14. Dissonance surrounding the Aboriginal origin of a selection of placenames in Victoria, Australia: Lessons in lexical ambiguity

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When studying the history of some 3,400 Aboriginal toponyms in Victoria, Australia, the majority of placenames were found to have no equivocalness or ambiguity about them (Clark and Heydon 2002). Although it was not possible to find meanings for every one of these Aboriginal placenames, in terms of historical accounts and folk etymology there was no ambiguity – the vast majority of the placenames are accepted in the source material as being of Aboriginal origin. This paper concerns some 26 placenames for which there is dissonance or a lack of agreement about whether or not they are Aboriginal in origin. These names are considered in some detail in an effort to resolve their lexical ambiguity and an attempt is made to explain the reasons for the ambiguity and to find any patterns and causal factors. The merits of the claims and counter claims in each case will be examined and an attempt made to categorise the assertion of Aboriginal etymology as either grounded in the historical evidence, or likely to be explained by folk etymology – that is, a false meaning based on its structure or sound that may lack historical basis but has been accepted through common practice, or explained as a false etymology that neither accords with historical evidence nor equates with folk etymologies.

A critical issue when considering toponymic etymology is the fragility of toponymic knowledge and the concomitant difficulty of learning about the origins of placenames. Who is the custodian of toponymic histories and who keeps alive the history and memory of placename making at the local level? Is this history a thing of fragments recorded in local histories, or preserved in oral and family histories, or part of a database or register kept by local museums and historical societies and local government? In many cases we no longer know the circumstances by which places were given names, and even less are we able to reconstruct the toponymic history of most places, that include details of who gave the places names, and the reasons behind their adoption. Furthermore, toponymic attachment is not a monolithic phenomenon; we should expect heterogeneous etymologies where there exist divergent associations with their own vernacular *raison d'etre*. Thus in many cases, polysemy is likely to be

normative and monosemic etymology the exception. Another real possibility is that most placenames are likely to be onomastic palimpsests, in that they represent accumulated iterations, glosses, or etymologies laid one over the other. Thus divergent etymologies need not require validation, but rather recognition that interpreting a placename is a dynamic process in which the etymology of a given placename may change over time and change for different iterations.

In some cases it may not be possible to resolve the lexical ambiguity and the equivocalness must therefore remain. Furthermore, in the context of colonial placename making, it has to be acknowledged that there may be numerous instances of Aboriginal placenames in their Anglicised form having the appearance of being non-Aboriginal in their origin (such as 'Cherrypool', an Anglicisation of Djarabul, see Clark and Heydon 2002: 58). Likewise there may be several names that owe their origin to exogenous names that appear to be similar to local Aboriginal words and the similarity is purely co-incidental but one that fails to withstand critical scrutiny (for example, Dimboola and Baddaginnie). In other cases the ambiguity may be deliberate. For example, Buchan in eastern Victoria (which is discussed in more detail below) is a contested toponym, with some sources attributing it as a Scotch name, whereas others suggest it is a contraction of Bukkan-munjie, a local Aboriginal name meaning 'place of the bag'. However, without hard evidence to the contrary the similarity between Buchan and Bukkan-munjie may be accidental; then again, the Scottish Buchan may have been conferred because of its similarity to the local Indigenous toponym, so the polysemy is deliberate and not accidental.

The methodology that will be followed will be to examine the entries of the various reference books for Victorian placenames, such as Saxton (1907), O'Callaghan (1918), Martin (1944), Massola (1968), Blake (1977), and Clark and Heydon (2002), and when relevant consider local histories and regional placenames studies such as Gardner (1991, 1992, 1996), Tully (1997) and Sinnott (2003). Kostanski (2009: 184) has discussed the methodological difficulties and limitations of toponymic books such as those of Massola (1968) and Blake (1977) that may in part explain the lack of rigour in their research.

1. Acheron

Acheron is the name of a river, a settlement, an Aboriginal station, gold diggings at Swamp Creek, a gap in the Great Dividing Range, a pastoral run, a ridge in the Black Range State Forest, and a scenic road called the Acheron Way (Sinnot 2003). Saxton (1907: 5) considered it was a 'Classical name'. According to Martin (1944: 5) Acheron Way 'was the name of a river in Epirus (north-west ancient Greece), regarded in awe as connected with the underworld'. Blake

(1977: 22) commented 'in 1839 Fletcher and Coburn took up their stn [station] between Acheron and Rubicon rivers, naming it after ancient Greek river which reputedly flowed to underworld'. Massola (1968) does not assert that Acheron is an Aboriginal placename. Barry Blake (2001 in Clark and Heydon 2002) considers it is a distortion of the Aboriginal name 'Ngaragon'. Sinnott has argued that Les Blake (1977) was

> unaware of the Aboriginal (Taungurong) name for the river: Agaroon (Neumayer) or Nyaggeron. Barry Blake has suggested that the original Taungurong word was Ngaragon. However, Cockburn and Fletcher would have been well placed to modify the Taungurong name or names to Niagaroon and Acheron, as the two men were the first licensees (1839) of both pastoral runs. (Also, Europeans often failed to hear or record the initial ng- in Aboriginal words). Acheron is the Latin spelling of Greek Ackheron (Ἀχέρων) ''River of Woe'', from akhos (αχος), distress. The Acheron was one of the rivers of the Underworld or kingdom of Hades, and also the name of a river in Epirus, Greece. (Sinnott 2003: 11)

This placename may be an example of polysemy, in that the first European settlers heard Ngaragon and used 'Acheron' in its place, or then again its similarity may be purely coincidental.

2. Avoca River

The town of Avoca takes its name from Avoca River. According to Saxton (1907: 7) and O'Callaghan (1918: 24), the river was named by Major Mitchell in 1836. 'Sutherland vol. 1, p. 87, says that Mitchell gave the name 'moved, doubtless, by the ''clearest of crystal and brightest of green'' which Tom Moore has so sweetly celebrated in the Irish Valley'. Martin (1944: 8) clarifies that this is named after the Irish river identified with the 'sweet vale' of the poet, Moore. Blake (1977: 27) noted that the Vale of Avoca is in County Wicklow, Ireland. Wajnryb (2006: 10) also considers the name is a literary name after Thomas Moore's poem 'Sweet Vale of Avoca'. Mitchell (1839 Vol. 2: 169) named the river on 10 July 1836, his entry is fact of matter and gives no reason: 'At three miles beyond the pass, we crossed a deep creek running westward, which I named the Avoca, and we encamped on an excellent piece of land beyond it'. Massola (1968) does not assert that Avoca is an Aboriginal placename.

In the Brock family papers, in a list of Aboriginal placenames 'Boca' is given as the Aboriginal name for the river. Alexander Brock squatted at Coonooer station, on the Avoca River, north of St Arnaud, and his diary spans from 1846–1852. Tully (1997: 84) considers Boca is a Djadjawurrung word for 'dog', however this is not supported by primary Djadjawurrung sources such as J. Parker (in

Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 159), which show that Djadjawurrung, consistent with other western Kulin dialects, called a tame dog 'kal' and the wild dog or dingo 'wilker'. A Djadjawurrung clan was known as the Galgal baluk (that is 'dog people'; see Clark 1990: 158). Djadjawurrung names for segments of the Avoca River include:

- 'Bangyeno banip' waterholes in the river south of Avoca with associations with the mythical bunyip;
- 'Djub-djub-galg' a camping place on the river where djub (melaleuca) was abundant;
- 'Natte yaluk' yaluk = river/creek, near Natte Yallock township;
- 'Witji bar' witji = basket grass, bar = river, referring to the river south of Charlton; and,
- 'Yangeba' yang = to sit (i.e. camping place), bar = river, the lower reaches near Lake Bael Bael.

In the Yorta Yorta language, which is a non-Kulin language, baka is their word for tame dog (Hercus 1986: 260) so it possible that Boca is a poor hearing of the Yorta Yorta baka, but this language area is quite a distance away from the Avoca River, so this is unlikely. It is more likely that Boca is Djadjawurrung pidgin for Avoca.

3. Ballan

In terms of dictionaries of Victorian placenames, there is a consensus that Ballan is a toponym transplanted from north Ireland. For example, according to Saxton (1907: 8), Ballan was named by 'Mr. Robt. Von Steiglitz [sic] after a property in the north of Ireland, where he was born'. The *Ballan Times* accepted Saxton's interpretation (*Ballan Times*, 21 November 1912 in Ballan Shire Historical Society 1989: 4). Thomas O'Callaghan (1918: 25) was more expansive 'The village of Ballan was surveyed in 1850 by Assistant Surveyor Malcolm. Mr. Hoddle, in forwarding the plan, wrote that His Honour the Superintendent had named the village "Ballan". That was the name of a pastoral station close to the village, and then owned by Robert von Stieglitz. He had named it after an estate in Ireland'. O'Callaghan identified his information sources as W. Thorn, Chief Draughtsman, Lands Department, and J.G. Saxton's (1907) publication. Later dictionaries, such as A.E. Martin (1944: 8) and L.B.J. Blake (1977: 30) are derived from Saxton and O'Callaghan and do not add any further information. Massola (1968) does not assert that Ballan is an Aboriginal placename. The possibility that Ballan may have an Aboriginal origin was first raised in Clark and Haydon (2002: 21), and revolves around Ballan being a contraction of Ballindyapp. Robert William von Stieglitz occupied a run he named 'Ballan' (Ballen), 4,836 acres on the right bank of the Werribee River at Ballan in April 1838, and his brother, John Lewis von Stieglitz occupied an adjoining run named 'Ballanee', 16,000 acres north of

Ballan in 1838 (Billis and Kenyon 1974: 170). Emma von Stieglitz (nee Cowie), wife of John, has provided us with a pictorial record of early Ballan, and one water colour sketch is entitled 'First settlement at Balindyeapp, Ballan, 1839. Victoria'. A second sketch is entitled 'Balindyeapp, Port Phillip, Septr. 1839'. In an edited publication of Emma von Stieglitz's sketchbook, the editor K.R. von Stieglitz has noted that 'Robert von Stieglitz's original quarters on the Balindyeapp, Ballindyapp, or Ballan station (there were numerous spellings) stood on the crest of slope immediately west of the Werribee' (von Stieglitz 1964: Figure 1, n.p.).

Thus it is argued here that Ballan, which is a likely contraction of Balindyeapp, was favoured by von Stieglitz because of its similarity with his birthplace in Ireland. This may be an example of what Kostanski (2009: 177) has understood as 'Anglo-Indigenous placename production, wherein the primary aim of adopting an Indigenous name for colonial landscape identification reflected an imperialist vision, overlooking or little concerned with the true meaning of significance of the names', in this case, Balindyeapp. Thus Ballan may be another example of polysemy, or then again its similarity may be purely coincidental.

4. Balnarring

Balnarring is a beach resort south of Bittern on the western shore of Western Port Bay. It is most probably a corruption of the name of the early pastoral run taken up by the Meyrick brothers (Alfred, Maurice) and their cousin Henry in 1840 called 'Ballanrong' (Billis and Kenyon 1974: 114). Variant spellings of the station name include 'Ballyrungen' (Meyrick 1939: 135); Ballanarong; Ballanrong; Ballarong; Ballyrangue; Ballerangan (Meyrick 1939: 171). Meyrick (1939: 171) is clearly of the view that it is an Aboriginal placename as he notes that 'Ball or Balla meaning a camp is very common' and cites his source as A.S. Kenyon. According to Massola (1968: 8), Balnarring is from Balbalnarring, bal = camp, narring = hair, beard. Blake (1977: 32) posits that it is 'possibly fr. Abor. bael, gumtree, and ''narang'', little, or fr. Ballymering, Irish bally for ''land belonging to'''. Gardner (1996: 27) has translated the name as 'hair camp'. Barry Blake (1991: 82) notes that the east Kulin word for 'beard' is 'ngarrin'; 'hair' is 'yarra', 'camp' is 'yilam' or 'wilam' which also mean 'bark'; 'red gum' is 'bial', and 'little' is 'waigurrk' or 'wayibu'. The Aboriginal origin of the placename Balnarring is contested only by Les Blake, and given the weight of the evidence supporting an Aboriginal origin, Blake's Irish etymology may be regarded as spurious.

5. Barham River

This refers to the Barham River, in south-west Victoria, near Apollo Bay. According to Massola (1968: 9), the name is a contraction of Burrum Burrum, meaning large, big. Blake (1977: 33) considers the name 'derives from Kent, England; however Barham may represent anglicising of Abor. n. for stream, burrum burrum, which possibly refers to big stones in river bed'. Pascoe (in Clark and Heydon 2002) suggests the name means muddy, presumably a corruption of 'burrum', seen elsewhere in western Victorian placenames such as Burrumbeep, Burrumbeet, and Burrumbite.

6. Beulah

Beulah is a small town in the southern Mallee region of Victoria, some 395 km north-west of Melbourne. According to O'Callaghan (1918: 29), the placename is derived from the Biblical Beulah from Isaiah 62, 4. 'Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate, but thou shall be called Hephzi-bah and thy land Beulah, for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married' (Martin 1944: 14). Massola (1968) does not assert that Beulah is an Aboriginal placename. According to L. Blake (1977: 39f), 'various meanings such as Abor. Belar, red ochre; Biblical, fruitful land; and Eng. Names, e.g. B. Spa in Norwood, have been given but first selector Alex McKenzie from Beauly, Scot'. Les Blake is the only source for the dissonant etymology, and it may be disregarded as mere speculation on his part.

7. Bonn

According to Massola (1968: 11), the name means 'ashes'. This translation was first published by District Surveyor Philip Chauncy (in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 204) from information he obtained in 1862–66, from Aboriginal people at Swanwater near St Arnaud. This translation is confirmed by Barry Blake (in Clark and Heydon 2002). However, according to Les Blake (1977: 44), it derives from the German city Bonn on the Rhine River in what is now the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Les Blake is the only source for the dissonant etymology, and the problems with his interpretations have already been discussed.

8. Buchan

Buchan is the name of a village, river and tourist cave in Gippsland. Howitt (1904: 80) observed that Bukkan-munji is 'now written Buchan, and is supposed to be a Scotch name given by some early settler from North Britain. It should properly be spelled as I have written it, being the native name for the bag in which the Kurnai carries various articles. Bukkan-munji means ''bag there'' or ''the place of the bag'''. George Augustus Robinson (Jnl 22/6/1844 in Clark 2000a) has suggested another etymology *a propos* another placename similar to Bukkan-munji: 'Fish are called munje, hence the compound Munberlemunje and so on'. William Thomas (in Pepper and De Araugo 1985: 120) considered it derived from Buccan 'stack of rocks with a hole in it'. This rendition is supported by Roberts (1977: 14) who locates Bukkan munji at the Buchan River and Tarra Creek junction where the rock folds. Saxton (1907: 13) in one entry asserts it has its origin in Scotland, however in 'Additions and Corrections' he notes 'Native name for the bag in which the Kurnai carries various articles. Buk Kan Mungi means ''bag there'' or the place of the bag. The Native Tribes of S.E. Australia, A.W. Howitt, 1904. Instead of Scotland' (Saxton 1907: 3). Martin (1944: 18) has recorded that 'Buk kan, natives' word for a bag they carried. Buk Kan Mungi was said to mean 'place of the bag'. According to Massola (1968: 14), Buchan is derived from 'Bukkan-munji, bag there, the place of the bag'. Blake (1977: 49) notes that in 1839 it was the name of Bayliss' station derived from buchan buchan, smoke-signal expert, or bukkan munjie, place of grass bag. Seddon (1994: 62) accords the meaning 'women's article'. The Buchan Sesquicentenary Committee (1989) translates mungie as water. Clark (1999) notes that bukin; bugin in Wiradjuri also refers to a medicine man of supernatural ability. Gardner (1992: 17) translates Bukkanmungie as 'place of the woman's bag'. This placename may be an example of polysemy, a toponym with multiple etymologies that was deliberately selected because of its polysemy.

9. Mount Buller

According to Saxton (1907: 13) named 'After Charles Buller of the Colonial Office'. According to Martin (1944: 18), 'christened by Mitchell, 1835, after an official in the Colonial Office. Natives knew it as Marrang'. Smyth (1878 Vol. 2: 196) lists Marrang as the Aboriginal name for Mount Buller. Massola (1968: 14) confirmed that Marrang meant 'the hand', or 'an edible root'. Presumably he is referring to the eastern Kulin marnang or marnong = hand (Blake 1991: 8), and murnong the eastern Kulin word for the daisy yam *Microseris lanceolata* (Gott and Conran 1991: 6). Blake (1977: 182) posits the Aboriginal name is 'Bulla Bulla, i.e. two'. However, Blake (1991: 96) has given bulabil or bindjirri

as the eastern Kulin word for two. Robinson (Jnl 11/5/1840 in Clark 2000a) provides the name Marinebut (sometimes transcribed as Warinbut), as the Daungwurrung name for Mount Buller, although Smyth (1878 Vol. 2: 196) lists Warrambat as the Aboriginal names for Mount Timbertop and Mount Terrible. Presumably Marine and Marrang are cognate. Robinson (1844 in Clark 2000b: 201), notes that buller is the Dhudhuroa word for mountain; however Clark and Heydon (2002) acknowledge that the similarity with Mount Buller may be purely coincidental. Sinnott has the following entry:

> Named by Sir Thomas Mitchell in 1835 after Charles Buller, a friend in the Colonial Office. Claims that it was named by Baron Ferdinand von Mueller in 1853 (first European to climb it) are unfounded as Mount Buller appears on Thomas Ham's Map of Australia Felix (1847) and is listed by Wells in 1848. Aboriginal (Taungurong) names: Marrang (Smyth, 1878), Warrinbut (Clark & Heydon). Les Blake mentions another Aboriginal name, Bulla Bulla, meaning two: this is dubious). Clark & Heydon point out that buller is also a Dhudhuroa word for mountain. (Sinnott 2003: 103)

The non-Indigenous origin of the placename Mt Buller is well attested, and its similarity with an exogenous Aboriginal word for mountain is probably coincidental.

10. Callawadda

Callawadda is the name of a pastoral district 29 km north of Stawell in the southern Wimmera region of Victoria. The locality formed part of John Robertson's 'Robertson's Station', some 22,400 acres on the Richardson River, north of Navarre; first taken up in February 1845 (Billis and Kenyon 1974: 272). Massola (1968) does not assert that Callawadda is an Aboriginal placename, however Blake (1977: 58), suggests the name is a corruption of an Aboriginal word for 'tall timber and plain', but fails to indicate his source. He posits that it 'may also be mis-spelling of Cadwallada which derives fr. Cadwaladr. Grandson in the fifth century of Cadwallan, ruler of North Wales'. Cadwalader or Cadwallader, which mean 'Battle Arranger' or 'Great General', are common names in Wales. Callawadda may be a transposition of Cadwallader, however until further research is undertaken, the etymology of Callawadda must remain unclear.

11. Caper Kelly

According to the Surveyors' returns 1869–70 and Surveyor General (Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 200), Caper Kelly is the native name of a large salt lake in far western

Victoria. It has not been possible to locate this lake. This name is very similar to capercaillie or capercailzie (literally 'horse of the woods'), *Tetrao urogallus*, the name of a large European woodland grouse in Scotland, and caper-kelly is one form of pronunciation. The similarity between this apparent Indigenous placename and the common name of a European grouse may be coincidental.

12. Darnum

Darnum is the name of a small town south-east of Warragul in the Shire of Baw Baw. According to Saxton (1907: 21) it is a native name meaning 'parrot'. O'Callaghan (1918: 40), repeats Saxton's gloss and sources it from Bunce (1856: 33) and Smyth (1878 Vol. 2: 191); however I have not been able to substantiate the Smyth reference. There is a reproduction of Bunce's list in Smyth (1878 Vol. 2: 138). This definition is accepted by Massola (1968: 19) and Barry Blake (1991: 87). Copeland, in a local history of the Warragul Shire, noted the following:

> "Darnum" is supposed to have acquired its name when the various small townships along the railway-line were taxing the ingenuity of official minds to christen and tabulate with appropriate names. This particular locality emerged from the unknown and un-named, it is said, from an exclamation of the late Sir Thomas Bent. This irascible old politician was annoyed with the suggestions made by different ones, when he expressed a desire to have the place called something it would be known by, and it was not clear whether he said "Darn 'em" or "D___' em", but the milder expression appears to have been chosen, with a slight alteration and arrangement in spelling, to denote the little railway township. However, Darnum it has remained ever since. (Copeland 1934: 485)

Martin (1944: 29), asserts that 'it is generally believed that it was derived from an exclamation frequently used by Thomas Bent, Victoria's rugged premier' in 1904. Blake (1977: 79), believes the placename is the 'ancient n. for Doncaster, Eng., but is also Abor. word for parrot'. Gardner (1992: 12) suggests it almost certainly refers to the crimson rosella *Platycercus elegans* or the eastern rosella *Platycercus exemius*. This is an example where folk etymology has generated a popular explanation that is not grounded in the historical literature.

13. Lake Drung Drung

Drung Drung is the name of one of three lakes some 16 km south-east of Horsham. Samuel Wilson (in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 178) confirms that Drung Drung is a native name, but he does not provide a meaning. Saxton (1907: 22)

considers it a native name meaning 'spoiling'. According to Martin (1944: 32) it is an Aboriginal name meaning 'much spoiled'. Massola (1968: 20) extends the meaning to 'spoiling, spoiled, ruined'. Blake (1977: 85) also notes that Drung is the name of an Irish village in County Donegal. Les Blake is the only source for the dissonant etymology, and it may be disregarded as speculation on his part.

14. Ecklin

Ecklin is the name of a swamp and a rural locality south of Terang, in western Victoria. Massola (1968: 21) noted that the Aboriginal name for Ecklin Swamp was Ecklin yalloack. This name was sourced from Lane in Smyth (1878 Vol. 2: 187), and contains yaluk the widespread Kulin word for creek. Blake (1977: 90) has raised the possibility that Ecklin is 'from Scot. L. Eck (*linn*, pool)'. Again Les Blake is the only source for the dissonant etymology, and may be disregarded as speculation.

15. Half-way Inn, Glenorchy

According to Wilson (in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 178), the local Aboriginal name for this locality was 'Greech', meaning 'fat'. Wilson noted that Aboriginal people 'assure me it is the native name, although the meaning suggests an English origin'. There is some similarity with the neighbouring Wembawemba word for 'fat' 'guradj' (Hercus 1986: 185); however, Barry Blake (in Clark and Heydon 2002) is convinced that 'greech' represents the English word 'grease', thus it is another example of misunderstood Aboriginal pidgin.

16. Jim Crow Hill

This was an early name for Mt Franklin, and was the name of a creek, range, and goldfield north of Daylesford. 'Mt Franklin' named after Sir John Franklin's visit to the Loddon Protectorate station in 1843 displaced 'Jim Crow Hill'. According to Saxton (1907: 36) Jim Crow Hill was 'Named by Capt John Hepburn. Capt. Bacchus, who accompanied him, asked what name should the ranges have, and Hepburn replied: Jim Crow, after a popular song'. Morrison (1967: 41) explains that the origin of the name 'Jim Crow' has intrigued many for a long time.

> Some believe it is the name of a former 'king' of the local Loddon tribe of Aborigines. Etymologically, the term ''jim crow'' was used for various implements, as for example, a ''jemmy'', which is a miniature form of a

bent crow (bar) and, somehow, the idea of bending or twisting seems to be implicit in its derivation. A device for bending iron bars was one time termed a "jim crow". About 1835, an American negro, James Rice who was a rather popular "song and dance" comedian wrote and popularised a song, the chorus of which was: "Wheel about and turn about and do just so, Turn about and wheel about and jump Jim Crow". Set to a catchy tune it swept the world, as similar songs do today. … There seems to be no reason, to doubt the accuracy of the story that the application of the term "Jim Crow" to this region, stems from a trivial incident wherein Capt. Bacchus, riding on horseback between "Lalgambook" and Koorocheang with Capt. Hepburn, called to his companion, "What do you think we should call these ranges?" Hepburn (perhaps with the maddening refrain churning in his mind) replied: "Call them Jim Crow!" (Morrison 1967: 41)

Quinlan has noted that Mount Franklin

which the early squatters called Jim Crow and the natives knew by the name of Lalgambook. John Hepburn used the name Jim Crow to refer not only to the mount itself but to the creek below it and to the district. Edgar Morrison who, in 1965, published the memoirs of Edward Stone Parker under the title *Early Days in the Loddon Valley*, believes that Jim Crow derives from the chorus of an American minstrel song, popular at the time of the first overlanders. It seems quite feasible, as he suggests, that the behaviour of this winding creek recalled to someone like the Mollison brothers the popular jingle, 'Hop a little, stop a little, jump Jim Crow'. Later, when the aboriginal station was established there, many took it for granted that the word referred to the natives. (Quinlan 1993: 99)

According to Blake (1977: 133), overlander Alexander Mollison's records list the district as 'Jumcra', 'Aboriginal name for which meaning not traced; "Jim Crow" was minstrel song from U.S.A. 1835'. Randell (1979: 222) in a history of the Coliban district explained that Mollison took up two stations in the vacant land immediately west of his Coliban station in early May 1840, naming the Loddon run 'Jumcra, probably an aboriginal name. The second run was called Boughyards. The men soon corrupted the first name into Jim Crow'. Tully (1997: 87) supports the view that Jumcra was corrupted to Jim Crow.

17. Kaneira

This is the name of a railway station and township on the Bendigo to Nandaly line in north-west Victoria. According to Saxton (1907: 38) and O'Callaghan (1918: 56), the station was named by 'Mr. Breen, the surveyor, after a man named

Kiniry'. Martin (1944: 47) notes 'Was originally Kiniry, or something similar, the name of an early settler'. According to Blake (1977: 138), 'word either Abor. for place where snake was seen, or corrupt version of n. of settler, Kiniry'. This is another example of a placename whose etymology has been interpreted by Les Blake without independent verification and is therefore Blake's interpretation and is likely to be spurious.

18. Kaniva

Kaniva is a town in the west Wimmera region. According to O'Callaghan (1918: 56), probably 'a corruption of "Kanizba", the name of a town in Hungary. A large number of Germans and Austro-Hungarians were amongst the earliest land selectors in that locality'. Presumably O'Callaghan is referring to Nagy-Kanisva, a town in the county of Szala, in southwest Hungary. 'The aboriginal name for the place was "Budjick" meaning "tomahawk"'. O'Callaghan cites St Eloy D'Alton 'Notes on the early settlement of the Wimmera' as his source. D'Alton was an Engineer in the Dimboola Shire in the early 1890s and the first Dimboola Shire Secretary. Massola (1968: 27) confirms that Budjick means 'stone axe'. Blake (1976: 59) in a history of Nhill and west Wimmera, notes that the name Kaniva was conferred to the locality in 1881 by the Post Master General, after the name of a shepherd's hut on the old station which recalled Kinnivie, near Durham, England. Blake (1977: 139) states that station plans show Kinivae as 'n. of shepherd's hut on pre-emptive right; Kinnivie is locality SW of Durham, England'. Landt (1961: 14), in a local history of Kaniva, notes that '"Kinivae" was six miles north-west of Kaniva's present site shown on early maps and was the name given to the Overseer's Hut on Tatiara, Woolshed Hill. Kaniva itself was originally called "Budjik Hill". Professor Browne suggests that the hut took its name from Kanziba [sic] in Hungary, suggesting that perhaps a Hungarian shepherd may have named the hut'. The identity of Professor Browne is not known. Wesson (2001: 72) is the only source that suggests Kaniva is an Aboriginal word, meaning 'snake asleep'. I suspect Wesson has considered Kaniva to be a variant of Kaneira (see above). Although the non-Indigenous origin of this placename is contested, there is very little support for it having an Aboriginal origin.

19. Kenmare

Kenmare is a farming district near Lake Hindmarsh. Massola (1968: 28) asserts Kenmare is an Aboriginal word meaning 'kangaroo'. This seems unlikely as the local word for grey kangaroo was 'gure', red kangaroo 'bara', and black-faced

mallee kangaroo 'gudji' (Hercus 1986: 269). Blake (1977: 140) argues that it is 'named after Eire estate near Lake Killarney, owned by Lord Kenmare in nineteenth century'. The etymology of Kenmare is unclear; however, Massola's interpretation is not supported by linguistic analyses.

20. Langi Willi

This is the name of a pastoral station near Skipton. Massola (1968: 30) considers that this name means 'the home of Willie (the home of William Mitchell, a pioneer at Skipton)'. Blake (1977: 155) concurs with Massola adding that Mitchell held the station from 1852–59. Claud Notman (1939: 18), in a history of Skipton, noted that the run's name was originally Bamgamie until it was purchased in 1852 by William Mitchell who changed its name to 'Langi Willi'. Robert Scott (in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 182) includes Langi Willi in a list of native names and gives its meaning as 'W. Mitchell's homestead'. If this is correct then Langi Willi is a fabrication comprising one Aboriginal word and one English word, and is comparable to another nearby station name 'Langi Logan' (the home of Logan). Langi, or more correctly larng-i-, is a widespread Kulin word that means 'the home of', and is seen elsewhere in placenames such as Langi Ghiran, Langi Kal Kal, Larnebarramul, and Larngibunja. Wile (pronounced willie) is the widespread Kulin word for 'possum' (Hercus 1986: 276), thus Langi Willi may mean 'home of possums' (Clark and Heydon 2002), however it seems more likely that Langi Willi is an Aboriginal − English composite. This is consistent with Kenyon's (1968: 3) promotion of the use of Lar to compose a house name using a mixture of Aboriginal and English words: 'Words may be made up. For instance, all words for ground or earth also indicate camp. Thus Lar, Larne, Laane, Langi all mean ground, camp or home, and may also be used as a prefix similarly to that fine name Langilogan, or Mr. Logan's homestead'. Another example of a composition using the prefix Langi, is Langi Morgala, the name for the Ararat Museum, roughly meaning 'home of yesterday' (see Kenyon 1968: 13).

21. Morwell

This is the name of a river and township in the La Trobe Valley in Gippsland. Legg (1992: 28) has documented that the first variant 'Morewell' dates from 1844. Massola (1968: 36) claims that it is derived from 'More willie', meaning 'woolly possum'. Blake (1977: 180) accepts Massola's position. Gardner (1992: 16) considers it is a Gunnai word that means 'inhabitants of the swamp' and he believes it is unlikely that the name is derived from one of a number of places in England on the Tamar River near Plymouth including Morwell Rocks and

Morwell Abbey. Stephen Legg (1992: 28–29, 32) in a history of Morwell Shire has undertaken a detailed analysis of the name and documents five interpretations – that it is derived from the name of a nearby hotel; that it is a corruption of Maryville; that it is named after the town of Morwell on the Morwell River in Cornwall; that it has an Aboriginal origin; and finally, that it gets its name from Morwell Street in London. Legg concludes that the Aboriginal explanation has the most integrity and is the only one that can 'survive critical examination'. He concludes that it is derived from 'morewill' meaning 'woolly possum' and he considers this 'a fitting tribute to the Ganai who pioneered the land' (Legg 1992: 34). The only difficulty with this *bon mot* is that the Ganai word for possum is 'wadthan' (see Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 96) and not 'wile' or 'wollert' which are Kulin words, a situation that Legg (1992: 32) was cognisant of.

22. Narbethong

Narbethong is the name of a township some 87 km north-east of Melbourne. Saxton (1907: 49) notes that it is a native name, meaning 'cheerful, lively, humorous'. According to Martin (1944: 63), it is an Aboriginal word meaning 'cheery'. Massola (1968: 38) agrees with Martin, adding the gloss 'lively'. Blake (1977: 198) notes that it was named 'by surveyor John Wrigglesworth in 1865 as Nar Be Thong; Abor. word for cheerful or a cheerful place'. Bunce (1856: 8, 27) records Narbethong as meaning cheerful and lively. Bunce (in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 144) in a list of east Kulin vocabulary, includes 'Narbeethong – Lively; Narbethong – Cheerful, fun, levity; Karbeethong – Mirth' (Bunce in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 140), and Carbeenthon or carbethon – Gay, cheerful, hilarity, humorous, play, to sport, to chuckle, to laugh, glad, gleeful, merry (Bunce in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 137). Blake (1991: 98) lists 'narbethong' as the east Kulin word for 'lively'. Sinnott (2003) accepts that Narbethong is an Aboriginal word. John Green, the superintendant of the Coranderrk Aboriginal station at Healesville informed John Mathew (Papers) that it is 'not a local Aboriginal word' but it is difficult to know what Green means by this comment as Bunce's vocabulary covers east Kulin which includes the Narbethong district. Green may be suggesting that it is not a placename. Symonds (1982: 54), in a history of Healesville acknowledges that the name is said to have come from the Aboriginal word for 'A cheerful place' but a local claims that the name derives from Narbeth, Wales, from where the Fisher family originated from. Sinnott (2003: 114) dismisses this claim.

23. Porepunkah

According to O'Callaghan (1918: 78) 'there are two accounts given as to the origin or derivation of this name. First:-An Indian officer who was with a party of "diggers", called the place Porepunkah – "pore" and "punkah" being two Hindoo words signifying respectively, "wind" and "blower". The name was given during a storm. Second:-Derived from a native name of somewhat similar pronunciation, signifying, "meeting of the waters", and having reference to the junction of the Buckland and the Ovens rivers'. O'Callaghan's source was Edward John Delany, Secretary of the Shire of Bright. Martin (1944), Blake (1977), and Gardner (1991) have accepted the Hindu explanation and Massola (1968) the Aboriginal explanation. The goldfield origin explanation may be suspect as the station name 'Portpunka' or 'Port Punka' (Billis and Kenyon 1974) or 'Point Punkah' (Lloyd and Nunn 1987: 7) was used from 1846, at least five years before gold digging commenced. Gardner notes that the run

> was taken up by William Walker and Co. in 1846; Walker was a banker and trader who spent much of his life in Calcutta. Indian coolies were imported in 1846 by Captain Robert Towns to work on Walker's stations and almost certainly worked here. The name is derived from the Hindi words for wind and blower, literally the name of a primitive cooling fan and almost certainly referred to the cold wind off the mountains. Also called Port Punkah and Point Punkah. Massola incorrectly has this as being of Aboriginal origins. (Gardner 1991: 17f)

Carol Sonogan (2011) suggests that Port Punkah may be derived from the Hindi term 'punka walla' which referred to a slave boy fanning a large rug to create a small breeze, or punka'. She postulates that given that the Port Punkah freehold provided the river-crossing place for a number of adjacent runs, the name may reflect its water association as well as the Indian connection. However, she believes it is more likely an 'attempt to assign personal meaning to the foreign sounds of an already-existing Indigenous name'. Sonogan (2011: 3) suggests a possible literal translation of Porepunkah is puwa pungga, head+stone, with an underlying meaning of 'man's head'.

24. Timor

Timor is the name of a creek and a farming district north-west of Maryborough. Flett (1975: 83) notes that the town of Coxtown on the Bet Bet Creek was surveyed in 1856 by Hugh Fraser and named 'Timor' 'although the new name went unknown for a long time'. Blake (1977: 257) fails to add to Flett's information. P.C. Crespigny (in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 180) lists Timor as a native

name of 'unknown meaning' of a 'creek running through Adelaide Lead into the Bet Bet Creek'. At first glance it is tempting to draw parallels with the Island of Timor and the Timor Sea, north-west of Australia, which is a variant of the Malay word 'timur' meaning 'east'.

25. Underbool

Underbool is the name of a railway station on the Ouyen to Pinnaroo line in the Mallee region of north-west Victoria. According to O'Callaghan (1918: 92), from information he obtained from A.S. Kenyon, it is a native name, 'probably from 'wimbool', the ear, 'bool' means 'water', native name of waterholes'. Martin (1944) accepts O'Callaghan's interpretation. Massola (1968: 50) renders the name 'Undera-bool' meaning 'abundance'. Hercus (1986: 261, 290) confirms that the local word for 'ear' was 'wirimbul', and 'water' was 'gadjin'. Blake (1977: 264) suggests that on '30 October 1861 surveyor Dr Neumayer camped there and district received German n. Underbolt'.

26. Warracknabeal

This is the name of a town in the Wimmera region of Victoria that takes its name from a local pastoral station. District surveyor, Philip Chauncy (in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 208), recorded the original native word as Wurranjibeel', referring to Warracknabeal station on Yarriambiack Creek, and gives it the following signification: 'Wurra, lip; ngi, its; beal, flooded gum tree – ie., lip of a flooded gum tree'. He noted that he obtained this information from native speakers at the Wimmera. Howitt (1904: 54) interpreted it as 'plain of red gum tree'. Saxton (1907: 66) notes that it is a native name meaning 'large gum trees'. O'Callaghan (1918: 94) reproduces Chauncy's information. Martin (1944: 85) translates the name as 'large gums'. Massola (1968: 51) renders the name '*warrak*, plain, *na*, of, *beal*, red gum tree (*Eucalyptus rostrata*)'. Priestley (1967: 3) in a history of Warracknabeal translated it as 'redgum trees shading the creek'. Linguist Luise Hercus (1986: 214; Clark and Heydon 2002) analysed the name as Wurungi-bial 'mouth of creek with red gum trees'. Blake (1977: 273) notes that 'although in 1932 Mrs G.H. Warrack of Edinburgh claimed n. came fr. her family and *nabeal* (Gaelic), of the ravine, the Abor. origin is usually accepted: fr. word for fringe of gum trees about hollow, or flooded red gum trees; in 1878 spelt Werracknebeal'. The Warrack family claim seems to be spurious. The pastoral run was named 'Werracknabeal' by Andrew Scott in 1845 with his sons Robert and Andrew (Billis and Kenyon 1974: 137).

27. Conclusion

This paper has considered 26 Victorian placenames that are the subject of etymological dissonance. It has been argued that two of them (Boca [Avoca] and Greech [Grease, Halfway Inn, Glenorchy]) are best explained as instances of misunderstood Aboriginal pidgin. In nine cases the origin of the placenames is well-attested, and the similarity with non-Aboriginal or Aboriginal placenames may have been instrumental in their adoption or perhaps the similarity is purely coincidental: Acheron; Ballan; Barham; Buchan; Mount Buller; Caper Kelly; Morewell; Porepunkah; and Timor. One case, Langi Willi, is best explained as an Aboriginal-English composite. Jim Crow Hill is an example of an Anglicisation of an Aboriginal placename, Jumcra, which has misled subsequent researchers who were unaware of the preceding Aboriginal name. Of the remaining 13 cases, they may all be explained as examples where despite the earliest evidence attesting to an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal origin they have been subject to speculative or spurious etymology – for example, Blake (1977) is the source of eight instances: Balnarring; Beulah; Bonn; Callawadda; Lake Drung Drung; Ecklin; Kaneira; and Underbool; Massola (1968) one instance – Kenmare; Wesson (2001) one instance – Kaniva; and local historians and genealogists a further three – Darnum, an example of erroneous folk etymology (Copeland 1934); Narbethong (a spurious claim based on a genealogical connection with Narbeth, Wales, in Symonds 1982); and Warracknabeal (a spurious claim from the Warrack family of Edinburgh reproduced in Blake 1977).

Other possible conclusions to be drawn are that some of these toponyms may be examples of polysemy; that is that they are toponyms with multiple meanings, and ones that may have been selected deliberately because of this polysemy (for example, Acheron, Ballan, Beulah, and Buchan are prime examples); and secondly, that they may be onomastic palimpsests, representing accumulated iterations, glosses, or etymologies laid one over the other, literally the accumulation and reinforcement of toponymic ideas over time (examples of this include Jim Crow Hill, and Morwell). It is common to find placenames with contested histories – a careful reading of any placename dictionary will reveal many examples. Thus for some of the examples considered in this study, it is possible that of the various explanations that exist some or all may have integrity.

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