and kept family ties close as these Caledonian clans intermarried and interacted in business, social life and politics.⁶⁶

63 'Death of Mrs Philp', *Townsville Herald*, 29 November 1890, 7.

64 Campbell and Campbell, *The James Campbell Story*, 21.

65 Robert Philp to Isabella May Philp, 6 January 1891, PFC.

66 It is beyond the scope of this article to account for the interconnectedness of Scottish business families in Queensland between 1860 and 1920, but the limited historiography suggests that having cultural ties in common was a source of emotional and financial support among migrant families in an unfamiliar colonial world. Stubborn cultural differences between European migrant groups, especially religious differences, influenced the Queensland Scots to retain close personal and business links with fellow Caledonians. See, for example, Patrick Buckridge, 'Robert Burns in Colonial Queensland: Sentiment, Scottishness and Universal Appeal', *Queensland Review* 16, no. 1 (2009): 69–78; Ruth Kerr, 'Love and Moffat's Store at Stanthorpe and the Beginnings of Moffat's Tin Mining Interests', *Queensland History Journal* 24, no. 6 (August 2020): 575–76; G.C. Bolton, 'Robert Philp: Capitalist as Politician' in *The Premiers of Queensland*, ed. Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2003), 6. For a broader discussion of Scottish-Australian networks in Australia in the nineteenth century, see Benjamin Wilkie, *The Scots in Australia: 1788–1938* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2018), chapter 2.

Second, without his marriage to Jessie, it is likely that Robert Philp's political career would have taken a different path. Had Philp not married Jessie, it is doubtful that he would have resided in Townsville for over a decade. As Philp wrote to Jessie in 1877, 'my work don't seem so wearisome now that I have some one to work for/ before had often the feeling to clear out and go away sometimes to the diggings'.⁶⁷ Indeed, Philp's early years in Townsville were often unhappy. He was frequently in pain from fever (probably malaria),⁶⁸ experienced a frosty reception from many local businessmen,⁶⁹ and missed his family and friends in Brisbane.⁷⁰

Undoubtedly, then, marriage and family responsibilities encouraged Philp to make his name as a merchant in North Queensland (1875–86). Representing northern electorates for nearly 3 decades (1886–1915), Philp's political identity and eventual rise to the Queensland premiership (1899–1903, 1907–08) was tied with North Queensland's development in a way it would not have been had he not married Jessie.

From carpenter's daughter to Lady Philp: Mina's story

Wilhelmina Fraser ('Mina') Munro, the second Mrs Philp, was born on 10 November 1867, a few heartbeats before her beloved twin sister Helena ('Miss Ellie'). She had 3 brothers: Edwin (b. 1865), James (1870) and Horatius Bonar, known as Horace (1878). At the time of her birth, Mina's 39-year-old Scottish-born father, John Munro, was a carpenter residing in Toowoomba. Also born in Scotland, her mother, Mary Anne, was the sister of James Campbell, the father of Jessie, the first Mrs Robert Philp. Hence Jessie and Mina were cousins, and part of the same extended family, business and social network that valued their Scottish heritage.⁷¹

67 Robert Philp to Jessie Campbell, 13 May 1877, PFC.

68 For reference to fever, see letters from Robert Philp to Jessie Campbell dated 13 May 1877, 10 June 1877 and 2 September 1877, PFC.

69 'The business people are a little jealous of me being comparatively a stranger and such a young single man they think I have no right to do so much business.' Robert Philp to Jessie Campbell, 20 May 1877, PFC.

70 Note, for example, Philp's reference to a Mr Whithall from Brisbane: 'his powers of conversation are not very good like myself but [I] always like to see anyone from Brisbane no matter who they are'. Robert Philp to Jessie Campbell, 9 September 1877, PFC. Elsewhere, Philp laments the lack of a rail link between Brisbane and Townsville: 'I would be content if I could only manage to be in Brisbane on Sunday evenings to take you home from Church'. Robert Philp to Jessie Campbell, 20 May 1877, PFC.

71 For information on this branch of the Munro family see Queensland Birth Certificates for Wilhelmina Fraser Munro (1867/C/2463), Helena (1867/C/2464) James John (1870/C/839), Horatius Bonar (1878/B/23035) and Edwin (1865/B/3737). See also 'Death of Lady Philp', *Queensland Times* (hereafter *QT*), 17 December 1940, 4; Campbell and Campbell, *The James Campbell Story*, 3.

During the early 1870s, the Munro family moved to Brisbane, where Mina's father 'had a boot shop near Spring Hill'.⁷² In a letter to her fiancé Robert Philp, Jessie Campbell describes a visit to Ipswich involving 'Mina'. Most likely this is an early mention of Wilhelmina Fraser Munro. If this assumption is correct, Jessie was making a gently mocking reference to the then 9-year-old Wilhelmina as a future social butterfly:

There are two very nice gentlemen up here very sweet on Mina, but such a flirt I never saw/ she can keep them both going. She wants the one you promised, only she says he must be as good as you [Robert Philp] or he won't do.⁷³

By 1884 Mina had developed a passion for music and dancing. She took lessons for several years with Mrs Newman, a popular Brisbane dance teacher, and performed waltzes and other steps of the day at a concert at the German Hall (South Brisbane) in 1888: 'Among the ladies whose dancing gave especial pleasure and reflected the greatest credit on their able instructress were ... the Misses Ellie and Mina Munro.'⁷⁴

During her adolescence, Mina was also a notable pupil at Mrs O'Connor's school for girls at Edward Street, Brisbane. Run by the former headmistress of Brisbane Girls' Grammar, Mrs Jane O'Connor's school emphasised both scholarship and traditional female accomplishments, including music, drawing and craft. In 1884 Mina won school prizes for grammar, writing (probably handwriting), French, 'Conduct' and 'silence'.⁷⁵ In that same year, she demonstrated her gifts as a scholar by winning the silver medal for geography when she sat for the University of Sydney Junior examination.⁷⁶

Unlike her older cousin Jessie, Wilhelmina became a teenager at a time when educational opportunities for both girls and boys in Brisbane were noticeably expanding. Boosted by overseas migration, Queensland's non-Indigenous population increased from 30,059 (1861) to 213,525 (1881).⁷⁷ This growth fostered a sense of permanent European settlement that encouraged Queensland parents to have greater expectations for their children's education, including, for a significant minority, that of their daughters. The establishment of the Brisbane Girls' Grammar School (1875) and the provision of female scholarships to grammar schools from 1876 were part of a movement by civic leaders such as former premier Charles Lilley

72 'Late Sir R. Philp', *Western Champion*, 17 November 1923, 16.

73 Jessie Campbell to Bob Philp, 31 May 1877, PFC.

74 'Mrs. Newman's Quadrille Assembly', *Queensland Figaro*, 21 April 1888, 3. See also 'Fancy Dress Ball', *Queenslander*, 22 November 1884, 827.

75 'Mrs. O'Connor's School', *Telegraph*, 22 December 1884, 5. See also Elisabeth Wheeler, 'Mrs Janet O'Connor: Educator and the Duporth School for Young Women: A Melba Connection', *Queensland History Journal* 23, no. 4 (February 2017): 255–69.

76 'University of Sydney: Junior Examinations', *Queenslander*, 13 December 1884, 964.

77 Ross Fitzgerald, Lyndon Megarrity and David Symons, *Made in Queensland: A New History* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2009), 24.

to enhance the availability of secondary education for girls in the colony. Mina's higher-than-average education for the time probably reflected her position as a member of a moderately wealthy family, as well as the growing cultural assumption that female academic achievement need not challenge the gender norms of the age.⁷⁸

Little is known of Mina's young adulthood, except that '[i]n her youth she was a member of the teaching staff of Duporth, Oxley, the school then conducted by the Misses O'Connor'.⁷⁹ Connected to the city via train, the school at Duporth (1888–1920) was the successor to Mrs O'Connor's school for girls in the city. Her daughters carried on the school after her death in 1895. As well as teaching at the school, Mina may also have taught privately. From 1893 to 1897, a 'Miss Munro' conducted 'Lessons in Music, French and Latin' at '18 Upper Edward Street'.⁸⁰

During the mid-1890s, Robert Philp would have got to know Mina as a young teacher: it is likely that she taught some of his daughters, at least 4 of whom were enrolled in Duporth at various times between 1893 and 1908.⁸¹ Isabella Mary (May), the eldest, won a scholarship in December 1892 entitling her to enrol in Brisbane Girls' Grammar School, but either she or her father decided that Duporth was the best school for her.⁸² She won many school prizes, including one for 'ladylike conduct', and subsequently passed the Sydney University Junior examination twice.⁸³

By contrast, Philp invested heavily in the education of his academically bright younger son, Robert Charles ('Charlie'), who studied at Brisbane Grammar School and King's School Parramatta, ultimately qualifying as a mining and metallurgical engineer at the Royal College of Science, South Kensington.⁸⁴ While he cared for his daughters, it is likely that he at least initially saw the schooling of girls as a means of

78 Marion Mackenzie, 'Women in Queensland Education: The Experience of First Place-getters in the Scholarship 1873–1962', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 20, no. 4 (November 2007): 139–40.

79 'Death of Lady Philp', *QT*, 17 December 1940, 4.

80 *Telegraph*, 11 July 1896, 1. See also *BC*, 20 February 1897, 1; *Telegraph*, 7 July 1894, 1; *BC*, 28 January 1893, 2. The evidence is inconclusive. On the one hand, Miss Munro's advertisements last appear in 1897, the year before Mina's marriage and new role as a homemaker. On the other, Munro was a far from uncommon surname in south-east Queensland during the 1890s.

81 There are no references in newspaper reports on the Duporth School to Helen Bannister (Ivy) Philp, adopted by James Forsyth; she may have gone to Brisbane Girls' Grammar School. See 'Sydney University: Results of Junior Examination: Successful Queenslanders', *BC*, 25 July 1907, 4. For references to Philp's daughters at Duporth, see for example 'Duporth School', *BC*, 15 December 1893, 6; 'The Misses O'Connor School', *BC*, 13 December 1901, 6; 'Duporth School, Oxley', *BC*, 15 December 1905, 5; 'Duporth School', *BC*, 15 December 1908, 6.

82 'Grammar School Scholarships', *BC*, 24 January 1893, 7.

83 'Misses O'Connor's School', *BC*, 21 December 1895, 10. The Philp Family Collection (Fryer Library, University of Queensland) holds May's 1895 and 1896 Sydney University Junior Examination certificates.

84 Entry for R.C. Philp, in *Queensland and Queenslanders* (Brisbane: Australian History Publishing, Co., 1936), 230. The elder son's education is harder to trace. Colin Philp is likely to have gone to Brisbane Grammar, but there is no conclusive evidence. In 1898, he studied at Gatton Agricultural College and later pursued a career as a pastoralist. See F.E. Lord, 'Brisbane's Historic Homes: XXV. Mallow', *Queenslander*, 24 September 1931, 35; 'Gatton Agricultural College', *BC*, 31 August 1898, 5.

providing marriageable, socially confident young women able to take their place in polite society. The annual prize-giving nights for Duporth college generally affirmed such notions:

The first part of the evening was devoted to a musical entertainment ... This was inaugurated by a grand march, which was executed with remarkable precision and effect. The deportment and the marching of the young ladies were especially striking.⁸⁵

Philp as a politician did little to advance female suffrage, believing that economic development took precedence over electoral reform.⁸⁶ Gradually, however, as the 1900s wore on, Robert Philp surprised himself by becoming an unequivocal supporter of a more public and political role for women in Queensland society. Addressing members of the Queensland Women's Electoral League in 1909, Philp argued that:

When the women of Australia learnt to use the power they possessed they could get any reasonable legislation they wanted. ... Mr. Philp dwelt upon the influence of women on the life of a nation ... He had been dubious at first as to the wisdom of allowing women to interfere in politics, but experience had convinced him that it was a good thing. They would never do anything to corrupt the politics of the State.⁸⁷



Figure 3: Robert and Mina Philp, circa 1900.

Source: State Library of Queensland.

85 'The Duporth School: Breaking Up', *BC*, 16 December 1904, 4.

86 See Megarrity, 'The Life and Times of Sir Robert Philp', 337.

87 Philp address, in 'Women as Antisocialists, Welcome to Delegates', *Telegraph*, 3 August 1909, 4.

In a sense, the above quote showed the seasoned politician sniffing the winds of change: since 1903, Queensland women of European origin had been entitled to vote in Commonwealth elections and, similarly, 1905 legislation introduced female suffrage in Queensland's state elections.⁸⁸ However, the second Mrs Philp probably influenced Philp's newfound appreciation of a wider role for women in public life beyond supporting their spouses. Aged 29 when she married Philp, Mina had lived a more independent life than Jessie and was able to use her position as the wife of a famous politician to develop a strong social standing and to further the causes she cared about.

Mina's marriage on 20 April 1898 to Robert Philp, Queensland Treasurer and Minister for Mines, naturally attracted much interest from the newspapers. Conducted by a Presbyterian minister, the wedding took place quietly at her parents' house in Brisbane. Owing to her father's illness, Mina was given away by her older brother, Edwin, and her sister, Miss Ellie, was her bridesmaid. The bride's 'lovely shower bouquet of bridal flowers was the gift of the bridegroom, as were the ruby and diamond brooch and bracelet'. The pair honeymooned in Toowoomba, Armidale and Sydney, before travelling up the coast in 'a Japanese boat to Thursday Island, stopping at all the places of interest on their way South [back to Brisbane]'.⁸⁹ After their honeymoon, Mina, Robert and the Philp children moved from Jessie's parents' house, Ballymore, to the 'Glen Olive' property in Toowong:

Mrs. Robert Philp was at home to a number of her young friends on Tuesday evening last. Dancing was entered into with much spirit, the large hall at Glen Olive giving ample room for the dancers. In fact, this charming riverside residence is particularly well adapted for entertainment purposes, and can accommodate a couple of hundred persons without undue crushing.⁹⁰

Mina had thus started her married life as she intended to continue it. Her love of social activity and entertainment marked her time as the wife of a premier and well afterwards. She enjoyed a busy round of attending 'at home' days with the wives, daughters and other relatives of the (non-Labor) political, civil service and commercial elites, many of whom—such as the Forsyths, the Campbells and the Philps—were her cousins. Robert and Mina had no children of their own, but Mina appears to have forged reasonable relationships with the children from Robert's first marriage. Assisted by her stepdaughters, she organised numerous social events at 'Mallow',⁹¹ the Toowong residence the Philps called home from 1899:

88 Fitzgerald, Megarrity and Symons, *Made in Queensland*, 67.

89 "Wedding Bells: Philp–Munro", *QT*, 23 April 1898, 6.

90 'Social Doings: Telegraph, July 16', *Week*, 22 July 1898, 4. See also 'Women's World', *BC*, 25 May 1898, 7.

91 For details of the Philp's move to Mallow, see 'Women's World', *BC*, 29 June 1899, 7.

Mrs. Robert Philp ... entertained over 100 guests at an enjoyable garden party at her residence ... The drawing room was beautiful, with red lilies, roses and wild flowers, and the dining-room and tea tables were ornamented with white flowers. Tea was also served in the garden ... Many beautiful gowns were worn.⁹²

Mina employed her flair for social organisation (and the celebrity that came with being Robert Philp's wife) to lend support to various charities. Some of these charities were connected to her membership of the Presbyterian church. For example, in 1903 she opened a fundraising event for the Queensland Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union, where, amid the cakes and sweets, 'A number of Spears from the Mission Station, Mapoon, North Queensland' were made available 'for sale'.⁹³ But Mina was also prominently involved with raising money for the Lady Lamington Hospital for Women from roughly 1900 to 1926, frequently serving as treasurer or co-vice-president of its committee (see Figure 4).⁹⁴ In 1900, she helped organise a 'Poster Fancy Dress Ball', where prominent Brisbane firms donated money for the privilege of being advertised on a prominent lady's frock or gentleman's costume:

Mrs. Robert Philp had an individuality all her own in a poster representing a large drapery firm [Chapman & Co.].⁹⁵

As honorary treasurer for the poster ball committee, Mina subsequently handed Lady Lamington, the governor's wife, a cheque for £465, 'with the earnest hope that it may be the means of placing the Women's Hospital on a solid basis to be built upon year by year, and always remain a valuable memento of the time you spent with us'.⁹⁶ Unlike Jessie, who was praised posthumously for being unostentatious, Mina's high public profile as the wife of a premier was affirmed by the press:

Mrs. Philp, by her charm of manner, the exercise of much tact, and her enthusiasm in social and charitable movements, has already achieved considerable [popularity] in a very wide circle.⁹⁷

92 'Mrs. Robert Philp's Garden Party', *BC*, 29 October 1912, 9.

93 Advertisement, *BC*, 6 August 1903, 2. See also Advertisement for a Japanese fete opened (on the second day) by Mrs Robert Philp on behalf of the Enoggera Terrace Presbyterian Church Women's Guild, *BC*, 25 May 1901, 2.

94 The last reference to Mina's involvement on the committee in the newspapers is 1926, at least in the National Library of Australia's Trove collection of digitised newspaper sources. See 'Women's Realm', *Daily Mail*, 19 October 1926, 10.

95 'Poster Ball', *Week*, 28 September 1900, 6. 'N.B. — Business Firms and others are kindly requested to forward Donation Cheques to Mrs. ROBERT PHILP, Hon. Treasurer, Toowong.' Advertisement, Poster Ball, *BC*, 19 September 1900, 2.

96 'Cheque Paid Over', *Telegraph*, 10 October 1900, 2.

97 'Hon. Robert Philp, MLA and Mrs. Philp', *Telegraph*, 1 January 1901, 7.



Figure 4: Members of the Lady Lamington Hospital Committee, 1908. Mina Philp is seated in the front row, wearing dark gloves and a white frock.

Source: State Library of Queensland.

Mina undoubtedly found pleasure in the social whirl of charity work, which gave her the opportunity to mingle with the powerful and, at least on one occasion, the legendary opera singer Nellie Melba, who in 1909 opened a 'Melba fete' in Brisbane to raise money for the Lady Lamington Hospital.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, in her own way, Mina attempted to influence political debate and decision-making. As early as 1903, she was involved in a fruitless protest by several women against a decision by the Victorian Government to flog a prisoner (Mr Purdue) whose death sentence had been commuted to 15 years imprisonment:

Twenty-one 'women of Victoria and Queensland' recently presented a petition to the [Victorian] Premier, praying that the flogging portion of the sentence on Purdue might be remitted, on the ground that 'the use of the lash is brutalising,' and that 'the physique of a youth of seventeen is unable to bear the infliction of two floggings of 15 lashes without lasting injury ...' ... The petition seems to have come from Brisbane, the first signature being that of Mina F. Philp, wife of the Queensland State Premier and the final signature that of Amy Castles, the Victorian [opera singer].⁹⁹

98 'Woman's World: Melba Fete', *BC*, 29 June 1909, 7.

99 'Pity for Purdue', *Herald* (Melbourne), 29 August 1902, 8.

In the 1910s, she campaigned for anti-Labor candidate and veteran Philp-supporter Edward H. Macartney when he successfully ran for the state seat of Toowong.¹⁰⁰ Mina was far from radical in her views, but nonetheless it is clear that she was influenced by the moral arguments of sections of the female suffrage movement, which stressed that women had a civilising influence to play within public life.¹⁰¹ During World War I, she was a member of the Australasian League of Honour, 'aimed at binding together the women and girls of the Commonwealth and Dominion in the service of God and the Empire at this time of danger'. At a packed meeting of the Queensland branch:

Mrs. R. Philp moved that those present express their approval of the aims of the Australasian League of Honour, and pledge themselves to make a special effort during the time of war to uplift, strengthen, and purify national life. This was seconded by Mrs. Merrington, and carried enthusiastically.¹⁰²

By now referred to as Lady Philp, following her husband's knighthood in 1915, Mina was heavily involved during World War I with the Toowong branch of the Red Cross, first as treasurer and later as president. She oversaw the raising of funds and clothing donations for the organisation, which, among other initiatives, set up a convalescent home for returned soldiers in Brisbane during February 1918:

The grounds are spacious ... It is proposed to commence a small poultry farm, which not only will provide the soldier inmates with ... eggs, but also will help to familiarise them with ... the many intricacies of egg production.¹⁰³

Mina also raised funds for the Australian Soldiers Repatriation Fund, the highlight being her involvement with the Allies' Garden City held at the Brisbane Botanical Gardens (December 1916 to January 1917). Collecting a net profit of £4,700, the City boasted a Charlie Chaplin lookalike, a Japanese village, sideshow alley, concert bands, Santa Claus, confetti battles and places to get a meal: 'Lady Philp has taken over the management of the Café Chantant, and will be pleased to receive donations of cakes, scones ... also volunteers to assist.'¹⁰⁴

The early 1920s must have been a difficult time of adjustment for Mina. Sir Robert Philp died in 1922, and she moved to the outlying suburb of Clayfield. Philp's eldest daughter May subsequently took over 'Mallow' as her own private residence.

100 'Lady Philp', *Queensland Figaro*, 16 January 1915, 7.

101 Mark Peel and Christina Twomey, *A History of Australia* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 120.

102 'Australasian League of Honour', *BC*, 4 August 1915, 11.

103 'Convalescent Home', *Telegraph*, 15 February 1918, 9. For Mina's role in the Toowong branch, see *Telegraph*, 28 July 1915, 8; 'Red Cross', *BC*, 21 March 1917, 8.

104 'Allies Garden City', *Telegraph*, 21 December 1916, 11. See also 'The Allies' Garden City', *QT*, 17 January 1917, 7.

'Mallow' may have held too many memories for Lady Philp, or it just might be that given that most of the furniture was from the 1880s (and chosen by the first Mrs Philp), the Toowong residence may never have really felt like 'home'.¹⁰⁵

During the interwar period, Lady Philp explored her love of literature by joining the Queensland branch of the Dickens Fellowship, as well as the Brisbane Lyceum Club, a meeting place for women interested in a range of topics such as arts, literary matters and current affairs.¹⁰⁶ As Sir Robert Philp's will had left her comparatively wealthy, she was also able to indulge her love of overseas travel.¹⁰⁷ As early as 1910, Mina had travelled with her sister to 'Banda, Java, Malay States, Japan and the Philippines',¹⁰⁸ and in the 1920s and 1930s, she took a number of extended tours, chiefly to the United Kingdom but also visiting the United States and Canada.¹⁰⁹

Sadly, her North American trip of 1929–30 was cut short by the death of her sister and travelling companion, Miss Ellie Munro. On her return to Brisbane, she was interviewed about her US experiences. While she was impressed by the supposed success of prohibition ('I did not see ten intoxicated men')¹¹⁰ and the presidency of Herbert Hoover, there was much she found lacking. The American diet seemed odd ('Coffee largely takes the place of tea ... At first ... I thought the whole population lived on lettuce');¹¹¹ the US school system suffered from a crowded curriculum 'so that ... specialisation was affected';¹¹² and while she admired the 'beautiful tenor voice' of the African-American singer Roland Hayes, the version of Handel's Messiah she heard in America did not compare with those she'd enjoyed in Brisbane ('they are not a singing nation like we are').¹¹³

Lady Mina Philp died on 15 December 1940, leaving an estate worth £26,098 to be 'shared among her relatives'.¹¹⁴ Frailness had slowed down her social life, but towards the end she was still taking an interest in current affairs, donating to the 'British Bombing Victims' Fund' and the Red Cross Society as World War II was in its early stages.¹¹⁵

105 F.E. Lord, 'Brisbane's Historic Homes: XXV. Mallow', *Queenslander*, 24 September 1931, 35.

106 'Death of Lady Philp', *QT*, 17 December 1940, 4. For the Lyceum Club, see Ruth Kerr, *Enquiring Minds: Women of the Lyceum Club Brisbane, 1919–2019* (Brisbane: Lyceum Club of Brisbane, 2019), 40.

107 Bolton, 'Robert Philp: Capitalist as Politician', 25.

108 'Social and Personal', *Telegraph*, 16 November 1910, 7.

109 'Lady Philp: Education Methods Abroad', *Telegraph*, 6 December 1930, 2; 'Lady Philp Returns from England', *Telegraph*, 30 January 1939, 11; 'Scotland's Beauty', *Telegraph*, 26 January 1935, 39.

110 'Lady Philp: Impressions of America', *Week*, 12 December 1930, 9.

111 'Lady Philp: Impressions of America', *Week*, 12 December 1930, 9.

112 'Lady Philp: Education Methods Abroad', *Telegraph*, 6 December 1930, 2.

113 'Lady Philp: Impressions of America', *Week*, 12 December 1930, 9.

114 'Lady Philp's Estate', *Evening News* (Rockhampton), 24 April 1941, 7.

115 'How the British Bombing Victims' Fund is Growing', *Telegraph*, 18 September 1940, 5; 'Red Cross Special Appeal', *Telegraph*, 13 November 1940, 16.

Conclusion

When Robert Philp gave up his position as parliamentary leader of Queensland's conservative party in 1908, a function was held in which his colleague declared:

We are not unmindful of the sacrifices Mrs. Philp has made, and we therefore ask Mr. Philp to accept, for her, a handsomely fitted dressing case.¹¹⁶

The first Mrs Philp received no such public acknowledgment of her role. Born and raised at a time when educational opportunities for young girls were limited, and married at a time when masculine culture dominated public events in Townsville and Brisbane, Jessie has largely been lost to history except for her very private letters. Mina, by contrast, was fortunate to have been born just a decade after Jessie. As a young woman, she benefited from a broader education, her husband's high profile and a growing belief, partly influenced by female suffrage, that women were entitled to a larger role in the public life of the nation than they had previously been permitted.

What a difference a decade made!

116 Harry C. Perry, *Memoirs of the Hon. Sir Robert Philp K.C.M.G. 1851–1922* (Brisbane: Watson, Ferguson & Co. Ltd, 1923), 264.

Sarah Bellamy, the women transported to Botany Bay, biographical genres and the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*¹

MELANIE NOLAN, CHRISTINE FERNON AND REBECCA KIPPEN

Surely using different kinds of sources results in different kinds of writing? Of course it is a matter of degree with both imagination and empirical research informing novels and biography on a continuum: sometimes novelists research and historians sometimes imagine. Charlotte Brontë's novel *Shirley* (1849) was based on her research of the *Leeds Mercury* newspaper of 1814 to 1816.² Some historians, while wary of crossing genres and writing fiction, have no problem using contemporary historical literature. Thomas Carlyle wrote a novel in 1836 before writing biographies of great male leaders and lesser ones on his friends and relatives.³ Certainly, different kinds of biography tend to rest more heavily on different kinds of sources. Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Lucy Frost observed that convict biography based on fragmentary and biased sources involves epistemological concerns:

The intellectual challenge faced by anyone who was to narrate convict lives is epistemological; what meanings can we legitimately attach to documents (textual or material) which are the source for knowing the past? How can we narrate the lives of people long dead? [... as] a conceptual problem, the issue is highly complex and theoretical.⁴

This has not dissuaded the writing of convict biography. Prosaically, historians tend to use mixed methods considering multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions and standpoints, and both qualitative and quantitative sources.⁵ They tend

1 We thank Matt Cunneen and Nichola Garvey and the anonymous referees for their comments on an earlier draft; and Jenni Bird for her advice.

2 Melanie Nolan, 'Industrialisation', in *A Companion to Women's Historical Writing*, ed. Mary Spongberg, Barbara Caine and Ann Curthoys (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 256. See also Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1966, f.p. 1857), 378.

3 Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (1836); the novel was first published as a serial in *Fraser's Magazine* in November 1833 to August 1834.

4 Lucy Frost and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, 'Introduction', in *Chain Letters: Narrating Convict Lives*, ed. Lucy Frost and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 4, cited by Jenni Bird, 'Reconstructing a Convict Life: Archives, Fragmentary Evidence and Convict History', unpublished PhD thesis draft, ch. 1, n.p.

5 Johnson R. Burke, Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Lisa A. Turner, 'Towards a Definition of Mixed Methods Research', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1, no. 2 (2007): 113.

‘to triangulate’ or use multiple methods and data sources in their research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena.⁶ The biography of the ‘First Fleeter’ Sarah Bellamy and how the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB) deals with biographical genres more generally are cases in point.

Bellamy was born about 1770 and died in 1843. Her entry in *Wikipedia* notes that she was ‘one of the longest-living first fleeters’ of those who left England in 1787 and arrived in Botany Bay in 1788.⁷ However, as we shall see, being among the long-lived first fleeters is only one of her claims to fame and, even then, a number of former convicts lived longer in the colony than her.⁸ In the past she fell between categories of the ADB in terms of her significance or representativeness. She was not included in the 2 colonial volumes published in 1966 and 1967.⁹ More surprising, perhaps, given reference to her life in subsequent historiography, as is described below, she was not included in the ADB’s ‘missing persons’ volume, published in 2005.¹⁰ So, currently, Bellamy’s common-law husband James Bloodworth has an ADB entry.¹¹ Arthur Bowes-Smyth, the surgeon on the First Fleet transport on which she travelled, has an entry in the ADB.¹² Bellamy soon will have one. She is at the centre of a number of ADB revision and research projects, as well as the dictionary’s emerging interest in prosopography.¹³ Her story provides an opportunity to discuss both biographical genres as well as how

6 Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, eds, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory* (Manchester: Manchester Unity Press, 1999), 236.

7 ‘Sarah Bellamy’, *Wikipedia*, accessed 1 September 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Bellamy.

8 John Cobley, *The Crimes of the First Fleet Convicts* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson 1982), 22, noted that in 1828 Sarah was one of at least 19 women of the First Fleet who were still alive.

9 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 1, A–H (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966) and *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 2, I–Z (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967).

10 Christopher Cunneen with Jill Roe, Beverley Kingston and Stephen Garton, eds, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Supplement 1580–1980* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2005).

11 Morton Herman, ‘Bloodworth, James ([c.1759]–1804)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography online*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University (hereafter *ADB online*), www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A010112b.htm, published first in hardcopy 1966. The surname was spelt variously as Bloodworth and Bloodworth contemporarily, but descendants are all Bloodworth. We have decided to refer to him as Bloodworth in this article.

12 ‘Smyth, Arthur Bowes (1750–1790)’, *ADB online*, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/smyth-arthur-bowes-2674, published first in hardcopy 1967.

13 For a discussion of the wider revision project of the ADB, see Melanie Nolan, ‘Who Deserves to be in the Australian Dictionary of Biography?’, *The Conversation*, 7 April 2011, theconversation.edu.au/profiles/melanie-nolan-183; Melanie Nolan, ‘Missing in Action’, *Inside Story*, 16 March 2017, insidestory.org.au/missing-in-action; and Melanie Nolan, ‘Time to Revise Entries’, *ANU Reporter* 49, no. 3 (Spring 2018): 60, reporter.anu.edu.au/time-revise-entries; Paul Daley, ‘Decolonising the Dictionary: Reclaiming Australian History for the Forgotten’, *Guardian*, 17 February 2019, theguardian.com/books/2019/feb/17/decolonising-the-dictionary-reclaiming-history-for-the-forgotten; Frank Bongiorno, ‘Reframing Australian Portraits’, *Meanjin*, Winter 2019, meanjin.com.au/essays/reframing-australian-portraits/; Shino Konishi, ‘Redressing the Imbalance of Representation in the Australian Dictionary of Biography’, University of Western Australia, www.uwa.edu.au/projects/indigenous-biography-project; Shino Konishi, ‘An Indigenous Australian Dictionary of Biography’, in “*True Biographies of Nations?*” *The Cultural Journey of Dictionaries of National Biography*, ed. Karen Fox (Canberra: ANU Press, 2019), 139–58, doi.org/10.22459/TBN.2019; Georgina Arnott, ‘Links in the Chain: Legacies of British Slavery in Australia’, *Australian Book Review*, no. 423 (August 2020), www.australianbookreview.com.au/abr-online/current-issue/author/15126-georginaarnott. All websites accessed 24 August 2020.

the *ADB*—an eminent work in itself—is changing. The *ADB* is often described as a monumental piece of scholarship: the largest and most successful cooperative research enterprise in the humanities and social sciences in Australia. More than 13,000 concise biographies of significant and representative Australians, who died prior to 1996, have been written by historians and other scholars, and published by the *ADB* over the last 60 years. The *ADB* went online in July 2006. It is now more than the book online, and is contributing to new approaches to biography, including prosopographical projects and group biographies as well as concise biographical essays on subjects previously overlooked. Indeed, the *ADB* is in the process of being revised to reflect more contemporary and nuanced understandings of the past in regard to Indigenous, women and working-class biography.¹⁴ One of our major projects, the ‘First Three Fleets and Their Families’ project focus is the 4,500 or so people who set off in the first 3 fleets to New South Wales between 1787 and 1791. It examines how those who survived the journey ‘remade’ their lives in the infant colony. The project is also investigating how their children and grandchildren fared. Records for all the fleeters and their families are being added to the National Centre of Biography’s (NCB) People Australia website.¹⁵ The NCB has also initiated a Colonial Women revision project to increase the number of women in the *ADB* who ‘flourished’ in the colonies before 1901. Bellamy has found a place in both projects. A consideration of the issues of genres and the sources and ways of writing a life such as Sarah Bellamy’s is proxy for all the women convicts transported to Botany Bay on the First Fleet.

Unthinkable history? Only fictional accounts?

Few women convicts were included in the first 2 volumes of the *ADB* that covered the period 1788 to 1850. Owing to the contemporary dearth of records, Bellamy and the lives of other women transported from England to arrive in Botany Bay in January 1788 have been described as ‘unthinkable history’.¹⁶ These women were regarded as voiceless: without diaries, letters or even records of their statements at court. For instance, one of the students that Nolan and Kippen are supervising has estimated, from the trial records of Old Bailey, London, that a group of convict women on the Second Fleet ship *Neptune* only spoke on average 46 words, or 2 or 3 sentences, in their own defence. They ranged from only 5 words to 130 at most.¹⁷

14 David Andrew Roberts, “‘The ‘Knotted Hands That Set Us High’: Labour History and the Study of Convict Australia’, *Labour History*, no. 100 (May 2011): 33–50, discusses ‘disciplinary silos’ in regard to convict history.

15 People Australia, at: peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/.

16 Joan Contessa Phillip, ‘Sarah Bellamy of Belbroughton Parish: A Poor Prisoner Speaks With Her Own Breath’, ch. 14 in ‘The Dream—Or, An Unthinkable History Written in Memory of Women Transported to Botany Bay 1787–1788’ (PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 2008), 328–58.

17 For instance, Old Bailey Records, 9 September 1789, The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674–1913, www.oldbaileyonline.org/, cited by Nichola Garvey, ‘Second Fleet Women, First-Rate Survivors’, unpublished PhD draft.

Of course men had only a few more words recorded in court proceedings than women and were thus similarly without voice. Of the First Fleet women, 53.7 per cent were sentenced at the Old Bailey, London.¹⁸ In Bellamy's case there are not even verbatim records of the Assizes session at which she was sentenced. She left no writing and we have no image of her except the report of her long red hair. The extent of description possible for convict women was considered too thin in the 1960s when the *ADB* entries on the period of transportation were written. Surely there is only so much we can say about some people?

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not be precluded from residing therein
 having been her only place of abode
 Since her Arrival in this Colony

And your Petitioner as in duty
 bound will ever pray &c. &c. &c.

N^o 4. O'Connell's Street
 Sydney New South Wales }
 Dec^r 1824

Sarah + Bellamy
 her Mark -

Lest to be made out a
 year of Probation and after
 the death of her son John
 Blackstock

Figure 1: Sarah Bellamy's mark X on a petition written on her behalf to the Governor, December 1824.

Source: NSW State Archives, NRS 899, Fiche 3077, Item 4/1836A, No. 56, pp. 245–48, NSWSA, Kingswood.

18 Data source: *People Australia: First Fleet (1788) Convict Women*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University (hereafter NCB-ANU), 2020, peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/biographies/search/?query=event%3A%22First+Fleet+%281788%29%22+occf%3A%22convict%22+gender%3A%22Female%22.

This view is now being contested. In 1988 Paul Carter teased out the concept of the unthinkable history of those transported:

To draw attention to the lost history of the convicts is to engage in a genuinely dialectical activity: it not only reflects critically on the dominant historical tradition, but also gives the convicts a place within it, a place from which to speak and be heard. To have let the convicts speak for themselves would have been to entertain the unthinkable: mutiny, another history.¹⁹

Given that perhaps only their social contexts might be re-created for these voiceless women, perhaps we need to move beyond the methods normally employed, as Annette Gordon-Reed has described it, creatively ‘in order to piece together what they can to defeat the archives’ silence’.²⁰ We need to reimagine the depiction of the women in official records. One option is to adopt fiction writing.²¹ Indeed, Bellamy has been the subject of 2 fictional accounts. Mary Maclaren has written a number of accounts of the women of the First Fleet including *Elizabeth’s New Life* (2011) in which Bellamy and others in her life (James Bloodworth and James Meredith) appear.²² Joan Contessa Phillip has resorted to what she has described as the poetics of fiction and ficto-history—a hybrid methodology using both the archives and imagination—to write a narrative.²³ She argued that this overcame the ‘incompleteness of [the] records, their silences and partialities, the forensic reading required to contextualize them, the perspective from which the [masculinist and middle-class] narrative is told’.²⁴ A chapter of her 2009 PhD thesis is devoted to ‘Sarah Bellamy of Belbroughton—A Poor Prisoner Speaks With Her Own Breath’, most of which is made up. Writing the lives of convicts is an experiment in extending the boundaries of academic remembering. Not surprisingly, fiction or faction has been the subject of some controversy among historians.²⁵ Could we write a great work of fiction on Bellamy? We could, but we argue here that her historical records are relatively rich.²⁶ Indeed, when one dwells on it, the quality and quantity of records that survive for her

19 Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (Faber and Faber, 1988), 295.

20 Annette Gordon-Reed, review of *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*, by Saidiya Hartman, *The New York Review of Books*, 22 October 2020.

21 Kate Grenville, *The Secret River* (Sydney: Text Publishing, 2005).

22 Mary Maclaren, *The Four Elizabeths* (Broadbeach Waters, Qld: Arem Storycrafters, 1993); and Mary Maclaren, *Elizabeth’s New Life* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2011).

23 Phillip, ‘Sarah Bellamy of Belbroughton Parish’, v.

24 Lynette Russell, ‘The Instrument Brings on Voices’, *Meanjin* 60, no. 3 (2001): 142–51.

25 For a discussion on keeping the boundaries between history and fiction that Kate Grenville’s *The Secret River* engendered, see Inga Glenndinen, ‘The History Question. Who Owns the Past?’, *Quarterly Essay*, no. 23 (2006): 1–72. See also ‘The History Question. Response to Correspondence’, *Quarterly Essay*, no. 25 (2007): 73–77; Mark McKenna, ‘Writing in the Past’, *Australian Financial Review*, 16 December 2005, 16 (republished in Drusilla Modjeska, ed., *Best Australian Essays 2006* [Melbourne: Black Inc., 2006]). For a wider discussion, see Sarah Pinto, ‘History, Fiction and the Secret River’, in *Lighting Dark Places: Essays on Kate Grenville*, ed. Sue Kossew (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), 179–98; Kate Grenville, ‘The History Question. Response’, *Quarterly Essay*, no. 25 (2007): 66–72.

26 For a discussion of constructing lives through fragments, see Annemarie McLaren, ‘Reading the Entangled Life of Goggey, an Aboriginal Man on the Fringes of Early Colonial Sydney’, *Ethnohistory* 65, no. 3 (July 2018): 489–515; Bird, ‘Reconstructing a Convict Life’, draft ch. 1.

life are atypical for a First Fleet woman convict. Of course successful male convicts like Henry Kable and James Underwood have a raft of land, property and business records; she has relatively rich and revealing records of when she deals with the government, such as court cases and petitions. Her contacts—voluntary and otherwise—with the courts, government officials are considerably more informative than most. As a consequence, aspects of Bellamy's life have been used by a raft of historians to write biography, prosopography, group biography, as well as fiction.

The first biographical account was written after two of Bellamy's great-great-granddaughters, Alice and Ula Clarke, went to Belbroughton, the small Worcestershire village of their ancestor's birth. The Clarkes interested Madge Gibson, the Belbroughton History Society archivist, in Bellamy's story. They provided her with 'background information on both Sarah Bellamy and the Bloodworth family, together with transcripts of documents from Australian archives' that Gibson used with Public Record Office and Worcester Record Office material to publish a biographical account in 1987.²⁷ The Clarkes and the Bloodworth Association, comprising family descendants, provided financial assistance.²⁸ The 1987 biography was expanded into a more detailed account of Sarah's family and life by the Wolverhampton University reader in criminal justice history David J. Cox and Gibson (now Vaughan), in 2014.²⁹ A United Kingdom family history website, *TheGenealogist*, recently featured Bellamy in an article on using Worcestershire parish records.³⁰ Similarly, historians and historical demographers are using convict records and collective biography to write the lives of a range of female convicts like Bellamy. Biographical details of the women who were transported on the same ship as Bellamy, the *Lady Penhryn*, are now online on *People Australia* and Bellamy's life can be contextualised within her cohort by using prosopographical methods in relation to wider demographic surveys. Furthermore, a number of historians have considered her as part of collective or group biography and aspects of her life are well known. For instance, she appeared in Robert Hughes's *The Fatal Shore* (1988) and Thomas Keneally's *The Commonwealth of Thieves* (2005) and *Australians* (2009) as a representative First Fleet woman either in terms of being

27 Madge Gibson, *Belbroughton to Botany Bay: The Story of a Worcestershire Girl's Transportation to Australia on the First Fleet and Her Life in the New Colony* (Belbroughton: Belbroughton History Society, 1987).

28 Mrs Nellie Blanche Sansom OAM, née Clarke (1913–2014), a Bloodworth descendant, formed the Bloodworth Association in the early 1980s. Nell Sansom, Bloodworth and Lee Papers, Monograph Series One (Brisbane: Social Histories Societies, 1982). See also Alice Clarke, 'James Bloodworth: First Fleeter (1759–1804)' [Speech at dedication of the plaque of James Bloodworth, 27 March 1988, Sydney Town Hall], *Journal of the Fellowship of First Fleeters* 19, no. 3 (May/June 1988): 4–5, accessed 5 October 2020, www.fellowshipfirstfleeters.org.au/founders/1988newsletter19i3.pdf. Research file on James Bloodworth, including copies of correspondence, research notes and photographs relating to his career as an early convict builder in Sydney, Papers of the Bloodworth family 1931–1987, MS 7975, National Library of Australia.

29 Madge Vaughan and David J. Cox, *From Belbroughton to Botany Bay: The Story of a Worcestershire Girl's Transportation on the First Fleet and Her Life in the New Colony* (Kingswinford: Dulston Press/Belbroughton History Society, 2014). The authors are grateful to Dave Cox for sending us a copy of this publication.

30 'Worcestershire Parish Records Trace Family Events Back through the Centuries ... Teenager Transported to Australia', *TheGenealogist*, 3 July 2020, accessed 1 September 2020, www.thegenealogist.co.uk/featuredarticles/2020/worcestershire-parish-records-trace-family-events-back-through-the-centuries-1272/.

a poor country adolescent convict or living with a fellow convict.³¹ She is an example in their wider arguments. Alan Atkinson, however, puts the First Fleet women, and Bellamy in particular, at the centre of his account of the *Europeans in Australia* (2016), something we will return to.³²

We cannot write a full ‘cradle to grave’ account of Bellamy’s life or one that considers her inner life. Yet if we use all these biographical methods—biographical, prosopographical, demographic, collective biography—as well as a judicious and carefully considered use of fiction, her personality emerges in Australian history. Indeed, what is history if it is not drawing from the richest range of sources to write and contextualise a coherent account?

Biography and the single convict case: Sarah Bellamy (1770–1843)

Bellamy was the sixth of 8 children of Elizabeth Bellamy, née Staunton, and her husband Richard Bellamy.³³ She was baptised in the local Holy Trinity Church, Belbroughton, Worcestershire on 3 February 1770.³⁴ Richard suffered ill-health and the family was poor and partly reliant upon parish charity.³⁵ Until 1779, the family lived in rooms in parish accommodation.³⁶

Sarah was a child apprentice. On 7 February 1779, as a 9-year-old, she began work at the Malt House Farm, known as Bell Inn. She was contracted, probably until aged 21 or marriage, to one of the Overseers of the Poor, James Spurrier of Bell Inn, in general domestic duties, including cottage industries and farm chores and presumably dyeing and spinning. At 15 the parish arranged a place for her with a Mr and Mrs Benjamin

31 See, for example, Helen Heney, *Australia's Founding Mothers* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 57; Don Chapman, *1788, the People of the First Fleet* (North Ryde, NSW: Cassell Australia, 1981), 43; Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: A History of the Transportation of Convicts to Australia, 1787–1868* (London: Folio Society, 1988), 247; Thomas Keneally, *The Commonwealth of Thieves* (North Sydney: Penguin Random House, 2006, f.p. 2005), 29–31, 54, 68, 70, 76, 99, 123, 136, 164, 234–35; and Thomas Keneally, *Australians Origins to Eureka* (Crows News, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2009), 59, 65.

32 Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia*, vol. 1, *The Beginning* (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2016).

33 Gibson, *Belbroughton to Botany Bay*, 4. Elizabeth Staunton married Richard Bellamy on 16 November 1755 and their children were: Thomas (1856), Mary (1859), Elizabeth (1861), John (1766), Margaret (1767), Sarah (1770), Phebe (1775) and Richard (1776).

34 Staunton-Bellamy Marriage and Children's Baptisms: *Belbroughton Parish Register* (Microfilm 20/1), Worcester Library and History Centre, Trinity Street, Worcester; *Belbroughton Parish Register, Baptisms, 1739–1800*, Vol. 3, Worcester History Centre, Microfilm Ref: X988.52 cited by Phillip, ‘Sarah Bellamy of Belbroughton Parish’, 333.

35 Belbroughton Vestry Minutes records, Gibson, *Belbroughton to Botany Bay*.

36 Gibson (*Belbroughton to Botany Bay*, 4) identified the red brick dwellings, houses 4 and 8, Queens Hill, which were let ‘to the overseers of the poor of Belbroughton and occupied by paupers of the said parish’ and in which the Bellamys lived. In addition to housing, the family received regular payments from the parish 1774–76; and also ‘linnen and necessities during their illness of the small pox’, 10 June 1769; ‘necessities so that [Elizabeth] may go clean into the infirmary’, 5 July 1772; as well as recording ‘Richard Bellamy be relieved discretionally’, 2 May 1773. Belbroughton Vestry Minutes (1769–1776), County Record Office, Worcester.

Hadon, weavers in Dudley, a few miles distant across the Staffordshire border. Hadon had bought a fourth loom for Sarah to use but was in financial difficulties and later appeared before the Summer Assizes on a bankruptcy charge. Not long after engaging her, it seems that Hadon had overextended and had to dismiss Sarah. In response to losing her apprenticeship, on 29 May 1785, she committed grand larceny: she was charged with the theft of a small fortune, including golden guineas and promissory notes (which she could not have read), to the value of £31 10s. 8p., from the Hadons.³⁷ The state-appointed judge at the Summer Assizes held at Worcester, Baron Beaumont Hotham, convicted her for the theft on 9 July 1785 and sentenced her to be exiled to the colonies under the 1718 Transportation Act rather than to be 'hanged by the neck'.³⁸ She pleaded to be 'publicly whipped on two successive market days' and not to be transported but her pleas were ignored.



Figure 2: 'Entrance of Port Jackson 27 January 1788': The arrival of the First Fleet, including the *Lady Penrhyn*, at Port Jackson. Watercolour by William Bradley.

Source: State Library of NSW: William Bradley drawings from his journal 'A Voyage to New South Wales' (ca 1802).

37 Indictment of Sarah Bellamy, Worcestershire Summer Assizes, 1785, ASSI 105/36, value of theft was 630 shillings, cited by Gibson, *Belbroughton go Botany Bay*, 6.

38 Philip, 'Sarah Bellamy of Belbroughton Parish', 356, argued that 'If Sarah had faced an Old Bailey court she would surely have hanged'. However, Vaughan and Cox (*From Belbroughton to Botany Bay*, 23) point out that convicted felons who faced the death penalty were standardly given the opportunity (by means of a Royal Pardon) for their sentence to be commuted to transportation.

Bellamy embarked on the First Fleet ship the *Lady Penrhyn* at Gravesend on 31 January 1787 after spending almost 2 years in gaol—this was not an unusual amount of time for first fleters, many had spent between 3 and 5 years in gaols and hulks before being transported. The *Lady Penrhyn* had been built as a 2-deck slave ship on the Thames in 1786 and was designed to hold 275 slaves but it was converted to transport convicts. Bellamy found herself among the 106 female and 2 male convicts, 8 children, 37 crew and 23 marines and their families who set sail for New South Wales in May 1787.³⁹ Arthur Phillip, commander of the First Fleet, noted that the women boarding the *Lady Penrhyn* were ‘almost naked and so very filthy’ and diseased, and that the ship’s surgeons had to first contain an outbreak of ‘gaol fever’ or typhus.⁴⁰ Arthur Bowes-Smyth, the ship’s surgeon, recorded Bellamy’s details in his inventory of convicts in his journal, noting her name, crime, trade and the term of years for which she was transported: ‘Sarah Bellamy, a servant, aged 17, sentenced for seven years for privately stealing.’⁴¹ Shortly before reaching Botany Bay, Sarah’s son, Joseph Downey the younger, appeared on the ship’s muster.⁴² David Cox has argued that the child’s appearance in this record means it is likely that Sarah and the child’s father, named as Joseph Downey, the *Lady Penrhyn*’s quartermaster, consummated their liaison either while the ship was still at Gravesend or shortly after it had arrived at Portsmouth.⁴³ The voyage took 252 days (36 weeks) to reach Botany Bay. The baby was baptised on 10 February 1788, died and was buried on 29 February, likely becoming the first European child interred in Australia.⁴⁴ Downey senior sailed on with the *Lady Penryhn* on 5 May 1788, which took on a cargo of Chinese tea from Canton on the voyage back to England.⁴⁵

Bellamy was assigned a 2-room hut on the east side of the Tank Stream and served as housekeeper to a naval officer, Lieutenant William Faddy, and, later, as a weaver. Her common-law husband from late 1789 was James Bloodworth, who had been sentenced on 3 October 1785 at Esher, Surrey, to 7 years transportation for the theft of a game cock and 2 hens. He arrived in New South Wales aboard the *Charlotte* and was the only convict listed as a bricklayer, so Governor Phillip immediately

39 Worcester Summer Assize Records, July 1785 (TNA ASSI 5/105 pts. 2 & 3), cited by Vaughan and Cox, *From Belbroughton to Botany Bay*, 18.

40 Letter from Governor Phillip to Under Secretary Nepean, 18 March 1787, Historical Records of New South Wales (Sydney: Charles Potter Government Printer, 1892), 59, archive.org/stream/historicalrecord1pt2sidnuoft/historicalrecord1pt2sidnuoft_djvu.txt, accessed 1 September 2020.

41 Paul Fiddlon and R.J. Ryan, eds, *The Journal of Arthur Bowes-Smyth: Surgeon, Lady Penrhyn, 1787–1789* (Sydney: Australian Documents Library, 1979), 17.

42 Mollie Gillen, *The Founders of Australia: A Biographical Dictionary of the First Fleet* (Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1989), 108; Vyvyan Brendon, *Children at Sea: Lives Shaped by the Waves* (Philadelphia: Pen and Sword, 2020), 19–20.

43 David J. Cox, *Crime in England 1688–1815* (London: Routledge, 2014), 146, fn. 51. See also Vaughan and Cox, *From Belbroughton to Botany Bay*.

44 New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate, Joseph Downey, 80 V4, 29 February 1788, copy issued 14 October 2020; Vaughan and Cox, *From Belbroughton to Botany Bay*, 33.

45 Brendon, *Children at Sea*, 20.

appointed him master bricklayer. Bloodworth found a source of clay, supervised the making and burning of the first bricks, in makeshift kilns, in the wooden moulds bought out from England with the fleet, and organised the collecting of oyster shells to grind up for lime for mortar.⁴⁶ The couple would likely have met when Sarah was transferred from Worcester Castle Gaol to Southwark. By 1790 Bloodworth had built Sarah a brick cottage.

Before this, however, on 1 August 1789, Bellamy was assaulted in the hut she shared with a child, by Captain James Meredith of the marines and Mr Kiltie, master of HMS *Sirius*.⁴⁷ Meredith was in a drunken state, which apparently was not unusual for him at the time, and had, by standing on Kiltie's shoulders, tried to climb through Bellamy's window under which she was sleeping. Meredith beat the resisting Sarah about the head and face. The melee attracted the convict night watch and Meredith ordered Sarah to the guard house charged with disturbing the peace. Sarah was recorded at her trial as having:

Resolved in her own breath [that she would not] 'put up with such unmerited treatment' from Captain Meredith or anyone else. These were Sarah's words to Judge Advocate Collins: she had at last stepped from the control of that ambiguous word, poor.⁴⁸

Supported by strong convict witnesses, namely Matthew Everingham, who later became a respectable settler, and the nightwatchman John Harris, the 6 men of the services headed by the Judge Advocate dismissed the charge of disturbing the peace. Sarah, perhaps wisely, did not bring charges against Meredith or Kiltie.⁴⁹

Bloodworth was emancipated in 1790 for exemplary conduct, making him the second convict to be pardoned. In September 1791 he was appointed superintendent of all bricklayers. He was largely responsible for the design and erection of Australia's first buildings. 'There is not a house or building which did not owe something to him,' wrote Judge Advocate David Collins. That included the first Government House. In 1792 the governor offered him a return passage to England, but the emancipist declined. About 29 per cent of the First Fleet men left the colony after their sentence had expired (compared to only 17 per cent of First Fleet women).⁵⁰ Bloodworth and Bellamy did not marry perhaps because he had left a wife, Jane Marks, whom he had married on 9 December 1782, and 4 children, in England when he was transported for stealing poultry.⁵¹ Together

46 Herman, 'Bloodsworth, James'.

47 Maclaren describes it as attempted rape, *Elizabeth's New Life*.

48 Gillen, *Founders of Australia*, 32.

49 For James Meredith's other misdemeanours in Botany Bay, the court martial which decided in his favour in 1792 and his later career in the marines, see 'James Meredith. Captain Lieutenant of Marines, 24th (Plymouth) Company', Fellowship of First Fleeters, accessed 16 September 2020, www.fellowshipfirstfleeters.org.au/jamesmeredith.htm.

50 *People Australia: First Fleet (1788) Convict Women*, NCB-ANU, 2020.

51 Vaughan and Cox, *From Belbroughton to Botany Bay*, 43.

they had 8 children of whom 4 died in infancy.⁵² They lived comfortably, owing to James's £50 annual salary. Bloodworth started his own building business. They were granted land at Petersham, with 50 acres to James (Bloodworth Farm) and 20 to Sarah (Bellamy Farm); they increased their holding by buying a further 200 acres. Here they cleared land, sowed wheat and maize, raised hogs and kept some horses, while James continued as superintendent of bricklayers. Bellamy's family gained a respectable reputation throughout the new colony.⁵³ In 1802 Bloodworth was made a sergeant in Sydney's Loyal Association, a mark of respect to a former convict. The association was made up of 200 volunteers recruited from citizens as a reserve or Home Guard, whose function it was to quell rebellions that may have broken out among the many convicts at liberty or as ticket of leavers, who were increasing in number.

When he died of pneumonia in 1804, Bloodworth was given a public funeral. The Sydney Loyal Association escorted the cortege with muffled drums and the body was laid in the town cemetery with military honours.⁵⁴ When he died, his estate was virtually also insolvent and the next phase in Sarah's life was about to begin—as a 35-year-old single mother with 4 dependent children,⁵⁵ the youngest being only 3 years old. As sole executrix, Sarah paid off debts of £350. For instance she sold 2 land grants for £50.⁵⁶ Governor Philip Gidley King secured her house in South Street by putting it in the name of her 14-year-old son James. Sarah lived there with her children without ever marrying or re-partnering. She rented her kitchen and an adjoining room to Jeremiah Cavanaugh, an Irish convict, in return for his teaching her youngest children, George (1796), Ann (1798) and Elizabeth (1802), to read.⁵⁷ She received her certificate of emancipation on 23 February 1811. In 1823 she successfully petitioned the colonial secretary, Frederick Goulburn, for the release of her son-in-law, the ticket-of-leave holder and shoemaker Robert Carver, husband of her daughter Elizabeth, who had been, she alleged, falsely accused of 'breaking and entering, and stealing' and had been sent to Port Macquarie to continue his original life sentence.⁵⁸ The family was in dire economic circumstances. He was released in 1824.⁵⁹

52 James (1790–1857), John (1792–1793), Robert (1795–1795), George (1796–1840), Ann Bray (1798–1875), Elizabeth (1800–1802), Elizabeth (1802–1871), Charlotte (1804–1804), 'Bloodworth, Sarah (1770–1843)', People Australia, accessed 1 September 2020, peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/biography/bloodworth-sarah-24919/text33469.

53 Quoted by Brendon, *Children at Sea*, 20.

54 Herman, 'Bloodworth, James'.

55 See notices in *Sydney Gazette and NSW Herald*, for instance, 24 June, 28 October and 9 December 1804.

56 'Andrew Fishburn', www.fellowshipfirstfleeters.org.au/andrewfishburn.htm accessed 13 October 2020.

57 Gillen, *Founders of Australia*, 32.

58 Petition by Robert Carver's mother-in-law, Sarah Bellamy, for mitigation of his sentence, 4 February 1823, NRS 900, Fiche 3230, Item 4/1869, p. 21, New South Wales State Archives (NSWSA), Kingswood; Letter from Colonial Secretary Frederick Goulburn to Captain Allman, Commandant of Port Macquarie, 21 July 1823, NRS 939, Reel 6019, Item 4/3864, p. 60, NSWSA, Kingswood.

59 Petition of Elizabeth Carver for the mitigation of the sentence of her husband Robert Carver, 17 May 1824, NRS 897, Reel 6061, Item 4/1779, p. 88, NSWSA, Kingswood.

Meanwhile, Sarah had faced a further downturn in her living conditions. In 1824 Sarah's oldest son, James junior, by then 34 years old and a qualified shipwright, claimed Sarah's house in O'Connell Street as his own and ordered Sarah and his sister Elizabeth to leave. Sarah petitioned the governor to intercede and provide an equal division among the 4 children, allowing her to live in the house until her death, but without success. Bellamy signed her petition to the governor, dated December 1824, with her 'X' mark.⁶⁰ She was recorded as a washerwoman in the 1825 muster and living at Sarah Burgis's house in the 1828 census. She died at her daughter Elizabeth's house at Lane Cove on 24 February 1843, her cause of death unspecified but thought to be of natural causes. She was buried 2 days later at the Devonshire Street cemetery and was then later, it is believed, transferred to Botany Cemetery 6 decades later when exhumed remains were relocated to other cemeteries across Sydney to make way for the new Central Station. Sarah was survived by 3 children.⁶¹

In May 1987, the Belbroughton Historical Society unveiled a memorial plaque commemorating Bellamy's transportation on the *Lady Penrhyn* as part of the 200th celebration of the sailing of the First Fleet.

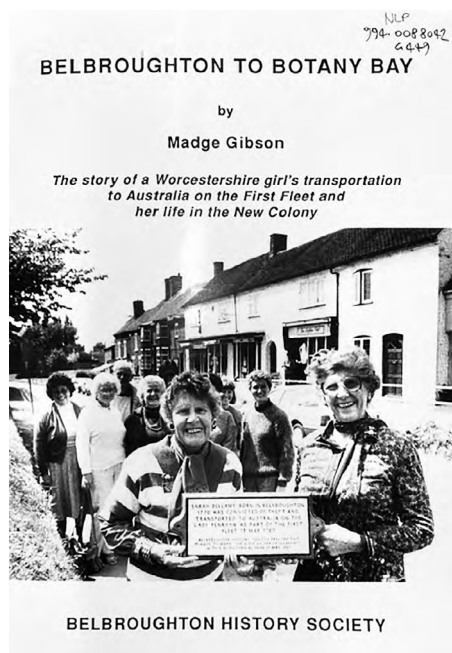


Figure 3: Bellamy's great-great-great-granddaughters, Alice and Ula Clarke, in Belbroughton to lay the commemoration plaque, 1987.

Source: Cover of Madge Gibson, *Belbroughton to Botany Bay* (1987).

60 Petition of Sarah Bellamy to the Governor, December 1824, NRS 899, Fiche 3077, Item 4/1836A, No. 56, pp. 245–48, NSWSA, Kingswood.

61 Gillen, *Founders of Australia*, 32; Rhonda Brownlow, *Descendants of Bloodsworth, James and Sarah Bellamy* (Kirrawee, NSW: Rhonda Brownlow, 2003).



Figure 4: The plaque honouring Sarah Bellamy at Belbroughton.

Source: Vaughan and Cox, *From Belbroughton to Botany Bay*, 54.

Prosopography: Putting Sarah into her demographical place

Such are the biographical details of Sarah's life, sparse but considerably more informative than for most other women who were transported during the early years of the colony. Historical demography, though, can add considerable detail, particularly of context, to gain a more complete picture of Sarah's life, times and even emotional experience. Historians have been analysing statistics in regard to convicts since Leslie Lloyd Robson's *The Convict Settlers of Australia* (1965) set out to establish 'Who were the Convicts'.⁶² Mostly, convict character has been considered but increasingly there has been more general consideration of convicts' life history.⁶³ Two major lexicons or biographical dictionaries have been published: Mollie Gillen's *The Founders of Australia* (1989) and Michael Flynn's *The Second Fleet* (1993).⁶⁴ Prosopography is the investigation of the common characteristics of a historical group of people and it is often based on biographical lexicons. About 80,000 convicts were transported to New South Wales between 1788 and 1842 (85 per cent were

62 L. L. Robson, *The Convict Settlers of Australia* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1965).

63 S. Nicholas, ed., *Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia's Past* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

64 Gillen, *Founders of Australia*; Michael Flynn, *The Second Fleet: Britain's Grim Convict Armada of 1790* (Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1993).

men and 15 per cent were women). One challenge for prosopography, however, is that a range of NSW convict records were destroyed: in 1863 by fire and in 1870 by way of deliberate pulping of records.⁶⁵ ‘The Founders and Survivors’ project, established in 2007, is tracing the lives of 73,000 convicts transported to Tasmania in the nineteenth century and following their descendants. It now has ‘1.5 million digital records of the populations who either migrated (freely or were transported) to the British colony of Van Diemen’s Land (renamed Tasmania in 1856) or were born in the colony in the years 1803–1900’.⁶⁶ It is more complete than the New South Wales archives. As mentioned, the *ADB* is now adding biographical entries of the first 3 fleets and their families, about 110,000 lives, into its database. By navigating our way around the various lexicons and databases, we can tease out biographical aspects of Bellamy’s life. Rather than considering women convicts as a whole, we can consider how typical was Sarah Bellamy in the demographic context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the convict system? We can follow Bellam’s life course through the datasets in 4 regards: her crime, sentence and post-transportation offences; her age and voyage experience; her marriage, births and child mortality; and her mortality.

First in terms of crime, Bellamy was sentenced to 7 years’ transportation for stealing a purse with money. Theft of valuables, which for women might entail clothing or cloth, was the most common crime for which convicts were transported (more than 90 per cent of women convicts) and ‘7 years’ was the most common sentence. Young female convicts were more likely than the general population to be either orphans or to come from a family who could not support them.⁶⁷ Most convicts (more than 80 per cent in Tasmania) had further offences recorded while under sentence, but it appears that Sarah Bellamy had none.⁶⁸

Second, in terms of age while on voyage, again Bellamy is reasonably typical, although on the younger side. Bellamy was 17 years old in 1787, and while the average First Fleet woman was a decade older at 28 years, 12 per cent were aged under 20 years (Figure 5), based on an analysis of the NCB’s *People Australia: First Fleet (1788) Convict Women* dataset.

65 Christine Shergold, ‘NSW Convict Records—“Lost and Saved”’, NSW State Archives & Records, accessed 2 September 2020, www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/guides-and-indexes/stories/new-south-wales-convict-records-lost.

66 ‘About’, Founders and Survivors, accessed 1 September 2020, foundersandsurvivors.com/about/.

67 Rebecca Kippen and Janet McCalman, ‘Parental Loss in Young Convicts Transported to Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania), 1841–53’, *History of the Family* 23, no. 2 (2018): 1–23.

68 Janet McCalman and Rebecca Kippen, ‘The Life-Course Demography of Convict Transportation to Van Diemen’s Land’, *History of the Family* 25, no. 3 (2020): 432–54.

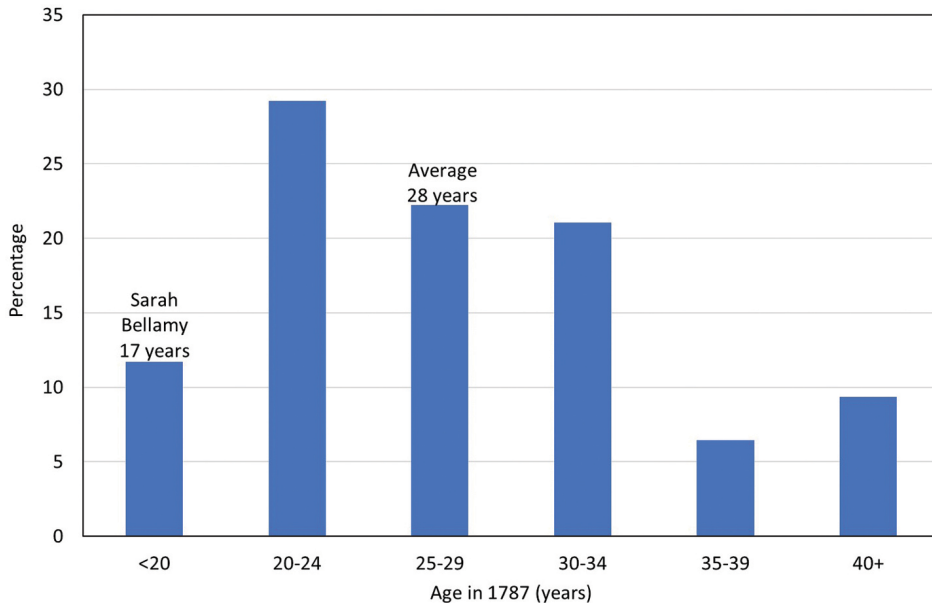


Figure 5: Percentage distribution of First Fleet convict women by age in 1787, n=171.

Source: *People Australia: First Fleet (1788) Convict Women*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University (2020).

Third, Bellamy's experience of marriage, birth and child mortality was common. Given the huge sex imbalance (5 men for every woman), convict women tended to partner quickly. Many had births outside formal marriage.⁶⁹ A large proportion of married convict women (more than 20 per cent in Tasmania) had no children—perhaps due to sterility from sexually transmitted infections contracted in former careers as prostitutes, or working 'on the town'. Bellamy and Bloodworth had 8 children. Among Tasmanian convict women—of those who partnered and had not been 'on the town'—almost 30 per cent had 8 or more children.⁷⁰ Four of Bellamy and Bloodworth's 8 children died in childhood. Sadly, infant and child mortality was high in this era. In England in the late eighteenth century, just over 50 per cent of babies survived to their 15th birthday.⁷¹ Based on that probability, 58 per cent of families with 8 or more children lost at least 4 in childhood.

⁶⁹ Peter Gunn and Rebecca Kippen, 'Convict Bastards, Common-Law Unions and Shotgun Weddings', *Journal of Family History* 36, no. 4 (2011): 387–403.

⁷⁰ Janet McCalman and Rebecca Kippen, 'A Wise Provision of Nature for the Prevention of Too Many Children', in *The Hidden Affliction: Sexually Transmitted Infections and Infertility in History*, ed. Simon Szreter (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019), 279–302.

⁷¹ Calculated from E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Davies, R.S. Schofield and J.E. Oeppen, *English Population History from Family Reconstitution, 1580–1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Fourth, how typical was Bellamy in terms of her lifespan? Removing higher mortality on the voyage and the year after landing, and based on age-specific mortality rates from age 25 years, First Fleet women lived on average to 59.6 years.⁷² Indeed, First Fleet women were conspicuously healthy in the early years having surgeons to attend to them on the transports and government supplied food at Port Jackson (in poor supply but probably better than when convicts were in gaols and hulks before being transported). English women at this time (also based on age-specific mortality rates from age 25 years) had a very similar average life expectancy of 59.8 years.⁷³ Thus, Sarah Bellamy, with a life span of 73 years (1770–1843), ‘beat the average’ by more than 13 years.

Figure 6 shows the remarkably similar survival curves for First Fleet convict women and English women. Given survival to age 25 years, 80 per cent of both populations lived to 40 years, and 56 per cent to age 60 years. One-quarter of both First Fleet convict women, and English women in general, lived to at least age 73 years (Figure 6). Bellamy, then, lived a full life in the colony but, despite suggestions, was not the oldest-lived of those transported on the First Fleet.

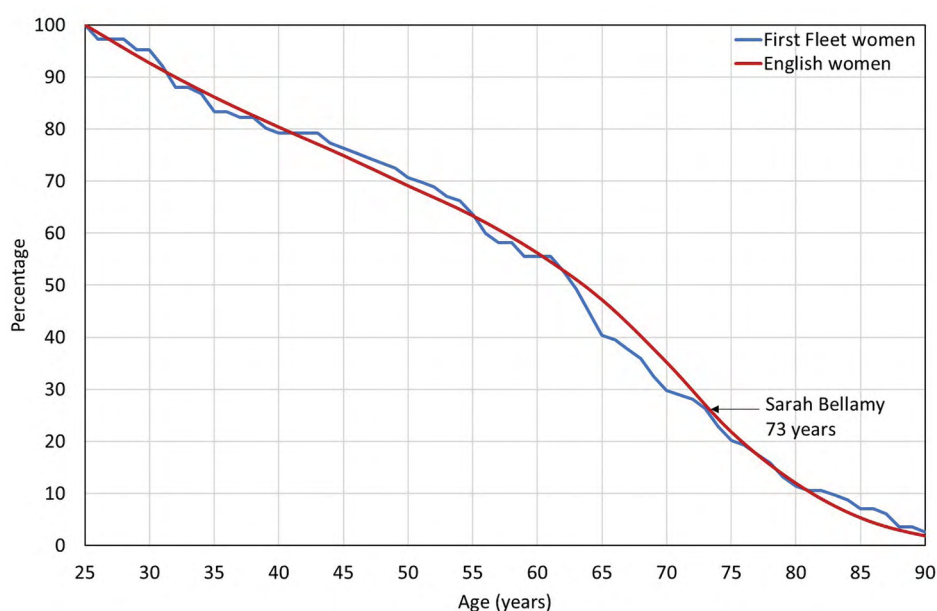


Figure 6: Percentage of survivors by age from age 25 years, First Fleet convict women (n=104) and English women (1750–1809).

Source: *People Australia: First Fleet (1788) Convict Women*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University (2020); and E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Davies, R.S. Schofield and J.E. Oeppen, *English Population History from Family Reconstitution, 1580–1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁷² *People Australia: First Fleet (1788) Convict Women*, NCB-ANU, 2020.

⁷³ Data source for 1750–1809 female mortality: Wrigley et al., *English Population History*.

So, in conclusion, how typical was Bellamy in the demographic context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the convict system? She was average in terms of her crime and sentence. At 17 years, she was younger than most female convicts, although 12 per cent of First Fleet women were aged under 20 years. Of the 8 children she had with Bloodworth, 4 died in childhood. Just under a third of similar convict women had 8 or more children and most of these could expect to lose 4 or more in childhood. Sarah lived to 73 years, as did a quarter of First Fleet women, and English women, based on age-specific adult mortality. While Bellamy is a pretty typical female convict of her cohort, most of the historians using her life as a good example did not know the extent of her typicality.

Collective biography: Bellamy and the rise of respectability, crime, sex and ‘getting on’

Sarah’s life has also been used in recent collective biography. Collective biographies examine a group by considering the links and associations between its members, demonstrating how they were united in time and space. For instance, Vyvyan Brendon has considered Bellamy in terms of sexual relations between sailors and female convicts during transportation. Her life story contributes to a historiography that, rather than considering individual agency, has emphasised female convicts’ uniform sexual liaisons.⁷⁴ The range of convict experience in this work is often not acknowledged. Take, for instance, the number of shipboard sexual liaisons that resulted in pregnancy. As Garvey notes, the Master or (Captain) of the ship made the decision as to whether or not crew fraternised with female convicts. William Compton Severs was part owner of the *Lady Penrhyn* and he himself had a child with Ann Green who bore his daughter Laetitia. Bellamy, for instance, was one of at least 6 women whose relationships with the ship’s crew resulted in their giving birth to children during their voyage or shortly after their arrival in Botany Bay.⁷⁵ We will probably never know the reason Captain James Meredith chose Bellamy for his attempted assault on 1 August 1789 but one possible reason may have been that she had given birth to a child on board the *Lady Penrhyn* and so was considered a loose woman by many males in the colony. Bellamy’s response shows that she did not see herself as such and was very much in control of her sexuality.

Bellamy has been the subject of 2 other collective biographies: crime sentencing in England and social relations in Australia. She became a respectable Australian. The rise in social status of convicts once in New South Wales was common as emancipists

⁷⁴ Brendon, *Children at Sea*, 19–20.

⁷⁵ Mary Mouton and Joshua Bentley, Joseph Theakson and Ann Yeats, William Curtis and Mary Branham, John Clement and Elizabeth Dalton, William Severs and Ann Green, and Joseph Downey and Sarah Bellamy. Garvey, ‘Second Fleet Women, First-Rate Survivors’.

were granted amounts of land that they would not likely have owned in England. As Robert Hughes and Trent Dalton suggest, Governor Phillip regarded marriage as the best path to respectability for ‘felons would ... raise a native-born yeomanry’.⁷⁶ In the Female Register that the Minister of St John’s Paramatta Reverend Samuel Marsden compiled in 1806, women were categorised as either legally ‘married’ by Anglican rite or ‘concubine’. Sarah was described as Bloodworth’s concubine. Even Marsden admitted, however, that ‘no relationship could have been more respectable, devoted or tenacious than theirs’.⁷⁷ Despite being unmarried even while Bloodworth was alive, Bellamy had a high social status and was relatively wealthy in contrast with her status as a parish child and condemned thief in England. Her biography reveals the transition from a society that put an onus on property crimes (England) to one that emphasised crimes of character (Australia). In Australia, while property was still an issue, character came to the fore. Harsh penalties were meted out to convicts who were drunk and disorderly in the street.

David J. Cox has considered Bellamy in the context of gender and prosecution in England.⁷⁸ The penal code at the end of the eighteenth century concentrated on property:

There were no fewer than 250 crimes for which death was the penalty (by 1850 there were only two). Nearly all were crimes against property. That included stealing anything at all from a boat on a river (but not a canal); stealing goods worth five shillings from a shop; stealing property worth one shilling from another person; and entering with an intent to kill game or rabbits. Children as well as adults were executed. Murderous assault, however, was not a capital offense so long as the victim survived. That reflected obvious class bias: a wealthy or noble individual might commit assault, but was not likely to pick pockets.⁷⁹

Bellamy illustrated what has been described as the ‘subjective sentencing’ associated with this ‘code’.⁸⁰ Crime alone was just one factor among many that judges took into account when sentencing. The sentencing standards Bellamy faced at the Assizes in July 1785 were most inconsistent. Joseph Pretty was given 6 months gaol for receiving stolen goods. Three other thieves were publicly whipped: Edward Child for breaking and entry, William Lamb for stealing shoes and John Wilmore

76 Trent Dalton, *By Sea and Stars: The Story of the First Fleet* (Sydney: 4th Estate, 2018), 126–30; Hughes, *Fatal Shore*, 245–46.

77 Hughes, *Fatal Shore*, 247; Portia Robinson, *The Hatch and Brood of Time, A Study of the First Generation of Native-born White Australians, 1788–1828*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 75–77.

78 Cox, *Crime in England 1688–1815*, 146, fn. 51. See also Vaughan and Cox, *From Belbroughton to Botany Bay*.

79 Leo Damrosch, *The Club: Johnson, Boswell and the Friends Who Shaped an Age* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019), 82; Jacob Viner, ‘Man’s Economic Status’, in *Man Versus Society in Eighteenth Century Britain*, ed. James L. Clifford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 38–39; Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E. P. Thompson and Cal Winslow, *Albion’s Fatal Tree: Crime in Society in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Verso, 2011); Cox, *Crime in England 1688–1815*.

80 Lucy Edwards, *Convicts in the Colonies: Transportation Tales from Britain to Australia* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword history, 2018), 6–7.

for stealing ribbon. Richard Crump was fined 1 shilling for manslaughter. For her crime, Bellamy was transported for 7 years. It was with a sense of injustice then that Bellamy pleaded to be publicly whipped twice instead of transported. As Gibson remarked, 'it does not seem unreasonable for whipping when her crime is compared with those of her fellow defendants'.⁸¹

In many ways, Bellamy seems to have been transgressional. In 1789, she resisted a sexual assault, defiantly proclaimed her innocence and, remarkably, was believed. When she was assaulted in Australia, Sarah resolved in her own breath that she was 'not to put up with such unmerited treatment'.⁸² Historian Alan Atkinson uses Bellamy to make a case for a unique social order developing in Australia:

Women ... looked to the courts for a power which could override that of the men they saw about them and which could protect them in a range of matters. [More specifically, Bellamy], incidentally, helped to affirm a peculiar relationship which might exist between convict women and the law at Sydney Cove.⁸³

While working on the First Fleeters project we have found other instances that back Atkinson's thesis, where women were appearing before courts in sexual assault cases, after having refused advances, and were believed by the courts, even though they may have been considered by some to have been 'fallen women'. Thomas Bramwell, a marine, received 100 lashes for beating Elizabeth Needham after she refused to go into the bush with him. He had had 'connections' with her on the *Lady Penrhyn* and thought he had a right to continue it on land. Elizabeth thought otherwise and the court agreed.⁸⁴ Similarly, Mary Leary cohabited with Edward Deane, a seaman, during the voyage. He charged her with theft of clothing at Port Jackson but the charge was dismissed after it was found that he made it up because she refused to go on the ship with him.⁸⁵ Similarly, a number of women successfully brought domestic violence charges against their husbands. In one remarkable case, the court ordered that the assets and children of Sophia and James Walbourne be equally split in 1800; they were given a child each.

Atkinson argued that Governor Phillip ensured that 'women's experience set the pace for the entire European project in Australia'.⁸⁶ English poor, like Bellamy, had experienced rights to welfare as members of parish communities. They had been 'taught to imagine that they might demand humanity from their rulers' and retained an attitude of rights.⁸⁷ There was subjection and discrimination but a 3-way relationship developed between men, women and the state, which together provided

81 Gibson, *Belbroughton to Botany Bay*, 8.

82 Gillen, *Founders of Australia*, 32.

83 Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia*, vol. 1: 191.

84 'Marr, Elizabeth (1762–1825)', People Australia, peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/biography/marr-elizabeth-25391.

85 'Leary, Mary (c. 1765–?)', People Australia, peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/biography/leary-mary-30725/text38068.

86 Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia*, vol. 1: 191.

87 Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia*, vol. 1: 193.

health and education for women who did not resist. Mary MacLaren captured this attitude of rights in her fictional account of Bellamy, a brazen red-headed woman who gave others confidence to exert their agency too.

Conclusion: Adding Sarah Bellamy to the *ADB*

Mixed research methods allow us to tease out the singularity of Sarah Bellamy's life, compare it to other convict women's lives and consider the links and associations between her experience and others, demonstrating how they were united in time and space. This article might have been on Arthur Phillip, the first governor of New South Wales, or Governor Lachlan Macquarie, or one of the better known and significant male characters for which there has been considerable research. It might have been on Elizabeth Macquarie. It is not simply a recording of the life of an insignificant woman whose experience has been neglected for diversity's sake. It is that, but it is more than that. Choosing an 'insignificant life' does not mean that it does not reveal important aspects of the British settlement of early Australia. Sarah Bellamy's life turns out to be 'typical' in demographic terms and is a means to reflect on the early British settlement of Australia. Ironically, it is a good example to reflect upon, as Alan Atkinson, Thomas Kenneally and David J. Cox have done. Interestingly, little of this work on Sarah discusses her 'typicality'. Rather, having been 'written up' by a range of historians, a subject like Sarah becomes an example commonly referred to in the literature.

The *ADB* is all too aware of the fraught relationship between significant and representative subjects. The journal has prided itself on its inclusion of representative subjects—more than many other national dictionary projects. Nevertheless, it is hardly representative and is engaged in several revision projects around 'decolonising' in terms of race, class and gender. The Colonial Women project, for instance, seeks to improve the gender balance of the *ADB*. Women still only account for about 12 per cent of all *ADB* entries. For the colonial period, the situation is even more worrying, with less than 4 per cent of articles recognising women. This project will add 1,500 new entries for women who flourished during, or prior to, the colonial period. It is a large and ambitious initiative that will significantly increase the representation of women in the *ADB*. And, to finish, adding the life of Sarah Bellamy and others of her ilk, which can sustain a concise biographical essay, is a good start.

Kurrburra the Boonwurrung *wirrirrap* and bard (1797–1849)—a man of high degree¹

IAN D. CLARK, ROLF SCHLAGLOTH, FRED CAHIR
AND GABRIELLE MCGINNIS

Introduction

Kurrburra (aka Mr Ruffy) (1797–1849), Aboriginal *wirrirrap* (doctor, healer, bard), sage counsellor of his people, consultant with koalas, and heroic slayer of a feared orangutan-like cryptid that lived in the ranges north of Western Port, is believed to have been born in 1797, and was a member of the Yawen djirra clan, the eastern-most group of the Boonwurrung People whose Country stretched from Wirribi-yaluk (Werribee River) to Wammun (Wilsons Promontory) in Victoria. His moiety was Bunjil and in the early 1840s he had 2 wives: Kurundum (1819–?) and Bowyeup (1823–?), and 2 children, whose names are not known. Kurrburra's traditional Aboriginal name is the Boonwurrung word for the iconic marsupial *Phascolarctos cinereus*, more commonly known as the koala.²

The Boonwurrung People were among the first of Victoria's Indigenous peoples to have contact with Europeans. They witnessed major events such as George Bass's visits in 1798 and 1802; the visit of *Le Naturaliste* in 1802; the short-lived penal establishment at what is now Sorrento in October 1803; the escape of the convict William Buckley in late 1803 and his travel through their lands until he arrived in Wadawurrung Country near Geelong; the second short-lived penal settlement in 1826 at what is now Corinella; and the eventual colonisation of Melbourne in 1835.

In these intervening years the Boonwurrung also suffered from incursions by sealers and whalers, and the forced abduction of Aboriginal women, girls and boys. Added to this was internecine conflict between the Boonwurrung and their eastern neighbours, the Ganai,³ with whom there was a blood feud apparently over the

1 Cultural warning: Readers of this article should be aware that some of the archival records and publications of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contain words that are now considered offensive. Such words may appear in the article where a quote is made from these archival records or publications. The history also refers to persons who have passed away and to incidents of a distressing nature.

2 Barry John Blake, 'Woiwurrung, the Melbourne Language', in *The Aboriginal Language of Melbourne and Other Grammatical Sketches*, ed. R.M.W. Dixon and B.J. Blake. The Handbook of Australian Languages, vol. 4 (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991), 112.

3 Native title groups now use the term GanaiKurnai.

Ganai's unauthorised use of Boonwurrung natural resources, which saw numerous violent clashes between the 2 groups and considerable loss of life. From 1837 until 1849, Boonwurrung Country also functioned as a site for government initiatives designed to impress European values and customs upon Aboriginal people, including a government mission that operated from 1837 until 1839 at what is now the site of the Royal Botanic Gardens in South Yarra; the Native Police Corps; and the establishment and operation of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, from 1839 until its closure in late 1849.

Perhaps the best-known Boonwurrung men in colonial Melbourne were 2 Yalukit-willam clan heads, Derrimut and Bullourd (aka King Benbow). Derrimut is famed for his role in preventing an Aboriginal massacre of the European settlement in Melbourne in October 1835 during its early establishment;⁴ Bullourd was employed as a messenger by Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson in the mid-1840s. Both Derrimut and Bullourd were active in representing Boonwurrung interests and were instrumental in securing the reservation of Boonwurrung land at Mordialloc in 1852. However, this article is concerned with Kurrburra, one of several Boonwurrung *wirrirraps* (doctors, healers), who was recognised as an authority within his community despite not being a clan-head. Kurrburra's standing was confirmed in a recent publication, produced in consultation with the Boon Wurrung Foundation, as a 'famous Boon Wurrung doctor, dreamer and diviner in early Melbourne'.⁵ Kurrburra is of particular interest because of the circumstances by which he acquired his name, and through the stories that exist of his powers and abilities. In reconstructing this biography of Kurrburra's life we will also examine the role of *wirrirraps* in Victorian Aboriginal society.

In terms of contemporary published sources, we first learn of Kurrburra in a sensational account published in 1846 of an orangutan-like cryptid that lived in the mountains at the back of Western Port Bay, Victoria, and that the great doctor was the only person alive who had killed one of these creatures.⁶ Other published primary sources include William Thomas's contributions to Smyth,⁷ and Bride;⁸ contributions from William Barak to Howitt;⁹ and analyses of a song of Kurrburra's

4 See Ian D. Clark, 'You Have All This Place, No Good Have Children ... Derrimut: Traitor, Saviour or a Man of His People?', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 91, no. 2 (2005): 107–32.

5 Meyer Eidelson, *Yalukit Willam The River People of Port Phillip* ([Melbourne]: City of Port Phillip, 2015), 83.

6 George Henry Haydon, *Five Years' Experience in Australia Felix: comprising a short account of its early settlement and its present position, with many particulars interesting to intending emigrants* (Exeter: Hamilton, Adams, & Co, 1846).

7 Robert Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria; with notes relating to the habits of the natives of other parts of Australia*, 2 vols (Melbourne: Victorian Government Printer, 1878).

8 Thomas Francis Bride, ed., *Letters From Victorian Pioneers*, 3rd ed. (1898; South Yarra: Lloyd O'Neil, 1983).

9 Alfred William Howitt, 'On Australian Medicine Men; or, Doctors and Wizards of Some Australian Tribes', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 16 (1887): 23–59; Alfred William Howitt, 'Notes on Songs and Songmakers of Some Australian Tribes', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 16 (1887): 327–35; Alfred William Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South East Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1904); Alfred William Howitt Papers, MS 9356, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne (hereafter Howitt Papers, SLV).

by Torrance,¹⁰ and Tate.¹¹ However, it is in the recently published journals and papers of two officials of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate that we learn the most about Kurrburra: the writings of Assistant Protector William Thomas,¹² and the Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson.¹³

Aspects of Kurrburra's history have been researched by Barwick,¹⁴ Wesson,¹⁵ Fels,¹⁶ and Clark.¹⁷ On the basis of information provided by George Augustus Robinson, Barwick and Clark have identified Kurrburra as a member of the Yowengerre, the eastern-most Boonwurrung clan, which was associated with the Tarwin River watershed and Wilsons Promontory.¹⁸ Blake renders Yowengerre as *Yawen djirra*, where *djirra* is a plural marker.¹⁹ They were also called the Yowen(w)illum, which means 'Yowen dwellers'. Yowen and Tarwin may be cognate. According to Thomas, however, Kurrburra was the head of one of the principal families of the Yallock-baluk, the adjoining Boonwurrung clan at Bass River and Tooradin.²⁰ This discrepancy is discussed below.

With the exception of two men, Kurrburra and Munmungina, Robinson noted on 1 July 1844 that the Yawen djirra clan was defunct.²¹ According to Robinson, the clan had been exterminated by the neighbouring Ganai clan, the Boro Boro Willum. This supports the information that Thomas received from Pinterginner (aka Mr Hyatt) on 12 February 1840, that 'all the blacks from Wilson's Promontory ... to Kirkbillesse [near Tooradin] all this country where we now were[,] were all

10 George William Torrance, 'Music of the Australian Aborigines', *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 16 (1887): 335–40.

11 Henry Tate, 'Aboriginal Music', *Argus*, 30 June 1923, 7.

12 Marguerita Stephens, ed., *The Journal of William Thomas Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip & Guardian of the Aborigines of Victoria 1839–1867*, 4 vols (Melbourne: Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, 2014).

13 Ian D. Clark, ed., *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, 1839–1852*, 3rd ed., 6 vols (1998; Kentucky: Createspace, 2014).

14 Diane E. Barwick, 'Mapping the Past: An Atlas of Victorian Clans 1835–1904, Part 1', *Aboriginal History* 8, no. 2 (1984): 100–31.

15 Sue C. Wesson, *Aboriginal Flora and Fauna Names of Victoria: As Extracted from Early Surveyors' Reports* (Melbourne: Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, 2001).

16 Marie H. Fels, 'I Succeeded Once' *The Aboriginal Protectorate on the Mornington Peninsula, 1839–1840*, Aboriginal History Monograph 22 (Canberra: Aboriginal History Inc. & ANU E Press with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 2011). doi.org/10.22459/ISO.05.2011.

17 Ian D. Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800–1900*, Monash Publications in Geography, no. 37 (Clayton, Vic.: Department of Geography and Environmental Science, Monash University, 1990); Ian D. Clark, 'The Tara-Waragal and the Governor's Levee in Melbourne, 1863 – a Reinterpretation of Woivurrung Local Group Organization', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, no. 1 (2014): 33–54.

18 Barwick, 'Mapping the Past'; Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans*.

19 Blake, 'Woivurrung the Melbourne Language', 48.

20 William Thomas Papers, 16 volumes and 8 boxes of papers, journals, letterbooks, reports, correspondence, etc., uncatalogued Mss., set 214, items 1–24. Mitchell Library. Vol. 23.

21 See Clark, *Journals of George Augustus Robinson*. Munmungina (aka Dr Bailey) was the son of Purrine, the late clan-head of the Yawen djirra. Munmungina's own country was Tobinnurrick Creek and Koornong Creek, Manton's and Jamieson's runs at Tooradin and Lang Lang. Purrine's country was Wammun (Wilson's Promontory). Munmungina died at Mayune on 16 August 1845—see Thomas in Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*.

dead, not one left. Two Fold Black fellows [i.e. the Ganai] long time ago killed many many, rest all dead'.²² Fels has studied the internecine conflict between the Boonwurrung and the Ganai and has identified 6 instances of conflict between 1820 and 1846: a massacre of the Boonwurrung by the Ganai near Arthurs Seat circa 1820; a Ganai attack of the Boonwurrung at Brighton in 1834 where upwards of 77 Boonwurrung were killed; a Ganai attack about 1835 that killed 12 Boonwurrung at Kunnung, a river near modern-day Kooweerup; a Boonwurrung raid into Gippsland in February 1840; a retaliatory raid by 97 Ganai fighting men on 3 October 1840 when they destroyed the huts at Jamieson's station and carried off their European plunder; and a joint Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung sortie into Ganai country in May 1846.²³ Regarding the latter, an old warrior named Berberry explained to Thomas that 'the Gippsland blks [blacks] are very bad men, steal & kill white man's bullocks & they gone to helpem white man too much frightened to gago bush'.²⁴ We know the composition of the February 1840 and May 1846 avenging parties, and Kurrburra is not listed in either of them. Why he did not participate is unknown, but it is hard to imagine that he did not suffer some personal losses of family members through this internecine conflict with the Ganai.

In the ethnographic record, the following variant spellings of Kurrburra's name have been recorded: Car.per.rer/Carborer/Car.per.re/Carbora/Kur.bo.roo/Kar.bor.er/Kurboro/Kurburu/Kurburra/Kaborer/Kurboror/Kubburrough/Kurborough/Mr Ruffy.²⁵ In 1841, Kurrburra supplied William Thomas with the names of the hills in the Yering district in the Yarra Valley and gave him information on their custodians, particularly whether or not they were extant.²⁶ Wesson postulates that there were 2 men named Kurrburra in Melbourne in the 1840s, a Boonwurrung Kurrburra and a Woiwurrung Kurrburra, and that the Kurrburra who supplied Thomas with this information is not the same Kurrburra that Robinson referred to above.²⁷ Clark has examined her reasoning for this division and has concluded that she is incorrect, and that there is only one Kurrburra, the man who is the subject of this biographical study.²⁸

Kurrburra was also known as 'Mr Ruffy' or 'Ruffy', presumably after one of the Ruffy brothers (Arthur, Frederick, Henry, James and William), who kept a roadside inn at Cranbourne, east of their 'Tomaque' run (1836–50), and 'Mayune' run (1840–45) at Westernport Bay.²⁹ Henry and Arthur were at 'Tomaque'; and all 5 brothers were

22 Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*, vol. 1: 132.

23 Fels, 'I Succeeded Once'.

24 Thomas Journal 21 May 1846 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*, vol. 2: 176.

25 Clark, 'The Tara-Waragal'.

26 Clark, 'The Tara-Waragal'.

27 Wesson, *Aboriginal Flora and Fauna*, 16.

28 Clark, 'The Tara-Waragal'. This view is supported by Fels, 'I Succeeded Once'.

29 Ralph V. Billis and Alfred S. Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Stockland Press, 1974).

at ‘Mayune’ from 1840 to 1845, and Frederick Ruffy, alone, 1845–50.³⁰ This name exchange may also be further confirmation of Kurrburra’s Boonwurrung connection. Although Kurrburra had taken the surname of the Ruffy brothers, the Ruffy brothers were situated on the estate of a neighbouring Boonwurrung clan, the Mayune-baluk. Given the tension between Kurrburra’s clan and the adjoining Ganai, and the apparent violence between them, it is not unreasonable to assume that he spent as much time as possible away from the perceived Ganai threat. His being off his own Country may also explain Thomas’s identification of Kurrburra as a member of the Yallock-baluk at Anderson’s and Massie’s station to the west of his traditional lands. It is possible that he had been adopted by these other clans—there are similar situations documented in south-west Victoria where surviving members of what were effectively defunct clans were adopted by adjoining, more populous, clans and in different census lists they were sometimes recorded as being members of both clans.³¹

Kurrburra was remembered as a ‘bard’ by William Barak;³² he was described by Thomas as being held in high esteem as a sorcerer, a dreamer and diviner, a very wise man and a doctor.³³ Given that the eastern Kulin people considered *kurrburra* (koalas) to be the sage counsellors of Aboriginal people in all their difficulties,³⁴ and that Kurrburra the bard was considered to be possessed of their spirit, it is not surprising that he too was held in high regard.

***Wirrirraps* in traditional Aboriginal society**

As a *wirrirrap*, Kurrburra would have possessed the powers to heal and also to harm,³⁵ although the ethnologist A.W. Howitt explained that medicine men were not always doctors; they may be a ‘rainmaker’, a ‘seer’ or ‘spirit-medium’, or may practise some special form of magic.³⁶ Some medicine men were ‘bards who devoted their poetic faculties to the purposes of enchantment, such as the *Bunjil-yenjin* of the Ganai, whose peculiar branch of magic was composing and singing potent love charms’.³⁷ The Reverend Francis Tuckfield, a Wesleyan missionary to the neighbouring Wadawurrung, wrote in the early 1840s of his amazement in finding that in each tribe there was a *wirrirrap* who claimed they could fly

30 Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers*.

31 See Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans*.

32 Howitt, *The Native Tribes*.

33 Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*; Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*.

34 Thomas undated Mss. written for Mr Duffy, Thomas Papers, Box 3, Item 1, Mitchell Library, Sydney. See Rolf Schlagloth, Fred Cahir and Ian D. Clark, ‘The Historic Importance of the Koala in Aboriginal Society in Victoria (Australia): A Reconsideration of the Archival Record’, *Anthrozoös*, 31, no. 4 (2018): 433–41.

35 Howitt, *The Native Tribes*, 365.

36 Howitt, ‘On Australian Medicine Men’; Howitt, *The Native Tribes*, 355.

37 Howitt, *The Native Tribes*, 356.

‘contrary to the general established laws of Nature’. Furthermore, he related how a Wadawurrung *wirrirrap* had confirmed to the tribe that there was a Heaven, and that he had been there.³⁸ Missionaries such as Tuckfield were aware of the enormous influence *wirrirraps* had on their communities.³⁹ Tuckfield wrote of the *wirrirrap*’s prodigious skills:

He is, they say, perfectly acquainted with almost all diseases and their cures, and in the case of death if he can be brought on the spot in a short time after the spirit leaves the body, he can bring the individual alive again. This he does by flying after the spirit and bringing it back.⁴⁰

William Jackson Thomas, the oldest son of William Thomas, and who was intimately associated with his father’s work in the Aboriginal protectorate, has written of the ‘medicine men’ of the Boonwurrung. Given that William Thomas Jnr was with his father at Arthurs Seat, where he had his own pastoral station, we can be certain that he personally knew Kurrburra. Thomas Jnr wrote of the role of *wirrirraps* in determining the identity of those responsible for unexplained deaths amongst the Boonwurrung. His account also confirms the feud between the Boonwurrung and the Ganai:

It appears according to the firm belief of all Black fellows that death is in no case (except accident) the result of natural causes, but is always the work of an enemy, of some other tribes, who causes the death by craft, charms, or muttering some form of imprecation ... After the man is buried, a space of about one foot is cleared all-round the grave not a blade of grass left, made quite smooth—the Graves are always round about four feet in diameter—The Medicine Men if there are more than one in the Tribe, make a long and careful examination of the ground so cleared, mumbling a monotonous sort of chant all the time, at length they find or pretend to have found the direction of the Tribe a member of which has caused the death—The Medicine Men of the Western Port Tribes generally spot a member of the Gipps Land tribes as the delinquent—This is noted as one against that tribe—after several deaths the cup of iniquity of the Gipps Land tribes is supposed to be full, and calls for punishment—For the purpose of inflicting this punishment eight or ten young strong men are selected, who are to show their skill and bravery in an expeditionary raid into the enemy’s country—When they near the borders of the Enemies country they divide into parties of two or three advance in the most stealthy manner being careful to leave as little trail as possible, at length they find a weak detached little camp—they wait until they see the young men depart to hunt then they fall on the unfortunate

38 G.W. Greenwood, ‘Reverend Francis Tuckfield’s Magnificent Failure at Bunting Dale: An Address Given to the Methodist Conference Historical Luncheon’, *Heritage: A Journal of the Methodist Historical Society of Victoria* 1, no. 2 (1956): 11.

39 Fred Cahir, *My Country All Gone, the White Men Have Stolen It: The Invasion of Wadawurrung Country 1800–1870* (Ballarat: Australian History Matters, 2019), 181f.

40 Francis Tuckfield in Michael Cannon, ed., *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, vol. 2A (Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office, 1982), 113.

old men and Women all of which they ruthlessly murder ... This is no one-sided affair—for the Gipps Land Natives act exactly on the same lines. The Western Port Natives tell of many fearful slaughters of their tribe by the Gipps Land Natives.⁴¹

Henry Meyrick who squatted on Boonwurrung land at ‘Colourt’ (Coolart) on the Mornington Peninsula, in the 1840s, discussed Boonwurrung ‘doctors’ in family correspondence. This part of the Mornington Peninsula belonged to Bobbinary, the *ngarweet* (clan-head) of the Burinyung-baluk clan, and who was another famed Boonwurrung *wirrirrap*, so the following account probably refers to Bobbinary, although it is possible that it refers to Kurrburra.

There are four families of blacks with us. One of them is the doctor of the tribe. I saw him cure one of the other blacks of a pain in his breast. He made the sick man lie on his back; kneeling by his side, he began to thump the fellow’s breast most unmercifully. On a sudden he jumped up, showing us an immense nail, which he said he pulled out of his breast. He then began singing, and threw the nail into the sea, saying he had cured him. The patient (*Cognomine* Wougill, *alias* ‘Lively’) was sufficiently recovered to go kangarooing with me next day.⁴²

G.G. McCrae, in ‘a note on the aborigines of the coast’, also discussed a ‘great doctor’ among the Western Port Aboriginal people, and it is possible that this is referring to Kurrburra, or Bobbinary:

There was always one great ‘doctor’, as we used to call him, in the tribe. Among themselves he was known as the coradge, or wizard, and he was credited with supernatural powers. He was held infallible in surgery and in cures of disease, for if anything went wrong after his treatment the patient was to blame. By his incantations (made at the right time) he could procure for his followers either the rain or the wind they desired, and he besides possessed (in their opinion) the power of life and death over people, no matter at how great a distance.⁴³

Aboriginal societies throughout Australia had their own healers, who were referred to in the nineteenth-century literature as ‘doctors’, ‘medicine men’, ‘sorcerers’ and ‘sacred men’ (see Figure 1). In Victoria, ‘medicine men’ were known by different names: for example, *Wirrirrap* (Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung, Wadawurrung); *Wavoit* (Daungwurrung); *Bangal* (Wergaia, Wembawemba); *Mekigar* (‘one who sees’) (Wiimbaio); *Wurowuurn* (Dhauwurdwurrung); *Lanyiwil* (Djabwurrung); *Murri-malundra* or *Budjan-belan* (Ngarigo); *Gommara* (Yuin); and *Biraark* (Ganai).

41 William Jackson Thomas in Ian D. Clark and Fred Cahir, eds, *The Children of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate: An Anthology of Their Reminiscences and Contributions to Aboriginal Studies* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2016), 262f.

42 F. J. Meyrick, *Life in the Bush (1840–1847) A Memoir of Henry Howard Meyrick* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1939), 133. Fels, ‘*I Succeeded Once*’, 185 considers the doctor referred to is Wongoro, aka ‘Old Doctor’, another Boonwurrung *wirrirrap*.

43 George Gordon McCrae, ‘The Early Settlement of the Eastern Shores of Port Phillip Bay: With a Note on the Aborigines of the Coast’, *Victorian Historical Magazine* 1 (1911): 22–23.

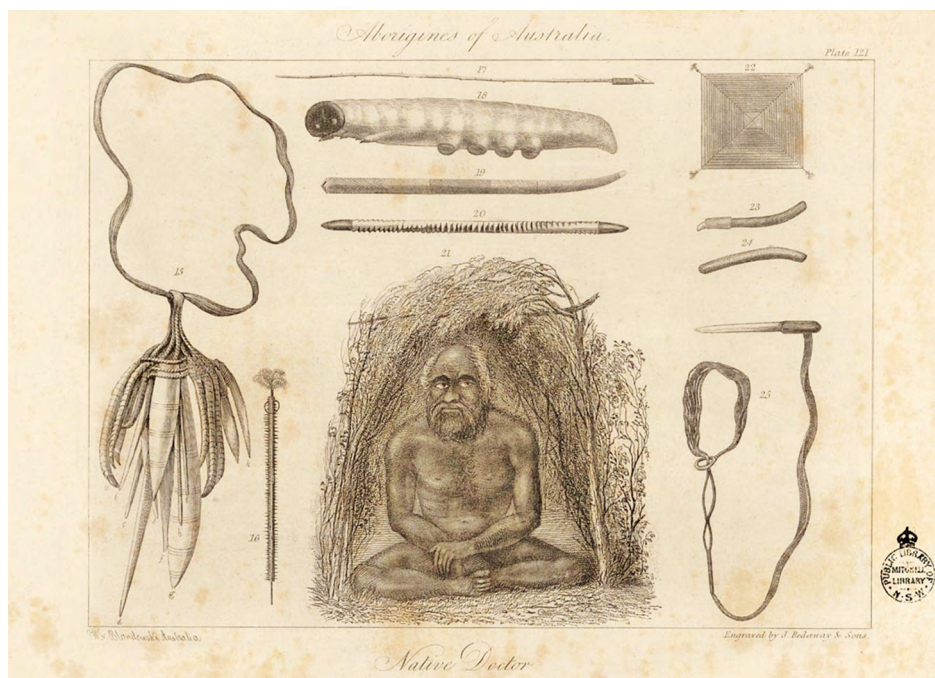


Figure 1: ‘Native Doctor’, William Blandowski, Australia Terra Cognita, W. Blandowski, Melbourne.

Source: State Library of New South Wales, Call No. PXE 864; IE No. IE1033358.

A.P. Elkin has noted that an Aboriginal doctor was an ‘outstanding person, a clear thinker, a man of decision, one who believed, and acted on the belief, that he possessed psychic power, the power to will others to have faith in themselves’.⁴⁴ He describes them as ‘men of high degree’—persons of special knowledge, self-assurance and initiative. Indigenous healers play significant roles in the religious, judicial and therapeutic foundations of community life and they are often described as clever men and women. The word ‘clever’ resonates with a respect for the healer’s extensive therapeutic knowledge and skill, and a degree of fear for their presumed mystical, supernatural and spiritual capabilities.⁴⁵ Philip Clarke’s assessment is that the closest equivalent in contemporary Western medicine would be a professional who is both a general practitioner and a psychiatrist.⁴⁶ As Clarke explains, the role of the healer was to diagnose problems, advise on remedies, suggest and perform ritualised healing procedures, explore the impact of community social and cultural issues upon the illness, and reassure their patients that they could be cured.

44 Adolphus Peter Elkin, *Aboriginal Men of High Degree* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977), 10.

45 Daniel Suggit, ‘A Clever People: Indigenous Healing Traditions and Australian Mental Health Futures’ (Short thesis, The Australian National University, 2008), 8.

46 Philip A. Clarke, ‘Aboriginal Healing Practices and Australian Bush Medicine’, *Journal of the Anthropological Society of South Australia* 33 (2008): 9.

Howitt explained that Aboriginal doctors did not exercise their powers *gratis*:

Presents were given them by people who had benefited by their art, and also by people who feared lest they should suffer from it. They received presents of weapons, rugs, implements—in fact, of all those things which are of value to the aborigines, not forgetting a share of the game caught. Especially did they reap a harvest at the great gatherings.⁴⁷

In terms of the making of medicine men, Howitt noted that the Wurundjerri (Woiwurrung) ‘believed that their medicine-men became such by being carried by the ghosts through a hole in the sky to Bunjil, from whom they received their magical powers’.⁴⁸ Howitt observed that the

class of blackfellow doctors was almost extinct in the tribes of which I had a personal knowledge ... In those tribes with which I had friendly relations, the medicine-men were of the second generation, that is, it was their predecessors who had practised their arts in the wild state of the tribe ... The Wirrarap of the Wurundjeri ... disappeared about the time of the early gold-diggings in Victoria.⁴⁹

Dawson has noted that in south-western Victoria, in the early 1840s, Tuurap Warneen, the clan-head of the Kulurr-gundidj, the Djabwurrung clan that belonged to Kulurr (Mt Rouse), was a ‘doctor of great celebrity in the Western District’.⁵⁰ So celebrated was he for his supernatural powers, and for the cure of diseases, that people of various tribes came from great distances to consult him. He could speak many dialects. At meetings he was distinguished from others by having his face painted red, with white streaks under the eyes, and his brow-band adorned with the quill feather of the turkey bustard, or with the crest of a white cockatoo.

As well as being famed as a bard, G.H. Haydon, in his publication *Five Years’ Experience in Australia Felix*, mentioned that Kurrburra was the only person now alive amongst the Boonwurrung, who had killed a fearsome creature, similar to the orangutan, that lived in the mountain ranges at the back of Western Port Bay:⁵¹

An account of this animal was given me by Worronge-tolon, a native of the Woeworong tribe, in nearly the following words:—‘He is as big as a man and shaped like him in every respect, and is covered with stiff bristly hair, excepting about the face, which is like an old man’s full of wrinkles; he has long toes and fingers, and piles up stones to protect him from the wind or rain, and usually walks about with a stick, and climbs trees with great facility; the whole of his body is hard and sinewy, like wood to the touch.’ Worrongy also told me ‘that many years since, some of these creatures attacked a camp of natives in the mountains and carried away some women and children, since

47 Howitt, ‘On Australian Medicine Men’, 47.

48 Howitt, *The Native Tribes*, 405.

49 Howitt, *The Native Tribes*, 412.

50 James Dawson, *Australian Aborigines: The Languages and Customs of Several Tribes of Aborigines in the Western District of Victoria* (Melbourne: Robertson, 1881), 58.

51 Haydon, *Five Years’ Experience*, 66.

which period they have had a great dread of moving about there after sunset. The only person now alive who killed one, he informed me, was Carbora, the great doctor, who had succeeded in striking one in the eye with his tomahawk. On no other part of his body was he able to make the least impression.' All this might be very probable when it is considered that, in the time before the white people came, their golboranarook, or stone tomahawk, was not by any means a sharp weapon.⁵²

In a review of Haydon's publication, *The Port Phillip Patriot and Morning Advertiser* mentioned his reference to killing native bears called 'Carbora' during an expedition through Western Port, and added that Carbora was 'the name also given to a native doctor'.⁵³ The origin of Kurrburra's name is worthy of more consideration.

The origin of Kurrburra's name

Kurrburra, the Bard, was named after the Boonwurrung word for the koala, *kurrburra*. Indigenous people were often named after animals, and examples are easily found: Beruke, *aka* Gellibrand, a member of the Gunung-willam clan of the Woiwurrung, was named after the kangaroo rat, *baruk*.⁵⁴ Robinson explained that at his birth a kangaroo rat ran past and so he was named.⁵⁵ William Barak, the *ngurungaeta* of the Wurundjeri-willam clan of the Woiwurrung, was named after a small white grub found in a gum tree, *bearuk*;⁵⁶ Burrenun, aka Mr Dredge, was named after *Burrunan*, a large fish of the porpoise kind.⁵⁷

There are two traditions as to how Kurrburra obtained his name. The first tradition, sourced in the 1840s, is that Kurrburra's parents gave him this name at his birth after a *kurrburra* (koala) in a nearby tree made a noise. Thomas noted that the koala explained to Kurrburra's parents that their son 'may always consult me':

When blacks dream of bears it is to warn them of pending danger. One Kurboro named after a bear was always consulted, he was so named because a bear made a noise up a tree under which he was born the father pretended that the Bear said the boy born under me may always consult me. Bears generally by the blacks are regarded & even consulted occasionally.⁵⁸

Kur-bo-roo, a well-known Western Port black, and held in high esteem as a sorcerer, a dreamer, and diviner, was named 'The Bear', under the following circumstances. Kur-bo-roo was born at the foot of a tree, and during his mother's trouble a bear

52 Haydon, *Five Years' Experience*, 65–66; *Geelong Advertiser and Squatters' Advocate*, 16 July 1847, 1.

53 *The Port Phillip Patriot and Morning Advertiser*, 15 May 1847; also see *Geelong Advertiser and Squatters' Advocate*, 16 July 1847, 1.

54 Barry John Blake, 'Kulin Vocabulary List', 25 July 2014. Unpublished paper.

55 Robinson Journal 15 October 1840 in Clark, *Journal of George Augustus Robinson*.

56 Howitt Papers, SLV; Blake, 'Kulin Vocabulary List'.

57 Thomas in Fels, *I Succeeded Once*, 122; Blake, 'Kulin Vocabulary List'.

58 William Thomas undated 'writing' for Mr Duffy, Thomas Papers, Box 3, Item 1, Mitchell Library.

in the tree growled and grunted until Kur-bo-roo was born, when he ceased his noise. By this, it was said, the bear intended to show that the male child born at the foot of the tree should have the privilege of consulting the bears, and the child was called Kur-bo-roo. Kur-bo-roo attained to some excellence in his profession, and was regarded by all as a very wise man and doctor.⁵⁹

Kurrburra's story is connected to the Boonwurrung belief that *kurrburras* (koalas) are privileged and revered animals, and when people are in difficulty they will seek advice from *kurrburras*.⁶⁰ William Thomas experienced this firsthand in November 1841 when in the company of Wougill (aka Lively), the man Meyrick had witnessed being cured by a *wirrirrap* at Coolart in 1840 (see above). Thomas and Wougill were looking for tracks left by the 4 Tasmanian Aboriginal people who had been involved in a shooting at Western Port Bay. They had travelled less than a kilometre when Wougill abruptly stopped. Thomas noted the following account in his diary. 'Lively stop'd short, & says do you hear, I said me hear Bear or something, he stop'd some minutes & said no stooped [stupid] that fellow, he tells me no you go that way, come over here'. Thomas attempted to 'laugh him out of his superstitious notions', but it had no effect. 'Lively said that Kurboro never told a lie'. Thomas realised he needed Wougill's services, so he said to Wougill 'well go where Kurboro tells you'. Wougill took him back a distance where the koala was still grunting, and 'not above a mile further we again came upon very fresh tracks' of the 4 people they were tracking. Thomas noted, 'I cannot state but I felt my surprise while he explained now you see no lie tell it Kurbora'.⁶¹

Thomas also noted that dreaming of koalas was a sad omen, and recounted an incident at Narre Narre Warren, when Kurrburra dreamt he was surrounded by 'bears':

When a black man dreams of bears, it is a sad omen. All the people are afraid when any one dreams of bears. One time, when there were about two hundred blacks at Nerre Nerre Warreen (on the Yarra) [sic], including about eighteen children attending the school, Kur-bo-roo had a dream. He dreamt that he was surrounded by bears. He awoke in a great fright about one o'clock in the morning, and at once aroused the whole encampment. Fires were suddenly set ablaze. The young blacks climbed the trees, cut down boughs, and fed the fires. The men, women, and children rushed hither and thither, displaying the greatest terror. I reasoned with them, sought to soothe them, endeavoured to control them; but all my efforts were useless. They fled from the spot where they had so long lived in comfort. By eight o'clock in the morning the forest was a solitude—not a soul remained; and all because of a dream of Kur-bo-roo.⁶²

59 William Thomas in Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. 1: 447–48.

60 Boonwurrung, and other Victorian Indigenous groups' stories of *kurrburna* will be the subject of a separate paper.

61 Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*, vol. 1: 404.

62 William Thomas in Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. 1: 447–48. The notation (on the Yarra) possibly added by R.B. Smyth, would seem to be incorrect. This reference has caused some confusion and has often been taken to refer to Nerre Nerre Minnum (South Melbourne), but the fact that Thomas refers to a school is clear indication that it is concerned with the protectorate station at Narre Narre Warren.

The song of Kurrburra

The second tradition of Kurrburra's naming was provided by the Woiwurrung *wirrirrap* William Barak in the early 1880s. In conversations with Alfred William Howitt, Barak told Howitt that Kurrburra was given this name because he once killed a 'bear' and its *murup* (spirit) went after him, and taught him a 'gunyuru' (song). Howitt, in a general discussion of songs and song making, refers to examples of the 'inspired song', a class of song, and also of the belief of the composer, that he was inspired by something more than mortal when composing it.⁶³ This observation relates to Kurrburra's song, in that Kurrburra was given the song by the spirit of a *kurrburra* that he had killed. Strehlow, in a study of Australian Aboriginal songs, noted that 'old Australian songs' were typically concerned with magic, religion, ritual events and sacred festivals, and included 'charms against sickness; war songs, poems concerning the exploits of supernatural beings; charms to control wind, sun, and rain; love charms; and songs of the homeland'.⁶⁴ The songs were regarded as having been composed by supernatural beings and were regarded as sacred and only fully initiated men were allowed to sing them.

In conversations with William Barak, Howitt learned more about Kurrburra and his song, and revealed that Kurrburra had the gift of extrasensory perception and precognition:

As an instance he told the following: —'The Mūrūp give the Coroboree songs to the Wiriraps. A man called Kūrbūrū who lived at Dandenong used to be able to tell the Kūlin when the Berbira were coming after them to catch them.'⁶⁵ This man was a Būnjil (Thara) his own name was Kūrbūrū (native bear) and he got it because when once he killed a native bear its mūrūp went with him. After that it taught him a "gūnyūrū" ...[']⁶⁶

Howitt discussed Aboriginal songs and songmakers in an 1887 journal article entitled 'Notes on songs and Songmakers of some Australian Tribes':

In the tribes with which I have acquaintance I find it a common belief that the songs, using that word in its widest meaning, as including all kinds of aboriginal poetry, are obtained by bards from the spirits of the deceased, usually their relatives, during sleep in dreams.⁶⁷

63 Howitt, *The Native Tribes*, 418.

64 T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Australian Aboriginal Songs', *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* 7 (1955): 40.

65 'Notes by Howitt on the Kulin nation from information provided by Ber-uk', p. 26, Howitt Papers, SLV.

66 'Notes by Howitt on the Kulin nation from information provided by Ber-uk', p. 27, Howitt Papers, SLV.

67 Howitt, 'Notes on Songs and Songmakers', 330.

One must be struck by the existence in an Australian tribe of a family of bards, the prototypes of the ‘sacred singers’ of olden times. The song is a good instance of this class of compositions, and also a good example of the belief held by these ‘sacred singers’ that they were inspired by something more than mortal when composing them.⁶⁸

As connected with magic, or rather with the supernatural, the following song may serve as an example. It brings into view a curious belief in some connection supernaturally between beasts and man and which is found in so many Australian beliefs and tales.⁶⁹ It was composed and sung by a bard named ‘Kurburu’ who lived many years ago in the early days of the settlement of the country by the whites, near where the town of Berwick now stands, in the Western Port District. He was supposed to have killed a ‘native bear’ and being possessed of its spirit (*mūrūp*) thenceforth chaunted its song.⁷⁰

Kurburu’s song

<i>Enagūrēa</i>	<i>nūng</i>	<i>ngalourma</i>	<i>barein</i>	<i>gūrūkba</i>	<i>mūrnein</i>
There	now	cut-a-cross	track	blood	?
<i>būrūnbai</i>	<i>nganūngba</i>	<i>lilira</i>	<i>mūringa</i>		
hurt	myself	chipped	tomahawk (with)		

The singer, Berak, gave me the following free translation, ‘You cut across my track, you spilled my blood, and broke your tomahawk on me’.⁷¹

At Howitt’s request, musical transcriptions were made of 3 songs (‘Kurburu’s song, Wenberi’s song and Corroborree Song’) and notated by the organist, composer and scholar, Reverend Dr George William Torrance.⁷² Torrance interviewed William Barak, who sang each song, and then made a brief description of them.⁷³ Howitt published Torrance’s transcription of Kurrburra’s song in his 1904 ethnography (see Figure 2).

68 Howitt, ‘Notes on Songs and Songmakers’, 330.

69 Howitt, ‘Notes on Songs and Songmakers’, 332.

70 Howitt, ‘Notes on Songs and Songmakers’, 333.

71 Howitt, ‘Notes on Songs and Songmakers’, 333.

72 Aline Scott-Maxwell, ‘Re-sounding Coranderrk: Connecting Past, Place, and Present-Day Communities through a Commemorative Indigenous Music Festival’, in *Communities, Places, Ecologies, Proceedings of the 2013 IASPM-ANZ Conference, 2014*, ed. J. O’Regan and T. Wren (Brisbane: International Association for the Study of Popular Music, 2014), 32–47.

73 Torrance, ‘Music of the Australian Aborigines’, 335f.

KURBURU'S SONG.

Sounded as if in the key of B minor.

Tempo moderato. M ♩ = 100. -

The musical notation is presented on three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B minor), and a 3/4 time signature. It includes a *mf* dynamic marking and a *Tempo moderato* instruction with a metronome marking of M ♩ = 100. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. The lyrics below the first staff are: ē - - - na gur - é - a nung ngal - ūr - ma há - reng. The second staff starts with a *rit.* (ritardando) marking, followed by a *tempo* marking. It features a melodic line with eighth notes and rests, with lyrics: gūr - - uk ha mīrnīn mīrnīn nge būrun bāngan bōdha. The third staff continues the melody with eighth notes and rests, and lyrics: e - lē - re mūr - ingā : ē yam-yam mūdhan gūru bai wīrge ngū-rak. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

“The above was repeated several times, without break or pause, omitting the ‘intonation’ at each repetition, and ending abruptly at the double bar.

Figure 2: Kurburu's Song.

Source: Courtesy Alfred William Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South East Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1904), 420.

Henry Tate was another who assessed the songs recorded by Howitt and transcribed by Torrance. He noted that:

little is actually recorded in musical notation of the remarkable and characteristic sound fantasies that once rang throughout the length and breadth of Australia that the scattered fragments which have been preserved gather a constantly increasing musical interest and value as time goes on in Dr. A. W. Howitt's 'Native Tribes of Southern Australia' three dirge-like songs recorded by Dr. Torrance possess considerable rhythmic interest. ... Another was composed by Kurburu, a native minstrel who lived where the town of Berwick now stands. It was generally believed by the native composers that they were inspired by some mystic power, something 'that rushes down into the breast of the singer.' This belief is exhibited in Kurburu's song. Kurburu had killed a native bear and its Murup or spirit entered his breast and made him sing.⁷⁴

74 Henry Tate, 'Aboriginal Music', *Argus*, 30 June 1923, 7.

Kurrburra's engagement with the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate

During the period from 1839 to 1844, Kurrburra was closely associated with the endeavours of Assistant Protector William Thomas. Thomas was heavily dependent on the senior Aboriginal men of his district whose knowledge of English was superior to his knowledge of local Kulin dialects.⁷⁵ These men, such as Kurrburra, were cultural intermediaries or 'go-betweens' whose knowledges of geography, natural history and ethnography were translated into the process of settler colonialism.⁷⁶

Kurrburra was resident at Thomas's protectorate stations at Tubberubbabel, on the Mornington Peninsula in 1840, and at Narre Narre Warren in 1840. In terms of other localities he is known to have frequented, they include the Boonwurrung encampment on the south banks of the Yarra River, at Melbourne (1840, 1844), Arthurs Seat (1840), Tooradin (1840), Dandenong (1840), Kornwarra (Western Port) (1840), Toolum (Balnarring) (1840), Kurk Billessee (near Tooradin) (1840), and Kullurk (Coolart) (1849). Very little is known of Kurrburra between 1845 and his death in February 1849 at Kullurk.

Kurrburra is first named in Thomas's journal in an August 1839 list of Aboriginal people determined to go from Melbourne to Thomas's new headquarters at Arthurs Seat.⁷⁷ From this list we learn that Kurrburra was aged 42, and had 2 wives—Kurundum (Quondom) aged 20, and Bowyeup, aged 16—and 2 children, details unknown.

On 12 March 1840, at 'Toorodun', Thomas noted that 'a trifling altercation took place between Kurboro and another respecting' an Aboriginal woman, but on Thomas's interfering, Kurrburra desisted and said he was 'no more sulky' [that is, angry].⁷⁸ Six days later, encamped at Dandenong, Thomas observed 'Kurburrer a little sulky but pacified him'.⁷⁹ The following month, Kurrburra was one of many sick Aboriginal people in Melbourne who were attended to by Thomas.⁸⁰

On 7 June 1840, Kurrburra was at Thomas's Tubberubbabel station at Arthurs Seat.⁸¹ On 5 July 1840, Old Tuart (aka Old Murray) persuaded Kurrburra and his family to leave the station, but Thomas overtook them and they returned

75 Rachel Standfield, 'Protection, Settler Politics and Indigenous Politics in the Work of William Thomas', *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History* 13, no. 1 (2012): 5.

76 Felix Driver, 'Intermediaries and the Archive of Exploration', in *Indigenous Intermediaries New Perspectives on Exploration Archives*, ed. Shino Konishi, Maria Nugent and Tiffany Shellam (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015), 16, doi.org/10.22459/II.09.2015.

77 Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*, 1:40.

78 Thomas Journal 12 March 1840 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

79 Thomas Journal 18 March 1840 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

80 Thomas Journal 12 April 1840 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

81 Robinson Journal 7 June 1840 in Clark, *Journal of George Augustus Robinson*.

to Tubberubbabel with him.⁸² Thomas knew that the success of his district's protectorate stations was dependent upon his ability to ensure that leading Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung elders such as clan-heads and *wirrirraps*, and their families, spent as much time as possible at the stations. This was one of his motivations in cultivating relationships with community leaders, and partly explains his distress when they left the stations and, in this instance, his pursuit of Kurrburra and encouragement to return to the protectorate station. This instance also serves to highlight the colonial practice of 'strategic intimacy' whereby a colonial agent (Thomas) builds a working relationship with a local elite and cross-cultural broker (Kurrburra), to gain access to local knowledge, extend their reach, and thus improve their governance.⁸³

In August 1840, Kurrburra speared one of his wives and was most remorseful afterwards. Her identity is not revealed. Thomas gave the following account of the dispute:

During my absence, Kurboro had speared his lubra [wife] & the encampment had been in a cabal, he came to me [ere?] I knew it & told me the tale said she no fetch me water & I big one sulky [angry], plenty sorry me, plenty cry, big one sulky, Marminarta, knowing that such is their custom, I reproved him, went to his lubra [wife] & dressed the wound they both seemed sorry.⁸⁴

Thomas abandoned his protectorate station at Arthurs Seat in September 1840, and established a new station at Narre Narre Warren that same month. Over the next 18 months Kurrburra visited Narre Narre Warren on several occasions, coming and going as he pleased. For example, on 25 November 1840 he left the station with his 2 wives and others to go to Kornwarra, Toolum and Kirkbillessee to catch eels, promising to return after 5 nights.⁸⁵ Kurrburra returned on 6 December 1840, and left after 5 days. Thomas noted that he left the station without saying goodbye to him.⁸⁶

Thomas had established a ritual at the station where he greeted the residents in the mornings and bid them good night in the evenings, so the fact that Thomas mentioned Kurrburra's departing without bidding him farewell is a clear indication that Thomas felt slighted. It also reveals the limitations of Thomas's influence in his role as protector.

82 Thomas Journal 5 July 1840 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

83 Tony Ballantyne, 'Strategic Intimacies: Knowledge and Colonization in Southern New Zealand', *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, n.s., 14 (2013): 11.

84 Thomas Journal 6 August 1840 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

85 Thomas Journal 25 November 1840 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

86 Thomas Journal 11 December 1840 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

On 31 March 1841, there was a major brouhaha at the Narre Narre Warren station involving Kurrburra's wife Kurundum who struck Mrs Wilson, the station manager's wife, because she would not give her any water, on the grounds that she could not spare any. Kurundum snatched some water and threw it into Mrs Wilson's face, and then struck her with her digging stick. William Thomas broke and burned Kurundum's stick in front of her as a punishment and cautioned that he would not suffer any insult to Europeans on the protectorate station. Kurrburra then punished his wife by spearing her in the arm. Thomas recorded 'I was much displeased with Kurboro who was also in tears. I showed great sorrow & spirted water from my mouth for some time on the wound, pretended to mourn'.⁸⁷ Kurrburra and his 2 wives returned to Narre Narre Warren on 7 April 1841,⁸⁸ and left on 30 April 1841.⁸⁹ On 7 June 1841, Jemmy, Mr Murray's son, and a nephew of Kurrburra, was stabbed and later died near Thomas Ruffy's Cranbourne Inn. Cannon suggests the murderer was Kurrburra, although Thomas was told it was a Boonwurrung man named Yal Yal.⁹⁰

In one of Thomas's notebooks there is a series of sketch maps of the mountains around Yering station in the upper Yarra district, drawn by Thomas from information he gleaned from Kurrburra.⁹¹ In the sketch maps there is a series of 53 mountain peaks and under each is annotation that provides the name of the peak and sometimes the name of the leading man of the mob or patriline associated with the peak, whether or not the associated mob is defunct ('all gone dead'), and other locative information. Thomas annotated the sketch maps: 'There can be no doubt from these names & ranges taken from an old wandering Black named Kurburra (alias Ruffy) how particular the Blacks are of giving names to every portion of country'. Their existence is an important part of Kurrburra's legacy, especially as an interpreter of Aboriginal cultural heritage to Thomas, who assiduously recorded it.

Exactly when the sketch maps were produced is contested—Wesson suggests they date from 1842,⁹² Stephens from 1844 or 1845.⁹³ Clark's analysis, working on the assumption that the sketches were made at Ryrie's station, has confirmed that Thomas visited the district on at least 4 occasions: late August 1840, March 1841, July 1841 and March 1845.⁹⁴ All things considered, Clark believes the July 1841 date is the most probable. Kurrburra identified 4 peaks as 'his country': Mown-nabil, Narn,

87 Thomas Journal 31 March 1841 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

88 Thomas Journal 7 April 1841 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

89 Thomas Journal 30 April 1841 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

90 Michael Cannon, *Black Land, White Land* (Melbourne: Minerva Australia, 1993), 16.

91 'William Thomas Notebook' in Robert Brough Smyth Papers, MS 8781, Box 1176/6(b), State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

92 Wesson, *Aboriginal Flora and Fauna*.

93 Marguerita Stephens, 'White Without Soap: Philanthropy, Caste and Exclusion in Colonial Victoria 1835–1888 — a Political Economy of Race' (PhD dissertation, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 2003), 66.

94 Clark, 'The Tara-Waragal'.

Poromekerner and Noronedo. With regard to Mown-nabil, Thomas's annotation was 'Very large high mount, Kurboras country'. Regarding Narn, Thomas wrote: 'Very high, Kurboras country'. Smyth noted that there is a mountain named Narn in a range north-east of Western Port 'that is inhabited by a strange animal named Wil-won-der-er, with a stone-like human form'.⁹⁵ This strange animal may be the same animal that Haydon referred to in 1846. Regarding Poromekerner, Thomas wrote: 'Very high. Kurboras coun[try]', and, finally, for Noronedo: 'Kurboras country Wagabil'.

On 17 February 1842, Thomas recorded that Kurrburra was involved in a 'cruel punishment and fight' at Narre Narre Warren when he 'seriously maltreated' his sister, 'for marrying herself' without his consent.⁹⁶ Kurrburra, his family, and others left the station on 28 February 1842 for Western Port Bay.⁹⁷

Thomas abandoned the Narre Narre Warren site in March 1842 and based himself at the confluence of the Merri Creek and Yarra River, from where he visited Aboriginal camps in Melbourne and the surrounding districts. Almost a year passes before Thomas next mentions Kurrburra in his journal, when on 11 February 1843, he wrote 'Kurboras informs me that his sister's child is dead'.⁹⁸

The next we learn of Kurrburra is in November 1844, when he arrives in Melbourne and stays at Thomas's quarters at the Merri Creek.⁹⁹ In late November, Kurrburra and his wife were staying with the Boonwurrung at their usual encampment on the south side of the Yarra River, near the Princes Bridge. What had become of Bowyeup is not known. Thomas administered medicine to the ill Kurrburra on 29 November,¹⁰⁰ and again on 3 December, when Thomas gave him a 'trifle to get bread & sugar'.¹⁰¹ Six days later, Thomas returned to the Yarra encampment and put a poultice on Kurrburra's hand.¹⁰² Kurrburra and his wife Kurundum are listed in an 1846 census of Boonwurrung family connections.¹⁰³

Thomas's final journal entry concerning Kurrburra is dated 27 February 1849; when working at Robinson's office in Melbourne, he heard news from a settler named Rutherford that Kurrburra had died at Kulluk.¹⁰⁴ Kulluk is Coolart, at Sandy Point, on the Mornington Peninsula. The circumstances of his death are not known.

95 Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. 1: 455.

96 Thomas Journal 17 February 1842 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

97 Thomas Journal 28 February 1842 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

98 Thomas Journal 11 February 1843 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

99 Thomas Journal 7 November 1844 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

100 Thomas Journal 29 November 1844 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

101 Thomas Journal 3 December 1844 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

102 Thomas Journal 9 December 1844 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

103 William Thomas Papers, CY3083, Mitchell Library.

104 Thomas Journal 27 February 1849 in Stephens, *Journal of William Thomas*.

Conclusion

This article has resurrected from the colonial archive a fragmentary but nevertheless fascinating biography of Kurrburra, a Boonwurrung *wirrirrap* and bard, who lived in the first half of the nineteenth century. He is at times an elusive figure as his engagement with colonial society was only partial; however, through piecing together the scattered information that survives in colonial sources, we have shown that Kurrburra, one of several famed *wirrirrap* in colonial Melbourne, assumed a special place in the colonial history of the Boonwurrung people and the wider Kulin confederacy. Research of this kind is an example of bringing ‘hidden histories’ to the surface, and highlighting and celebrating ‘forgotten heroes’ in settler colonialism. Using selected materials from Aboriginal protectorate records and the settler colonial archive we have sought to bring to life the intermediary Kurrburra. Kurrburra’s special talents ensured that in the eyes of William Thomas and others, he became a ‘character’ or minor celebrity in the literature of settler colonialism.

Kurrburra shared his name with that of the Boonwurrung name for the koala, and possessed of their *murup* (spirit), he was renowned for his ability to receive the counsel of *kurrburras*, and had the gift of extrasensory perception and precognition. The spirit of a *kurrburra* had taught him a *gunyuru* (song), that was relayed to A.W. Howitt by William Barak in the early 1880s. Howitt had Kurrburra’s song described and transcribed by composer G.W. Torrance. Other than his healing and counselling faculties, Kurrburra was also famed for his heroic slaying of a feared orangutan-like cryptid that lived in the ranges north of Western Port. He was one of the last surviving members of the Yawen djirra clan that had suffered at the hands of internecine conflict between the Boonwurrung and their eastern neighbours the Ganai. During the early years of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, he was closely associated with assistant protector William Thomas, who was responsible for the Western Port District. Another exemplar of Kurrburra’s role as a cultural intermediary and informant for Thomas was the detailed map of landscape features in the Yarra Ranges and the identification of Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung patriline associated with these named places.

Kurrburra died in late 1849, though the circumstances of his death are not known. Nevertheless, Kurrburra retains a very important place in the early history of Melbourne and the Aboriginal protectorate of the Port Phillip district.

Intellectual lives, performance and persona: The making of a people's historian

SOPHIE SCOTT-BROWN

Introduction

The most important aspect of British historian Raphael Samuel (1934–1996) was his entire way of *being* a historian. Samuel, a former youth member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, is best known as a founder of the first British New Left (1956–62), the driving force behind the first History Workshop movement (1963–79), which pioneered a distinctive ‘history-from-below’, and as the author of *Theatres of Memory* (1994), an idiosyncratic exploration of the past in contemporary culture. Despite all this, he did not advance an especially ground-breaking historical argument or historiographical theory. He set his sights elsewhere, on the democratisation of history making. To achieve this end, he created a distinctive persona as a people’s historian through which he projected a radical transformation of what it meant to study history. Yet posterity was both condescending and neglectful, and until recently the full significance of Samuel to postwar historiographical thought has received little close attention.¹

The problem, as Herman Paul observed, is that intellectual history tends to focus on historian’s products but not their ‘doings’ or performances.² Certainly, this was the case for Samuel, as Sheila Rowbotham, a former Workshopper, noted of her old friend:

Writers leave visible traces, they contrive their own record. Organisers, in contrast, have a powerful impact upon those with whom they have direct contact but tend to live on in oral memory alone.³

If Rowbotham is right, conventional approaches to intellectual history, which give little space to *in situ* performances, will not suffice. This is where biography, with its traditional concern for the individual, offers traction, making visible those powerful personalities who leave unconventional records of themselves. But how, then, can, or should, this relate to intellectual history?

1 Sophie Scott-Brown, *The Histories of Raphael Samuel: A Portrait of a People's Historian* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2017), doi.org/10.22459/HRS.05.2017.

2 Herman Paul, ‘What is a Scholarly Persona? Ten Theses on Virtues, Desires Skills and Desires’, *History and Theory* 53, no. 3 (2014): 348, doi.org/10.1111/hith.10717.

3 Sheila Rowbotham, ‘Some Memories of Raphael Samuel’, *New Left Review* 1/221 (1997): 128–32.

Intellectual biography would seem a natural point of fusion, but this is not straightforward. Reflecting on the 'return' of biography, Malachi Hacoen, biographer of Karl Popper, commended its capacity to illuminate the 'situational logic' underpinning intellectual work, making it 'an essential methodological component' of intellectual history.⁴ He went on to sound a note of caution, however, saying, in reference to the Popper study, that while it could be 'a stage, in the history of economic discourse', it could not 'answer the broader and perhaps more weighty historical questions broached by the latter, relating to the triumph of economic paradigms, and their historical influence'.⁵ Biography, by this account, seems restricted to providing richer contextualisation around intellectual work.

Two points might be made in reply. First, it is hard to discern how the relationship between formation and product (in this case economic theory) is formulated. How can we judge the point when formation and product divide? To make such a call risks falling into a myopic presentism⁶ that takes the product (discerned in the present) as *the* necessary and inevitable outcome towards which all inquiry must be directed. The effect of this is to overdetermine some aspects of cultural process while neglecting others.⁷ This downplays the significance of chance, contingency and improvisation in intellectual work. Hacoen argued that only by making discourse, as an integrated whole, visible is critical assessment possible, but the very assumption that discourse is an independent entity, rather than a way of seeing, simply reproduces its discursive power. Criticality, in this sense, becomes only the substitution of one model for another. We could, with Ray Monk, reject the idea that there *is* anything beyond ongoing formation and that thought is indeed unfolded through small, ad-hoc, and often contradictory, connections.⁸

Second, Hacoen assumed a limited view of intellectual biography as, by definition, a fundamentally empirical exercise. Not only does this neglect the question of the assumptions that frame the selection of such empirical evidence, it may also, as Nick Salvatore contended, be more a question of the biographer's approach than something inherent to the form. For Salvatore, by contrast, biography offers an ideal lens into the interplay between the individual and the micro, meso and macro scales of intellectual life through which they operate.⁹

4 Malachi Hacoen, 'Rediscovering Intellectual Biography and Its Limits', *The History of Political Economy* 39, no. 1 (2007): 9–29, doi.org/10.1215/00182702-2006-036.

5 Hacoen, 'Rediscovering Intellectual Biography', 27.

6 See David L Hull, 'In Defense of Presentism', *History and Theory* 18, no. 1 (1979): 1–15.

7 Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam, 'Introduction', in *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, ed. Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007).

8 Ray Monk, 'Life Without Theory: Biography as an Exemplar of Philosophical Understanding', *Poetics* 28, no. 3 (2007): 527–70, doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-007.

9 Nick Salvatore, 'Biography and Social History: An Intimate Relationship', *Labour History* 87 (2004): 182–94.

How are these scales first defined and then traversed? Shadowing parallel tendencies in intellectual history, there have been 2 dominant approaches.¹⁰ The first, ‘internalist’, commonly associated with the ‘history of ideas’ approach,¹¹ focuses on the subject primarily as a mind interacting with other minds mostly through ‘texts’ (broadly construed to include a range of cultural artefacts). Scale here is a question of moving from the ‘unit-idea’ outwards to the idea within a longer historiographical tradition, a course generally plotted by reconstructing a textual genealogy. The second, ‘externalist’, draws on sociology and anthropology to emphasise the subject as a situated body, responding to the constraints imposed by a specific time, place and social structure.¹² Ideally, historians should seek ways to integrate the strengths and insights afforded by both perspectives.

It is to this idea of interplay—between minds and bodies, performances and products, contexts and scales—that Herman Paul proposed the concept of ‘scholarly persona’. This he defined as ‘a culturally sanctioned model, embodied by influential figures, that defines certain types of behaviours as being essential for a scholar’.¹³ Such a model, he argued, is rooted in deeply held beliefs about the nature, status and purpose of intellectual work, generated within and through the wider cultural resources available to think with, mediated by the concrete situations in which such resources are encountered.¹⁴ Beliefs, with varying degrees of deliberation, produce a framework of values that determine a set of virtues (prized moral behaviours). Virtues inform preferred intellectual practices and behaviours, including everything from research methods to teaching and writing style.

For Paul, persona, as a composite of personal, social and intellectual identities, provided an important missing historiographical link capable of integrating factors.¹⁵ Here again, however, there is a risk that persona becomes something reductive and static, a predetermined cultural caricature that makes little provision for the contradiction and conflict experienced by the empirical personality. It can also retain a privileging of product, simply promoting the importance of performances in contributing towards a given outcome. What if, as in the case of Samuel, the means were the end? That the crafting of an alternative scholarly persona—an alternative way of being a historian—*was* the idea?

10 Dominick LaCapra, ‘Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts’, *History and Theory* 19, no. 3 (1980): 245–76, doi.org/10.2307/2504544; Donald Kelley, ‘Intellectual History and Cultural History: The Inside and the Outside’, *History of the Human Sciences* 15, no. 2 (2002): 1–19, doi.org/10.1177/0952695102015002123.

11 The classic example is Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: The Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

12 This approach is exemplified in Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Cambridge: Polity Books, 1988). For a good recent example see Thomas Akehurst, *The Cultural Politics of Analytic Philosophy: Britishness and the Spectre of Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

13 Herman Paul, ‘A Missing Link in the History of Historiography: Scholarly Personae in the World of Alfred Dove’, *Journal of European Ideas* 45, no. 7 (2019): 1011–28, doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2019.1628084.

14 Herman Paul, ‘Introduction’, in *How to be a Historian: Scholarly Personae in Historical Studies 1800–2000*, ed. Herman Paul (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 1–14.

15 Paul, ‘A Missing Link’, 1011.

The challenge, then, is to retain persona as a useful ‘integrational’ tool, able to forge wider connections, but to bring from biography the greater sense of precision and dynamism permitted by a finer grained perspective. In responding to this, activist intellectuals, like Samuel, offer particularly good case studies because, as Jeffrey Alexander observed, they consciously orientate themselves to meaning and the mechanics of its making.¹⁶ Given their motivation to change minds and stimulate action in others, they often display a heightened awareness of both the intellectual and social environments they inhabit, and consciousness of themselves as actors within them. Still, there is a need to step carefully. Just because a biography takes an activist intellectual as its subject does not automatically mean that it will privilege performance over product.

Take, for example, recent studies of E.P. Thompson, Samuel’s fellow historian and New Left activist. While these illuminate how Thompson’s personal values shaped his political commitments or, equally, how New Left debates informed his masterpiece, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), they do not examine his intellectual persona as the medium through which these component pieces were fused and translated into practice.¹⁷ This misses a vital insight into both the brilliance and limitations of his political and historical imagination. Thompson’s early Methodist education, with its emphasis on public demonstrations of morality, combined with his early ambitions for a career on the stage, later taste for Elizabethan and Jacobean literature and sense of himself as, first and foremost, a politically committed *writer*, all mean that one cannot judge his historical writing as one might other ‘professional’ communist historians such as Christopher Hill or Eric Hobsbawm.¹⁸ As Jonathan Ree noted, in Thompson’s case there was always theatre, he was a polemicist more than a theoretician.¹⁹ By implication, then, works like *The Poverty of Theory* (1976), his notorious attack against French sociology, should not be read as counter-theory, but in the same spirit as one might approach Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal*.

In this article, however, I focus on Samuel and argue that his cultivation of the ‘people’s historian’ provides an ideal case study of the potential persona has to offer biography as intellectual history. To explore these ideas further I first examine how he came to refine it in response to heated historiographical debates around politics, theory and method. I then turn to consider more closely the ‘conversation’ between cultural persona and empirical person by examining the ‘backstage’ of his people’s

16 Jeffrey Alexander, ‘Dramatic Intellectuals’, in *The Drama of Social Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 106.

17 David Eastwood, ‘History, Politics and Reputation: E.P. Thompson Reconsidered’, *History* 85, no. 280 (October 2000): 634–54, doi.org/10.1111/1468-229x.00167; Scott Hamilton, *The Crisis of Theory: EP Thompson, The New Left and Post War British Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Madeleine Davis, ‘Edward Thompson’s Ethics and Activism 1956–1963: Reflections on the Political Formation of *The Making of the English Working Class*’, *Contemporary British History* 28, no. 4 (2014): 438–56, doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2014.962910.

18 E.P. Thompson, *Beyond the Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 52; Dorothy Thompson, ‘Introduction’, in *The Essential E.P. Thompson* (New York: The New Press, 2001).

19 Jonathan Ree, ‘A Theatre of Arrogance’, *Times Educational Supplement*, 5 June 1995.

historian, the points at which what he presented in public was the result of previous strategising, sometimes at variance with his private thoughts.²⁰ Finally, I assess his effectiveness and offer some concluding thoughts on biography, persons and persona.

The people's historian: Contexts and contours

In this section, I examine the making of Samuel's 'people's historian' persona as a dynamic process. Although forged in the early days of the History Workshop, it was given its most explicit formulation during a series of fraught historiographical debates that erupted during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This context is important as it was through defending the Workshop that he was able to negotiate and adjust the role as a distinctive political project.

The Workshop had modest beginnings. On joining the teaching staff of Ruskin College in 1962, Samuel found the emphasis on teaching for, and to, the Oxford Special Diploma demoralising for many of the adult students and out of keeping with the spirit of the college's radical history.²¹ Established in 1899, Ruskin's roots were firmly in worker's education—education that would be of use and benefit to the advancement of the working class as a whole, not only individual members—and the college had had, from the start, close ties with the trade union movement. By the early 1960s, although reduced in number, many students still identified as workers and attended through union-funded day release schemes.²²

For Samuel, the former communist, this had formed its primary attraction, although the reality turned out to be different. The curriculum for the diploma was remote from the lived experiences of his working-class students, much less any wider class struggle. It existed simply to lever the students to a standard required for entry into a conventional degree program. Finding this both insulting and a lost opportunity,

20 I draw here on the ideas of Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1990).

21 See Lawrence Goldman, *Dons and Workers: Oxford and Adult Education since 1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), ch. 5, doi.org/10.1086/ahr/103.1.184; Jonathan Rose, 'The Whole Contention Concerning the Workers' Educational Society', in *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 256–97, doi.org/10.3138/cjh.38.1.130. For alternative accounts see Roger Fieldhouse, 'The 1908 Report: Antidote to Class Struggle?', in *Ruskin College: Contesting Knowledge Dissenting Politics*, ed. Geoff Andrews, Hilda Kean and Jane Thompson (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999), 35–58; B. Jennings, 'Revolting Students: The Ruskin College Dispute 1908–9', *Studies in Adult Education* 9, no. 1 (1977): 1–16, doi.org/10.1080/02660830.1977.11730740.

22 Geoff Andrews, Hilda Kean and Jane Thompson, eds, *Ruskin College: Contesting Knowledge Dissenting Politics* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999).

he began the Workshop as a small pedagogical project in which the students were encouraged to develop their own research plans with his support. The results were an astonishing series of densely empirical studies of working-class life.²³

Capturing the countercultural mood of the times, Workshop meetings quickly expanded, drawing many from outside the college who were attracted by the provision of a platform to explore alternative forms of history making. The first national Women's Liberation conference, for example, grew out of a Workshop meeting (1972), followed by ground-breaking sessions addressing the histories of women and children. Such plurality, while undoubtedly the Workshop's great strength, was also the source of conflict. Workshopppers shared a common appetite for alternative forms of history but defined this quite differently. As Bill Schwarz later recalled, the Workshop, in a microcosm of wider debates among the postwar left, was soon beset by the collision of intergenerational political 'moments' and agendas.²⁴ On the one hand, there was the 'socialist humanism' characteristic of E.P. Thompson (and, broadly, of the first British New Left²⁵), with its historical concern for individual experience as showcased in his magisterial *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).²⁶ On the other was a burgeoning Marxist cultural theory, heavily influenced by Antonio Gramsci and French Marxism but, in domestic idiom, stemming first from the work of Raymond Williams,²⁷ later substantially developed, along different lines, by Stuart Hall, Perry Anderson and the second New Left generation.²⁸ Complicating this binary were the dynamics between the traditional class-based politics represented by the unions and those of emergent groups such as the women's movement led, at Ruskin, by Rowbotham, Anna Davin and Sally Alexander. There were further tensions still between worker student participants, academic historians and political activists.

23 Early Workshop pamphlets included: Frank McKenna, *A Glossary of Railwaymen's Talk*; Sally Alexander, *St Giles Fair, 1830–1914*; Bernard Reaney, *The Class Struggle in 19th Century Oxfordshire*; Stan Shipley, *Club Life and Socialism in mid-Victorian London*; Dave Douglass, *Pit Life in County Durham*; John Taylor, *From Self Help to Glamour, the Working Men's Club, 1860–1970*; Alun Howkins, *Whitsun in 19th Century Oxfordshire*; Dave Marson, *Children's Strikes in 1911*; Dave Douglass, *Pit Talk in County Durham*; Jennie Kitteringham, *Country Girls in 19th century England*; Edgar Moyo, *Big Mother and Litter Mother in Matebeleland*.

24 Bill Schwarz, 'History on the Move: Reflections on History Workshop', *Radical History Review* 57 (2002): 202–20; see also Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 45–124, doi.org/10.1215/9780822396512.

25 E.P. Thompson, 'Socialist Humanism: An Epistle to the Philistines Part I/II', *The New Reasoner* 1, Summer (1957), 105–43; Madeleine Davis, 'Reappraising Socialist Humanism', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 18, no. 1 (2013), 57–81, doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2013.750175.

26 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963).

27 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958); Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961).

28 Dennis Dworkin, 'Socialism at Full Stretch' and 'Culture is Ordinary', in *Cultural Marxism in Post War Marxism*, 45–124.

In its original form, as a project with the Ruskin students, the Workshop's case studies of working-class life appeared to align closest with Thompson's work and to be seen as a continuation of his project.²⁹ Thompson, however, was sceptical about the claim, seeing the Workshop's focus as myopic.³⁰ Samuel, too, rejected it stressing first, the Workshop's more extensive approach to everyday life,³¹ and second, importantly, the equal concern given to the act of history making as with the product.³² Working-class people (or other socially marginalised groups) should not, he argued, defer the cultural production of history to others—even those, like Thompson, who performed this service exceptionally well.³³

By the time that *Village Life and Labour* (1975), the first Workshop edited collection, was published, Samuel's editorial was already defensive. Against Thompson's charge that the Workshop evacuated 'large territories of established political and economic history', he argued that there was nothing intrinsically 'micro' or 'macro' in the study of history.³⁴ He went on, setting out an early framing of the Workshop's approach to people's history: 'the Workshop began as an attack on the examination system, and the humiliations which it imposed on adult students', later adding: '[I]n the early years, when such research activity was wholly unofficial, even—from the point of view of the curriculum—clandestine, there was not even recognition or support from their own college.' This last claim was later contested by H. D. Hughes, the College's principal at the time, suggesting that Samuel may have used some poetic licence to bolster his defence.³⁵ In contrast, failure on behalf of authority figures was juxtaposed by the determination and sacrifices made by the students: '[A]ll that sustained them was the seriousness of their commitment, and the awakening pride that comes from mastering a craft for oneself.' On the 'job' of the socialist historian Samuel was non-committal, vaguely stating that it was 'keeping the record of the oppressed'.³⁶ In discussing his and Davin's, his co-editor and companion at the time, personal role in the process, he employed heavily domesticated imagery: 'the manuscripts line the passageways, crawl up the stairs to sleep at night, and invade the children's bedroom. For us, as for many of the contributors, they are the troubled product and labour of love'.³⁷

29 Harvey Kaye, *The Education of Desire: Marxists and the Writing of History* (London: Routledge, 1992), 122.

30 Terry Hott, 'Interview with EP Thompson', *The Leveller*, 22 January 1978, 22.

31 Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: The Past in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994), 320.

32 Raphael Samuel, 'General Editor's Introduction', *Village Life and Labour* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), xix.

33 Hilda Kean, 'Public History and Raphael Samuel: A Forgotten Radical Pedagogy?' *Public History Review* 11 (2004): 51–62; Sophie Scott-Brown, 'The Art of the Organiser', *History of Education* 45, no. 3 (2016): 372–90.

34 Quoted in Samuel, 'General Editor's Introduction', xix.

35 H.D. Hughes, 'History Workshop', *History Workshop Journal* 11 (1981), 199–201.

36 Samuel, 'General Editor's Introduction', xix; Brian Harrison, 'Interview with Raphael Samuel', 23 October 1979, transcripts held in the Raphael Samuel Archive (RSA), Bishopsgate Institute, London.

37 Samuel, 'General Editor's Introduction', xxi.

In 1976, the *History Workshop Journal* was launched, intended to provide an extension of the Workshop meetings, a platform and outlet for the work produced:

Like the Workshop, like the pamphlets and books in the Workshop series, the Journal will address itself to the fundamental elements of social life—work and material culture, class relations and politics, sex divisions and marriage, family, school and home. In the Journal we shall continue to elaborate these themes but in a more sustained way.³⁸

Whatever the original intentions, the journal soon became the focal point of fierce debate with the publication of Richard Johnson's critical examination of Thompsonian socialist-humanism (1978) that, he argued, had been an important, but limited, developmental stage towards a more sophisticated theorisation of culture and ideology.³⁹ His article prompted a barrage of responses published the following year.⁴⁰ A little later, Samuel's fellow Ruskin tutor David Selbourne joined the fray with an extensive critique of the Workshop's 'naïve empiricism' and lack of theoretical substance.⁴¹

Samuel did not contribute directly to these exchanges; he was still struggling to define his ideas. In an interview with his friend, the oral historian Brian Harrison in October 1979, when asked what 'socialist history' was, he stumbled and evaded the question: 'it's an awfully big question, Brian. No, I think it'll lead us off into a different track to this. It's too big a question.'⁴² At the same time, he rejected his earlier claim made in 1975: 'I mean, I say "the job of the socialist historian is *keeping the record of the oppressed* ..." and I don't know how that came about, and it certainly wasn't one that we'd been using before then quite explicitly like that'.⁴³

History Workshop 13, December 1979, was intended, and deliberately choreographed, to be a reckoning of these matters, but, in the event, it was something of a disaster. The Workshop's jubilant pluralism finally imploded, the meeting was simply too big, with too many themes and papers. Many of the Ruskin students felt alienated by the theory-driven work, the theorists largely ignored the historians and spoke among themselves. By far the most devastating event was the bad-tempered exchange between Stuart Hall, Johnson and Thompson on the theme of 'Culture,

38 Editorial Collective, 'Editorial', *History Workshop Journal* 1 (1976): 1.

39 Richard Johnson, 'Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese, and Socialist-Humanist History', *History Workshop Journal* 6 (1978): 79–100, doi.org/10.1093/hwj/6.1.79.

40 Tony Judt, 'A Clown in Regal Purple: Social History and the Historians', *History Workshop Journal* 7 (1979): 66–94, doi.org/10.1093/hwj/7.1.66; Keith McClelland, 'Towards a Socialist History: Some comments on Richard Johnson, "Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese, and Socialist-Humanist History"', *History Workshop Journal* 7 (1979): 101–15, doi.org/10.1093/hwj/6.1.79; Simon Clarke, 'Socialist Humanism and the Critique of Economism', *History Workshop Journal* 8 (1979): 138–56.

41 David Selbourne, 'On the Methods of the History Workshop', *History Workshop Journal* 9 (1980): 150–61.

42 Brian Harrison, 'Interview with Raphael Samuel', 23 October 1979.

43 Samuel, 'General Editor's Introduction', xix; Harrison, 'Interview with Raphael Samuel', 23 October 1979.

Theory and History'.⁴⁴ Impatient with being, as he saw it, 'admonished', Thompson was in no mood to be fraternal.⁴⁵ Not even Hall's measured distinction between culture and 'culturism' could restore peace. It was the last Workshop to be based at Ruskin and seemed to confirm an unbridgeable gulf between the fragmented components of the left.

The experience propelled Samuel into a concentrated period of reflection on what people's history and, by extension, the people's historian, really meant. The first evidence of his conclusions appeared in his editorials to *People's History and Socialist Theory* (1981), the book collection of the Workshop papers. The first addressed the genealogy of people's history. Starting from the early nineteenth century (considerably pre-dating the recent 'discovery' of 'history from below'), he surveyed its appropriations across different times and ideological perspectives, identifying a common link:

People's history, whatever its particular subject matter, is shaped in the crucible of politics, and penetrated by the influence of ideology on all sides ... Each in its own way represents a revolt from 'dry as dust' scholarship and an attempt to return history to its roots, yet the implicit politics in them could hardly be more opposed.⁴⁶

A similar juxtaposition reappeared in unpublished notes relating to Samuel's article 'British Marxist Historians 1880–1980'. Here, again, imported artificiality or cold formality contrasted with homely, organic authenticity:⁴⁷

The Marxist history that emerges from the Birmingham Centre of Contempt Studies [Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies]—a hot house of theoretical—self consciously setting out to naturalise French Marxist structuralism will necessarily be very different from the one that emanates from the kitchens of Spitalfields and L. Pimlico or the terraces of World's End and Wolwroth—the characteristic habitats of the History Workshop Collective.

In recent years the scholarly mode has been no less influential all kinds of books which bear the marks of the PHD even when they take on an explicitly Marxist problematic as with RQ Gray and Gareth SJ.⁴⁸

Ten years later, in *Theatres Of Memory* (1994), Samuel provided further dramatisations, this time with a satirical framing:

44 Raphael Samuel, 'Culture, Theory and History', in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

45 E.P. Thompson, 'Letter to Raphael Samuel', RS 7: 'History Workshop Events', RSA, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

46 Raphael Samuel, 'People's History', in Samuel, *People's History and Socialist Theory*, xx.

47 Raphael Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians 1880–1980', *New Left Review* 1/220, Mar–Apr (1980): 21–24.

48 Raphael Samuel, 'Notes on British Marxist Historians', Samuel 135/ British Marxist Historians, RSA, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

The enclosed character of the discipline is nowhere more apparent than in the pages of the learned journals, where young Turks, idolizing and demonizing by turn, topple elders from their pedestals, and Oedipal conflicts are fought out ... Academic rivals engage in gladiatorial combat, now circling one another warily, now moving in for the kill. In seminars such conflicts service the function of blood sports and are followed with bated breath.⁴⁹

As in the earlier examples, this functioned as a rhetorical device rather than being a serious analysis of academic practice. Nevertheless, brevity and caricature notwithstanding, it drew upon the same technique of deflating the mystique and grandeur of professionalism by presenting it in terms of its 'profane' realities.

If, on the one hand, attending to the everyday could dislodge the dignity of professionals and send them up for laughs, it could also bestow dignity upon those everyday historians, of whom he approved. This could, in one sense, be tragic:

We might begin by recognizing the enormous scholarly input involved in retrieval projects, saluting the courage of those who have risked their lives—and in the case of the scuba-divers occasionally lost them—to enlarge the domain of the historically known.⁵⁰

Or, in another, it might be romantic:

The pawnbroker at the Black Country Museum, Dudley, drawing on local knowledge of the three brass balls—not least that of the town's one surviving pawnbroker—had found a narrative for every object in his store ... The 1920s storekeeper explaining the mysteries and signs of the grocery trade was a mine of information, most of it gleaned, she explained from museum visitors.⁵¹

Like the predecessors he had identified in his 1981 editorial (see above), Samuel's people's history invoked everydayness as an ethical critique of cultural authority.⁵² Against the 'enclosure', remoteness and even hypocrisy of the professional, who turned historical knowledge into a personal commodity, and the theorist, who reduced its complexity to serve their hypotheses, the people's historian was open-ended, humble and worked close to the ground—on the streets, in communities, with people as they really were.

49 Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 4.

50 Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 274.

51 Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 280.

52 For further discussions on the use of 'the ordinary' as a device for social and political critique, see Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

At this point, Samuel made an important additional move. The old activist in him could not settle for description and analysis alone but sought to apply those insights to practice.⁵³ Translated back to history, people's historians could not, then, simply narrate the people's story on their behalf, they had to actively create the conditions in which the people of whom they spoke could become producers of their own history. In many respects, this was the logical conclusion of people's history as an idea. If it had always been an attempt to expand the scope and range of the discipline, expanding the number of participants, of people recognised as history makers, would (theoretically) maximise the diversity of content. As such, the meaning of *being* a historian was transformed from history making as an essentially private occupation to history making as a generative social activity. A people's historian was a practice and a relationship, not a structural thing.

The people's historian: Backstage

By making this shift, from narrator to facilitator, Samuel substantiated his theory through action. Within this, the people's historian's persona was vital. Not only did it literally embody his political ideas, it was its only viable mode of expression. Constrained by the need to show rather than tell (having conceded the authority of the theorist), he had also to enlarge his egalitarian performance to convey his message clearly.⁵⁴ Given this, he had to craft his persona as self-consciously as he would have done a piece of writing.

In what follows, I go 'backstage' of the people's historian to consider the conversation between the cultural persona and the empirical person.⁵⁵ To illuminate this, I draw attention to the points at which what Samuel presented in public was the result of previous strategising, sometimes at variance with his private thoughts. I also consider examples of where this failed and how failure actually helped him to develop better strategies for realising his historical vision.

Accounts from former Ruskin students suggest that Samuel was successful in projecting the sort of warmth necessary to inspire and nurture confidence among those traditionally excluded from intellectual work:

He had this tremendous understanding of the inner inferiority that mature students have in a society that tells them they've missed out. He not only understood what was inside the student, he unlocked it and channelled it in written and verbal debate.

53 See Andrew Feenberg, *The Philosophy of Praxis: Marx, Lukacs and the Frankfurt School* (London: Verso, 2014); Peter Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

54 Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005).

55 Term drawn from Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

There wasn't an ounce of superiority in him. In those tutorials he was often as much the student as the lecturer. He learned from you and you learned from him. He was fascinated by other people's experience.⁵⁶

As with any performance, not all found it to their taste. Selbourne, his Ruskin colleague, and not a working-class student, remarked:

Samuel embodied a peculiar style of privileged patronisation of working people ... He often seemed a kind of vicarious proletarian himself, romanticising the lives and labours of the industrial working class whilst flattering as well as encouraging his students. This often silly class condescension was an uncomfortable thing to observe.⁵⁷

Selbourne may not have liked it, but the fact he saw Samuel's approach as *embodied*, rather than affected, suggests that its integrity held. Yet for all its effectiveness, there were those, especially among his closest friends, who were aware of Samuel's hidden layers. Rowbotham, for example, recognised that:

Raphael was not simply a writer but a renowned organiser, the kind who was an initiator of great projects with a capacity to yoke his fellow to the concept and carry them on regardless of grizzles and groans. The deliberately dozy and slightly dotty front disguised an iron resolution.⁵⁸

Stuart Hall, a long-term friend from Oxford University and former New Left co-founder, had also become familiar with Samuel's *modus operandi*:

His passionate intensity was overwhelming. He could fix you with his deep, dark eyes and, especially when he was trying to persuade you about the unpersuadable, his voice would acquire a deep, rich seductiveness and gradually what you had originally thought to be your 'better judgement' would slowly melt away.⁵⁹

The tensions that Rowbotham and Hall alluded to, between Samuel's presented self and his private intentions, reinforce just how deliberate a creation that persona was. Moreover, these 'cracks' provide insight into the sorts of calculation involved in realising it within the given pragmatics of a situation.

In fact, Samuel's upbringing predisposed him to just such a role and equipped him with the skills required to achieve it. He was only 5 years old when Minna, his mother, followed her sisters in joining the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in

56 John Prescott, 'Genuine Love for Others', *The Guardian*, 10 December 1996. Other student accounts echo this view: Dave Douglass, 'Ruskin Remembered', *Raphael Samuel: Tributes and Appreciations*, 1997; Paul Martin, 'Look, See, Hear', in *Ruskin College: Contesting Knowledge, Dissenting Politics*, ed. Geoff Andrews, Hilda Kean and Jane Thompson (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999), 146–47.

57 David Selbourne, 'The Last Comrade Raphael Samuel, the Ruskin Historian Who Died Last Week Was the Conscience Keeper of the Old Left', *Observer*, 15 December 1996, 24.

58 Rowbotham, 'Some Memories of Raphael', 131.

59 Stuart Hall, 'Raphael Samuel 1934–1996', *New Left Review* 1/221 (1997): 119–27.

1939, quickly becoming a party organiser. Always bright, and frustrated with her suburban life, she threw herself into politics with gusto, becoming a progress chaser in an aircraft factory and later the key organiser of the large Slough branch of the CPGB. A gifted musician, she assumed the roles of literature secretary, class tutor and engagements secretary for the Worker's Music Association.⁶⁰

For a significant portion of his childhood Minna, a one-woman dynamo of public activity, organising, teaching and public speaking, provided an important early model of committed intellectual work. But if she epitomised this role for her son as a child, she did not invent it. As Samuel's essay series, later book, *Lost World of British Communism* (2006), documents the party leadership set out a strong line concerning intellectuals. Rajani Palme Dutt, the CPGB's chief ideologue, expressed it thus in 1932:

[T]here is no special work and role for Communists from the bourgeois intellectual strata ... The intellectual who has joined the Communist Party ... should forget that he is an intellectual (except in moments of necessary self criticism) and remember that he a Communist.⁶¹

It also defined clear roles and modes of practice:

In the localities, too, authority was expected to be self-effacing. Branch secretaries were expected to *comport themselves as co-workers*, taking on a good deal of the dogsbody work, as the price of the trust which reposed in them. At branch meetings he/she was to *exercise a pastoral care, drawing the members in by allocating tasks to them, 'involving' them in the processes of decision making ... encouraging new comers to 'express' themselves.*⁶²

and:

One started at the 'level' of the sympathiser, emphasising common ground, 'building' on particular issues, while at the same time investing them with Party-mindedness. Plied with Party literature, invited to Party meetings, above all 'involved' in some species of Party work ... the sympathiser was drawn into the comradeship of the Party by a hundred subtle threats⁶³

If the party had shaped this role, it did so in dialogue with a distinctive moment in its history: the turn to popular front communism in 1935. The previous policy of class against class had maintained a severe allegiance to class politics, alienating the national branches from any collaboration with other mainstream political groups

60 Raphael Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism* (London: Verso, 2006), 63–68; See also Alex May, 'Keal, Minna (1909–1999)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; Paul Conway, 'Minna Keal: 1909–1999', Classical Music on the Web, April 2000, www.musicweb-international.com/keal/.

61 Rajani Palme Dutt, 'Intellectuals and Communism', *Communist Review*, September 1932, 421–30.

62 Samuel, *The Lost World*, 125.

63 Samuel, *The Lost World*, 125–26.

in their countries. The change in line to popular front, which was announced by Georgi Dimitrov, leader of Communist International, in 1935, was prompted in part by the effective demise of the German branch of the party, whose isolation had rendered it powerless to withstand the rise of the Nazis. It effected a more outward-facing attitude towards other progressive forces and gave a revitalised form to party activism. Although it attracted people to join who would not otherwise have done so, it also altered the functioning of roles within the party, putting more emphasis on the art of friendly persuasion than hard-line combative arguments.

Seventeen years later, in 1952, the party of Samuel's young adulthood had changed again. At the peak of the Cold War, the Soviet Union, no longer the wartime ally, had become the new public enemy. These were tough times, charm and persuasiveness, always important tools, were now essential just to get a hearing. As Samuel recalled in an interview with his friend, the oral historian Brian Harrison:

the great fear of Communism was of being an outcast. The whole effort was simply to accept our legitimacy. And that meant quite a lot of bending, in effect, to, as it were, present a political position in a palatable way, as it were in liberal terms. So a lot of my communism by force of necessity became a re-presentation of belief in terms that could be sympathised with, and ideally, supported by liberals.⁶⁴

As the quote suggests, Samuel was an experienced strategist, accustomed from an early age to translating his ideals into forms that fitted the pragmatics of his situations. In his archive, alongside the voluminous notes and drafts one might expect of an historian, there are a striking number of planning documents from every stage of his career, which give a glimpse of the mechanics of this process. From detailed strategies for the New Left Club network and *Universities and Left Review* (the journal he edited with Hall, Gabriel Pearson and Charles Taylor between 1957 and 1960) to carefully orchestrated breakdowns of Workshop events, they make clear that, as Rowbotham said, the 'deliberately dozy and slightly dotty front' really did mask—and protect—a purposeful agenda.

To see this feature more clearly, let us return to the fateful Workshop 13 that provided a good example of Samuel's planning, his self-control *in situ*, and his response to crisis. As discussed above, from the mid-1970s, the Workshop was besieged by simmering tensions, mostly clustered around the issue and status of critical theory in history, which were fast becoming destructive. As its founder, and at this time its primary driving force, he felt a need to act in order to prevent further bifurcation. So determined was he in this that he undermined the Ruskin Student Collective's decision to make the theme 'Repression and the State', persuading them, instead, to go with 'People's History and Socialist Theory'.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Brian Harrison, 'Interview with Raphael Samuel', 18 September 1987, RSA, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

⁶⁵ Raphael Samuel, 'Post-Mortem of History Workshop 13', RS 7: 'History Workshop Events', RSA.

For someone supposedly committed to playing a supportive role of other people's interests, this was an incongruent move. Samuel went further still, allocating the students a project on 'Worker Historians in the 1920s'. The obvious symbolism was clearly calculated: Ruskin worker-historians presenting on the history of worker-historians offered a potent reminder of the Workshop's roots in empowering working-class people to become cultural producers. Ironically, the poetic significance was lost on the students who failed to become enthused by either the new theme or their project. They regularly missed meetings and put little effort into their own contributions.⁶⁶

Single-mindedly, Samuel forged ahead, and Workshop 13 became the biggest and most ambitious event to date with a huge program and ensemble cast. Local history panels sat alongside global history; theory-led panels nestled against community history projects; and feminism, colonialism and labour history threaded in and across the program. Pluralism had always been one of the Workshop's professed values but the sheer size and scope on offer here was dysfunctional. Perhaps this was the point: to show that no single theory or methodology could ever hope to capture all the possible varieties of experience. In the event, it only fostered frustration.

The Thompson–Hall–Johnson plenary, held on the Saturday evening, was an equally strategic move that Hall, at least, was aware of, later recalling the feeling of being 'heavily disguised as the ghosts of culture, theory, history'.⁶⁷ If, in Samuel's slightly cumbersome drama, he was there representing 'culture', Thompson was history.⁶⁸ Against Thompson's notorious prowess as a polemicist, Johnson, as the young 'theorist', stood little chance.⁶⁹ Presumably, Samuel anticipated that such a stage-managed confrontation would provide a reconciliatory airing, but he was wrong. The result was a bad-tempered collision that left the audience so uncomfortable that the intended roundtable discussion on the topic, due to be held the next day, was cancelled.

In Workshop 13, Samuel had mismanaged the performance. Rather than celebrate plurality as a virtue, it had simply reinforced the destructiveness of fragmentation among the left. Sensing contrivance, his 'actors' had not wanted to play their assigned parts. He now had to act quickly to retrieve something of the situation. His first response was silence. As with the earlier debates in the journal, he did not react directly. He had not intervened in the plenary (despite chairing it) but had been responsible for cancelling the second session. In the following days, as a steady stream of complaints came in from upset attendees, he maintained this stance. He corresponded with an unapologetic Thompson about the incident and even

66 Samuel, 'Post-Mortem of History Workshop 13'.

67 Stuart Hall, 'Memories of Raphael Samuel', *New Left Review* 1/221 (1997): 119–27.

68 Ree, 'A Theatre of Arrogance'.

69 Ree, 'A Theatre of Arrogance'.

drafted a letter that seemed about to defend, or at least contextualise, his former comrade's outburst, but he did not complete it and no part of it was published.⁷⁰ What he did produce was a very detailed 'post-mortem' in which he systematically assessed each of the problems in turn.

Samuel's silence frustrated some who felt he ought to have taken more of stand,⁷¹ but keeping slightly aloof gave him time to manage his response. Given his commitment to the twin virtues of collectivity and plurality, he needed to avoid becoming positioned as another combatant in the debates. Instead, he addressed the matter obliquely, using his editorials, sweeping historiographical surveys on 'People's History' and 'History and Theory', to reassert the multiplicity, variety and fluidity of history making.

The tone of these pieces was good humoured, done in his capacity as the Workshop's genial general editor. He saved his more astringent critique of the left for his essay 'British Marxist Historians 1880–1980' that he chose to publish in *New Left Review* (pointedly not in the *History Workshop Journal*), the journal he had co-founded and been forced to abandon following the departure of Hall as chief editor, a role assumed by Perry Anderson in 1962 who had, consequently, led the journal in a far more explicitly theoretical direction.

Once again it was history, or rather histories, that provided his preferred method of critique. The current debates surrounding theory, he argued, privileged 'the epistemological status of Marxist concepts, rather than their political or historical determinations', but this was to miss the point.⁷² Far from being a single developmental entity advancing through time, Marxism was always an ensemble of ideas 'so far from being immune to exogenous influences. Marxism may rather be seen—in light of its history—as a palimpsest on which they are inscribed'.⁷³ The argument is by now familiar: to Samuel, the importance of historical knowledge was not that it endowed predictive authority on a select few who understood it properly, but that it undermined the very plausibility of totalising claims while, at the same time, revealing multiple interpretive possibilities.

Now, with the Workshop itinerant, he faced the challenge of reinventing his people's history project for a new age. The 1980s, dominated by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government, was a much colder political climate for the left than the mid-1960s when the Workshop had begun. At the same time, history in popular culture appeared to be enjoying something of a renaissance, appearing on film, television, books and, not least, through the boom and flourishing of a heritage

70 Raphael Samuel, 'Draft letter to History Workshop Journal', RS 7: 'History Workshop Events', RSA.

71 Carolyn Steedman, oral communication with author, University of Warwick, May 2012.

72 Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians 1880–1980', 21.

73 Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians 1880–1980', 24.

industry.⁷⁴ Like many of his colleagues on the left, Samuel was initially sceptical.⁷⁵ Thatcher's championing of 'Victorian Values' such as self-help provided an attractive smokescreen for drastically reduced public spending. Her invocation of national glory during the Falkland Islands conflict appeared an equally cynical bid to boost her flagging popularity. He called the Workshop to arms, hosting sessions on 'Patriotism' (1984) to combat Falklands jingoism, and 'Victorian Values' (1987), and wrote articles bewailing the gentrification of his beloved Spitalfields neighbourhood.⁷⁶

Yet, while Samuel's personal scruples may have inclined him to view the commodification of the past with distaste, the people's historian could not help but perceive an opportunity: this history was *popular*. To condemn everyone who was moved by an appeal to national identity, who watched a Merchant Ivory film or visited a country house as either a Neo-Tory or a member of the ignorant masses was to resume the role of the historian-as-legislator, or cultural elite, which had to be avoided all costs, out of keeping, as it was, with his projected ideal.

By the time *Theatres of Memory* (1994), his monumental study of the past in popular culture, was published, Samuel seemed to have completely switched track. This sudden change astonished both historians and the political left alike. Richard Hoggart felt the book to be the product of a 'traumatised Marxist' struggling to overcome the breakdown of his former identity.⁷⁷ Patrick Wright substituted trauma for vanity, suspecting that Samuel was motivated by a desire to 'play the part' of the people's historian.⁷⁸ Stefan Collini similarly perceived something disingenuous about a trained historian of Samuel's calibre being so willing to abandon his responsibilities as a social critic.⁷⁹

As discussed above, *Theatres* was certainly full of caricatured provocations towards his favourite bogeymen (the theorist and the professional historian), but there was as usual more to it than met the eye. The book worked across 3 agendas. First, it maintained its defence of history-in-the-plural by rejecting

74 See: Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); David Cannadine, 'Conservation: The National Trust and the National Heritage', in *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (London: Penguin Press, 2002), 224–43; Alex Murray, 'The Heritage Industry and Historiographic Metafiction: Historical Representations in the 1980s', in *The 1980s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. Philip Tew, Emily Horton and Leigh Wilson (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 125–50, doi.org/10.5040/9781472543332.ch-005.

75 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985); Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1983).

76 Raphael Samuel, 'A Plaque on All Your Houses', *The Guardian*, 17 October 1987.

77 Richard Hoggart, 'Review of *Theatres of Memory*', *Political Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (1995): 215–16.

78 Patrick Wright, 'Review of *Theatres of Memory*', *The Guardian*, 5 February 1995.

79 Stefan Collini, 'Speaking with Authority: The Historian as Social Critic', in *English Past: Essays in History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 95–105.

both normative and singular historical accounts of the heritage industry (as, for example, the product of postcolonial trauma, a late capitalist fetish, an instrument of conservative hegemony).

Second, it recognised a far more extensive range of activities as valid forms of history making, reinforcing Samuel's commitment to inclusivity. Developing this further still, other chapters offered forensic excavations of the active thinking processes at work when people were apparently 'passively' consuming the past, watching a period drama, buying an old farmhouse jam, or visiting a living museum.

Finally, interspersed throughout the book, never announced but clearly on show, were subtle techniques for stimulating further inquiry, the people's historian's *raison d'être*. The chapter 'Dickens on Film' was as much a guide for how to connect a personal experience into a historical discussion as an examination of Dickensian film adaptations. More explicit still were the suggestions offered for how to use photographic sources as prompts to further investigation: 'school photographs, if they were illumined by comparative analysis might be equally serviceable for the study of corporate loyalties and pedagogic ideals'.⁸⁰ In this jubilant, if not always coherent, combination of impassioned polemic, popular history and pedagogical enthusiasm, *Theatres* was truly emblematic of Samuel's people's historian at large and in action.⁸¹

Conclusion

Was Samuel successful in anticipating, and crafting, his alternative 'culturally sanctioned' model of the historian in the age of plurality? Yes and no. While no transformational cultural shift has occurred in how professional historians understand, practice and receive recognition for their role, or how they are typically represented in popular culture, there is, undeniably, a greater variety to what is considered acceptable as historical research.⁸² There is also the growth of public history courses, many of which, in the United Kingdom, owe some direct links to Samuel's influence (via, for example, former students, Workshoppers or simply readers of *Theatres*). Outside of the academy, perhaps the more likely site for realising this persona, the growth of public engagement programs attached to cultural institutions, such as archives, museums and libraries, have created a new strata of educational roles that, without the associated pressures of a formal educational setting, have afforded opportunities to accommodate greater creativity. Often, these roles are filled by the graduates of public history courses. And, finally, it is worth noting that Samuel's

80 Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 332–33.

81 Sophie Scott-Brown, 'Setting the Stage: Performance, Personality and Politics in *Theatres of Memory*', *Rethinking History*, published online 4 June 2019.

82 See Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

ethical critique of professional history, far from becoming redundant, still stands. In his book *Historians and the Uses of the Past* (2012), Jorma Kalela was still able to urge the need for a fundamental attitudinal change from historians towards 'giving respect' to different forms of knowledge and 'creating trust' among their students.⁸³

For the purposes of this article, however, questions of legacy are interesting in as far as they indicate the success, or otherwise, in generating the cultural change he desired, but legacy is not the main point. Of more relevance is the extent to which Samuel's case demonstrates the potential of persona as a concept able to integrate scales and capture multidimensional complexity. Into his people's historian were fused older traditions of people's history, selected strands of Marxist thought, along with postwar debates on historiography and politics. This, in turn, was mediated by how his personal positioning allowed him to receive, perceive and experience them, and then renegotiate through the pragmatic demands imposed by the 'real time' contexts of place and personalities in which and with whom he worked.

So far, this supports Paul's claim for persona as an integrational concept, necessarily moving across, between and through different historiographical factors. What this article has attempted to add is how closer attention to feedback between the cultural persona and the empirical personality enriches this further. At points in Samuel's life, such as History Workshop 13, the desire to enforce the cultural agenda was insufficiently tempered by an accurate reading of the empirical context, resulting in both behavioural inconsistencies (the imposition of authority while effecting anti-authoritarianism) and, ultimately, failure. At other times, such as the early heritage debates in the 1980s, the empirical personality, and its instinctively negative reaction, was, in effect, 'admonished' by the persona, this time with the result of expanding the scope of his historical imagination.

Life encompasses all that we are and all that we aspire to be. If biography is ultimately, as Hachohen suggested, defined by empirical detail and precision, that need not—ought not—preclude inquiry into the wider reaches of our social imagination nor overlook how this, in turn, is translated back to us in solid forms. It should, however, prompt us to seek out the sort of conceptual tools that provide us as full a range of intellectual movement as possible, while also keeping us close to the ground.

83 Jorma Kalela, *The Historian and the Uses of the Past* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

The outsider anthropologist? Leonhard Adam in Germany and Melbourne

MICHAEL DAVIS¹

Leonhard Adam was ‘a lonely figure, humiliated by the university’s and the community’s lack of respect for his learning and his world status in scholarship’.² That was the view of the esteemed Pacific scholar, historian and anthropologist Greg Dening, who worked briefly for Adam at Melbourne University during the 1950s. He observed that Adam was ‘always on the edge of establishment at the University of Melbourne’.³ Yet the Melbourne academic Robyn Sloggett has written of Adam that ‘Melbourne society embraced him’, supporting her observation by detailing the many writing and lecturing activities Adam was engaged with.⁴ How can these two apparently contradictory assessments of Adam be reconciled?⁵

I want to suggest in this article the possibility that, to some extent, both may have had some veracity. I would hesitate to use the term ‘embraced’ to denote the relationship Adam had with the Melbourne scholarly and intellectual community. But I argue that it is feasible to surmise that, while Adam was fully engaged in a wide range of pursuits in the academic and intellectual world of Melbourne and Australia, at the same time he experienced a sense of isolation, of being outside the establishment. It is this latter quality or sensibility that Dening was likely to have observed.

1 Most of my research on the Leonhard Adam Archives at the University of Melbourne Archives was assisted by a small grant as a Council of Australian University Librarians/Australian Society of Authors (CAUL/ASA) Fellowship in 2016. I am grateful to the organisers of that fellowship for the support. Versions of this paper were presented at the University of Melbourne on 23 August 2016, and at the conference ‘Global Histories of Refugees in the 20th and 21st Centuries’, University of Melbourne, 8 October 2016.

2 Greg Dening, *Readings/Writings* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1998), 94.

3 Dening, *Readings/Writings*, 98.

4 Robyn Sloggett, “‘Has Aboriginal Art a Future?’” Leonhard Adam’s Essay and the Development of the Australian Aboriginal Art Market’, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2 (2015): 169, doi.org/10.1177/1367877913515871.

5 Leonhard Adam’s daughter Mary-Clare Adam has commented that ‘as the years went by, my father increasingly felt that his world status in his field was not appreciated by his colleagues at the University of Melbourne’, but she adds further, that ‘Robyn [Sloggett] is also correct that Melbourne society embraced him, particularly his allies, the professors of Fine Arts and Law ... Also groups of “Society” such as the Leepers and their entire circle’, personal correspondence, 18 September 2020. The Leeper family, Valentine, Molly and Geoff, were friends of Adam; see Robyn Sloggett, “‘Has Aboriginal Art a Future?’”, 175.

To explore the idea of Adam as an outsider, I want to complicate this notion, to bring out its messiness, and investigate the possibility that he was simultaneously outsider and insider in both his personal and his professional lives. I suggest that the loneliness Denning had observed in Adam was a manifestation of many factors and influences. One important aspect was shaped by his accumulated experiences as an ostracised academic in Nazi Germany, his travel to Australia on the prison ship HMT *Dunera*, and his subsequent internment in a camp at Tatura in rural Victoria as an 'enemy alien'.⁶ Adam's German Jewish heritage (on his father's side) also contributed to his being both an outsider and an insider, a theme I discuss later in this article.

To explore the complexity of his identity, I examine Adam's academic activities in Berlin during the 1930s, at a time when the Nazis were gaining ascendancy, and then look at his work at the University of Melbourne in later years, during the 1940s to 1950s. I discuss the impacts on Adam's academic activities in Berlin with the rise of Nazi anti-Semitism, and explore his later interests in Indigenous ethnography and art at Melbourne University in the context of the prevailing academic and intellectual influences during that period.

Adam as outsider and questions of identity

The complex question of his identity, the experiences and traumas of fleeing anti-Semitism, and enduring the challenges of internment, were all factors contributing to what I refer to as Adam's outsider status. He did not regard himself (at least not explicitly) as an outsider; however, this is the way in which I characterise him on the basis of having explored aspects of his research, writing and editing, and the milieu in which he sought to carry out his academic work in Berlin and, subsequently, in Melbourne. Having a Jewish father meant that Adam was classified by the Nazi regime as 'non-Aryan', and therefore deemed to be undesirable by the regime. The historian Ken Inglis stated that Adam's 'family history was sufficiently Jewish for the Nazis to strip him of all official positions'.⁷ Although Adam did not explicitly declare a Jewish identity in his correspondence, he referred to himself as being of 'partly non-Aryan heritage'.⁸ He explained this in a letter on 15 October 1941 to Ada Duncan, a welfare activist who had many roles, including at that time director of the Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council:

6 Ken Inglis, 'The Odyssey of Leonhard Adam', *History Australia* 14, no. 4 (2017): 561–78, doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2017.1389234.

7 Ken Inglis, 'From Berlin to the Bush', *The Monthly*, August 2010, 50.

8 Adam's daughter Mary-Clare Adam comments "'Of partially non-Aryan heritage" is Nazi language, but this was also terminology that my father was used to hearing in Germany in the 1930s'. She adds that 'He was classified as a Jew when he applied for a grant to go to England', personal correspondence, 18 September 2020. It is also useful to note that Adam's mother converted to Judaism, and his parents had a Jewish wedding; Mary-Clare Adam, personal correspondence, 18 September 2020.

In 1930, I was appointed member of the Board of Experts to the American, African and Oceanian departments, Berlin Ethnograph Museum (appointment by the Minister of Education). Prof. Kohler was, among others, editor of the *Zeitschrift fuer* [sic] *vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft* (founded in 1878), an international centre of comparative studies in Oriental laws and primitive laws. I became his co-editor in 1917 and, after his death in 1919, editor-in-chief. Since then, the journal was still more devoted to ethnological and oriental subjects. In 1933 I lost all my official posts for my partly non-Aryan parentage but, for some time, could still carry on the journal as this was a private enterprise.⁹

It is worth considering further the question of Adam's Jewish identity. While his father was Jewish, his mother had converted to Judaism, and was later, in 1938, 'induced to renounce her conversion to Judaism'.¹⁰ Adam's own reflections on his identity suggest a complicated, possibly ambivalent self-characterisation. As noted, he had referred in some of his private correspondence to his 'partly non-Aryan' heritage. This was one of the classifiers employed by the Nazi regime's machinery of anti-Semitic laws and regulations.¹¹ Yet, as Inglis has noted, when asked about his identity, Adam at times had also referred to himself as 'Prot' (i.e. Protestant). Inglis explains:

Melbourne friends sometimes assumed that Leonhard was Jewish, but this was not a perception he encouraged. On official forms filled in soon after his arrival in Australia, he gives his religion as 'Prot.', and when applying for permission to remain permanently in Australia on 29 August 1944, he describes himself as 'of European race' and adds 'Not Jewish, although late father was Jewish'.

To further complicate the picture, Inglis notes that, Adam 'combined a thoroughly secular view of the world with a reverence for both Jesus and Buddha'.¹² This multifaceted, perhaps troubled sense of identity may also find some of its roots in the context of German Jewish identity more broadly. Being of Jewish descent in Germany already brought with it some ambiguities and tensions for Adam. German Jews had sought to identify as both Jewish and as German. Within a context of Enlightenment culture, the tensions between assimilation and maintaining a distinct Jewish identity were central to identity formation for many German Jews, and contributed to what Mendes-Flohr describes as the 'bifurcated soul of a German Jew':

9 Leonhard Adam to Ada Duncan, Director, Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council, 15 October 1941, 'From Dr. Leonhard Adam, No. 35000, No. 4, Internment Camp, Tatura, Victoria', Box 1, Folder 1/2, Adam Papers, Accession 1994.0060, University of Melbourne Archives. On Ada Duncan, see Diane Langmore, 'Duncan, Ada Constance (1896–1970)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/duncan-ada-constance-10061/text17747, published first in hardcopy 1996, accessed online 2 September 2020.

10 Inglis, 'The Odyssey of Leonhard Adam', 563–64.

11 Mary-Clare Adam has commented that this was also terminology that her father was used to hearing in Germany in the 1930s. Personal correspondence.

12 Inglis, 'The Odyssey of Leonhard Adam', 568–69.

by virtue of the adoption of *Kultur* and *Bildung*—grounded in the cultivation of universal values sponsored by enlightened, liberal German discourse—German Jews were no longer simply or unambiguously Jewish. Their identity and cultural loyalties were fractured, and they were consequently obliged to confront the challenge of living with plural identities and cultural affiliations.¹³

The desires, struggles and successes of assimilation or acculturation, and emancipation into German society, only to have this fractured and utterly rejected under the Nazis, undoubtedly brought further stresses into this complex of German Jewish identity.¹⁴

What might we conclude then about Adam's self-identity as Jewish? His own descriptions of himself as 'Prot.', or as 'of non-Aryan descent', while also apparently gesturing towards Buddhism and Christianity,¹⁵ suggest multiple identities at play. This plurality is congruent with Adam's cosmopolitan and global world view espoused throughout his professional writings. Yet within this, we might also detect a counter-narrative that speaks to ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty of identity, possibly encompassing what the cultural theorist Sander Gilman described as Jewish self-hatred.¹⁶ Yet how is it possible that an individual like Adam, seemingly confident and successful in his career, and well regarded by friends, colleagues, students and peers, might be haunted by the shadows and echoes of anti-Semitism, of a sense of being 'Other', and of being an outsider? In the context of Adam's successes in work and life, perhaps Denning's observation was particularly pertinent.

My argument that Adam was perhaps both an outsider and an insider might find further support by drawing on the observations of one of his students, John Mulvaney. Commenting on Adam's lectures between 1947 and 1957 in the history department at the University of Melbourne, Mulvaney wrote: 'This is not the place to reflect upon the extraordinary scholarship of these lectures, nor upon their total unreality in a context of utilitarian undergraduates pursuing the ever rising middle classes through so many periods and places.'¹⁷ This suggests that Adam's erudition, breadth of scholarship and European cosmopolitanism, while making him a gifted presenter, were somehow misplaced at the time. Reminiscing about R.M. Crawford, the former head of the department, Mulvaney wrote about Crawford's influence on Adam:

13 Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 3.

14 On the 'cultural emancipation' of German Jewry and its implications for their intellectual, political and artistic lives, see George L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

15 Inglis, 'The Odyssey of Leonhard Adam', 568–69.

16 Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

17 John Mulvaney in Manning Clark, A. L. Burns, Hugh Stretton, D. J. Mulvaney, J. S. Gregory, W. Macmahon Ball and W. K. Hancock, 'R. M. Crawford: Some Reminiscences', *Historical Studies* 15, no. 57 (1971): 13.

The small museum of ethnography and primitive art which Adam built up in the Department was testimony to Crawford's co-operation, as much as to Adam's ingenuity. It was always an experience in the departmental tea-room when Adam burst in triumphantly bearing his latest trophy from Tibet, Timbuktu or Tahiti. Had Melbourne University followed Crawford's lead and established a teaching department of anthropology, this collection would have proved invaluable. It was no fault of Crawford's that all his initiative on Aboriginal studies came to nothing within his university. He was in celebrated company, for Sir Baldwin Spencer, A. W. Howitt (a Council member) and F. Wood Jones had failed before him.¹⁸

This comment captures well the ambiguity of Adam's work at Melbourne University, which was at one and the same time innovative, engaging and scholarly, but also out of place and time. The notion of outsider status might also be construed in a negative sense, if Denning's suggestion of Adam as a 'lonely' figure, who was 'humiliated' by the scholarly community, is interpreted in that way. It is very likely that Adam's experiences under the Nazis had inculcated in him a sense of being apart. Yet, I also argue that his outsider status was a manifestation of the particularities of his work in Aboriginal art and ethnography in Melbourne at a time and place when these ways of working were not common. But as will be seen, the calibre and volume of Adam's work also established him in some senses as an 'insider' who, in Sloggett's terms, was 'embraced' by Melbourne society.

It was not uncommon for individuals from a Jewish background to experience a sense of alienation and marginalisation in Australia, and these feelings may, in some sense, have also facilitated an anthropologist's ability to retain a 'distance' from the peoples they were working with. This was the case, for example, with the anthropologist Ruth Latukefu, née Fink. Born in Frankfurt am Main in 1931, she and her family were able to escape the Holocaust and settle in Sydney in 1939. She wrote candidly that 'I think my marginal and somewhat alienated situation made me self-aware in many situations, as though I was an outsider watching myself':

As a child, I never felt completely at ease with people other than my immediate family. I was also very sensitive to signs of hidden prejudice, and this guarded outlook and tendency not to take things at their face value were probably helpful in later fieldwork. Feeling an outsider myself made it easier for me to show empathy with Aboriginal people when I came to know them, and to understand how they felt as an oppressed coloured minority, socially outcast from mainstream Australian society.¹⁹

While Adam's experience and outlook were different from that of Fink, his approach to ethnographic and anthropological work was nonetheless similarly influenced by his Jewish heritage, albeit implicitly, and by his experiences under the Nazis and as a refugee. His views on the role of the individual Aboriginal artist and on the potential

18 Manning Clark et. al., 'R. M. Crawford: Some Reminiscences', 13.

19 Ruth Fink Latukefu, 'Like a Film Running Backwards', in *Before It's Too Late: Anthropological Reflections, 1950–1970*, ed. Geoff Gray, Oceania Monograph 51 (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2001), 77.

for Aboriginal art to become commercially viable might also have been influenced by his German Jewish background, with its tensions around cultural progress, assimilation, and intellectual and artistic achievement. The context in which he worked in pre-Nazi era Berlin offers possible insights into how he developed such perspectives.

Intellectual and political context in Germany during the 1930s

During the 1930s under the Nazi regime, anthropologists and other social scientists were increasingly caught up in the brutal ideology. It was a complex scenario, with conflict, cooperation and resistance, as the Austrian anthropologist Andre Gingrich explained: 'German anthropology in the Nazi period involved complex scenarios of collaboration, persecution, and competition.'²⁰ At this time, 'academic anthropology's integration into the Third Reich was a relatively smooth process, as was the case with many other fields of the humanities'.²¹ Another academic, Sabine Jell-Bahlsen, has examined the transformation of ethnology under the Fascists in Germany, writing that 'when the Nazis seized power, there was an increasing pressure on teachers and graduate students to join the Nazi party, or at least to align themselves clearly with party doctrine'.²² This was to have a profound effect on the discipline and its practitioners, including Adam.

In 1934, as Nazification continued to assert its stranglehold, a 'legal decree introduced political Nazi criteria for academic promotion to positions as senior lecturers and professors'.²³ With the growing anti-Semitic proscriptions:

In 1935 the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnography, and Prehistory introduced an Aryans-only clause for new members, as did most other anthropological and academic associations in Germany of those years. In 1938 the same society excluded all its remaining Jewish members, among them Franz Boas in the United States. By that year, virtually all anthropologists with a Jewish background who had not already been forced to emigrate had lost their professional jobs in Germany.²⁴

Adam was one of the anthropologists 'who were forced into emigration or were harassed, persecuted, jailed, tortured, or murdered'.²⁵ His exclusion—which was to have lasting impacts on him professionally and personally—can be illustrated by

20 Andre Gingrich, 'German Anthropology during the Nazi Period: Complex Scenarios of Collaboration, Persecution and Competition', in *One Discipline, Four Ways: British, German, French, and American Anthropology*, ed. Fredrik Barth, Andre Gingrich, Robert Parkin and Sydel Silverman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 111.

21 Barth et al., *One Discipline, Four Ways*, 112.

22 Sabine Jell-Bahlsen, 'Ethnology and Fascism in Germany', *Dialectical Anthropology* 9, no. 1/4 (June 1985): 319.

23 Gingrich, 'German Anthropology during the Nazi Period', 114; see also Walter Dostal, 'Silence in the Darkness: German Ethnology during the National Socialist Period', *Social Anthropology* 2, no. 3 (1994): 251–62.

24 Gingrich, 'German Anthropology during the Nazi Period', 114.

25 Gingrich, 'German Anthropology during the Nazi Period', 117.

detailing his experiences with an ethnology textbook that he had initially established, and was publishing articles in and editing, called the *Lehrbuch der Völkerkunde*. The book, which continued for many years as a respected ethnological resource, had originally been conceived by Adam. But with the introduction of anti-Semitic laws, he was unable to continue his editorial role, and Konrad Preuss took over.²⁶ Adam did, however, maintain his involvement, by publishing papers in the book. But he was subject to continued opposition and hostility that infected the entire milieu of writing, editing and publishing in anthropology. A Nazi sympathiser, Walter Krickeberg, a follower of earlier forms of diffusionism who became curator for North America at the Berlin museum, had attacked Preuss for 'publishing two articles by a "non-Aryan" person, Leo Adam'.²⁷

Adam outlined in a letter to Ada Duncan, who had assisted in his eventual release from Tatura, his long involvement in the textbook and the problems he had endured under the Nazis:

Early in 1938, I was eventually compelled to resign the editorship of my journal, largely because I had praised the work done by Malinowski, Raymond Firth, and the Royal Anthropological Institute, in a German Handbook of Ethnology (*Lehrbuch der Voelkerkunde*) [sic] to which I had contributed the chapter on primitive law, etc.²⁸

This experience seems to have haunted him for the rest of his life. Writing in 1958 to Fred McCarthy, curator of anthropology at the Australian Museum, Adam described how the first edition of the *Lehrbuch*, 'inaugurated by myself, was destroyed by the Nazi censor'.²⁹ The *Lehrbuch* had been a significant part of Adam's work, and, despite his traumatic experiences with it under the Nazis, he later proudly promoted its value in a letter to the Edinburgh-based bookseller, printer and publisher James Thin:

I believe there is a need for a textbook like this in the British Empire. The U.S.A. have produced numbers of textbooks and there is still no end to it. But in the U.K. we have only the small volume 'Anthropology' by my dear late friend, the Rector of Exeter College, Oxford: R. R. Marett; and we have Raymond Firth's volume 'Elements of Social Organization' (London, 1951. Watts & Co). Neither of these two has the great variety of different chapters like our 'Lehrbuch'. The 'Notes and Queries' of the R. Anthropological Institute are not a textbook for students but a guide for field workers.³⁰

26 Preuss, like Adam, was also wide ranging in his disciplinary interests. Jell-Bahlsen states that he 'had studied history, geography, and to a lesser extent ethnology', Jell-Bahlsen, 'Ethnology and Fascism in Germany', 322.

27 Jell-Bahlsen, 'Ethnology and Fascism in Germany', 320.

28 Adam to Director, Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council, 15 October 1941, Adam Papers. Adam to F. D. McCarthy, 15 June 1958, Adam Papers.

29 Adam to F. D. McCarthy, 15 June 1958, Adam Papers.

30 Adam to James Thin, Esq., Director, Oliver & Boyd Ltd, Edinburgh, 20 November 1958, Adam Papers.

Despite anti-Semitic accusations of partisanship, or allegations levelled at him of having had allegiance to particular anthropological approaches considered to oppose Nazi ideology, as a transdisciplinary, humanist and pragmatist, Adam's cosmopolitan and global approach to anthropology enabled him to publish papers that were not 'aligned' specifically with either or both of the prevailing 'schools' of thought in anthropology.³¹ His reputation was such that he gained the attention of leading scholars in his discipline. Some of those people were, however, frustrated at their inability to assist in securing his release from the Tatura internment camp. Writing in February 1941, the then elderly German-born anthropologist Franz Boas, by now residing in America and near the end of his life, wrote to a colleague, Arthur Kohler, 'I really do not know what I can do for Leonhard Adam. I have had him for years on the list of those whom I should like to help, but no opportunity has ever offered.'³² The well-known anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski was also concerned about Adam's plight, and provided a letter of support:

I have known Dr. Leonhard Adam personally for the last four or five years. I have heard him lecture and take part in discussions and seminars; and, of course, as every anthropologist, I know his published work and his reputation among scholars.

The qualities of Dr. Adam's scientific work are well known, so I have only to add that I am one of those who appreciate his contributions to the comparative study of Law and Primitive Jurisprudence very highly. He also has a good experience of museum work, a subject, however, on which I am less qualified to speak. In his research work among the Nepalese and Indian prisoners in 1918 he shows great potentialities as a field-worker, should opportunities arise.

... There can be no doubt that Dr. Adam is highly qualified for a teaching appointment which involves some museum work and the study of law and custom with a wide sociological background.³³

With this kind of support and encouragement, and given his wealth of experience in comparative law, ethnology and museum studies, Adam had the confidence and skills to deliver impressive lectures at the University of Melbourne. Despite this success, his accumulated experiences of anti-Semitism, escape from Nazi Germany, imprisonment on the *Dunera*, and internment in Australia inflected, albeit in subtle ways, his intellectual pursuits. His academic work both in Germany and then in Australia positioned him, in a sense, 'apart from' or 'outside' the dominant strands of ethnological thinking, but at the same time, he was also engaged across multiple

31 Jell-Bahlsen, 'Ethnology and Fascism in Germany', 320.

32 Franz Boas, Department of Anthropology, Columbia University in the City of New York, to Dr. Arthur Kohler, 2514 Piedmont Avenue, Berkeley, California, 17 February 1941, Adam Papers.

33 Copy of a testimonial from Dr M. Malinowski, Prof. of Anthropology in the University of London – no date, Adam Papers.

disciplines. This complex straddling of borders and margins, of belonging but also standing outside, is likely a factor arising from his Jewish heritage and his experiences arising from that.

Following his release from Tatura in 1942, Adam worked briefly at the Melbourne Museum before taking up an appointment at the University of Melbourne.³⁴ His work there began to gain attention and made an impression on friends and colleagues. In 1942, at the height of World War II, Adam's friend and mentor, the Oxford University anthropologist R.R. Marett, wrote to Adam:

I am greatly interested to hear of your work at Melbourne. It is all-important, even in these times of stress, to keep alive the spirit of scientific research in Australia, and not least of all in relation to the anthropology and prehistory of their own vast continent and region. If they cannot do it properly, it would be a disgrace; nay, the world has a right to demand it of them.³⁵

Adam's work in Melbourne was cosmopolitan, wide-ranging and infused with his sense of curiosity and enthusiasm for extending and crossing disciplinary boundaries and conventional schools of thought. While these qualities and values gained him support and admirers among many in the scholarly community, they may also have been a factor in setting him apart from the academic and intellectual milieu in Melbourne. As a Jewish German refugee, presenting in public in a somewhat formal European style, and having the perspective of a polymath, it is likely that he may have inculcated a sense of difference from the perspectives of some of his contemporaries.

Adam in Melbourne: Bridging disciplines

By the time Adam arrived in Melbourne in 1940, he had already established himself professionally in Berlin, having been deeply engaged in anthropology and historical and ethnological jurisprudence, and this had enabled him to develop a wide network of contacts among the scholarly community. He maintained many of these connections throughout his life, and his correspondents included anthropologists and academics in a range of disciplines, editors and publishers of academic books and journals, museum curators, collectors, booksellers, and many others. Some of Adam's correspondence continued over many years, and included conversations about his major, long-lasting works in progress. For example, he was working on a large book project, 'Arts of Primitive Peoples', for a series edited by Nikolas Pevsner, a task that

34 Sloggett, "Has Aboriginal Art a Future?"

35 R. R. Marett, Exeter College, Oxford, to Adam, 27 October 1942, Adam Papers, Accession 2011.0013, University of Melbourne Archives.

became a lasting preoccupation. Writing in 1960 towards the end of his life, he explained his wide-ranging and long-term interests in anthropology to John Barnes, then head of anthropology and sociology at The Australian National University:

It is now over ten years that I have been working at the manuscript of my 'Arts of Primitive Peoples' for Pevsner's 'Pelican History of Art', and although the African chapter is ready, the Asiatic one approaching completion in a few weeks, and a few American sections also being ready, the whole volume is not yet done.³⁶

He continued:

All the more I enjoy studying, as a welcome interruption, treatises overlooking and surveying, like your presidential address, the realm of cultural anthropology from a high level, showing achievements, shortcomings and necessary tasks for the future. It was now precisely half a century ago that I began my academic studies—mainly in law, with ethnology as a side-line at that time. But my studies in American—later also Indian—ethnology and archaeology began as early as fifty-three years ago. Thus, looking back at the international progress in both physical and cultural anthropology, one can only admire the progress made by colleagues in many countries.³⁷

These extracts show how Adam's academic interests were pursued within a global context, and also over a considerable period. They suggest an individual who proudly maintained a European cosmopolitan intellectual ethos, working within the bounds of an academic institution in the 1950s in Melbourne.

Adam's prolific output ranged across legal anthropology and Indigenous art and ethnography. *Primitive Art*, his best-known work, was first published in 1940 and reissued in several revised and enlarged editions. In this work he employs the notion of 'primitive' in its archaic sense of hierarchy and progress, but nonetheless qualified this primitivist discourse by explaining:

'Primitive art', then, is merely a general term covering a variety of historical phenomena, the products of different races, mentalities, temperaments, historical events, and influences of environment.³⁸

Primitive Art was well received, and attracted comments and reviews from a wide international readership. Inglis asserted that the book 'made Leonhard's name around the English-speaking world'.³⁹ The renowned British sculptor Henry Moore, in a brief reflection on 'primitive art', was 'prompted by an excellent, solid little book called *Primitive Art*, by L. Adam, which has just appeared'. He commended *Primitive Art* on its accessibility to the wider public. Writing during the scarcity of World War II, when the British Museum (whose collections had formed the basis

36 Adam to Prof. J. A. Barnes, Head of the Dept. of Anthropology & Sociology, ANU, 1 May 1960, Adam Papers.

37 Adam to Prof. J. A. Barnes, 1 May 1960.

38 Leonhard Adam, *Primitive Art* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd, 1963), 31.

39 Inglis, 'The Odyssey of Leonhard Adam', 564.

for much of Adam's work in this book) was closed, Moore commented: 'It is within everyone's reach in the sixpenny Pelican Series, and if it receives the attention it deserves, it should bring a great many extra visitors to the British Museum when its Galleries reopen.' He added that Adam 'does not regard primitive art in the condescending way in which it used to be regarded'.⁴⁰ Another commentator stated that '[f]rom a scholarly perspective the book contained little original fieldwork, but was brilliantly written, an intelligent summary of other people's research'.⁴¹

Adam's academic interventions straddled genres, disciplines and intellectual pursuits in postwar Melbourne, placing him outside the conventional modalities of thinking. An interdisciplinarian in a milieu that was both organisationally and temporally bounded by entrenched disciplinary orientations and boundaries, he taught and practised anthropology in a university that had no anthropology department. He saw the connections between Indigenous art as art, and also as ethnography, extolling its aesthetic values. Furthermore, he envisaged commercial and economic opportunities for Indigenous artists who, as he saw it, would benefit from a viable arts and craft movement. He appreciated the educational potential in Indigenous art, and also understood its historical contexts, thus venturing into discourses of art history and historiography that were at best only just beginning to emerge in Melbourne at that time. For all of these reasons, Adam was out of time and out of place: both insider and outsider.

Adam's ability to see the connections between art, art history, aesthetics and ethnography was demonstrated in most of his publications, and in his private correspondence. In a paper published in 1944, 'Has Aboriginal Art a Future?', he argued that this art was 'a movement, defined by particular styles and particular forms and with an aesthetic sensibility that placed it within an art historical discourse, and beyond ethnography'.⁴² Sloggett stated that 'Although not acknowledged by Adam, his 1944 essay reflects his experiences as a German Jew and his own experiences of cultural loss and physical separation'.⁴³ She suggested that Adam's views on the importance of Aboriginal art in modernising contexts derived from his own personal experience:

He saw the brutal attacks by the Nazis that expunged cultures and subcultures across Europe. He witnessed the destruction of books he had authored, and experienced his own disempowerment and the fragmentation of his family. His interest in

40 Henry Moore, 'Primitive Art. 1941', in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, ed. Jack Flam, with Miriam Deutch (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), 271. The piece by Moore included in this collection was taken from *The Listener* 25 (24 April 1941).

41 Jaynie Anderson, 'The Creation of Indigenous Collections in Melbourne: How Kenneth Clark, Charles Mountford, and Leonhard Adam Interrogated Australian Indigeneity', *Les actes de colloques du musée du quai Branly Jacques Chirac* [online], 1 | (2009): 3, 28 July 2009, accessed 7 September 2020, journals.openedition.org/actesbranly/332; doi.org/10.4000/actesbranly.

42 Sloggett, "Has Aboriginal Art a Future?", 176.

43 Sloggett, "Has Aboriginal Art a Future?", 169.

strengthening contemporary cultural identity was not to do with salvaging cultural material or archaic practices, but rather about art production as evidence of the preservation of culture, and as support for an intellectually robust, economically viable and culturally dynamic society. For Adam art enabled Aboriginal culture and identity to claim a place in the academy with all the benefits that thus accrued.⁴⁴

The essay was perhaps the seminal piece that displayed his keenness to bridge disciplines and genres, and which also set him outside established views. Sloggett explains:

There were good reasons for Adam to publish this essay in a new and experimental magazine. He was unambiguously and provocatively discussing contemporary Aboriginal art as a modern and innovative movement. In doing so he was not addressing the question ‘Has Aboriginal art a future?’ to the anthropologists involved with the study of Aboriginal art, nor to the government administrative officers or missionaries involved in managing the lives of Aboriginal people who produced the art. Instead Adam was talking to Australia’s avant-garde intelligentsia: the artists, writers, collectors, patrons and academics who were the audience of the magazine and the taste-makers in Australia.⁴⁵

Adam’s innovative, interdisciplinary views also gained attention through an exhibition he curated in 1943 for the National Gallery of Victoria, another moment that illustrated his interests in historicising Indigenous art. That exhibition, in one recent analysis, was construed as ‘radical’, in its ‘incorporation of Australian Aboriginal arts into the canon of primitive art that was accomplished by its transfer from ethnological to fine art display’.⁴⁶ Another writer has claimed that the 1943 exhibition ‘fundamentally re-established the way in which Australian Indigenous art, and international Indigenous art more broadly, was valued’.⁴⁷ The essay Adam wrote to accompany the 1943 exhibition broke new ground with this thinking around connectivity. He also understood the important role of Aboriginal art in art history, writing that while ‘the scientific study of primitive arts, art techniques and styles, the investigation of their historical developments and their religious and social functions is an important subdivision of Ethnology ... at the same time it is part of the History of Art’.⁴⁸ Artist and gallery director Tony Tuckson commented on this that ‘It is perhaps this, more than anything else, which attracted the interest of artists and art critics, and it was only a matter of time before the art galleries in

44 Sloggett, “‘Has Aboriginal Art a Future?’”, 169.

45 Sloggett, “‘Has Aboriginal Art a Future?’”, 168.

46 Ruth Phillips, ‘Aesthetic Primitivism Revisited: The Global Diaspora of “Primitive Art” and the Rise of Indigenous Modernisms’, *Journal of Art Historiography* 12 (2015): 16. See also Catherine De Lorenzo, ‘The Hang and Art History’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 13 (2015): 1–17.

47 Benjamin Thomas, ‘Daryl Lindsay and the Appreciation of Indigenous Art at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in the 1940s: “No Mere Collection of Interesting Curiosities”’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 4 (June 2011): 4.

48 Adam, quoted in J.A. Tuckson, ‘Aboriginal Art and the Western World’, in *Australian Aboriginal Art*, ed. Ronald M. Berndt (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1964), 63.

Australia began to form collections of Aboriginal art'.⁴⁹ Adam's outsider status can be construed on the basis of his unconventional views in that he saw Aboriginal art within a wider framework than was the tendency in Australia at the time. He linked this art to a modernising paradigm in which it potentially contributed to a cultural renaissance, economic development and education. These views set him apart from, or outside the prevailing approach in academic and intellectual circles, wherein Aboriginal art was considered as primarily ethnographic.

In his article 'The Abstract Art of the Aranda', Adam understood the contextualised nature of this form of expression, writing: 'It is well known that to the natives themselves even the simplest and seemingly abstract designs have an esoteric significance which, however, is not inherent in the design itself but is attributed to it in a certain context only.'⁵⁰ His understandings of the historical and cultural contexts of Aboriginal art was noted, too, by the anthropologist Raymond Firth, who wrote 'Adam emphasized the significance of cultural background, especially of religion, for an understanding of primitive art', although Firth also thought that Adam's 'treatment of "social implications" was very superficial, concerned mainly with the artistic role of women, dancing, and property rights'.⁵¹

Adam had begun building an ethnographic collection at the University of Melbourne with the acquisition of bark paintings from Fred Gray, at the settlement of Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Keenly aware of the educative aspects of Indigenous art, Adam remarked of these Groote Eylandt bark paintings that 'apart from their decorative purpose, many (if not all) of them also have an educational function, which was established by one of our reliable informants, Mr. Perriman of the Church Missionary Society'.⁵² Adam pursued his interests in the educational role of Aboriginal art in *Primitive Art*, where he argued for the role of this art form in education and training, and also as providing a basis for a commercially viable arts and crafts industry. His consistent concerns and interests in the aesthetic elements led him to decry what he saw as a decline in the quality of Indigenous artistic productions, with the growing introduction and influence of European tools, methods and approaches. He bemoaned the loss of 'authenticity':

Already ethnographic dealers find it hard to procure primitive objects of real value. The best of the old works are now in museums and private collections. Most of what is available to-day is of inferior quality, made carelessly for curio-hunting globetrotters by modern methods, and with European tools. New Zealand, where the beautiful

49 Tuckson, 'Aboriginal Art and the Western World', 63.

50 Leonhard Adam, 'The Abstract Art of the Aranda', *Anthropos*, Bd. 55, H. 3/4 (1960): 346.

51 Raymond Firth, 'Art and Anthropology', in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 21.

52 Adam, 'Aboriginal Bark Paintings from Groote Eylandt', *Meanjin* 9, no. 3 (1950): 189.

art of the Maori once flourished, has become a centre for such pseudo-primitive production. Before long modernization will have reached the few tribes in Africa, Indonesia, New Guinea, and Australia, where genuine primitive art is still alive.⁵³

Adam's interest in the aesthetic value of Aboriginal art formed the basis for arguing for the role of this art in a potential Indigenous arts and crafts movement, and he stated that 'the discovery of the aesthetic value of primitive art, as well as its psychological and social functions, could not fail to attract the attention of educationists, missionaries, and colonial administrators'.⁵⁴ This aesthetically informed Aboriginal arts and crafts movement that Adam envisaged was founded upon his recognition of the role of individuality in Indigenous art. He commented that 'However much indebted an artist may be to his environment for impressions, ideas, and technical methods, his creative act is something altogether personal'.⁵⁵

Adam's complicated, possibly ambiguous and troubled identity, what I have referred to as his outsider status, can also be attributed to his positioning at the interface between what were otherwise disparate disciplines and discourses—those of art, art history and ethnography. In this sense, his thinking was more aligned with some European centres where there was more dialogue between discourses, disciplines and practitioners in the fine arts, ethnography and anthropology.⁵⁶

Adam's academic interests ranged far wider than Aboriginal art. In an obituary in 1961, the museum curator Aldo Massola wrote that Adam 'belonged before the age of specialization, when one could be expert and erudite in the many ramifications of ethnology', taking 'ethnology' to imply wide comparative studies.⁵⁷ Adam's theoretical and methodological orientations cannot readily be categorised. As noted, he lectured in law, Chinese language and studies, ethnology and material culture. Massola writes that 'theoretically speaking, he [Adam] may be classed amongst the old German "Diffusionist" school, and he always claimed that diffusion was more important than evolution, although the two must work together'.⁵⁸ Adam's 'diffusionism'—the idea that cultural traits observed in a particular society were the result of influences that had 'diffused' from some other, external cultural centre—was, in Massola's terms,

53 Adam, *Primitive Art*, 210.

54 Adam, *Primitive Art*, 210.

55 Adam, *Primitive Art*, 65.

56 See, for example, Arnd Schneider, 'Unfinished Dialogues: Notes toward an Alternative History of Art and Anthropology', in *Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology*, ed. Marcus Banks and Jay Ruby (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 108–35. Schneider suggests that where there was less dialogue between these disciplines, such as in Britain (with notable exceptions such as Henry Moore), this was likely because there were fewer 'transdisciplinary go-betweens'. He writes: 'One reason then, for the lack of communication between artists and anthropologists, and by the same token between art discourses and anthropological reasoning, might have been that in Britain (as in the German-speaking countries before 1933) truly transdisciplinary go-betweens were lacking. This was in clear contrast with figures such as Michel Leiris and Carl Einstein, who would move between the disciplines of art and anthropology and who were themselves accomplished writer-poets', Schneider, 'Unfinished Dialogues', 122.

57 Aldo Massola, 'In Memoriam Leonhard Adam', *Oceania* 31, no. 3 (March 1961): 161.

58 Massola, 'In Memoriam Leonhard Adam', 162.

‘modified by a belief that simple inventions, the basic needs of man, must have been made independently in widely distant regions; culture is thus polygenetic’.⁵⁹ As noted above, Adam’s anthropological views were not readily categorised within an approach such as diffusionism, whether in a ‘modified’ form or not.

Adam’s work was also influenced by his interest in historical context, whether in ethnology, law or art. His education in the development and history of comparative legal institutions, which began formally under the tutelage of Professor Josef Kohler (1849–1919), an expert in the comparative history of law, developed into another of his specialisations—what he termed ‘ethnological jurisprudence’.⁶⁰ This interest in jurisprudence—legal theory, the philosophy of law and legal systems, and comparative legal systems across different cultures and societies—occupied Adam for much of his early career.⁶¹

But even while pursuing this interest, Adam had ambivalent feelings about specialising in ethnological jurisprudence. Always the polymath, being within disciplines and specialisations, but also ‘standing apart’ from them, Adam’s interests also lay in other subjects, as he explained later, in 1950, in a candid remark to the publisher Hans Böhm:

My friends at the Berlin Museum f. Voelkerkunde [sic] suggested a novelty: why not follow Kohler and Wilutzky and specialize in primitive law? So I met Kohler who urged me to take up law as my main subject to start with, and in this way I eventually got entangled in a career which I never liked. But during all those years, as my long list of publications proves, I never got away from ethnology and Oriental studies.⁶²

Adam’s interest in historical or ethnological jurisprudence, in part, may be seen as a reaction to earlier trends in ethnology in Germany and elsewhere that constructed indigenous peoples as ‘without history’, as passive, ahistorical subjects for the exoticised gaze of the imperial anthropologist. In response, some thought that the study of law, by implication, indicated the presence of social and historical contexts to peoples and societies.⁶³ But while having been steeped in this relatively specialised domain of ethnological jurisprudence, Adam’s approach was also partly situated within a ‘mainstream’ anthropological tradition, since in Australia he worked on ‘a structural-functionalist anthropology of law and art’.⁶⁴

59 Massola, ‘In Memorium Leonhard Adam’, 162–63.

60 Leonhard Adam, ‘Modern Ethnological Jurisprudence in Theory and Practice’, *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, 3rd ser., 16, no. 4 (1934): 216–29; see also Rüdiger Schott, ‘Main Trends in German Ethnological Jurisprudence and Legal Ethnology’, *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, 14, no. 20 (1982): 37–68, doi.org/10.1080/07329113.1982.10756267.

61 Adam, ‘Modern Ethnological Jurisprudence’.

62 Adam to Hans Böhm, 23 May 1950, Adam Papers. See, for example, Sloggett, “‘Has Aboriginal Art a Future?’”

63 Adam, ‘Modern Ethnological Jurisprudence’; Schott, ‘Main Trends in German Ethnological Jurisprudence’; Thomas Hauschild, ‘Christians, Jews, and the Other in German Anthropology’, *American Anthropologist* 99, no. 4 (1997): 751, doi.org/10.1525/aa.1997.99.4.746.

64 Tigger Wise, ‘Elkin, Adolphus Peter (1891–1979)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, online, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/elkin-adolphus-peter-10109, published first in hardcopy 1996, accessed online 17 October 2020.

Leonhard Adam in the context of anthropology and Aboriginal studies in Australia, 1940s–1950s

The experiences Adam had endured in his academic life in Germany under the Nazis were to preoccupy him throughout his life. But his cosmopolitanism and global thinking was also a factor in the way he situated himself in the context of academic life in Australia, as someone who was able to think and work across boundaries, disciplines and prevailing trends. He explained something of the manner in which he worked between various disciplines in ethnology and legal studies in a letter to Professor Sir George Whitecross Paton (1902–1985), legal scholar and vice-chancellor of the University of Melbourne. Having been invited to give tutorials on primitive law, Adam explained that he would be ‘very happy indeed to run the tutorial as suggested in your letter’:

I used to be principally concerned with ethnological jurisprudence, and from 1930 to 1933 I was lecturer in primitive law at the Institute of Foreign Laws, Berlin University. Primitive law is also included in my permanent ethnological classes at Queen’s on Monday evenings, which were instituted in 1942 ...

As pr. L. [primitive law] belongs to both legal science and social anthropology, it may be approached in two different ways. To most anthropologists, primitive law is confined to recent primitive tribes. This approach is, in my opinion, too narrow. The scope of pr. l. as a section of comparative law, or else as an integral part of historical jurisprudence, is wider, including some of the more highly developed legal systems, especially Oriental laws. This more comprehensive approach is also my own. I trust this will meet with your approval.⁶⁵

When Adam arrived in Melbourne, the dominant authority in Australian anthropology was A.P. Elkin, professor of anthropology at the University of Sydney from 1933 to 1956.⁶⁶ Adam was a regular correspondent with Elkin. In Australia a focus was on fieldwork, on the documentation and recording of Aboriginal peoples’ societies and cultures as a kind of salvage ethnology, as the Aborigines were thought to be a disappearing people.⁶⁷ As well as this focus on field-based methods, there have been many influences on the direction of anthropology in Australia, one of which was a close association between anthropology and colonial administration. The discipline was shaped to a considerable degree by pragmatic administrative/bureaucratic concerns, with some emphasis on colonial administration in Australia’s territories of Papua and New Guinea, and the work of assimilation in Australia’s remote northern

65 Adam to Prof. Paton, 12 June 1945, Adam Papers.

66 Tigger Wise, *The Self-made Anthropologist: A Life of A. P. Elkin* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1985).

67 See for example Geoffrey Gray, “[The Sydney School] Seem[s] to View the Aborigines as Forever Unchanging”: Southeastern Australia and Australian Anthropology’, *Aboriginal History* 24 (2000): 175–99.

and north-western regions.⁶⁸ British functionalism, and the tradition of fieldwork, with exemplars in practitioners such as Malinowski and Alfred Haddon, had a strong foothold, as did variants of diffusionism.

In the context of anthropology in Australia during the years that Adam was active, the Northern Territory, including Groote Eylandt, in which Adam took a particular interest, had been a focus for the observation and recording of Aboriginal cultures for some decades.⁶⁹ Recording and collecting material and expressive Aboriginal culture was a very strong focus of the discipline and, during Adam's first year after arriving in Melbourne, he worked at the Melbourne Museum on the material culture collections there. He maintained a dedicated interest in collecting and collections throughout his career, and developing the University of Melbourne ethnographic collection was one of his primary activities. He studied and collected the bark paintings from the Northern Territory, including from Groote Eylandt, and these formed the core of the Adam ethnographic collection at the university. The building up of this collection was one of Adam's chief occupations during his time at the university, and his aim was to establish a museum as a teaching and research resource of widely representative cultural objects.

Once again, in this as in all his professional work, we see him involved across varied, though related disciplines, many years before it became *de rigeur* to encourage interdisciplinarity in academia. Writing to Hans Böhm in May 1950, Adam explained:

But I am also now lecturer in cultural anthropology and in charge of a small ethnographic museum, my own foundation, which I am building up at the University. Once a year I am giving a course on primitive art, with many slides. But if you think this was once my hobby, I must say this is not the whole truth. Actually, I started with ethnology, but there had to be a more solid foundation for a living in those days. There were too few well-paid jobs for ethnologists, so you had to be a medical man (for physical anthropology), or an educationist (for linguistics, geography, history).⁷⁰

68 The literature on the history of Australian anthropology is very large. Some useful works are: Gillian Cowlishaw, 'Studying Aborigines: Changing Canons in Anthropology and History', *Journal of Australian Studies* 16, no. 35 (1992): 20–31; I.R. Hiatt and L.R. Hiatt, *Arguments about Aborigines: Australia and the Evolution of Social Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Nicolas Peterson, "Studying Man and Man's Nature": The History of the Institutionalisation of Aboriginal Anthropology', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, no. 2 (1990): 3–19. Also see Gillian Cowlishaw, 'Tunnel Vision: Part One – Resisting Post-colonialism in Australian Anthropology', *The Australian Journal of Australian Anthropology* 28, no. 3 (2017): 324–41, doi.org/10.1111/taja.12242.

69 Michael Davis, *Writing Heritage: The Depiction of Indigenous Heritage in European–Australian Writings* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing and National Museum of Australia Press, 2007).

70 Adam to Hans Böhm, 23 May 1950, Adam Papers.

To conclude, Adam was forever working within, between and outside disciplines, and prevailing theoretical trends. He was at one and the same time, outsider and insider. His psychological, personal and professional humiliation under the Nazis remained with him, but he was able to maintain a worldly curiosity and enthusiasm throughout his life. A displaced European intellectual thrust into the milieu of Australian anthropology and Aboriginal studies in the 1940s, Adam's tireless energy has left an enduring legacy.

The Australian delegation to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference: A biography

DAVID LEE

The Australian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 had 3 significant achievements. The delegation secured a position for the 'Dominion' of Australia, often still described as 'colony', in a major international peace conference. It won a place for Australia in the new international organisation, the League of Nations, established by the Peace Conference, and it obtained responsibility from the League for mandates over the former German territories of New Guinea and Nauru. The separate signing of the Peace Treaty by Australian plenipotentiaries was a significant step in Australia's transition from colony to independent nation-state that could not be effaced. Key members of the delegation were W.M. Hughes, the wartime prime minister affectionately known as the 'little digger', Joseph Cook, a former prime minister and minister for the navy, and 3 members of the Round Table Movement that encouraged closer union between Britain and its dominions: Lieutenant-Commander John Greig Latham, Cook's adviser; Sir Robert Garran, permanent secretary of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, solicitor-general since 1916 and Australia's most distinguished public servant; and Frederic Eggleston, a Victorian lawyer and army officer.

Previous studies of Hughes's overseas diplomacy in 1918 and 1919 have tended to attribute all of the outcomes to the prime minister's energy and leadership. As for the wider delegation, they have referred to Cook's minimal influence, Garran's personal loyalty to Hughes, Latham's legal skills, and Eggleston as a disgruntled observer. W.J. Hudson concluded that 'there is nothing to suggest that on any important issue Hughes was inhibited by his advisers'.¹ Malcolm Booker went further to argue that Hughes was 'for the most part badly served' by his advisers with both Latham and Eggleston very much under the influence of the British diplomats and public servants.² While agreeing that Hughes exercised the dominant influence in London and Paris in 1918 and 1919, the argument of this article is that the delegation was important in supporting Hughes in diplomacy that was contrary to the wishes of his cabinet colleagues back in Australia, and the British Government. The Australian

1 W. J. Hudson, *Billy Hughes in Paris: The Birth of Australian Diplomacy* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 63.

2 Malcolm Booker, *The Great Professional: A Study of W. M. Hughes* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 239–40.

delegation was motivated to help Hughes become the most assertive advocate for dominion interests in Paris because it felt that Australia had more at stake in the peace negotiations than other dominions: Australia's very security. This strategic concern emboldened the delegation to support Hughes in claiming for Australia a role at a major international conference that many Australians thought was inappropriate for a dominion. In doing so, they laid the foundation for Australian independence. This article does not consider Hughes's campaign for reparations because in this he was following a wider Empire line, one eventually softened by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts for diplomatic reasons.

Dominion representation at the Peace Conference

Hughes was born in London in 1862, son of a carpenter and Welsh-speaking deacon of the Baptist Church from North Wales. He migrated to the Australian colonies in the 1880s, gravitated to unionism and the newly formed Labor Party and won election to the seat of West Sydney in the federal parliament in 1901. Hughes held office in Labor administrations during the first decade after Federation. An advocate of centralised Commonwealth powers, Hughes was also a staunch supporter of Empire, even trying to dispense with the double dissolution election that (Sir) Joseph Cook had called in wartime out of loyalty to the mother country. Labor won the election of 1914 and Hughes was appointed attorney-general under Prime Minister Andrew Fisher. When Fisher retired in October 1915, Hughes succeeded him, but in the following year the Australian Labor Party split as a result of Hughes pursuing conscription for overseas service. Hughes continued in office, nonetheless, as head of a Nationalist Government.³

During the course of World War I it became increasingly important for Australians to feel that they had a voice in the framing of the British Empire's policy in war and peace. Ever since 1915 the British Government had promised to consult the dominions on the terms of the peace that would end World War I. In December 1916, in fulfilment of this undertaking, Prime Minister Lloyd George decided to set up an Imperial War Cabinet, running concurrently with an Imperial War Conference, as the coordinating body for the British Empire's war effort and a source of advice on the terms of the peace.⁴ Much of the second session of the Imperial

3 L. F. Fitzhardinge, 'Hughes, William Morris (1862–1952)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 392–400; L. F. Fitzhardinge, *William Morris Hughes: A Political Biography* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1964–1979); Carl Bridge, *William Hughes: The Paris Peace Conferences of 1919–1923 and Their Aftermath* (London: Haus Publishing, 2011); Peter Cochrane, *Best We Forget: The War for White Australia, 1914–18* (Melbourne: Text Publishing Company, 2018).

4 Arthur Berriedale Keith, *War Government of the British Dominions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 27–47.

War Conference from June to July 1918 was devoted to discussion of the possible shape of the peace. Hughes actively participated in these discussions during a period when the outcome of the war was still in the balance. He had come to London accompanied by Garran, Cook and Latham, Percy Deane, his private secretary, and H.S. Gullet, a young journalist.

Cook had also been born in England, 2 years before Hughes. The son of a Staffordshire coalminer, he migrated to the colonies in the 1880s, settling in Lithgow, New South Wales. After George Reid's retirement in 1908 he became leader of the Free Trade Party and, when Andrew Fisher's Labor Party was defeated in 1913, briefly became prime minister. After the wartime split in the Labor Party, he joined the new Nationalist Party and served under Hughes as minister for the navy.⁵ Garran was born in Sydney on 10 February 1867, youngest child of journalist and politician Andrew Garran.⁶ In 1901 he was appointed permanent secretary of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, a post he held for the next 3 decades. Hughes drew heavily on Garran's abilities in World War I and a 'bond of mutual regard grew between the two men, who were superficially incongruous in every respect'.⁷ Hughes appointed Garran to the new statutory office of Solicitor-General in 1916 and delegated many wartime powers to him. As the Department of External Affairs had been abolished during the war, Garran accompanied Hughes to the Imperial Conference of 1918 as the prime minister's main public service adviser. Hughes also took with him a younger man, John Latham. Born in Melbourne in 1877 to a poor Methodist family, he had been a brilliant student, graduating from the University of Melbourne in 1896 and admitted to the Victorian Bar in 1904. In 1917, following allegations of union sabotage, he was appointed head of Naval Intelligence with the honorary rank of lieutenant-commander. His work in the navy on Australian security drew him to the attention of both Cook and Hughes who co-opted him to the delegation to the Imperial War Conference in 1918.⁸

In June and July 1918, many people, like the then South African minister for defence Jan Smuts and Hughes himself, thought that the war would go into 1919 and perhaps even 1920.⁹ The Imperial War Conference was not in session in late August when a German collapse seemed possible and peace imminent. By that time, Hughes was the only dominion prime minister left in England, although Smuts,

5 F.K. Crowley, 'Cook, Sir Joseph (1860–1947)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 8, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1981), 96–99.

6 R.S. Parker, 'Garran, Sir Robert Randolph (1867–1957)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 8, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1981), 622–25.

7 Parker, 'Garran, Sir Robert Randolph', 623.

8 Stuart Macintyre, 'Latham, Sir John Greig (1877–1964)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 10, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1986), 2–6; David Lee, 'Sir John Latham and the League of Nations' in *League of Nations: Histories, Legacies and Impact*, ed. Joy Damousi and Patricia O'Brien (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2018), 83–99.

9 W.K. Hancock, *Smuts*, vol. 1, *The Sanguine Years, 1870–1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 493; cablegram from Hughes to Watt, 13 November 1918, National Archives of Australia (NAA), CP360/8, 2.

prime minister of South Africa from September 1919, remained as a member of the Imperial War Cabinet. However, after the failure of their 'spring offensive' from March to July, the Central Powers recognised the hopelessness of their position. On 5 October they sent a message to United States President Woodrow Wilson seeking an armistice based on his 'Fourteen Points',¹⁰ a statement of principles for peace he had announced on 8 January 1918. Wilson had taken many democratic and progressive ideas, such as free trade, freedom of the seas, open agreements rather than secret treaties, democracy and self-determination, and translated them into foreign policy.¹¹ Two of the points most disagreeable to Hughes were that there should be a new international organisation, a League of Nations, after the war and that the adjustment of all colonial claims should give weight to the 'interests of the populations concerned'.¹² Hughes worried that such a body could potentially interfere with Australia's protectionist tariffs and its discriminatory 'White Australia' immigration policy. Wilson's idea of 'no annexations' put in jeopardy Hughes's hopes for Australia's permanent annexation of the German territories in the Pacific captured by Australia during the war: New Guinea and perhaps also Nauru whose phosphate was desired for the development of Australian agriculture.¹³ Hughes stayed on in London after the Imperial Conference to attend to a range of matters connected with Anglo-Australian relations, but the speed of the German collapse in late 1918 took him by surprise.

After returning from France where he met the French president, George Clemenceau, Hughes embarked on a speaking tour in northern England. With Hughes conveniently away from London, Lloyd George kept the dominion representatives at arm's length from discussions at Versailles held between 29 October and 4 November to discuss the armistice. The British decision-makers broadly accepted an armistice based in principle on Wilson's Fourteen Points without including a reservation on the retention of the captured German colonies by the dominions. An international conference was to convene in Paris the following year to frame the peace terms for the defeated Central Powers.¹⁴

10 Trygve Throntveit, 'The Fable of the Fourteen Points', *Diplomatic History* 35, no. 3 (June 2010): 445–81.

11 John N. Snell, 'Wilson on Germany and the Fourteen Points', *Journal of Modern History* 26, no. 4 (December 1954): 364–69; D. Fromkin, 'What is Wilsonianism?', *World Policy Journal* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 100–11; R.W. Tucker, 'The Triumph of Wilsonianism?', *World Policy Journal* 10, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 83–99; John Thompson, 'Wilsonianism: The Dynamics of a Conflicted Concept', *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (January 2010): 27–47; L.E. Ambrosius, 'Woodrow Wilson and the Birth of a Nation: American Democracy and International Relations', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 18, no. 4 (December 2007): 689–718; Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition: The Treaty Fight in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); John Milton Cooper Jr, *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

12 'The Fourteen Points', *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 24 November 1918.

13 See W.M. Hughes, 'Australia and the Pacific Islands', 6 February 1919 and 'Memorandum Regarding the Pacific Islands', Latham Papers, MS 1009, Series 21, Box 61, Folder 19, National Library of Australia (NLA); and letter, Hughes to Lloyd George, 4 November 1918, Lloyd George Papers, House of Lords Records Office (LGP–HLRO).

14 Peter Spertalis, *The Diplomatic Battles of Billy Hughes* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983), 80–81.

It was galling for Hughes that countries such as Greece and Portugal were represented at the armistice discussions while the dominions, which had played a much larger role in the allied war effort, were not. Irate, he protested the terms of the armistice in a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet on 5 November.¹⁵ He professed himself unwilling to be 'bound to the chariot-wheels of the Fourteen Points' and neither would he be party to a League of Nations whose structure, functions and membership had not been defined.¹⁶ Hughes complained that the British Government had declared war without consulting the dominions and were now 'settling the Peace Terms equally without reference to Dominions being first consulted'.¹⁷ In a letter published in *The Times*, he reiterated his claim that he had not been informed of the discussions in Versailles until after they had been completed.¹⁸ The Imperial War Cabinet, he admitted, had previously discussed the question of peace terms but Wilson's Fourteen Points had never been agreed there. Moreover, '[h]ad the conditions of peace as set out left no room for criticism, the mode of their settlement would still be quite incompatible with the relations which ought to exist between the self-governing Dominions and Britain'.¹⁹

Of the members of the Australian delegation to the 1918 Imperial War Conference, Garran also thought that severe damage could be done to the Empire by this 'altogether inexcusable and damnable decision'.²⁰ Similarly, Latham was sympathetic to his protest about the lack of consultation with the British on the peace terms. He wrote to Philip Kerr, Lloyd George's private secretary and a fellow member of the Round Table Movement, warning that 'the people of the Dominions will be justified in believing that they cannot safely trust the leaders of Great Britain'.²¹ In Latham's notes for a subsequent address at the Round Table he included in the outline: '(1) Promise broken (2) Hands of separatists strengthened (3) Imperial War Cabinet and consultative system on which it is based has been proved to be deceptive'.²²

The support of the delegation for Hughes's criticism of the armistice stood in stark contrast with the attitude of the rest of the Australian Government. William Watt, the acting prime minister, was the most critical. A Deakinite Liberal and former

15 Imperial War Cabinet Minutes, 5 November 1918, Hughes Papers, MS 1538/111/4, NLA.

16 Imperial War Cabinet Minutes, 5 November 1918.

17 Imperial War Cabinet Minutes, no. 36A, 6 November 1919, CAB 23/44, United Kingdom National Archives (UKNA).

18 W.M. Hughes, Statement, *The Times*, 8 November 1918.

19 *The Times*, 9 November 1919. See also letter, Hughes to Lloyd George, 9 November 1918 and letter, Lloyd George to Hughes, 11 November 1918, LGP-HLRO.

20 Garran Diary, 9 November 1918, Garran Papers, MS 2001/7, NLA. See also Leonie Foster, *High Hopes: The Men and Motives of the Australian Round Table* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1986), 84.

21 Letter, Latham to Kerr, 9 November 1918, Latham Papers, MS 1009/19/25, NLA.

22 Latham to Kerr, 9 November 1918; 'Rough Notes for Address to the Round Table', 21 November 1918. For Latham's connections with Kerr and other British members of the Round Table Movement, see John E. Kendle, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 222.

premier of Victoria who held orthodox views about the place of a dominion in world affairs, he told the governor-general Ronald Munro-Ferguson that he greatly regretted Hughes's public criticism of Lloyd George.²³ At the end of 1918, Watt, anxious for Hughes to return to Australia to give ballast to an unstable government, thought that the dominions should not be represented at the Paris Peace Conference and that the Empire should gain control over the German colonies south of the equator before handing them to Australian administrative control.²⁴ Munro-Ferguson also thought that it was highly improper and impudent for Hughes to suggest that Australia should have had a role in the armistice discussions and that 'Hughes has done the most mischievous thing possible, and exposed his flank to his enemies in a deliberate endeavour to stir up bad blood between Eng[land] and Aust[ralia]'.²⁵

One of the Hughes's main concerns was that Japan would be invited to the 1919 Peace Conference in Paris and not Australia. At a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet on 6 November he pointedly asked: 'Why should Japan be included and Australia excluded from the Peace Conference? What sacrifices had Japan made which were in any way comparable with those of Australia?'²⁶ In this his cabinet colleagues felt that Hughes had gone too far. Watt cautioned him:

We think that a claim either express or inferential of the right of Dominions to representation on Versailles Council cannot be sustained. This view applies of course to Peace Conference if you are thinking of it in the same way. If our conception of your attitude on this matter is correct, your colleagues ask you to reconsider this phase very carefully.²⁷

Weeks before Hughes made his protest on the terms of the armistice, Lloyd George had sounded out the measured and congenial prime minister of Canada, Sir Robert Borden, on whether he might participate in discussions of the policies the British should take to the Paris Peace Conference. In his reply on 29 October 1918, Borden first explicitly raised the issue of Canadian representation in Paris, pointing out that the 'press and people of this country take it for granted that Canada will be represented at the Peace Conference'.²⁸ As Hughes's biographer L.F. Fitzhardinge has pointed out, Lloyd George at that time was almost certainly not in favour of representation of dominions in Paris, and Borden had made no suggestion as to its form.²⁹ What both probably had in mind was a single British Empire delegation

23 Lord Novar, Diary Entry, 9 November 1918.

24 Lord Novar, Diary Entry, 3 December 1918.

25 Lord Novar, Diary Entry, 20 November 1918.

26 Imperial War Cabinet Minutes, no. 36A, 6 November 1918, CAB 23/44, UKNA.

27 Cablegram, Watt to Hughes, 14 November 1918, NAA CP 360/8, 2.

28 Quoted in R. M. Dawson (ed.), *The Development of Dominion Status 1900–1936* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 178–79.

29 L. F. Fitzhardinge, 'Hughes, Borden, and Dominion Representation at the Paris Peace Conference', *The Canadian Historical Review* 49, no. 2 (1968): 162–63.

that included Borden but still acted as a unit. When Borden reached England on 17 November, he discussed arrangements for the Peace Conference with Lloyd George and Andrew Bonar Law, chancellor of the exchequer. They suggested a delegation to the Paris Peace Conference consisting of Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Arthur Balfour, secretary of state for foreign affairs, and George Barnes, minister without portfolio, with Borden included as a special representative of the dominions. Borden demurred at having 'any special status to represent the Dominions', but he later consulted Smuts who agreed that Borden should go to Paris not as the special representative of the dominions but as an 'Empire Delegate'.³⁰

As Lloyd George considered arrangements for the conference, he was shaken by Hughes's public criticisms of Britain's lack of consultation with the dominions on the peace. In the Imperial War Cabinet on 20 November 1918 he sought to involve them in shaping British policy, although not yet conceding to them the right to separate representation at the conference. To mollify them, he agreed that an Allied conference should precede the Peace Conference and that India and the self-governing dominions should have the fullest opportunity to express their opinions on 'questions which may closely concern them'.³¹ Meanwhile, Hughes let Borden know that he would oppose the representation of any other dominion at the conference unless he himself was also appointed. To try to resolve the impasse between Hughes and Borden, Smuts suggested that the fifth place in the British delegation should be filled periodically and in rotation from a panel of dominion representatives.³² By this time, Borden's cabinet colleagues in Ottawa was pushing him towards being formally a part of a British delegation in Paris.³³

The reverse was the case in Australia. Critics in the House of Representatives attacked Hughes's apparent push for Australian representation as unorthodox and inappropriate for a dominion of the British Empire.³⁴ Hughes though, supported by the delegation, was not deterred from pressing Australia's claims. It was particularly important that Hughes had the support of Cook, a former prime minister and second in seniority in the Cabinet, in making this claim. By early December the British Government conceded that the representatives of the dominions could attend as additional members of the British delegation when questions directly affecting them were being considered. On 30 December 1918 an unappeased Hughes again made

30 Fitzhardinge, 'Hughes, Borden, and Dominion Representation', 163; Hancock, *Smuts*, vol. 1, 496–97.

31 Fitzhardinge, 'Hughes, Borden and Dominion Representation', 164.

32 Letter, Smuts to Lloyd George, 3 December 1918, LGP–HLRO, Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), Reel 2 – M1125–947 Series F, NLA.

33 Cablegram from White to Borden, 4 December 1918, in *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 2, *The Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, ed. R. A. MacKay (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1969), 7.

34 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, XCIV (1920), 5817.

a blistering attack in the Imperial War Cabinet on Wilson's Fourteen Points and gained some support for his remarks from the colonial secretary, Walter Long, and in Melbourne from Munro-Ferguson.³⁵

At length, on 31 December, the Imperial War Cabinet discussed the idea of the Great Powers (Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the United States) being represented by 5 plenipotentiary delegates. But Hughes strongly criticised a state of affairs in which each dominion would be accorded lesser representation at the conference than countries such as Sweden. He suggested that when the conference discussed this question, the dominions should be entitled to representation equal to that accorded to neutrals, given that Australia had put and kept more men in the field than Belgium.³⁶ Although Borden would have accepted a position of himself being the Empire representative on the British delegation, this option had been stymied by Hughes's opposition. Borden therefore reverted to Smuts's compromise in which the dominion prime ministers should be part of the British delegation, with one or more of them sitting periodically on the delegation representing the British Empire at the conference. Lloyd George warned, however, that a British delegation swelled to comprise 5 delegates from Britain and 3 each from the self-governing dominions would be unwieldy and out of proportion with other countries' delegations.

Out of all this came the ingenious compromise in which representatives of the dominions in Paris would have a dual position as delegates in their own right as well as alternate members of the British delegation.³⁷ This decision had far-reaching implications, among them separate dominion signatures on the Peace Treaty and full dominion membership of the League of Nations as quasi-independent states. This solution was fully realised when Lloyd George made the case in January 1919 for dominion representation at the conference to his French, Italian and American colleagues. Wilson and his Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, at first opposed the principle of separate dominion representation. However, Lloyd George made such a strong case that the other countries relented.³⁸ On 13 January he succeeded in having approved 2 representatives each for Canada, Australia and South Africa, and one each for New Zealand and British India at the conference. This meant that the Australian delegation included Hughes and Cook as plenipotentiaries of Australia and a supporting staff of their Australian advisers including Garran as adviser on legal questions.

35 Fitzhardinge, 'Hughes, Borden and Dominion Representation', 166.

36 Extract from Minutes of Forty-Eighth Meeting of Imperial War Cabinet, 31 December 1918, in *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 2, 18.

37 Fitzhardinge, 'Hughes, Borden and Dominion Representation', 167–68.

38 Minutes of First Meeting of British Empire Delegation, 13 January 1919, in *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 2, 26.

Winning of the right to separate dominion representation was of great significance for Australia's political and constitutional history and its path to consolidating its status as an independent sovereign state.³⁹ Many historians ascribe particular importance to Borden's role in achieving this outcome for his dominion as well as Australia.⁴⁰ Hughes, however, was perhaps even more important than either Borden or Smuts, first by blocking the idea of Borden as an Empire delegate and then by stymying Smuts's idea of a single British Empire delegation working with a panel of dominion representatives. Hughes was not a systematic thinker concerned with constitutional principles such as dominion autonomy (of the kind supported by Borden and Smuts) or with separatism (which he and his country abhorred). He was simply a political pragmatist who regarded it as intolerable that Japan could be seated as a Great Power at the conference while Australia was relegated to a subordinate role. Moreover, he was driven by the compelling strategic concern of gaining Australian control over the German colonies south of the equator. Borden, by contrast, had no desire for Canadian control over German colonies.

Ironically, Hughes probably contributed more than Smuts and Borden to the recognition of separate dominion representation at the Paris Peace Conference. In obtaining this outcome, Hughes was not supported at all by his cabinet colleagues in Melbourne, even by his fellow ex-Laborite and minister for defence, George Pearce.⁴¹ He was, however, supported by his delegation to the Imperial Conference, especially his loyal private secretary, Percy Deane, by Garran and Latham, who pushed his minister, Joseph Cook, to let him play a role in Paris. All these men would play a part in the Australian delegation to the conference in 1919. The Victorian lawyer, Frederic Eggleston, also joined the Australian delegation in late 1918. When Hughes and his party came to England in 1918 to attend the Imperial War Conference, Eggleston, who was already in London, had the advantage of knowing Garran and Latham, all of them being members of the Round Table Movement. In December 1918 Garran advised Hughes to ask for Eggleston to be invited to support the Australian delegation at the Peace Conference.⁴²

39 See W.J. Hudson and M.P. Sharp, *Australian Independence: Colony to Reluctant Kingdom* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1988); and Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Dominions as Sovereign States* (London: Macmillan, 1938).

40 See, for example, Brian Douglas Tennyson, *Canada's Great War, 1914–1918* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 171.

41 John Connor, *Anzac and Empire: George Foster Pearce and the Foundations of Australian Defence* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

42 Warren Osmond, 'Eggleston, Sir Frederic William (1875–1954)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 8, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1981), 421–24; Warren Osmond, *Frederic Eggleston: An Intellectual in Australian Politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

Pacific mandates

One of the key objectives of the Australian delegation to the conference was to secure control over the former German colonies in the South Pacific and, if possible, to prevent the Japanese gaining influence over those in the North Pacific. The future status of Pacific territories was one of the subjects discussed at the Imperial Conference of 1917 that Hughes was unable to attend. In 1917, although Hughes had a comfortable majority in the House of Representatives, he lacked one in the Senate. Consequently, he was unable to extend the life of the Australian Parliament until October 1918 and had to have the parliament dissolved in March 1917, go to the hustings and then face a national election on 5 May. By that time, Hughes had lost confidence in his former chief, Andrew Fisher, the current High Commissioner in London, and was unwilling to allow him to represent Australia at the Imperial War Conference. The result was that Australia was unrepresented at a particularly important meeting. One of the most significant developments at the 1917 conference was a successful effort by Borden and Smuts to head off the idea of a federated British Empire. They did so by sponsoring a successful resolution, Resolution IX, that the dominions should be recognised as 'autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth' having the right to an 'adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations'.⁴³

Even before the 1917 conference began, the British Government had made an agreement to secure increased naval assistance from its ally, Japan. In return, the British agreed to support Japan's campaign for its permanent occupation of former German island possessions in the North Pacific. The Colonial Office secured from Hughes's new Nationalist Government a grudging acquiescence in the arrangement. Hughes was never happy with the deal and hoped that he could cooperate with the United States to oppose the longer-term occupation of the islands by the Japanese.⁴⁴

By 1918 the colonial secretary, Walter Long, had become aware of a potential difference of opinion between the peace aims of the British and the Americans over the right of populations to determine their own futures and the application of that principle to the people of German New Guinea.⁴⁵ Long was correctly anticipating that the United States would insist on territories such as German New Guinea not being annexed by Australia as one of the spoils of war, but rather being administered as a mandate of the new League of Nations. He urged Australians to obtain expressions of opinion on the wishes of the peoples of German New Guinea to 'live under British rule'.⁴⁶ Hughes referred Long's cablegram to Joseph Cook, the minister for the navy, who in turn passed it to Latham in his role with Naval Intelligence.

43 Foster, *High Hopes*, 84.

44 See Hughes's letter to Lloyd George, 4 November 1918, LGP-HLRO.

45 Telegram, Long to Governor-General quoted in Spertalis, *Diplomatic Battles*, 54.

46 Telegram, Long to Governor-General.

Cook and Latham thereafter developed the political and strategic arguments for Australian annexation, or the loosest possible form of mandate, over the German colonies south of the equator.

Latham made a detailed study of the pronouncements on the shape of peace by Lloyd George, Wilson and Pope Benedict XV.⁴⁷ In light of this study, he recommended that Australia should adopt a policy to German New Guinea that had at its heart the welfare of the native peoples. To that end, he pointed to the usefulness of Australia promoting its economic and commercial interests in the colony during wartime occupation. Australia's objective, he argued, should be to bolster its case for long-term control over the colony by pointing out to other countries both the strength of Australian interests in the colony and the attenuation of German interests.⁴⁸ Cook passed Latham's memorandum to Hughes who asked that Latham be included in the Australian delegation to the Imperial War Conference of 1918. As part of the delegation there, Latham produced a 'Memorandum on the Pacific' in July 1918.⁴⁹ In this he mounted a strong argument for Australia's retention of the German colonies south of the equator based on its defence and strategic requirements, the development of its resources and the protection of British trade in the Pacific.⁵⁰ The paper also pointed to the benefits of an alliance between Britain and the United States to secure Anglo-American supremacy in the Pacific.⁵¹ Hughes was impressed by Latham's paper and used it as the basis of his arguments at the Imperial War Conference and Paris Peace Conference in the following year.

Having missed out on the Imperial War Conference of 1917, Hughes was determined to make a mark when it resumed in 1918. On 23 January 1919, Lloyd George took the case of the British Empire on the German colonies to the Paris Peace Conference. He argued for South-West Africa and the former German colonies in the Pacific to be allowed to be annexed by the dominions and exempted from Wilson's proposed mandatory system (the system in which former enemy territories would be administered on behalf of the League of Nations and according to principles agreed by the League).⁵² Hughes followed by making a forceful claim for Australian annexation on the grounds of Australian security, the welfare of the native inhabitants and the costs placed on a small country such as Australia on fighting World War I. Garran was unhappy with the session, describing it as 'very unsatisfactory'.⁵³ His doubts about the impact of the British/Australian case intensified when Wilson defended the principle of the mandatory system under

47 J.G. Latham, 'Former German Colonies in the Pacific', 16 January 1918, NAA MP1049/1, 1919/0118.

48 Latham, 'Former German Colonies in the Pacific'.

49 J.G. Latham, 'Memorandum on the Pacific', 23 July 1918; also J. G. Latham, 'The Surrender of German Forces in the Pacific', 11 July 1918 and 'Report on Defence Policy for Australia', NAA B6121, 184J.

50 Latham, 'Memorandum on the Pacific'.

51 Latham, 'Memorandum on the Pacific'.

52 British Empire Delegation Minutes, no. 3, 23 January 1919, Garran Papers, NAA CP351/1, 2/12, and CAB 29/28, UKNA.

53 Garran Diary, 24 January 1919, Garran Papers, MS 2001/13, NLA.

the League of Nations with no exceptions. In Wilson's mind a new world order had been born and arguments such as those of Hughes for annexation simply reflected a lack of faith in the League of Nations.⁵⁴

Hughes's case for New Guinea was built upon work on which Cook and Latham in particular had been labouring for some time.⁵⁵ They had helped develop a historical case stretching back to the 1880s when Queensland had pushed Britain to colonise New Guinea. Britain had resisted and then been outmanoeuvred by Germany. The vigour of Australia's claim, however, raised anxiety among leading figures in Lloyd George's government who feared that Wilson might walk out of the Paris Peace Conference. Borden confided to a cabinet colleague: 'You know that I have taken a strong ground against large annexations of territory to the British Empire. I rather fear that we are heading to disaster by that route.'⁵⁶ Lord Robert Cecil, a leading Conservative and enthusiast for the League of Nations, urged Balfour to lead a retreat on Lloyd George's fight for the dominions and supported the mandatory principle in a meeting of the British delegation. Edwin Montagu, another member of the British delegation, warned Lloyd George:

The peace of the world and the success of future arrangements are all jeopardized by the attitude of Australia. Anyone who heard Lord Robert Cecil this afternoon and anyone who heard Mr. Hughes's answer can realize that Australia has no case except this, that she is there and intends to remain there ... If we allow an exception for the mandatory rule for Australia we open the door to all sorts of exception by the French and the Japanese ...⁵⁷

Montagu wondered whether Australia could be persuaded to accept the mandatory principle if it was allowed to apply its own immigration laws to the mandate.⁵⁸

Following a meeting of the British delegation on 28 January, several of its members worked assiduously to find a way out of an impasse that threatened to wreck the conference. Smuts and Cecil discerned 2 kinds of mandates: *A class* mandates that applied mainly to former Ottoman territories and gave them a high degree of autonomy; and *B class* mandates that applied to peoples from less developed territories that were given a lesser degree of autonomy.⁵⁹ A further class of mandate was then devised to satisfy Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. If they were

54 Quoted in Spartalis, *Diplomatic Battles*, 127.

55 J.G. Latham, 'Mandatory System and the German Pacific Islands', 21 January 1919, Sir Joseph Cook Papers, MS 762, Folder 1, NLA.

56 Letter, Borden to President of Privy Council, 25 January 1919, in *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 2, 41.

57 Letter, Montagu to Lloyd George, 28 January 1919, LGP-HLRO, AJCP NLA.

58 Letter, Montagu to Lloyd George, 28 January 1919.

59 Memorandum by Lord Milner, 'Mandates under Clause 19 of the Draft "Covenant" of the League of Nations', 8 March 1919, Latham Papers, MS 1009, Series 21, Box 60, NLA. On Smuts's role see I. C. Smith, 'J.C. Smuts' Role in the Establishment of the League of Nations and the Mandate for S.W.A', *South African Historical Journal* 5, no. 1 (November 1973): 94–107.

not able to achieve outright annexation, C class mandates would give the mandatory powers much more extensive authority than those responsible for A and B class mandates. The Australian historian Duncan Hall ascribed authorship of the C class mandates to Smuts and Kerr.⁶⁰ Garran in his memoir, *Prosper the Commonwealth*, recalled that its authors were Sir Cecil Hurst, the British legal adviser, and Latham, who would later rise to be Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia.⁶¹ Latham himself later recalled that he had drafted the clause for the C class mandate and shown it to the secretary of the Imperial War Cabinet and of the British delegation in Paris, Sir Maurice Hankey, and that Hankey took it to Lloyd George for approval. Whoever were its authors, and Latham has a large claim to it, the terms of the proposed clause for a C class mandate were:

There are territories such as South West Africa and the Pacific Islands which, owing to the sparseness of their population or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilisation, or their geographical contiguity to the mandatory State, and other circumstances, can best be administered under the laws of the mandatory State as integral portions thereof, subject to the safeguards abovementioned in the interests of the indigenous population.⁶²

Hughes still preferred outright Australian annexation of New Guinea but recognised that Lloyd George was now unprepared to go further than a C class mandate. This did not stop Hughes from trying to further his cause by placing articles in the press. One such article in *The Times* on 29 January made a public appeal for Britain to support the case of the dominions. Another in the Paris Boulevard Edition of the *Daily Mail* contended that the Australian delegation believed that Wilson's stand against dominion annexation was due mainly to his fear that if Japan was allowed to annex the German islands north of the equator, there would be an outcry in America and particularly in the Congress.⁶³ Eggleston rightly believed that Hughes had orchestrated the leaks to the newspaper.⁶⁴ Latham did not say anything at the time, but he supported the clause for a C class mandate that he had played a part in devising. In 1920, in a defence of the new League of Nations and in support of Eggleston, he argued that for Australia to have insisted on outright annexation would have been a disaster as it would have allowed Japan to fortify and build naval bases right up to the equator.⁶⁵

60 Duncan Hall, *The Commonwealth: A History of the British Commonwealth of Nations* (London: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971), 916.

61 Robert Randolph Garran, *Prosper the Commonwealth* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1958), 264–65.

62 'Draft Resolutions in Reference to Mandatories' as presented by Lloyd George to the British Empire Delegation, minutes no. 6, 29 January 1919, Garran Papers, NAA CP351/1, 2/12.

63 *Daily Mail* (Boulevard Edition), 30 January 1919; see also *Sydney Sun*, 31 January 1919.

64 Eggleston Diary, 30 January 1919, Eggleston Papers, MS 423/6/82–5, NLA.

65 J.G. Latham, *The Significance of the Peace Conference from the Australian Point of View* (Melbourne: Melville and Mullen, 1920), 12.

Wilson, stung by the Australian leaks to the newspapers, accepted the compromise of the C class mandate, but argued that the mandatory states could not actually be selected before the League of Nations was actually approved after the signing of the Peace Treaty. Forced grudgingly to accept a C class mandate, Hughes told Wilson that Australia would not take part in any agreement at all unless the mandatory states were immediately confirmed. Out of this came a compromise brokered by the genius of Lloyd George. Referring to (Hughes's) press leaks that had conveyed the impression of disunity between the British and the Americans, he suggested a communiqué that would announce a satisfactory provisional agreement. This agreement included recognition of the mandatory principle, and that the League would supervise mandated territories. There would not be any immediate distribution of the 'spoils of war', but the acceptance of the C class mandate clause meant that dominions contiguous with the mandatory states would in practice have to be accepted by the League of Nations as mandatories. Hughes admitted as much when he summarised the position for Watt:

Our position is in some respects better under the mandatory system, if we get it in the above form, than if we were in outright control because Japan under mandatory system cannot and must not fortify Marshall and Carolines or use them for submarine or naval base.⁶⁶

The League of Nations and racial equality

Hughes was always dubious about Woodrow Wilson's concept of a League of Nations. He preferred to rely for Australian security on the might of the British Empire bolstered perhaps by an Anglo-American alliance. Garran agreed with Hughes inasmuch as Wilson, an 'extraordinary able but a dangerous man', had failed to think through his concept of the League of Nations.⁶⁷ It was left to other statesmen such as Smuts and Cecil to realise fully Wilson's concept. Garran, however, was less predisposed against a British-designed League of Nations than Hughes, and his colleague Latham later became one of the staunchest supporters of the new organisation in Australia. But even though Hughes was sceptical about Wilson's concept of a League of Nations, he was protective of Australia's position in the new world organisation. If there was to be a League of Nations, Hughes wanted to ensure that Australia, though still a British dominion, could be a member of it with the fullest opportunities. In a meeting of the British delegation on 3 January 1919, for example, Hughes criticised the lack of explicit language on the right to dominion representation in the League. He referred to Australia's usual acquiescence in the practice of the British Foreign Minister representing the whole

66 Cablegram, Hughes to Watt, 31 January 1919, NAA CP360/8, 3.

67 Spertalis, *Diplomatic Battles*, 115.

British Commonwealth in diplomatic negotiations with foreign powers.⁶⁸ But when it came to the new institution, this created a position in which Australians were asked expressly to nominate the British Foreign Secretary as their representative in addressing foreign powers.⁶⁹ In such a situation, Hughes insisted on departing from usual practice and securing Australian representation in the League without mediation by the British.

When Japan participated as a Great Power in the Paris Peace Conference, it had the specific objectives of gaining control over Germany's possessions in the North Pacific and China. Beyond that, the Imperial Japanese Government was so concerned about the degree of racial discrimination prevailing in international relations that it instructed its delegation to press for an international commitment to abolish racial discrimination.⁷⁰ On 13 February, Baron Makino, head of the Japanese delegation, presented its proposal for insertion into the Covenant of the League of Nations to the league commission of the Paris Peace Conference:

The equality of nations being a basic principle of the League of Nations, the [High Contracting Parties] agree to accord, as soon as possible, to all alien nationals of States members of the League equal and just treatment in every respect, making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race and nationality.

This was exactly the sort of proposal that Hughes feared might be associated with the new world organisation.

Japan, encountering resistance from the US and British delegations, issued a new claim on 4 March. The Japanese delegation indicated that it would be content with a statement of principle on racial discrimination and would not seek immediate changes in domestic legislation that conflicted with that principle. The implication of the concession, however, was equally alarming for Hughes. It presaged that at some stage the Japanese would eventually seek changes in racially discriminatory legislation of other states, such as Australia's White Australia policy. In February the Japanese sought to devote much diplomatic effort into persuading those most resistant to their proposal, namely the British 'colonies'. During that month the Japanese delegation put its case to both Hughes and to Garran but received a noncommittal reply from both. To resolve the impasse, Cecil convinced Borden to host on 25 February a meeting at his flat that included the Japanese, the dominion leaders and himself as an intermediary. At the meeting Hughes pleaded not drafting difficulties but the fact that 95 out of every 100 Australians would unite in resisting the

68 See Keith, *Dominions as Sovereign States*, 3–14.

69 Minutes of Second Meeting of Committee on Position of Dominions and India in the League of Nations, 3 January 1919, in *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 2, 22.

70 See Naoko Shimuzu, *Japan, Race and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2002).

principle that underlay the proposal.⁷¹ Privately, Hughes commented: “The Japanese wish to insert the above amendment in the Preamble. It may be all right. But sooner than agree to it I would walk into the Seine—or the Folies Bergère with my clothes off.”⁷² Over the next few weeks Hughes (supported by Garran) continued to resist the Japanese racial equality clause even at the risk of Japan walking out of the League.

Cecil, in frustration, complained to Borden in April:

I cannot help regretting the completely *non possumus* attitude assumed by Hughes. It would be refreshing if that statesman could for once make a constructive suggestion, instead of devoting his great abilities exclusively to destroying every proposal made by others ... Unless something is done I am afraid that the Japanese will make a public protest against our attitude on the question and attract a very great deal of European sympathy from those nations who have no Asiatic question to deal with and this will be all the more regrettable since they are our Allies. Further, it is possible that they may refuse to join the League of Nations—a result which will materially increase the insecurity of Australia, apart from its disadvantages.⁷³

The upshot was that continued Australian resistance combined with Woodrow Wilson’s reluctance to allow interference with America’s own racially discriminatory immigration laws to defeat the Japanese proposal. Wilson, however, was able to appease the Japanese by supporting their claims not only to Germany’s Pacific territories in the North Pacific but to the Shandong Peninsula in China as well.⁷⁴ On the basis of this compromise, Japan remained in the League without a racial equality clause and Hughes and Cook were able to sign the Peace Treaty for Australia on 28 June 1919.

The delegation in Paris and Australian independence

While the Australian delegation in Paris did not obtain what it wanted in reparations from the defeated Central Powers, it succeeded in getting mandates over German New Guinea and later Nauru, and was able to oppose a clause on racial equality in the League Covenant and secure the right of the dominions to be represented in the League and even on the League Council.⁷⁵ Hughes and the other dominion leaders had been insistent that all the treaties and conventions resulting from the Peace

71 Spartalis, *Diplomatic Battles*, 175.

72 Spartalis, *Diplomatic Battles*, 175.

73 Letter, Cecil to Borden, 2 April 1919, in *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 2, 104–5.

74 Kristofer Allersfeldt, ‘Wilsonian Pragmatism? Woodrow Wilson, Japanese Immigration and the Paris Peace Conference’, *Diplomatic History* 15, no. 3 (September 2004): 545–72. W. H. Donald, an ex-patriot Australian in China, wrote a bitter letter of complaint to Hughes about this on 1 September 1919, Hughes Papers, MS 1538, Series 16, Box 103, NLA.

75 For the reparations issue see Spartalis, *Diplomatic Battles*, chapter 7.

Conference should be drafted so as to enable the dominions to become parties and signatories to them. Borden and Smuts, in particular, were keen to emphasise that separate dominion signatures on the peace treaties were consonant with the idea of the Crown acting as the supreme executive in the United Kingdom and the dominions but on the advice of different ministries with different constitutional units.⁷⁶ Hughes, moreover, later sided with Smuts against Borden in agreeing that the dominion signatures on the Peace Treaty entitled the dominions to make laws for their mandates without needing to be empowered to do so by British legislation.⁷⁷

This was consistent with the resolution that Borden and Smuts (but not Hughes) had championed in the Imperial War Conference of 1917: Resolution IX claiming that the organisation of the Empire would be based on autonomy and equality of nationhood. It was potentially inconsistent with the Australian idea championed by Liberals such as William Watt that continued throughout the interwar period. This was that the British Empire should speak with one voice in foreign policy.⁷⁸ Addressing the Commonwealth Parliament after the conference, Hughes argued that 'separate representation' at Paris meant that Australia had become a nation and entered into a family of nations on the 'footing of equality'.⁷⁹ But other members of the delegation like Eggleston worried that Australia might find itself in a worse situation after the conference than before as it meant that Australia would henceforth be deprived of the 'authority' of England in its external relations.⁸⁰ Hughes eventually felt the force of these arguments himself when he attempted to walk back from the full implications of Australia's greater independence at the Imperial Conference in 1921.⁸¹ There, supported by Joseph Cook as high commissioner in London, he torpedoed a proposal from the South African prime minister, Jan Smuts, to clarify the constitutional status of the dominions.⁸² Hughes found it advantageous in dealing with countries such as Japan to retain ambiguity on whether Australia was speaking as an autonomous dominion or as part of the British Empire.

While Hughes remained lukewarm to the League of Nations in the interwar period, he did insist that Australia should have full voting rights there rather than there being a bloc British Empire vote.⁸³ Latham became a staunch advocate of the new organisation and a founding member of the League of Nations Union in

76 Memorandum by Borden on Dominions as Parties and Signatories to Peace Treaties, 12 March 1919, in *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 2, 72.

77 Cablegram from Hughes to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 February 1920, NAA CP4/11.

78 See David Lee, *Australia and the British Empire between the Wars* (London: Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 2004).

79 Spertalis, *Diplomatic Battles*, 120.

80 Osmond, *Frederic Eggleston*, 96.

81 See also James Cotton, 'William Morris Hughes: Empire and Nationalism: The Legacy of the First World War', *Australian Historical Studies* 46, no. 1 (2015): 11–18.

82 W.K. Hancock, *Smuts*, vol. 2, *The Fields of Force, 1919–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 48–9.

83 Cablegram from Hughes to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 November 1919, NAA A981, UNI53.

Victoria. Indeed, he presaged in 1920 that Australian membership of the League would necessitate a great number of Australians being represented abroad.⁸⁴ Both he and Stanley Bruce, a fellow Victorian, were advocates for Australian activism in the League. The Australian delegation's diplomacy in 1919 had helped this become possible. Australia became an independent member of the League, holder of League of Nation mandates, and a member of the League Council, all of which contributed to building Australia's personality as an international actor in its own right. Latham's personal antipathy to Hughes saw him caucus with the newly formed Country Party when he was elected to the House of Representatives in 1922. After the Country Party toppled Hughes as prime minister, Latham joined Bruce's Nationalist-Country Party administration as attorney-general in 1925. In that capacity, he accompanied Bruce to the Imperial Conference of 1926 that defined the United Kingdom and dominions as 'autonomous communities' that were 'equal in status'.⁸⁵

In 1930 when Latham was leader of the Opposition, Garran, still Australia's Solicitor-General, helped Labor Prime Minister James Scullin to negotiate with the United Kingdom the passage through the British Parliament of the Statute of Westminster. This legislation established the legislative independence of the self-governing dominions. After Latham became minister for external affairs and attorney-general, he recommended to Cabinet in 1933 that the Australian Parliament should adopt the Statute of Westminster and thus put the finishing touches on Australia's status as an independent state.⁸⁶ This would not happen until 1942 under the Curtin administration. In the meantime, Latham and Eggleston, who had served as solicitor-general of Victoria from 1924 to 1927, remained keenly interested in Australia's external relations, leading to the former becoming Australia's first minister to Japan in 1940 and the latter Australia's first minister to China in 1941.

The Australian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 was a remarkable one. It consisted of members of the Round Table movement aimed at closer union between Britain and the dominions (Garran, Latham and Eggleston), W.M. Hughes, an advocate of Australian self-government within a powerful Empire, and Joseph Cook, a free-trade Liberal. All of them were committed before the war to Australia's integration in a tight-knit British Empire, but they combined in 1919 to put Australia on a path that would see Australia becoming an independent nation-state by the time of World War II. Moreover, they achieved the successes they did in opposition to the views of the majority of Hughes's Cabinet and often against the wishes of the British Government.

84 Latham, *Significance of the Peace Conference*, 15.

85 David Lee, *Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Australian Internationalist* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 67–69.

86 David Lee, 'States Rights and Australia's Adoption of the Statute of Westminster, 1931–1942', *History Australia* 13, no. 2 (April 2016): 258–74.

Political biography—handmaiden to history?

STEPHEN WILKS

Biographers are producing many good accounts of political lives, but are they fully realising the genre's potential to contribute to understanding the political past? Often these biographies are constrained by limited aims that make them more handmaidens to history than central players. Many political biographies are predominantly a narrative of a life, leading to anodyne conclusions that can be little more than character assessments of the subject. Why is this so? And how might political biographers achieve more? A wise choice of subject is just one such means; the main need is for stronger assessment of a subject's policy ideas, achievements and lasting influence—effectively, to establish the individual's place in history.

This article presents an argument for scholarly biographers of major political figures to seek to realise the potential of their work to contribute to the closely related—indeed intertwined—field of political history. The focus here is on biographers in Australia and the rest of the English-speaking world. As a group, they have long brushed aside suggestions that their works do not really constitute history, but are they now fully realising the potential of the genre? I suggest not. They instead are at risk of overestimating the success and influence of their works. By being limited to life narratives alone, political biography is too often—to draw on a comforting cliché favoured by the marginal—failing to punch at its weight, let alone above it.

Biography is rooted in human agency; political history is rich in interpersonal interaction. The two should go together readily and effectively. Biography presents to scholars a platform for exploring the torturous chains of decision, chance and error that characterise the political past and the legacies it imparts. Some venerable figures suggested otherwise, quite unapologetically. R.G. Collingwood famously thought that biography is 'constructed on principles that are not only non-historical but anti-historical' as the 'biological events' that constitute biography create 'a framework not of thought but of natural processes'.¹ G.R. Elton opined in 1967 that 'even at its best biography is a poor way of writing history' as the biographer's task is not to 'be concerned with the history of that individual's times except in so far as it centres upon or emanates from him'.² Such dismissals are less commonly stated so bluntly today, but are still far from unknown. More recently,

1 R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (1946; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 304.

2 G.R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (1967; London: Collins Fontana, 1969), 169.

the American historian David Nasaw reported that ‘characterization of biography as a lesser form of history stretches far and wide’, to the dire extent that ‘assistant professors are told to get tenure and promotion before taking on a biography’.³ Biography at least has the starting block advantage of popularity with the reading public. In Australia it vies with military history for shelf space in the Australiana sections of bookstores. The story of a life is easy for the reader to identify with, is rarely encumbered with seemingly abstract concepts that can seem tiresome, and can carry readers along with a compelling sense of direction as an entire life unfolds on paper. This potentially powerful form of history should now seek to move from being a slightly awkward cousin loitering in the lower echelons of scholarly history to a full family member.⁴

I draw here also on long personal experience of reviewing biographies, scholarly and otherwise, for newspapers and journals. Most have been of political figures from the twentieth-century Anglosphere. I also take account of my own original research concerning the effervescent Earle Christmas Grafton Page, longstanding leader of Australia’s rural-based Country Party, and fleetingly prime minister in 1939.⁵ Page has been dismissed by some historians, in almost as many words, as a simple rustic. This is despite his having commenced medical studies at the University of Sydney aged all of 15 and subsequently topping his graduation year. The man’s political longevity, seniority and stridently stated enthusiasms in fact make him twentieth-century Australia’s most important advocate of developmentalism, a little-studied stream of thought that assumes that governments can readily lead a newly minted nation to the realisation of its economic potential. This has encompassed measures as varied as land settlement schemes, the fostering of secondary industry, investment in major infrastructure and the subsidisation of mining projects, right up to such unlikely propositions as the Bradfield scheme to divert rivers towards Australia’s arid interior. Competition between optimistic and more sober conceptions of national development is one of the great themes in Australian history. Developmentalist ideas were central to Page’s career, supporting revisionist arguments, such as by political scientist James Walter that Australian political life has been richer in applied thinkers than is widely assumed.⁶ The oft-maligned Page is not only a fine vehicle for studying these powerful concepts in the history of a new nation, but also provided me with a spark for pondering the wider role of biography in history.

3 David Nasaw, ‘AHR Roundtable Historians and Biography: Introduction’, *American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (2009): 573.

4 I do not in this article deal with memoirs and diaries by politicians and their ilk, being primary sources rather than biographies. A good account of these is provided by Mark McKenna in ‘The Character Business: Biographical Political Writing in Australia’, in *A Historian for All Seasons: Essays for Geoffrey Bolton*, ed. Stuart Macintyre, Lenore Layman and Jenny Gregory (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Publishing, 2017), 48–70.

5 Stephen Wilks, *Now is the Psychological Moment: Earle Page and the Imagining of Australia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2020), doi.org/10.22459/NPM.2020.

6 James Walter, with Tod Moore, *What Were They Thinking?: The Politics of Ideas in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010).

Limitations

In 1964 the prominent American political scientist Lewis J. Edinger judged that ‘on the whole political scientists, perhaps somewhat disdainfully, have preferred to leave it to others to write about the individual political leader’.⁷ He added that consequently political biographies had been moving ‘toward a greater stress on free-flowing narrative and less on precision of terminology and concept’.⁸ Seventeen years later, the Australian biographer Kate White similarly observed that ‘Australian political biographies overall do not give us much insight into political behaviour’ and ‘lack the immediacy of social history and the drama and intrigue of political history’.⁹ Examples included Colm Kiernan’s biography of Labor Party leader Arthur Calwell, which she thought an ‘apologist biography’ that was ‘little more than a work of piety’; and L.F. Fitzhardinge’s 2-volume study of prime minister William Morris Hughes, which ‘seems to lose Hughes’s colourful personality in the maze of historical detail’. Yet she found herself struggling to explain the prevalence of ‘this uncritical approach’.¹⁰ Today, academic political historians are more likely than ever to produce biographies, but there seems not to have been commensurate change in the impact this output is having on wider history.

Political biographies typically make an imprecise start by not stating with clarity what if any historical goals they are out to achieve. Their authors decline to set themselves specific questions such as those that are posed later in this article. Biographies are elevated to scholarly history only when they look beyond charting a life and character to judge what that life meant for the world about it, including what if any individual legacy reverberated beyond the subject’s death. Many fine political biographies are being produced, but in the constricted sense of serving up a fluid narrative of the trials and tribulations of a political life, without shaping this into a basis for an argument about its wider significance.

Accordingly, turn to a political biographer’s stated conclusions and one frequently finds just a few generalised reflections on the individual in isolation. Many are markedly similar, such as by professing wonderment at the contradictions of character as if this were rare among human beings. Even what is widely (and largely justifiably) acclaimed as the foremost political biography of our time—Robert Caro’s ongoing work on Lyndon Baines Johnson—is avowedly a study of character and how that bore upon the acquisition and exercise of power.¹¹ For this mighty work

7 Lewis J. Edinger, ‘Political Science and Political Biography: Reflections on the Study of Leadership (1)’, *Journal of Politics* 26, no. 2 (1964): 423.

8 Edinger, ‘Political Science and Political Biography’, 424.

9 Kate White, ‘Towards an Assessment of Australian Political Biography’, *Politics: The Journal of the Australasian Political Studies Association* 16, no. 1 (1981): 130–32.

10 White, ‘Towards an Assessment of Australian Political Biography’, 130–32.

11 Robert Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 4 volumes to date, 1982–2012).

to fulfil its potential, Caro still needs to draw together what LBJ's life amounted to and how this resonated beyond his time. This is the challenge that hopefully will be met in his still-awaited fifth and concluding volume. (Caro, an inspiringly dedicated researcher, reportedly plans to undertake field work in Vietnam so as to absorb a personal sense of what it was like at the receiving end of LBJ's exercise of power.) The more workmanlike Robert Dallek in the second volume of his lesser known account of Johnson at least gives us a few concluding pages on his subject's Great Society domestic program ('a study in paradox') and Vietnam ('a larger mistake').¹² In Australia, Allan Martin's 2-volume work on Robert Menzies is the fullest and most scholarly study of this massive figure, but ends with a rambling survey of his subject's successes, failures and characteristics; perhaps its being titled 'Reflections' rather than 'Conclusions' is significant.¹³

Surveying the subject's character seems to be the end in itself, almost eschewing consideration of how this influenced broader history. The substantive conclusions that many political biographers do provide are frequently inserted at various points along their account of the subject's life. This not only imparts some element of interpretative analysis, but also subordinates it to a descriptive narrative that remains firmly dominant. Presenting analysis as disconnected shards hanging off a succession of anecdotes effectively signals that historical interpretation is a secondary consideration that the reader must bear with in the course of navigating the story of a life.

Often only cursory significance is attached to even the most seminal of a subject's policy statements. Ben Pimlott's widely esteemed 1992 biography of Harold Wilson details the then new Labour leader's famed 'white heat' speech of 1963 that ringingly called for a technologically empowered Britain. Wilson was hailed as his nation's coming man, with 'a cohesive and inspiring new doctrine'.¹⁴ Pimlott covers its immediate political reception but addresses the translation of this shining vision into government policy in summary form only. His book is a fine narrative of a political life but could have been even more, petering out into an inconsequential account of Wilson's years in retirement. By so often lacking fully fleshed assessments of their subject's impact on wider events, political biographers conform, albeit unintentionally, to *sotto voce* reservations about biography as a field. What we are left with can resemble compendiums leavened by only occasional glimmers of commentary, parcels of semi-digested evidence rather than full scholarly assessments.

12 Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times 1961–1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, first published 1998), 625–26.

13 A.W. Martin (assisted by Patsy Hardy), *Robert Menzies: A Life* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, vol. 1 1993, vol. 2 1999).

14 Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (1992; London: HarperCollins, 1993), 305, 526–27.

Political biographies invariably and quite properly survey the subject's relations with other important personages—such as Pimlott on how Wilson worked with Barbara Castle ('the only member of the Cabinet who ever felt a really human sympathy for the Prime Minister') and Richard Crossman ('Harold liked and distrusted him').¹⁵ But they do not routinely assess how such individuals had to work as a group in driving the decision-making process, as is commonly the case. We are too often given mere statements of bilateral relations, so to speak, with limited reflection on the implications for outcomes.

Closely related is a tendency to fail to capture a sense of the sheer messiness and seeming irrationality of so much of political life. This basic reality is at odds with the biographer's instinct for smooth narrative flow. Most major political decisions are shaped by efforts to strike an acceptable compromise between conflicting aims and contrary pressures, conducted amid onrushing floods of pressing new events. Conventional historians and biographers alike can fail to take full account of this. Pimlott on Wilson is a worthy exception; another is Walter Isaacson in his 1992 biography of Henry Kissinger. A chapter detailing how Kissinger as National Security Advisor coped during a not atypically chaotic fortnight in September 1970 provides a neat biographical corrective to how 'historians naturally treat the world in an unnatural way, plucking a particular event or crisis out of context, analyzing it, then moving on to the next one, even if they were in reality all jumbled up'.¹⁶ Denis Murphy, in his biography of T.J. Ryan (a strong candidate for being the best prime minister that Australia never had), also touched on the need for political biographies to consider how their subjects dealt with issues as they emerged and not artificially separate them out, even making such juggling part of their assessment of the individual's political ability.¹⁷ As a senior Australian government official once sagely told me, 'always look first for the stuff-up rather than the conspiracy'.

Australian political biographies frequently display distinctive limitations of their own. Too many fail to convey fully what policy ideas and ideals their subjects held. Readers are more likely to be the beneficiaries of abbreviated references to a belief in social justice, seeking opportunity for all, courting big and powerful friends, and suchlike. Admittedly, this raises a question of whether such shorthand is primarily attributable to authors or more necessarily arises from the limitations of their subjects. Our local, Australian product is frequently also commensurately weak on formative experiences. It is not unknown for as much text to be provided on a pre-politics sporting career or what football team a subject publicly supported (often a careful political choice) as on reading habits or any other known intellectual influences. Many past accounts of the aforementioned Earle Page largely ignored the

15 Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, 337, 335.

16 Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1992), 285.

17 Denis Murphy, *T.J. Ryan: A Political Biography* (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1990, first published 1975), xx.

reading and other formative experiences of this ideas-rich individual and how they came to be reflected in his innumerable proclamations about Australia's national destiny. This is only partly the consequence of Australian public figures acting on a smaller and more culturally provincial stage than that of the United States or Britain; it more fundamentally suggests a disinclination to attach importance to seemingly abstract ideas.

Assisting from the wings is the indifferent standard of reviewing in this country. Reviewers typically and implicitly accept that biography is a genre of limited range and set their sights accordingly. 'Hodgepodes of conventional wisdom and middlebrow advertorial', proclaimed Gideon Haigh of Australian literary reviewing, admittedly somewhat harshly.¹⁸ Newspaper and magazine reviewers of Australian historical biographies too often fail to compare the work in question with earlier books on the same subject. Should they do so, they may well find that the work they are reviewing contains little new coverage, and even less in the way of novel interpretation. The career of the first governor of New South Wales, Arthur Phillip, has been addressed by a string of worthy and mostly welcome books over the years, but none add greatly to Alan Frost's 1987 biography.¹⁹

Many such criticisms of political biography have been made before, albeit sometimes passingly. In 2007 James Walter wrote of Australian biographies being at least until late last century predominantly 'strictly chronological, and favoring public life over private, and description over analysis'.²⁰ Five years later R.A.W. Rhodes, in critiquing the conventions of 'the British tradition of political life history', wrote of the importance of focusing on 'the webs of significance that people spin for themselves', and of how good biographical works 'use life history to address issues beyond the life itself'.²¹

And, indeed, there are honourable exceptions to the seemingly dire situation that your author so disapproves of. Here are several Australian examples (only 3 of which present an entire life, incidentally). Judith Brett's *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* explores the great man's ideas and values, making it one of the most intriguing political life studies to appear anywhere.²² State premiers are patchily covered by biographies, probably partly as they present problems of limited sales markets, but *Playford's South Australia* is a little-known collection of incisive essays assessing the legacy of that state's long-serving premier.²³ Tim Colebatch's study of Victorian

18 Gideon Haigh, 'Feeding the Hand That Bites', *Kill Your Darlings*, no. 1 (March 2010): 9–11.

19 Alan Frost, *Arthur Phillip, 1738–1814: His Voyaging* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1987).

20 James Walter, 'Political Biography', in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Politics*, ed. Brian Galligan and Winsome Roberts (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2007), 413.

21 R.A.W. Rhodes, 'Theory, Method and British Political Life History', *Political Studies Review* 10 (2012): 161, 171.

22 Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* (Chippendale, NSW: Macmillan Australia, 1992).

23 Bernard O'Neil, Judith Raftery and Kerrie Round, eds, *Playford's South Australia: Essays on the History of South Australia, 1933–1968* (Adelaide: Association of Professional Historians Inc., 1996).

premier Dick Hamer concludes with a full assessment of its subject.²⁴ Patrick Weller's conclusions in *Malcolm Fraser PM* adroitly relate the person to policies and outcomes, albeit with more emphasis on individual political style than on critically assessing the widespread perception that the Fraser Government failed to arrest national economic decline.²⁵ Jenny Hocking's 2-volume biography of Gough Whitlam is strong on his early influences, both familial and intellectual.²⁶ And Peter Edwards has contributed to the small but growing genre of biographies of political players who were not actually politicians, notably Arthur Tange and Justice Robert Hope.²⁷

A contributing problem is the preponderance of 'instant' political biographies, written at high speed while the subject is still of sufficient public interest to commercially justify the exercise. As publishers' urgent deadlines invariably make such works the first to reach the shelves, they help set public expectations. Some are effectively ephemeral campaign biographies clearly geared to furthering their subject's career prospects. Again, there are also some relatively solid works that constitute exceptions within this genre, such as Peter FitzSimons on Kim Beazley.²⁸ But more often a shortage of substance sets the bar decidedly low and contributes to an acceptance of biographers conforming to a modest standard. At worst, they are the late-night television of biography, more addictive than a constructive use of a reader's time. More reflective and substantial works can challenge such accounts, but usually appear only very much later. The first volume of Martin's account of Menzies appeared 15 years after his subject's death, preceded by interesting but far less consequential efforts by Kevin Perkins, Percy Joske and John Bunting.²⁹ Historians are following in the wake of such works.

But this is neither an acceptable nor complete excuse. More fundamentally, the problem seems to be one of political biography being constrained by unstated but pervasively limited expectations. To judge from some of the works most widely available, many publishers and readers alike implicitly accept that anything stretching beyond a suitably diverting life story constitutes a pretentious intrusion. The limitations of such narrative-based biography may be behind what does not exactly constitute a trend, but is at least an interesting phenomenon—that of narratives of important lives eventually being followed and complemented by anthologies

24 Tim Colebatch, *Dick Hamer: The Liberal Liberal* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2014).

25 Patrick Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM: A Study in Prime Ministerial Power* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1989).

26 Jenny Hocking, *Gough Whitlam: A Moment in History* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2009); and Jenny Hocking, *Gough Whitlam: His Time* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2012).

27 Peter Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2006); Peter Edwards, *Law, Politics and Intelligence: A Life of Robert Hope* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2020).

28 Peter FitzSimons, *Beazley: A Biography* (Pymble, NSW: Harper Collins, 1998).

29 Kevin Perkins, *Menzies: Last of the Queen's Men* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1968); Percy Joske, *Sir Robert Menzies, 1894–1978: A New, Informal Memoir* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1978); John Bunting, *R. G. Menzies: A Portrait* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

of interpretative essays. The 1991 biography *Playford: Benevolent Despot* was followed by the aforesaid *Playford's South Australia* in 1996.³⁰ Martin's first volume on Menzies was followed in 1995 by the collection *The Menzies Era: A Reappraisal of Government, Politics and Policy* and, in 2016, by *Menzies: The Shaping of Modern Australia*.³¹ And Wilson post-Pimlott has his *Harold Wilson: The Unprincipled Prime Minister? Reappraising Harold Wilson*.³²

Possibilities

So how exactly does political biography reach beyond such limited horizons? What follows is an admittedly idealised outline of what might characterise political biography that realises its historical potential—a checklist, perhaps, but at least a start.

Of foremost importance, naturally enough, is selection of a rewarding subject. Wise choice of subject does not alone make a good biographically based history, but it most certainly helps. The ideal is someone who had a purpose in their politics, making them rich in ideas and potentially also in policy influence. The 'quickie' by FitzSimons on Beazley acquires gravitas from its subject's clarity of policy vision and consequent sense of purpose. Another typical feature of a suitably sound subject is political longevity. A long public career, such as that of Earle Page, which stretched over 50 years, is obviously more likely to have navigated developments over time in the political environment and the workings of government. How a subject responded—adroitly or not—can help draw out the historical implications of these changes.

Subjects who were not denizens of the very front rank of public life need not be readily dismissed. Many influential figures were never heads of government, or at least were not for long. To take Australian examples, think of Black Jack McEwen and his driving of trade and industry policy, Gareth Evans on foreign and infrastructure policies, Neal Blewett on health care and John Dawkins on higher education. And an individual's skills of observation and perception can more than make up for a relative lack of official standing. Someone who reflected intelligently on events is not only a source of evidence but possibly also a subject in themselves.³³

30 Stewart Cockburn, *Playford: Benevolent Despot* (Stepney: Axiom Publishing, 1991).

31 Scott Prasser, J.R. Nethercote and John Warhurst, eds, *The Menzies Era: A Reappraisal of Government, Politics and Policy* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1995); John Nethercote, ed., *Menzies: The Shaping of Modern Australia* (West End, Qld: Connor Court, 2016).

32 Andrew S. Crines and Kevin Hickson, eds, *Harold Wilson: The Unprincipled Prime Minister?: Reappraising Harold Wilson* (London: Biteback, 2016).

33 Such as Paul Hasluck in his *Diplomatic Witness: Australian Foreign Affairs 1941–1947* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1980).

Political biographies benefit from both a stated purpose and a consolidated analysis. They should dwell on policy ideas and their influence, seeking always to relate the individual to wider events. The details of a life can be a backbone that provides a means to the end of interpreting the past. What was the nature of the subject's engagement with the wider world? What did he or she influence and inspire, and how lastingly? Anecdotes should ideally serve a purpose by being chosen for the light they cast on such points of historical significance. At the very least, consideration can be given to what a subject eventually came to symbolise. The biographer might even consider eschewing the historian's best friend—chronology—for a more overtly analytic thematic structure. But as chronology provides an instant organising principle that captures changing contexts around a subject and also meets the expectations of the typical reader, this should never be done lightly.

We can ask, too, what the subject set out to do. Did policy ideas sit at the core of their public life? If so, the biography should attempt neatly to marry life with ideas. Was their vision clearly stated? Was it distinctive or a borrowing of the ideas of others? Past assumptions about their having limited goals should be critically assessed—such as some past writings about Page. Did the individual embody a more broadly held set of ideas, such that their single life can be used to illuminate a much wider theme? Reading around a subject is almost as important as reading about them. Depth of knowledge of their cultural surroundings in time is a basis for appreciating what they influenced and what influenced them. Historians thrive on context; so should political biographers.

How do we assess an individual's influence? This is not easy amid the fog of history. There are, for example, competing proposals as to who was most responsible for establishing the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in 1911, variously claimed by and for King O'Malley, Andrew Fisher and Billy Hughes.³⁴ And who was behind Commonwealth funding of the postwar explosion in Australian universities and student numbers in the 1950s? Menzies? What about deeper antecedents, stretching back to prime ministers Chifley and John Curtin, or even beyond them to Treasurer Richard Casey in the 1930s?³⁵ The closest we can get to answering such uncertainties is by tracing in detail how an idea evolved though time, from gestation to practical policy. Political biography, possibly stretched to cover more than one subject, is a means of doing so by looking at the individual players in a decision, anatomising complex chains of events in a way that recognises and indeed revels in the messiness of political reality.

34 See, for example, David Day, *Andrew Fisher: Prime Minister of Australia* (Pymble, NSW: 4th Estate, 2008), 249–52.

35 See A.W. Martin, 'R.G. Menzies and the Murray Committee', in *Ideas for Histories of Universities in Australia*, ed. F.B. Smith and P. Crichton (Canberra: Division of Historical Studies, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University, 1990), 94–115.

In attempting all this, the absence of new primary sources should not be a decisive obstacle. Naturally enough, the periodic release of hitherto embargoed documents can present an opportunity to reassess a political life. But more important is preparedness to critically re-evaluate what, if anything, has been previously claimed about a subject. In striving to build on existing biographies, authors should not feel compelled to emulate their often extreme length; sheer wordage is never a match for quality of interpretation. Related to this is that they also need not feel rigidly obliged to produce a whole life. They often can more effectively focus on selected points of importance. A mass of detail can actually obscure the subject's main significance. With many big political figures, one of the most pressing questions is simply 'where do I stop?' The answer is when the author has done enough to justify his or her assessment of their significance.

How far a subject has receded into the past can be important. The deeper this is the greater the scope to put them in historical context and judge the persistence or otherwise of their legacy. It took over 70 years for a politically powerful view to emerge that Alfred Deakin's great mistake was to commit the young Australian Commonwealth to trade protectionism.³⁶ The passage of time might even provide a step towards tying down that most elusive of concepts, an individual's place in history.

The complexity of political decisions and their origins points to a case for more use of group biography. It is indeed hard to delineate an individual's legacy—might that of a group tell us more? As suggested, decisions are rarely neatly those of one person. More often they arise from networks of individuals churning their way through the testing of each other's relative strength before finally settling on a collectively acceptable compromise. Hence the case for a study of how members of a group interacted. This is not to be confused with a mere anthology of separate brief lives. Sheila Fitzpatrick has used a true group study of Joseph Stalin's inner circle to contribute to a reinterpretation of how he functioned in power, demonstrating that this was not as well understood as had long been assumed.³⁷ If instead choosing to stay with one individual, biographers can at least ponder how this subject worked with others in negotiating his or her way towards their own ends.

Perceptions of a subject's political failure is not necessarily a limitation. This can instead be harnessed to address important questions. How exactly did he or she fail, and what does this imply about the wider political and social environment? Considering why something did not succeed can be significant in explaining the past, not least as it can help delineate the borders of practical possibility in a political

36 See Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 43–45, 66, 76–78, 98.

37 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin's Team: The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

culture. Past controversies that ultimately failed to leave a lasting legacy can also tell us what was once seen as important. Page was unable to create new states within the Australian federation, to spread hydroelectricity across the continent and to embed economic planning in the structures of government, but these were all once the subject of major debates.

An undue preoccupation with that oft-sought goal of discovering the inner person, an ill-defined concept, can be another pitfall. This great white whale of biography is engaging to speculate about, especially if the person in the best position to authoritatively contradict a biographer happens to be no longer of this world. With political figures it is outcomes, influence and legacy that should come first, being of widest impact. Inner life can be engrossing and highly significant, but foremost when pursued for what implications it ultimately had for public policy. There can also remain the interesting possibility that the subject did not really know themselves. It is common, for example, for self-declared rationalists like Page to have been far more emotive than they ever realised.

Also—and despite the preceding point—we should still try to delineate how the subject formed their political ideas. An individual's early education, reading, personal interactions, and pleasant and unpleasant experiences can tell us much about their later goals. The range of books that constituted Menzies's personal library, preserved at the University of Melbourne, implies much about his worldview. One biographer who attaches significance to this collection is Troy Bramston in his recent book on Menzies.³⁸ Take 2 other Australian prime ministers; imagine young McEwen each night after labouring on the farm forcing himself to read by the light of a kerosene lamp; or the child Ben Chifley sent off to live with his grandfather and endlessly reading, reading.

Nor should we shirk from conveying a sense of drama. Almost any political biography is bound to deal with remarkable events, should its subject be of any worth at all. Caro does not just convey the drama surrounding LBJ's acquisition and use of political power—he has the rare ability to make even the duller of legislative proceedings sound engrossing as he explores the nature of such power. His eye for the interplay of personality and influence invigorates every chapter of his Johnson saga.³⁹ This is also an example of a biographer being self-aware of a personal strength and endeavouring to play to this. In the right hands, drawing on such a strength to display an individual voice is a powerful tool. One reason why Richard Bosworth's *Mussolini* is arguably the finest international biography by an Australian—aside from the harnessing of a lifetime of scholarship—is a sharp wit liberally applied using understated drollery.⁴⁰

38 Troy Bramston, *Robert Menzies: The Art of Politics* (Brunswick, Vic.: Scribe, 2019), 267–68.

39 Caro, *Lyndon Johnson*.

40 R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini* (London: Arnold, 2002).

A last suggestion. All serious biographers should strive to produce something 'definitive' but hesitate to claim to have actually done so. No work of history is, biography included, no matter how well executed. By not doing so, we rightly anticipate and welcome those historians who will surely come after us.

To conclude and propose. These suggested approaches, skilfully combined, may ideally draw what would otherwise be a raw narrative and shards of analysis into a full and consolidated account of a political life's historical significance. Political biography is most productively treated as a basis for garnering, organising and then interpreting evidence, a versatile vehicle for exploring the past. Imparting an overriding sense of purpose beyond just recording life and times is vital. By being drawn together into something coherently conclusive, a political biography is more likely to justify recognition as a fine interpretative history. In doing so, it will help to elevate the entire genre to the higher status it is so well capable of. Indeed, might they even also help resuscitate public interest in Australian politics and history?

BOOK REVIEWS

Patricia Clarke review of Craig Campbell and Debra Hayes, *Jean Blackburn: Education, Feminism and Social Justice*

(Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Publishing, 2019), 464 pp., PB \$34.99, ISBN 9781925835274

Jean Blackburn was at the centre of the major reforms in education in Australia that followed the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972 with its ambitious policies aimed at raising the standard of education and advancing equality in educational resources and funding. This biography reveals how a woman, whose father was vehemently against educating girls beyond the ability to earn a basic living, could become such an important national figure, now regarded as one of the best and most influential educational thinkers Australia has produced.

Blackburn was 50 before she began to attain prominence. To that point, her life reflected the times in which she lived. She was the clever student from the unpromising background who endured a poor primary education but who took advantage of competitive exams to get to a good selective high school where, in a stimulating environment, she became politically and socially aware. She witnessed the failure of capitalism in the Depression and she entered university in the late 1930s, the first of her family to do so. She experienced widespread disillusion with international institutions in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and the inability of democracies to forestall the rise of fascism, and she was the young person swept away by the appeal of communism. During World War II, she shared with many women the exhilarating experience of working in an important job, only to see this opportunity disappear in the postwar years when she was expected to embrace a life as housewife and mother in the deadly dullness of 1950s conformist suburbia.

She was born Jean Edna Muir in Melbourne on 14 July 1919 to parents Les and Claire (née Witt), the middle child between two widely spaced brothers. Both parents were Methodists who had received a minimal public education. Her father had left school at 13 and been apprenticed in the motor trade, but by the time Jean was born he had worked himself up to a managerial position with the international oil firm later known as Shell. By dint of extreme, never-ending frugality that was to remain a hallmark of his rule of the family, he had acquired a house in middle-class East Malvern. The intense thrift he imposed depended on the absolute power he exercised as the sole source of income and it was combined with harsh physical discipline for slight infringements by his children who grew up in a home without books or conversation of any consequence. The environment was not much different when Jean began attending Malvern East State School on Lloyd Street. It had no

library and she regarded the teachers as sadists. They were certainly sticklers for rigid rules: in Grade 2 she was strapped because she didn't maintain the correct distance between hand and eye in writing.

The seeds of rebellion, independence and defiance of authority were being nurtured in a child who later defied her father's narrow views on education by gaining admission to the selective University High School. Even then it required the support of her usually passive mother to withstand her father's arguments against wasting education on girls, the expense of the uniform, the school being on the other side of the city from the up-market home they had moved to in Hawthorn, and many other objections. Strangely, even to old age, Jean expressed only grudging gratitude towards her mother (who herself had to leave school at 12) for her decisive interventions, including later in finding the money for her to attend university.

At University High School she was among some of the brightest products of the Victorian primary education system, including politically aware children of refugee Jewish families who had fled Nazi Germany. She had some inspiring, gifted and dedicated female teachers, and she flourished in a competitive environment where open debate was encouraged. Enrolling at the University of Melbourne in economics in 1938, she was caught up in the intellectual turmoil surrounding the Spanish Civil War and the increasing menace of Nazism and fascism and found a natural home in the communist-led Melbourne University Labour Club. She was elected assistant secretary under the president and Communist Party member Dick Blackburn, a son of the then Australian Labor Party member in the federal parliament, Maurice Blackburn, and Doris, his activist mother. Soon she was selling the communist newspaper outside Flinders Street railway station and frenetically busy organising meetings and protests. Her election as president of the Labour Club led to another clash with her father and a breakaway from home, the surprise being it had not come sooner. She was president during the early part of World War II and as a Communist Party member followed party directives to withdraw support for the war until the German attack on Russia that ended nearly 2 years of Russian neutrality.

In 1942, with an honours degree in economics, Blackburn was employed in a policy role in the Department of War Organisation of Industry. Under wartime conditions, she was able to continue working after her marriage to Dick Blackburn in 1943, but her taste of independence receded quickly with the birth of their first child. In quick succession she found herself in a small expensive Melbourne flat with a difficult baby and a husband, often absent on Communist Party business, who accepted a job with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in Adelaide without discussing the move with her. For the next 10 years she was the quintessential housewife and mother in suburban Adelaide, gradually building a network of women friends.

Blackburn drew on her experiences in those years when she wrote about the waste of talent among women like herself who were capable of being much more than housewives but were denied opportunities to work in *Australian Wives Today* (1963), a study she undertook for the Victorian Fabian Society and which foreshadowed some of her later work. It included many policy suggestions aimed at helping housewives re-enter the workforce, including free access to higher education, childcare reform and more flexible work and shopping hours. She also made a strong case for girls to have easier access to tertiary education.

Blackburn's opportunity to work came when she won a position as English and history teacher at Presbyterian Ladies College, a private school that was prepared to employ a Communist Party member at a time when they were banned from teaching in government schools. Her party membership led to the inevitable Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) file, but the party, more often than not, humiliated women members and Blackburn was no exception. Made president of the Communist-front New Housewives Association, she found it abruptly abolished and replaced with the Union of Australian Women without being consulted. She resigned from the party in 1956, although her husband remained a lifelong member. Apart from time off for the birth of a third child in 1958, Blackburn continued as a highly regarded teacher until the mid-1960s.

Concurrently she gained a higher degree in education that led to an appointment as research secretary to an inquiry chaired by Professor Peter Karmel into South Australian education, which had reached a crisis with overcrowded schools, huge class sizes and gaping inequalities in resources between schools. Her ground-breaking research for the inquiry established that educational outcomes were related to a child's socioeconomic circumstances, which varied widely between localities and schools. Her research also led to the acceptance that to achieve equality in education government help was essential, not only for poorly resourced public schools but also for Catholic parochial schools, thus raising the issue of state aid to religious schools that had been a divisive issue since colonial times. This was the beginning of her working relationship with Karmel that was to carry through to her national role.

As soon as Labor won election in 1972, the Whitlam Government began implementing its policy to establish an Australian Schools Commission to assess the needs of students in all schools and make recommendations for funding based on need. It began by appointing an interim committee, under Karmel with Blackburn as deputy, which had the task of setting guidelines. When the commission was formally established, they continued in these positions. Blackburn was required to move to Canberra where she was immediately involved in constant, intense work from early in the morning until late at night with only brief, rushed trips home to Adelaide each second weekend.

She brought to her work her accumulated life experiences ranging from her own schooling in Victoria, her children's experiences in the South Australian public system and her own teaching at a prestigious private school, to the loss of employment opportunities after a brief spell in an important wartime job, her experience in negotiating the control exercised by the Communist Party and in adapting and making friends as a housewife in a city where she knew no one and to the waste of talent when there were multiple factors restricting married women entering the workforce. She also brought to preparing reports an analytical mind and superior writing skills and the ability to synthesise inputs into complex issues. Her life in Canberra, although eventually rich in friendships, does not appear to have included any outlets for relaxation or humour or time for immersion in anything but work-related issues. A friend described Blackburn's work-dominated life as 'quite killing'.

During these years of relentless toil, she made her distinctive contribution to education as the architect of the Disadvantaged Schools Program, which revolutionised the resourcing and funding of public and non-government schools on a needs basis, and her report on *Girls, School and Society* (1975), which canvassed the under-achievement of girls in education and the projects and funding necessary to equalise their educational choices. Her research in these areas established her reputation as one of Australia's foremost and creative educational thinkers. David Gonski, in his reviews of government funding of schools, pointed to its enduring relevance.

Blackburn's work continued during the earlier years of the coalition government under Malcolm Fraser, but she was increasingly at odds with the government's direction and resigned in 1980. She had already seen the beginning of the changes in legislation that over the next 50 years whittled away the goal of equality in education to the point where Australian schools are noted now for their inequality in resources. After leaving the Schools Commission, Blackburn was appointed a research fellow in the Education Department at the University of Adelaide. In 1990 she was named the first chancellor of the new University of Canberra, originally established as the Canberra College of Advanced Education, but retired the following year for health reasons.

This biography is a very successful factual record of the life of Jean Blackburn as a student, a political radical, housewife and mother, her development as a feminist and her great achievements in educational policy. The historical background to every stage of her life is well documented, sometimes in rather more detail than necessary, but some aspects of her personal life that might have been pursued are left hanging. The enduring marriage between Jean and Dick Blackburn was an important element in their lives and the lives of their children, and its stability must have been reassuring when they were apart, particularly during the years when Jean

was absent in Canberra and suffering from severe stress and depressive episodes. Yet it is not examined in depth in this book and Dick Blackburn remains a figure in the background.

The great achievement of this biography by 2 highly qualified educationists, Craig Campbell and Debra Hayes, is its comprehensive coverage of the complexities behind the history and development of educational policies in Australia, the dire position these policies inflicted on students in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly in the population explosion after World War II, and the research behind the development of new policies in the 1970s and their implementation at state and federal level. The authors' research included interviews with many educational experts that will be of continuing value for historians in the field. Jean Blackburn's pivotal role is woven into the account of the development of educational policy and its flowering in the early work of the Australian Schools Commission. The publication of her biography comes at a time when Australia is ripe for another revolution in educational policy.

Helen Ennis review of Anne-Louise Willoughby, *Nora Heysen: A Portrait*

(Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Press, 2019), 384 pp., PB \$34.99,
ISBN 9781925815207

Among the first decisions a biographer must face is where to start the narrative of their subject's life and how to deal with chronology. Anne-Louise Willoughby chose to begin her biography of Australian artist Nora Heysen with a discussion of *Transport driver*, one of Heysen's most celebrated paintings produced during Heysen's stint as a war artist. Willoughby's decision was sensible. It enabled her to stress from the outset that art was at the centre of Heysen's life, and to signal some of her fundamental concerns. The aircraftwoman Heysen depicted is 'a professional ... strong, authoritative', all of which applies to the artist herself. Willoughby's biography celebrates Heysen's considerable achievements, but it was also conceived as part of a larger project of restitution that redresses 'the historical biases that have shadowed women's contributions, in particular to Australian art'. The book adds to a slowly growing corpus of biographies of women artists; Jo Oliver's *Jessie Traill: A Biography*, published in February 2020, is the most recent. In addition, it relates to institutional initiatives such as the National Gallery of Australia's Know My Name exhibition (2020–21), which showcased the work of Australian women artists.

Nora Heysen emerges from the biography as a formidable person in many ways. She was spirited, blunt, loyal, a precociously talented draughtsperson, and a very knowledgeable, committed artist. There is no question that she knew her own mind from an early age and imagined a life devoted to her art. However, in common with so many creative women in the twentieth century, her career did not follow a smooth or linear trajectory. Heysen had to deal with countless frustrations, disappointments and disruptions along the way. While some of these were specific to her own circumstances, they did of course intersect with broader societal and cultural conditions, which were hugely influential in determining what was actually possible for her to accomplish. Chief among them were gender and sexual politics. Willoughby reminds us of Heysen's ground-breaking achievements as the first woman to win the Archibald Prize (1938) and the first official Australian woman war artist (1943–45), but Heysen always stressed she was not a feminist, an intriguing point that I will return to.

Heysen's art career followed an unfortunate and far too familiar trajectory: a promising start with impressive public recognition, a long period of obscurity (she did not exhibit her work for 6 decades), and rediscovery in the 1980s, which brought welcome institutional and public attention but was not accompanied by the

production of exceptional new work. By the time the art world became interested in her again she was well into her 70s and her practice—mainly flower painting in a realist style—was out of synch with contemporary concerns. It was only her earlier work, especially from the 1930s and 1940s, that came to be widely appreciated.

Willoughby pointedly titled her first chapter ‘In the Name of the Father’ because, as she rightly states, in any consideration of Nora’s work ‘her father is never far from the discussion’. German-born Hans Heysen is an eminent Australian artist, known above all for his landscapes. He was his daughter’s first mentor and provided her with financial, professional and emotional support throughout his life. The two were close and mutually respectful, though Hans made it clear that he would have preferred one of his sons to have become the artist in the family. Nora explained in an interview in 2001 that her father believed women were not suited to artistic careers because ‘biologically they were conditioned to bearing children and running a home and that was what women did’. A major consequence of Hans and Nora’s shared devotion to art was their agreement that he would paint landscape (the most prized genre in the hierarchy of Australian art) and she would confine herself to portraiture and flower paintings. The complex, interdependent relationship between the two artists has recently received further attention: the publication of *Heysen to Heysen: Selected Letters of Hans Heysen and Nora Heysen*, edited by Catherine Speck, and the exhibition *Hans and Nora Heysen: Two Generations of Australian Art* mounted by the National Gallery of Victoria, both in 2019.

The account of Nora’s early life forms one of the strongest sections of the book, probably because Willoughby is more at ease with description than analysis. The detail is lively and revealing. The fourth of Hans and Selma’s 8 children, Nora grew up in the idyllic setting of The Cedars at Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills (the house is now open to the public). The children had the run of the 36-acre property, revelling in nature and their freedom, and enjoying an informal, osmotic education, surrounded by art and books. The family also had an impressive social life at The Cedars, largely due to Selma’s efforts. An extraordinarily adept promoter of her husband’s work and a supreme hostess, she organised innumerable tennis parties and soirées for members of Adelaide’s elite society and potential clients. There was also a seemingly endless flow of illustrious Australian and international visitors, including artist Lionel Lindsay, opera singer Dame Nellie Melba (she gave Nora her first palette), ballerina Anna Pavlova, actors Laurence Oliver and Vivien Leigh, and politician (later prime minister) Robert Menzies. Tellingly, however, gender roles were in full force during these visits. Willoughby notes that Nora was invariably summoned from her studio if guests arrived; her role was to make the scones.

Willoughby's assiduous research has brought forth new material, including the circumstances behind a previously suppressed family tragedy involving Nora's older sister Josephine. She became pregnant to a man her parents disapproved of, was hastily married, lived in poverty and died after the birth of her first child due to inadequate medical care. Selma's determination to avoid a public scandal that could damage Hans's reputation were evidently factors in removing Josephine from Adelaide; all the family had to live with the dire consequences of her banishment.

Throughout the biography Willoughby effectively uses quotes from Nora's letters and interviews to convey a sense of her character and straightforward, no-nonsense attitude. One of the most memorable concerns Donald Friend whose studio was next to Nora's at the war artists' studios in Melbourne. She found him irritating, as she explained to her parents in 1945:

He giggles incessantly and entertains. I don't mind the racket of the trains and trams, but that giggling is an irritant. He wears heavy gold rings on his fingers, long hair and the work I've seen up to date repulses me. I'm convinced he is a fake, no doubt a very amusing and witty one with pretty camouflage, but my back bristles.

However, when discussing Nora Heysen's art rather than her life Willoughby is far less convincing, mostly offering generalisations not insights. Heysen began to establish herself as an artist in her 20s, and benefited from 3 years spent in England and Europe, from 1934 to 1937, which gave her firsthand contact with major works of Western art, invariably a revelatory experience for Australians whose art education was so reliant on reproductions. It was in this period that Heysen's complex engagement with modernism became apparent. Picasso, for example, she regarded as a charlatan and she was very wary of abstraction. The work of the old masters, including Vermeer, was of enduring interest. On her return to Australia, Heysen continued to produce outstanding works, especially portraits and self-portraits, but her artistic development was interrupted by the outbreak of war, and by her relationship and eventual marriage in 1953 to Robert Black, a specialist in malaria research whom she met in New Guinea when on war service. Black was apparently indifferent to his wife's art but she persevered nonetheless. On one occasion, when travelling with him, she shut herself 'in the small stifling hot bedroom we shared and painted a flower piece'. This is a revealing admission because it speaks both of her compromised situation and her determination to overcome it. She later described her 19-year marriage as a 'great disruption'.

Willoughby attempts to bolster the human interest angle with which she is more comfortable by incorporating extensive art historical research. She is, however, over reliant on secondary sources—there are too many quotes from art historians, they're often too long and are not well integrated into the text. Her treatment of the different phases of Heysen's practice is also uneven. The Sydney decades are particularly sketchy, with regard to Heysen's artwork as well as the dynamics of her

life with Black. (Did they socialise or were they an insular couple, did she mix with artists, how was she affected by her travels to Pacific Islands with her husband?) There is no doubt that Heysen's life choices and unchosen decades-long invisibility defy standard biographical approaches, but it is precisely because of this situation that other ways of examining her activities and providing contextualisation are called for. The task in cases such as Heysen's is to ensure that complex private realities are not elided or nullified by the lack of a public presence and existence of conventional documents. I would, for instance, like to know much more about Heysen's garden at her home The Chalet in Hunters Hill; it was clearly a site for significant creative effort and relates to the practices of numerous other artists (including contemporary Australian painter Elizabeth Kruger).

It is in the later chapters of *Nora Heysen: A Portrait* that structural issues with Willoughby's biography become most apparent. Important points are often not well articulated or are buried in an excess of detail. The discussion of Jeffrey Smart is one such example: the information Willoughby offers may be of general interest but it is not put to work to advance the main narrative.

While the decision about where to start a biography is crucial, so is the decision about where and how to end it. In her final chapter, Willoughby identifies possible reasons behind Heysen's long period of obscurity but does not marshal them into a substantial, critically informed discussion. The facts given include her unfashionable choice of subject matter (flower paintings had a marginal status), an approach to art that was not progressive (more could have been said about dominant art styles of the period), and her refusal to promote her own work (she did not have a commercial dealer). This brings me back to feminism, the consideration of which is not well developed either in relation to Heysen's perspective or Willoughby's own. Nora Heysen experienced sex discrimination and hostility firsthand, at home and as a professional in the art world. One of the most shocking public outbursts came from artist Max Meldrum who railed against her winning the Archibald Prize. He declared that: 'Women are more closely attached to the physical things of life. They are not to blame. They cannot help it, and to expect them to do some things equally as well as men is sheer lunacy'. Heysen's response to this endemic misogyny was not to become a feminist, as one might have expected of a well-educated, well-informed, strong woman. She saw herself first and foremost as an artist and did not want to be judged either as a woman artist or according to feminist criteria. This position was not unusual among women of her time but did it mean that Heysen paid too high a price for her views? Willoughby quotes art theorist Frances Borzello who argues that: 'Women coped with the prejudice against them by denying it existed—as was officially the case—or by getting on with their work regardless'.

Towards the end of her biography, Willoughby refers to the ‘genteel poverty’ of Heysen’s domestic situation in the years before her death: she lived with her beloved cats (numbering 32 at the peak) in a once lovely but decaying home overrun with possums and rats, and chose not to replace broken windows or repaint the walls (she said she liked the patterns formed by the peeling paint). Were her reclusiveness and eccentricity some of the inevitable outcomes of subjugation and seemingly endless compromise? Were they positive, defiant responses?

Willoughby’s enthusiasm for Heysen and her work is genuine and unflagging. However, *Nora Heysen: A Portrait* does not sufficiently address the big questions affecting Heysen and many other creative women of her generation, especially those relating to the high stakes endeavour of pursuing an art practice—regardless.

Karen Fox review of Lainie Anderson, *Long Flight Home*; Ann Blainey, *King of the Air*; and Sir Ross Smith, *Flight to Fame*

Lainie Anderson, *Long Flight Home* (Mile End, SA: Wakefield Press, 2019), 372 pp., PB \$29.95, ISBN 9781743056639

Ann Blainey, *King of the Air: The Turbulent Life of Charles Kingsford Smith* (Carlton, Vic.: Black Inc, 2018), 384 pp., HB \$49.99, ISBN 9781760641078

Sir Ross Smith, *Flight to Fame: Victory in the 1919 Great Air Race, England to Australia*, edited and introduced by Peter Monteath (Mile End, SA: Wakefield Press, 2019), 180 pp., PB \$29.95, ISBN 9781743056400

At 2:06 pm on 10 December 1919, Keith and Ross Smith, along with the air mechanics James Bennett and Wally Shiers, spied the coast of Australia, the end point of a long flight from England that had begun almost 28 days prior. A common experience for many a weary traveller today, the first sight of the coastline solidifying into view on the horizon was for these 4 men both a triumph and a relief. Landing their Vickers Vimy twin-engine bomber in Darwin less than an hour later, they were met by the administrator of the Northern Territory and the mayor of Darwin, and swarmed by an enthusiastic crowd, excited to meet the men who had just completed the first-ever flight from England to Australia. When they had left England, not quite a month ago, they had been one crew among 6 to enter the ‘great air race’ sponsored by the government of the Commonwealth of Australia; today they were the winners of the £10,000 prize, and had ensured their place in history as the first men to fly from England to Australia. Of their competitors, only one other team would arrive safely in Darwin, and 4 men were killed, 2 only moments after taking off from Hounslow to begin their journey.

Although united by their focus on the early history of aviation in Australia, these 3 books are in many ways very different. Only one, Ann Blainey’s *King of the Air: The Turbulent Life of Charles Kingsford Smith*, is a conventional birth-to-death biography. Ross Smith’s account of the great air race of 1919 is a reissue of an earlier text, *14,000 Miles through the Air: The First Flight from England to Australia*, originally published by Macmillan in 1922, under a new title, and edited and with an introduction by Peter Monteath and a foreword by Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston, while Lainie Anderson’s *Long Flight Home* is a novelisation of that same flight, told from the perspective of one of the air mechanics who accompanied the Smith brothers.

These latter two are both published by South Australia's Wakefield Press to mark the centenary of this pioneering flight, and both are connected to the official celebrations of the event: Houston is a patron for South Australia's Epic Flight Centenary 2019, while Anderson is its program ambassador.¹ Adelaide was Ross and Keith Smith's home town, as well as that of Shiers, making it appropriate that it is South Australia that is marking the occasion. Blainey's life of Kingsford Smith also has a connection to this celebration, if a somewhat oblique one that she herself does not mention: 'Smithy'—as he was known and as she refers to him through most of the book—was himself eager to enter the 1919 race. Disappointed at being excluded, he believed he would have been victorious had he been permitted to enter (pp. 62–65).

All 3 books, too, reflect what appears to be a powerful and continuing interest in the early history of aviation in Australia. A quick search of the catalogue of the National Library of Australia (NLA) brings up a large number of recent works of aviation history and biography, including among others: Rick Searle's *Charles Ulm: The Untold Story of One of Australia's Greatest Aviation Pioneers* (2018), Kristen Alexander's *Taking Flight: Lores Bonney's Extraordinary Flying Career* (2016), Peter Fitzsimons's *Charles Kingsford Smith and Those Magnificent Men* (2009 and 2016), Rick Searle's *The Man Who Saved Smithy: Fighter Pilot, Pioneer Aviator, Hero: The Life of Sir Gordon Taylor GC, MC* (2016), D.R. Dymock's *Hustling Hinkler: The Short Tumultuous Life of a Trailblazing Australian Aviator* (2013), Grantlee Kieza's *Bert Hinkler: The Most Daring Man in the World* (2012), Michael Molkentin's *Flying the Southern Cross: Aviators Charles Ulm and Charles Kingsford Smith* (2012), Rosemary Arnold's *First Females above Australia: The First One Hundred Years of Australian Women Pilot Firsts: 1909–2009* (2010), and Peter Maiden's *The Sky Racers: The 1919 Air Race from London to Australia* (2010).

The reissue of Ross Smith's text is a valuable service, not only commemorating a tremendous feat of human courage and ingenuity, but making it live again for a modern reader. As an adventure story, as it is described on the back cover, it is indeed a 'hair-raising tale', and a jolly good read—as it might have been described at the time of its original publication. The accounts of skin-of-the-teeth take-offs and landings, and various near misses and almost disasters, are compelling and well told. But the book is much more than this. It is also a travel tale, with descriptions of parts of the British Empire of a century ago that make it also a work of great historical interest, and reveal the embodied experience of a young, white, Australian male—and hero—in the heyday of empire.

Smith—or, perhaps, Smith with help from Frank Hurley, whose assistance he acknowledges in a preface—is also at times a remarkably poetic writer, describing aspects of their journey in expressive prose. Narrating their voyage over a 'mighty

¹ See History Trust of South Australia, 'Epic Flight Centenary', epicflightcentenary.com.au/, accessed 16 September 2019.

cloud ocean' between England and France, he writes of the way 'the shadow of our machine pursued us, skipping from crest to crest, jumping gulfs and ridges like a bewitched phantom' (pp. 58–59). His evocation of the physical, mental and emotional experience of flying the bomber similarly enables the reader to inhabit a kind of flight that few are likely to experience for themselves, one in which the materiality of the machine, and the aerial environment, are close and corporeal. Sitting in the Vimy's open cockpit above the English Channel, he tells us, he found the 'long-sustained rhythmical boom-boom-boom' of the engines became 'a song of pleasant harmony to the pilot, a duet of contentment that sings of perfect firing in both engines and says that all is well' (p. 56).

Monteath's introduction is a useful addition for a modern reader, introducing both Smith and the air race, as are the handful of footnotes, generally alerting the reader to a change in the names of places mentioned by Smith. The book is also well illustrated with black-and-white images from the flight, which bring the text to life, a map showing the route taken, and a useful table of days flown, time taken and distances covered, to which I found myself frequently referring.

At the same time as reissuing Smith's relatively brief and factual account of the historic flight, Wakefield Press have also published Lainie Anderson's novelisation of it. A journalist, Anderson has attempted to recreate the journey in fiction, using a range of historical documentation as source material. This is both a true story and an imagined one. The book takes a much wider chronological frame than does Smith's account, and rather than being told from the perspective of one of the Smith brothers—the quickly knighted and lionised heroes whose names are still to be found included in texts about famous or great Australians—it is told in first-person narration through the eyes of one of the 2 mechanics on the flight, Wally Shiers.

Framed as Shiers's oft-told pub tale of his grand adventure, with which he is regaling avid listeners in his local watering-hole near the end of his life, it is divided into 3 parts. In the first, Shiers meets his love and wife-to-be, Helena Alford, to whom he becomes engaged, before enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force and departing to serve overseas. After a period with the Light Horse in Egypt, he joins the flying corps as a mechanic, and when World War I ends flies to India with Ross Smith, Bennett and 2 British generals. Part One ends with Shiers back in England, having agreed to join Smith's team for the air race. Much shorter than the others, Part Two takes the story through the preparations for the race, adding drama through a falling out with Helena, upset that Shiers has not returned to marry her as soon as the war ended. It is thus only in Part Three that we read of the flight itself. The book ends with Shiers's marriage to Alford—based on a newspaper account of the event—in Sydney, and a postscript outlining what happened to the main characters afterwards, as well as to the other competitors and to the faithful Vimy.

It is an entertaining tale, and Anderson effectively draws the reader into the world she creates, both through the drama of war and heroic flight, and through the ups-and-downs of the characters' relationships. Wally and Helena's love story becomes more than a literary add-on to the adventure, developing into a drama in itself. The notes on sources at the end of the book were a useful inclusion, and reveal the extent of the research underlying it. Anderson has consulted a range of materials, from an oral history with Shiers held in the NLA and files in the National Archives of Australia, to official war histories and other works by historians, to newspaper articles. These notes are valuable, especially the explanations of how Anderson weighed different accounts or chose to depart from them for narrative tension, and it was occasionally disappointing to discover no information given as to the origin of a particular detail. This is, however, a minor gripe: the book is in essence a novel, not a scholarly history.

Focusing on another of Australia's early pioneers of aviation, Ann Blainey's *King of the Air* adds to the already extensive catalogue of works about Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. Recognising that Smithy is already much biographed, Blainey acknowledges her debt to those who have gone before her, and seeks to carve out a niche for herself, observing that her book 'tries to focus on the inner as well as the outer man', and arguing that while his career is well known, 'his hopes and doubts, his impetuosity and patience, his courage and fears, are less well understood', despite 'play[ing] crucial roles in his dazzling success and his final disaster' (p. ix). She also seeks to explore 'his relationship with fame', including how celebrity shaped his life, and how he handled (or failed to handle) its demands (pp. ix–x). In terms of source material, she has evidently benefited from the digitisation of newspapers from across Australia, including relatively remote locations, that may not have been available to earlier biographers (pp. x–xi).

The biography is an enjoyable and readable account of a short but dramatic life, one that fully justifies the reference to it as 'turbulent' in the subtitle. Kingsford Smith's life could hardly fail to make good reading, given both his heroic feats and his personal dramas, from the breakdown of his first marriage to his struggle with panic attacks while flying over water, but Blainey does full justice to her material, and this is lively and well-written. A minor complaint, as with Anderson's tale, relates to the notes on sources. Endnotes are dispensed with in favour of summaries of references for each chapter, in which the details being noted are given in bold. At times, these notes seem frustratingly incomplete, and occasionally one is left uncertain as to the source for a given detail. How, for example, did she discover not only Smithy's physical appearance as a young man, but that he was unhappy with it (p. 28)? Phrases such as 'in his heart he knew', or 'they are said to have' tantalise the reader interested in the source material, but the relevant chapter notes provide little information (pp. 64, 123). It is also disappointing that—as is true of all 3 books—there are rather more typographical errors than one might reasonably expect to see.

Overall, though, all 3 of these books are both enjoyable and fascinating. They illuminate the lives of 5 of Australia's early pioneers of the air, and address an important aspect of Australian, and indeed global, history. It is easily forgotten how dangerous early aviation was, in these days of comfortable and regular jet travel. Both Ross Smith and Charles Kingsford Smith were killed at a relatively young age: the former in 1922, while test-flying a plane in which he hoped to circumnavigate the world, the latter in 1935 during an attempt to break the record for a flight from England to Australia. In 2019 another astonishing pioneering flight was commemorated alongside the air race of 1919: the 50th anniversary of humankind's first landing on the moon, in 1969. As humanity begins to look still further afield, and voyages to Mars seem increasingly possible, it is timely to delve into these books and remember those who were among the first to leave the firm earth and journey by air.

Peter Love review of Carolyn Rasmussen, *The Blackburns: Private Lives, Public Ambition*

(Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2019) 432 pp., HB \$110,
ISBN 9780522876178, PB \$44.99, ISBN 9780522876185

The logo of Maurice Blackburn Lawyers declares ‘We Fight for Fair’. It might also have been a good family motto for the firm’s founder Maurice Blackburn and his activist wife Doris. They formed a particularly interesting idealist political partnership.

One of the more striking themes in this biography is its intimacy, between Maurice and Doris and Rasmussen and her subjects. Although there is not much personal testimony in the picture of the pair’s respective family backgrounds, they come alive in the adept use of public records as a context for the hard times that fell on both families. Those difficulties were common to many middle-class families who relied on precarious incomes, particularly as the 1880s boom burst and destroyed the housing market for Doris’s Horden family. They were cast upon the flimsy resources of the extended family, but not, unfortunately, the Sydney Hordens who had done well in retailing. Maurice’s mother was widowed when his bank manager father died at a relatively early age leaving her to eke out a very modest income through her music and other incidental sources. At this stage we have a well-defined account of the downward mobility of the 2 families that circumscribed the lives of Doris and Maurice as they were educated and grew to maturity.

As Rasmussen focuses her biographical lens more sharply on them to explore their respective progression through school and, in Maurice’s case, university, we get a clear sense of how they negotiated their paths. Doris was a lively child and was quick to defend herself and her friends, which led to a movement from one school to another but did not seem to hamper her ability. She did not seek university enrolment, largely because her family could not afford the fees. She took governess and teaching positions that she found unfulfilling and eventually became a librarian/bookseller at the Book Lovers’ Library. Along the way, inspired by one of her teachers, she joined the Women’s Political Association (WPA), the leading first wave feminist group in Melbourne, for which she sold and occasionally wrote for the *Woman Voter*. Maurice, through a family connection, was able to attend Melbourne Grammar and then the University of Melbourne where he completed Arts/Law while supporting himself and his studies by working in law firms, private tutoring, and school teaching, which he enjoyed. Towards the end of his studies, he began to question the conservative values that his education had espoused and moved progressively towards the Victorian Socialist Party and, later, the Political Labour

Council. The trajectory of each 'political apprenticeship' converged when Doris noticed Maurice at a debating club, where she learned of his interest in advancing the position of women under the law, and he saw her, the 'little, self-possessed, severely serene creature', at the WPA Tea Rooms. Before long they were in love and embarked on a courtship that entwined 'politics and passion'.

At this point we see their intimacy in their letters to each other but also the understanding that Rasmussen brings to her command of the material so that we can imagine their passion for each other. She has had an association with the Blackburns for many years, researching and writing about them and their political homeland around Coburg and other inner-metropolitan suburbs of Melbourne. She was also encouraged by members of the family and Blackburn Lawyers. The depth of the research that supports her closeness to the couple is apparent in the range of material cited, from the private letters to the more general works on the civic and political culture of Melbourne. The bibliography and endnotes comprise 66 pages. This long-term immersion in the affairs of the Blackburn family has allowed her to exercise that most desirable characteristic of good biography—critical empathy. Rasmussen's command of the sources not only informs a thorough, analytical approach to the course and consequences of their lives, but it also allows her to exercise an emotional intelligence to explore and infer something of the intimacy of their emotional lives. This biography, in following the entwined lives of a couple with shared political as well as personal passions, has a vitality that is absent in the more mundane works that more resemble autopsies than recorded lives.

In following the adventures of such Melbourne families in the early years of the twentieth century there are incidental insights into housing, transport, suburban life and, more prominently, civic and political culture. As clever and engaged citizens they touched several of the places that expressed a lively intellectual culture. These included the more obvious WPA, the Book Lovers' Library, the Free Religious Fellowship, the Melbourne Debating Club, the Victorian Socialist Party and eventually, for Maurice, the Australian Labor Party (ALP). These were merely some of the numerous sites of a lively intellectual culture, so long a feature of Melbourne life, that engaged and enriched the public sphere for Doris and Maurice.

One of the most interesting issues is the question of women's equality and the way that Maurice and Doris navigated the tensions that arose in the context of Maurice's response to the WPA's supposed turn towards 'sex antagonism'. He drifted away from the WPA as his advocacy for the rights of women seemed less important than the wrongs that men do as a central focus of their campaigning. In their correspondence on this, Doris worked her way to a view of how gender equality might work in a loving married relationship. Rasmussen has done well to show us how they negotiated this as one of the foundations of their personal and political partnership.

Gender equity was one of the issues on which they came to a principled stand. The Blackburns did not drink, and, as a matter of public policy, based on the harm that abuse of drink had done to so many families, Maurice took a stance in favour of limiting licensed premises and the 'local option'. This brought him into conflict with elements of the 'Wren machine', but he stood his ground and prevailed against efforts to defeat him.

When he entered the Victorian Legislative Assembly as a Labor member in 1914, his resolute opposition to World War I and Hughes's conscription plebiscites saw him defeated at the 1917 election. Doris, meanwhile, had intensified her peace activism but the times were hard for the family. Maurice was not covering his costs in his legal firm and had to rely on other income such as editing for *Labor Call* and lecturing at the Victorian Labour College. His principled stance on the war and conscription had nonetheless raised his profile in the Victorian Labor Party and he was elected to senior roles, including president in 1919 and conference delegate. In the 'red dawn' period after the war, Maurice was optimistic about the future of the first 'socialist' government in Russia and as a result became more directly involved with union cases. When the divisive 'socialisation objective' was debated at the 1921 Federal Conference, his interpretation took the radical teeth out of it and effectively allowed the ALP to be potentially electable. By the time Blackburn re-entered the Victorian Parliament in 1925, the law firm was better established with an expanding industrial relations cliental, although it was not as profitable as it might have been because of Maurice's indifferent management. In exploring this period in the Blackburns' lives, Rasmussen plays a deft counterpoint between the public political activism, the private business affairs and the personal family circumstances. This is one of the great strengths of this book. As it modulates from a major to a minor key and changes pace from allegro to moderato, it holds and rewards the attention of its readers. It persuades the careful reader that what they are seeing, matters.

Despite some constructive parliamentary work, especially on women's rights and other important matters, Blackburn's Victorian parliamentary career up to 1933 was largely routine until the end of the 1920s when existing high employment in his own electorate became a more national issue after the 1929 stock market crash. He worked through an unstable political environment, including the two Hogan minority governments that eventually languished in the deepening slump of the Depression. The disintegration of the Scullin Government was the final political indignity of the period. For the Blackburn family it was worse. Several relatives died and they lost their youngest daughter to a congenital heart defect. Doris was devastated and completely discombobulated by little Margaret's death. Rasmussen surveys all this with a clear and compassionate eye, without any hint of mawkish sentimentality.

Blackburn ended his years in the Victorian Parliament as Speaker as he began to eye a federal seat and turn his attention to the threat of Fascism and the likelihood of another war. In this turn he returned to an interest that he and Doris had long shared. It also placed him in close association with Communist Party members who were leading anti-fascist campaigners. The inevitable rupture between Blackburn's resolute stance and the ALP's anti-communist and isolationist policy ended in his expulsion. After he contrived a return to the Labor Party, he won a narrow preselection vote for Bourke and was elected with a thumping majority at the 1934 federal election.

As war became closer with every Nazi advance, the Blackburns intensified their campaigning against war and all that it threatened to civil liberties, free speech and the prospect of a return of conscription as a real threat. As events ended in war Blackburn became less potent in his influence, especially as the Japanese threat became desperate. He had become so insistent in his opposition to the war policy of both major parties that, on the day that the Curtin government was appointed, he was expelled for the last time. As events overtook his principles, he slowly became irrelevant and finally lost Bourke at the 1943 election, which was a significant win for the Curtin Government. Maurice died soon after. Rasmussen surveys the tributes, weighing the authors' emphases with their relations to Maurice. She assesses Curtin's views judiciously, avoiding the temptation that a sympathetic biographer might have to score a posthumous point.

Doris planned a long-term strategy to contest Bourke at the 1946 election and won with significant Liberal preferences. Standing as a candidate for Independent Labor, she advocated many ALP policies but was very active in advancing Aboriginal welfare issues, peace in a chilling Cold War climate and matters affecting women in the Public Service. She also made a point of challenging the White Australia Policy. While she had some friends in the parliament, not many were from the ALP. She worked doggedly for her cause but by 1949 there had been a redistribution; she stood for the new seat of Wills and lost, receiving less than 20 per cent of the vote.

After leaving parliament, she concentrated her remarkable energies on a range of causes she had shared with Maurice, and several others of her own. Her work in Australia and internationally for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom preoccupied her for some time before she became heavily engaged as a founding member of the Aboriginal Advancement League. In her latter years she travelled to be with her family until on 12 December 1970 she died, aged 81.

Rasmussen has given us the remarkable story of an idealist political family that worked tirelessly for peace, freedom and justice for many who had few champions. They suffered many reverses in their fights for justice, but subsequent political history

has shown them to be on the side of the angels. I am personally delighted to learn so much about Doris and her remarkable qualities as an activist reformer. I thank Rasmussen for bringing her further forward for us all to admire and applaud.

Finally, a word about the physical volume. Rasmussen has been fortunate in her publisher. They have, at no bargain price, given us a beautifully made book. The stock, the print, the binding and the way it comes to hand and eye are a credit to their craft and a worthy memorial to the Blackburns.

In light of the recent changes to the focus and management at Melbourne University Publishing Ltd, *The Blackburns* may well be a work that exemplifies the best in its long catalogue of academic publishing and maintains its preference for writers who can engage readers' interest to the end of the text.

Stuart Macintyre review of Geoffrey Blainey, *Before I Forget: An Early Memoir*

([Hawthorn, Vic.]: Hamish Hamilton, 2019), 352 pp., HB \$45,
ISBN 9781760890339

Most historians' memoirs bear the mark of their authors' calling. They relate their own lives with an unusual precision, giving full details of antecedents, for example, and are attentive to chronology and context. Historians use this scaffolding to make sense of their lived experience, so that a disciplinary understanding of the past directs and supplements memory. In looking back on their lives, moreover, they are concerned to explain how it was that they found their vocation. This can involve the identification of formative influences, teachers, interests and opportunities that shaped their careers. It can also impart a teleological cast, the life following a predetermined path.

Geoffrey Blainey observes in this memoir that when he studied history more than 70 years ago, he was not informed that 'ordinary people could be precious sources'. Trained as an undergraduate in the interpretation of written sources, it was only as he embarked on research into mining history that he came to the conclusion that an informant with little education was 'more likely than a professor to retain an accurate memory of events they had actually experienced'. An early informant was Jimmy Elliott, one of the first prospectors to pitch his tent at Mt Lyell, who could relate distant incidents with a plenitude of detail. 'Jimmy enjoyed talking but did not like me writing notes in his presence', so it was only when the young historian checked these recollections against other sources that he came to appreciate their accuracy.

The emphasis here is on the reliability of memory, though the comparison with the professor of history hints at the suggestion that a reliance on records weakens the capacity for recollection. The difference between oral and literary forms of the past is not taken up here, though it was discussed in the essay 'Antidotes to History' that Blainey published in 1968. Rather, *Before I Forget* affirms the importance of direct experience, of being there, listening, observing and responding. He began writing the book at the turn of the century, he says, believing that his memory might become weaker. Upon returning to this draft 15 years later, he found the occasional error and only then verified episodes with the aid of diaries and correspondence. And even though he uses knowledge acquired later to explicate circumstances, he proceeds always from what he remembers.

At times, indeed, *Before I Forget* ventures into the territory of *Black Kettle and Full Moon*, the compilation he published in 2003 of 'daily life in a vanished Australia'. We are told of the household economy of the inter-war years, his mother constantly darning, mending and putting up preserves; of the reliance on the kettle for hot water, and the way that linen had to be boiled in the copper and put through the ringer. The characteristics of the automobile of that period are recalled, cranking the ignition, the tail-light switched on manually, a waterbag hung at the front, luggage stowed on the running board, and the children bagging (or bagsing, as some would have it) the window seats. Multiplication tables were chanted at primary school and there were games such as hoppo-bumpo and footballs improvised from rolled-up newspaper. From his first sight of the old Corio Oval in Geelong, football becomes a consuming passion, recalled here with the magical scene of the contrasting colours worn by Geelong and South Melbourne, and the smell of eucalyptus from the changing-rooms.

The detailed evocation of a past way of life extends to the tasks the young boy undertook to earn pocket money. He used a billycart or wheelbarrow to collect horse manure from a nearby bakery and sell it to neighbours, collected bottles for sale to the 'bottlo' (though his father's teetotalism robbed him one source of revenue, beer bottles). We are reminded how a morning paper round was more respectable than street selling. Later, when eggs were rationed during World War II, he bought half a dozen hens and became a small-scale producer; and on Saturdays he served as assistant to a greengrocer selling house to house.

Then there are the games that he invented. He was far from unusual in laying out a miniature farm in the backyard, but created his own form of imaginary football with a brother, which used cigarette cards laid out in position on the carpet of the best room and a marble to determine the score. This ritual extended to his walk to and from school, where cars travelling in one direction were credited to Geelong, those in the other direction to their opponent, and even the Sunday morning church service, where the hymn numbers became forecasts for the scores on the following Saturday. Later still, he became intrigued by elections and compiled a list of all federal electorates with each candidate's vote determined by throws of the dice.

The childhood was punctuated by moves around Victoria. Geoffrey's father was a Methodist minister, transferred regularly from one church to another: Jeparit, then Terang, Leongatha, Geelong and Ballarat. Geoffrey was 3 in 1933 when the family moved to Leongatha, but the rolling hills of central Gippsland made a lasting impression. Geelong, where they shifted when he was 7, is remembered as a bustling town with trams, factories and a busy port; in Ballarat, where he began secondary school, there was the wide expanse of Sturt Street and the mullock hills left over from the goldmines: 'I vaguely felt that the nobler buildings and archways, cobblestone workyards, numerous spires and towers, were all trying to speak, but remained silent'.

Every 4 years the Blainey children had to make friends afresh. They did so at school but principally through the church. The parsonage was a calling point for the members of the congregation, whether seeking advice and assistance or bringing gifts of local produce. Methodism laid emphasis on fellowship, with 'tea meetings' where families brought a plate to the church hall for a communal evening meal, and Sunday school carried over into sport and recreation. Like other denominations, as John Button recalled of his Presbyterian childhood in Geelong, the Methodists did their shopping and other business with co-religionists.

He clearly found this companionship congenial and at the same time liked to go further afield. In school holidays he worked on the farms of relatives, travelling 160 kilometres by bicycle on one occasion to the holding of an aunt and uncle at Cororooke. In the summer after completing school, he and a friend hitchhiked to Sydney, via Mildura, and returned through Canberra; and as an undergraduate he made similar excursions to Tasmania and central New South Wales, to see Lawson's outback. As he describes these adventures, he was both intrigued by the countryside and increasingly drawn to its historical associations.

How, then, did this interest in the past form? His mother's father was an early influence. Grandpa Lanyon was a schoolteacher with a keen interest in public affairs—when the early Commonwealth Parliament was inspecting sites for the federal capital, he rode his pushbike to look them over. He had a 'pleasing library' and his reverent attitude to books was noticeable. He presented Geoffrey 'at an absurdly young age' a copy of the Commonwealth Yearbook, a harbinger of an absorption in such reference works, and later introduced him to the reading room of the State Library, a 'breathhtaking site'. The author of a history of his local Methodist church, Grandpa Lanyon's reminiscences 'helped to infect' the boy with an interest in distant events. Entering his teens, he was 'becoming conscious of history without quite knowing what it was'.

He already had a capacious memory. In 1942 'Master G. Blainey' won a prize for correcting a wrong answer given on a radio quiz show on the birthplace of Muhammad. He plays down the scholarship he won to Wesley College in the following year: it was offered to sons of Methodist ministers and only one other competitor sat the exam. Though initially he found himself some way behind his classmates, he made rapid progress. It was at Wesley that he was first taught history, by a teacher who mixed passages from Ernest Scott's *Short History* with reminiscences of those who figured in it. The accomplished literary critic A.A. Phillips exerted the greatest influence, partly by purging his prose of excess ornamentation, partly by encouraging independent thought and partly by promoting involvement in theatre, debating, the library and the school magazine. By this time the family had moved to a church in Thornbury, though Geoffrey continued to board and used vacations to read newspapers in the State Library. He shared the exhibition for history and won a general exhibition in his final exams.

His account of the time as an undergraduate at the University of Melbourne from 1948 to 1950 is revealing. He pays handsome tribute to his teachers, especially Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Max Crawford, Manning Clark and John O'Brien, but says little of what they taught him. His circle of friends at Queen's College and editorship of *Farrago* take up more space than his studies. It was a slightly older undergraduate at Queen's, Ken Inglis, who taught him how to take notes and the companionship of other contemporaries that introduced him to the great ideas ablaze at the time. He found little attraction in 'the abstract ideas and colourless principles' that constituted the much vaunted honours subject Theory and Method of History, and characteristically told the teacher that his interest was in method rather than theory. He read widely outside the syllabus, began collecting books and continued to read files of nineteenth-century newspapers—'I was learning Australian history my own way'.

Upon graduating he was invited to become a tutor, the staging post for Crawford's ablest students who would proceed to further study in England and an academic career. His response to Crawford, 'Are you short of hands?', indicated a preference for writing over teaching. Fortuitously, Crawford had recently been approached by a board member of Mt Lyell Mining wanting a company history. Entering into life on the west coast of Tasmania, Blainey learned his craft, accumulating notes 'in absurd quantities' and then composing his account in vivid, sensual prose. It was his publisher, Gwyn James, who suggested the title, *Peaks of Lyell*, and his preference thereafter was for the visual over the abstract.

For the next decade he worked as a freelance, producing a string of mining, banking and other institutional histories. Some, produced for anniversaries, were written remarkably quickly (the centennial history of the University of Melbourne in just a year, that of the National Bank even more quickly) but none showed signs of haste. It was Blainey's practice not to seek such work on the grounds that his bargaining position would be stronger if the client made the approach. Most of his commissions came from boardrooms and it was remarkable how the young man won the confidence of business leaders. He undertook to write a history that was 'fair and true' and more than one was held up or never appeared because he would not alter the typescript. He also had to learn to say no to requests from publishers and editors, a necessary safeguard for 'blazing my own track in the direction I wished to travel'.

There was a streak of obstinacy in this independence. Upon completing his degree Blainey refused to graduate, deeming the fee for doing so 'a tax on knowledge'. It was the credit squeeze of the early 1960s that spurred the decision to take an academic post and the memoir concludes with his early years back at the university. He explains that there was no valid reason for halting the account when he reached the age of 40: I simply thought that I had written enough.

We therefore finish some way short of Blainey's later years as a controversialist, though a few threads of those of controversies are apparent. Reflecting on life in the parsonage, he remarks that such tight-knit church congregations have largely vanished and are 'no longer viewed sympathetically in the media and sections of some universities'. Recalling A.A. Phillips's celebrated essay on the cultural cringe, he observes 'the day was to come when many Australians tended to "cringe" slightly in the presence of the multicultural'. He relates how he invited Brian Fitzpatrick as a guest lecturer and explains there was much greater tolerance then than now 'to allow opposing views to be heard or even fostered'—a proposition that would have startled Fitzpatrick. Of his John Latham lecture lamenting the 'black armband' view of Australian history Clark had nurtured, Blainey says that he continues to admire his friend as a distinguished exponent of the craft of history writing but that 'while we rode comfortably in the same train we got off at different stations'.

This is a book of remembrance rather than self-examination. Blainey goes to some lengths to record his political views. Partly through the influence of teachers, he found himself 'veering to the left' at Wesley and read George Bernard Shaw with admiration for his prose, his skill in mental combat and 'impudent cheerfulness when arguing and rebutting'. In school debates he liked to take the unpopular side. The use of the atomic bomb to end World War II shocked and depressed him, but also inoculated him against subsequent Cold War crises. By the time he left school, then, he was already 'on the middle of the political road' and at university he shed any remaining faith in schemes of human betterment. Of his subsequent views he remains silent.

Of the childhood faith in which he was raised the memoir is perplexingly reticent. His father had a substantial theological library but there is no mention of the son using it. At Wesley the chaplain asked him if he would join the Methodist church. He recalls the exact spot in the cloisters where the request was made and rejected, but not the reasons; nor does he indicate any discussion of the matter with his parents. At university he was not attracted to the Student Christian Movement in which a number of Queen's College students were active. He did attend college chapel and in his first year went to services in just about every church in the city: Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Lutheran, Swedenborgian and even Theosophical (though not, it appears, either of the cathedrals). Again there is no indication of what he was seeking, nor of any subsequent engagement with questions of faith.

This, then, is a restricted memoir that eschews subjectivity. It tells us a good deal about how he became a historian and sheds new light on the works he wrote during this period. But the enigma of this singular historian remains.

Granville Allen Mawer review of Hugh Crago, *All We Need to Know: A Family in Time*

(Port Adelaide, SA: Ginninderra Press, 2019), 256 pp., PB \$35,
ISBN 9781760417222

If Hugh Crago were, in the fullness of time, to be selected for an *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry, one to be based exclusively on information contained in his autobiography, it would read something like this.

Hugh Crago, university lecturer, counsellor and autobiographer, was born in 1946, probably at Normanhurst, Sydney, the first of three children of Albert Ian Hamilton Crago, school inspector, and his wife Gwen, née Sanders. He was educated at Ballina Primary School, Grafton High School and the University of New England (BA with first-class honours in English, 1968). While reading for a postgraduate degree at Oxford he married Maureen, whose parents lived in north-west New South Wales. The Cragos would have two daughters.

In 1972 he returned to Australia to teach English literature at the College of Advanced Education, Wagga Wagga. Increasingly sceptical about the relevance of literature to life, he began reorienting his courses towards communication. He and Maureen commenced training as marriage counsellors and in 1979 they decided to seek professional qualification as counsellors and family therapists. At the Antioch New England Graduate School, New Hampshire, they were supervised in two years direct clinical experience.

Crago returned to Wagga to practice his new profession. At about this time, in his mid-thirties, he conceived the idea of writing his own 'emotional history' and that of the two preceding generations of his family, focusing on relationships, feelings and values. It became 'an obsession' (p. 40). A decade later he had a quarter of a million words of manuscript and a publisher wanting to reduce it by two-thirds. Not until 2016, aged seventy, did he find a way to restructure and reduce it to publishable length. In the interim he had doubled his own experience of life and relationships while many of his older informants/subjects had concluded theirs.

After seven years at Wagga he took charge of a small youth refuge in Southport, Queensland, for two years. In 1991 he returned to teaching as a junior lecturer in human development at Griffith University's School of Education and subsequently taught counselling at the School of Health at the University of New England. Unable to secure a tenured position at either university, in 1998 he became academic program head at the Jansen Newman Institute, Sydney, which privately trained intending counsellors and psychotherapists. At all three institutions his insistence on academic standards put him at odds with management.

In 2004 he was appointed to a part-time senior lectureship at the University of Western Sydney. By the time he retired in 2012, he was confident that he had successfully rebuilt the university's counselling program. In retirement he continued to research and publish on counselling and storytelling, the latter finding another outlet in the form of poetry.

These bare bones are all the basic life data that can be gleaned from Hugh Crago's autobiography. That he omits to share with his readers the maiden name of the woman to whom he has been married for half a century should be sufficient warning that this is not going to be a conventional autobiography—it is not. The author tacitly accepts the Socratic prescription that the only things that make a lifetime worthwhile are the seeking of wisdom about oneself and others.¹ It makes for highly self-absorbed autobiography but, as the subtitle proclaims, the book has wider ambitions. This is a family memoir, or more strictly one man's memoir of his family. He describes it as an 'emotional history of three generations' (p. 122). Ultimately, it is a search for self in the most genetically intimate of human contexts.

The title is taken from Keats, who was denying the relevance of any knowledge that did not contribute to an understanding of truth and beauty. The author uses it as an ironic comment on secrecy in families and their unwillingness to confront uncomfortable realities. In his prescription the only cure is a good airing, in which everything that can be known becomes known and understood. Socrates had the same ambition but, where his sphere was the whole matrix of human interaction, Crago looks to understand the universal through the particular: 'In the individual life we see the wider pattern of the family, and in the family, we see the entire human race' (p. 247).

The core family comprises Crago's grandparents, Albert and Ethel, their children and one of their grandchildren, the author. Earlier generations are more selectively tapped. The author's siblings and cousins and the generations that followed, including his own children and grandchildren, are omitted. While the stated reason—privacy—is entirely legitimate, it denies readers information that would permit them to test the central thesis of the book, which is that family traits are handed down by nature and nurture (p. 231). The price of publishing such information is on display in Crago's analysis of his 78-year-old wife Maureen. What to him is honesty many would call insensitivity and disregard. She is said to have read every successive version of the book but to have queried only the amount of 'self-display' on his part (p. 4). One can only hope that she gave final consent to publication before her mental acuity 'slowed' (Crago's term), particularly as he records that periodic 'mental fog' had been one of her ailments from an early age (pp. 197–98). The life experiences of two other individuals beyond the core family are also examined. One is Henry Lawson, the author's first cousin at two removes

1 Plato, *Apology* 38a, 5–6.

and here a study in unrealised potential, alcoholism and mental illness; the other is John Wesley, whose Methodism set the moral and behavioural tone in Crago's family and, in its emphasis on self-examination, deeply influenced Crago himself despite an early loss of faith.

Most of the family information was gathered by interview, either face-to-face or over the telephone, and supplemented by correspondence. The interviews were not taped but brief notes taken at the time were written up immediately afterwards quoting the exact words used. Initially confident that 'telling the whole truth was the only way to go', he was unprepared for the sensitivities of his relatives:

When I showed them the chapters that were most relevant to them, a few recoiled in dismay, angrily telling me I had 'completely misunderstood' their father, mother or in-laws, even though what I had written was closely based on what I had been told—sometimes by the very person who was now so upset. Other relatives said nothing at all. I am pretty sure they thought it was dreadful stuff but did not want to hurt my feelings by saying so. The only ones who praised the book were one or two cousins so distantly related that they could read it without taking the bad bits personally. (p. 8)

Reading between the lines, among the dismayed in-laws might have been Maureen's parents, which would account for their absence. It is so complete that we are not even allowed to know their names.

The traits that Crago identifies as common in his family are high anxiety, high sensitivity and high reactivity. Despite his reticence about succeeding generations, he claims to know several individuals among them who display the same configuration. 'More than that it is not appropriate for me to say', although he hopes that those who recognise themselves may be motivated to find out more about their genetic inheritance and what it might mean for them (p. 224). As specific family advice it is not of much help because, as Crago concedes, that temperamental combination is found in a substantial proportion of the population.

The chances of becoming a subject for biography are probably enhanced if the sitter has already painted a self-portrait. Hugh Crago's exhaustive treatment of his inner life, the most difficult part for a biographer to access, would make him an attractive topic. Few people would be prepared to share as many private hopes and fears with a stranger. That he is willing to do so is because of his confidence in the redemptive power of psychotherapy. A trained counsellor himself, and one who underwent psychoanalysis for several years (it uncovered no trauma), he found the 'melancholy self-knowledge' with which he emerged to be comparable to the personal salvation that Methodism promised others in his family: 'in both there is the sense of forgiving and being forgiven, being freed to live more contentedly and wisely in the future' (p. 187).

His therapist pointed out that a rigid determination to tell the truth at all costs—‘the stuff of martyrdom’, as paraded by his hero Sir Thomas More—might be a kind of narcissism. Crago writes that after an internal struggle he conceded the point, but it took the limited form of accepting that he might have sacrificed his chance of worldly success in order to preserve the purity of his beliefs. In this context, pressing on with a warts-and-all autobiography might be interpreted as denial of the point, doubling down against already foregone career opportunities. Apparently oblivious, the author asserts that what all narcissists have in common is a thin skin—the inability to accept criticism.

The book is thematic with a structure derived from Bach’s preludes and fugues, a nod in the direction of Crago’s 10 years of classical piano training as a child. The chapters, with titles like ‘Difference and Dissent’, ‘Loyalty and Betrayal’ and ‘Sanity and Madness’, have identical subdivisions, viz. *In My Time*, which sets out the author’s experience; *In Family Time*, which looks for the same or similar experiences in the family’s past; and *What We Need to Know*, in which the author analyses the common threads. The last 2 chapters are entitled ‘Personal Reflections’ and ‘Theoretical Considerations’. One of those theoretical considerations is assortative mating, in which individuals select partners for their perceived similarities. Against it is the contradictory notion that opposites attract, the dynamic of Crago’s own courtship and marriage:

[it] may seem like a contradiction of assortative mating, but I don’t think it is. We may well see advantage in teaming up with someone whose strengths and weaknesses complement our own (and vice versa), but we are not drawn to just anyone who seems to ‘complete us’ in this way. Rather, I think we are drawn to a particular combination of difference and similarity, only the differences are usually easier for us to ‘see’ than the similarities. The first differences we perceive in our chosen mates are desirable differences. We want to be with that person because we admire the ways in which she or he can do what we ourselves cannot, can be the person we are not. Further into the relationship, of course, those same differences often become irritants. Now we may find ourselves wishing that our mate could be more like us. (p. 232)

From this, drawing on Freud’s insight that we tend to be attracted to an individual who reminds us of one of our parents, Crago goes on to hypothesise a genetic basis for such attraction. Even a dissimilar partner may in time prove to share key characteristics of the seeking partner’s parents. In this way, families replicate their gene pools. Paradoxically, the desirably different partner is similar to someone else in the family whose genes are not carried by the seeking partner or carried without being manifested.

The philosophy of the book is determinist and its atmosphere dense and claustrophobic. Even nominative determinism is invoked, leading to the unlikely suggestion that 2 Johns in the family who suffered from low self-esteem might have acquired it from exposure in school to the historical reputation of Bad King John. A similarly long bow is drawn in speculation that the author's unwillingness to learn to drive emulated an assumed similar unwillingness on the part of a non-driving favourite grandmother.

The book is engaging in its candour and illuminating, if speculative, in its reflections; what it lacks is perspective and distance. The readers to whom the manuscript was submitted appear to have been unable to contribute much of the former (unless their input was ignored). Lack of distance, on the other hand, is an inescapable limitation of autobiography: taking the long view would have required him to defer completion until some years after his own demise.

Jim McAloon review of Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times* and Richard J. Evans, *Eric Hobsbawm*

Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times. A Twentieth Century Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 447 pp., ISBN 0713995815

Richard J. Evans, *Eric Hobsbawm: A Life in History* (London: Little, Brown, 2019), 674 pp., £35, ISBN 9781408707418

To state the obvious, autobiography and biography are different. An autobiography, as Hobsbawm knew, is an exercise in memory; it is frequently personal and sometimes selective. Hobsbawm thought that a scholar's autobiography would necessarily be very different from those of politicians and others who might be said to have made history. Richard J. Evans's biography complements and extends Hobsbawm's 2002 memoir, at a length justified by his assessment of his subject's significance.

In discussing his early years, Hobsbawm's purpose was to explain (to himself?) who he was—a central European Jew, of the educated but precarious middle classes. There are noticeable silences: there is little about his father's occupation. There are hints of more trauma than he wishes to note. Certainly Hobsbawm was an orphan, dependent on (kindly) relatives from the age of 14. As Evans suggests, reading and the life of the mind were a refuge from unhappiness.

Berlin in the early 1930s shaped Hobsbawm's politics for the rest of his life. Hobsbawm writes evocatively; Evans's account, as often, is fuller. Arriving in England in 1933—a British citizen—Hobsbawm was fortunate in his London grammar school, especially compared to his Berlin gymnasium. Evans writes perceptively of this self-conscious, bookish youth, and the biographical accounts of Hobsbawm's encounter with Popular Front Paris, and Spain at the outbreak of civil war, are absorbing.

For all his awkwardness, as Evans notes, Hobsbawm had far more life experience than most young men entering Cambridge, and far better intellectual preparation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Mounia Postan, another transplanted polyglot continental, was the only one he really respected. A historian as biographer can note the influence of Postan's *Annales*-inspired approach on Hobsbawm's later work and from this point Evans's account of Hobsbawm as a historian is deft and never intrusive. Hobsbawm was also absorbed in communism, and he recalled of Margot Heinemann, John Cornford's 'last love', that 'through a lifetime of comradeship, example and advice, she probably had more influence on me than any other person I have known' (Hobsbawm, p. 122). Unfortunately, neither volume explores this.

Hobsbawm's experience of World War II was tedious and frustrating. After a spell in the Engineers, he was confined to the Education Corps rather than the intelligence work for which he was surely fitted.

The most positive consequence was Hobsbawm's decision to become an academic historian. His PhD thesis was a critical study of the Fabians, written at Cambridge even as Hobsbawm began his lifelong association with Birkbeck in 1947. Hobsbawm might reasonably have expected his thesis to be published. Evans details the ungenerous (and ideologically motivated) act of turf protection by which Richard Tawney blocked this, as he also blocked the subsequent dissertation on the New Unionism that Hobsbawm wrote as a Cambridge fellow.

Hobsbawm emerged as a historian of consequence in the 1950s, a period in which he was 'lonely and emotionally vulnerable' after the end of his first marriage (Evans, p. 298). His autobiography recalled more publications blocked, more jobs not offered. He had a complex relationship with Postan—he respected his old teacher, took Postan's advice about teaching to heart, even though 'every one of [Postan's] job references was a poisoned arrow' (Hobsbawm, p. 184). Yet Hobsbawm notes that things were nowhere near as bad as they would have been for him in the United States.

Throughout the 1950s Hobsbawm travelled, partly to relieve his unhappiness and partly to keep in touch with a wider world. Paris was almost his second home, and Henri Raymond and Hélène Berghauer were 'the closest thing to a family I had' (Evans, p. 329). Here as on other points, Hobsbawm's memoir was circumspect; Evans fills in the silences. The Historians Group was his intellectual home, and an enduring legacy was *Past & Present*, inaugurated in 1952. Evans highlights Hobsbawm's commitment that the journal should be intellectually open and his implicit defence of 'ambitious and sweeping generalisation' (Evans, p. 318) in *Annales* style. This was rare for an English historian, and the academic establishment, even the Fabian one, wouldn't touch the journal at the time.

The year 1956 looms large in accounts of the Historians Group, and both memoir and biography deal with events in some detail. Evans suggests that 'Eric wanted to have his cake and eat it' (p. 352)—to be a communist but not adhere to party discipline. Perhaps, rather, Hobsbawm hoped to foreshadow a democratic communism. Hobsbawm testifies to the extraordinary tension of those months and, unlike John Saville and E.P. Thompson, recalls the schism with some pain. Hobsbawm is also coldly realistic about the New Lefts that came out of 1956—'intellectually productive' but practically negligible, combining 'ideology, impracticality and sentimental hope' (pp. 211–12). Even though Hobsbawm had long been on the edge of the party—too sympathetic to Yugoslavia, writing too much for the liberal bourgeois press, too fond of jazz—he refused to leave the party

and the leadership refused to expel him. Addressing the dimension of his life that attracted most criticism, and some vituperation, Hobsbawm devoted a chapter and more to reflecting on 'being communist' at length, and in more than personal terms.

Jazz became increasingly important in the late 1950s. Evans's wry observation is that as the *New Statesman's* paid jazz writer Hobsbawm 'became a participant observer of Soho life in the late 1950s' (p. 362) and that 'Francis Newton' was an alter ego, not simply a convenient pseudonym. By 1960 Hobsbawm was very different than he had been in 1950—personally, politically and intellectually.

The year 1962, almost exactly halfway through his life, was a turning point. His marriage with Marlene Schwarz lasted until his death and gave him the emotional and domestic security he had longed for. Hobsbawm says little enough about home life; while Evans gives a good account of his strengths and (sometimes) weaknesses as a parent, Marlene is very much in the background.

Also in 1962, the first volume in *The Age of* quartet was published. Evans's discussion of the book and its reception is succinct and apt. The year was likewise Hobsbawm's first encounter with Latin America, an area of increasing interest. Evans gives an engaging account of Hobsbawm the Birkbeck teacher in the 1960s (in those days when university teachers were not discouraged from developing idiosyncrasies). Denied other chairs, Hobsbawm was promoted at Birkbeck in 1970. He said that the lack of preferment meant that he didn't peak too soon, an unduly modest comment given his sustained output into old age. At the end of the 1960s there were the *Industry and Empire* and then *Captain Swing* (with George Rudé). A new and rewarding departure in the early 1970s was forays into Marxology, Evans emphasises the significant contributions here.

Some reviewers of *The Age of Extremes* (1994)—which dealt with Hobsbawm's own lifetime—wanted a more personal account of the short twentieth century. To a significant extent, Hobsbawm gave them that in *Interesting Times*. Hobsbawm himself understood that 1962 was a watershed, but he wrongly thought that domesticity made his life much less interesting. From that point, the 2 volumes diverge and the reviewer finds it less useful to alternate between them. *Interesting Times* becomes a succession of thematic chapters—reflections on Hobsbawm's generation, his own account of jazz and jazz journalism, and evocative discussions of places and regions (with some inconvenience in returning to late 1930s travels that would have been better in the first half of the book).

Hobsbawm admitted to difficulty in understanding the revolutionary currents of 1968. He himself was a Prague Springer, insisting on a disciplined party. He lamented the rise of nationalist terrorists like ETA and the Provisional IRA. 'Marxists are not separatist nationalists' (p. 260). He maintains a certain dignity: 'What I have written about the 1960s is what an autobiographer can write who never wore jeans' (p. 262).

More generally, as Evans shows, Hobsbawm remained in some sense committed to a Marxist view of historical study as a science. His reservations about the early History Workshops were justified; Evans is more acerbic even than Hobsbawm.

In 1978 Hobsbawm's lecture 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?' marked a new stage of political intervention. Looking back, Hobsbawm remained critical alike of the Bennite and Militant 'left' and trade union leaders who won battles but in doing so lost the war. Alongside the tartness, there are kindly, if perceptive, portraits of Healey, Foot and Benn. Evans's detailed analysis of these points is valuable. By now Hobsbawm was firmly convinced of the need for a broad coalition to defeat Thatcher. We cannot know whether Hobsbawm could have done more to map out alternative strategies, but perhaps he was wary of how politics had consumed E.P. Thompson. Surely, though, Hobsbawm was exaggerating when he described the 1992 election night as 'the saddest and most desperate in my political experience' (p. 276). Worse than 30 January 1933?

Hobsbawm retired from Birkbeck in 1982, and immediately took a position, part time but lasting many years, at the New School for Social Research in New York. By then, too, some of his limitations were becoming clear. *The Age of Empire* (1987) had a chapter on 'women', he still compartmentalised them. Gender was not within Hobsbawm's frame of reference.

After 1989, Hobsbawm's historical analysis became engaged with an increasingly complex present. The state of Europe did nothing to warm him to nationalism. He remained uncompromisingly of the view that historians had to resist nationalist and ethnic myths, developing these themes in his 1990 *Nations and Nationalism*. Again Evans carefully discusses the book and its reception.

Hobsbawm had already begun, in 1987, to think about the fourth *Age of*. He was now eminently marketable, and publishers competed. Where Hobsbawm does not come off well, as Evans implies, is in having a young woman, Lise Grande, as an unpaid research assistant. She found him cranky and irritable. Only at the end of 3 years did he make a token payment of US\$1,000, and acknowledge her contribution (they remained in touch). Grande suggests that he was confronting his own disillusionment, anger and sadness at the course of the century and especially at the 1980s and 1990s.

As he moved through his 80s, Hobsbawm became something of an institution. Birkbeck welcomed him back into an office. There he could talk: 'Eric did not care whether you were a junior colleague or a student, as long as you took history seriously. History was a mission, not a job' (Evans, p. 559) as one said. At 85, in 2002, Birkbeck made him president. Hobsbawm was close to Gordon Brown, Labour chancellor from 1997, and the new government gave him due recognition. Knowing

full well he would not have taken a knighthood, they made him a Companion of Honour. Hobsbawm quite rightly said that any order that included James Larkin Jones was worth being in.

Hobsbawm lived for 18 years after *The Age of Extremes*, still publishing, if now often in collections of articles or extended interviews. His mind remained sharp until the end. He described himself as an 'eccentric elderly grandee' (p. 305) and was perceptive enough to note that his reputation as a Marxist at last helped his profile. One has the impression he enjoyed old age, as he found much to enjoy even in difficult times.

Evans's account of Hobsbawm's death and funeral is surprisingly moving. No one would have been surprised that the Internationale was played at the funeral. Some would have been surprised that he requested Ira Katznelson to say the Kaddish for him. As Hobsbawm himself had written at the beginning of his memoirs, his mother had enjoined him never to let anyone think he was ashamed of being a Jew. A final touch was his daughter Julia placing the current *London Review of Books* on his coffin—just so that the old man could have one last thing to read. Reading the 2 volumes together means an extended time in Hobsbawm's company; they are hours well spent.

Fred Myers review of Alec B. O'Halloran, *The Master from Marnpi: Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, Pintupi Man, Papunya Tula Artist*

(Sydney: LifeDesign Australia, 2018), 243 pp., HB \$80, ISBN 9780959056549

Alec O'Halloran's *The Master from Marnpi* has my mind jumping in many directions. It is a beautiful volume, a biography of the Pintupi man Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, self-produced, with extensive visual images. It is not published through a scholarly press, but it is an exemplary work of scholarship, of sourcing and citation, and it will not only be a fundamental piece of work for those interested in Indigenous Australian art but also, in my view, for many others with curiosity and interest in Indigenous life and history.

Full disclosure. I have met Alec on many occasions, as a source in his research, a senior scholar in his area and a fellow student of Western Desert Indigenous painting. His commitment to the project of preparing a biography of the Pintupi painter Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri seemed to me remarkable given the obstacles: he never met the late Namarari, did not know his language and had very little experience of the relevant Aboriginal communities, their culture or their histories—nor did he have professional training as a scholar. Did he know of the challenge facing a biographer of Namarari, especially the interaction of a life with quite different constructs of personhood?

I was asked to review his book, presumably, because I am one of the people who has had personal and professional knowledge of the Pintupi painters, knowledge of their language and of their practices. Reading it, I was torn between my considerations of method, my local knowledge, my memories of O'Halloran's tireless pursuit of those of us who might have helpful information and my admiration for the sheer devotion and inspiration of this quest.

Namarari, to use the name O'Halloran rightly chooses, had a life trajectory that took him from childhood at the eastern edge of the Western Desert (when that region was beyond colonised Australia) to the Lutheran outposts of Haasts Bluff and Hermannsburg; to the pastoral station of Tempe Downs and back to reside at the government settlement of Papunya (in the 1960s); the outstation of Brown's Bore (in the 1970s); and eventually, in the 1980s, to his own outstation, Kintore at Nyunmanu, and Kintore itself. At Papunya (in 1971) he began to paint under the auspices of Geoff Bardon and what became the artists' cooperative Papunya Tula.

O'Halloran is concerned to show that by the time he began to paint, he had already had a wealth of experiences at the edges of Euro-Australian frontier life where he adopted the clothing, and especially the hat, popular among Aboriginal stockmen.

O'Halloran embraced this project because of his admiration for Namarari's painting and a desire to know more about him. Eventually, he decided to do a biography of this man, not quite realising at first that there are very few biographies of Indigenous persons on this kind of frontier.¹ After a few years intensively investigating sources of knowledge about Namarari, interviewing people like me, various managers of Papunya Tula and curators of exhibitions with his work, O'Halloran—in later middle age but undaunted—began a PhD program with Howard Morphy at The Australian National University to acquire the tools of understanding. This is of some significance in understanding this book, because it is clearly (to my eye) guided by the training he received to develop a methodology, a consideration of sources, and questions one might ask. The attention to detail, including careful surveys of the rate and quantity of paintings over time, is scrupulous, leaning towards a positivist search for the right fact. If this sounds critical, I want to express my admiration for the project in its detail and thoroughness, and also to say that the product is immensely suggestive and illuminating of Namarari as a painter, as I will discuss below.

The research for this project is necessarily meticulous because Namarari left few documents other than his paintings and a couple of recorded interviews. If engagement with the subjectivity and outlook of a person is necessary for a biography, how can one go about this, particularly given the complex differences that shape Pintupi personhood and no accessible textual/literary representations of interior life? The research includes interviews with almost every person alive who might have come into contact with Namarari: from art managers and curators to his wife, nephew and grandchildren; other researchers, local historians, outstation managers, government officials, filmmakers, and on—people who have engaged with the Indigenous world of Central Australia over a 50-year period. O'Halloran scoured the archives for census listings of Namarari and his family, explored government and mission documents and various ephemeral materials (catalogues, posters), and gained permission to use interviews collected by two other writers/scholars associated with Namarari in the 1970s and 1980s, John Kean and Philip Batty.

The biography proceeds through inference—interpreting Namarari's predilections and experiences through the historical sources of Indigenous life in the cross-cultural context of the Central Australian frontier, a lens that might not be entirely clear to some readers although it is key to the book and its interpretive apparatus. O'Halloran has taken up the framework that Pintupi have adopted for themselves—namely, of a history they have articulated and narrated that is focused on their

1 Vivien Johnson wrote biographies of Michael Nelson Tjakamarra and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. And there was at least one film made about the famous Pintupi leader Nosepeg Tjupurrula.

return to their homelands and self-determination after what might be seen as a temporary exile in the lands of their neighbours. To do this, to establish the basic framework of cultural value for Pintupi people, O'Halloran necessarily draws on the work of other scholars—myself, Vivien Johnson, Jeremy Long and others who have elicited these accounts. This is crucial, if done somewhat mechanically, as the author measures the facts (difficult to get) of Namarari's life, work and travels against these anthropological analyses to arrive at an interpretation of what mattered to him.

Thus, we find that Namarari was committed to his relationship to his country (*ngurra*), which he painted exclusively, evaluated against the understanding we now have of rights painters have, to family (*walytja*) and The Dreaming (*Tjukurrpa*)—3 key concepts identified in my own ethnography.² Moreover, Namarari's life is measured against the obligations and duties understood to be incumbent upon a *wati*, an initiated man, although there are no statements from Namarari or Pintupi commentators that directly make this linkage. Indeed, if Indigenous subjects might be difficult foci of biography, Namarari would be exceptionally so: an unusually quiet, reticent and self-contained person, as many have noted. Yet these interlocutors felt there was something to gain if you persevered with him. That makes consideration of Namarari's importance as a subject complicated.

Namarari's story, at least in part, has been of interest to *other* interlocutors, as it appears in the film *Benny and the Dreamers* (1992),³ and to many who met him in Central Australia. His narrative of the revenge killing of his father drew considerable attention, as does the raucous story he shared with his 'brother' Benny Tjapaltjarri of gulping down tins of jam when they first met white people. Namarari's story also speaks to the trajectory of the Pintupi themselves, a 60-year period of leaving and returning; we have Norman Tindale's photographs of Namarari from a 1932 Mount Liebig Expedition in which he is identified as a boy by name, and later followed up by Tindale at Haasts Bluff in 1948. Geoff Bardon and his brother made another film, *Mick and the Moon* (1977),⁴ with Namarari as the main subject, but in this rather strange film, as O'Halloran politely observes, Namarari never talks himself.

My comments are meant to show how O'Halloran drew on a range of materials, not unfamiliar to other scholars, but expanded on by his dedicated search for Namarari's possible presence and traces in other locations. O'Halloran starts with the identification of Namarari's Dreaming and ties to country, especially Marnpi and Nyunmanu, to which he had inherited rights and which are the source of his enduring identity as a Pintupi man—the man from Marnpi. The author establishes Namarari as a boy who experienced the tragedy of his father's death and his grandmother's

2 F. Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Place, Sentiment, Place and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

3 Ivo Burum, dir., *Benny and the Dreamers* (CAAMA Productions, 1992).

4 Geoffrey Bardon, dir., *Mick and the Moon* (Tasmanian Film Corporation, 1977).

suicide from grief, adoption by a second father, support of his mother, work as a stockman, and so on. Within that story, O'Halloran pulls out the specific details of violence against Aboriginal poachers by pastoralists and his sense of waiting and watching, to show that Namarari is to be understood as someone with his own family and work, and adapting to a changing world, a positive account of what he did and could do, in direct opposition to the assimilation agenda that the author repeatedly cites as obscuring the painter's relationship to European requirements and controls (p. 103). O'Halloran interprets Namarari as patient, waiting, watchful, and learning how to make himself useful as a bridge between white and black in order to support his family according to his own values, enacting the values of a *wati*, an initiated man—which he indicates is a 'provider'. In pursuit of his interpretation of Namarari as a significant participant in the cross-cultural encounter, he repeatedly analyses various documentary materials or interview data to return to his contributions to a 'cross-cultural project'. Or, to take one more example, the discussion of Namarari's ability to generate income and make deals with people (like Philip Toyne) 'most likely made him an important provider at Brown's Bore and the object of some pressure by his family or fellows' (p. 96), a contemporaneous equivalent of the scalps-ration-cash exchanges of the dingo scalp economy of Central Australia of the 1930s–1940s in which many Pintupi had participated.

It is difficult to represent a world view through so many veils and abstract analyses. At times, the cultural forms appear too objectified to make sense of a subjectivity we can only infer. More simply said, the use of the anthropological analyses and some of his interpretive frameworks is sometimes abrupt and mechanical, placing the choices Namarari faces in what might be a commonsense economic framework. These feel quite sudden, an interruption of an engagement with Namarari as a Pintupi person. Pintupi personhood, which theoretically underlies any question of choice, I have argued, is relational and more specifically a dialectical articulation of values of relatedness (identity with others) and autonomy (one's own business). Finally, the author's attempts to identify words and places in Pintupi through similarities of their possibly mistaken spelling in English orthography is often problematic as O'Halloran does not know the language; the interpretation of these traces of place and story requires more local knowledge of ancestral stories and local geography than he has, making these interpretations methodologically suspect.

I write this from the point of view of someone who knew Namarari and has spent many years living with, thinking about and engaging with people from Namarari's community. Cross-cultural biography writing is difficult. Writing a biography of a man like Namarari, or even other Pintupi people I have known, is not an easy task, even if one knew them personally. The cultural difference or distance is considerable, already requiring much interpretive work to grasp the significance of personal details. Not least is the questionable relationship between the concept of

a 'biography'—the writing of a life—and the facts of an individual's history when the subjects may not have a cultural script of a 'life' as a story or a framework of a life-project. What might be the form for such a work, and its goal?

The author's characterisation of Namarari as quiet, reticent, patient and committed to his family rings true to me, and the many sources O'Halloran approached said the same. As data, he lays it all out, and many writers would not go to such lengths to reiterate the point. Indeed, it is the hallmark of this book: very little seems to be left out. It is, then, perhaps an extraordinary *catalogue raisonné*, a gift to the Master of Marnpi that the details of his life and his influence on others are gathered up, as sometimes happens in funeral tributes.

O'Halloran's aim comes into focus clearly in the final chapter, when he turns explicitly to a series of paintings and makes them intelligible as significant aesthetic works through an understanding of the man and the man through his painting—his works as the extension of himself available to analyse. As I write this, I am struck by the resonance with Michael Jackson's recent treatment of art as 'a mysterious interplay of inner and outer realities, and the existential imperatives of finding some way of integrating these realities'.⁵

Whatever my critical concerns, *The Master of Marnpi* is full of brilliance, the result of perspiration and persistence, but also inspiration. In the end, we find the author takes us to a consideration of Namarari's painting practice (with his own thanks to, among others, Paul Sweeney and Wayne Eager, former field officers of Papunya Tula) that completely melds with his careful probing of Namarari's life to open up a compelling understanding of the painter's work, his stylistic choices and modes, and the trajectory of his late work. It is here, in elucidating the characteristics of his paintings, that O'Halloran is most convincing in his individuation of Namarari. This, after all, is perhaps the goal of the project: to understand Namarari's life as a man who is a painter, an artist.

The last section of the book is a suggestive and illuminating analysis of a range of individual paintings. I particularly appreciate his development of 'templates' in Namarari's paintings of *Marnpi* (a Kangaroo Dreaming place) and for a series of Bandicoot paintings, connected to various sites. Other stylistic developments include his expanded use of the undulating grid in various works. Experimentation around these features crucially establishes the painter's artistry, his virtuosity. Finally, O'Halloran notices the extraordinary development of the *Tjunginpa* (hopping mouse) paintings, with their all-over dotting, and the suitability of this work

5 Michael Jackson, *The Work of Art: Rethinking the Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 184.

for a man of immense and precise concentration, and—importantly—that the preponderance of these paintings in his late life owe to the market popularity and their simplicity for a man whose creative energies were reaching their end.

The following passage brings the threads together as O'Halloran offers his account of Namarari's method and style of work, speaking to who he was:

He valued the privacy of a dedicated studio. He attended to the whole of the canvas with consistent effort and attention. He worked towards variations in design patterning and paint opacity to create visual interest. He was a patient craftsman who selected his materials carefully and worked in deep concentration. He was methodical in the application of paint and creative in the design of his compositions. His meticulous attention to detail occasionally bordered on an obsessive approach in an activity that totally absorbed him ... He derived pleasure from his work. (p. 156)

And more, pointing to the work that painting did for this particular man, O'Halloran points to the significance of Namarari's very routine as a deeply present characteristic of his practice and life. 'Namarari's paintings', he writes:

were a manifestation of an inner connection, a meditative approach to painting. Observers described him as being 'in the zone' when painting, or preoccupied with his own thoughts in a 'contemplative state.' Was he aligning himself emotionally to his nearby *ngurra* and to the *tjukurrpa* realm in the invisible beyond? Whatever the case, Namarari had found a place for himself. (p. 156)

O'Halloran's artist-biography has brought attention to the ways in which Indigenous artists appropriate their 'traditions' not only in distinctive ways, but also in ways that might allow an understanding of who they are in more complex ways.

The story has a powerful ending. The final painting, unfinished, is reproduced, and we learn that he died in Alice Springs, from kidney disease (as so many other Pintupi painters have), His grandchildren say they wanted to bury him at his own country, Nyunmanu (where his outstation was located), but it was 'too far out'; his 'wish to once again breathe Kintore's air, was not granted' (p. 156). If Namarari's story ends here, with some disappointment, it is the beginning of another story of Pintupi self-determination, as they worked to bring dialysis to remote communities so elders like Namarari could stay on country.

Hans Renders review of Andrew Roberts, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny*

(New York: Viking, 2018), 1,152 pp., HB \$89.99, ISBN 9781101980996

Winston Churchill: Cast-iron faith in democratic freedoms and a lifelong love for military action, siestas and cigars

It appears that over 1,000 biographies of Winston Churchill have been written. A total that does not include the innumerable number of books dealing with particular aspects from the life of this British statesman: Churchill and money, Churchill and Islam, Churchill's doctor, Churchill and World War I, or the attention paid to him in the biographies of his wife, Clementine Spencer, the prime ministers both before and after him, and his father, the first of which was written by Churchill himself.

Yet still, Andrew Roberts has dared to publish a fresh new biography on the distinctive, perennially cigar-smoking statesman, of which he smoked 160,000, according to his biographer. It incorporates new archival material that Roberts uncovered as the first researcher to access the archives of King George VI. The biography comprises more than 1,100 pages. This isn't all that much in Churchillology when one considers the fact Martin Gilbert published his 6-part biography of Churchill between 1971 and 1988, after he assisted Churchill's son Randolph in writing 2 volumes on Churchill's early years. A careful biographer, Gilbert published a further 20 titles on Churchill.

Roberts is a biographer of a different sort. Five years ago he also published a remarkably hefty volume on Napoleon that was positively received the world over. The same now goes for his biography on Churchill. In almost every Western country this book has been reviewed in several newspapers (I did it for the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool* of 30 March 2019). Almost all those reviewers noted that Roberts is a Tory and that he writes attractively. Indeed, Roberts is a joy to read. One is impressed by his smooth writing style, his immeasurable archival knowledge, and his ability to connect world history to a cantankerous and diminutive (1.67 metres tall) man who, like a pink piglet, dressed in flannel pyjamas and lectured his secretary staff from his bed.

Churchill lived an extraordinarily full life. For starters there were his experiences as a soldier, or as a war reporter, in Cuba, Bombay, the Sudan, India, Belgium and the Dardanelles. During the second Boer War in South Africa he was taken prisoner and managed to escape. When he returned in July 1900 to London, he was welcomed as a national hero. Already, back then!

Roberts does a very good job highlighting Churchill as a journalist and historian. Right from Churchill's first steps onto the battlefield he published a stream of articles for prestigious newspapers, not only in England but also in the United States. Invariably these articles turned out to be a trial run for a monograph. He published nearly 40 books, of which half consisted of multiple volumes. Roberts has determined that this oeuvre—apart from the speeches that were also published in book form—contains 6.1 million words, more than Shakespeare and Dickens published put together. Churchill was always actively writing, whether as minister (from 1910), secretary of state, or lord of the Admiralty, or during the many years he was simply a member of the House of Commons. Even when he was a citizen without a regular salary, his 'writing factory' occupied his time and provided him with the necessary income to sustain his ever lavish lifestyle.

This biography beautifully describes how Churchill often saved his own political life, or damaged that of others, because he was such an improbably gifted speaker. That in the process he was willing to shed tears, proved either his sincerity, or that he was a talented actor. His speeches and articles made many a prime minister realise that Churchill could wreak more havoc outside of government than he could as a government official. That insight on the part of his political enemies earned him a variety of ministerial positions. National hero or not, many a politician despised Churchill. Not in the least because he defected from the Conservative party to the Liberal party and then back to the Conservative party again 20 years later.

An admirer of strong male characters, Churchill's interest ranged from Napoleon to the first Duke of Marlborough, John Spencer-Churchill, on whom he published a 2-part biography. He also had a complex, yet enduring, love for his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, son of the seventh Duke of Marlborough. Randolph, writes Roberts, was an opportunistic and ruthless politician. An excellent orator in the House of Commons too. Randolph, however, had a dark side. He tried to blackmail the Prince of Wales over a love affair. This meant the end of Randolph Churchill's political career, a man for whom the prime ministership was within his reach.

Winston Churchill tried all his life to polish his father's reputation. This is all the more striking considering this father was extraordinarily harsh to his son. When the young Churchill wrote a letter from boarding school to his parents, it would sometimes be returned unceremoniously to its sender unread 'due to sloppy handwriting'. Roberts manages to unearth beautiful quotations that illustrate the strenuous relationship

between Winston and his parents. At 17 years of age: ‘Come, come, come, come, come to see me please,’ begged the boy, ‘because you have already disappointed me so many times by not coming’.

A good reason to keep reading new biographies of Winston Churchill is that he is often referred to in current events. During the campaign for Brexit (Britain’s departure from the European Union), Boris Johnson regularly claimed that Churchill would have agreed with him. We know that Johnson was being less than truthful. Johnson knows very well what Churchill thought about European cooperation during the war, because he himself published a biography about the man in 2014. Immediately after Churchill became prime minister in May 1940, no matter how proud he was of his own country (and initially critical of the European Economic Community), he showed himself a fervent supporter of the European spirit. In fact, in June 1940 the new prime minister came close to incorporating his country into a French–British union to prevent France from surrendering to Berlin and the French fleet from falling into Hitler’s hands. This plan, which he discussed in London with the recently appointed French under-secretary of defence Charles de Gaulle, also had the support of the French premier, but the *Assemblée* voted against it. Churchill, already a Francophile, remained an admirer of De Gaulle. That he also found him to be terribly irritating and chauvinistic did in the end not diminish his admiration. When Churchill later wrote his memoirs he softened all sorts of negative references found in letters and government documents about De Gaulle and his ‘impertinent’ behavior.

Feathers on a scale

However, there are things that Robert’s biography of Churchill can be criticised for. While his biography of Napoleon ran to almost 1,100 pages, it was a magnificent book and consequently its enormous size was not a detraction. His account of Churchill, however, is unnecessarily thick. Large parts of this book are more of a chronicle than a biography. The long struggle Churchill had to undergo to finally become prime minister is sometimes told hour by hour, and in such detail, that when something truly important happens, it no longer stands out. Also Roberts is a little too defensive for my taste. Or one could say, the Tory biographer is too much in line with the conservative biographee. Churchill has been attacked often and for many things. Though Roberts does acknowledge criticisms, he invariably remarks that the matter was different. And in that he is probably right, but it remains a rhetorical trick to downplay the political and military blunders that Churchill also made. This is the case with, for example, the fall of Antwerp (1914), the battle for the Turkish Dardanelles (1915) and the Narvik drama (1940), where Churchill made some serious errors in judgement.

Because the Churchill historiography is such a vast subject, seeing what was left out and wondering why is a fun sport. That Churchill was once gifted a white horse by the Dutch businessman Bernard van Leer, better known as 'De Vatenman' (the Vatsman), is deemed not worth mentioning by Roberts. Or that Churchill, according to the historian Max Hastings, heedlessly believed in October 1914 that he could make history by defending Antwerp from the German army with a platoon of sailors, and ordered himself a Rolls Royce and 25 bouquets of roses ahead of time to brighten his entry into the Belgian capital. Hastings, in his book *Catastrophe 1914: Europe Goes to War*, deems Churchill's role in the fall of Antwerp as 'the shocking foolishness of a minister who abused his powers and committed an act of treason'. It is understandable that Roberts omits Hastings's quote. He admits that Churchill made an error in judgement in entering Antwerp.

In fact, as Roberts makes clear, Churchill spent 65 years preparing for his job as prime minister during World War II. He became prime minister on the first day of Hitler's invasion of Western Europe: 10 May 1940. The longest section of this biography is about this war. For years Churchill had been warning that Hitler could not be trusted, that he would try to conquer Europe and attack England. What was remarkable was how often Hitler mentioned Churchill, who was hated by so many in England, in his speeches. That this dictator felt it necessary to mock a backbencher impressed even Churchill's biggest opponents. After the Nazis showed their true face, Churchill's cautions were finally heard and in May 1940 he became prime minister. His biggest accomplishment is not so much that he halted the Nazis, as Roberts justly writes, but that he prevented the British government making peace with Hitler, and all the humiliating conditions that would have come with that.

Churchill has without exaggeration become mythical, perhaps more so in the United States today than in Europe. This is remarkable if one considers that next to his heroic and courageous battle for freedom and democracy, he also became the embodiment of a number of views that we now find reprehensible. Gandhi, who in India carried out his peaceful activism against colonial England, was dismissed by Churchill as an unruly little lawyer who pretended to be a fakir, to which Gandhi replied with a letter to Churchill: 'I have been attempting for some time to become a fakir, and that while (too) naked – an even more difficult task. Therefore I regard your remark as a compliment, unintentional though it may be'. An accusation that is often levelled at Churchill is that in 1943 he deliberately prolonged a famine in India by preventing food relief and is therefore guilty of genocide, this is strongly downplayed by Roberts. Churchill also opposed women's suffrage for years, which led to him being physically attacked by suffragettes on multiple occasions, and making it impossible for him to speak by sounding a large bell. Later, after he had seen how women had played an important role in the war, he came to believe that giving women the vote was a good thing.

Churchill won the Nobel prize for literature for his 6-part memoirs, which he wrote after World War II. For this he had plenty of time because, in spite of his popularity, the conservatives suffered a huge defeat to Labour, and Clement Attlee became the new prime minister in 1945. 'That's democracy', responded Churchill. Still, he was happy to return to the office of prime minister in 1951, serving in that role until his 80th year.

At the end of his book, Roberts makes a final assessment. He sums up quite a list of mistakes Churchill made alongside his ironclad heroics. Alas, these are but feathers on a scale, so goes his conclusion. And one is inclined to agree with him. Perhaps this book had to be as thick as it is to show how improbably active Churchill was all his life. You could even say that there is more that could be said, but that is what all those other biographies are for, in which you can read how the statesman passionately developed as a portrait painter and how he became skilled in bricklaying as a means to relax.

Churchill died, as he had predicted years before, on the anniversary of his father's death, 24 January 1965. In London, the largest funeral ever was organised (for a non-royal family member). The heads of state of 112 countries walked by as he lay in state. One of those present, at 1.95 metres tall, towered above all the others: Charles de Gaulle. 'It wasn't a funeral', said his wife Clementine that night, 'it was a triumph'.

Len Richardson review of Jared Davidson, *Dead Letters: Censorship and Subversion in New Zealand 1914–1920*

(Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2019), 296 pp., PB \$38.95,
ISBN 9781988531526

Jared Davidson's *Dead Letters* reproduces a range of private communications intercepted by the New Zealand state during and immediately after World War I and reconstructs, from often fragmentary evidence, the lives and social circumstances that inspired them. The blending of the particular lived experience with the realities of life in a society under stress enables Davidson to explore fissures and tensions buried within the fabric of early twentieth-century New Zealand society. Few questioned the increased policing that followed the outbreak of war. The greater surveillance of individuals and organisations seems, Davidson suggests, quoting Richard Hill, to have consolidated 'official portrayals of the policeman as servant of the public rather than agent of the state' and constables, daily charged with administering the law, as 'guardians of the civilised order'.¹ That the increased surveillance took shape within the framework of imperial defence arrangements and censorship came to be guided by a British military officer, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Gibbon, attests to New Zealand's colonial circumstance.

Davidson groups his letters to throw light upon this colonial reality and divides them into 2 broad themes: 'King and Country' and 'Spies, Sex, and Subversion'. The explication that accompanies each letter provides a means of exploring a slice of individual experience, the context in which it was lived and, where possible, its future course and connections. The opening letter, written by Marie Wetzel to her brother Hermann in Germany in 1916, reveals the personal dilemmas of an individual caught up in the web of wartime definitions of nationality and facing possible deportation. It was not possible, in present circumstances, Marie lamented, to 'both German and English be' (p. 72). Born in Germany in 1862, she came to New Zealand in 1900 after marriage in Sydney and 3 years in South Africa. She was attracted by New Zealand's reputation as a paradise for workers and the knowledge that her compatriots had been calling New Zealand home since the early 1840s and now comprised the largest immigrant family after the British. After more than

¹ Richard Hill, 'State Servants and Social Beings: The role of the New Zealand Police force in the Great War', in *New Zealand Society at War 1914–1918*, ed. Steven Loveridge (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016), 96.

a decade farming in the Palmerston North area, the family moved to Wellington where, like many working-class families, they eked out an existence by taking in boarders.

The outbreak of war made an already difficult existence more so. No fawning foreigner, Marie never disguised either her revolutionary socialism or her hatred of the British. The class war was one she was willing to fight and in doing so she moved in circles that ensured police attention. It was a world peopled by exotic, revolutionary spirits. Not the least of those introduced by Davidson is Sidney Huguenot Fournier d'Albe. A colourful descendent of French Huguenots, scion of an aristocratic Alsace family and of menacing mien: 'one empty eye socket, beaked nose, teeth like old piano keys and a voice to wake the dead'.² His imprisonment in 1917 for his role in protests against the War Regulations was as inevitable as was Marie's being watched and harassed by the authorities. Required to report regularly to police, she was choosy about when she did so. There is irony in the circumstances of her postwar departure from New Zealand and return to Germany. Officials, who during the war would gladly have been shot of her, now refused her request for assistance to leave. Now it seemed that because her husband was a naturalised Englishman, she could indeed both 'German and English be'.

If those of German nationality were obvious surveillance targets, the mix of nationalities who worked the nation's wharves came a close second. It was there as recently as 1913 that a major industrial disturbance occurred that precipitated a general strike and took New Zealand as close as it has ever come to a revolutionary moment. Thus, it was hardly surprising that the names of all foreigners working on the country's wharves were, from 1917, placed on a 'register as aliens'. In this environment, suspicions flourished within a widespread ignorance of Europeans rooted in New Zealand's remoteness. Drawing upon the experience of Even Christensen, a Norwegian waterside-worker from Dunedin, Davidson demonstrates just how repressive in practice such an environment might become. As a naturalised individual, Christensen came first to be declared a 'disaffected alien', subsequently had his naturalisation revoked and lost all the rights it bestowed. Such was the persistence of suspicions first generated in wartime that a decade later an attempt by his son, a New Zealander by birth, to have the now 69-year-old Even's naturalisation restored was rejected.

The letters written by 'True Sons of Ireland' such as those Tim Brosnan wrote to his sister, Margaret McCarthy, in Australia aroused a different but equally damaging set of suspicions. Tim, from County Kerry, and Mary Ellen ('Molly') Corbett, of Clare, reached New Zealand separately and there met and married in 1916. The couple became part of a small group of working-class Irish navvies

2 Eric Beardsley, *Sliding Down the Hypotenuse: A Memoir* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2011), 11.

moving around rural New Zealand looking for work. Outspoken in his support for Sinn Féin and the Republican cause, Brosnan was imprisoned for refusing to accept call-up for military service and subsequently lost all civil rights for a decade. His experience stands quietly in the shadow of activists such as Patrick Charles Webb, the Australian-Irish member of parliament for the Grey Valley coalfields, who endured the same fate and subsequently became a cabinet minister in New Zealand's first Labour Government. What we see in Brosnan's letters is one man's determined resolve to uphold the tenets of Irish nationalism as he saw them. Such deeply held convictions remained, as Davidson reveals, unknown even within his own family. His death from pneumonia at 47 years of age closed off his life before the reflections of old age revealed the memories of past struggles. In *Dead Letters*, Brosnan's experience is skilfully used to explore the variety of attitudes to events in Ireland that prevailed among New Zealand's Irish and ranged from those of loyal middle-class or 'lace-curtain Catholics' to those of Sinn Féin adherents. Brosnan's letter from prison to his sister in Queensland records a sense of having been caught across the Tasman and on the wrong side of history. The rejection of conscription in 2 separate referenda in Australia contrasts with its implementation in New Zealand without reference to the electorate. New Zealand Irish might thus, as Brosnan knew only too well, be conscripted to fight in an imperial war even as the King's troops enforced British dominion in Ireland.

'The Camp in the Bush' has been a place of refuge for a wide variety of people throughout New Zealand history. It was there that a variety of military defaulters sought to evade conscription. Proximity to a remote coalfield community was doubly useful. A bush-hideout, an assumed name, a certificate of exemption as a coalminer and a life of sorts was possible for a defaulter. Davidson reveals the exploits of a mercurial camp-dweller from the fringes of a coalmining community near Westport to capture something of the uncertain nature of life on the edge. Migration to-and-fro across the Tasman had long been a commonplace among coalminers as they responded to the realities of intermittent work, mine-closures and personal dilemmas. The introduction of conscription without plebiscite in New Zealand left those among them who were of military age liable for conscription. For those like Frank Burns (aka Frank Longman, aka Jack Hay), of less than straightforward circumstances, there was little choice but to hunker down in the bush and hope the law did not come knocking.

Spies were as readily imagined in wartime as aliens were fertile ground for rumour. Davidson illustrates both points by presenting a letter from Arthur Muravleff. Born in St Petersburg to a Russian father and French mother, he reached New Zealand, by way of Australia, in 1913. In his early 20s he attracted attention as he moved around New Zealand as an itinerant labourer given to spending considerable time producing copious notes and sketches allegedly for a book he planned to publish. When curious people, thinking he was French, tried to engage him in conversation they considered

his responses poor and asked authorities to investigate his identity. Interned in 1918, Arthur wrote to the Russian consul in Australia. By seeking the intervention of the post-revolutionary Russian Government he unwittingly compounded his problems. Those once disposed to look compassionately at his circumstances now preferred not to. Arthur's place in the tale of spies and spy catchers during World War I underlines the arbitrary and capriciousness of its operation as officials struggled to keep up with international politics.

Nowhere does Davidson demonstrate the tangled web of wartime surveillance more dramatically than in his account of Dr Hjelmar Dannevell's travails. As she tended to her patients in pre-war Wellington, wearing male-style clothing and practising naturopathic and alternative medicine, she was an accepted figure in high society. There were whispers. She was a fraud, she was embezzling money from her female patients or, even worse in the eyes of some, she was a lesbian. Davidson recounts how it was that friends in high places did not save her from internment in 1917. In postwar New Zealand society she was never to regain her previous level of acceptance. Disillusioned, she sailed for San Francisco with companion Mary Bond in 1929.

The war rendered such questioning of the state and its relationship with capital as existed in New Zealand even more subversive. It is from the letters of individuals whose frequent and sometimes radical public utterances had attracted the interest of the police before the outbreak of war that Davidson demonstrates the long reach of the censor's arm. It is territory peopled by activists of many hues. Davidson embeds their letters in a nicely drawn discussion of the contrasting world views they represent. He traces a lineage that ranges from the doctrine of direct action in the workplace as a precursor of the general strike as propounded by the disciples of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) to a small group of anarchists who wished to replace capitalism and the state with a social order based on cooperation. In a wartime society such ideological distinctions were of little interest to the guardians of the nation-state. Those who proclaimed them were summarily lumped together as promoters of chaos and disloyalty, natural companions of those who opposed the war and the military conscription needed to assemble the personnel to fight it. All were grist to the censor's mill.

Davidson ends his selection of letters with a glimpse of how the imperial censor envisaged his postwar surveillance duties. A new and potentially destabilising element had thrust itself into the international political arena in 1917 when the old order was overthrown in Russia. To publicly declare support for or interest in the Bolshevik experiment was, in New Zealand as elsewhere, an invitation to scrutiny. So too were the activities of unionists within the transport-related industries. Now bound together in the Alliance of Labour, they extended the One Big Union syndicalist goals of the pre-war 'Red Feds' and revived concerns within police circles of a repetition of the 1913 general strike. It was, Davidson demonstrates,

against this background and at a time when imperial sentiment was infused with a determination to protect a hard-won peace that the apparatus of state surveillance was professionalised. Talk of special branch operatives from within the police force soon came to pepper the conversations of radical activists and union officials. They were to do so until the nation's third major waterfront confrontation between capital and labour in 1951 stimulated the formation of the New Zealand Security Service in 1956. This impressive conclusion rounds out a finely and humanely drawn study that provides a deeper understanding of the genesis and operation of censorship and surveillance in New Zealand.

Heather Roberts review of Hilary Heilbron, *Rose Heilbron*; Evan Thomas, *First*; Pamela Burton, *From Moree to Mabo*; and Constance Backhouse, *Claire L'Heureux-Dubé*

Hilary Heilbron, *Rose Heilbron: Legal Pioneer of the 20th Century, Inspiring Advocate Who Became England's First Woman Judge* (Oxford, UK: Hart Publishing, 2012), 382 pp., HB \$50, ISBN 9781849464017

Evan Thomas, *First: Sandra Day O'Connor* (New York: Random House, 2019), 512 pp., HB \$52.99, ISBN 9780399589287

Pamela Burton, *From Moree to Mabo: The Mary Gaudron Story* (Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing, 2010), 512 pp., PB \$49.95, ISBN 9781742580982

Constance Backhouse, *Claire L'Heureux-Dubé: A Life* (Vancouver: UBC Press for the Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 2017), 768 pp., HB CA\$49.95, ISBN 9780774836326

On 24 September 2019 Baroness Brenda Hale delivered the judgment on the question of whether the prime minister had lawfully suspended parliament. The decision was eagerly anticipated worldwide, in some quarters with a near prurient interest into the democratic misadventures, and constitutional conundrums, facing the United Kingdom in its advance towards Brexit. A topic of equal interest, it seemed, was the dramatic spider brooch Baroness Hale was wearing when she delivered the judgment in a television broadcast. Internet memes, and searches for arachnid-related products skyrocketed. As did Google searches for 'Baroness Hale'. Who was this 'power dressing' judge—the first woman to be appointed President of the Supreme Court—whose court was holding Prime Minister Boris Johnson to account?

The stories of the 'FW2' (First Woman To), the female pioneers into an industry or profession, have always attracted media and public attention, including interest in their sartorial choices, appearance, and marital and parenting credentials. For biographers and historians, their stories allow an insight into how women have negotiated the pressures of being 'first' and of entering the distinctive cultures of male-dominated professions, and the broader backdrop of systemic socioeconomic pressures uniquely faced by women of their eras. Four biographies of women judges published in the last decade illustrate the shared pressures they faced, across 4 nations, distinct time periods and waves of feminist activism. Each biography also demonstrates the different choices made by the women, and their biographers, in telling the stories of women navigating a successful life in law.

Rose Heilbron: Legal Pioneer of the 20th Century, Inspiring Advocate Who Became England's First Woman Judge is an affectionate biographical memoir written by Hilary Heilbron, Rose Heilbron's daughter. The book's subtitle leaves little doubt as to the historic significance of Rose Heilbron's contribution to the British legal landscape. Informed in part by a private diary, personal recollections and court records, Hilary Heilbron is able to take the reader into glimpses of how Rose Heilbron prepared for cases, and her often self-critical inner thoughts about her career and relationships. The biography also offers some insights into how Rose 'made it work' being wife/mother and successful lawyer in the 1950s, at a time when those roles were usually filled by two separate people in a marriage. A poignant anecdote in the book speaks to both the highly unusual phenomenon of the 'working mother' of Rose Heilbron's era, and the power of the cultural norms Rose was attempting to challenge. When Rose's sister-in-law visited for the first time to meet her niece, Hilary, then 11 months, she went with Rose to the nursery:

[Hilary] rose on her chubby little legs gurgling with delight at recognising her mother, to which her sister-in-law commented in surprise and amazement 'Gosh, she knows you!' (p. 100)

According to Hilary Heilbron, Rose would frequently recount the anecdote 'with some wry amusement' (p. 99). The assumptions underpinning the story go a long way to explaining the emphasis in the biography on the positive *presence* of her mother in Hilary's life, both physical and emotional. Contemporary working parents will also find much that continues to resonate in these stories, in the challenges of attempting to forge 'work/life balance' in a marriage with two busy professionals.

First is the latest biography of Sandra Day O'Connor, the first female Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States (US), appointed in 1981. Evan Thomas's biography has the advantage of access to the previously private diaries of both Sandra Day and John O'Connor, as well as interviews of friends, family and clerks of the Justice. This allows Thomas to weave a rich tapestry of the journey of this US legal pioneer to the bench, and reveal previously unconfirmed incidents in her personal story. For example, Thomas can confirm that Sandra Day O'Connor had received, and declined, an offer of marriage—written by hand—from her later fellow Justice, and Chief Justice, on the US Supreme Court, William Rehnquist. When discussing the leading, and highly controversial, cases that marked out O'Connor's tenure on the bench, Thomas's access also allows a 'behind the scenes' glance at how decision-making occurs, including the personal tensions that can play a significant part in how judgment emerges from the US Supreme Court. As a journalist, Thomas's discussion of the legal cases is more light-touch than that of the practising barrister Hilary Heilbron, while still ensuring that the reader is left in no doubt of the pragmatic, highly intelligent judge's contribution to the court, and her capacity to carve out her own distinctive judicial philosophy. Contemporary readers will engage particularly with Chapter 6, which explores the infamous confirmation

process for US Supreme Court Justices undertaken by the United States Senate Judiciary Committee. Thomas refers explicitly and at length to the 'balancing act' required of O'Connor as part of this process, and throughout her career: the 'FW2' inevitably negotiating the double-bind faced by women of not being masculinist, and thereby conforming to gender-norms of the supportive spouse and homemaker, while simultaneously not being too feminine to hold positions of public power. O'Connor emerged unscathed by the confirmation process with a unanimous 99-0 vote in her favour.

Former lawyer Pamela Burton, in contrast to Heilbron, Thomas and Backhouse (the author of the fourth biography in this review), attempted to tell her story of Mary Gaudron without any support or assistance of her subject. As Burton explains, the biography was 'not in any sense authorised' (p. xv); Australia's first woman High Court Justice refused to be interviewed or allow Burton access to her personal papers. Unsurprisingly, unaided by these sources Burton pays more limited attention to Gaudron's interior mind, although what emerges clearly from the biography is Gaudron's motivation (shared also by O'Connor) not simply to inhabit the judicial office, but to prove that she was more than equal to the task:

I do not want to be the first and last. People might say 'we tried a woman once and it did not work'. (Gaudron quoted at p. 269)

That level of determination was required of Gaudron to succeed in law. Appointed to the High Court of Australia as its first woman judge in 1987, Gaudron had forged her career in an era in Australia when married women could not work for the Commonwealth Public Service; when it was questioned whether the top student in a law class should be awarded a University Medal, as a man was 'more likely to obtain benefit' from the award (p. 62); and when women were refused rooms in barristers chambers because 'it was felt that the company of a woman on the floor would be either disruptive or, at the least, uncongenial' (p. 78). While Burton devotes less attention to Gaudron's personal life than do Heilbron and Thomas, the careful navigation needed to 'balance' personal and private lives, and the impact of gendered expectations regarding childcare in particular, remains apparent throughout the biography. 'Problems with teenage children do not evaporate when their mother becomes a High Court Judge', Gaudron is reputed to have observed, and judges remain the children's 'taxi service' (p. 266). However, the biography is prominently focused on Gaudron's legal legacy, with detailed discussions of her key contribution to many of the High Court decisions that have shaped modern Australian legal and political life. This includes the eponymous *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* (1992) 175 CLR 1, which historically recognised Indigenous Australian native title interests. As such, it is an important aid in understanding a key period in the Australian legal landscape, and the journey and legacy of an important legal icon.

Like Mary Gaudron, Claire L'Heureux-Dubé was appointed to her nation's highest court, the Supreme Court of Canada, in 1987. However unlike Gaudron, and O'Connor, L'Heureux-Dubé was the *second* woman to join the Supreme Court of Canada. Iconic and controversial, L'Heureux-Dubé was the first francophone woman to join that court, having originated from Quebec where she had been the first woman to sit in Quebec City on the Quebec Superior Court (in 1973), and the first woman appointed to the Quebec City Court of Appeal (in 1979). Like Heilbron, O'Connor and Gaudron, L'Heureux-Dubé faced 'brutal' gender discrimination, 'marked irrefutably as an outsider by gender, captured in group portraits as the lone female in the crowd' (p. 5). A renowned feminist legal scholar herself, Constance Backhouse explores the legacy and impact of the court's 'great dissenter', and deftly interrogates the impact of her many identities on her experience as 'First/Second' on the court. Backhouse's work is rigorously researched, with its final 200 pages devoted to extensive referencing, bibliography and index. As a legal academic, I find comfort in such referencing, as it opens the source material to reader engagement, critique and further exploration, and matches the critical evaluation offered by Backhouse of L'Heureux-Dubé's contradiction, complexities and legacy. This does not mean that Backhouse's work is turgid legalese. The biography is impeccably written, engaging, insightful and an important treatment of its subject matter. It also stands as an exemplar of best scholarly practice in the under-represented genre of judicial biography.

Backhouse's approach to the structure of her narrative illustrates the self-consciously critical nature of her account of her subject. In contrast to works that adopt a cradle to end of career approach, Backhouse commences with a discussion of L'Heureux-Dubé's most controversial decision, that of *R v Ewanchuk* [1999] 1 SCR 330. As Backhouse's detailed yet accessible prose indicates, this was a pivotal case both in the trajectory of Canadian jurisprudence on gender and the law, and in the framing of L'Heureux-Dubé as a feminist icon and divisive figure in Canadian legal and political imagination. Recounting her multifaceted reputation at the outset reinforces that for Backhouse complexity is a feature of both her biography and L'Heureux-Dubé that can be embraced and not sidelined in the telling of this story. In this regard the contrast to Thomas's discussion of O'Connor's record on abortion is striking. O'Connor was regarded by many in the United States, as Thomas reflects, as a controversial figure—for both her incrementalism and pragmatic decision-making, and her capacity to be the 'middle' voice for her era on the court. In some respects Backhouse's task was simpler in framing a gripping biography: known as the fiery 'tiger' on the court, L'Heureux-Dubé was regarded by some as a figure courting controversy, and was also renowned for her dramatic language and decision-making style. *Ewanchuk*, for example, saw judicial complaints made against L'Heureux-Dubé for her calling out of what she perceived to be gender discrimination by a lower court

judge. The recurring complaint against O'Connor was instead that one could not be sure where she stood on an issue and, particularly, that her views on abortion were 'opaque', and her judgments rarely 'memorable'. And yet, for a time, O'Connor was reputedly the most powerful woman in America.

What Backhouse's 768 pages (including 200 pages of notes and index) also deftly accomplishes is an exploration of the *intersectionality* of discrimination. L'Heureux-Dubé was the first francophone woman on the court, and Backhouse's decision to use French and English throughout the text ensures that L'Heureux-Dubé's inhabiting of both worlds is always front in the reader's mind. This also reinforces the tensions in L'Heureux-Dubé jurisprudence, discussed by Backhouse, that is that the judge was cognisant to discrimination faced by some groups (such as women and children) but not to the prejudice encountered by others. According to Backhouse, the fact that the judge had had a privileged education by nuns lead to a strong sense of self-confidence, which meant that L'Heureux-Dubé held a difficult relationship with feminism and the feminist movement. While Backhouse brings these complexities into full view in her biography, the question of race is left relatively unexplored by Hilary Heilbron. Rose, in addition to being the first woman judge in the United Kingdom, was also its first Jewish judge. The fact that Rose forged her career during the rise of Nazism is underdeveloped by Heilbron. It is unclear, at least to an Australian reader, the extent to which Rose benefited from patronage of Jewish solicitors in forging her career. As Backhouse noted, '[g]etting started in law was a difficult proposition for anyone, male or female, who did not have an elite family background or legal connections' (p. 135). Increased attention in Heilbron's account to how the combination of gender and race impacted in Rose Heilbron's early career would have provided the reader with greater contextual understanding of Heilbron's 'outsider' status, and in turn enriched the generational, class and cultural portrait that could have emerged of this remarkable woman.

A subject that Heilbron, Thomas, Burton and Backhouse each explore, in different ways is the question of their subject's status as 'mother judge'. Is it possible to be a judge and a mother? The social expectations surrounding the 'good' mother (and how the absence of children can itself be a black-mark against professional women) are topics of continuing resonance. As is the question why men are rarely asked whether they can be *good father* judges, a topic Annabel Crabb recently queried in her *Quarterly Essay*.¹ For each pioneer woman Justice, it is clear that the struggle of 'balance' was one that touched their lives and their management of their careers. For each, accepting help was essential, as was functioning on minimal sleep. With varying levels of critical engagement, and aided by differentiated access to their subjects, what emerges from these books is that each woman dealt with the 'ordinary' challenge of parenting in different ways, just as their approach to judging

1 Annabel Crabb, 'Men at Work', *Quarterly Essay* (September 2019).

demonstrated that there is no one way to inhabit the role of ‘woman judge’. With each book underpinned by these questions, alongside the essential question of the attributes of a good judge, both collectively, and individually, Heilbron, Thomas, Burton and Backhouse provide the reader with much to explore.

Cheryl Ware review of Dennis Altman, *Unrequited Love: Diary of an Accidental Activist*

(Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Publishing, 2019), 256 pp., PB \$29.95,
ISBN 9781925835120

The late twentieth century witnessed significant transformations in the social lives and political statuses of gay men and lesbians. From the late 1960s, the international gay and lesbian liberation movements propelled discussions about sex and sexuality into the public arena as individuals demonstrated against discriminatory legislation and police harassment, and declared pride in their sexualities. It was during this period that 21-year-old Dennis Altman—who had recently left Hobart for New York as a ‘shy and naïve graduate student’ (p. 3)—became an ‘accidental activist’ by writing about the burgeoning gay liberation movement.

I came to Altman’s writings as an oral historian interested in the intimate lives of gay men who lived through the HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s. While Altman acknowledges that his tendency to write from the first person is a ‘largely unacceptable style within academia’ (p. xii), such a balance between personal reflections and academic argument is one of the major strengths of his work and is a key feature of this memoir. Since the publication of his influential text *Homosexual: Oppression & Liberation* in 1971, Altman has authored 13 books and many more articles and chapters that offer insights into the international fight for gay and lesbian rights, political and community-based responses to HIV and AIDS, and the globalisation of sexuality, among other topics. These texts have solidified his reputation as a pioneering activist, academic and leading political commentator.

Unrequited Love: Diary of an Accidental Activist traces Altman’s love affair with the United States, beginning with his enrolment as a Fulbright Scholar at Cornell University in the mid-1960s. Drawing predominantly on his personal memories and a ‘very sketchy’ diary he has kept for almost 50 years, Altman guides readers through several decades of activism, his academic career in Australia, America, Europe and Asia, and his friendships and exchanges with other writers who have been instrumental to shifting understandings of sex and sexuality. *Unrequited Love* is a particular form of memoir that is framed from events that took place between 2016 and 2019. This style enables Altman to discuss both his memories of the past and to engage with contemporary sexual politics and events. These include his commentaries on the international #MeToo movement and the marriage equality campaign. Indeed, the Australian Government’s controversial decision to launch

a non-binding postal survey to garner public opinion on same sex marriage in 2017 forced thousands to 're-live adolescent traumas, to come out again, in the spotlight of national attention' (p. 91).

The book's title not only reflects Altman's personal engagement with the United States over the last 5 decades, but also alludes to Australia's one-sided affinity for the country, evidenced by the strong sense of betrayal some Australians felt with the election of Donald Trump as president in November 2016 (p. x). Altman identifies the responses to HIV and AIDS as particularly explicit examples of the extent to which the United States influences Australia. Specifically, Australian activists took the lead from their American counterparts and established local chapters of the vocal organisation AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) that originated in New York in 1987. Commemorative events such as the annual AIDS Candlelight Memorial and the AIDS Memorial Quilt began in San Francisco, in 1983 and 1985 respectively. Yet Australia's progressive policy responses to the threat of HIV and AIDS has surpassed that of the United States. From the mid-1980s, public health officials in Australia worked alongside communities to establish a collaborative and proactive response to the risk of HIV and AIDS that some historians have identified as one of the best in the world. Nevertheless, just as Altman's enthusiasm for the United States in the 1980s sometimes 'blinded' him to what was happening in Australia, America has shown 'almost zero interest' in Australia's history of HIV and AIDS (p. xiii).

Unrequited Love is a particularly moving demonstration of the value of engaging with the voices of those who lived through the critical years of gay liberation in the 1970s and the immediate impact of HIV and AIDS over the following decades. The onset of HIV and AIDS galvanised many members of the LGBTIQ community who campaigned for faster access to medication, provided emotional and economic support for those with the virus and grieved the loss of the countless gay men who died too soon. Altman remembers attending lengthy board meetings as vice president of the Victorian AIDS Council in the early 1990s and the lack of effective medication, yet also the 'moments of real community' (p. 173) that have become one of the lasting legacies of the global epidemic. Writing about the human impact of HIV and AIDS was itself a deeply personal experience for Altman, and 'unlock[ed] the long list of men whose lives touched mine in various ways, and who should now be growing old with me' (p. 85). This included the 'intensely private' activist and author Robert Ariss, alongside whom Altman served on the Australian National Council on AIDS, and whose doctoral thesis *Against Death: The Practice of Living with AIDS* (1997) was published 3 years after his death.

The memoir offers a commentary on the importance of life writing, which provides a 'tangible way' to pass on stories and a means to correct 'contemporary misreadings' of past events. It is especially pressing in the aftermath of HIV and AIDS that 'hollowed out the generation who should now be reaching retirement' (p. xi).

Unrequited Love is then, at least in part, a response to concerns that individuals' personal memories and stories of those critical years will be lost. Altman identifies the increasing emphasis on oral history and authenticity as reasons for the greater demands for the stories of those who lived through these movements. Oral history is certainly an important means of engaging with individuals' intimate lives and personal reflections. Altman previously shared his experiences during an oral history interview with women's studies scholar and now Emeritus Professor Jill Matthews in 1991 and during an interview for the Australian Response to AIDS Oral History Project in 1993. The rich collections of oral history interviews across Australia are a testament to the public interest in the lives and memories of those who lived through and, in many ways, pioneered social transformations in the lives of LGBTIQ individuals. The National Library of Australia hosts extensive collections of interviews including the Australian Lesbian and Gay Life Stories, the LGBTIQ Pioneers, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, and the HIV/AIDS Volunteers oral history projects. Regional groups including the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Melbourne and the Pride History Group in Sydney host valuable collections that feature in-depth interviews with prominent and less publicly known LGBTIQ individuals.

Unrequited Love guides readers through Altman's career, especially after he moved from Sydney to New York in 1981 to 'live out the fantasy of becoming a real writer' (p. 107). He spent the following months completing the final edits of *The Homosexualization of America* (1982) and frequented seminars dominated by the presence of Susan Sontag at New York University's Institute for the Humanities. He shares his enjoyment of writing *Global Sex* (2001) and the subsequent promotion events in Manhattan and Mexico City, and his more recent collaboration with friend and colleague Jonathan Symons, with whom he co-authored *Queer Wars: The New Global Polarization Over Gay Rights* (2016).

In this regard, the book delves into Altman's personal connections with friends and colleagues, many of whom will be familiar names among readers. He recounts attending New Year's Eve parties in Balmain hosted by Australian historian and activist Lex Watson, and discussing the sacrifices of activism with fellow writer Danny Vadasz, the co-founder of the Melbourne-based periodical *Gay Community News*. Altman reflects on the 'surprisingly kind' and generous Gore Vidal, who became the focus of his book *Gore Vidal's America* (2005), and Michel Foucault's ambivalence to the gay movement, which he identified as a shared sentiment among intellectuals of Foucault's generation.

Yet the book offers more. It extends beyond Altman's professional academic career and public involvement in activism to reflect on his personal life as the son of Jewish refugee parents in postwar Australia. He draws on his May 2017 visit to the German town of Charlottenburg, where both of his parents had lived at different times, as a starting point to discuss his heritage. This section of the memoir offers a moving

account of his parents' journeys through Europe to Australia. His mother's family had escaped to Berlin via Poland, and then to Melbourne shortly before Hitler's rise to power, while his father had fled Vienna and arrived in Sydney—with his stamp collection in tow—in 1938. Stamp collecting became a shared experience between Altman and his father, and the role of stamps as political symbols became the focus of his coffee table book *Paper Ambassadors: The Politics of Stamps* (1991).

The memoir sheds light on the grief Altman experienced following the loss of Anthony Smith, his partner of 22 years. Anthony served as president of the Northern Territory AIDS Council and later became one of the founding staff members of what is now the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University in Melbourne. He collaborated with Anne Mitchell to develop some of the first surveys of high school students' knowledge and behaviours regarding sexual health. The project revealed the high number of students who feared for their safety and felt unable to speak openly about their genders and sexualities, and formed the foundation for the Safe Schools Program. Anthony's presence as an accomplished researcher and life partner is felt throughout the book. Altman recounted the 'lifelong grief and longing' and the awareness that 'each day the dead are further lost to us' (pp. 14–15). The 2014 International AIDS Conference in Melbourne was an important turning point. It not only meant he felt ready to shift away from 3 decades of AIDS activism, but he also identified the conference as the time when grief 'cease[d] to be the dominant theme in [his] life' (p. 47).

The book celebrates some of the key achievements of gay liberation. This is illustrated in Altman's comparison between himself and Benjamin Law, author of the *Quarterly Essay* on the controversy surrounding the Safe Schools Program. Specifically, Altman's experience of coming out at a time when homosexuality was deemed a medical condition and sex between men was criminalised across Australia marks a clear departure from the world Law and his generation encountered. Nevertheless, the 'vicious campaign' targeted at those responsible for delivering the Safe Schools Program, which the federal government ceased funding at the end of 2016, is a particularly explicit example of a 'subterranean backlash' (p. 45).

In this vein, the book offers a caution against the 'triumphalism' that surrounded the 40th anniversary of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in 2018. He argues that such celebrations tend to focus on progress with less acknowledgement of the ongoing issues that LGBTIQ individuals and others face in Australia and elsewhere. These include concerns about protecting queer students in schools, especially with the end of the Safe Schools Program, and the Australian Government's treatment of asylum seekers—some of whom fled persecution because of their sexualities—who were then detained in offshore detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru. He also articulated concerns about Australians' 'remarkable lack of interest' in the decline of democratic freedoms in the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia, despite political rhetoric about Australia's closeness to these nations (p. 70), and

the return of oppressive governments in various countries including Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Venezuela. The immediate impact of the Trump administration, which reversed decades of progress and is making it more acceptable for people to express prejudices in public platforms, is a further example of such backlash.

This engaging memoir guides readers through some of the key events in Altman's adult life. It introduces readers to fleeting and lifelong friendships, the triumphs and limitations in gay liberation and his reflections on recent political issues. By framing the book from the present, Altman offers thoughtful and insightful observations on current political crises and cautions readers against overlooking current deprivations of human rights in favour of celebrating progress. *Unrequited Love* strikes the careful balance between personal experience and academic commentary and this is a true strength of Altman's work.

Notes on contributors

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Patricia Clarke OAM is a writer, historian and former journalist, who has written extensively on women in Australian history and on media history. She is author of 13 books including several biographies of women writers. Her latest book is *Great Expectations: Emigrant Governesses in Colonial Australia* (2020). She is an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities and a Fellow of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies; she has been a member of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography's* Commonwealth Advisory Committee for many years and was also a long-time member of the National Library's Fellowship Advisory Committee.

Michael Davis is a historian with inter-disciplinary interests across the humanities and social sciences. His research interests include Indigenous/European histories of encounter, environmental histories, biography, ethnographic history, and history of anthropology, and postcolonial studies. He has worked in academia and government, with Aboriginal community organisations, and as an independent researcher and writer. He has honorary affiliations with the University of Sydney and The Australian National University. His recent publications include 'Indigenous Australian Identity in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts', in Steven Ratuva (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity* (2019).

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Karen Fox is a research editor for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and a research fellow in the National Centre of Biography in the School of History at The Australian National University. She specialises in Australian and New Zealand history, and she is especially interested in the history of fame and celebrity; women's, gender and feminist history; imperial and colonial history; and biography and life writing. She has taught Australian and imperial history and biography at ANU, and she is the author of *Māori and Aboriginal Women in the Public Eye: Representing Difference, 1950–2000* (2011).

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Peter Love is a labour historian and activist of longstanding. The story of the Blackburns, which he reviews in this volume, overlaps with his own research on the Labor politician Frank Anstey. He is the author/editor of books on Australian Labor Populism, the Cold War, the 1955 Split, the Eight Hour Day, and Swinburne University of Technology. He is also a trustee of the Melbourne Trades Hall and Literary Institute, and a life member of the Australian Labor Party.

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Lyne Megarrity is an experienced educator. During her teaching career, she developed classroom programs and professional development experiences designed to provide engaging learning about history. She has done research for, and contributed to, history publications about Townsville, and is a volunteer for the National Trust.

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Len Richardson's research and teaching interests at the University of Canterbury focused on the Australasian labour movements. His published work has concentrated on coal-mining unionism on both sides of the Tasman and includes *The Bitter Years: Wollongong and the Great Depression* (1984); *Coal, Class & Community: The United Mineworkers of New Zealand* (1995); and *People and Place: The West Coast of New Zealand's South Island in History and Literature* (2020).

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