

Keeping body and soul together: creating material 'civilisation'

At his Goulburn River station in September 1839, Port Phillip protector James Dredge recorded a day's events which demonstrated, he believed, the importance of the physical self to Christian civilisation. His wife, Sarah, gave a dress to a Daungwurrung woman (whose name went unrecorded) in return for a woven basket, a scene Dredge described thus: 'A stranger can scarcely imagine the pleasure this poor creature felt, and the gratitude she manifested in being clothed like a "white lubra" – and throwing aside her filthy rags.' To the protectors, trading Indigenous goods for European ones seemed morally preferable to one-sided 'pauperism'. At the same time, from the Dredges' viewpoint, charitable dynamics still structured this encounter: the transition from alleged 'filth' and inadequate clothing to cleanliness and decency, and the enactment of a specifically feminine benevolence and gratitude. It was quite a day for physical change, as Dredge then showed the woman her reflection in his mirror. She and another friend were amused and fascinated by the mirror, presenting food to their reflections. Dredge, who also spent the day brooding over his past year in Port Phillip, feeling unhappy and useless as a philanthropist, concluded 'What a mercy or mercies it is that *my lot* was not cast amongst "the rude barbarian" Tribes of this land.' The place of the mirror in this story is intriguing, reminiscent of the accounts – discussed at length by Jean Comaroff – of South African missionaries presenting people with mirrors. (Dredge, in fact, knew he was contributing to existing discourse, commenting that 'savage' people's surprise at mirrors was something 'I have often read of'.¹) Mirrors were intended not only to impress people with European innovation, but also to encourage introspection and enlightenment.² Ideas about cleanliness, clothing and privacy were important to the first philanthropists in the Australian colonies, as they made paradoxical plans to reshape Indigenous people both as autonomous individuals and objects of institutional conformity.

The association of native peoples within imperial discourse with the physical, natural world, and the claim that they were less intellectual or spiritual than their colonisers, scarcely needs reiteration. It is worth noting, however, that this association had particular significance for Evangelical philanthropists, who, while insisting on the equal value of all human souls, nonetheless located 'heathens' firmly within the earthly sphere. At Wellington Valley, in 1839, James Günther described talking to a Wiradjuri man, Cochrane, about the phrase in

1 James Dredge, 24 September 1839, James Dredge, Diaries, Notebook and Letterbooks, ?1817–1845 [hereafter *JDD*], MS11625, MSM534, State Library of Victoria (SLV).

2 Comaroff 1991: 8–10.

Romans 8:1 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Jesus Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Cochrane, who pleased Günther by learning to read but also aggravated him by continuing to participate in young men's ceremonies, asked 'Do I walk after the flesh?' Günther, pleased that the question had arisen, sternly confirmed that he did.³ Meanwhile, Methodist missionaries Francis Tuckfield and John Smithies and protector ES Parker all claimed that their attempts to preach in local Indigenous languages were hindered by the supposed deficiency of these languages, which contained a wealth of terms for the natural world but 'no sacrifices, no prayers: no fears or hopes with reference to another state'.⁴ South Australian missionary, CG Tiechermann, went further, informing his readers in 1841 that Indigenous people were mired in the world of the flesh, unable to understand Christian philosophy, and lacking the convert's necessary humility:

From the visible world they derive their existence, from the visible world they expect good and evil, and the whole creation again they believe to have under their control. Therefore, we cannot expect to find morality or any idea of final and individual responsibility amongst them.⁵

However, this attitude did not indicate a lack of Evangelical concern with the material world. A powerful paradox of 19th century missionary work was the coexistence of belief in a mind-body split and a determination to see civilisation lived and displayed physically. Here, a religious wish for spiritual transformation to be made visible mingled with the growing 19th century emphasis on 'disciplinary technologies'; the urge, as explored by Foucault, to civilise through observation and introspection. For some philanthropists, bodily issues were included explicitly in their job descriptions. LE Threlkeld, for instance, was instructed in 1825 to teach the people of Lake Macquarie about decency and cleanliness, while the covering of nudity was one of the duties of the West Australian and South Australian protectors.⁶ Missionaries, as Jean Comaroff has noted,

3 James Günther, journal, 19 December 1839, in Carey and Roberts (eds) 2002, *The Wellington Valley Project: Letters and Journals Relating to the Church Missionary Society Mission to Wellington Valley, NSW, 1830–42, A Critical Electronic Edition* [hereafter WVP]: <<http://www.newcastle.edu.au>>

4 John Smithies to General Secretaries, 26 October 1844, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Archive: Australasia 1812–1889 [hereafter WMMS], reel 2, f84–85, Mp2107 (Record ID: 133095), National Library of Australia (NLA). Also, ES Parker 1967, 'The Aborigines of Australia', 10 May 1854, in Morrison (ed): 19–20; ES Parker to GA Robinson, 16 January 1849, Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV) VA512 *Chief Protector of Aborigines*, VPRS4410 unit 2, 1849/64 (reel 2); Francis Tuckfield to General Secretaries, 30 September 1840, WMMS, reel 2, NLA.

5 Christian Gottlieb Tiechermann 1841, *Aborigines of South Australia: Illustrative and Explanatory Notes of the Manners, Customs, Habits and Superstitions of the Natives of South Australia*: 10–11, also 8–10.

6 Instructions to the Protectors of the Aborigines of Western Australia, in Lord Stanley to Governor Grey, 14 November 1843, in *British Parliamentary Papers (BPP): Papers Relating to Australia, 1844*, Colonies: Australia, vol 8, 1969: 372; Matthew Moorhouse to Colonial Secretary, 14 March 1842, State Records of South

knew instinctively what students of culture have only recently discovered: that the fundamental axioms of being are vested in routine mundanities ... profound 'inner' transformations could be achieved by working on the humble 'outer' terrain of the body, dress, or subsistence production.⁷

Or, as James Günther remarked irritably about Wiradjuri people who resisted his teachings, 'all want not merely preaching to them, occasionally, in the bush, they want instructing & training up like children'.⁸

Several historians of Aboriginal Australia have developed an interest in material regimes of observation and control, particularly in accounts of the stolen generations by scholars like Anna Haebich, and in works on institutional cultures by Bain Attwood, Jane Lydon and Anna Cole. Missionary ideas of bodily civilisation in other colonies have also been explored in the works of Patricia Grimshaw, Jean and John Comaroff and Richard Eves, amongst others. The Australian colonies in the 1830s and 40s offer important additions to this area of enquiry. The exceptionally derogatory views expressed about Indigenous bodies, and the particular obsession with gaining control over children within the philanthropists' own domestic space – at a time when missionaries and protectors had comparatively little coercive power – made for unique yet formative regimes. The important, if contradictory, efforts to recreate colonised peoples as both individual subjects and institutional communities also deserve further examination.

Fine figures and the idea of dirt

Physical depictions of Indigenous Australians by philanthropists (published and unpublished) were mixed. They showed some limited understanding of the cultural meanings of paint, jewellery and body modification for people travelling into foreign country or taking part in ceremonies.⁹ Indigenous beliefs that the human body was permeable to the outside world, vulnerable to intrusion by sorcery, were also evident (albeit in partial, unsympathetic ways) in descriptions of Aboriginal responses to illness.¹⁰ Philanthropists' physical

Australia (SRSA), GRG24/6, Colonial Secretary's Office, Correspondence files, no 39 of 1842; Daniel Tyerman and George Bennett to LE Threlkeld, 24 February 1825, London Missionary Society, Records [hereafter *LMS*], AJCP M73, SLV.

7 Comaroff 1991: 11. Also, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991 vol 1: 193.

8 James Günther to Dandeson Coates, 12 February 1839, *WVP*.

9 For example, Parker 1967, 'The Aborigines of Australia': 22; GA Robinson 1998, *Journals: Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate*, Clark (ed) vol 1: 26; Robinson 1998, *Journals*, Clark (ed) vol 2: 181, 215; Francis Tuckfield, 14 December 1839, Francis Tuckfield, *Journal*, 1837–1842 [hereafter *FTJ*], MS11341, Box 655, SLV; LE Threlkeld, 'Memoranda', in Gunson (ed) 1974 vol 1: 98.

10 For example, ES Parker, *Quarterly Journal*: July 1841, PROV VPRS4410 unit 2, (reel 2); ES Parker, *Quarterly Journal*: 1 September – 30 November 1841, PROV VPRS4410 unit 2, 1841/59 (reel 2); Robinson

descriptions of Indigenous men could even be quite appreciative; the men were described as 'remarkably erect in their carriage with very fine and broad chests', 'a fine, stout, athletic race ... well proportioned and finely limbed', 'fine open countenances', 'muscular forms, fine models for the sculpture.'¹¹ However, such remarks were limited. No such admiration was expressed for Indigenous women, whose physical descriptions mirrored the broader image of them promoted by missionaries: as degraded and helpless, in need of Christian aid and supervision. Furthermore, missionaries also made numerous more general claims that Indigenous people's bodies – which in fact displayed a wide range of coverings, decorations and modifications – were 'naked' and 'dirty'.

The missionary trope of Indigenous 'filth' took a number of forms, all concerned with the need for cultural control and British bourgeois notions of privacy. One assertion was that the Indigenous use of body paint and oil was offensive. Günther, for example, disdainfully described Wiradjuri men who used fish-fat and oil on their hair and bodies as 'dirty fellows'.¹² Painting or decorating the skin was a centuries-old taboo in Judeo-Christian societies, with connotations of sexual depravity, but such comments can also be understood according to Mary Douglas's argument that the concept of 'dirt' is used to denote objects that appear in the wrong place, offending social order.¹³ As Anne McClintock has observed, such concerns were on the rise during this period; 'In Victorian culture, the iconography of dirt became deeply integrated in the policing and transgression of social boundaries.'¹⁴ Missionaries, of course, had some awareness that bodily decorations were not dirty within Indigenous societies, where they held an array of cultural meanings, but this did not lessen their own sense of disorder – rather the contrary. The oiled or painted native body showed allegiance to social and spiritual systems alien to the philanthropists, and suggested fundamentally different understandings of the self. As the Comaroffs note, during the 19th

1998, *Journals*, Clark (ed) vol 1: 40; William Thomas, March abstract 1839, 4 October 1839, 19–20 November 1839, William Thomas, Papers, 1834–1868 [hereafter WTP], ML MSS 214, reel 1, State Library of NSW; LE Threlkeld 1892, *An Australian Language As Spoken by the Awabakal, the People of Awaba or Lake Macquarie*, Fraser (ed): 48; Francis Tuckfield to General Secretaries, 30 October 1841, WMMS, reel 2, Mp2107, NLA; Tuckfield, 14 December 1839, FTJ, MS11341, Box 655, SLV; Francis Tuckfield, Report on the Wesleyan Missionary Society's Mission to the Aborigines, August 1843, WMMS, reel 2, Mp2107, NLA; William Watson, journal, 12 May 1833, WVP.

11 James Dredge to Jabez Bunting, 20 April 1839, in Cannon (ed) 1983, *Historical Records of Victoria (HRV): Aborigines and Protectors*, vol 2B: 433; Joseph Orton 1836, *The Aborigines of Australia*: 7; Parker 1967, 'The Aborigines of Australia': 9; Robinson 1998, *Journals*, Clark (ed) vol 1: 132; Robinson 1998, *Journals*, Clark (ed) vol 4: 205; GA Robinson 2001, 'Brief report of an expedition to the Aboriginal tribes of the interior over more than two thousand miles of country during the five months commencing March to August 1846', in Clark (ed) vol 4: 67; GA Robinson 2001, 'A Report of an Expedition to the Aboriginal Tribes of the Western Interior during the months of March, April, May, June, July and August, 1841', in Clark (ed) vol 4: 18; LE Threlkeld, 'Reminiscences 1825–1826', in Gunson (ed) 1974 vol 1: 46.

12 Günther, journal, 25 and 29 September 1837, WVP.

13 Douglas 1966: 2, 4, 35–36.

14 McClintock 1995: 153.

century the image of the 'greasy' native became a common imperial trope. It represented a particular threat to the Evangelical sense of a modern, civilised self: individual, private and self-controlled.

It [ochre, fat or the vague term 'grease'] suggested stickiness, a body that refused to separate itself from the world ... Little could have been further from the contained, inward-turning person of the Protestant ideal, a self 'discreet' because 'discrete'.¹⁵

Here, it is useful to consider Norbert Elias's argument that the emergence of modern Western society and the individual self involved an advance in the threshold of embarrassment and shame, and a growing sense of oneself as separate from and observed by others.¹⁶ Concepts of civility and manners were crucial here, and this was another area in which philanthropists saw Indigenous Australians as disorderly. Several missionaries were particularly disturbed by people's table manners. Threlkeld described kangaroo meat being 'torn off and eaten, whilst the blood streams down the arm of the hunter whether Male or Female in a most disgusting manner'; openly handling meat and blood demonstrated too great a closeness to one's food and to its violent origins.¹⁷ William Watson, even more pointedly, commented that the sight of 'these poor creatures half or entirely naked lying on the ground, pulling to pieces an opossum with their hands and teeth, covered with filth and dirt' would be enough to make anyone wonder 'can these dry bones live?' While Watson concluded that they could, his profound physical disgust indicates the importance of manners and management of appetites to Christian temperance and individualism.¹⁸

Ideas about physical integrity were also associated with disease. Watson, in particular, complained of the 'loathsome condition and dirty habits' of sick people at Wellington Valley, calling them 'filthy and corrupt in their bodies'.¹⁹ Here, the moral stigma of venereal disease lay close to the surface, as Watson commented 'I am often sick while I am dressing the wounds of their emaciated bodies, and my heart is frequently overwhelmed within me when I think of their diseased souls'.²⁰

Notions of 'dirt' were also linked closely to concerns about scarcity of European clothing. Günther commented disapprovingly on '[t]he dirty fellows – it must be remembered that they were quite naked', while Threlkeld would not invite Awabakal people into his house 'in consequence of their filthy habits and

15 Comaroff and Comaroff 1997 vol 2: 224–227.

16 Elias 1978: 47, 63, 68–82.

17 Threlkeld, 'Reminiscences, 1825–1826', in Gunson (ed) 1974 vol 1: 46.

18 Watson, journal, 30 June 1833, WVP.

19 Watson, journal, 28 February 1833, 30 June 1833, WVP.

20 Watson, journal, 6 Oct 1833, WVP.

disgusting appearance, being often in a state of nudity.’²¹ Indigenous Australians’ relative lack of concern about physical exposure had long troubled European travellers, not only because of its supposed immodesty, but also because it appeared to contradict the Biblical claim that Adam and Eve’s transgression had made humans naturally ashamed of nakedness. To Evangelicals, this could only be interpreted in terms of grave degradation. Threlkeld told the London Missionary Society in 1825 of the drinking and violence he had observed in the townships, adding as further proof of depravity ‘though English friends may start at the idea of naked females parading, it is so common in this Colony, that it is scarcely noticed, although exhibited in the midst of towns and streets’.²² While Threlkeld believed that Britons had once lived similarly – ‘our mothers in a state of nudity danced before the mystic grove besmeared with pipe clay’ – this was not intended to dignify nudity or paint, but rather to stress the changes brought about by Christianity.²³ LMS representatives themselves had been appalled to see people in Sydney ‘in a state of absolute and shameless nudity’, while James Günther’s first glimpse of partially clothed Wiradjuri people at Wellington Valley made him reflect that they were ‘more like beasts than rational beings.’²⁴

So strong was the assumed connection between clothing and civilisation that when Indigenous people took off their European clothing this could be interpreted as a scornful rejection of philanthropic work. This could be assumed even when the people in question had long-lasting connections to missionaries. In 1833, Watson was disappointed when Warrahbin, a girl who had previously chosen to stay at Wellington Valley to avoid white men, left with her husband. She took off the clothes Mrs Watson had given her and put on her blanket, and Watson contrasted her ‘wild and savage appearance’ with ‘that modesty of demeanour which characterised her when, dressed like an English female, she resided with us.’²⁵ The missionaries were similarly downcast when the young man Jemmy (Gungin) – who also retained ongoing relationships with the missionaries – left for a ceremonial battle; he ‘threw off his clothes and followed the rest, naked, into the bush.’²⁶

Rather less concern was expressed about traditional forms of body modification (apart from self-harming as an expression of mourning, discussed elsewhere). Where disputes did occur, they were linked to the fragility of missionary

21 Günther, journal, 29 September 1837, *WVP*; LE Threlkeld, Second Half Yearly Report of the Aboriginal Mission Supported by the London Missionary Society, 21 June 1826, *LMS*, AJCP M73, SLV.

22 LE Threlkeld to LMS, December 1825, in Gunson (ed) 1974 vol 1: 193. See also Strong 1986: 180; Williams 1981: 41.

23 Threlkeld, ‘Correspondence’, in Gunson (ed) 1974 vol 2: 205.

24 James Günther to Dandeson Coates, 1 September 1837, *WVP*; Daniel Tyerman and George Bennett, quoted in Gunson, ‘Introduction’, in Gunson (ed) 1974 vol 1: 14.

25 Watson, journal, 14 September 1833, 2 October 1833, *WVP*.

26 Günther, journal, 15 August 1837, *WVP*; Watson, journal, 14 September 1833, *WVP*.

authority. This became evident at Wellington Valley in 1835, in controversies over nose-piercing. Hilary M Carey and David A Roberts have described the growth of a Wiradjuri belief at this time that the powerful deity Baiame would destroy all Europeans because they had seduced his wife, or would kill Wiradjuri who lived with Europeans or lent their female relatives to them, or would harm people who did not pierce their noses and attend the Waganna ceremony. Carey and Roberts identify this as part of a revivalist movement focused partly on concerns about sexual relationships between Indigenous women and white men. They suggest that nose-piercing, possibly less significant before colonisation, grew in importance as Europeans tried to eradicate it and may have symbolised wider battles for control over women's bodies.²⁷ While the missionaries may have been mystified by the spiritual nature of this revival, they were well aware of the bodily contests involved. Watson complained of girls being removed from the mission by their relatives and worrying about not wearing bones through their noses; 'we frequently detect them feeling the cartilage of the nose or probably endeavouring to make a hole through it ... We find it necessary to tell them plainly that they shall never go into the Bush.'²⁸

Soap and salvation: making Christian bodies

Philanthropists initiated numerous daily routines designed to clothe and clean the Indigenous body. Particular emphasis was placed on washing and dressing for the Sabbath. Port Phillip protector William Thomas handed out a piece of soap to each family to encourage them to prepare for Sunday, and was so pleased when people attended church washed, shaved and wearing European clothes that he scarcely minded when they took them off afterwards.²⁹ In Perth, John Smithies reported happily that children attended school and chapel fully clothed, and Günther took melancholy pleasure in noting that people attended the funeral of a young girl, Nanny (Geanil), 'all decently dressed'.³⁰ Published accounts from Wellington Valley placed particular emphasis on the hopeful symbolism of people attending church dressed appropriately; for instance, two publications in 1834 described a man called Bogin, who beat his wife when he arrived at the mission but shortly afterwards accepted new clothes from the missionaries and promised to attend church and live like a white man.³¹ Here, clothes helped to symbolise what philanthropists believed was a contrast between heathen male savagery towards women and the peaceable enlightenment of Christianity.

27 Carey and Roberts 2002: 821–823, 832–838, 843; Watson, journal, 1 April 1835, WVP.

28 Watson, journal, 19 December 1835, WVP.

29 Thomas, 15 November 1840, 22 November 1840, 31 January 1841, WTP, ML MSS 214, reel 2; Thomas, 15 April 1846, 17 May 1846, 16 August 1846, 5 October 1846, WTP, ML MSS 214, reel 3, State Library of NSW.

30 Günther, journal, 28 July 1839, WVP; John Smithies to General Secretaries, 8 October 1840, WMMS, reel 2, Mp2107, NLA.

31 Church Missionary Society (CMS), *Church Missionary Paper: for the use of weekly and monthly contributions*, no LXXV, Michaelmas Day 1834; CMS, *Missionary Register*, February 1834: 115–119; CMS,

The symbolic importance of clothes was emphasised most strongly in relation to children. Young people, considered more malleable than their older relatives, were a focus for bodily regimes. In the early 19th century, relatively few Aboriginal children lived permanently with missionaries, and the institutional power exercised on later stations was less apparent; family contact, travelling and ceremonial duties continued. The resulting struggles for control were often expressed in physical terms. When Watson, for instance, recalled his first meeting with the young boy, Billy Black, who died on the journey to Wellington Valley, he emphasised the physical transition that took place.

When he came to us he was exceedingly filthy and dirty, though well clothed. Mrs Watson cut his hair made him wash himself well all over and as the best means of getting him clean she burnt his linen. His habits in the room where he slept were of too dirty a kind to allow of relation.³²

John Smithies, who tried increasingly to restrict contact between children in his Perth institution and their parents, stated proudly that the children washed every morning; 'Any omission of this necessary duty should be strictly punished'.³³ Protector Charles Symmons praised Smithies' school for ensuring that the children ate with the missionary's family, implying a vital connection between 'civilised manners' and child custody.³⁴ A similar link between clothes and custody was made by Port Phillip protector Thomas, who cut the children's hair and dressed them in shirts and frocks when they arrived at his school (noting happily that this made them look like English charity children) but confiscated shirts from children who went travelling with their families.³⁵ Regimes of clothing and cleanliness were also central to the plans for the Adelaide institution in the 1840s, where the children were to be marched in a daily roll call for physical examination, and where their dormitories (set out like 'a Barrack room') were to demonstrate group conformity but also a certain individualism, with mirrors and personal pegs and shelves. The stated aim of this lifestyle was to 'render a return to bush life intolerable'.³⁶

Through correct European clothing, missionaries tried to reshape social, sexual and religious order. Age and gender were differentiated; the Parramatta institution, for example, dressed the boys in linen shirts and knickers and the girls in petticoats and blue striped dresses, while Langhorne's mission dressed

Missionary Register, August 1839: 388.

³² Watson, journal, 3 October 1832, WVP.

³³ McNair and Rumley 1981: 47.

³⁴ Hetherington 1992: 51.

³⁵ Thomas, 23 August 1841, WTP, ML MSS 214, reel 2, State Library of NSW; William Thomas to GA Robinson, Journal of Proceedings during the months of June, July & August 1841, PROV VPRS4410 unit 3, 1841/70 (reel 2).

³⁶ Estimate and Plan, for the Establishment and Conduct of a Central Government School for Native Children, at Adelaide, c1843, SRSA, GRG24/90, Miscellaneous records of historical interest, no 374.

the younger children in tunics, with trousers for the older boys.³⁷ Such clothing was intended not only as an outward marker of 'civilisation'; the process of wearing it was meant to alter habits of work and worship, with children instructed to make and repair their own clothes and wash them for the Sabbath.³⁸ This promoted a more sedentary, privatised working life, especially for the girls. Such institutional conformity, however, points to what the Comaroffs have observed as a broad paradox in mission work: the desire to encourage individualism and consumerism, which coexisted with a wish to stress 'sober sameness and uniformity.'³⁹

The bodies of children, when 'civilised', were cited as important signs of philanthropic progress. In 1845–46, Thomas listed amongst the achievements of his Merri Creek school the fact that the children were all dressed in clean shirts, frocks and blankets, 'washed & combed as the children of white parents'.⁴⁰ Rev George King made similar pleased remarks to the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel about his small Aboriginal school in Fremantle.⁴¹ However, the most enthusiastic accounts came from John Smithies' Western Australian Methodist mission, which witnessed a number of youthful conversions in the 1840s. When describing adults visiting their children in his institution, Smithies used bodily imagery to contrast his optimism for the younger generation with the alleged savagery of their elders:

imagine their coming to the mission establishment draped ... in a few kangaroo skins sewn together not half covering their persons ... these visitants besmeared with grease and oil and wilga [yellow ochre], head and hair clotted and matted with the sauce, their faces glistening and bodies perspiring in the sun ... with as much affection as any other of our common species they hug and kiss their children ... Talk to them about God or Christ or heaven, they seem to have no idea, no feeling, no hope, all is dark, dark, dark.⁴²

37 Bridges 1978: 165; Brook and Kohen 1991: 73, 205, 209; George Langhorne to Colonial Secretary, 14 August 1837 and 31 December 1837, in Cannon (ed) 1982, *HRV: The Aborigines of Port Phillip, 1835–1839*, vol 2A: 173, 208.

38 McNair and Rumley 1981: 45–47; Langhorne to Colonial Secretary, 31 December 1837, in Cannon (ed) 1982, *HRV*, vol 2A: 208; Matthew Moorhouse to Colonial Secretary, 31 January 1849, SRSA, GRG24/6, Colonial Secretary's Office, Correspondence files, no 242 of 1849; Thomas to Robinson, Journal of Proceedings during the months of June, July & August 1841, PROV VPRS4410 unit 3, 1841/70 (reel 2).

39 Comaroff and Comaroff 1997 vol 2: 220–221.

40 Thomas to Robinson, Journal of Proceedings during the months of June, July & August 1841, PROV VPRS4410 unit 3, 1841/70 (reel 2); Thomas, 14 September 1845, *WTP*, ML MSS 214, reel 8, State Library of NSW.

41 Rev George King to Rev Ernest Hawkins, 15 February 1845, in United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG), Records, AJCP M1222, SLV.

42 John Smithies to General Secretaries, 25 October 1843, *WMMS*, reel 2, Mp2107, NLA.

This image resonated for Smithies' superiors in the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, who reproduced it in their 1845 report; it also appeared in the 1846 *Missionary Register*.⁴³ When the *Missionary Register* described the conversion and baptism of some of Smithies' pupils, the passionate and rather physical experience was highlighted, with Indigenous converts portrayed simultaneously as recipients of charity and as joyously included in the Methodist congregation.

Oh! to behold those once wretched and debased outcasts – these sable Australians – with their shining hair and faces, clad in neat blue garments, and white tippets, made by our Christian Ladies ... Bowing down on their knees to receive their new names ... to behold their tearful eyes, amid the tears and prayers of the Congregation, was a scene not soon to be forgotten.⁴⁴

Efforts to encourage bodily change had important personal and domestic meanings for philanthropists themselves. This topic has been explored in other contexts, including Hawaii by Patricia Grimshaw and North America by Linda Clemmons.⁴⁵ The figure of the missionary woman was particularly relevant to regimes of clothing and cleanliness. It was, for instance, the ladies on the Adelaide native school committee who lobbied for proper clothing for the children.⁴⁶ The Wellington Valley papers, especially, described Mrs Handt, Mrs Watson and Mrs Günther cutting young men's hair and urging people to wash and wear clothes on Sunday.⁴⁷ Here, a vital paradox was evident: proximity to 'dirt' must (by definition) be intolerable to respectable women, yet only such women were qualified to enforce cleanliness. Günther was surprised that his wife Lydia (whose respectability, delicacy and discontent with their inadequate living conditions were stressed in his writings) could stand exposure to young men's bodies during the cleaning process. He commented 'I was surprised that Mrs G. had inclination and ability for it', and 'Mrs G could hardly bear it but observed "I must not mind if I can do the poor men any good"'.⁴⁸ The contradictory ideal of white missionary femininity – too refined to bear dirt, yet uniquely qualified to eradicate it – was made explicit in a letter to the *Colonist* newspaper in 1839. Praising Wellington Valley mission, the writer remarked:

43 CMS, *Missionary Register*, May 1846: 210; 'The Report of the WMMS for the year ending April 1845', Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, *Reports of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 1840–1851*: 32.

44 CMS, *Missionary Register*, May 1847: 217.

45 Clemmons 1999: 69–91; Grimshaw 1989.

46 Matthew Moorhouse to Colonial Secretary, 23 August 1843, *Protector of Aborigines, Letterbook, 1840–1857*, SRSA, GRG52/7, unit 1.

47 JCS Handt, journal, 5 November 1834 and 26 April 1835, *WVP*; Günther, journal, 25 September 1837, *WTP*; Watson, journal, 3 October 1832, 16 March 1833, *WTP*.

48 Günther, journal, 25 and 29 September 1837, *WVP*.

I was greatly struck by the neat, clean and orderly appearance of all the children in attendance. While zealous missionaries labour to promote the intellectual, moral and spiritual improvement of the blacks, Mrs Watson and Mrs Günther are no less indefatigable in attending to their personal comforts. The difficulty of performing this latter task can be duly appreciated only by those who have been accustomed to observe the slovenly and filthy habits of savages.⁴⁹

Imposing Evangelical order and purity on young bodies was emblematic of broader challenges inherent in missionary work. For Australian philanthropists of this era – mostly from lower middle-class or artisan backgrounds – projects of Aboriginal 'civilisation' were seen as routes to greater respectability for themselves. At the same time, however, they were also associated with manual labour, and here the domestic strain on their wives was emphasised to show the threat posed to middle-class dignity. Similar tensions have been explored by Anna Cole, in her discussion of Ella Hiscocks, matron of the Cootamundra Girls' Home. Cole portrays the matron exerting harsh power over the children in her care, notably through hygiene regimes – 'Cleanliness, in Hiscocks' world, was next to whiteness'. At the same time, the marginalisation of this white woman through her gender, racial proximity and inferior social class was never far from the surface; 'her futile struggle against dirt symbolises the inevitable exclusion and isolation from mainstream society of both the Aboriginal girls in her care and matron herself.'⁵⁰

Also illuminating was another point that emerged in some unpublished philanthropic writings (although usually obscured in more public accounts): that philanthropists themselves were subject to physical observation and intrusion. En route to Wellington Valley in October 1832, Watson rested at Rebecca's Swamp and distributed provisions to Indigenous men and their shy, reluctant wives. Of the women, Watson wrote:

I can scarcely ever forget the astonishment they manifested at the dress of the ladies. They pointed at them and laughed and chattered away surprisingly. And they seemed to be much alarmed at my watch. Mrs W. gave her [one woman] the lining of an old bonnet and she was as proud of it as ever a Monarch was of his royal Diadem.⁵¹

The return of a paternalistic tone in the final sentence could suggest a need to recover authorial control, after the experience of being objects of curiosity and entertainment. Other encounters were more confronting. JCS Handt, whose

49 *The Colonist*, 24 December 1839.

50 Cole 2005: 161–163, 169.

51 Watson, journal, 2 October 1832, *WVP*. The 'her' is unidentified; presumably, it refers to one of the women.

pessimistic observations about the 'savagery' of Moreton Bay people were reproduced in the Church Missionary Society's *Missionary Register*, described meeting a group of 50 people at Eagle Farm, who demanded clothes from him, making him fear they might 'strip me, or perhaps do worse.'⁵² Chief protector GA Robinson related similar anecdotes from his travels around Port Phillip, meeting people who were aggressively fascinated by his foreignness. In January 1840, he described travelling near Mt Alexander and meeting Daungwurrung people:

One wanted me to take off my shirt for him, another my trousers, another my shoes, indeed, every article I had on. And so pressing that I scarcely knew whether I was to be left in a state of nudity or not.⁵³

Several months later, Robinson recorded another meeting with Daungwurrung people, who demanded food and examined the intruders in disconcerting detail, bringing their physical, sexual and gendered selves into question: 'They felt our arms, neck and thighs and other parts of our persons. They called [the squatter] Mr Stucky a lubra because he had no beard and his hair was done up like a woman's.' They also offered the travellers sexual access to boys, saying 'white fellows on the Goulburn always did that'.⁵⁴

The permeable, vulnerable nature of the European body was made apparent in different ways when Indigenous people offered to treat sick philanthropists. In 1839, Daungwurrung people persuaded protector Dredge to consult the 'native doctor' about his facial tics and depression. The treatment – which Dredge described in terms of sucking and blowing on the affected areas, 'making a whizzing noise with his mouth', and spitting on the ground – did not help Dredge, although he was touched by their concern.⁵⁵ Similarly, in 1840, when Thomas became ill at his station and collapsed, three doctors took hold of him, ignoring his servants' protests, and rubbed their faces against his, blowing hard 'to give me life'.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, at Buntingdale, Francis Tuckfield described having his infected eyes examined by Wer-e-rup, a man of spiritual authority, who was rumoured to be able to fly and raise the dead.

He immediately caught my head and began to suck my face under my eyes, after which he took three pieces of she-oak leaf out of his mouth, rubbed them with his fingers and gave them to his wife, who wrapped

52 CMS, *Missionary Register*, August 1839: 390.

53 Robinson, *Journals*, vol 1: 132.

54 Robinson, *Journals*, vol 1: 285.

55 Dredge, 9 October 1839, *JDD*, MS11625, MSM534, SLV.

56 Thomas, 8 – 9 November 1840, *WTP*, ML MSS 214, reel 2, State Library of NSW.

them carefully in her rug. The doctor said the pain would leave my eyes and enter the leaves, and if his wife took proper care of them, the cure would be affected.⁵⁷

The tone of such accounts was often more bemused than hostile – although Tuckfield would later accuse Wer-e-rup of witchcraft and deception – and their place in the archive is an intriguing one. The philanthropist, constructed in dominant Evangelical discourse as an expert observer, is revealed to be (at local and personal levels) an object of bodily study, invasion and intimacy himself, reminding the reader of the limits to his power at this time and his uneasy reciprocity with Indigenous people.

'Build houses like the white fellows': the privacy paradox

As with the body, so with physical space in general – issues of privacy, autonomy and institutionalisation pervaded philanthropic understandings of labour, leisure and worship. When protector William Thomas praised a Boonwurrung man called Benbow for building himself a hut, and lectured the other people camped by the Yarra that they should do the same, he told them 'that God's book orders man to build houses & inhabit them.'⁵⁸ Such assertions were typical. When Archdeacon Broughton, for instance, told the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements) in 1835 that the Indigenous future looked unpromising, one of the reasons cited was fact that 'They have not the most distant conception of a house; they never live in a house: they have no clothing nor houses.'⁵⁹ Other, more optimistic writers did not question this association between physical space and Christian enlightenment. The Aborigines Protection Society's *Colonial Intelligencer* (1849–50), for instance, insisted that all races of people were capable of improvement. The journal illustrated this by contrasting the Seneca people's embrace of modern housing with a story of Irish peasants (typically depicted as white savages) refusing to move into clean accommodation, preferring to live in one room with their pigs.⁶⁰

While housing had connotations of hard labour and sedentary life, it was also related to efforts to create a discrete, autonomous self. Missionaries across

57 Francis Tuckfield to WMMS, 20 Feb 1839, in Cannon (ed) 1982, *HRV*, vol 2A: 114. For more on Wer-e-rup, see also Francis Tuckfield to General Secretaries, 30 October 1841, *WMMS*, reel 2, Mp2107, NLA.

58 Thomas, 10 May 1846, *WTP*, ML MSS 214, reel 3, State Library of NSW.

59 Archdeacon Broughton, evidence, 3 August 1835, *BPP: Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements) together with minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, Anthropology: Aborigines, vol 1, 1836: 17.

60 Aborigines Protection Society (APS), *The Colonial Intelligencer, or Aborigines' Friend*, vol II, London, 1849–50: 70, in APS, Transactions, c.1839–1909, MIC/o6550, reel 1, (Records the property of Anti-Slavery International).

different parts of the world repeated the claim that native peoples lacked personal boundaries – for example, Joseph Orton’s astonished observation that he had seen people in Port Phillip sleeping in groups ‘lying in all positions legs over bodies and heads and vice versa like a litter of swine’.⁶¹ In her Hawaiian study, Patricia Grimshaw notes missionaries’ similar horror at Hawaiians’ communal housing, considered an anathema to civilised privacy, while Michael Harkin observes related concerns about Heiltsuk housing in British Columbia, which defined its residents more as group members than as individuals.⁶² Meanwhile, the Comaroffs have examined South African missionaries’ desire to remake Tswana housing, to emphasise boundaries both external (fences, doors, windows, symmetrical streets) and internal (rooms designated for specific activities); ‘enclosure being both a condition of private property and civilized individualism and an aesthetic expression of the sheer beauty of refinement.’⁶³ Australian mission housing at this early stage was generally too impoverished to evince such detailed efforts, but concern with establishing order, individualism and boundaries was clear. As Peter Read comments, ‘A cottage inhabited by an Aboriginal family was less a shelter than an instrument of management, education and control’.⁶⁴

Only rarely did philanthropic sources mention that some Indigenous societies already lived in houses. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society’s *Missionary Notices* (1824) spoke of their hope for mission work amongst a ‘new tribe’ of people they had heard of at Moreton Bay, supposedly superior because they lived in clean huts, in fishing villages.⁶⁵ Similarly, in 1840, protector CW Sievwright reported with fascination his discovery of an ‘aboriginal village’, with large, solid houses, apparently recently inhabited, between the Wannon and Wando rivers in western Victoria.⁶⁶ Given the colonial violence and depopulation which engulfed both these districts, it is perhaps unsurprising that these examples were scarcely mentioned again. Rather, philanthropists vested their hopes in European housing styles.

At Wellington Valley in 1838, James Günther recorded in his diary ‘a step, which we long wished to see’: three young Wiradjuri men, Jemmy Buckley, George and Fred, announced after their daily lesson ‘Now we are going to build a hut’. Günther was delighted, both by the desire for sedentary housing and the

61 Joseph Orton, 17 May 1839, Joseph Orton, Journal 1832–1839 and 1840–1841 [hereafter *JOJ*], ML ref A1714–1715, CY reel 1119, State Library of NSW.

62 Grimshaw 1989: 57–63; Harkin 2005: 205–225.

63 Comaroff 1989: 673–674. See also, Comaroff and Comaroff 1997 vol 2: 277.

64 Read 2000: ix.

65 WMMS, *Missionary Notices: relating principally to the Foreign Missions*, vol IV, no 95, November 1824: 363.

66 CW Sievwright, 1 June 1840, Report of the proceedings of Assistant Protector Sievwright, from September 1839 to May 1840, in MacFarlane (ed) 1998, *HRV: Public Finance of Port Phillip, 1836–1840*: 366–367.

hard, independent labour involved; 'the activity & cleverness they displayed, proved quite an enjoyment to us.' He stressed the divisions and boundaries of this housing, symbolising regulation of contact between outer and inner worlds and aspiration to class improvement. He noted, for instance, that Fred wanted separate sleeping and sitting rooms, and that Jemmy wanted a fence around his hut, 'like a gentleman.'⁶⁷ Later, Günther added:

When I have visited George & Jemmy in their new hut after dark and shut the door after me they called out, 'Leave the door open that we may hear the bell for Prayers we shall now go to prayers every evening.'⁶⁸

The Buntingdale missionaries were similarly pleased in 1841, when a man called Karn-karn built himself a house on the mission land, over which he made traditional claims. Tuckfield was careful to note the exact dimensions of the house (14 feet by 7 feet) and the possessions within it – a bed with a straw mattress, 2 plates, 1 fry pan, 2 knives, 1 pot, a table and a stool – interpreted as signs of growing personal autonomy and materialism. By 1844, the WMMS's report stated happily that half the people at Buntingdale were living in houses.⁶⁹

People who made use of European housing may have been motivated partly by a desire for closer, more profitable relationships with philanthropists. Karn-karn, for instance, was rewarded by the missionaries with clothes, food and tools, whereupon several other men announced that they would build houses too.⁷⁰ On a more serious note, Dredge recalled being visited in Melbourne after his resignation from the protectorate by Daungwurrung people, who complained about their worsening dispossession. They stressed their wish for a productive relationship with the protectorate in a secure area of their country, and their willingness to adopt European habits to achieve this:

they said they would look out a good place and would all sit down there, build houses like the white fellows, and plant potatoes ... They said they would build houses for themselves like the white fellows, and a *big one* for me.⁷¹

Adoption of housing often combined with ongoing traditional practices. Protectors Parker and Robinson complained that people continued to move away

⁶⁷ Günther, journal, 23 March 1838, WVP.

⁶⁸ Günther, journal, 4 April 1838, WVP. See also, Günther, journal, 22 March 1838, WVP. Note: the bracketed punctuation comes from the edited sources themselves.

⁶⁹ The Report of the WMMS for the year ending April 1844, in WMMS, *Reports of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, 1844: 28, 30; Francis Tuckfield to General Secretary, 30 Oct 1841, WMMS, reel 2, Mp2107, NLA; also Tuckfield, 9–11 May 1841, FTJ, MS11341, Box 655, SLV.

⁷⁰ Francis Tuckfield to General Secretaries, 30 October 1841, WMMS, reel 2, Mp2107, NLA; also Tuckfield, 9, 11 May 1841, FTJ, MS11341, Box 655, SLV.

⁷¹ Dredge, 27 November 1841, 4 December 1841, JDD, MS11625, MSM534, SLV.

after family members died, refusing to enter their houses again.⁷² Meanwhile, Tuckfield, despite his joy at the housing enthusiasm at Buntingdale, was disappointed when two men announced they wanted houses big enough to accommodate their three wives, rejecting Tuckfield's suggestion that 'if they intended to imitate the whites in one thing they should in another and that they were better to get rid of four wives out of six.'⁷³

While houses were encouraged as a means and expression of privacy, the most important locale for teaching domestic discipline was the mission house itself. This could be cruelly ironic; efforts to impart 'civilised' private life could involve attacking the family lives of Indigenous people, through attempts to gain custody of children. The separation of families within institutional spaces like workhouses was well established in British philanthropic practice.⁷⁴ The first Australian missionaries and protectors – although usually unable to keep children forcibly for long, and frequently obliged to negotiate with families – nonetheless embraced this principle. In 1838, Watson and Günther requested separate boarding facilities for boys and girls, with buildings and fences to isolate the children from contact with their relatives or white servants. Isolation from Europeans – particularly urgent at Wellington Valley, where sexual abuse of young girls occurred – indicated the racial complexities of trying to construct Aboriginal 'privacy' under missionary control, isolated from black and white intrusion. Fenced-in playgrounds – eventually constructed at Wellington Valley, and requested by the schoolteacher at Thomas's station – were also meant to impart the message that leisure should occur in time and space apart from work.⁷⁵ Similar regulations were evident at the Methodist mission school in Perth, where the children who worked as servants in white households were banned from loitering or playing marbles in the street, behaviour which blurred the public-private distinction and had connotations of working class vagrancy. Playtime was to occur at the missionary's house only.⁷⁶

There was, however, a paradox at the heart of the mission house: its very use as the epitome of domestic civilisation undermined the private-public distinction. The 'fetish for boundary purity', which Anne McClintock identifies as crucial to Victorian middle-class life, was both present and inadvertently challenged in colonial philanthropic work.⁷⁷ Like the discrete, civilised missionary body

72 ES Parker, *Quarterly Journal*, 1 September – 30 November 1841, PROV VPRS4410 unit 2, 1841/59 (reel 2); GA Robinson to CJ La Trobe, 23 October 1839, PROV VPRS10 unit 1, 1839/363 (reel 1).

73 Francis Tuckfield to General Secretaries, 30 October 1841, *WMMS*, reel 2, Mp2107, NLA; also Tuckfield, 9, 11 May 1841, *FTJ*, MS11341, Box 655, SLV.

74 Crowther 1981: 43–44.

75 Bridges, *The Church of England*: 430; James Wilson to GA Robinson, undated (approx 1841), PROV VPRS12 unit 2 (reel 2).

76 Charles Symmons, *Regulations and Arrangements relative to the Native Children*, enclosed in Gov Hutt to Lord John Russell, 15 May 1841, in *BPP: Papers Relating to Australia, 1844*, vol 8: 387–388.

77 McClintock 1995: 171.

– in fact, an object of fascinated looking and touching – the mission house had to remain open to Indigenous engagement. At Thomas's station in 1841, for example, parents agreed to leave children behind temporarily, but set conditions: they must sleep in the schoolmaster's house for protection from 'Wild Black Fellows', and the girls, for propriety, must be prevented from sitting at the boy's campfire.⁷⁸ After leaving the protectorate, James Dredge found his house in Melbourne open at times to Daungwurrung visitors, who crowded inside, greeted his family affectionately and slept on his kitchen floor. Dredge, touched if a little bemused by this, observed 'they came into our house as if they were come home'.⁷⁹

Not all arrivals were so welcome. During 1834, the Wellington Valley missionaries were enraged to discover that young men had been sneaking into the girls' room at night.⁸⁰ At Buntingdale in 1841, violence between residents led Dhaugurdwurrung people to seek refuge in the mission house. They woke Tuckfield one Sunday at midnight, banging on the door to tell him they were leaving at once, because they feared violence from people who had just arrived. The following night, a man was murdered. Tuckfield described the scene:

In a minute the whole of the encampment was in an uproar. The cries of the children, the screams of the women and the constant threats of the men were indeed awful and as the whole of it were near our houses our situations for the time were any thing but desirable. Great many of our blacks came in about our houses anxious to lay themselves down in our kitchen, School Room etc lest more of them be speared.⁸¹

Such uses of mission space could highlight the complexities of gender in philanthropic attempts to construct a new Indigenous self, both privatised and institutionalised. The missionary woman, working on food preparation, cleanliness and child care, tried to represent idealised Evangelical femininity, but her very domestic efforts could make her home a space for wider disputes. This was particularly evident at Wellington Valley, due to their zealous efforts to control young people, and to Watson's special enthusiasm for recording his wife's work. Watson frequently described child custody in terms of leaving children with Ann Watson, and in 1836, he mentioned a related incident.

78 Thomas, 23 August 1841, *WTP*, ML MSS 214, reel 2, State Library of NSW; James Wilson to GA Robinson, undated (approx 1841), PROV VPRS12 unit 2 (reel 2).

79 Dredge, 10 October 1840, 12 August 1841, *JDD*, MS11625, MSM534, SLV. Note: Dredge identified some of his visitors as 'Woralim', which I have assumed to refer to the group identified by Ian D Clark as Warring-illum Balug, a Taungurong clan from the upper Goulburn River – see Clark 1990: 374–374.

80 Watson, journal, 6 November 1834, *WVP*.

81 Francis Tuckfield to General Secretaries, 30 October 1841, *WMMS*, reel 2, Mp2107, NLA. See also, Tuckfield, 13 June 1841, *FTJ*, MS11341, Box 655, SLV. Note: the new arrivals were not identified in these entries.

A native female about fourteen years of age came up to the mission house; she is a widow, her husband having died a few months ago ... her father and mother told her to come and live with us. I was not at home when she arrived, and when it was known that she had come to the mission-house Kabon Billy who has two wives already hastened up, and in a very violent rage demanded her. However Mrs Watson took care to secure the door, after which she went round and soon talked Billy into a good humour, and he went quietly away.⁸²

Such stories constructed a distinction between the outer (dangerous, savage and masculine) and inner (domestic, civilised and feminine) worlds, while also demonstrating how vulnerable these boundaries were. However, the story serves, too, as a reminder of the complex dynamic between missionary space and the disagreements over custody and kinship occurring between Indigenous people themselves.

Watson's writings showed a recurrent theme of femininised missionary space, inviting Indigenous tutelage yet vulnerable to intrusions by Indigenous men. This became clear in 1836, when a group of people from another district gathered near Wellington Valley, apparently planning revenge attacks. One man, Darby, left the fighting and fled to the mission house for protection. Watson described the scene vividly:

Our girls on seeing him approach painted all over his face and body, carrying his weapons ... ran to Mrs Watson, 'crying out, Black fellow coming Black fellow coming, running very fast.' Mrs Watson told them to come in ... for she apprehended that the wild natives were coming to attack the Mission House and take away the girls ... what should present itself to her notice but the painted face of a native (between the partly opened door and the door post) and a number of spears and, other weapons half way in. Mrs Watson did not at first recognise him, and she felt some alarm, when, he panting exclaimed, 'Black fellow come up, Black fellow come up, plant, plant, where is Mr Watson.' ... having convinced Mrs Watson as much by his trembling as by his expressions that he wanted to be concealed from the natives who were seeking to kill him, he was put into a private room and shut up... He kept continually rising up and saying 'where is Mr Watson? You go fetch him. No, No, you sit down by me, don't let Black fellow come.' What a scene was this! A stout, able, Savage, seeking for safety, and reposing his confidence for protection in a nervous European female.⁸³

⁸² Watson, journal, 2 September 1836, WVP.

⁸³ Watson, journal, 17 November 1836, WVP.

It is worth noting, again, the significance of paint here, to missionary eyes, as a marker of unfamiliarity and disorder. Two days later, Darby was accused of an incorrect relationship with a woman, and more violence followed. Watson wrote:

presently our large room which had just been washed and got ready for the Sabbath was nearly filled by about 40 females who had rushed into the kitchen, for refuge, crying and trembling: Then the men came ... for their weapons which the females generally carry. The yinnars [women] ... kept throwing out their weapons saying to Mrs Watson you give that to Bobby and that to Tommy and so on for all their husbands, and it was very well Mrs Watson escaped without injury, for in their fright they threw them down any way.⁸⁴

In the missionary's papers, such descriptions were framed as savage invasions into Christian family space, and were probably intended partly to vindicate the Watsons' policy of separating young girls from their relatives. Yet, other readings are also possible. The account suggests the complex role within mission space of Indigenous men, alternately assumed to be threatening to and dependent on missionary women. And while the nurturing ideal of the missionary woman was reinforced, she was also linked strongly to the tumultuous outside world. This pointed again to the broader paradox of mission privacy: upholding the value of 'civilised' domestic space necessitated extensive engagement with a 'savage' Other. Importantly, of course, such accounts are also suggestive of Wiradjuri people's own use of the space claimed as Mrs Watson's, and the relationships of protection and obligation they tried to build with her.

Gathering community, enforcing unity

Imposing new divisions between people and stressing the sanctity of the domestic Christian world was only part of philanthropic work. Also important was the reshaping of group selves and attempts to dismantle older divisions between people. Philanthropists designated sites of work, rationing and worship for mass gatherings, where new kinds of social proximity were encouraged. This was presumably seen as part of a long term process to remake Indigenous people as part of a respectable Christian public. However, in the short term, the sense of self missionaries and protectors tried to impart was less that of the legitimate public citizen and more that of the institutional subject.

When gathering communities, protectors and missionaries aimed to dismantle many traditional spatial distinctions between people, and to bring groups together under philanthropic observation and authority. The main settings for

84 Watson, journal, 19 November 1836, WVP.

this involved communal eating and church services. Thus, a visitor to protector Sievwright's Mt Rouse station described his efforts to feed several hundred people. Sievwright, a former army officer with comparatively little interest in evangelising, emphasised administration and a certain loss of dignity.

In the morning they [residents] were put into a pen, and run out, one by one, as sheep are when they are counted, when each received a mess of a kind of burgoo, or porridge ... In the middle of the day they were all drawn up in a row, squatted on their heels, and a wheelbarrow, full of pieces of beef, was wheeled around, the overseer giving a piece to each in turn.⁸⁵

The writer did not see Indigenous people as passive participants in this, however, stressing that they scrutinised the food and 'freely gave vent to their feelings of rage and disappointment' when it was inadequate.⁸⁶ Missionaries, meanwhile, showed a greater wish to monitor manners. At Wellington Valley, Günther wanted a proper dining hall, where missionaries could observe people, prohibiting greed or the feeding of the undeserving and reminding people of the food's association with God.⁸⁷ Later, at Buntingdale, Tuckfield distributed and supervised the meals, claiming clan rivalries made it unwise to allow Indigenous people such responsibility. When residential numbers swelled, the people were instructed to form a circle around the missionaries and the food. After prayers and hymns, breakfast was distributed to each person, along with instructions for the day's work. Here, explicit links were drawn between God, food and labour, in a physical layout that stressed missionary observation and attempted (largely in vain) to flatten distinctions between people, and to establish station residents as a single, orderly community.⁸⁸

However, the most symbolically loaded public space was that of the church service. There is a certain irony here; Evangelical philanthropists viewed conversion as a deeply personal inner transformation and frequently refused to believe that Indigenous people who appeared compliant had 'truly' changed, but they nonetheless cherished the *appearance* of religious community. Tuckfield, when he first arrived in Port Phillip, was pleased by the sedate behaviour of people who attended his services – 'Everything we say on such occasions is to them in an unknown tongue yet they appear to be struck with silent admiration and they invariably listen with breathless attention'.⁸⁹ Similarly, Parker doubted the understanding and sincerity of his congregation, but was still pleased by

85 Charles Griffith, 1845, *The Present State and Prospects of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales*: 195.

86 Griffith 1845: 195.

87 Günther, journal, 19 December 1837, WVP.

88 Tuckfield, 11 January 1840, FTJ, MS11341, Box 655, SLV; Francis Tuckfield to General Secretaries, 30 September 1840, WMMS, reel 2; Francis Tuckfield to General Secretaries, 30 October 1840, WMMS, reel 2, Mp2107, NLA.

89 Francis Tuckfield to General Secretaries, 12 Aug 1838, WMMS, reel 1, Mp2107, NLA.

their behaviour in church; 'Their deportment was serious and orderly; they spontaneously followed the example of the whites in standing up, kneeling etc.'⁹⁰

Philanthropists were frustrated and angered, however, by the lasting power of traditional spatial prohibitions. Ironically, the more they tried to engage large numbers in Christian worship, the more pre-colonial practices became visible. At Wellington Valley, young male initiates, forbidden to come near women, sometimes avoided church, explaining 'too much yeener [woman] sit down there.'⁹¹ The missionaries' efforts to accommodate this by seating the older men and children between the young men and women were unsuccessful, forcing them to hold separate services. Similarly, Joseph Orton commented on the difficulties he witnessed at Buntingdale when large groups assembled: 'It is amusing to see them peeping and crouching around the buildings of the station to avoid a casual meeting; and it is sometimes very annoying when they are required to do anything.' He was not so amused when several women refused to enter the church, staying outside and 'peeping and watching every movement of [the] others'.⁹² Parker reported particular trouble reconciling church services with the rule forbidding Dadjawurrung women to look upon their future sons-in-law, while his colleague Thomas struggled to make the women sit with the men, who reproved him 'why so stupid you, you know we do not sit together'. Usually, this was resolved by letting the women stand outside, and when it rained they pitched their shelters nearby. Sometimes they still refused to attend, however, complaining that they did not like hiding their faces. Thomas, impatient with the custom, was so irritated when women insisted on sitting with their backs to the men (and to him) that he turned some of them around by force.⁹³ Efforts to remove older spatial distinctions in mass gatherings were shaped by the Evangelical notion of all worshippers being equal before God, but also by the institutional need to reduce independent identities and make everyone subject to observation.

These early regimes of material 'civilisation' showed contradictions and compromises which might point to weaknesses in philanthropic authority at this time. Certainly, these early protectors and missionaries tended to take a more conciliatory approach than many of their successors would do. However, many of the contradictions of these projects would prove to be both creative and long-standing in Australian mission life. Ideas about physical civilisation were,

90 ES Parker, *Quarterly Journal*, December 1840 – February 1841, PROV VPRS4410 unit 2, 1841/55 (reel 2).

91 Watson, *journal*, 10 March 1833, *WVP*. Also, Günther, *journal*, 25 January 1838, 26 January 1838, 18 February 1838, 19 February 1838, 21 February 1838, 4 March 1838, 18 March 1838, *WVP*.

92 Orton, 4 May 1841 and 6 May 1841, *JOJ*, ML ref A1714–1715, CY reel 1119, State Library of NSW.

93 ES Parker, *Quarterly Journal*, 1 March – 31 May 1841, PROV VPRS4410 unit 2, 1841/61 (reel 2); Thomas, 15 November 1840, 22 November 1840, 29 November 1840, 11 April 1841, 28 May 1841, 30 May 1841, *WTP*, ML MSS 214, reel 2; Thomas, 1 January 1844, *WTP*, ML MSS 214, reel 3, State Library of NSW.

perhaps, inherently paradoxical, seeking to elevate people from the earthly world through bodily regimes. Furthermore, the process of creating autonomous individuals through institutionalisation required some basic tensions, between the Indigenous subject as single and social and the philanthropist as observer, participant and object of observation. Considering such issues helps to further our understanding not only of efforts to change Indigenous societies, but also of the problematic creation of colonial authorities themselves.