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ABORIGINAL HISTORY

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Editorial

This issue contains obituaries of three key figures in Aboriginal Australia, an important bibliographic collation, and an account of consultative processes involved in the production of a historical exhibition. There is a plea for considering afresh the Aboriginal contribution to contact history, an Aboriginal text about seeing the first motor car, new evidence about the Pilbara walk-off and the first detailed account of the Tent Embassy. There are accounts of the Aboriginal cricketer Johnny Mullagh and of little-known but important events in southern Western Australia.

The volume begins with a controversial account of the life of the late Kevin Gilbert. Gordon Briscoe's article contains many challenges and insights; but, such was the controversial nature of the article, the editors and editorial board invited responses which we have printed without alteration. Although, regrettably, distress was caused in some articles while the article was circulated during 1994 before publication, we took the view that all national figures are likely to attract controversy, and that Kevin Gilbert had been already a controversial figure in his own lifetime. Most, perhaps all, people reconstruct their identities in the course of a lifetime. To suggest that an Aboriginal person might have done so is not to suggest that that person was not 'really' Aboriginal, but rather that identity is a more complex matter than is often supposed. Does it matter if an Aboriginal person who adheres to one identification is descended also from other groups or communities? We answer: no it doesn't.

Given that such divergent opinions are represented in the original article and in the responses, the Editorial Board recommends that all five articles be read together, providing as a group a broad context for consideration of such issues.

Peter Read
Ewan Morris
ABORIGINAL
HISTORY

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PART 1

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OBITUARY:
OODGEROO OF THE TRIBE NOONUCCAL

John Collins

Oodgeroo of the tribe Noonuccal, Custodian of the Land Minjerribah (formerly known by her Anglicised name of Kath Walker), died on 16 September 1993.

Minjerribah is the Noonuccal word for the great sand island which fringes Moreton Bay opposite the city of Brisbane. The Noonuccal-Nughie tribes occupied both North and South Stradbroke islands and fished the waters of the bay, which was known to them as Quandamooka. Visitors from many countries sailed into the bay in the early days, and when Kathleen Jane Mary Ruska was born on 3 November 1920 there was plenty of variety in her blood line.

Her father was the caretaker of the local aged and infirm asylum on the island but he also maintained traditional ways. The young Kathie (one of seven children) knew the bay, its beach and forested dunes:

Children of nature we were then
No clocks hurrying crowds to toil.1

Schooling at the local primary school had to be endured rather than enjoyed but, at 13, like so many other Aboriginal girls of her age, she was drafted into domestic service in Brisbane. This meant that she had to live in a white world; that she had to obey the orders of the women and to keep clear of the men. She managed to do this until the Second World War, when she joined the Women's Army.

She became a telephonist and was on the way to accumulating skills that would see her move out of the cramped 'no highway' that was the lot of her people, until illness forced her back into domestic service. She married, had a son and settled into suburban Brisbane, but the marriage was not to last. Now with two young boys, Dennis and Vivian, Kath (as I shall call her) might have been overcome with the burdens of single parenthood in a very hostile society. Instead, she enrolled in a repatriation stenographic course and joined the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). As she said many times, she was political by genes as well as by upbringing and the only political party she could find in post-war Australia that did not have White Australia as a major plank of policy was the CPA. She stayed a member and benefited greatly, but left when they wanted to write her speeches.

She had already begun to write verses and was attracted to the Realist Writers' Group that formed in Brisbane in 1954.2 Kath Walker's first volume of poems, We are Going, was published in 1964 in Brisbane and the following year in New York. The reaction was varied; nevertheless, immediate reprints followed to keep up with demand. This was the first publication of poetry written by an Australian Aboriginal person, and Kath Walker immediately became a public figure. Language had now become a weapon and some critics responded with malicious comments: 'She wasn't a full black, so it was the white blood

John Collins was formerly a teacher at the Universities of Melbourne and the South Pacific and managing director of Jacaranda Wiley Press (publishers of Oodgeroo's books). This is an edited version of an article originally written for 'Race and Class', 35/4 (1994).

1 'Then and now' in Walker 1964.
2 On the Realist Writers' Group see Syson 1993.
that was writing'; 'someone ghosted the work, if not wrote it'. This doubt as to genesis hurt Kath then and remained with her for most of her life. In the foreword to her second volume, *The Dawn is at Hand* (1966), Kath hit back at critics who called her poems bitter 'as though even atrocities were not mentioned to nice people' and who sought to quash protests against social injustice by accusing their author of being a communist.

The decade of the 1960s saw Kath travelling the length and breadth of the continent as a leader of the movement which eventually forced the Liberal-Country Party government to hold the 1967 referendum. As the decade drew to a close, Kath, worn out and penniless after her years of exertion and battle, retired to her 'sitting-down' place on Stradbroke Island (Moongalba), but not for long. Various literary awards came her way and, in 1969, she made her first of many ventures overseas as the Australian delegate to the World Council of Churches Consultation on Racism which was held in London. Seven years earlier, at a council meeting of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) she had made her feelings about racism well known in a poem written especially for the meeting, the 'Aboriginal Charter of Rights':

> We want hope, not racialism,
> Brotherhood, not ostracism,
> Black advance, not white ascendance;
> Make us equals, not dependants ...³

In 1979, in a speech given at the Australian National University in Canberra, after her widespread travels in the previous ten years (Fiji, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Ghana and the US), she said:

> As I have travelled throughout the world, I have often thought that one could judge a society by the way it treats its racial minorities. Where a minority was forced to live in squalor, I have seen a squalid society. Where a minority was riddled with disease, I have seen a sick society. Where a minority was without hope, I saw a nation without hope.⁴

Kath was now quite conscious of the world's misery but that did not prevent her from criticising the apathy of white Australia.

On her return from Lagos to Sydney in 1976, her flight was hijacked at Dubai. She survived three days of murder and mayhem by compiling a life report card! As she said later, she only gave herself three out of ten for tolerance and determined that, if she survived, she would try to improve. She was, in fact, extraordinarily tolerant of the everyday failings of humans. She knew that she had her own quota and, in particular, worried about her sons who, in her words, 'grew up behind my back while I was out hustling politicians'.

In the meantime, she had established a very strong relationship with another Australian poet, Judith Wright. It had been Judith who, as reader for Jacaranda Press, had been enthusiastic about Kath's first collection. In 1976 they were together in the film *Shadow Sister*. Judith dedicated and presented to Kath her poem 'Two Dreamtimes', in which she tried to sum up this strange 'white Australia'.⁵

In the late 1980s, partly due to the Hawke Labor government's failure to enact land rights legislation and partly in protest at the celebrations of the white bicentennial, Kath Walker decided to do three things: first, she returned the imperial honour (an MBE) that was given to her in 1970; second, she decided that she and her second son would be part of the bicentennial celebrations; and third, she decided to change her name. Many Aboriginal

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³ Walker 1964.
⁴ Walker 1981.
⁵ In Walker 1990.
groups were violently opposed to her participation in the World Expo at Brisbane, where Oodgeroo and her son, Kabul, scripted and directed *The Rainbow Serpent Theatre* which entranced thousands of Expo visitors as it told some of the Dreamtime stories. Many of her literary friends thought she had made a stupid mistake with the name change. I doubt if any of the reactions worried her in the slightest.

Oodgeroo had now been honoured with doctorates from three universities ('I'm sure they do it to get some mileage out of it for themselves,' she said to me as we waited once for an academic procession to begin). She had been to both China⁶ and the USSR, had acted in an award-winning film (*The Fringe Dwellers*), had had a volume of her paintings published,⁷ and, after teaching thousands of children and young adults at her sitting-down place (Moongalba), had involved herself in an educational project at the University of New South Wales.

But this world of achievement was to be shattered when her artist son, Kabul, sickened and died of AIDS. Kabul (previously known as Vivian) had shared many of his mother's artistic gifts. He was an accomplished dancer and painter and, in the last few years, had become his mother's closest critic and confidante. With Kabul's death Oodgeroo was tested as never before. In public she had always remained strong, resilient and ready at all times to be provocative, with a piercing wit and a menacing intellect. But the loss of her son was almost too much to bear, and less than three years later she had succumbed to cancer. On 20 September 1993 she was buried beside Kabul at Moongalba.

Oodgeroo had fought a long and often bitter fight against the apathy of comfortable middle-class Australia. She had paid a heavy price in personal terms, but she had won many battles. One battle that she never managed to finish was the battle between her two selves: the girl who was born on Stradbroke, who strode the land as if she owned it, who became an elder of the Noonuccal tribe and a teller of Dreamtime tales; and the activist and agitator in the white man's world. This divide between the two laws and two starkly different views of the world is rarely bridged. Oodgeroo's experience in countries other than Australia enabled her to create bridges and linkages.

She would often say, 'I feel as if they all want part of me'. That was the price she paid for the power that had come out of the poems and the podium. At the same time, she knew how important had been the associations with people like Kathie and Bob Cochrane whom she had met in the early days of the Queensland Aboriginal Advancement League; like James Devaney of the Realist Writers' Group; like the Cilentos and Stephen Murray-Smith, as well as Faith Bandler and other members of FCAATSI. But she realised that, with the publication of her first collection of poems, she had become the property of two publics whose wishes would very rarely be similar.

Two generations after Oodgeroo now look at an Australia which is still to come to terms with its inheritance. On the black side there is new hope and with it a new urgency. Because pioneers like Oodgeroo sounded the call and made significant contacts in other places, there is now more strength and direction in the movement. On the white side, through a less blinkered education system, young Australians are beginning to understand that there is more to the cultural and economic system than their elders believed. Oodgeroo believed quite firmly that the forcing of change and the redressing of injustice in the land

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⁷ Beier 1986.
will depend as much on an enlightened young white population as on an educated and activist black one.

Her first volume, *We are Going*, was originally entitled *All One Race*. That was the title of a poem that clearly sums up Oodgeroo's world view:

I'm international, never mind place,
I'm for humanity, all one race.8

**LIST OF REFERENCES**

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8 Walker 1964.
OBITUARY FOR NORMAN BARNETT ("TINNY") TINDALE
Born Perth, October 12, 1900
Died Palo Alto, California, November 19, 1993, aged 93

Philip Jones

On his first major field trip after being appointed assistant entomologist at the South Australian Museum in 1918, Norman Tindale sketched the tribal Aboriginal boundaries in the Groote Eylandt and Roper River area of the Northern Territory. His map was edited before publication and the boundaries removed on the basis that Aborigines were wanderers with no fixed attachments to land.

Tindale's reaction was to dedicate his research efforts for the next two decades towards proving that Aboriginal groups did relate territorially to distinct regions that could be successfully mapped. His tribal map of Australia, first published in 1940 and revised in 1974 together with his encyclopaedia of Aboriginal tribal groups, was radical in its fundamental implication that Australia was not *terra nullius* - decades before the Mabo judgement made it a national issue.

Over the next 70 years, Tindale played a crucial role in confronting this entrenched stereotype about Aboriginal people - that their nomadic lifestyle indicated a lack of enduring territorial relationships with the land. Tindale's daily work at the South Australian Museum brought a constant reminder of the public's perception of Aboriginal people during these decades; it is hardly surprising that his commitment to the tribal paradigm grew in response. This was so even as the applied anthropology of his academic colleagues in eastern Australia was suggesting that the complexity of Aboriginal social and territorial relationships was hardly amenable to Tindale's ambitiously broad categorisation. Despite this, Tindale's carefully sourced data and his commitment to bibliographic methods means that researchers may dismantle and test most of his conclusions, a course rarely open with the work of other ethnographers.

Tindale was also a pioneer Australian archaeologist. He was one of the first to successfully challenge the orthodoxy of the 1920s, that Aboriginal occupation of Australia had been relatively brief. His excavation of a 5000-year old Aboriginal rock shelter at Devon Downs on the Murray River in 1929 was a pivotal event. Before that project, Australian archaeology did not exist as a discipline, largely because it was assumed that Aboriginal people were relatively recent arrivals. Tindale's meticulous excavation established not only that Aboriginal people had lived for several millennia in the Murray valley, but demonstrated that their strategies for subsistence had altered in response to environmental change. He showed how stone tools, animal bones and cultural remains could be used to piece together a previously untold story about Australia's past. His foresight in preserving charcoal samples against the predicted development of C14 dating has received scant recognition. Nevertheless, critics of Tindale's construction of an Australian cultural chronology based on his Devon Downs, Tartanga and even Noola Rockshelter excavations and his examination of 'Kartan' implements, acknowledge the precision of his work and the quality of his data.

Like several dominant figures in South Australian anthropology, Tindale's empirically-based research interests arose from his training in the natural sciences, particularly geology and biology. He completed a Bachelor's degree in Science at the University of Adelaide in

*Dr Philip Jones is Head of the Division of Anthropology, South Australian Museum.*
1933. Tindale's commitment to 'boundedness' in space (tribes) and in time (cultural chronologies) may be traced to this natural science paradigm and its concern with cataloguing and filling gaps in the record. At a time when anthropology had tended to contract into university departments, redefining itself in the process, Tindale reinvigorated the profession within the South Australian Museum, uniquely blending empirical investigation with social enquiry.

Tindale's commitment to data-gathering was not an end in itself, but represented an attempt to build a picture of Aboriginal life within the frame of the Australian environment. This commitment was exemplified by his central role during the Board for Anthropological Research expeditions to remote Central Australia locations, organised from Adelaide during the 1930s. He was responsible for purchasing and documenting artefacts, making sound, cinematic and photographic records of daily life and ceremonies, recording sociological data, as well as collecting natural science specimens.

Despite this empirical emphasis, Tindale published widely in the field of Aboriginal art, he pioneered the practice (later used by Mountford and Berndt) of supplying Aboriginal people in Central Australia with brown paper and their choice of crayons, documenting the results carefully. He was one of the first anthropologists to articulate the fact that the art of the concentric circle represented a cryptic and endlessly flexible reference to place, the artist's own mythological locus.

Tindale's first passion was entomology, indulged as a boyhood hobby in the countryside surrounding Tokyo, after his father, an accountant with the Salvation Army mission in Japan, had taken his family there to live from 1907 until 1915. Through these butterfly-collecting excursions he was first introduced to the fieldwork methods of natural science collecting, later an integral part of his anthropological expedition routine. In Tokyo itself he gained his first experience of museums and the life behind their static exhibits.

On his family's return to Australia in 1915, Tindale gained a job with the Adelaide Public Library as a cadet, biding his time until a position at the South Australian Museum became available. A few months after taking up his position at the Museum Tindale lost the sight of one eye in an explosion caused while assisting his father with photographic processing. He later recalled the Museum Entomologist, Arthur Lea, telling him, 'Tindale, you'll never make a blind entomologist, but you might make a blind anthropologist!'

Tindale nevertheless forged an international reputation during his lifetime for his work on the Hepialidae moths.

Because Groote Eylandt was still almost unknown by naturalists or anthropologists, prior to Tindale's 1921-1922 expedition the museum director sent him to Melbourne to learn the rudiments of anthropology from Walter Baldwin Spencer. Spencer taught Tindale the Geographic I method of language transcription, the basis for Tindale's later collection of parallel vocabularies across Australia. Apart from studious attention to Spencer's gift of his 1912 edition of 'Notes and Queries on Anthropology', Tindale followed one aspect of Spencer's advice for the next 70 years: to write a daily journal, no matter whether the events of the following day proved the previous day's record invalid. Tindale's systematic journal-keeping became legendary during his lifetime. These journals, bequeathed by Tindale to the South Australian Museum, join with his genealogical records, crayon drawings and maps, films, photographs, sound recordings and artefacts in constituting a unique, interlocking archive of data about the Aboriginal people of Australia.

Tindale and other Adelaide members of the Board for Anthropological Research were often criticised for their brief forays into Central Australia during the 1930s, in contrast to Elkin's students with their intensive periods of fieldwork. By this time though, Tindale had already served his fieldwork apprenticeship; the Groote Eylandt expedition saw him living
in the field with Aboriginal people for a total period of twenty months. During 1933
Tindale and the physical anthropologist Cecil Hackett spent three months accompanying
Pitjantjatjara and Yangkantjatjara people through the Mann Ranges. Both experiences left
Tindale with enduring respect for Aboriginal people's intimate knowledge of local
environments.

Thanks to his mastery of 'street Japanese' during his Tokyo childhood, Tindale's career
was interrupted by World War II - he was posted to the Pentagon in Washington as an
intelligence officer with the Japanese code-breaking unit. Assigned the rank of Wing
Commander, he was flown to the crash sites of Japanese bombers in the Pacific region,
with a brief to decode and translate any data which could identify the Japanese sources of
vital parts of weaponry. Tindale used these forays to make additional journal entries about
Pacific ethnography.

One day in the Pentagon during this period he encountered the South Australian nuclear
scientist Mark Oliphant, with mutual surprise. The two had been cadets at the Adelaide
Public Library in 1916, before Tindale's employment at the Museum. Both were working
on different aspects of the Manhattan Project. At the end of the war, when Tindale was
seconded to examine the effects of Allied bombing in Japan, he stood on the ruins of his
father's Tokyo home, remembering his Japanese childhood friends and the insects and
butterflies they had collected together.

Tindale's family came from Taratap Station near Mt Gambier and there his mother had
played as a child during the 1870s with a Tangane boy of the Coorong Aborigines,
Clarence Long Milerum. Years later, visiting the region for his anthropological research,
Tindale met Milerum and a long friendship developed. As an old man Milerum worked with
Tindale during the 30s, making basketry and weapons and explaining his culture and
traditions to museum visitors. Tindale's great unfinished project was Milerum's biography.
This was intended, like the Berndts' study of the Lower Murray Yaraldi (published by
M.U.P. in 1993), to give an insight into the pre-European culture of the Tangane people of
the Coorong through the eyes of a friend and principal informant.

Tindale's familiarity with the Aborigines of the Coorong and Lower Murray assisted
him with an important research project, extended today by Aboriginal people working at the
South Australian Museum. Tindale's aim, working with the American physical
anthropologist Joseph Birdsell, was to build a genealogical and sociological profile of the
Aboriginal population as it mingled with the European population across Australia.
Through the Aboriginal Family History Project Tindale's name has become familiar to new
generations of Aboriginal people.

Tindale's friendship with Birdsell, begun during his visit to the United States in 1936
on a Carnegie Fellowship, endured beyond his retirement from the South Australian
Museum in 1965 until his death, and it contributed largely to his decision to take up a
teaching position at the University of Colorado. Both men kept in constant contact until
recently; Birdsell died on 5 March, 1994, just months after Tindale. Birdsell and Tindale
shared common views of the prehistoric origins of Australian Aborigines. Like Tindale,
Birdsell bequeathed his research library to the South Australian Museum and, recently
announced, made an extremely generous bequest to the institution, establishing the Norman
B. Tindale Memorial Research Fund, to be used for the purposes of 'research into
Pleistocene man in Australia'.

Tindale continued to live in the United States after his retirement and the death of his
wife of 45 years, Dorothy May, in 1969. She had accompanied him, together with the
married an old family friend, Muriel Nevin (who survives him, together with his son and
daughter from his first marriage). Apart from occasional research trips to Australia and butterfly collecting trips elsewhere in North America, they continued to live in Muriel's Palo Alto home, a small wooden house bursting at the seams with his research materials, library, and butterfly specimens. An adjacent shed provided more storage space and a workbench for constructing his neat wooden butterfly boxes.

While Tindale relished the relative seclusion of his retirement in the United States, he was never aloof from family or friends. A boyish sense of humour, a readiness to engage with researchers on their own terms, and an enthusiasm for new information sustained him through accidents and episodes of ill health from his mid-80s.

He impressed all visitors during his later years with the same qualities recorded by earlier colleagues - an indefatigable commitment to making an enduring record of Aboriginal life before the transformations wrought by European contact. His career's output of several books and more than 200 scientific papers on anthropology and entomology were used by him as working texts for future papers; he did not preserve bookshelf copies of any of his publications. By 1989 he knew that he would not complete his Milerum book, nor several other projects. Unfazed, he scaled his work program back and supplied data for Aboriginal place names to the South Australian Department of Lands. Another source of pleasure was his contact with Canberra and AIATSIS-based linguists during the 1980s, eager to draw upon the numerous Aboriginal vocabularies which he had recorded during his fieldwork. Tindale was never happier nor more animated than when confirming a new detail and putting it on the record for others to use.

Tindale was honoured during the latter part of his career with an honorary doctorate from the University of Colorado in 1969. The impetus for this was provided by Professor John Greenway, who later presented Tindale with a remarkable volume of more than 50 testimonial letters from his international colleagues. Australian recognition for Tindale's career was more halting than it would have been had he remained in this country; he received the Verco Medal and the John Lewis Medal from South Australia's Royal Society and Royal Geographical Society during the early 1970s, and an honorary doctorate from A.N.U. in 1980. During 1993 Tindale received unofficial confirmation of the award of the Companion of the Order of Australia; this was awarded posthumously.

Tindale remained an Honorary Associate of the South Australian Museum until his death, an association which spanned more than seven decades. During this time all his former colleagues left the scene and he observed the gap between museum and academic anthropology develop, widen, but then, encouragingly, begin to close. His letters to the Museum were like those from someone who has stayed away in the field too long: they were always completed with the touching postscript, 'Please give greetings to all those who remember me'. The South Australian Museum Board's 1993 decision to name a gallery in his honour may have meant most to him - a 'museum man' to the last.
OBITUARY:

DR CATHERINE HELEN BERNDT, 1918-1994

Bob and Myrna Tonkinson

Dr Catherine Berndt died on May 12, 1994 at her home in Perth. Catherine Helen Webb was born in Auckland, New Zealand, of Scots, English, Irish and Maori ancestry - though she did not learn of her Maori ancestry until 1986. She was delighted to discover that she was a descendant of the Pokai family, whose ancestors are believed to have reached New Zealand in the Tainui canoe. Catherine became a devotee of anthropology while a young student in her New Zealand homeland and over a fifty year period made a major contribution to her discipline, becoming a world authority on Aboriginal Australia and enjoying a distinguished international reputation.

Catherine Berndt's academic credentials were impeccable: a B.A. from Victoria University College, Wellington in 1939; an M.A. with first class honours from the University of Sydney in 1949; a Ph.D from the London School of Economics in 1955; an honorary doctorate from The University of Western Australia in 1983; and in addition to several major anthropological prizes, national recognition for her contribution to anthropology with the award of the Order of Australia in 1987.

Catherine attributed her abiding interest in anthropology to several sources: growing up in a bicultural society, hearing missionaries preach about far-off places and people, and reading the many anthropology books her father brought home. All these factors stimulated a keen interest in cultural differences and the challenge of explaining them. Her upbringing had emphasised the basic equality of the sexes along with the need for reform, and her mother strongly supported her ambition to become an anthropologist, so her later work with Aboriginal women was no doubt stimulated by these background influences.

In 1940, Catherine went to study anthropology in Sydney under Professor A.P. Elkin, where she met fellow student Ronald M. Berndt, and soon realised the extent of their common interests and strong motivation to forge careers in anthropology. They married in 1941, and thus began one of the most productive professional partnerships in the history of anthropology. In careers spanning a half century, involving years of fieldwork in several different locations in Australia, as well as a highly productive period on the frontier in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, the Berndts became leading figures in their profession. Almost all their fieldwork was conducted as a team, and they discussed their ideas and shared insights as a matter of course. Regardless of whether the resulting publications appeared under single or joint authorship (and there were plenty of both), everything they produced bore the imprint of what had clearly been, at some level, their collaborative endeavour. Catherine worked predominantly among women, while Ron focused his research on men, and both were formidably energetic and effective researchers, as the massive body of data gathered by them indicates. Catherine likened their together-but-separate research strategy to what she has always proposed as the fundamental principle of gender relationships in Aboriginal Australia: independence of the sexes within an overarching societal framework of interdependence.

Professor Bob and Dr Myrna Tonkinson teach Anthropology at the University of Western Australia.
Fieldwork for Catherine began with a period of joint research in a remote Western Desert community at Ooldea, South Australia, in the early 1940s. Later fieldwork with descendants of the Narlinyeri people in the lower River Murray area and in a survey of communities elsewhere in South Australia, led to an intensification in her strong interest in the study of Aboriginal women and in processes of change and transformation in Aboriginal societies. Later research in northern Australia led to her first international single-authored publication, a major study of women's religious activity, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia* (1950). This was the first issue of what was to become a famous monograph series, *Cahiers de l'Homme*. In his laudatory introduction, Claude Levi-Strauss, praised Catherine for her landmark work, which he saw as an important contribution to the sociology of religion, bringing to European anthropologists a vibrant, accessible account of women's religious activities set in a context of sociocultural change. Levi-Strauss praised her work not only for its theoretical strengths but also for breaking the European stereotype of Aboriginal Australians as imprisoned in static and rigid institutional forms.

As a result of her research in a number of different Aboriginal communities throughout Australia, and her numerous publications, Catherine Berndt became an internationally respected authority on religion and on the role of women. Her writings have contributed much, also, to the understanding of marriage, the family and socialisation in both Australia and Melanesia. Catherine also pursued another of her major interests: oral literature as manifested in mythology and stories. Her Ph.D topic, 'Myth in Action', was based on her fieldwork in Papua New Guinea (about which she and Ron wrote a fascinating account that appears in a recent volume of early fieldworkers in the highlands, edited by Terry Hays and entitled *Ethnographic Presents*). Catherine wrote widely on, and contributed significantly to, the anthropology of myth; she also played a large part in developing oral literature as a field of study in Australia. Two important works, both co-authored with Ron, are *The Barbarians* (1971) and *The Speaking Land: Myth and Story in Aboriginal Australia* (1989). Catherine was particularly interested in children's literature, and her accurate translations of traditional stories appeared in several beautifully illustrated publications, aimed at Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children alike. Winning a Children's Book Award for one such publication was a source of great pride and satisfaction to her.

Both Catherine and Ron Berndt wrote a great deal about 'traditional' Aboriginal Australia, and their textbook *The World of the First Australians*, after numerous editions, remains the major anthropological reference work on Aboriginal Australia. They had an equally strong interest in social change and in depicting the realities of poverty, racism and continuing oppression as they affected Aboriginal people in contemporary Australian society. Many of their publications, such as *From Black to White in South Australia* (1951) - a title that Catherine could never abide - and *End of an Era* (1987) dealt with these topics, and in them one of Catherine's particular concerns was to document the impact of change on Aboriginal women and children.

When the Berndts moved to Perth in 1956, they began the task of establishing anthropology there, and eventually Ronald Berndt became Foundation Professor of Anthropology at The University of Western Australia in 1963. The rapid growth of the subject at UWA was facilitated significantly by Catherine's efforts, first as Visiting Tutor and later as Visiting Lecturer, and she was an important influence on a generation of students there. Like many of her female contemporaries, Catherine never held a tenured, full-time position. To this degree, her professional life was lived in the shadow of her husband, and the true extent of her massive contribution to Aboriginal studies has probably been somewhat hidden. What is clear, however, is that the unstinting labours of the
Catherine Berndt, whose lives were truly devoted to anthropology and to each other, were an inextricably intertwined endeavour.

The death of Ronald Berndt severed that remarkable partnership and left Catherine profoundly bereft, but from the outset, she vowed that what would keep her going was the large number of unfinished projects she had promised Ron she would complete. It was a very difficult battle, as her health deteriorated, but her determination to go on working was only blunted, and never extinguished. One of her greatest regrets was that she was unable to continue to visit Balgo, Elcho Island and other places in Arnhem Land to see her many cherished friends. However, Catherine did work on, and one of her major achievements was to bring to fruition a commitment she and Ron had made to Aboriginal people decades earlier. The Yaraldi volume was a huge project that had occupied her and Ron for several years prior to his death in 1990. It resulted in *A World That Was: The Yaraldi of the Murray River and the Lakes, South Australia* (1993). This magnificent volume was based on fieldwork done by her and Ron a half century earlier. A richly detailed account of a fascinating society and culture as they functioned in the last decades of the 19th century, this book is undoubtedly the last of its kind in Aboriginal Studies. Its publication gave Catherine a great sense of satisfaction in having finally fulfilled the promise to make this wonderful material available, not only to the descendants of the Narrinyeri people, but to all Australians.

As many people have remarked, using the title of one of the many books written by the Berndts, Catherine's death really marks the end of an era, and it is difficult to imagine the anthropological scene in Western Australia - and in the nation as a whole - without two of its leading players. If there is a hereafter, then Ron and Catherine are again united after but a brief hiatus, and we can be assured that much is being planned - and the work is continuing.
THE STRUGGLE FOR GRACE:
AN APPRECIATION OF KEVIN JOHN GILBERT

Gordon Briscoe

Kevin John Gilbert died on 1 April 1993 from a debilitating respiratory illness. He was an acclaimed Australian writer and he takes his place at the heart of 'the Australian national tradition'. During his life, however, he was an enigma to Australians, Aborigines and other Australians alike.

The term 'the Australian national tradition' is a feature of Russel Ward's writing, by which I mean a nation's conception of itself, and I am using this because it is typical of the way many Aborigines lived: people of Aboriginal descent helped, too, to create that legend. This self-conception was important because it influenced the way people acted, whether collectively or by themselves. And as in nations which perceive certain patterns of behaviour as typical of themselves, so the Australian national character, or tradition, makes that character a real one. This character, like Ward's legend, found its shape most notably in the rural hinterlands of Australian pastoralism. It was in areas like this that many Aborigines, including Gilbert, were raised from childhood to adulthood.

Before being released from prison in 1971, he managed to develop a public profile even though his art was difficult to comprehend. In part, only a handful of people understood the subjects on which he wrote. In part also, it was not easy to gain his confidence sufficiently to be able to understand the life of the man himself. Few people were able to do so. Nor did he reveal much. The world was able to sense, however, a self-admiration with which only a few other people concurred. Gilbert's life from the time of his imprisonment in 1957 can be seen as a struggle for grace. It was a goal which he never quite achieved — for this both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians are responsible.

This feeling of public guilt was nowhere more obvious than at Gilbert's memorial service outside the old parliament house, when mourners were already creating an icon of him. Successive eulogies were delivered. It was plain to me that he meant different things to different people. That, presumably, is something from which everyone suffers. Nevertheless, at this ceremony, the icon changed hands and each time it did so a different image appeared. A truly critical evaluation of his works would reveal much about the motives of his uncritical patrons and flatterers, who had something to gain by promoting him to the Australian public.

Gordon Briscoe was born in a Native Institution near Alice Springs. He was involved in Aboriginal politics in Sydney from 1964 to 1972 and was the first President of the Aboriginal Medical Services in Redfern. He is currently a PhD candidate in the Research School of Social Science, ANU, and is writing a thesis entitled 'Disease, health and healing, the history of the provision of health services to indigenous people in WA and Qld 1900 to 1940'.

Kevin Gilbert became known to most Australians when, in the late 1960s, the art world saw an exhibition of his lino cuts produced while he was in prison serving life for the murder of his white Australian wife. In addition, his literary skills formed part of the idea that Gilbert was a talented Aboriginal writer who had been unjustly treated and should be released on parole. In 1971 he was released and gained wide publicity for his writings and his political activities from then to his death on 1 April 1993.

This appreciation hopes to throw some light on the man by discussing first, my personal view, second, the literary authenticity of what he wrote about, and third, the public Kevin Gilbert.

Kevin Gilbert: a personal introduction

It is not easy for people who classify themselves as Aboriginal Australians to pass judgement on other Aborigines and their lives. Although of Aboriginal descent, I do not find it easy to fit into the position of toryism — the retention of rights and power by occupying a place as part of the establishment and the status quo, due to birth — that Aboriginal Australians find so comfortable to occupy today. I hope, as I believe Kevin would have wanted, to safeguard his contribution to the Australian literary tradition and to prevent his memory from becoming a fetish. Kevin Gilbert was essentially a 'cherry picker' by inclination — an itinerant rural worker, and that was the world he knew best. The title he chose for his first literary success was *The Cherry Pickers*, a name and an idea fitting for the author as well. He tried desperately to live up to ideologies of his own making and not to the idealised reconstruction of those white reformers who really made him (notably H.C. Coombs, Diane Barwick and Stewart Harris). His life tells us a great deal about being a 'cherry picker'. It tells us very little about what it was like being an Aboriginal person affected by a life-time's struggle against state legislative controls.

I first came in contact with Kevin when I was treasurer of the federal government funded magazine *Aboriginal Identity* in 1971-1972. I was also a field officer for the Aboriginal Legal Service and president of the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern. Mrs Barry Ovenden, the temporary editor of *Identity*, assisted him to handle the transition from release from gaol to editor. I met him the day after his release but did not see him again for about six months. Kevin was involved in establishing his magazine, *Alchuringa*, which he affectionately called the 'little Alcha'.

The news in 1971 that Gilbert was to be released from prison was greeted with a strong feeling of scepticism by Aborigines living in Sydney at the time, particularly those living in Redfern. They were wary because they had never experienced such a display of public leniency towards any person identifying as an Aborigine. They were used to discrimination rather than favours and under the circumstances they had not been confident he would ever be released from gaol. They were cautious about his new found Aboriginal identity. Younger people had never heard of him because of their isolation in the country towns from which they had recently migrated, while older people remembered his trial in 1957 and the circumstances of his conviction. Even in 1971 they were not ready to display public or private compassion towards him. There were a number of reasons that could have explained their fears: they could have been attributed to their Christian morality. Or it may have been due to their defensiveness against a reaction from the white people of Sydney with whom they came in contact in their daily lives.

What heightenened their fear was Gilbert's decision to begin publishing *Alchuringa*, a magazine canvassing Aboriginal issues. The old political movers and shakers like Roy Carroll and Ken Brindle knew of the old magazine *Altjuringa* and that it was used for the

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3 Historically the term referred to Catholic Monarchists in 1680 England, but by 1832 they became Conservatives and part of the Imperial establishment. Today Aborigines throughout Australia have become part of the status quo in Australian politics as well as part of the landed classes, and in these terms I use the term as an analogy to people who inherit power, land and property by way of the lottery of birth. See Elliott 1977, pp.463-464.


5 Harris 1979.
THE STRUGGLE FOR GRACE

political vanguard of the 1940s and 50s. They recalled that people wanted equality with white rural dwellers, permanent employment, a better standard of living and, above all, respect. Gilbert seemed to them to challenge both the old view of advancement and the hard fought idea of civil rights. These ideas, they feared, would be replaced with those of 'black nationalism'. Rather than racial togetherness Gilbert was preaching a new religion of difference and specialness. In his literary works and political ideologies he portrayed increasingly narcissistic and surrealistic forms, which I discuss below.

Soon after his release he married his second wife Cora, to whom he acknowledged much for his first polemical work, Because A White Man'll Never Do It (1973). This book was in the tradition of Studs Terkel's Hard Working Times (1970), for which Terkel interviewed hundreds of working people in the western areas of the United States. Handled by Gilbert, such work was essentially a didactic piece of populist journalism, in which ordinary people revealed their innermost feelings on simple fundamentalist themes. For its author, the book was something of 'the education of Kevin Gilbert'. It was about Aboriginal Australian people, from whom he claimed descent. This transformation, as explained below, took a long time and began with the tragedy of his first wife's murder.

At the age of twenty-three he was arrested, tried and sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of his wife. In his writings he never named her, referring to her in Living Black, (1978, p.243), his second political work, simply as 'a European'. His story was that poverty, grog, work fatigue and domestic arguments brought him down, and led him to murder — nothing more was said about her.

Gilbert was born at Condobolin, NSW, in 1933. The family were small property owners, but the depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s forced them, like many other small-holders, to travel in search of casual labouring work. The whole family travelled and was employed casually as fruit and vegetable pickers, small contract labourers, scrub clearers, ring-barkers, rabbit trappers and fencers.

These hard times moving from place to place made alienation a way of life. To add to his pre-adolescent loneliness, at the age of seven his mother and father died suddenly, leaving him at the mercy of the New South Wales welfare system. This part of his past becomes blurred and difficult to reconstruct. What he claimed was that:

when my parents died ... [my] oldest sister took care of the family, but subsequently the children were put into homes. [I] went to Sydney for a time then returned to the country.6

He wrote that he spent some time also at the Catholic children's home for 'State Wards' at Cowra. We know that he experienced a difficult adolescent period, the effects of which must have been extremely traumatic. This shaped both his actions and his ideologies. To Kevin, the world manifested its horror in simple black-white, and good-bad, terms. To him, the past was real, and on this point he was a fundamentalist.

His heritage included descent from the Kamilaroi and the Wiradjuri peoples of central and northern New South Wales. This heritage came from his mother, born Clara Naden. Although he never revealed it, Naden is an Afghan name, and from what Gilbert recalled, it was possible that his mother may have been of Afghan descent. The Afghans operated the network of camel transport from the 1860s to the 1920s in western New South Wales. And although she died when he was seven, he said he always considered that, of his immediate family, he was the darkest of her children. From his mother, too, he inherited the awareness

that his kinfolk were 'those lovely little black relatives of mine on the Condobolin Aboriginal Reserve'.

What became of the Afghan people and their descendants? I am not accusing Gilbert of being a person of no Aboriginal descent, but stimulating enquiry into his immediate and long-term past. One explanation was that, being non-Whites, they inter-married and identified as Aborigines. The depression of the 1890s forced many groups of mixed racial descent onto welfare relief. By the 1920s, there was no way of distinguishing between the new ethnic groupings such as Afghans, Persians, Chinese, Japanese, South Sea Islanders and Europeans, many of whom inter-married with Aborigines. As a result many were moved to reserves. Many of the children were moved to state institutions, or state government Aboriginal reserves. If they escaped the clutches of the police and welfare authorities, as many families with light complexions did, they occupied vacant land where life was free and the cost of living was low.

From his white parentage Gilbert inherited his understanding of the value of property ownership, although the property amounted to only four acres [2 ha] on Goobang Creek. The family's expectation about the property is never revealed. In general, the family had to move around the district in search of work. This characteristic intensified during the depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, and forced them, like many other small-holders, to travel more widely in search of casual labouring work. The search took them mainly to the Riverina district, between Dareton, Wilcannia and Leeton, in search of pea and grape picking. They travelled by horse and buggy and lived in caravans along the Murrumbidgee and Murray-Darling river basins and the mallee country between.

In this sense Gilbert was something of an Australian 'Huckleberry Finn'. For example, while travelling, he wrote, 'every year we'd go across the Riverina district to Leeton ... to pick peas and grapes. There were days of crossing red sand ridges of the mallee country, ... chasing rabbits, watching huge kangaroos watching us, mallee-hen hunting, looking for bower-bird nests and emu eggs. Always searching for game, ... helping to keep something in the larder; seeing our group swim the rivers to reach a sheep or cattle station to buy fresh meat or flour or tea. And when there was no money ... hoping ... [for someone] who'd fill your sugar bag with tucker.' At Leeton, the very poor seasonal workers and the Aborigines used to camp on Wattle Hill where, he recalled later, there was piped water, toilets and a shower block. Aborigines began making these places their living areas in the 1960s. Immediately prior to, and following, World War II such places were used mainly by poor whites or people exempted from the New South Wales Aborigines Protection legislation.

While Gilbert spent his youth under the care of the New South Wales welfare system to him it was not a haven but a form of incarceration. By the time he was fourteen he fled the institutional life to return to what he thought was a comfortable and familiar fringe-camp life with itinerant rural casual labour groupings. What originally drove him back to fringe-camp life was the imagined freedom and comradeship. These camps were located on rent free land on the fringes of towns. This was not so much freedom, however, as an escape from collective responsibility. In seeking it he was fleeing the horrors of real life.

Reflecting on his past, Gilbert believed that his Aboriginal identity was the driving force of his return to the itinerant labourer's life. His Aboriginal connections, however, were not the crucial ones. As a young man he had married a white woman, and the marriage

7 Gilbert 1978, p.240.
9 For an extensive study of the effects and coverage of the Aborigines Protection legislation see Rowley 1971.
produced two children together with pain and torment. After killing her in 1957 he spent fourteen years in a number of prisons. In my view, he reconstructed himself in prison through studying journalism, theology and anthropology, together with the study of linocut, and literary art forms.  

Journalism provided him with two important attributes, first, a capacity to write prose, second, an ability to search out information, and then write a story based on that material. Gilbert suffered from a hatred of editors. Like his friend and mentor Xavier Herbert, for example, Gilbert believed that his own editing was sufficient, and so he refused to have his work edited further. Unfortunately, he was not alone in that respect: other writers who identify as Aborigines believe that they are more important than their texts. These writers see editorial amendments as an attack on themselves. Their refusal of editorial changes may satisfy their sense of personal integrity but betrays an underlying insecurity. A more important problem is that the reader suffers.

Anthropology provided Gilbert with an entry to the literature of traditional Aboriginal society. It was a book learning acquired second hand in gaol, however, which denied him a complementary fieldwork experience. It was in gaol, therefore, that he picked up his ideas about traditional Aboriginal society. Gilbert went into gaol a 'cherry picker'. In gaol he metamorphosed, emerging as an Aborigine. Most people born and raised in non-Aboriginal society, as Gilbert had been, held little appreciation of the classical Aboriginal society. This was evident in his literary work characterised by naivety in his two polemical books Living Black and Because a White Man'll Never Do It. In the latter work, he wrote that:

the inheritance of land was totally secure, a never-ending state of possession that extended generation after generation to all those born within the material and spiritual boundaries of their tribal area. Each member of the tribe had his rights and responsibilities — the right to sustenance from the land and responsibility for its ritual upkeep.

This statement is not applicable, in any universal sense, to Aborigines across Australia. The reason for this was that land areas were not necessarily transferable from one group, or individual, to another. There were large tracts of land which many groups seldom, or never, used. Furthermore, ownership was never guaranteed as Europeans know the word. Inheritance is a Judao-Christian concept that cannot be applied to 'land-use systems' as practised by bush people. There were tracts of land that, through death, could never be reoccupied, or even passed on. Finally, words such as 'tribe', 'spiritual boundaries' and 'responsibilities for ritual upkeep' are anthropological inventions and, while they helped Gilbert to appear learned, were terms which could never be applied in any modern political sense to existing groups. The distribution of land to contemporary groups is a political act. Like most reforms of modern land tenure, it is highly selective and benefits only the few.

In addition, in these two works, many of the informants were like the author: marginalised people, non-traditional Blacks with little understanding either of classical Aboriginal society or of the wider non-Aboriginal society. The most his books can claim to represent is, therefore, the narrow view of the marginalised.

Kevin Gilbert's writing and his literary authenticity

Gilbert died in Canberra of emphysema on Thursday 1 April 1993. To some, emphysema is a progressively debilitating disease, to Gilbert it was a handicap he refused to accept, and his refusal epitomised his whole being. It made him an enigma. Instead of

confronting his past he sought refuge behind a literature used to construct his own Aboriginal identity. Gilbert based his literature, as I will reveal, on theological, political and anthropological idealisations. He alienated white Australians because he humiliated them in public and made them uncomfortable. Aboriginal Australians alienated him because they harboured doubts about the sincerity of his remorse for murdering his first wife. Nowhere is Kevin's struggle more clearly expressed than in the words:

I married a European girl. ... There were fights and poverty and jealousy. It ultimately led to a brawl in the middle of the night along some country road.

I was pissed, she was tired and despairing and I grabbed a rifle ... the jury in Dubbo called it murder. Five defence witnesses weren't called, and me, an Abo in a hick country town - what was more natural than to receive a sentence for life?12

This statement tells the reader more about Kevin than do his other literary works. This is the self-pitying Gilbert, the one who laments 'poor-bugger me', on the one hand, but on the other shows an apparent lack of pity for the woman whom he killed. Curiously, since he spent 14 years in gaol for the killing of his first wife, his writing evinces no sense of remorse. It is as if Gilbert was saying 'she was only a white female so it didn't really matter! This attitude is surely just as obnoxious as that of the people who regarded him as 'just an Abo in a hick country town!' The passage reveals a surprising lack of self-awareness and self-reflection. Like much of his output it is journalistically superficial. It is clever in conveying impressionistic and emotional glimpses of a fading life in rural areas of Australia unfamiliar to many readers, perhaps, but remains bereft of analysis.

Gilbert's greatest literary weakness, however, was his failure to probe the reasons for the rural poverty he experienced before going to gaol. He left a strong impression of life on fringe-camp allotments and some government reserves, including the experience of rough justice. He raged against authority. He did not go beyond reporting what he and his informants felt subjectively comfortable in expressing. Truly memorable journalism should at least attempt more. It might start by analysing why it was that many Aborigines had to be itinerant casual labourers who lived not on reserves but on vacant marginal land. It might analyse the legislative constraints to show how inflexible were the post-World War II employment prospects in the rural sector preventing Aboriginal labour mobility. Gilbert's identity as an Aborigine was essentially a reconstruction relying on his journalism for its authentication. It was an identity that he discovered in the isolation and solitude of prison, a factor which his play reveals.

**Kevin Gilbert the 'cherry picker'**

Gilbert idealised his past life as a 'cherry picker', a rural labourer, in his seminal play, *The Cherry Pickers*, which purported to deal with 'the realisation of everyday life'.13 In its original form, the play received critical acclaim as a great contribution to Australian literature. As time went by the play was transformed to represent 'nationalist' symbolisms, which detracted from its original universal appeal.

The essentialism and particularism underpinning his only published play determined Gilbert's future theory as well as his practice, and both are discussed below. Moreover, in wanting to portray everyday life Gilbert determined that he would do so through his liberal populist and surrealist perspectives. What emerged in *Because A White Man'll Never Do It*, and *Living Black*,14 was a type of surrealistic and populist reporting that focused on the

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14 Gilbert 1978.
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'socio-political' rural struggles, and ultimately on 'sovereignty'. This concept, it will be revealed, was for Gilbert both political and cultural, but was not integrated into an appreciation of the 'economic-cultural' side of Aboriginal contemporary life. In doing so, he revealed a non-class understanding of the socio-political order. The problem with this type of literary structuring is that the 'socio-economic' condition of life is always omitted. The reader is not told how political effects are materially and specifically secured, and so we are given a vulgarised version of a political and cultural life bereft of economic explanations, due to Gilbert's 'disabling disregard for multiple, local, but not necessarily unconnect[ed], political struggles'.

Gilbert the journalist

Gilbert tried to convey the idea he was there on location - at the event - and that there was nothing like 'being there'; but in his polemical literature he never localised his Aboriginal informants. His informant is, indisputably, in his or her own habitat or home location, which reassures readers they can trust the writer. But Gilbert is not there as just a reporter. Journalism for Gilbert meant proselytising the informant as well as the reader.

Some of Gilbert's journalistic problems are revealed in the following piece he wrote on Pearl Gibbs:

One day, Aborigines will stop living and dying in hope. When that day happens, land rights will come, our people will look at history and historic figures and we'll see Pearl again, in an Aboriginal Hall of Fame together with Bill Ferguson, Bert Groves, Charley Leon and our tribal patriots, and the patriots starving now in parks, chained on the reserves, battlers battling in the Streets of Redfern, Moree, Woodenbong, Canberra, Brewarrina, Bourke, Nowra, Dubbo, Condobolin, Cowra.

This is all moving rhetoric for a particular type of reader, and particularly to uncritical Aborigines who lack a self-constructed ideology. For such readers 'land' was a powerful political symbol representing political and ideological independence. The use of terms such as 'our people dying in parks and kept in chains on reserves' appealed to Aboriginal readers' emotions of the past. Likewise, it nurtured readers' resentments of a perceived social degradation. It promoted the manipulation of the guilt feelings of both white and black readers. On the one hand, whites were made to feel guilty for an unexplained past. On the other hand, blacks were publicly ostracised because they failed to act on his moral rhetoric.

Of one person he wrote:

I wonder, Evonne, when you're playing straight sets
And you 'haste' your opponent so well,
Do you ever look back at your grandmother, black
And catch glimpses of her in her hell?

We are not told anything about how Gilbert wanted to provide a material subsistence for people who were to occupy the land he wanted returned. Nor are we told that Pearl Gibbs, Bill Ferguson and Bert Goves were members of the Aborigines Welfare Board, a body despised by many Aboriginal people. Their membership of this Board chaired by Professor A.P. Elkin, and which administered the Aboriginal Protection (Amendment) Act 1943 for the New South Wales Government, Gilbert either omitted or never explained.

17 Greenfield 1985 pp.89-104.
Apparently he preferred the facile manipulation of his readers' emotional proclivities. Yet this is cheap journalism because it evades satisfactory analysis. If Gilbert is the best writer the Aboriginal movement can produce, then the movement clearly has a long way to go!

**Gilbert the theologian**

Theology was the third element in Gilbert's self-reconstruction. It is uncertain what theological literature he read, but from that reading, and from his second-hand perceptions of traditional Aboriginal spiritual beliefs, he synthesised a loose body of quasi-religious thought I shall call 'theology'. It combined a sense of a creator spirit with an assertion of the universality of Aboriginal spiritual values (however defined) together with a reverence for the 'the dreaming' and a belief in a 'promised land' (sovereignty). I will elaborate on these themes below.

Gilbert had a particular viewpoint on religion, and it was one he attempted to press on his readers. He claimed in an interview with Caroline Jones that he spoke directly to God. He wrote in a very personal way,

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I know I cannot question Thee
The mighty who hast made the earth and the skies
Yet still a tiny voice squeaks from my heart
Squeaks terrified.20
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This humility is short lived because he then asked a series of questions about being able to look at the world through human eyes and to see different people with different colours.

Theology, which Gilbert studied in prison, contributed towards his emerging new identity in a number of significant ways. First, he learnt the importance of how to convince people to believe in what he was telling them through the use of syllogisms containing spiritual metaphors, and rhetoric he injected into the text. Second, he learnt that there were a number of simple ideological constructs of biblical origin on which to build other ideas that appear to be historically based. These appealed to some form of symbolic and identifiable object - genealogy, or an object which appeared concrete such as compensation or money and land. Third, theology helped Gilbert identify aspects of what anthropologists like Stanner, Berndt and Bell, called 'Aboriginal religion', or what might appear to represent a set of identifiable religious values. He proposed that the future form of organisation of society should be based on Aboriginal sovereignty.21 In this way Gilbert preached a form of traditionalism.

Gilbert evinced a deep respect for an authority which he believed emanated from traditional 'lore'. Tribalism, classic Aboriginalism, held a certain prestige both for him and for the middle classes.22 A number of writers have contributed to debate the question of what they have labelled 'Aboriginality'; and Gilbert, too, did so in the late 1970s.23

Gilbert accepted funding and monetary support from whomever offered it. He was careful not to be labelled a communist, and he could never be described as being a socialist. In fact he was openly hostile to both overseas socialists and international revolutionaries who came to gather support for their cause in Australia. What he argued was that white Australians were 'racist' (a term he used often but never explained)24 and, therefore, for others to seek Australians' support was tantamount to supporting racism. Much of Gilbert's own rhetoric was very racist: the irony was that, in railing against racism, he

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20 Gilbert 1990, p.89.
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demonstrated himself to be racially bigoted. For Gilbert and his uncritical supporters, it
seemed that only whites could be racist. Such a position, of course, is the epitome of racial
bigotry.

Although he never really understood what class barriers meant (a meaning he might
have expressed as the haves and the have nots), these social structures were important to
Gilbert. His main early focus of attack was on the rural propertied elite class which he
remembered from the late 1950s. But this powerful class was not his only target. He also
attacked the emergent Aboriginal bureaucratic class centred in Canberra. In part, it appeared
to observers that he was jealous because federal governments were never prepared to make
him their confidant. It should not be forgotten, however, that he was employed as a
consultant to advise the New South Wales Wran Labor government in drawing up the
recommendations on a proposal for recognising land title for Aborigines in that state.

In part also, he saw the burgeoning black 'compradors'\(^{25}\) as serving a master other than
the one he advised them to follow. For example, Gilbert wrote of this small influential
group:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{That man has a price, can be bought} \\
\text{The government wage now ensuring} \\
\text{A people's fight won't be fought.}^{26}
\end{align*}
\]

Such misanthropy towards other Aborigines tended to display Gilbert's ambivalence
towards himself. Each of his three wives were white women; he accepted numerous
government grants from the early 1970s.

Discipline was a quality he admired and in many respects he was unable to recognise
that quality in the Aborigines he saw in their real social surroundings. His idealisation of
them from his readings in prison fell flat soon after his release from gaol. Nevertheless,
never softened either his viewpoint or his rhetoric towards them. But the people who
appeared to have captured his admiration were mostly white. The group included Cora
Gilbert (nee Walther), Diane Barwick, Nugget Coombs, Xavier Herbert and Stewart Harris.
These were people who appealed to his egoism, who were themselves radical conservatives
of the tory mould (that is, they supported the election of a particular form of government and
then fearlessly resisted change, in this case, Labor policies of the 1970s electoral platform)
and who supported him in both life and death. These people were, in their tough­
mindedness towards the upper classes, the ones he admired most.

The types of Blacks who drew his support were those who saw Aboriginal custom as
something tangible, not an abstraction, a culture inheritable by birth rather than education.
This attitude is really a form of fetishism. What many Aboriginal people call 'culture',
therefore, was also characteristic of Gilbert's later attitudes. He turned entrepreneurially
towards raising money through selling traditional paintings as symbols of culture rather
than as art forms. Art featured more as an after-thought to the real concerns of 'blood, land

\(^{25}\) The comprador class are people who are resident outside the areas where the groups they
support reside. For example, the term normally applies to people who live abroad but
support a dominant class in their country of origin. In the Chinese case they sympathised
with the Chinese Government of Mao Tse-tung who arranged for the importation of foreign
capital. In the case of Aborigines they are people who may (whether misguided or not)
believe that they can only support Aborigines by becoming bureaucrats because they are
not wealthy enough to support them on their own capital.

\(^{26}\) Gilbert 1990, p.87. The footnote reads 'Dedicated to the black Activists who are no longer
active. To those who have sold out for jobs and perks. ... Those who have refused to bring
about a new strike for land rights on Australia Day 1977 - at a time when it has never been
more necessary'.
and community', all of great prominence in the romanticism of his play, poetry and polemics.

The strange feature of Kevin Gilbert's following was that it consisted mainly of a small group of mostly white liberal humanists rather than any Aboriginal groups. The latter were more or less forced to accept Gilbert reading his verse to small captive audiences at the Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and National Aborigines Day Observance celebrations. He moved his home to Canberra in order to peddle his ideas, his literature and himself. He used the rhetoric of an imagined leader of a great (but non-existent) mass movement, and he loved the centre stage in front of Parliament House where publicity (like his family's living on vacant Council land) was free.

Historically, there may be at least two reasons why the nationalist ideologies which Gilbert believed in were not easily assimilated by Aboriginal Australians. Firstly, Aboriginal Australians are not a politically aware group who can easily identify authoritarian nationalist sentiments. Secondly, Gilbert appealed to a group whose political awareness was still influenced by both a belief in government legislation and traditionalism. Although a picture has emerged of a figure who espoused an ideology of regressive and atavistic nationalism, Gilbert was swept along by circumstances not of his own making. As Bernard Smith noted,

during the past twenty years or so a spirit of nationalism [appears to have been] uniting people of Aboriginal descent. ... Whether the Aboriginal people constitute today a nation within a nation is arguable; but there can be little doubt that it is now the most important and vocal national minority in the country, is growing in strength and confidence daily, and is developing widespread international connections.

Bernard Smith's perceptions were excessively romantic. Furthermore, he was misled by the noise of political opportunism rather than the existence of any spirit which united Aboriginal Australians. The nationalism Smith spoke of was non-existent then and is the same today.

Kevin Gilbert the populist

Populism manifests itself throughout the world in various forms and has its roots in ideas expressed by people from Machiavelli to Foucault. Australian populism emerged from liberal traditions of New South Wales Labor politics in the nineteenth century. Nineteen-sixties radical politics in that state was an important manifestation of radical populism, to which the politics of Aboriginal Affairs was intrinsically connected.

Gilbert's populism cut across class divisions and appealed to ideological categories (that is, ideas which appeal to people's own perceptions of themselves such as in the verses cited below, but are not themselves an ideology). It called on Aborigines to assert themselves against what he saw as corrupt ruling elites (black or white) who maintain their power by conspiratorial cunning. He focused on enterprises on the land and emphasised myths about the strengths and virtues of traditional culture. These were the strategies

28 Bern 1979, pp.118-131. This paper is instructive for groups of urbanised Aborigines whose political consciousness is affected by 'false consciousness'.
29 Smith 1980, p.36.
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adopted by the nineteenth century norodniki (or historic Russian populist ideologues).32 The problem with Gilbert's populism was the belief that the 'social relations' of the Aboriginal producers (or black workers wherever they existed) were naturally harmonious, and with the elimination of both elite landlords and white oppressors, harmony would be restored.33

Like Jack Davis and Colin Johnson, Gilbert assumed, in what I call 'prose in metre' (or rhyming prose), that he was interpreting a new set of ideas for 'the people'. For example, his use of mythology is typified by the verse:

Look, Koori
Look to the dawn, dark brother
Look to your knife and gun
Look to your martyrs stepping forth

Look at your patriot's grave
Look to the justice they have done
Before yourselves grow brave.

Rise to the height of a first born son

Look to the new-found Dreaming
Rise as a new-born man

It's better to die than to live a life
As gutless scum, Koori.

This cannot seriously be considered as poetry. Like much of the so-called poetry of protest, it is little more than ranting. It ought really to be laughed out of the anthologies. To say that Gilbert's verse quoted above is poetry is to patronise Aborigines in the worst possible way. It provides for double standards: a critically rigorous standard for Whites and a lower 'empathetic' but uncritical one for Aborigines.

In his early work Gilbert feared that 'a new black consciousness ... [was] going to militate against the part-Aboriginal'. He proceeded to offer a somewhat contradictory corrective through a 'rejection of contraception, a change in the curriculum and a return to anything identifiable as traditionally Aboriginal which, [to him] was all positive or healthy ideas about race'. Such ideas came to Kevin during and after his imprisonment. He assumed, falsely, that these ideas, in the verse above, were constructed to appeal directly to readers and leave them vulnerable to the shock of the final stanza.

Gilbert's populist ideas may also be appreciated in his reaction to a reading of Dr Charles Duguid's Doctor and the Aborigines. He claimed support for his own ideas on 'natural hygiene':

you see dirty, lazy blacks trying to excuse themselves by saying that they refuse to keep themselves or their homes clean because they want, totally, to 'reject white values'. If you don't believe me, if you want tribal authority ...

[see] how the nomadic Aborigines had a good sense of hygiene.34

33 For this interpretation I acknowledge Bongiorno 1993. There is an author's embargo placed on citation of the paper.
34 Gilbert 1973, p.199.
Although one journalist credited Gilbert with extensive knowledge of Aboriginal languages and culture, that was not the case: what Gilbert knew about Aboriginal culture he learned from his readings during his incarceration.

I wanted to educate myself. There was a prison library where you could get three books a week, and I wanted to study some of these subjects which to me were new.35

Most of what Gilbert learned, therefore, was not acquired from personal experience but from what he read of classical Aboriginal society out of travelogues such as the many books by Bill Harney. Other literature included that of Duguid, Norman Tindale and Charles Mountford. Finally, Gilbert must have been influenced by Xavier Herbert, for they were good friends and their attitude to editors was the same.

People who knew the Gilbert family saw his rage as part of his own ideology (or self-perception) and not his heritage. As Gilbert himself wrote in his second work,

My father was white, English-Irish; my mother, Aboriginal-Irish. A mixture like that becomes an interesting family cocktail. Sometimes it becomes a family catastrophe.36

Much of Gilbert's political ideology as well as his social ideas are directly traceable to the shaping, or construction, of the kind of nationalism in his writings. He had the tendency to mix genres such as politics, culture, society and bureaucracy in which liberalism and socialism came uncomfortably together. These problems emerged in his first book:

if we are to build a healthy black society on our little portions, our black Israelis all over this continent, we will need doctors, lawyers, engineers, agriculturalists, accountants, you name it. We all know that reserve kids can't become these things. Because it ruins them, it poisons them - and all blacks, if they want to be honest, admit it. The reserves are pest holes. Trouble is, we don't want the kids off the reserves either.37

Gilbert was constructing a kind of homeland needing workers as a form of black state. This state, it is hinted, would be run on liberal social justice lines. His ambivalence was revealed in combining Aboriginal children and reserve land in the one thought.

He proceeded, in a romantic mode, to suggest forms of worker cooperative gangs based, it would appear, along the lines of socialist-type guilds:

a different spirit would prevail ... through parts of Queensland and Western Australia ... [in] all black construction gangs in road-making, railway building where:

(a) the authorities were full of praise for their workmanship;
(b) morale was at an all-time high;
(c) there was little evidence of conflict from within;
(d) the whole thing built good strong healthy black men that no whites dared mess with.38

Equality, it appeared, it would be enforced on males and females alike. He indicated that 'Blacks have got to make the weak elements shape up or get out'. His authoritarianism in relation to Aboriginal women is clear in his declaration:

the sluts, the child neglecters, the irresponsibles - handled by community ostracism ... if necessary a hiding from other women. It is human values not

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35 The Australian, 8 April 1993.
37 Gilbert 1973 p.194.
38 Gilbert 1973, p.197.
to neglect and starve your kids. It is human values to work hard and contribute to your own community. It is human values to keep your house clean. It is human values to stop your kids from dying. It is human values to maintain a level of conduct commensurate with dignity and pride. It was so in the tribe, it is so today if human development is to have any meaning.\(^{39}\)

There appears to be another overlapping of ideas of socialism and liberalism whereby collectivism and individualism come together with democracy. It must be remembered that he had close relations with prison chaplains who might have explained aspects of his political ideas. His models of the past, present and future took some account of ideas of socialism, liberalism and Christianity that emerge in Australian nationalism. It would not be out of character of the Australian national tradition, therefore, to suggest that Christian socialism and liberalism affected white and Aboriginal rural labour in similar ways, incorporating them both into 'the Australian national tradition'.\(^{40}\)

**Kevin Gilbert the proto-nationalist**

Proto-nationalism refers to a phenomenon of national movements, or the mythology of their existence, which can mobilize certain variants of feelings of collective belonging which already existed and which could operate, as it were, potentially on a macro-political scale which could fit in with modern states and nations.\(^{41}\)

The definition is broad enough to account for Gilbert's nationalism even though it overlaps with other socio-political currents such as 'national-socialism', and nationalism proper.\(^{42}\) Ideas like these were important to the construction of what he came to identify as Aboriginal Sovereignty. Proto-nationalism does not describe him so much as it does the fledgling Aboriginal political groups at which he aimed his rhetoric. He thought that these groups had a potential to assume a body of macro-political proportion. Both he and his mentors were misled because in reality such models did not exist. Gilbert's ideas originated in the breakdown of relations, or alienation, between himself and the rural group with whom he strongly identified. The movement he represented was largely a fabrication. Aboriginal groups in Sydney alienated him immediately on release from prison in 1971, and, later Australian society did likewise.

In addition, Gilbert had two major disillusionments about the world in general. The first was when he escaped the life of the institutions to return to an idealised life as an itinerant rural labourer. The second was as an adult after he felt the alienation of post-prison-release, following the publication of his first literary work.

Gilbert's alienation began by '[being] tossed between stern aunts then snatched by the child welfare system following the death of his mother and father'.\(^{43}\) More than likely the children were regarded as deserted or neglected. He ran away from institutional care and, at the age of fourteen, headed back to what he thought would be the perfect life. By the time he was twenty-three he was behind bars for the murder of his first wife. He blamed the murder on alcohol and his racial mixture. He also blamed his parents for leaving him alone when he needed them most. These are all understandable reactions to his predicament, but it made a loner out of him. Gilbert's individualism was the real force behind his proto-nationalism because he largely acted alone or with small groups and was not accountable to

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40 Briscoe 1993, pp.133-161.
41 Hobsbawm 1990, pp.46-47.
43 *Canberra Times*, 3 April 1993, p.7.
anyone for his actions. What was peculiar about his circumstances, and his literary style, was that he had a collective view of Aborigines as a body of people acting as a group for a common cause.

For example, the idea of 'assimilation', to Gilbert, broke people up. In his first book he wrote

> it is argued that wherever blacks settle as a group, they will form 'another mission' with all the horrors. ... Many blacks agree with this policy ... [but they've] never seen an all-black body with the type of internal discipline. ... Other blacks ... say ... that it can only come in highly specialised circumstances, in black Israels which I have described elsewhere.44

He implied that there was a need for 'black groups' to form their own state-building organisations. The nationalism of both his early and later writings was pregnant with hyperbole. In a simplified pictorial form,45 he appealed to a sense of both Aboriginal nationalism and the possible achievement of Aboriginal 'sovereignty'. There was only one route for his politics to follow:

>'power' remained addressed only in terms of sovereignty [and therefore] any available distinction between populist and ... democratic forms is unable to be constructed, rendering a whole range of possible ... struggle[s] unavailable [as a political strategy].46

The same problem was apparent in the ideas expressed in a pamphlet entitled 'Aboriginal Sovereignty',47 which he edited and distributed. In this pamphlet Gilbert caricatured the whole of Australian society as recognising Aboriginal demands for sovereignty. He portrayed Aborigines as having elaborated their legitimate and just claims for their statehood to be accepted. The function of the ruling body, which he called the 'Sovereign Aboriginal Body', was both to present and legislate for Aborigines throughout Australia.48 First, the basic structure was a colonial one depicting a hierarchical body made up of regional councils with a peak assembly. Second, he incorporated the very colonial structures which he so vehemently opposed. He attempted, therefore, to portray an authentic and representative body, that caricatured people who identified themselves as Aborigines and also demanded forms of sovereignty. No explanation was attempted in the pamphlet of what sovereignty meant.

Such attempts at political organisation through the use of nationalist and proto-nationalist symbolism conform to the Australian national tradition and mirror closely Ward's Australian legend. More simply, these activities are patterned behaviour conditioned by time, circumstance and the political and economic conditions prevailing at the time.49 The limited biographical information on Kevin Gilbert indicates that he conformed to a proto-nationalist process, whose foremost characteristic encapsulates the national character today in its appeal to a mass movement which both government and the media encourage. In the Aboriginal Australian case, however, the movement he professed to represent relied heavily on public support and acceptance: but the movement was largely a myth.

In Gilbert's pamphlet the mystification is continued through the idea of a homogeneity of the Aboriginal ethnic or racial groupings. Of further interest is his use of the term 'cultural self-determination', a sentiment that the writer never defined. These types of

44 Gilbert 1973, p.185.
45 Gilbert 1993.
46 Greenfield, p.98.
sentiments caused problems across most of his literary and political activities. Furthermore, the pamphlet links two characteristics of significance, first, the search and demand for a promised land, ('land rights') and second, a return to a lost and golden past in which the narrow tribalism of ancient times was expanded into 'sovereignty', implying a separate type of Abridgen government. Similarly, these elements featured in his socio-political appeal. This phenomenon was no accident: a number of American black radical political groups are sometimes classified as 'black nationalists'.

Ideas similar to those of this pamphlet appeared in his earlier literary work. For example, he reproduced one of his informant's views that:

Aboriginals should be busy changing [their] situation. Aboriginals should be building a modern Aboriginal culture, something that is meaningful in today's context. This radical re-education of Aboriginals by Aboriginals and at the direction of Aboriginals is vital. We know that a white Australian will never do it.

These sentiments are not revolutionary but separatist. He wanted to have a place where Aborigines could not only be separated from white society but have the trappings also of their religion, their own reconstructed authority to encourage a movement towards traditionalism, and their own system of governance. These are classical nationalist and, therefore, proto-nationalist ideals, but they overlapped with ideas highlighting his alienation.

Gilbert the surrealist

Kevin Gilbert's literary art contained surrealist tendencies. First, he portrayed images to shock the sensibilities of the comfortable middle-class and the rural landed gentry. Second, some of the images were bizarre, reflecting his own alienation. Third, both his polemical writing and verse descended into dream-like worlds. Fourth, he confused the abstract with the concrete metaphors or similes.

Possibly as a result of his introduction to art as occupation in prison, he displayed signs of surrealism through his lino-cutting skills. He possibly came in contact with the great surrealists in his reading on abstract art forms. A characteristic of the early surrealist school was its rejection of middle-class artistic representations. Following the art-world's representation of the post-World War I alienation from middle-class values, a new artistic genre emerged. This new school evolved from works by European artists such as Picasso, Dali and Hans Arp. The last artist, in particular, displayed abstractions which appeared as earthy, simplistic and portraying the essence of the late 1920s school in which he was 'trying to present art as more closely representing every day life', and in particular, the poverty of material life.

Gilbert was drawn to things which society rejected. He was obsessed with dreams and dreaming, and captured by the idea of trans-cultural intuition which would stand against Australianism (that is Australian nationalism but not 'black nationalism'); and, finally, he was possessed with the belief that he knew how to resist prejudice, or racism. In the Australian context he reflected surrealist developments in that he portrayed the idea that 'human thought is humiliated in that it is compelled to note, to affirm, from day to day, a

50 International Encyclopaedia, pp. 63-70. The section under the heading 'nationalism' provides a good explanation of modern day nationalism in the USA and other places.
51 Gilbert 1978, pp. 3-4.
52 International Encyclopedia, p.47.
series of events which have no bearing on rational intelligence and which are related solely to barbarism'.

Other criteria of surrealism emerged at public rallies and demonstrations where Gilbert not only challenged but also mocked white society. He challenged whites by attacking their wealth, their society, and their lack of awareness about the message he was delivering. His verbal tirades were released to his audiences wilfully and at random into every crowd he addressed. In a display of public humiliation - an important criterion of surrealist activists - he mocked both his subjects and his audience as if he was living out art. Unlike other political orators, he mocked Aborigines because he vainly thought he had the answer to their social political, cultural and, most importantly, economic weaknesses perceiving that simply as landlessness. For instance, he chided Aboriginal Australians for their alleged lack of interest in land ownership as an economic base. He set high standards for his audiences by mocking them. This was a strategy for gaining their undivided attention. These traits were sometimes explicit, but mostly they were implicit in his oratory and literature.

Gilbert's genre was prose-commentary, old fashioned, opinion-driven journalism, often using out-worn clichés which other people had dumped. The Cherry Pickers, his first attempt at public exposure, typified the bizarre images of reality that stamped him as a surrealist. In the soliloquy of Act 1, Bungaree, a historic character, has a dialogue with the audience. This represents the mythical or dream-like world coming in direct contact with the real world. It may be dismissed as typical of many plays in its use of ghosts. But the use here is different because the speaker is asking the audience to accept both a legal and a historical argument, neither of which is explained. The audience is then told that it is witness to an event at which it was not present but which will now come to life.

The dream-like world used in The Cherry Pickers is repeated in such poetry as 'My Father's Studio'. In this verse, he wanted his readers to believe that it is his own father speaking to them in a special 'traditional' way. He disguised the fact that his father was a white man. Moreover, he mixes names of language groupings with words of a colloquial nature. This technique gives the impression that the writer is speaking in an Aboriginal language. The reader is asked to accept, in an unreal way, the real words of the dialogue as one taking place directly with a traditional Aboriginal. This technique is not meant to appear to either Aborigines or other Australians, as bizarre. It is meant to appear as a dream-like transmutation. Surrealism, therefore, is manifested throughout Gilbert's artistic presentations. It derives from a European heritage and is merged integrally with his populism. Gilbert skilfully forced Australians to notice him.

Gilbert the icon?

An 'icon' is something that is idolised, stands for something of religious significance and possesses a mystical power that grows with time. There is a danger that Australian commentators and some writers have created an icon of Gilbert. Like Xavier Herbert, he was somewhat of a social recluse. Both writers became alienated from their respective circles of colleagues.

An example of the construction of the Gilbert iconography relates to what three other writers have written about Aborigines and the past. The first of these was the anthropologist Professor W.H. (Bill) Stanner, who, incorrectly, in my view, blamed Australian society for 'the great Australian silence'. Stanner might have added that this
capacity for silence about social responsibility for which he criticised Australians, should have been extended to include Aboriginal Australians. It was their capacity for silence which failed to give Kevin Gilbert the grace he sought.

The second writer to interpret the Aboriginal Australian past incorrectly was Bernard Smith. Smith, as noted above, believed that a radical nationalism was developing among Aboriginal people. What he was observing was the emergence of a few individuals, mainly those of an economistic and opportunistic mould, who emerged as a result of federally funded social and economic policies. These people had been buoyed by their own economism and their false consciousness in general.\(^{56}\)

Smith misled other writers. For instance, a third writer to engage in the mystification of what he calls both an Australian 'Fourth World', and an 'Aboriginal literature' was Adam Shoemaker, who wrote, *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988*.\(^{57}\) In a superficial introduction he observed:

> strong indications of a global trend towards a collectivity of indigenous peoples. ... It is probable that a necessary precondition for full participation of the Australian Aboriginal people in [the] Fourth World movement will be a unified black collectivity within Australia itself. Although the Aboriginal people do not constitute today 'a nation within a nation', it does seem both logical and likely - at least in symbolic terms - that this is precisely the direction in which they are presently heading.\(^{58}\)

What Stanner, Smith, Shoemaker and many other writers have done is to distort the Aboriginal Australian past. Whatever these writers' views are, Aboriginal Australians have, since 1901, been part and parcel of Australian nationalism. Their incorporation by the states began in earnest in the 1920s and ended absolutely in the 1940s.\(^{59}\) The fact that many people tried to maintain the old remnants of traditional life made no difference to their overall dominance by Australian nationalism.\(^{60}\)

Furthermore, Aborigines have never been constituted as a separate state, neither in 1900 nor today, in any reasonable understanding of the historic term. Notwithstanding that, it has become fashionable to speak of, for example, the 'Kulin', 'Yolngu' and 'Kamilaroi' 'nations', as if the various separate 'tribal' (but linguistically related) groups inhabiting Australia, before 1788, constituted politically unified entities. This, of course, was never the case. Even more indicative is the current misuse of terms like 'Koori' and 'Nyungar', which similarly but wrongly impute a nationhood that has never existed.

**Conclusion**

Kevin John Gilbert struggled against adversity in order to achieve self-recognition. What many academics, journalists and the various other writers who promoted him have done, is to turn him into an icon. Equally uncritically, various prominent Aborigines — Dennis Walker, Jack Davis, Robert Bropho, to name a few - have seized on his capacity to draw publicity. For there is not one Gilbert icon but many, each made by the one promoting it, and made to serve the maker's individual purpose.

Gilbert began as a marginalised person, but despite being acclaimed by his flatterers his powerful admirers and a compliant press, he remained a fringe-dweller. He lived and

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\(^{56}\) In using this term, I follow Lenin in Clark, 1988, esp. pp.54-55, where Clark explains Berstein's concentration on economic change and rejects political revolutionary change.

\(^{57}\) Shoemaker 1989, p.4.


\(^{59}\) Stevens 1978. See also Rose 1986.

worked on the margins, never part of traditional Aboriginal society, never in the mainstream organisations for Aboriginal advancement, and never unequivocally a son of the white society from which his father came. His achievements were both undeniable and admirable, but they were not those promoted by his flatterers. Instead, they lay in the nature of his triumph over adversity, and his success in becoming an acclaimed writer despite the inauspicious beginning to his writing career, the long term gaol sentence for the murder of his first wife. In his death he has become an icon to many. Whether the icon can remain intact, particularly when his writing is subjected to rigorous critical appraisal and the details of his career are revealed by some future critical biographer, is a matter for speculation. Kevin Gilbert struggled for grace, and his flatterers and promoters sought to bestow it on him. Whether he achieved it is uncertain. Less certain still is whether, if he did indeed attain grace, would he be allowed to retain it by the unforgiving society that created him.

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The editors invited eleven scholars of Aboriginal Australia, or colleagues of Kevin Gilbert, to respond to the article by Gordon Briscoe. The following four articles were the response.
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Gordon Briscoe's appreciation of Kevin Gilbert is nothing if not boots-and-all. I assume that Aboriginal people can cope with this kind of thoroughly iconoclastic outspokenness and debate. If they can, it is all to the good. The Aboriginal cause is too important, not only to Aborigines but to everyone in this country, to be side-tracked by, however well-meaning, fetish or mystique. We need to keep the reality of Aboriginal lives and struggles before us, not Pellegrini plaster-cast replicas. Having said that, I have every intention of defending Gilbert, whom I knew and respected, against some of the comments of my friend Briscoe. In so doing I naturally fall into Briscoe's trap and in part validate his argument, which is that Gilbert is an icon manufactured by whites. Catch 22 - provided Briscoe's argument is right in the first place.

The argument, as I understand it, goes something like this. No special case should be made out for Gilbert as Aboriginal. Indeed, it may well be that no special case of this sort should be made out for anyone, since we are all subject to socio-economic laws whose determination is prior to determination by race. Thus Gilbert is a rural worker, a 'cherry picker', before he is black. His life requires analysis and critique in the light of class and economics, something which Briscoe believes is lacking in Gilbert's own writing. There is the added complication that, for Briscoe, Gilbert is hardly Aboriginal at all; rather, Aboriginality is that identity he constructs for himself during those deadening prison years. So two mystiques are in operation: the dubious notion of Aboriginality, at least in the form Briscoe labels 'proto-nationalist', and Gilbert's own self-construct. After which a third mystique comes into play: non-Aboriginal people find it politically expedient to construct a black icon, Gilbert as Aboriginal Hero. In reality, says Briscoe, Gilbert is a figure in many ways marginal to the black struggle, best understood when demystified, at which point he appears as rural labourer, journalist, theologian, populist, proto-nationalist and surrealist. I intend to comment on this with emphasis on Gilbert's literary achievement and on the way in which I think Aboriginal cultural products such as writing and art should be 'read'.

It seems to me right and proper to question pious assumptions as Briscoe does, but I remain sceptical about many of the conclusions. In his personal life Gilbert is taken to task for choosing to be a fringe-dweller and, more pointedly, for killing his first wife. Both acts implicitly relate to Briscoe's larger argument about Gilbert's separatist, even supposedly racist, attitudes. It is as if Briscoe's Gilbert chooses to be non-white, first by refusing the social assimilation of the welfare system, then by an actual and symbolic murder, and finally by a willed metamorphosis — white to black — while in prison. These are harsh judgements and only someone with an intimate knowledge of Gilbert could possibly comment on them. I note, however, that Briscoe's quotation of the passage from Living Black which describes the killing runs as follows: 'I was pissed, she was tired and despairing and I grabbed a rifle ....' In fact the actual passage on p. 243 of the 1977 Allen Lane and the 1978 Penguin editions reads: 'I was pissed, she was tired and despairing and grabbed a rifle ....' Did anyone other than Gilbert know exactly what took place in the

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middle of that terrible night? Whatever it was, I doubt it was morally straightforward. Is the omission of the subject-I from the text a mere slip or a complex Freudian one? Is it a slip at all?

On the question of Aboriginality, there may well be at least an element of truth in Briscoe's portrait of the man who constructs an identity behind bars. But is the identity any the less genuine for that? Certainly there is no inherent contradiction between being a 'cherry picker' and being Aboriginal. But of course Briscoe's article sees Aboriginality itself as a theological construct requiring deconstruction: again, Gilbert's personal life cannot be separated from his social message. For Briscoe Aboriginality does not obtain in reality; Aboriginal people lack homogeneity; they have never been and are not now a nation; they are in fact part of the Australian nation. Black identity, in short, has more to do with haves and have-nots than a 'religion of difference' or a 'black nationalism'.

I would not for a moment dispute Briscoe's economic and class observations. Likewise it may well be that ideas of sovereignty pushed to separatist extremes have little basis in Aboriginal political reality. But we cannot be sure that it will always be so. Certainly talk of 'black Israels' seems particularly unfortunate in retrospect, and in more ways than one. But, no matter how internally divided, did Aboriginal society identify itself as 'Australian' on January 26, 1988? I would have thought not, and understandably not. That does not mean that one can talk glibly about an Aboriginal nation, but the phrase 'proto-nationalism' or 'national conscious ness' (as distinct from fully-fledged 'nationalism') seems by no means inappropriate to describe the enormous upsurge of black activism in a number of fields, cultural and political, over the past two or so decades. If there is no such thing as Aboriginality, that is, no shared proto-nationalism, how do we explain the emergence of a front at least sufficiently united to bargain with government in 1993? Or even something like the Barunga Statement, now in New Parliament House? That document combines, in visual and written form, the aspirations of groups ranging from Arnhem Land to the Western Desert. Thus Aboriginality, however internally heterogeneous, has a basis in reality it did not have once, even if its character is more negative than positive, that is, even if it is based on a shared experience of suffering and oppression rather than on an experience of cultural sameness.

It is true that this common political experience of suffering may be also related back - Briscoe thinks spuriously and in idealized fashion - to a common socio-theological tradition. I agree that such a tradition can only with difficulty be made to produce the totalizing identity of Aboriginality. Rather it is inherently pluralist and fragmenting: it produces tight-knit Aboriginal groupings but not the proto-nationalist monolith 'Aboriginality'. However, it need not follow from this that old pluralist socio-theological structures cannot be adapted to serve the needs of a growing sense of unified Aboriginality. Aboriginal societies were always adaptive, and they have had to be especially adaptive since 1788. Can't we see Gilbert's views, however affected by white anthropologists, as one more creative example of radical adaptation, rather than as, in Briscoe's words, mere 'traditionalism'? And in this connection it is enough to recall that Gilbert's formula of 'give us land, an economic start in the form of compensation and then leave us alone to make our own decisions' has proved anything but a political dead end in the post-Mabo negotiations of 1993.

I do not think that Because a White Man'll Never Do It and Living Black, which outline much of the position critiqued by Briscoe, represent 'journalism' in the derogatory sense. Perhaps in some ways Gilbert is, as Briscoe insists, an alienated individual on the margin of Aboriginal society. Prophets, however, have been known to come from Galilee, and one might equally argue that Gilbert's complex between-two-worlds position gave him
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some strategic advantages. It may have tempted him to romanticize the socio-theological past, to hunt for a spirit or essence of Aboriginality. But one can be excessively Feuerbachian about this. Gilbert was in precisely the right situation to appreciate the significance of spiritual traditions and the shock to the social system produced by their demise.

To come to the issue of Gilbert's literary achievement. Briscoe calls Gilbert a surrealist and I take the comment to be pejorative. Actually, European surrealism - and its Australian counterpart in the late thirties and early forties - saw itself as intensely politically revolutionary. I have no difficulty, however, in conceding that surrealism's 'revolution' operated largely, if not entirely, in the sphere of political fantasy. So if Briscoe wants to suggest by the term the apolitical futility of André Breton's proverbial individual who discharges his pistol randomly into the crowd, then I accept his usage. I don't accept, as already indicated, that Gilbert's was a fantasy politics. But it is on the literary aspect of Gilbert's supposed surrealism that I wish to focus at this point. You can reasonably argue that there are surreal (if not exactly surrealist) elements in Gilbert's writing, as, for example, in the opening of The Cherry Pickers. Comparable elements can be found in Merritt's The Cake Man and in sixties Australian plays by people like Hibberd and Romeril, not to mention the so-called Theatre of the Absurd in postwar Europe, particularly the plays of Genet, Ionesco and Pinter. But I would prefer to say that the Prologue to Gilbert's play takes the form of ritualized action - whose effect is rather different from the surreal. Even here there are realist elements, mixed up with the non-realist: the colloquial language of I AM, for example, as he fashions Aboriginal people. As for the rest of the play, with the partial exception of Tommlo's and Zeena's regenerative dance, it is emphatically in a realist mode. Whether its depiction of the behaviour and speech of the pickers is accurate, I cannot judge with any certainty, but I assume authenticity, given that Gilbert had first-hand experience of people like these characters. In any case, whatever its authenticity, the play remains unambiguously realist in concept, that is, realist in the literary-genre sense.

What about the poetry of People Are Legends? Here Briscoe's charge is that it is 'little more than ranting' and this is followed up with the larger point, that we apply a double standard in literary judgement, one - rigorous - for non-Aboriginal writing, another - uncritically empathizing and consequently patronizing - for Aboriginal writing. So it appears that Briscoe is thinking of poetry other than Gilbert's: poetry, for example, like some of that collected by Gilbert in the anthology Inside Black Australia. For what it is worth, my view is that some of Gilbert's poems work well while others have a rhetorical feel about them. I like poems like 'Love? Country Party Style', 'Fair Swap', 'Maureen' and many others which seem to me to rely on colloquial immediacy and whose rhythms are, appropriately, those of the traditional folk song or protest ballad. I particularly like 'Birth Control for Blacks' and 'Granny Koori': witty poems with a nice bite. But, the literary dinosaur will ask, do you like these as much as your favourite Australian poet, Michael Dransfield? Or, if it comes to that, Shakespeare? In short, is it as good as Dransfield or Shakespeare? Why answer this question? It is clearly political, since it asks one to rank cultural artefacts so as to rank cultures themselves. In any case, individual likes and dislikes are of less than momentous significance. One can leave judgement to history, secure in the knowledge that history may (or then again may not) judge accurately.

A more interesting question seems to me to be that of the way in which Aboriginal writing as a whole asks to be read. Briscoe's approach is refreshing insofar as it refuses to fetishize difference, that is, refuses the argument, so often put forward in contemporary criticism, that one cannot read across the boundaries of culture, gender, sexuality and the
like. White cannot claim to read black, or male claim to read female, or straight read gay and so on. Briscoe - and this is consistent with his desire not to mystify Aboriginality - insists on a single standard and therefore implicitly gives the non-Aboriginal reader access to the space of Aboriginal writing. I find this an attractive aspect of his thinking, but there are some requisite provisos and I would like to theorize the whole issue by suggesting that we do in fact require a specific hermeneutics of Aboriginal writing. It may be true that we can all (with widely varying degrees of comprehension, naturally) read Aboriginal writing. But this is not to say that all writing should be placed in the one category, that is, that there is no such thing as a distinct category of Aboriginal writing. Any given body of cultural production, insofar as it has any distinctiveness, requires a particular way of reading if it is to be adequately understood. In other words it requires a particular interpretation, a particular hermeneutics. Aboriginal writing is no exception. This seems an obvious point to make, but it was not necessarily grasped by white reviewers of Inside Black Australia and I am not sure it is properly allowed for in Briscoe's argument. You can't just say: one criterion for all. Nor can you simply ask that black writing, Gilbert's included, be read as 'art', which amounts to the same thing.

Surprisingly, given the socialist orientation of his article, Briscoe accepts the aestheticizing of cultural production, that is, he accepts categories like 'art' and 'literature' when these are better viewed as the result of a historical and ideological process about which there may be justified suspicion. The aestheticizing impulse seems particularly distorting in the case of Aboriginal writing and art. After all, pre-contact culture referred itself not to aesthetic but to religious categories. And contemporary Aboriginal culture - as exemplified by everything from regional bark painting, sculpture, canvas acrylics, dance and song to urban art, rock music, theatre and writing - is surely better understood in politico-religious than in aesthetic terms. Of course there are exceptions, since to a degree the cultural production of urban Aborigines has been aestheticized and is seen as 'art' by its producers. But only to a degree. The introduction to the recent Paperbark anthology prioritizes the political, not the aesthetic, though it does not quite resolve a certain ambiguity in this respect. Gilbert's introduction to Inside Black Australia also puts politics centre-stage. The Aesthetic is simply not, as most people believe, a universal category. Rather it is culture-specific. That means that insistence on its universal application - to all cultures or even to the one culture at different times - expresses cultural arrogance. A proper hermeneutics of Aboriginal writing requires adequate contextualization, otherwise hermeneutic understanding (in the classical sense of Verstehen) will fall short of the mark. I don't understand and so cannot properly judge a Balgo acrylic, say by Wimmitji, without realizing that is is a spiritual map and so a title-deed of land, that is, without grasping its politico-religious context. Mutatis mutandis, the same is true of 'Granny Koori'. It's not just a 'poem', just 'art'.

There is another aspect to all this. Gilbert's and indeed black writing in general should not be aestheticized on the grounds that it is in English and to a large extent employs originally European categories (modes such as realism or genres such as 'poetry' or 'drama' or 'prose'). With so-called Post-Colonial critics, I would argue that when non-Aboriginal forms or language are appropriated by Aboriginal writers something new is brought into being, the forms cease to be simply European, the language ceases to be simply English. Isn't this obvious in the case of Wimmitji's picture? The canvas and the acrylic are non-Aboriginal, but it does not follow that we can assimilate the result to the European. In like manner, a hermeneutics of black writing requires us to approach the Aboriginal text as a reorientation and transformation of received forms. Of course, Gilbert's language is English. But in order to do interpretative justice to the poems, don't we need to take
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account of the way in which they bend and alter received usage? The unthinking will say that it is bad English. In fact, like, in varying degrees, all Aboriginal writing, it signals, for those able to recognize it, a phase in the development of creole speech. This may be more plainly evident in Rastafarian Jamaican English or in Aboriginal-English pidgin than in the language of a writer as removed from black traditions as Gilbert. But it is evident even there. Gilbert the editor of Inside Black Australia is right in arguing against the reading of Aboriginal verse in the light of non-Aboriginal 'antecedents' (xviii). More markedly than Australian English in general, Aboriginal English cannot be conceptualized as a branch of an existing tree. It is already another tree, though one not without relation to the other. To stress the relation rather than uniqueness expresses a political wish to prioritize the English or European component. What I have termed a proper or adequate hermeneutics will not ignore this component, but it will put it in perspective. Given that until recently readings of Aboriginal writing by non-Aborigines have been blind to anything other than non-Aboriginal criteria, it seems time to redress the balance.

Briscoe represents Gilbert as a near-white writer writing for whites. I have no doubt that, like many Aboriginal writers, Gilbert, while writing primarily for Aborigines, glanced over his shoulder at the ever-present non-Aboriginal witness: white activists, white literary pundits, white authorities of all kinds, in short, white society. But if he did not write and speak to and for Aborigines, he wrote and spoke to and for no one - except perhaps himself. That is too ungenerous a suggestion and in any case it is scarcely borne out by the facts.

Your turn again, Gordon.

Australian National University
A RESPONSE TO GORDON BRISCOE

A RESPONSE TO GORDON BRISCOE

David Headon

As an 'appreciation' of Kevin Gilbert, Gordon Briscoe's 'The Struggle for Grace' is so severely flawed that one scarcely knows where to start. Had I been the editor who received his article I would have counselled a total rewrite on the basis that the piece reflects the character flaws, at times bizarre subject matter and gross stylistic deficiencies not of the subject in question, but of the individual who so clumsily attempts the discussion. Kevin Gilbert deserves — and is fortunately beginning to receive — far more considered responses to his impressive, iconoclastic life and work.

In order to keep my responses here as brief as possible, let me list in italics those comments of Briscoe's with which I do agree, or at least accept as legitimately arguable (and why), and then list merely the most contentious assertions with which I totally disagree (and why).

Agreement

1. Gilbert's life after incarceration 'can be seen as a struggle for grace'. There are numerous ways of approaching Gilbert's lifework — 'a struggle for grace' is one. Briscoe, however, explores virtually none of the implications of his interesting title.

2. Gilbert 'meant different things to different people'. Though it becomes clear to the reader that Briscoe interprets this as somehow reflecting Gilbert's waywardness of character, to me it highlights Gilbert's versatility and ability to evolve as a writer, social commentator and Aboriginal community leader.

3. Gilbert advocated, in his first writings, a 'black nationalism'. Briscoe obviously rejects 'black nationalism'. Fortunately Gilbert did not. Strong, forthright Aboriginal spokespeople were desperately needed in the 1970s to publicise the desperate plight of many Aborigines and to challenge white Australia to address the wrongs of the past.

4. Because a White Man'll Never Do It (1973) is a 'didactic piece ... in which ordinary people revealed their innermost feelings on simple fundamentalist themes'. The book is didactic, though this in no adequate way reflects its ground-breaking content. What 'simple fundamentalist themes' are, I haven't a clue. Nor, it seems, does Briscoe.

5. Gilbert 'experienced a difficult adolescent period, the effects of which must have been extremely traumatic'. Undoubtedly true — all the more reason to appreciate the distinctive quality of Gilbert's literary, social and political contribution to this country post-1971.


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7. Gilbert ‘reconstructed himself in prison through studying journalism, theology and anthropology, together with the study of lino-cut, and literary art forms’. Controversial yet interesting idea, and one with merit. If Gilbert ‘reconstructed’ himself during his fourteen and a half years in some of NSW’s worst gaols—a good bit of it in solitary confinement — then all power to him. It enables us to better appreciate the achievements of the last two decades of his life.

8. Gilbert ‘alienated white Australians because he humiliated them in public and made them uncomfortable’. He did. I witnessed this on more than one occasion. Though I didn’t necessarily agree with Gilbert’s methods — or, at times, the substance of his public arguments — I thought his confrontational tactics usually made a strong political point, and one which symbolically reversed the established historical patterns of behaviour in this country post-1788.

9. ‘Theology, which Gilbert studied in prison, contributed towards his emerging new identity in a number of significant ways’. Largely true, I think, especially in the last ten years or so of his life. The angry young man evolved into the more thoughtful, even prophetic elder statesman.

10. Gilbert’s ‘models of the past, present and future took some account of ideas of socialism, liberation and Christianity that emerge in Australian nationalism’. True, yet Gilbert was well aware of the severe shortcomings and illusions of the ‘Legend’ interpretation of Australian history. Life in and around Condobolin in the 1930s and ‘40s, if you were Aboriginal, had little interaction with (White) socialist ideals.

11. The circumstances of Gilbert’s earlier life ‘made a loner out of him’. I feel this as well; yet, again, one can only point to the achievements of his later public life when he appeared to be someone to whom the high-profile public life did not come easily. He was the ‘conscience’ of many Australians, both black and white — an often unpalatable yet vitally necessary voice.

12. Gilbert encouraged ‘a movement towards [Aboriginal] traditionalism and their [sic] own system of government’. In the later years of his life Gilbert was unequivocal on these points, as he demonstrates in Aboriginal Sovereignty (1988), his introduction to Inside Black Australia (1988) and his contribution to Cry for Justice (1991).

13. Gilbert’s ‘achievements were both undeniable and admirable . . . they lay in the nature of his triumph over adversity, and his success in becoming an acclaimed writer despite the inauspicious beginnings to his writing career’. ‘Triumph over adversity’ is only one of the reasons why Gilbert’s achievements deserve praise. Briscoe overlooks or avoids all the rest.

Disagreement

1. Before 1972, Gilbert’s ‘art was difficult to comprehend’. What? Is Briscoe referring to the manuscript of The Cherry Pickers (it wasn’t published until 1988)? The early poems? The lino-cuts? None are ‘difficult to comprehend’. In fact, they are very accessible products of a man obviously embittered by experiences of the white justice system.
A RESPONSE TO GORDON BRISCOE

2. Gilbert had 'a self-admiration with which only a few other people concurred'. Nonsense. Certainly the older he got, the more confident and imposing he got. But these qualities attracted admirers, as the extraordinary range of tributes after his death demonstrated.

3. 'In his literary works and political ideologies he portrayed narcissistic and surrealistic forms ...' Utter nonsense. No Gilbert essays, poems or plays are either 'narcissistic' or 'surrealistic'. Indeed, as a writer Gilbert strove to communicate directly in all but a few of his last (almost pantheistic) poems. These are consciously spiritual offerings.

4. Gilbert 'was a fundamentalist' because he believed 'the past was real' Believing in the significance and 'living quality' of the past scarcely makes one 'a fundamentalist'. If so, most of us are 'fundamentalists'.

5. Gilbert believed 'that his own editing was sufficient, and ... refused to have his work edited further'. As one of Gilbert's editors in his last (assertive) years I have first-hand experience that this is untrue. Gilbert was a patient listener; if you made a good case, he adjusted accordingly. On the assumption that Briscoe would make adjustments to his own writing, on editorial advice, I would suggest that his own editors/readers have done him a disservice by not suggesting major changes to his article.

6. Gilbert's reading in gaol 'denied him a complementary fieldwork experience' of 'traditional Aboriginal society'. No Aboriginal creative writers who have emerged in the last twenty years have 'fieldwork experience' of 'traditional' Aboriginal society — only part-traditional society. Briscoe incorrectly implies some do. Name them.

7. 'Naivity' characterises Because a White Man'll Never Do It (1973) and Living Black (1977). There are many words and phrases to describe these two works — 'provocative', 'culturally significant', 'milestones', 'political bombshells'. 'Naivity' is not one of them. Both works reflect greater Aboriginal involvement with the political process; they are works of liberation and inspiration.

8. 'Instead of confronting his past [Gilbert] sought refuge behind a literature used to construct his own Aboriginal identity'. First, it is not necessary to confront one's past to be a writer of significance. Second, Gilbert would pass this test anyway because he often addresses the past in his writing, most notably in the brilliant linking sections of Living Black. Writing for Gilbert is not a 'refuge' but a means of liberation, a way to express love and a political tool to stimulate action.

9. 'Gilbert's greatest literary weakness ... was his failure to probe the reasons for the rural poverty he experienced before going to gaol'. He does probe these reasons in The Cherry Pickers, Because ..., Living Black, The Blackside (1990) and numerous essays — but this would scarcely amount to a 'great literary weakness', even if he didn't.

10. Gilbert 'does not go beyond reporting what he and his informants felt subjectively comfortable in expressing'. Anyone who has read Living Black and Because ... knows this is nonsense. Just read the three-page Introduction to Living Black to remind yourself.
11. *The Cherry Pickers* in ‘its original form ... received critical acclaim as a great contribution to Australian literature’. It did not; it was, however, correctly viewed as having historical importance. The play wasn’t published until 1988, and only then by Gilbert’s Burrambinga Books.

12. ‘As time went by the play was transformed to represent “nationalist” symbolisms ...’ Meaningless nonsense.


14. ‘What emerged in ...and Living Black was a type of surreal and populist reporting ... ‘Populist’—perhaps. ‘Surrealist’, never. Briscoe, despite quoting critics on surrealism, at no point uses the term with validity. Worse, I don’t think he understands what it actually means.

15. Gilbert ‘revealed a non-class understanding of the socio-political order’. Conflated thus, this is meaningless.

16. ‘[I]n his polemical literature he never localised his Aboriginal informants’ Gilbert was, in fact, one of the first writers to do exactly that.

17. ‘...Blacks are publicly ostracised because they failed to act on [Gilbert’s] moral rhetoric’. Gilbert doesn’t ‘ostracise’, he challenges his people, usually with uncompromising statements. He has a vision for the future and he wants all Aborigines to share in it, particularly those who feel isolated and disenfranchised.

18. ‘In his later verse, [Gilbert] proceeded to the idea of race hatred’. In fact, virtually the opposite occurred. The race bitterness in some early poems gives way in the poems of *Black from the Edge* (1994) to conscious defiance (‘Winter Camp’), pleas for justice (‘Choice is yours’, ‘Red Land Claims’, ‘Keep’) or ambitious, spiritual poems epitomised by the volume’s ‘Epitaph’.

19. ‘...[T]he people who appeared to have captured his admiration were mostly White’. Nonsense. The poem ‘Winter camp’ symbolises Gilbert’s admiration for all those Aborigines — past and present — who stood up to be counted in defiance of European incursions.

20. Gilbert’s support for those Aborigines ‘who saw Aboriginal custom as something tangible’ is ‘really a form of fetishism’. This is so bizarre a statement (for any who has read Gilbert’s work) as to scarcely need a reply. It is not only inaccurate but, it seems to me, deeply insulting to Aboriginal people — despite emanating from an Aboriginal writer.

21. Gilbert ‘turned entrepreneurially towards raising money...’ Extraordinarily, Briscoe attempts not so subtly to portray Gilbert’s money-raising activities (to provide basic necessities in underprivileged Aboriginal communities) as somehow suspicious. The inference reflects sadly on Briscoe himself.
22. Gilbert moved to Canberra 'to peddle his ideas'. 'Again, this reads as the assertion of someone desperate to discredit. Gilbert's Canberra home in fact became a strategically important base for his political activities.

23. Gilbert's populism ...appealed to ideological categories ...' Populism doesn't appeal to categories, but to people. Gilbert's did.

24. Gilbert's poem 'Look Koori' is 'little more than ranting... Literary critics with analytical skills in this area disagree with Briscoe's assessment.

25. Gilbert 'mixed genres such as politics, culture, society and bureaucracy...' So do Lois O'Donohue, Noel Pearson, Charles Perkins and Paul Keating. So did Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Gilbert is in good company in 'mixing genres'. Social commentators of quality and influence do.

26. 'Gilbert's 'ambivalence was revealed in combining Aboriginal children and reserved land in one thought'. Ambivalence? Why? The combination is perfectly valid.

27. Gilbert was 'peculiar' because 'he had a collective view of Aborigines as a body of people acting as a group for a common cause'. Gilbert did, but this should scarcely elicit criticism from anyone, much less another Aborigine. Gilbert emphasised solidarity for political purposes — as many have done before him.

28. 'The limited biographical information on Kevin Gilbert indicates that he conformed to a proto-nationalist process...' Meaningless nonsense. There is, in fact, a considerable amount of biographical information available on Gilbert, if one is willing to search, and 'national character' and the 'nationalist process' are irrelevant to the information we have available.

29. Gilbert's 'literary art contained surrealist tendencies'. It did not. Briscoe's attempts to link Gilbert to 'the surrealist artistic school of thought' are crude and simplistic — and inaccurate.

30. Surrealists were involved in displays of 'public humiliation' and 'verbal tirades'. So, Briscoe informs us, was Gilbert. Ergo, for Briscoe, Gilbert is a surrealist. Hardly. By this criterion, our present Prime Minister is a 'surrealist'.

31. Briscoe uses The Cherry Pickers as his example of Gilbert's (favoured) 'prose-commentary' genre. 'Pickers' is a play.

32. The analogy Briscoe draws between anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner's 'great Australian silence' and the 'capacity of silence' of Aborigines is absurd. The former 'silence' is conspiratorial and guilt-ridden; the latter, a community response to historical realities. They cannot be compared.

33. 'What many academics, journalists and the various other writers who have promoted him have done, is to turn him into an icon'. The fact is that for a writer of Gilbert's depth
and productivity there is, circa 1994, far too little written on him. He is no icon; at least not yet; but, steadily, his contribution is being increasingly recognised.

Briscoe’s article is no ‘appreciation’. It is a confused and confusing response to a figure of major political and cultural significance. Gilbert’s output is in desperate need of ‘rigorous critical appraisal’ but it fails to get it from Gordon Briscoe. The only good that will be served by Briscoe’s article is if it acts as a catalyst for those many Australians — black and white — who admire Gilbert, to enter the debate and legitimately illuminate the breadth and creativity of Gilbert’s lifework.
A RESPONSE TO GORDON BRISCOE

Michael Dodson

The thing that most disappoints me about Mr Briscoe's article on Kevin Gilbert is its posthumous release. It is impossible for the dead to respond, that task is left to the survivors. Kevin Gilbert was a survivor in every sense - I like to remember him like that.

Mr Briscoe's article is in part factually incorrect, an essential flaw for an historian writing about history I have thought. I leave it for members of Kevin's family to correct these errors but their making immediately raises the alarm about the article and the intentions of Mr Briscoe.

I think his writings tell us more about Mr Briscoe than about Kevin Gilbert. The struggle for grace is Gordon's not Kevin's. The events of history (and a person's life is an event of history) is not usually clearly organised and non chaotic. The opposite is true. Kevin Gilbert's life may be described by some as chaotic and wandering. But it is predicated with the self expressions of how he saw the events and lives around him. We may not agree with his expressions (Mr Briscoe rejects many of them) but they were his. He had things to say - Mr Briscoe tries - unsuccessfully in my view - to examine why he said them. We will never know. The man is dead. We do know he made a contribution, to disregard that contribution is to disregard history. Disregarding history can and does produce fatal consequences.

Spurious and fallacious attacks on the dead man's personal life ignores the historical part Kevin Gilbert made in informing and enriching the lives of many of us.

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BRISCOE'S ERRONEOUS AND MIS-NAMED 'APPRECIATION' OF KEVIN GILBERT

Eleanor Gilbert

It is astonishing that the Chairperson and Editorial Board of Aboriginal History are prepared to publish, not only such a disrespectful article about a recently deceased person, but also one that does not achieve basic academic standards of research and cannot be classified as history.

Briscoe's misnamed 'Appreciation' is riddled with blatant factual errors and imbued with dubious malicious motives.

Despite the circumstances, and the fact that Briscoe finished his article one month after Kevin passed on, we did offer to talk to the Editorial Board to clarify how Kevin's life had been misrepresented, but we were informed that 'would be inappropriate'. Instead we are asked to co-operate with Briscoe's sad and sorry research methods of throwing a heap of unsubstantiated guesswork and lies into a public forum in the hope that the family will sort fact from fiction. That is an inappropriate expectation. In order to put the matter to rest, however, we will highlight three of the many gross departures from the truth, but in doing so, inevitably, Briscoe's credibility suffers.

Briscoe's recurring theme is that Kevin was 'born and raised in non-Aboriginal society' and 'went into gaol a "cherry picker". In gaol he metamorphosed, emerging as an Aborigine' is so ludicrous as to cause one to question what Briscoe is revealing about himself.

An examination of footnote 10 reveals that Briscoe continues to try to substantiate his claim by referencing his statement with 'Rowley 1971. See also Rowley 1967, p. 7'. The citations are Outcasts in White Australia and 'The Aboriginal Householder'. Neither the book nor the ANZAAS paper even mention Kevin.

Briscoe continues the attack, by criticising Kevin (and the whole of the family) on the basis of race and the implication is obvious. 'His heritage included descent from the Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri peoples. ... This heritage came from his mother, born Clara Naden. Although he never revealed it, Naden is an Afghan name'. Briscoe continues by putting words into Kevin's mouth, 'and from what Gilbert recalled, it was possible that his mother may have been of Afghan descent'. Family oral history and 'papertalk' concur that is neither research nor history, but sheer fabrication. Nor is there anyone in our family called Clara Naden, as Briscoe calls Kevin's mother, whose name was Rachel.

It is sufficient to say that Kevin's indomitable Wiradjuri spirit was nurtured by his extended family, several of whom spoke Wiradjuri as their first language. They maintained an autonomous existence on tiny remnants of traditional and sacred Wiradjuri lands to which they had access, choosing to remain independent from missions and white control of their lives. The associated pride of having survived over one hundred and fifty years of physical and cultural genocide was passed on and is reflected in the poem 'Uncle Paddy'

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1 Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages records
about Kevin's own uncle, a fluent Wiradjuri speaker, whom he held in the highest regard:

It's great to be free
Even if you have to trap rabbits and eat sheep guts
Eat well of it - not for the hell of it
Eat sheep guts - and fight to be free!

Statements such as that the sovereignty movement he represented was 'largely a fabrication', that sovereignty is a 'belief in a promised land', and that land rights is the search and demand for a promised land, add to the absurdity of Briscoe's argument. One need only follow the indigenous participation with the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples and the evolving indigenous sovereignty movement internationally to realise that sovereignty is a concept that links Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

Indeed, the Aboriginal sovereign claim has been clarified by the fact that, after the ten years deliberation of Mabo v Queensland, the full bench of the High Court was unable to provide any convincing legal arguments or precedents with which to justify how the Commonwealth of Australia acquired sovereignty. As two judges admitted:

it must be accepted in this Court that the whole of the territory designated in Phillip's Commissions was, by 7 February 1788, validly established as a settled British colony. [added emphasis]

In other words, the High Court expects one to believe that Aboriginal sovereignty, across the whole of the continent, was extinguished the moment the penal colony was established at Sydney Cove, even though the land was populated by Indigenous Peoples with a highly effective Law and government.

Kevin was able to interpret the grassroots expressions of ownership - 'Always was, always will be Aboriginaland'; 'Boss for our own mob'; 'We own this land from creation days'; - into a language that revealed Australia's Achilles heel - 'Sovereignty never ceded'. He so passionately advocated a sovereign treaty or international covenant as the proper foundation for all people in this land, because he understood the consequences '... when the free dreams die'.

LIST OF REFERENCES


______, 1994, Black From The Edge, Melbourne.

Mabo and Ors. v. Queensland, 1992, Canberra.


2 This statement elucidates the limitations of historians writing black history. In his Ph.D thesis 'A History of the Wiradjuri People of New South Wales, 1883-1969', Read (who, significantly, is co-editor of this journal and is very much responsible for Briscoe's article being published) could conclude that the Wiradjuri language was dead even though some, including Kevin's aunts, who could speak it fluently, were still alive (pers. comm.).

3 Gilbert 1990.

4 Mabo and Ors. v. Queensland, 1992, Canberra.

5 Deane and Gaudron JJ, in Mabo ... 1992, p. 69.

6 Blackshield 1993.

The Aboriginal Embassy: An Account of the Protests of 1972

S. Robinson

By 1972, Australian Aboriginal people had developed a form of political consciousness which embraced the idea of land rights, and had for the most part adopted protest as their means of political expression. The Aboriginal Embassy of 1972 was the result of a decade of debate within the Aboriginal community over means and goals. It involved both the adaptation of exogenous notions of Black Power, and the political expression of a traditional awareness of original dispossession. It was on the lawns of the Federal Parliament House that these issues were aired in the public arena during the nine-month existence of the embassy. The events of 1972, a story of both tumultuous violence and calm restraint through symbolic response, culminated in the relative success of this seminal protest. The return of land was placed on the political agenda of the major parties; the embassy achieved a semi-legendary status and inspired Aboriginal activists over the following years.

There exist a variety of accounts, in Aboriginal oral history, and in the few written mentions of this significant event, of the inspiration for the embassy. Kevin Gilbert, Charles Perkins, Burnum Burnum (Harry Penrith), and Michael Anderson played a part in these different versions. It is agreed by all participants, however, that the embassy was conceived as a direct response to the Australia Day Statement by Prime Minister McMahon on 26 January 1972.

The statement epitomised the Liberal-Country Party coalition's policy of a diluted assimilationism which sought to quash the 'separateness' of Aboriginal people, and make them part of mainstream Australian society. The Australia Day statement began with the assertion that the government acknowledged 'the deep affinity between Aboriginal people and the land' and announced that new policies on 'land holdings on Aboriginal reserves and elsewhere' had been formulated. A five-point plan followed. Firstly, the statement promised assistance to groups and individuals 'to hold effective and respected places within one Australian society' whilst maintaining culture and traditions 'within the diverse culture of Australian society'. Secondly, McMahon emphasised that although assimilation was, after changes to that policy in the 1960s, a matter of 'choice', the idea of 'separate development as a long term aim is utterly alien to these objectives'.

Scott Robinson died tragically between the time of writing this article and its publication. He had begun study towards a Ph.D thesis on the history of the Aboriginal people of north coastal NSW. He was a promising and deeply committed historian, as this, his first and last article, demonstrates.

1 This was, in addition, the extension of a tradition of ownership of land by Aboriginal people in the eastern States in the nineteenth century, and its revocation which brought double dispossession (see Goodall 1990; Morris 1985; Reynolds 1990). The tradition of ownership was maintained through its cultural transmission, and also through occasional political references such as the Ferguson/Patten campaign for civil rights in the 1930s, which held rights to land as a secondary objective.

2 Hasluck 1988, p. 22.

3 McMahon 1972.

4 ibid., p. 9.
The statement went on to suggest that the government take action to ameliorate education, employment and housing, and remove what it referred to as 'special disabilities' before the law. McMahon unashamedly stated that 'good progress is being made' in improving health standards in Aboriginal Australia. The remainder of the statement was a response to the burgeoning demand for land rights by Aboriginal people throughout Australia. It was also a rebuff to the Council for Aboriginal Affairs, an advisory body whose members (Barrie Dexter, H.C. Coombs and W.E.H. Stanner) had for some time urged acceptance of the demand for land rights despite the intransigence of successive ministers for the Interior and Environment, Aborigines and the Arts. McMahon acknowledged 'the desire of Aboriginal people to have their affinity with the land recognised by law', but then proceeded to enumerate the constraints which would apply to Aboriginal access to land. There were to be no land rights in a form recognisable by the Aboriginal activists of the time and their supporters, as this would 'lead to uncertainties and possible challenge in relation to land titles in Australia which are presently un questioned and secure. The statement announced the introduction of 'general purpose leases' in the Northern Territory, where fifty year leasehold was to be granted, provided that 'reasonable economic and social use of the land' was made by recipients. Land was not to be available on existing missions, reserves or crown land, and land outside the reserves was to be purchased by the government as it became available. Finally, McMahon made specific reference to the Yirrkala people's opposition to the Nabalco mining venture, stating that the mine at Gove was 'in the national interest'. Among those Australians who heard the Australia Day statement on the national media were the central core of young Aboriginal activists from the eastern States, gathered in Redfern. These Aboriginal people had a close association with politics through the demonstrations of the preceding years, and through the social connections of the Redfern community. For some months, Chicka Dixon had been hosting discussion nights at his home, bringing together activists such as Gary Foley, Michael Anderson, Paul Coe, John Newfong, Billy Craigie and Gordon Briscoe. At other times this same group, with their origins in rural Australia and their meeting place in the city, would gather at the pool tables in the Clifton Hill and Empress hotels. The concept of a symbolic protest in Canberra may have been the brainchild of Charles Perkins, Kevin Gilbert, Burnum Burnum (who suggested a hunger strike to Michael Anderson some months previously) or activists associated with the newly-established Aboriginal Medical Service. It is accepted, however, that Gilbert took the organisational steps by calling together the first ambassadors, and by approaching the Communist Party of Australia for funding. The car which left Sydney on the night of 25 January was driven by the Tribune's photographer, Noel Hazzard. Bertie Williams was dragged from his bed to join Billie

5 ibid., p. 7. At the time, infant mortality and the incidence of disease affected Aborigines at a disproportionately high rate.
6 ibid., p. 9.
7 ibid., pp. 10-12.
8 ibid., p. 12.
9 Read 1990, p. 129.
11 Michael Anderson (from northern NSW), interview, 28 August and 10 November 1991.
12 Billy Craigie (from the far north coast of NSW), interviewed in 'True Stories', ABC television documentary, 2 August 1992.
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Craigie, Gary Williams and Michael Anderson in their hurried journey to Canberra. Hazzard assisted the protesters by making contact with a local academic, and fellow member of the CPA. While Bertie Williams suggested the idea of calling the encampment an 'embassy', the group was provided with a beach umbrella and materials for placards. They erected the umbrella on the lawns of the Federal Parliament House in the early hours of the morning, identifying themselves with a sign reading 'Aboriginal Embassy'.

The new presence on the lawns did not pass unnoticed. The Commonwealth police asked the protesters what they were doing outside Parliament House. 'We're having a protest', was the reply. When told that the protest would continue until the government granted land rights to the Aboriginal people, the police remarked that 'that could be forever'. Nevertheless, the shivering Aborigines remained for the duration of the night.

Canberra, and the rest of the nation, awoke the next morning to the news of the embassy. Michael Anderson, whose name is to a certain extent synonymous with the early phase of the embassy, made the first statements from the lawns. He told the press:

As soon as they start tearing up Arnhem Land we're going to start tearing up bits of Australia ... the land was taken from us by force ... we shouldn't have to lease it ... our spiritual beliefs are connected with the land.

While other Aboriginal protesters (including Bobbi Sykes and Bruce McGuiness) began to arrive, a second statement was issued from the lawns of Parliament House. It demanded retraction of the Australia Day statement and compensation for stolen lands, and warned the government that the embassy would stay until these demands were met. The focus of these early comments by the embassy drew attention to an occupancy of the continent then acknowledged as 30 000 years old, and demanded recompense.

The ideology expressed at this stage was vague in detail, a slogan rather than a program. Some supporters and members of the public were left to wonder what in fact was meant by 'land rights'. It was clear, however, that a form of indigenous tenure other than that permitted under the McMahon statement was called for by a group whose interest encompassed both the more traditional areas of Australia and their own 'country' in the eastern States. A broad desire for the return of an economic base under freehold title, and compensation to make that base workable, underlay these early statements.

In addition to public statements, the embassy made a media impact through its very existence, and through conscious use of symbolic protest. The encampment was an Aboriginal twist on the larrikin sense of humour which throws rough-hewn insolence in the direction of established Australian authority. As Dr Roberta Sykes reflected, 'it was only a wag's act to put it up anyway, in the beginning'. In addition, it was a display of symbolism at several levels, being simultaneously a comment on living conditions in Aboriginal Australia, on the question of land ownership (of this particular piece of ground as well as other parts of Australia), on the relative status of indigenous people in a city dotted with embassies, and on the avenues of protest open to the otherwise (often) silent minorities in Australian society. Sykes wrote later that 'to occupy a building similar in structure to those used by the oppressive bureaucratic machine would have been to alienate the protest from the level of the people.' Gary Foley thought that 'they declared it the

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13 Bertie Williams died in 1974. It is likely that Gary Williams was also present. (Interviews with Noel Hazzard, Michael Anderson and Gary Foley, 1991.)
15 ibid.
16 Canberra Times, 26 January 1972.
17 Dr Roberta B. Sykes (from north Queensland), interview, 18 October 1991.
Aboriginal Embassy' because 'Aborigines are treated like aliens in their own land', and 'unlike embassies on Red Hill in really flash surroundings', the protest was to be in the public arena, 'under the noses' of the parliamentarians.19

Tourists and visitors began to arrive at the embassy, while non-Aboriginal support became apparent. The Australian Council of Trade Unions made a statement in support of the Yirrkala people. The National Council of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Women met at the Australian National University on 28 January, and although the campus was virtually empty of students at this time of year, a group of residents associated with the anti-apartheid campaign made contact with the embassy, and began the important contribution made by student supporters.20

A new placard appeared on the lawns in the last days of January; it read 'which do you choose - land rights or bloodshed?'. Its identification of the struggle with the rhetoric of violence and the clenched first salute of Black Power made clear the tension between symbolic, non-violent, creative protest, and more belligerent means. This tension remained unresolved, but it was through the former approach that the embassy made its presence felt for the six months which followed.

In January, the lawns of Parliament House had been virtually taken over by the Aboriginal protesters. For the first time since the opening of the building in 1927 (when an 'inadequately clad' Aborigine was removed from the ceremony)21 a permanent camp existed on the lawns. This posed administrative problems for the government, and especially for Ralph Hunt as Minister for the Interior. A twenty-four hour police surveillance was instituted on 30 January.22 The only applicable legislation, however, was the Gaming and Betting Ordinance, s. 19(a), which imposed a forty dollar fine for loitering in a public place. Minor incidents such as the question of mowing the lawn were easily settled - the protesters offered to mow it themselves, and were only mildly disrupted when drenched by the groundsmen's sprinklers.

Anderson made a more comprehensive statement of demands in early February. This five-point plan addressed Aboriginal ownership of all existing reserves and settlements (including rights to mineral deposits), ownership of land in the capital cities (including mineral rights), preservation of all sacred sites in all parts of the continent, six million dollars in compensation, and full rights of statehood for the Northern Territory. At the same time, Anderson named a 'ministry', including a Minister for the Arts, Environment and Caucasian Affairs.23 These demands were an expression of a program of land rights for all Aboriginal people; they were both serious demands for redress, and an example of the use made by the embassy of uncompromising public relations which created unprecedented media attention for Aboriginal activism and its cause.

It was at this point that Ralph Hunt first suggested that action be taken to remove the embassy. An interdepartmental committee recommended that the existing Gaming and Betting Ordinance not be applied, and that new legislation be created under the Commonwealth Lands Ordinance.

19 Gary Foley (from Cangai, on the north coast of NSW), interview, 7 June 1991.
22 Canberra Times, 31 January 1972. It should be noted that relations between the Commonwealth police and the Aborigines were cordial in these months, often involving cups of tea and conversation over the campfire.
23 Australian, 3 February 1972. (These terms were later dropped as being 'too much like white bureaucracy.')
Support for the embassy began to increase. A group of Aboriginal people from Yirrkala, and from Elcho, Bathurst and Melville islands visited Canberra. Their number included Galarrwuy Yunupingu and Wali Wunungmurra, and their presence enriched the embassy by lending a pan-Aboriginal appearance to the protest.\(^{24}\) Australian Labor Party (ALP) leader Gough Whitlam and local member Kep Enderby\(^{25}\) visited the tents on 8 February, when Whitlam gave a partial endorsement to the embassy's five-point plan.\(^{26}\) Land rights were to be granted under Labor, and although this was a non-specific response to a relatively non-specific demand,\(^{27}\) the promise to grant statehood to the Northern Territory and abolish remaining discriminatory laws in the States was unequivocal.

In addition to large numbers of tourists, visitors to the embassy included Soviet diplomats, a representative from the Canadian Indian Claims Commission, and a cadre from the Irish Republican Army who donated a linen handkerchief to the cause.\(^{28}\) International media coverage included articles on the embassy in the *London Times*, the *Guardian*, *Time* magazine, *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, and the *New York Times*.\(^{29}\)

The most important group of supporters was, however, the student body of the Australian National University (ANU). The facilities of the Student Representative Council were made available, and there was extensive social mingling between Aboriginal people and students who had become politicised by involvement in the movements against conscription, Australian involvement in the Vietnam War, and the recent Springbok tour. As Richard Refshauge indicated, land rights was an issue which 'demanded' attention. Support was provided in a manner which recognised that 'Aborigines were not going to allow their decision-making or the way they were perceived infiltrated'.\(^{30}\) During the demonstrations of 1972, a strong and supportive student presence was apparent.

The government and associated bureaucracy remained at odds during this period. The Council for Aboriginal Affairs,\(^ {31}\) although regarding the Australia Day statement as 'a very small step forward' on land rights, openly criticised the government's stance.\(^ {32}\) Barrie Dexter, the council's executive member, reflected that:

> From the outset in the Council and Office we felt sympathy and admiration for the 'Embassy' members, who had demonstrated a perceptive understanding of the real meaning of the government's policy, and devised a most ingenious...

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\(^{24}\) Andrea Collins, letter dated September 1991 (ATSIC regional office, Nhulunbuy). Pan-Aboriginal basis for the protest, however, was challenged due to the questionable dichotomy between traditional and less-traditional people, brought about by the Protection era and reproduced by white Australian racism.

\(^{25}\) Now Mr Justice Enderby.

\(^{26}\) *Australian*, 9 February 1972.

\(^{27}\) Other comments by Whitlam make it clear that his vision was one of Australia-wide return of land. His reference was consistently to the International Labour Organisation's convention no. 107, which did not distinguish between more traditional groups and Aborigines in the eastern States and Western Australia.

\(^{28}\) *Tribune*, 30 May 1972.


\(^{30}\) Richard Refshauge (then SRC President), interview, 18 April 1991; Allan Gould (student supporter), interview, 2 May 1991.

\(^{31}\) Since 1967, the government's 'think tank' on Aboriginal Affairs. Its three members - W.E.H. Stanner, H.C. Coombs and Barrie Dexter - were attached to the Prime Minister's Department and in its relationship with the minister the council held advisory powers only.

means of getting across to the government the message we had been trying to impart.\(^{33}\)

Dexter considered that the council viewed land rights as an 'Australia wide' concern, and when Coombs visited the tents in February John Newfong announced that he had expressed 'complete sympathy' with the demands of the protest.\(^{34}\) The council, however, remained frustrated by the government at all turns.

The embassy became an issue in parliamentary debate on the first day of sitting on 23 February. While Howson, Minister for the Environment, the Arts and Aborigines, insisted that the concept of land rights was 'alien to native thought', Ralph Hunt (Minister for the Interior) made the first mention of 'an ordinance to ensure that Parliament House is reserved for its purpose ... not a place where people can camp indefinitely'.\(^{35}\) Hunt acknowledged that the demonstration was peaceful and 'quiet', but later in the day criticised the involvement of the socialist left who, he stated, would use Aboriginal people as a 'political football' in the interest of 'attacking our present order of society'.\(^{36}\) Labor members condemned the government's statements, and Gordon Bryant called the embassy 'one of the most original demonstrations we have for some time in any political field'. Gough Whitlam called for a commission to consider land rights 'for the whole Commonwealth ... not just the Northern Territory'.\(^{37}\) A number of ALP members signed a petition promising to physically defend the tents.

The response from the embassy to the threat of a removal of the tents was to promise, in the words of Denis Walker, a 'bloody fight' if an attempt was made to disperse the protest.\(^{38}\) Others, who adhered more to the non-violent, symbolic approach of the embassy rather than the street-fighting call of the (Australian) Black Panthers, were equally determined to remain \textit{in situ} on the lawns until their demands were met.

Thus began several months of continued protest, threats of removal by Hunt, and further publicity for the embassy. Hunt wrote to the Prime Minister on 24 March, 'indicating intention to amend ordinance'.\(^{39}\) On the lawns, a constantly changing and fluctuating population of Aboriginal people from throughout Australia remained encamped under the red, black and green flag of international Black unity.\(^{40}\) The floating population usually peaked at weekends, when carloads of Aboriginal people travelled from Sydney. Chicka Dixon organised much of the transport, while prominent activists such as Gary Foley, Bruce McGuinness, Paul Coe and Sam Watson arrived at the end of each week. News rapidly spread throughout Aboriginal Australia, and the fame of the protest continued to increase.

Hunt, it was widely assumed, would delay taking action until after the potentially embarrassing South-East Asia Treaty Organization conference in Canberra on 27 June. During this extended reprieve, a nation-wide protest for Aboriginal land rights was held under the banner \textit{Ningla-A-Na} (an Arrernte word meaning 'hungry for our land'). Conducted on National Aborigines Day, marches in most capital cities occurred without violent confrontation, despite comments such as Foley's that 'the time of white pacifism is

\(^{33}\) Dexter n.d.
\(^{34}\) \textit{Canberra News}, 18 February 1972.
\(^{36}\) ibid., pp. 131, 135. ASIO had already warned Hunt and other ministers of what its personnel considered a threat to their safety by Aboriginal activists (see Howson 1984, pp. 819, 829).
\(^{38}\) \textit{Canberra Times}, 27 March 1972.
\(^{40}\) The black, red and yellow Aboriginal flag, designed in 1971, arrived at the embassy in July.
gone'. The Ningla-A-Na protest centred on the demand for land rights, and on the prevention of the Nabalco mining operation at Gove. In addition, the marches made it clear that the Australia Day statement was viewed as empty rhetoric by the Aboriginal activists and their supporters.

Hunt finally took action on 17 July, when Inspector J. Johnson of the Commonwealth police handed a draft of the new ordinance to Ambrose Golden-Brown at the embassy. The draft made clear new penalties for camping in a public place such as the lawns of Parliament House. While Richard Refshauge, President of the ANU Students' Representative Council, offered to assist the demonstration through a 'passive stand', a statement was issued by the embassy to the effect that the Aboriginal protesters would undertake a 'sandbag defence'.

The halcyon days of protest at the embassy ended on 20 July. For six months, the embassy had been a creative, non-violent direct action whose demands directly contradicted the ideology of the status quo. Although there had been allusions to the sort of power which emanates from the barrel of a gun, the protest had been an entirely non-violent display of political commitment. The events which followed were the result of almost ten years of Aboriginal protest over the right to their land, and five months of debate within the government over the wisdom of using force to disperse a nationally (and internationally) embarrassing demonstration.

Hunt's final promise on 18 July was that there would be two weeks' grace before the implementation of the new law. Fearing police action was imminent, student supporters established a vigil the next day. Nevertheless, the intervention of the police came with an element of 'surprise'. Pat Eatock, an Aboriginal participant in the embassy and also employed at the government printer, overheard police requesting a copy of the new gazette on the morning of the twentieth ('get us the first one ... we're waiting to move on it'). As the two-way radio link to the university and the university switchboard were apparently jammed, Eatock left work and phoned several student residences. By ten o'clock there were thirty people at the embassy, and by the time student supporter Steven Padgham had drawn more students away from their lectures the number had increased to seventy.

At half past ten, Inspector Osborne led 150 police toward the tents. The protesters faced a body which marched as 'a paramilitary force' from behind Parliament House. The ensuing fracas occurred between police supposedly acting with the legitimate authority of the state and demonstrators who regarded that authority as bogus. To the demonstrators, the state's actions represented an affront to the right to peaceful protest against injustice which could be redressed only by 'land rights ... now!'. Osborne made several announcements over the megaphone, warning the protesters to move away from the tents, and advising them that 'if you fail to move you may be arrested for obstructing police'. The protesters linked arms and sang 'we shall overcome' as the police advanced towards them.

41 *Tribune*, July 1972.
42 *Canberra Times*, 18 July 1972.
43 ibid.
45 Gary Foley, interview, 7 June 1991.
46 Pat Eatock (from Boguntungan in Queensland, then resident in Canberra), interview, 17 July 1991.
47 Di Riddell (then secretary of the ANU SRC), interview, 17 August 1991.
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An 'all-out, all-in' brawl followed. There was no doubt among the participants that the police commenced the violence, and some officers were seen to remove their badges before attacking the protesters. Peter Burns, a local resident, remembered how he linked arms with a woman of fifty who 'copped a boot in the groin' from the police. Gordon Bryant, fulfilling his pledge to defend the embassy, was seen pulling a policeman away from a protester. As Aborigines and white supporters grappled with police, a number were led away:

The paddy wagon ... was parked up on the gravel. The coppers opened the back ... just threw them in.
The tents were ripped from the lawns and taken away in a police vehicle. Eight people, including five Aborigines, were arrested, while 'almost every demonstrator ringing the tent was injured or bruised in some way'. Paul Coe was admitted to hospital, and Gary Foley was also injured. According to Bobbi Sykes, most of the eight police injured suffered broken knuckles and teeth marks on their hands.

Reactions by the various parties involved, and by the public, were varied. The media gave the event precedence over the national petrol strike, and this at once raised issues of civil liberties and Aboriginal land rights. Hunt denounced Bryant and Enderby for participating, and blamed the incident on 'people who had come from outside to stir up trouble'. Whittam sarcastically congratulated the government on:

the despatch it showed against these Aborigines in contrast to its impotence in the face of travel swindlers, international gangsters and fascist bombers and tax racketeers.

Barrie Dexter considered the first removal a 'tragedy', which had put an end to 'a courageous Aboriginal initiative'. Coombs also expressed regret at the government's action, and suggested that 'there remain avenues for protest which I hope they (Aborigines) will continue to use'.

Those more closely involved considered the first removal to be a 'token fight' which left 'feeling running very high'. Aboriginal participants were particularly aware of the public anger generated by the actions of the police - Gordon Briscoe reflected that 'The violence as it was portrayed on TV ... was on a par with the Vietnam images, on a par with the anti-apartheid images'.

The embassy, although uprooted from its campsite, continued to exist in the determination of Aboriginal people, now billeted in student houses and the university buildings in Childers Street. Protest was planned over the removal, and over the demand for land rights which it had come to represent.

50 Chris Swindbank (student supporter), interview, 2 May 1991.
52 Peter Burns (Canberra resident and white supporter), interview, 23 August 1991.
53 Western Australian, 21 July 1972.
54 Peter Burns, interview, 23 August 1991.
56 Western Australian, 21 July 1972.
59 McNally 1973, p. 86.
60 Dexter n.d.
61 ibid.
63 Gordon Briscoe (from central Australia), interview, 22 May 1991.
On 21 July, student supporters enlisted the aid of Terry Higgins in making a legal challenge to the ordinance. A Supreme Court injunction was sought by Ambrose Golden-Brown, Billy Harrison, Pat Eatock, and Allan Sharpley in the hope of preventing any further removal of tents from the lawns of Parliament House. On the same day, Senator Murphy announced an ALP resolution against the ordinance.

A march through the streets of Canberra was organised on the twenty-second. Later that day a meeting took place between Superintendent Rochford and Inspector Osborne of the Commonwealth police, and Dexter, Refshauge, Briscoe, Sykes, Eatock, Paul Coe, Les Watson and Gary Williams. Although there was some recognition that the ordinance had been passed with 'haste ... and a bit of criticism', the meeting failed to produce anything but confirmation of the polarised attitudes of the opposing parties. The Aboriginal representatives asked why the police had acted as 'mindless people' who refused to 'look beyond the letter of the law to the real human aspects of the situation', and reaffirmed their right and intention to demonstrate for the return of their land in front of Parliament House.

Warnings of physical resistance were issued by the embassy-in-exile on the twenty-second. Dennis Walker observed that violence was 'not only likely, but bloody well necessary. We're just not going to stand silently and watch our people beaten up.' Bobbi Sykes described the feelings of the demonstrators, including those who eschewed violence, as follows:

We couldn't allow ourselves to be placed in a position which would even appear we were compromising either ourselves or our people ... reserve blacks saw it [the embassy] as the only ray of light to appear on their darkened horizons for many years. Most urban blacks regarded it as the first positive step towards equality so far.

Sunday, 23 July 1972, was another day of violent confrontation between Aboriginal people and their supporters (who numbered some 200), and the police. The protest, which included a number of older members of various Aboriginal communities marched through the city and across Commonwealth Avenue Bridge to restore the tents to the lawns. Aboriginal people, students, unionists and other supporters sat on the road in front of Parliament House, while others linked arms around the tent and sang 'we shall overcome', and chanted slogans including 'the whole world's watching', 'land rights now', 'free Black Australia', and 'Stop Nabalco'. Paul Coe reminded white supporters that 'What is happening here today to black men and women is surely going to happen to white men and women ... What will they [the government] do to you tomorrow?'

The demonstration formed itself into a number of circles around the tents. Police selected Bobbi Sykes from the crowd and asked her to tell the demonstration to disperse. She refused. A figure appeared at a window in Parliament House, and word spread that it was Ralph Hunt taking a look at the proceedings. A chant started up, rhyming slang

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64 Now Mr Justice Higgins.
65 Affidavits of the plaintiffs in Supreme Court Records (SC 701/72).
67 Dexter n.d.
69 ibid., pp. 88-9.
mocking the minister's surname, which 'infuriated' the police.73 While the protest in general 'cheerfully and loudly told the police to fuck off',74 there was at the same time a clear call over the protesters' megaphone: 'we don't want violence either'.75

Preceded by the sound of their boots crunching on the gravel, some 360 police emerged from behind Parliament House. Another chant started, this time the Sieg Heil of Nazism, in parody of this manifestation of the power of the state.76 Particularly threatening was the presence of NSW police uniforms amongst the approaching troop.77

The violence which followed was even more intense than that of the previous Thursday. Cavadini's film of the event showed the full extent of the tumultuous brawl on the lawns, detailing incidents such as the souveniring of a police badge by an Aboriginal protester and incitements over the megaphone as the violence escalated ('everyone in uniform should have their guts blown out').78 Michael Anderson remembered how:

One big blond headed bloke pulled an old woman to the ground ... as soon as we saw that we saw red ... we clobbered him.

By the end of the second removal, nine protesters had been taken for treatment by Pat Sorby at the ANU Health Service. Eight Aboriginal people (including Isabel Coe, Michael Anderson and Gary Williams) and ten white supporters were arrested, and five police treated for bites, cuts and abrasions.79 Almost immediately, it was announced that another re-erection of the tents would take place on the following Sunday, and one Aboriginal protester left the lawns with the comment: 'next time we come with fuckin' guns'.80

The number of arrests bore no relationship to the magnitude of the violence, and it was the view of many participants that it was surprising that no-one was killed. Chicka Dixon called it the most violent event he had ever witnessed.81 Pat O'Shane remembered a 'major public outcry' and a feeling of outrage that 'an innocuous group of people should evince such a violent action against it.'82 Gary Foley remembered the media value of the protest (for good or ill) as lying with its being 'one of the most violent confrontations in the history of Canberra'.83

After two removals of the embassy, the essential issues of land rights and the right to mount such symbolic, creative and non-violent protest, remained unresolved. The tension between the embassy and all it stood for, and the forces of authority, had not diminished since 20 July. The question loomed: was there to be a third, even larger and more violent, protest in front of the seat of government?

On the afternoon of the twenty-third, Aboriginal protesters met at the ANU bar to plan their next move. Those present included Johnny Coe, Bob Maza, Denis Walker, Chicka Dixon and Gary Foley. Consensus had established that another re-erection would take place, and the discussion thus centred on tactics. There was suggestion of 'a few molotov

73 Peter Burns, interview, 23 August 1991.
76 ibid.
77 Various informants; cf. Ron Dillon's (former Commonwealth police officer) view that police from interstate were not used during the suppression of the embassy (interview, 18 August 1991).
80 Peter Burns, interview, 23 August 1991.
81 Chicka Dixon (a slightly older activist from western NSW, then resident in Sydney), interview, 2 July 1991.
82 Pat O'Shane (from north Queensland), interview, 22 October 1991.
83 Gary Foley, interview, 7 June 1991.
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cocktails around town' as payback for the brutality of that morning;84 Denis Walker proposed appeal to post-colonial African nations and the People's Republic of China, and also suggested that 'if they take the embassy we take something of theirs ... preferably property rather than people.'85 When asked for comment, Chicka Dixon merely shook his head. On the twenty-sixth, Pat Eatock warned that there was every possibility that the planned re-erection would turn into 'Australia's Sharpeville'.86

Meanwhile, on the twenty-fifth, Mr Justice Fox adjourned a writ seeking declaration of the invalidity of the ordinance. He found that section twelve of the Seat of Government Act, which provided for the notice and availability of new ordinances, was an 'unsatisfactory piece of legislation'.87 Although the application for permission to return the embassy to the lawns was rejected, the protest had again embarrassed the government.

The government and its ministers were aware of the threat of a major incident but, in the days leading up to 30 July, continued in a blundering policy of prevarication. McMahon appeared in the media as irretrievably paternalistic and out of touch with the political realities of the situation - he stated his chief interest as 'my people, the Aborigines'.88 The Prime Minister's only response to the impending demonstration was to tell Howson and Hunt to co-operate on the matter and seek a negotiated solution, something which neither minister achieved.89

Attempts at intercession to prevent further violence were made by a number of individuals. Richard Refshauge and the Reverend Garnsey, ANU Chaplain, suggested to J.O. Ballard (Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior), that the tents be 're-established and then pulled down again' to avoid confrontation, but the proposal was rejected.90 Paul Coe asked Hal Wootten, President of the Aboriginal Legal Service, to intervene, but Wootten was uncertain what, if anything, he could do in the circumstances.91

The three members of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs, then in Darwin for a joint Federal and State meeting, advised the minister to negotiate. Howson, however, was opposed even to Hunt's proposal for a 'club' as a permanent meeting place for Aboriginal people in the national capital.92 Howson continued to refuse to negotiate with 'unrepresentative militants', while Hunt informed a meeting of police and embassy representatives (including Michael Anderson, Billie Craigie, Tiger Bayles, Margaret Lawrie and Pat Eatock) that 'the tent embassy was not on and could not be re-erected'.93

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85 ibid.
88 McNally 1973, p. 103.
89 Howson noted in his diary only that ASIO considered that Black militancy was experiencing problems with funding and popularity (Howson 1984, p. 889).
92 Dexter n.d. The proposal for a permanent meeting place had been rejected by the embassy some months earlier; it was appropriated and turned into a demand for a 'people's place' with the status of an embassy by Pat Eatock, Geraldine Briggs, Shirley Smith, Denis Walker and others on 26 July 1972 (letter to Howson from Aboriginal delegation dated 26 July).
93 Ballard to Hunt, Department of Interior document dated 27 July (in possession of Ralph Hunt). This document also mentioned the possibility of 'permitting' a tent to be put up, 'the
While Whitlam urged restraint, and Eatock telegraphed McMahon warning of 'a national crisis including bloodshed and possible death,' the disarray of the policy-makers reached a peak. Howson refused to co-operate with Coombs, or with Hunt, and preferred to heed the advice of Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen to 'stand firm.' While the embassy continued to demand the dropping of the charges laid at the previous demonstrations, re-erection of the tents and 'subsequent removal to a temporary representation centre' with full diplomatic status, McMahon vetoed any plan for a 'club' and was supported in this by Howson. All that was offered was a meeting of the State and Territory Advisory Committee, Howson's pet project, in August.

On the Saturday night, R.A. Wilson announced his hope that there would be no violence, but promised that the law would be 'upheld'. Busloads of Aborigines were en route to Canberra from throughout Australia, many carrying warnings of 'bloodshed' (and some opposition to protest action) from the elders of their communities. This admonition was recalled by Kath Walker, who believed that on this occasion the elders felt that they would 'rather lose the land than lose the children'. At this stage Eatock, Foley, Anderson, Sykes, Dixon, Paul Coe, the Bellear brothers, and other Aboriginal protesters were struggling with the task of organising what could have been a bloodbath. Eatock remembered that 'people had reached the stage where they were prepared to die for the issue'.

On the overcast winter's Sunday of 30 July, Wootten made a final attempt to intercede, asking Wilson to delay police action and let the interstate Aboriginal protesters make their symbolic point before they returned home. No guarantee, however, was extracted from the police.

The demonstration commenced at the university later in the morning. Aboriginal people formed groups according to their home State, and Aboriginal marshals walked the length of the rallying ground confiscating knives and other weapons ('you'll get it back later'). The demonstration then proceeded to Parliament House. Participants recalled the huge crowd (estimated at two thousand Aboriginal people and supporters, and a thousand tourists and onlookers). As Michael Anderson put it, 'I never saw so many people in my life'; the sheer weight of numbers made it 'quite obvious that people were going to get hurt' if either the police or the protesters adopted violent tactics.

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94 Sydney Morning Herald, 29 July 1972.
95 Canberra Times, 28 July 1972.
96 And in fact denied him a seat on the official plane returning to Canberra (see Coombs 1978, p. 17).
97 Howson 1984, p. 891.
98 Hunt and McMahon offered Newfong a club as a 'more permanent and dignified presence' in Canberra in May, an offer rejected by John Newfong in negotiations (Hunt n.d.).
99 Dexter n.d. (Cabinet minutes remain unavailable at the time of writing).
100 The late poet, and elder of the Nunukal people.
101 Oodgeroo Nunukal (Kath Walker), interview, 23 October 1991.
103 Hal Wootten, personal recollections of the Aboriginal Embassy, 23 November 1992 (in possession of the author). (See also Aboriginal Legal Service annual report, 1971-72, p. 9).
106 Gary Foley, interview, 7 June 1991.
THE ABORIGINAL EMBASSY

Three circles were formed around the tent. Indicating the expectation of violence, twenty 'guards' were arranged between each of the circles, whose purpose was to place themselves between the protesters and the police.\textsuperscript{107} To the surprise of the demonstrators, the police seemed to be biding their time. For the next four hours, the demonstration remained in front of Parliament House, engaging in chanting and dance.\textsuperscript{108}

Chicka Dixon exhorted student supporters to live up to their potential to be 'white brothers': 'if you are not going to be part of the problem, then you must be part of the solution'.\textsuperscript{109} Kep Enderby told the protest that the police were not responsible for the repressive law which it was their duty to enforce, while a Builders' Labourers' Federation spokesperson criticised their willingness to obey orders. Aboriginal spokespersons emphasised the need for non-violence. A book\textsuperscript{110} was circulated among the participants, who signed it while police 'kept moving the deadline.'\textsuperscript{111} Sykes, and others involved in the third occupation of the lawns, regarded this as 'a real coup de grace'.

By three o'clock, no police intervention had occurred other than a further extended deadline for removal of the tent. The police then informed the demonstrators that they could 'march back with full honour',\textsuperscript{112} and the majority of the students returned to the university, having made their presence felt in support of the embassy and Aboriginal land rights at a comparatively festive event.

At this juncture, Hal Wootten (who had remained on the edge of the crowd throughout the proceedings) passed a note from the Aboriginal protesters to the police to the effect that the Aboriginal demonstrators would allow 'two unarmed police' to enter the crowd (still numbering well over one hundred) and dismantle the tent. Gordon Briscoe accompanied Wootten to reassure the police of the good intentions of the protesters, and (although 'suspicious') they accepted this offer.\textsuperscript{113}

At half past three, those who remained heeded Chicka Dixon's call to 'sit there peacefully ... just allow them to come in'. Seven police officers\textsuperscript{114} were led through the crowd by Osborne. There were some calls of 'boo', but no physical resistance to the removal of the tent.

A few moments later, however, the protesters had:

congregated over the other side of the park ... we had a piece of canvas and held it up over our heads and they looked across and thought we had put the tent up again ... they came running across to tear the tent down and found it was just a whole lot of people standing up holding a piece of canvas on their heads.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{107} Woroni (ANU student newspaper), 1972.
\textsuperscript{108} Ningla-A-Na, directed by Alessandro Cavadini, 1972.
\textsuperscript{109} Harris 1972, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{110} If extant, this visitors' book (and many other leaflets and personal reflections) would certainly make a valuable source for an autonomous history of the embassy by an Aboriginal author. Although Kevin Gilbert, James Miller and Dr Roberta B. Sykes have all referred to these events in their publications, no major history of these events has been written by a participant or Aboriginal author.
\textsuperscript{111} Dr Roberta Sykes, interview, 18 October 1991.
\textsuperscript{112} Jack Waterford, interview, 30 July 1991
\textsuperscript{113} Hal Wootten, personal recollections of the Aboriginal Embassy, 23 November 1992 (in possession of the author).
\textsuperscript{114} Woroni, 31 July 1972. Obviously a larger delegation than expected.
\textsuperscript{115} Dr Roberta Sykes, interview, 18 October 1991.
The police, after exchanging 'murmurs and glances', removed the canvas to reveal a circle of Aboriginal people sitting smiling at them, making the then-popular raised V-sign of peace, and holding aloft a placard designating the site as the Aboriginal Embassy. Some of the protesters picked up the canvas again and followed the police back across the roads, dropping it at their feet. At the close of the day, there had been no violence. Instead, there had been a day of symbolic, non-violent and creative action. The primacy of this approach since the inception of the protest, combined with restraint on both sides, prevented a violent confrontation. Some participants considered that the police had been told to 'stand off'; in fact, as R.A. Wilson recalled the third removal of the embassy, 'the government and the minister left it entirely to my discretion', but there is no evidence of any governmental decision to this effect. The organisation of the protest, the calm orchestration of the actual point of contact by Chicka Dixon, and the negotiations undertaken by Wootten and Briscoe were essential contributing factors which made the ascendancy of non-violence possible. A spontaneous adoption of non-violent action amidst the jubilation of strength in numbers occurred, although this approach owed much to the symbolic nature of the protest over the preceding months.

In the months that followed, the embassy remained a significant issue in Aboriginal and mainstream politics. Howson's conference of State and Territory Advisory Councils was disrupted by activists using symbolic methods of protest, and adopted a firm stance on land rights. The conference also resolved to re-erect the embassy for a fourth time, and this in fact occurred on 12 September when Justice Blackburn declared that 'the ordinance was not notified in accordance with the provisions of the Act'. This in itself wrought temporary havoc with the legal system, making dozens of other associated ordinances invalid. In both Houses of Parliament, intense debate took place over the government's inept handling of the affair, and former government minister Jim Killen crossed the floor to vote with the opposition over the re-gazettal of the ordinance. Whitlam called the fourth and final protest - removed without violence on the morning of the thirteenth - 'an assertion of the rights and dignity of the Australian Aborigines'.

The embassy was, in many ways, a success story. Although not necessarily an election issue, the embassy highlighted the failings of the government on the eve of Whitlam's victory in November 1972. The embassy assumed a mythology of historical and political significance amongst Aboriginal people. Despite the fact that its central demand for land rights was only partially fulfilled by the Northern Territory act of 1976, the longevity of the demand for the return of land in other areas (that is, in areas outside those covered by the recent native title legislation) and more generally for Aboriginal

118 R.A. Wilson, interview, 16 August 1991.
120 Among other protests, Aboriginal activists stuffed their mouths with white paper gags to indicate their lack of equal speaking rights. See New Dawn, October 1972.
121 Federal Law Reports.
122 Now the Hon. Sir James Killen.
124 Ralph Hunt himself conceded that the protest achieved a 'token' victory (interview, 16 October 1991). Authors such as Adam Shoemaker (1989) and Hannah Middleton (1977) are perhaps unaware of the influence of the protest and the longevity of its renown.
125 Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act, 1976.
sovereignty indicates its pivotal significance in the history of contemporary Aboriginal politics.

The embassy exemplified the efficacy of protest action within the framework of Australian democracy. Gary Foley called the July demonstrations a 'spectacular moral victory ... an enormous psychological boost for the movement', and even advocates of other, violent methods of direct action shared in the euphoria of making a powerful media image, exposing the inadequacy of the government, and placing land rights on the political agenda for the following two decades. Had violence escalated, as it could well have done in July, the legend and the legacy of the protests would be essentially different to the status and achievements of the Aboriginal Embassy.

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126 As well as accumulating legendary status, the embassy was the model for further encampments on the lawns of the (old) Parliament House in 1974, 1979, and 1992. The latter incarnation of the embassy remains in place at the time of writing, demanding the recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty.

127 Other encampments of a political nature, such as the major protests against uranium mining in 1983, and later protest against US bases, became common on the lawns of Parliament House in the years after the Aboriginal Embassy.
BLACK AND RED:
THE PILBARA PASTORAL WORKERS' STRIKE, 1946

Michael Hess

For most of the period of white settlement in Western Australia the labour of Aborigines was an essential factor in rural production. This was especially true in the pastoral industry. Not only was it an industry based on the expropriation of Aboriginal lands by white settlers, it was also an industry largely maintained by the exploitation of cheap Aboriginal labour. Despite the fact that these workers had the reputation of being 'the best stockmen in the world' they were excluded from the provisions of industrial awards and worked and lived under conditions that would not have been tolerated by a white workforce.

On 1 May 1946 workers on some two dozen stations in the Pilbara region struck. The degree of co-ordination and solidarity they displayed first amazed and then infuriated both the white pastoralists and their representatives in the State Government. While the mass media either ignored or condemned the strike, sections of the metropolitan labour movement sprang to the defence of the strikers and notable actions of solidarity were organised. The dispute took a number of turns with some employers agreeing to the conditions the workers sought. At one stage the State Government also agreed to substantial reforms but this was later withdrawn. Some workers returned to the industry but others decided that their withdrawal would be permanent.

Aboriginal labour in northern Australia

The first Europeans to arrive in Australia were quick to note the lack of the three most important pre-conditions for colonial exploitation. There were no easily accessible raw materials to fire the imagination of colonial entrepreneurs. There were no existing markets to be exploited by the introduction of new products and there were few native inhabitants whose condition was sufficiently miserable to render them easy targets for labour recruitment. By comparison with other regions the foundations of colonial exploitation had been laid very poorly in Australia. This ought not, however, to blind us to the reality of colonial penetration nor to the fact that the malevolent effects of that penetration observed elsewhere are also evident in the 'development' of Australia.

In the pastoral industries at the edge of the colonial frontier Aboriginal labour has been a vital factor ever since the crushing of initial resistance. Yet not only was that labour very poorly treated, as indeed was much white labour, but it was denied the most fundamental right associated with labour under capitalism: it was not 'free labour'. Stevens' work on the

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1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Australian Canadian Labour History Conference, University of Sydney, 12-16 December 1988. Subsequent re-writing owes much to anonymous referees, to the editors of Aboriginal History, and to suggestions from Don McLeod, Paul Roberts, Lloyd Davies, Joan Williams and Raelene Frances. The views expressed, however, are my own.
cattle industry in northern Australia during the 1960s provides a good example of how the colonial character of both white settlement and government policy acted to prevent the emergence of a free indigenous labour force in the north capable of partnering capital in the region's development.

Not only did their exclusion from the industrial award system leave them almost totally at the mercy of their employers, but they were generally unable to leave a station and seek work elsewhere. McGrath's revisionist study of the moral economy of Northern Territory cattle stations notes the compatibility of Aboriginal socio-religious traditions with pastoral work. She stresses that employment in the industry was part of the strategies used by Aboriginal groups to survive the white invasion of their lands and even played a role in ameliorating their conditions of exploitation. This revision has the advantage of presenting a more positive picture, rejecting the stereotype of Aboriginal workers as passive victims of white enterprise. On the evidence of her own informants, however, it is clear that the situation McGrath has described would fit comfortably into the category of pragmatic accommodation or at best may be seen as 'bargaining at the margins'. It is very difficult to see it as a challenge to white colonial control and this is presumably why commentators such as Wheelwright and Buckley have concluded that Aboriginal workers did not in fact mount any serious challenge to exploitative working conditions. It may well be that this more positive view of the position of Aboriginal workers arises from the fact that McGrath's study focuses on family run stations. By contrast Rose's collection of reminiscences of Aboriginal former employees on company stations paints a much less happy picture, in which 'while Aboriginal labour was required, Aboriginal people were treated as if they were expendable'.

The general history of the regulation of the Aboriginal pastoral workforce supports Rose's conclusion. When the Federal Pastoral Workers' Award was granted on the application of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) in the mid-1920s, the AWU sought to use it to restrict the employment of Aborigines, who it felt competed unfairly with its white members. The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, however, refused this aspect of the union's application, arguing that Aboriginal labour was vital to many properties whose economic viability would be threatened if it was restricted. In 1936, the AWU applied to vary the award to bring Aboriginal workers within its provisions, but the court again rejected the demand 'on this occasion without explanation'. Including Aboriginal workers within the award would, of course, have given them access to the bargaining process and neither government nor industry wanted that. As with so many subject colonial peoples, the Second World War seems to have made a considerable difference to the position of Aboriginal workers. During the period of white male labour shortage Aborigines in the north worked in many skilled and semi-skilled jobs which had previously been the preserve of whites, and were employed and paid by the Army itself. Their reward was that both the Federal Labor Government and the Acting Administrator of the Northern Territory took up their case for inclusion in a special 'Aboriginal Award'. The Government's view, which was a normative one in white Australia of this period, was that this award should provide black workers with wages equal to about

3 Berndt and Berndt 1987, p. 97.
4 McGrath 1987.
5 Buckley and Wheelwright 1988, p. 2.
7 Stevens 1981, p. 68.
8 Morris 1965.
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half the basic wage plus food and accommodation.9 A special report prepared for the Administrator took the view that 'the value of the work of the average native is about 70% of that of the average white'.10 When it came to a conference with employers, however, their offer of a cash wage of 15% of the basic wage plus food and accommodation was accepted by the administration! On paper this represented a 5% lowering of wage rates for these workers, but then few employers had ever bothered with the official rate.11

Subsequently the hidden agenda of the negotiations became clear when a new Liberal-Country Party Coalition Federal Government, with strong support from the pastoral industry, introduced regulations to more strictly control Aborigines in general and Aboriginal workers in particular. The new Welfare Ordinance, which applied in the Northern Territory, introduced the concept of 'wards', who once 'declared', could be employed under the Wards Employment Ordinance. The regulations were administered in a blatantly racist manner and their effect was to continue to deny Aboriginal workers access to any sort of bargaining process regarding their conditions of employment and even to deny them freedom of movement or the right to refuse to work.

The result, as Stevens has extensively documented, was that in 1965 when the AWU mounted its equal pay case, the northern cattle industry was still reliant on Aboriginal labour, which was being administered under a set of regulations which were basically colonial in character. There is no space here to detail the striking similarities with both the spirit and letter of colonial labour regulation in the Australian administered Territory of Papua and New Guinea.12 It is, however, hard to believe that such similarity is coincidental.

Background to the strike

While there have been many anthropological studies of Western Australian Aboriginal groups there has been relatively little written about the role of Aboriginal labour. In general the same elements of colonial exploitation are evident as in the Northern Territory but there are also particular features which give the history of Aboriginal labour in the West an interest of its own.

In 1889 the British colony of Western Australia was granted self-government by an Act of Parliament. A condition of the passage of that Act, insisted upon by progressive British politicians, was that the colonial Government take upon itself the responsibility of caring for the region's Aboriginal inhabitants. This condition was enshrined in s. 70 of the Constitution, which read:

'there shall be payable to Her Majesty, in every year, out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum of Five Thousand Pounds ... to be appropriated to the welfare of the Aboriginal Natives, and expended in providing them with food and clothing ... and in assisting generally to promote the preservation and well-being of the Aborigines.'13

This money was to be paid to the Aboriginal Protection Board by the Treasurer and spent at the Board's discretion with the proviso that when the annual revenue of the Colony exceeded £5000 an annual amount of not less than one percent of annual revenue would be substituted.

9 Berndt and Berndt 1987.
10 Carrington 1945.
12 Hess 1983.
Within a few years the revered leader of WA's white settlers, John Forrest, had engineered the repudiation of s. 70. Forrest's argument was that the clause was never meant to stand and was simply a useful sop to the British anti-slavery lobby, which might have had the influence to delay self-government had it not been included. While by no means the most outstanding piece of white settler treachery, the incident illustrates the attitude of the WA Government to the region's prior inhabitants. This incident was to have a profound effect on the thinking of at least one member of the white community, Don McLeod. He came to see it as a symbolic starting point for systematic government denial of the rights of the 'beneficial owners' of the land. It also provides a fitting path into consideration of the events in the Pilbara pastoral industry in 1946, when Aboriginal workers asserted their rights against those of their self-styled 'protectors'.

These events have been described elsewhere. The autobiographical material by Don McLeod and Clancy McKenna provides valuable insights into the thinking of two of the strike's leaders. Brown and Biskup have dealt with the strike in the context of more general histories of the black-white relationship. John Wilson's work includes a more scholarly account as background to his study of one of the post-strike communities, while Mandle has provided a study concentrating on the role of Don McLeod as a champion of Aboriginal rights.

Despite these efforts the strike has not been accorded the place it deserves in Australian labour history. This is no doubt partly due to the fact that Aboriginal history tends to be presented in the context of race relations rather than work relations. This article seeks to set the strike in its labour history context as a struggle by organised workers for rights that were denied them by sections of management and the state.

The central issue of the strike itself was the workers' right to organise, or more precisely to select representatives to negotiate on their behalf. Because this took place in a situation of colonial dominance this was not merely an industrial demand. It was also a political demand, which went to the heart of the system of 'protection' by asserting that the owners of the means of production and the agents of the state, which acted as their handmaiden, did not have the right to act on behalf of the people. Subsequently the strike led to the establishment of self-managing communities as some of the strikers sought to achieve control of their social and economic situations. Some in these communities still claim to be on strike. The Aboriginal pastoral workers' strike of 1946 is thus noteworthy not only as an early effort by Aboriginal workers at collective organisation. It must also rank as Australia's longest strike and one of the few which has involved both a fundamental challenge to management control and an alternative vision of freedom from that control. It is also a story of thoughtful determination and valiant solidarity, qualities which would have long ago ensured it a place of honour in the history of the Australian labour movement had its heroes been white.

The strike begins

The official position on the condition of Aboriginal labour in north-western Australia in the period leading up to the strike is well summarised in a 1939 report of the Deputy
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Commissioner for Native Affairs. 'Generally speaking', the report concluded, 'the natives are very well treated' with some getting wages of as much as one pound per week.21 An alternative view was put forward in the same year by the Labor Council of New South Wales in a pamphlet by its Assistant Secretary, Tom Wright, calling for 'a new deal for Aborigines'.22 Wright argued that the situation of Aborigines was generally one of neglect and deprivation and that raising the demand for a new deal for them 'must be one of the tasks of the Labour Movement'.23 In his view, Government policy saw 'the salvation of the Aborigines in their transformation into workers (generally without wages) for station owners, miners, mission stations and others who have already contributed largely to the destruction of the native population and treated them virtually ... as chattel slaves'.24 It was, in other words, 'their "usefulness" to whites', which was the major determinant of Aboriginal policy. A major justification for the policy was that Aborigines were a 'vanishing race' and unless integrated into 'white civilisation' would disappear completely. Wright pointed out that in fact 'it is whites who have deliberately caused their destruction' in order to grab their land and that the official policy of 'protection' would preserve that land theft and add to it the exploitation of Aboriginal labour.25 He argued that this would further the disintegration of tribal life and would truly fulfil the prophecies of a 'vanishing race'.

Wright's alternative was a radical program of land rights and Government support for Aboriginal self-management. Existing 'reserves' were to be turned over to their Aboriginal inhabitants. New reserves were to be created with 'adequate legal ownership' vested in the tribes currently on them. Non-Aborigines were to be excluded except where their presence was necessary for medical or technical functions. With security of land tenure as its basis, Wright saw the encouragement of co-operative, self-managed enterprises becoming possible. He called for at least one million pounds 'for initial expenditure in restoring and extending reserves and establishing essential organisation'.26

Tom Wright was the Secretary of the militant Sheet Metal Workers' Union and a leading member of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). The foreword to the pamphlet was written by another well-known communist, the author Katherine Susannah Prichard. It excited considerable interest among WA communists and found its way to the Pilbara and Don McLeod. McLeod was known for his sympathy with the plight of the Aboriginal people and local activists of the time recall that Wright's pamphlet 'crystallised much of what he had been thinking'.27 McLeod's own status in the CPA is unclear, although as early as July 1944 he was writing to Ernie Thorton, National Secretary of the Federated Ironworkers' Association, describing himself as 'a Party member undisclosed' and his work on behalf of Aboriginal people as 'my party task'.28 The communists were not, of course, the only group in white Australian society to be concerned about the situation of Aboriginal people. Others, including the Association for Aboriginal Advancement and the Women's Service Guild, had been active in WA but it is fair to say that neither organisation could match what Bolton has described as McLeod's 'capacity, rare among

21 Native Affairs File, No. 574/1939.
22 Wright 1939.
23 ibid., p. 6.
24 ibid., p. 16.
25 ibid.
26 ibid., pp. 31-2.
27 Davies 1988, p. 34.
28 Letter, McLeod to Thorton, 14 July 1944.
white men at any time, of gaining the trust of Aborigines and acting as a catalyst to bring them together for concerted action.29

One such action involved protests against the issuing of 'native passes' to mixed descent people in Port Hedland in 1944. The pass system had not been in operation in the area for over a decade and its re-introduction seems to have been occasioned by defence force fears of the local population. The year before a threatened strike by mixed descent workers was averted when the Acting Commissioner for Native Affairs threatened to order the evacuation of all mixed descent persons from the area.30 McLeod had attempted to represent the interests of these workers in discussions in Perth with the Department of Native Affairs and returned disappointed to Port Hedland to establish a branch of the Anti-Fascist League, with which he had made contact in Perth. His tactic was, of course, to indicate the parallels between the fascism against which Australia was officially at war and provisions such as the pass laws, which he saw as fascism at home. Wilson records that the mixed descent workers, then living outside the three mile limit established by the pass laws, marched into Port Hedland under the banner of the Anti-Fascist League. The authorities were apparently at a loss to know how to respond and simply allowed the protesters to remain, illegally, in the town.31

The connection between the Pilbara workers and the Anti-Fascist League was also, in part at least, a connection with the Communist Party. In any case McLeod was discussing the arguments put forward by Wright with his Aboriginal acquaintances at the same time as the CPA began to publicise them in the West. By 1944 Wright's views were being incorporated in CPA State Secretary, Leah Healy's, commercial radio broadcasts with the official CPA line being that the establishment of an autonomous Aboriginal republic would provide the material conditions whereby Aborigines 'can be brought from savagery to the highest stage of civilisation - socialism'. The CPA went further in advocating the view that Aborigines could be 'won as allies of the working class' and promoted a policy of social action to remove oppressive legislation, provide adequate health and medical services and extend to Aborigines the benefits of social welfare.32

Joan Williams, then working on the CPA's WA publication, *Workers' Star*, recalls the attitude of the Party to these developments:

> The Communist Party in WA, with the biggest population of Aborigines, recognised the responsibility to campaign against their oppression. However the approach had been more in propaganda than action.33

Williams recalls that when McLeod started a correspondence with Katherine Susannah Prichard on the issue of the exploitation of Aboriginal people by the pastoralists, the Party could hardly believe its luck. Prichard brought these letters into the CPA office in London Court, Perth. The Party's view was that its own people would not be able to draw Aboriginal workers into action. McLeod, however, having 'the trust of the Pilbara Aboriginal people and some knowledge of Marxism', was in a different position. Williams recalls that 'he felt in need of support and we were a natural group to provide it'. Graham Alcorn, then editor of the *Workers' Star*, took over 'the Aboriginal portfolio' from Prichard and when CPA General Secretary J.B. Miles came to Perth in 1945, McLeod took part in a Party School, which included the CPA's leading local cadres. Williams recalls McLeod as

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30 Biskup 1965, p. 357.
32 Native Affairs File, No. 77/44.
33 Williams n.d.
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having been a 'vigorous participant' in the school discussions, which included the issue of a possible strike by the Pilbara's Aboriginal workers. Subsequent correspondence between McLeod and Alcorn included suggestions from the latter as to how the strike should be planned, what its demands should be and how support of white unionists could be enlisted.34

The prospect of communists and Aborigines coming together was the worst of nightmares for the WA Establishment, combining many of its racial and political prejudices. The Minister for the North-West in WA's Labor Government wrote to the Commissioner for Native Affairs to point out that 'the Communist Party knows very little about the fundamental difficulties of the native question'. He continued 'the [CPA radio] talks suggest that the natives possess an intelligent capacity, but you know as well as I do that this is not so'.35 Official concern with 'the disruptive activities of the [communist] party ... in native circles' was, by late 1944, directed at the activities of 'that communist chap' McLeod.36 E.H. Green, manager of Talga Talga station wrote to the Department of Native Affairs complaining that McLeod was 'exciting [the natives] to strike' and demanded that 'McLeod's permit to employ natives be revoked'.37 McLeod had first gained this in order to employ his long-time friend, Kitchener, as a wood cutter. By this time, however, he was employing anything up to ten men in various sorts of rural work he undertook. Amongst these men, for a period of some months at least, was Dooley Binbin, who later recalled that as their work took them into many areas they were able to observe all the injustices affecting other workers: 'this wrong here, that wrong there'.38

In his contracting work, such as fencing and well-digging, McLeod provided a model of employment relations which the pastoralists clearly found threatening. At this stage, however, the Department does not seem to have shared their concern and even managed to file the complaint under 'Mcloud'. It was not long, however, before a Constable Fletcher took the matter further, reporting that local police saw 'McLeod as a dangerous man among natives'.39 Just where the danger lay in McLeod's activities may be judged from the fact that the 'natives' he employed were earning eleven pounds a week.40 The Commissioner for Native Affairs duly revoked the permit, but McLeod appealed successfully in the Magistrate's Court and had it restored.41

Despite such official concern with communist influence, however, the real starting point of the strike was not Leah Healy's broadcasts on Perth commercial radio, or McLeod's employing Aboriginal workers at ten times the going rate. It was, in fact, a tribal law meeting, which took place well before the events described above. McLeod has described the meeting at Skull Springs in 1942 as 'an event of great significance, the sort of law meeting which took place traditionally perhaps once every fifty years'.42 Two hundred representatives from 23 language groups were present and the meeting lasted six weeks. McLeod records that it was this meeting which decided on taking positive action to improve the situation facing the region's 'Beneficial Owners' and gave him 'authority to take

34 ibid.
35 Letter, Minister to Bray, 19 January 1944.
36 Letter, Bray to Minister, October 1944.
37 Letter, Green to Minister, n.d.
38 Binbin et al. n.d., p. 3.
39 Native Affairs File, No. 800/45, p. 17.
40 Binbin et al. n.d., p. 3.
41 Letter, Bray to O'Neill, 22 August 1945.
42 McLeod 1984, p. 40.
decisions in this area as problems arose'. This meeting also elected Dooley Binbin, who was not present but had great prestige as a traditional Lawman, to represent the desert Aborigines in the management of this issue and left it to these two to select a representative from the settled areas. They later chose Clancy McKenna, a mixed descent man from Port Hedland, to fill this role.

This was to plunge McLeod into two years of negotiating with the Native Affairs bureaucracy and the State Labor Government. From the outset the machinery of the state refused to recognise him as a spokesman and a central demand of the negotiations became the right of the people to appoint their own representatives. Without such recognition, of course, Aboriginal people were effectively denied the right to organise. In particular they demanded that McLeod be appointed Inspector of Aborigines, and hence their go-between with white society and the state. They also demanded that some stations be handed over to Aboriginal management to enable them to undertake self-supporting enterprises of the type described in Wright's pamphlet. Of his efforts to talk sensibly with the Government and its agencies, McLeod recalls:

> the attempt was in all respects unsuccessful. I was threatened, abused and told that I was sticking my nose into business that was no concern of mine. The native question, I was told, was considerably beyond my meagre comprehension and certain competent people were dealing with it.

Another recollection of the Skull Springs gathering is that it was after the tribal law meeting that 'Kitchener [one of the brothers working for McLeod] started another meeting and talked to the people about what was wrong'. In any case it is clear that after much discussion in what amounted to a united nations meeting of the tribes of the region, a decision was taken. Years later a group of those involved recalled that decision and their words tell of their frustration with attempts to go through the proper channels: 'What we felt was that somehow we have to break through - we've got to break through'.

Word about the meeting spread slowly. Dooley Binbin recalled that he first heard about the plan for direct industrial action from white workers on the station where he was employed as a blacksmith: 'I heard a whiteman say, "Bye-n-bye you blackfellows are going to be better off - you're going to make a strike"'. Subsequent meetings were held in many places and the strike was discussed many times. Dooley recalls, significantly, that these discussions were primarily amongst Aboriginal workers themselves but that 'sometimes Don [McLeod] came along'. In his version of the story it was at Nullagine in 1945 that he and Don McLeod got down to seriously discussing the situation facing the people. As already mentioned, Dooley had worked with McLeod for four months that year and, as the oral tradition records, during this time 'Don was listening to Dooley and getting what he thought about things'.

In March 1945 Dooley set off around the stations travelling by foot and by rail with the message 'strike on 1 May 1946'. Each station got a calendar, written out on a food tin label, showing how many weeks it was until the appointed day. Dooley recalled that McLeod was worried that some of the stations would not strike, but he just kept going around arguing and convincing people. The authorities were also closely watching the
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'preparation for the strike'. They singled out particular 'leaders' for close scrutiny. But while this may have intimidated some and limited their freedom of movement, Dooley seems to have been more determined and more able to escape attention. He recalled:

I just wanted to go ahead and get those fellows out [on strike] - even if I did go to jail ... I kept it dark and didn't let the whiteman know. I didn't let the policeman know. I said to the others, 'if I go to jail, you can still go ahead'.

In Perth communists and others led by Dr Alec Jolly and Katherine Susanna Prichard constituted themselves as a provisional executive of the Defence of Native Rights Committee and began collecting money. Graham Alcorn, who had been delegated by the Communist Party as its organiser on the issue, arranged for McLeod to speak on the Perth Esplanade at the regular weekend speakers' forums then in vogue. The *Workers' Star* carried reports of speeches by McLeod and others in support of a better deal for Aboriginal workers, as well as a well researched series of articles detailing the background to the coming strike. By this time McLeod and Alcorn had developed a regular correspondence covering organisational issues such as gaining public and union support for the strike. The difficulties they faced in the extremely conservative political environment of WA's white settler society were exemplified in a superficial way by McLeod's appearance. Joan Williams recalls that this was the subject of some discussion amongst the communist activists seeking to maximise support for the Aboriginal workers: 'Don was perhaps the only man in Perth, except the occasional Navy man, with a beard. His beard, although quite neat, didn't help his image in the paranoia of the time'.

The early days of the strike

The strike began on schedule, coinciding not only with the international workers' day of 1 May but also with the start of the new season's mustering and shearing. The *West Australian* reported merely that De Grey station and 'at least 11 others' had struck on time. Eventually workers from some 25 stations left their jobs and were joined by many others from the towns of Port Hedland and Marble Bar. The demands were for better working and living conditions and for the Government and its agents to recognise McLeod as the strikers' legitimate representative.

Since it was the start of the shearing season, employers were desperate to get their men back to work. Some immediately offered better wages. Others called in the police. Both had the effect of getting some workers back on to the stations. Efforts were also made to end the strike quickly by gaoling 'key leaders'. This strategy failed miserably because, despite the apparent beliefs of officials, the strike was not merely the work of 'agitators' but enjoyed widespread support amongst both workers and their families. The 'leaders' were only representatives of the will of the people, so as quickly as one 'leader' was gaoled the strikers threw up another to take his place.

Nonetheless those whose activities made them prominent suffered considerable personal hardship and their courage deserves to be recorded. Clancy McKenna, who played a vital role in organising around Port Hedland, was taken into custody late in April, although he was not formally charged until 7 May. He was sentenced to three months under s. 47 of the Native Affairs Act, for enticement to strike. It was not, however, Clancy the authorities

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49 Native Affairs File, No. 800/45, pp. 22-4.
50 Binbin et al. n.d., p. 2.
51 Williams n.d., p. 2.
52 *Workers' Star*, 12 April 1946, 25 April 1946.
were after. So deeply imbued with racist attitudes were they that they felt that the Aboriginal workers would be unable to act if their 'white adviser' were removed. Bray, Commissioner for Native Affairs, telegraphed North-West police seeking co-operation against 'McLeod's insidious anti-Fascist Communistic activities' as the most effective means of ending the strike.\footnote{Letter, Bray to O'Neill, 3 May 1946.} The police felt that Clancy would give them the evidence they needed against McLeod. The official report of his arrest to the Native Affairs Department claimed that, 'Clancy is only the mouthpiece of D.W. McLeod'. Unfortunately for their scheme, however, the report concluded that 'so far he has given very little information against McLeod'. Nevertheless in the tortured logic of racism the officer concluded that 'I expect that he will do so when he realises that McLeod has deserted him'.\footnote{Native Affairs File, No. 800/45, p. 70.} No doubt the fact that Clancy never came to this conclusion was attributed to his supposed lack of 'intelligent capacity'.

The strategy of gaoling the leaders failed even more miserably at Marble Bar where the strikers simply refused to nominate a leader and Constable Gordon Marshall had to be content with chasing them out of town since his gaol could not hold the whole mob. When the strikers moved to Moolyella, Marshall reassessed the situation and went out there to arrest Dooley, whom he kept chained to the grill of a cell for six days while he awaited trial. Dooley and Clancy were tried together on the same charge and Dooley too received a three months gaol sentence. In the meantime the \textit{West Australian} was content to run, but not too prominently, the public line of the Commissioner of Native Affairs that 'most Natives are happy' and the strike was the work of 'a few malcontents'.\footnote{West Australian, 4 May 1946, p. 14.} Although the Commissioner neglected to mention them, the demands of the strikers were well formulated by this stage and had been clearly communicated to the Department. They were for a 30 shilling minimum weekly wage, the right to elect their own representatives and the right to freedom of movement.\footnote{Native Affairs File, No. 895/46.}

A vital aspect of these early days of the strike was the part played by Aboriginal women both as workers on strike and in supporting the establishment of the strikers' camps. While this has not been documented in the way that the involvement of some of the men has been there is at least one detailed account of a woman activist. Frichard recorded the role played by Daisy Bindi (Mumaring), a Nungamurda woman from the area around Jigalong who worked at Ethel Creek station. Her activity in organising meetings in the south-eastern Pilbara before the strike commenced was sufficiently effective to attract police attention and the authorities threatened to remove her from the district. Once the strike began she collected supporters from her area, organised transport and talked her way through a police reception to join the strikers' camp. Bosworth concludes that 'her initiative was largely responsible for spreading the strike to the further inland Pilbara stations'.\footnote{Bosworth 1989, pp. 223-4.}

Back in Port Hedland, McLeod was arrested and charged under s. 39 of the Native Affairs Act, with entering a 'native camp'. He was released on bail without too much fuss. By the time he was released, however, word of his arrest had reached the strikers and 200 men were marching from the Two Mile with the intention of setting him free or being locked up with him. Port Hedland at this time had a white population of less than 200 and the sudden appearance of the strikers marching down the main street created considerable anxiety amongst the white townsfolk. Unaware of McLeod's release the marchers
surrounded the gaol, hitting the corrugated iron walls with sticks and demanding that the police produce their man. It was only after someone discovered McLeod visiting a friend in the local hospital that they left. The march had been a landmark as a peaceful show of strength and McLeod records that the strikers 'had quite a different status in Port Hedland after this event'.

Support from Perth

In the meantime in Perth, the Committee for the Defence of Native Rights (CDNR) had been officially formed at a public meeting at the Town Hall, attended by 300 people. The meeting demanded that Clancy and Dooley be freed, agreed to engage leading lawyer Fred Curran to defend McLeod and set about organising food and financial support. The Secretary of the Committee was an Anglican clergyman, Padre Peter Hodge, while its chairman was the communist general practitioner, Dr Alec Jolly. Although its most active members were communists the list of speakers at the meeting shows that the strikers had much broader community support than this might indicate. They included N. Payne of the Tramways Union, Mrs Vallance of the Women's Christian Temperance Society, Tommy Bropho of the Perth Aboriginal Community, Katherine Susanna Prichard of the Perth Modern Women's Club and Mr Foxcroft of the Society of Friends.

The commitment of some of the non-communist participants in the CDNR was to be sorely tested as their support of the Aboriginal workers forced them into unaccustomed confrontations with authority. McLeod, for instance, recounts the incident of a visit by Hodge to Port Hedland and the 12 Mile camp later established by the strikers. They were both arrested. The charge of 'being within five chains of a congregation of natives' must have seemed particularly ironic in view of Hodge's profession. On the same occasion the Padre was to demonstrate the courage of his convictions by addressing an extremely hostile meeting of white town and station people in Port Hedland.

After an initial hearing McLeod was kept in custody and only after an exchange of letters with Fred Curran was it possible to convince the official concerned that he ought to be bailed. Further obstruction was encountered when bail was set at £300. Today's equivalent would be about $12,000. Nonetheless being bailed enabled McLeod to get to Perth where he addressed many meetings and received expressions of support from union and community groups. These were by no means all left wing organisations and included the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the University of Western Australia's Student Guild. The students even staged a march in support of the strikers.

Eventually McLeod was fined £50 and ordered to pay costs of almost the same amount. An interesting aspect of the trial was the use of the Criminal Investigation Branch's Detective Sergeant Richards, who later played prominent roles in the Petrov Affair and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. On this occasion, strangely like the Petrov Affair, Richards produced a 'document' which he alleged McLeod had written and which suggested that there were over '1,000 good Communists' amongst the Pilbara Aborigines. McLeod denied authorship but this did not deter the West Australian, which reported that he had admitted that the document was his. The occasion of McLeod's sentencing was one of

60 McLeod 1984, p. 56.
61 Workers' Star, 27 May 1946.
63 Native Affairs File, No. 894/46.
64 West Australian, 21 June 1946, p. 6.
65 Workers' Star, 22 June 1946, p. 12.
66 West Australian, 21 June 1946, p. 6.
rejoicing for the authorities. Commissioner Bray wrote to the chief police officer in the
North-West to congratulate him on the 'success'.  
Curran's defence of McLeod had been based on the view that the Native Affairs Act,
under which McLeod had been charged, contravened the British Anti-Slavery Act of 1833.
This made some ground in the public arena but totally failed to impress the local
magistrate. The gaoling of Clancy and Dooley had already provided a focus for public
support for the strikers and the trial and conviction of McLeod added a second. The
Committee for the Defence of Native Rights used it as the basis of an appeal to the
Secretary General of the United Nations Organisation in which they detailed 'the feudal
treatment of Aborigines in Northern Australia'. The case also received some attention
from the international press, but in Australia it was very much a case of the media ignoring
the strike or being content to repeat the Native Affairs Department's views. It was left to
the Workers' Star to provide the other side of the story.
The combination of the public campaign and the fact that many strikers remained solid
despite the harassment led to the release of Clancy McKenna and Dooley Binbin late in
June. They had served seven weeks of their three month sentences. The catalyst for this
action was reported as being 'representations from the ALP'. Certainly some sections of
the Australian Labor Party did support the strikers. Senator Dorothy Tangney was one of
the leading figures to identify publicly with the campaign. The mass media, however,
ignored her press releases and it was left to the Workers' Star to report her saying:
Aborigines are being exploited in the North West by the big landowning
companies and absentee owners, who employ them at a few shillings a week,
and don't even provide sanitation or shelter for them.  
The State Labor Government was not as impressed by the apparent injustices as the
Senator.
The CDNR did not, however, have the public campaign all its own way. After the
release of Clancy and Dooley, the Committee attempted to see the Premier and Minister for
Native Affairs with the intention of demanding the repeal of the Native Affairs Act. Premier
Wise refused to see them. Another indication of the difficulties they faced occurred in the
coal mining town of Collie, where the local Council refused a request to support the
strikers and dismissed the CDNR as 'cranks'. It was the sort of report about the strike which
the mass media did feel able to carry.

Starting again
Despite the efforts of the authorities the strike showed no signs of going away. In
July, some stations, having finished shearing, reduced the wages they had increased in May
to get the strikers back to work quickly. Some of these workers now rejoined the strike. In
other cases, strikers were promised two pounds per week if they returned to work but when
they got to the station found they would only be paid one pound, so they too rejoined the
strike. Clancy and Dooley had both been released and were active again and discovered that
many non-station employers were prepared to meet the demands. Clancy was, in fact,
working for Constable Marshall fixing his car and was being paid the thirty shillings a
week which had been the strikers' central demand. Clancy and Dooley set about visiting the

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67 Letter, Bray to O'Neill, 26 June 1946.
68 Davies 1988, p. 36.
69 Workers' Star, 12 July 1946, p. 2.
70 ibid.
71 West Australian, 10 July 1946, p. 5.
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stations on which strikers had returned to work. They found that most had done so because of police coercion.

Dooley decided that a dramatic gesture was needed to 'start the strike again'. The Port Hedland race meeting, when many workers would be in town was chosen as the best time. A train load of strikers left Marble Bar for the race meeting but at the Four Mile outside Port Hedland police stopped the train and ordered them off. Clancy and Dooley got them into ranks and they marched into the Two Mile Camp. The next day the Port Hedland police got a shock when the man they had sent out to the Four Mile to sell food to the strikers rushed back into town to report that he could not find anyone there. Local Constable Fletcher then went out to the Two Mile camp with Richards and O’Neill and ordered the strikers back to the Four Mile. They voted to stay where they were and continue the strike. That night McLeod crept out to visit them evading the police whose job it was to ensure that the camp was isolated. A meeting was held and it was decided that the strikers would avoid any outright confrontation with the police. The next day the races were over and station people and their workers streamed out of town. At the Two Mile they were stopped by the strikers. McLeod recalls, 'they lost whatever Blackfellows they were carrying to join the mob'.

The problem for the strikers now became one of how to feed the growing mob. McLeod was working as a wharfie in Port Hedland and donated most of his income to buy food. Under post-war rationing, commodities such as tea, sugar and butter could only be purchased upon production of Government-issued coupons. Previously Aboriginal workers had received these from the stations on which they were employed. Now in the camp outside Port Hedland the strikers were no longer getting these coupons. Dooley and another leader, Jackson, went to the police station to demand the ration coupons, which were properly the property of the strikers. They were told that the station managers had the coupons and that if they returned to the stations they would be able to get them. They then asked McLeod to help but when he went to the police station he was hustled away by four policemen Under the impression that McLeod had been arrested again, Clancy got the 80 strikers who had been waiting at the cricket ground for news of the outcome to march on the police station. Once again they surrounded it and demanded McLeod's release. But the police had already let him go. So instead they demanded rifle and beachcombing permits which would help them subsist. The marches on the gaol provided the focus for the ballad 'Clancy and Dooley and Don McLeod' by Dorothy Hewett. The ballad paints the emotions of the time well, capturing the sheer heroism of the strikers and the strength of their leaders in standing up to entrenched prejudice. It played a significant part in the public campaign in support of the strike as Hewett was often called upon to recite it at public meetings.

After another meeting McLeod again approached local police in their role as 'protectors of natives' regarding the ration coupons and was again arrested under s. 39 for meeting with the strikers at their camp. In the town white ill-feeling was increasing. There were reports of the formation of white vigilante gangs and the proprietor of the Pier Hotel threatened to shoot McLeod. The strikers decided to split into two groups. One would camp at the 12 Mile outside Port Hedland and the other would return to Moolyella, inland from Marble Bar.

72 Binbin et al. n.d., p. 4.
73 McLeod n.d.
74 Workers' Star, 9 August 1946, p. 1.
It was at this time that Padre Hodge visited the 12 Mile and was arrested along with McLeod for doing so. Hodge was dealt with immediately and was fined. McLeod was remanded in custody for two weeks and was later sentenced to three months imprisonment. In the meantime Clancy was organising various self-supporting enterprises. He was using McLeod's old V8 and travelling the district setting up camps as collection points for pearl shell, kangaroo skins and goat skins. Schools were also established by two self-taught strikers, Tommy Sampi and Gordon MacKay, at the 12 Mile and Moolyella camps. The Education Department refused to send them teachers but did provide correspondence courses. The schools also acted as information centres with the teachers reading newspaper reports and correspondence about the strike to the people.

The camps continued to be visited by station managers, accompanied by armed police, trying to 'encourage' the strikers to return to work. With basic provisions in short supply there was constant pressure on the strikers but, rather than give in, they continued to develop their organisation. After refusing an offer of one pound a week for a return to work, the strikers formed the North West Workers' Association, with the central policy of a full pastoral award wage for Aboriginal station workers.

In October appeals by Clancy, Dooley, McLeod and Hodge against their convictions all failed in the WA Court of Criminal Appeal. The appeals had been funded by the Committee to Defend Native Rights from donations raised in Perth and the eastern States. The West Australian, which had given no space to the views of the strikers or their supporters, reported those of 'the learned judges' at some length. Just how learned those views were was revealed shortly afterwards when the matter was taken to the High Court. The point at issue was the interpretation placed on s. 39 of the Native Affairs Act which made it unlawful for anyone apart from officials 'to enter or remain within or upon a place where natives are camped or where any native may be congregated in the course of travel in pursuance of any native custom'. In the appeal case the Chief Justice of WA, Sir John Dwyer, observed that the law was intended to protect 'the natives' and that 'the main method by which that purpose is to be achieved is by the separation of the natives from the non-native population'. Lloyd Davies' comment that this indicated at least, that His Honour understood the politics of the situation, seems apposite. That the actual law was not so well understood in WA was revealed in the High Court where Sir Owen Dixon, 'who has always been considered the High Court's master of the English language', said that the WA judges' construction of the clause could not have been reached by any person 'unless his mind be controlled by some considerations external to the precise text or his sensibilities to English forms of speech have been dulled'. The convictions were quashed.

While the legal arguments raged the strike itself had become much more than a withdrawal of labour. Self-governing communities, supported by their own enterprise and by donations from supporters, had been established at the 12 Mile and Moolyella. All the attempts of managers, police, courts and Native Affairs officials to intimidate the strikers had proved fruitless. Far from losing momentum, the strike was growing. The experience of independence in the camps added dignity and solidarity to the strikers' armoury, while the reactions of management and its political allies actually strengthened the strike in some quarters. In November 1946, for instance, the Workers' Star reported a further 100 workers

75 West Australian, 14 August 1946, p. 6.
76 West Australian, 15 August 1946, p. 10.
77 Workers' Star, 4 October 1946, p. 5, 8 November 1946, p. 5.
78 West Australian, 13 October 1946, p. 11.
79 Davies 1988, p. 38.
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joining the strike over the issue of intimidation. The Department had also given in on the question of ration coupons which were now being supplied to the 12 Mile Co-Operative Store.81 A report by a medical practitioner at the time told the Commissioner for Native Affairs, no doubt to his considerable chagrin, that 'these natives are well behaved, making an effort to uplift themselves and endeavouring to keep some laws of hygiene'.82 The doctor went further, offering the advice that the proper way to resolve the dispute was through a tripartite conference at which 'the natives should be given an opportunity to express their views'.

At this stage of the strike serious differences in negotiation stance emerged. In January 1947 some of the Warragine mob were moving back to the station when they were met by Clancy and a group of activists intent on talking them out of returning to work. After considerable argument and a show of force by the pro-strike faction, they agreed to re-join the 12 Mile camp. This resulted in Clancy and 12 others being arrested and charged under s. 9 of the Act for preventing those men from working.83 In the public arena reaction to this arrest revealed the extent of the gains the campaign had been making. The CDNR held a series of meetings to demand Clancy's release. The Minister for Justice, Nulsen, responded to information supplied from those meetings much more positively than had previously been the case. He replied that 'if the facts you have been giving me are correct we should be supporting the native co-op at Port Hedland [the 12 Mile] and giving them all the help we can'.84

The greater interest in finding a long term solution to the issues raised by the strike may have been related to 'trouble with natives' spreading. In Carnarvon a demonstration of Aboriginal workers led by Walter Cameron demanded better conditions, while at Berrimah in the Northern Territory a strike by Aboriginal workers quickly realised its goals of a 30 shilling per week wage plus provision of a canteen, school and other amenities. There were also reports of 'unrest' from Broome, while Perth Aborigines sent Tom Bropho and Jeff Harper on a tour of the South-West to look at working conditions and gather support for the North-West strike.

After he had spent one month in gaol, Clancy's sentence was remitted. During his absence, Ernie Mitchell had been leading the 12 Mile community and his success may be judged from the fact that after Clancy's return the community contributed to send Ernie and his wife, Topsie, on a holiday. Subsequently, Mitchell too was arrested when police visited the camp 'and remonstrated with them for stopping any natives who desired to return to work'. In response Mitchell 'spoke out loudly' and was arrested for his effort.85 The courage it took to stand up to police in such a situation can hardly be overestimated. The oral tradition reserves a particular place for another leader of the strikers' community, Jackson, who frequently met armed police coming into the camp to deliver similar messages with just two words indicating, in language to which they were well used, that they should go away.

On the other hand the High Court decision had made s. 39 of the Native Affairs Act almost unenforceable and this allowed the strikers a new freedom of organisation. McLeod was able to take a more direct role and put great effort into organising self-supporting activities. The work Clancy had begun collecting goat skins was allocated to the disaffected

81 Workers’ Star, 29 November 1946, p. 6.
82 Letter, Dr Musso to Commissioner for Native Affairs, 2 January 1947.
Waragine mob and shell collecting parties were organised north and south of Port Hedland. But these were minor activities compared with the beginning of prospecting for minerals. This would later develop into a sizeable business and provide the economic basis for self-supporting communities such as those at Strelley and Yandeyarra. Both that and the subsequent loss of the rights to the mineral deposits they discovered are, however, another story.86

The end of the strike

By mid-1947 the strike had settled down into a war of attrition. As the new shearing season approached, the pastoralists sent a delegation to the Minister for Native Affairs pointing out that without Aboriginal workers they would be unable to muster their sheep and thus would be prevented from shearing. The Minister was also approached by a Roman Catholic missionary, Father Bryan, 'in relation to certain influences amongst the strikers'.87 Bryan had already shown his colours in the strike when he spoke against Hodge at the public meeting in Port Hedland referred to above. Now he managed to so impress the Minister with his 'wise and balanced appreciation of the situation' that he was sent, along with the Acting Commissioner for Native Affairs, to tour the Pilbara and compile a report on the strike.88

One result was that the Government agreed to subsidise the establishment of the ironically named White Springs Mission, of which Bryan was to be the head.89 Peter Biskup has described the move as 'an attempt to undermine McLeod's influence in the district'.90 In fact the Mission was also part of a new wave of bureaucratic thought in regard to WA's 'native problem'. Riding the crest of the wave was the new Commissioner for Native Affairs, Stanley Middleton. He had been brought in from the colonial Administration of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea in the hope that WA's 'natives' would prove amenable to the 'benevolent paternalism' which the Australian colonial regime considered a hallmark of its control of TPNG. It was characteristic of his enthusiastically assimilationist approach that while Middleton was refusing to even consider the demands of the 12 Mile and Moolyella communities for grants of land to enable them to expand their self-supporting activities, he organised the reservation of some 230 000 acres for the White Springs Mission.91 In keeping with the TPNG colonialist tradition the Mission would operate 'along the lines of a pastoral concern to train boys in station work, and the girls [would get] training to fit them for domestic work'.92 The Mission failed to attract any converts but was able to keep operating on the Government subsidies until 1951.

Suddenly Government funds were also available for mission schools in other areas most affected by the strike. The Church of Christ received funding for a school at its Carnarvon Mission.93 Father Bryan offered to set up a similarly supported school adjacent to the 12 Mile community94 and the Methodist Church was approached to 'set up a school

86 McLeod 1984, pp. 93ff.
87 Note dated 14 April 1947, from personal notes made by R.R. McDonald while Minister for Native Affairs.
88 Letter, McDonald to Archbishop Prendville, 8 April 1947.
89 Native Affairs File, No. 1039/47.
90 Biskup 1965, p. 236.
91 Native Affairs File, No. 1039/47.
92 Letter, McBeath to Minister for Native Affairs, 12 October 1948.
93 Letter, Minister for Native Affairs to Forest, 10 February 1948.
and work among the Moolyella natives'. Other offers of assistance were also made as the Department of Native Affairs tried to undermine the strike, including one from Karl Drake-Brockman offering himself for the job of Commissioner for Native Affairs.

Two other pieces of correspondence in this period deserve mention for what they reveal about attitudes in the bureaucracy and the white community. The first involves a Department of Native Affairs Inspector, McGaffin, who was stationed at Derby. He complained that the Department was involved in 'slavery' and that far from improving the situation of those they were supposed to protect, officials did not even have the courage to enforce s. 18 of the Native Affairs Act which related to terms and conditions of employment. Having drawn these matters to the attention of the Commissioner for Native Affairs by letter, McGaffin went further, charging that his fellow inspectors were too intent upon being friendly with the pastoralists to be able to do their job properly. A Departmental memorandum dismissed the allegations but included enquiries from other officers as to how McGaffin could be himself dismissed.

A less, or perhaps more, serious complaint, but one equally revealing of relations between the white community and Aborigines, came from R. Scott, a farmer of Watheroon. Scott was incensed at a ruling of the local football league that 'no more than 8 natives be allowed in a football team'. He saw this as directed at his own successful team which had fewer than that number of whites. He also pointed out that such a ruling would lead to a marked deterioration in the standard of the game in remote areas.

Scott and McGaffin, however, represented very minor chinks in the armoury of control and the overwhelming impression from Departmental files is that white opinion was strongly on the side of officials in deploying all their bureaucratic weaponry against the strikers. They were harassed in their communities by hectoring Inspectors and armed police, they were arrested for speaking out in favour of the strike, their children were taken from them with the connivance of missions and so on. The cost of such activity to taxpayers must have been considerable but at no stage was this considered. The communities' demands for land to facilitate their self-supporting activities would certainly have cost much less. All the reports to the Minister for Native Affairs, including the lengthy Bateman Report of 1947, however, recommended that the 'native problem' was best dealt with 'professionally'. In practice this meant the implementation of TPNG style paternalism under Middleton. The strikers wanted the freedom to work out their own futures. Middleton's line was that they must assimilate. In practice this meant accepting the lowest positions white society had to offer.

When the 1949 shearing season began Mt Edgar and Limestone stations agreed to pay the rates and provide the conditions demanded by the strikers. With all Pilbara wool being shipped from Port Hedland the workers appealed to the Seamen's Union to apply bans to wool shorn on other stations. Ron Hurd, a prominent communist, was then Secretary of the Fremantle Branch of the SUA and had no trouble in convincing his members to impose the ban. Government officials and shipping agents tried various ruses to get the wool away. At times they claimed that the ban in fact applied only to Mt Edgar and Limestone wool, and at others that all wool on the wharf was from these two stations. They found the seamen difficult to fool. Eventually the Deputy Commissioner for Native Affairs, Elliot-

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95 Letter, Middleton to Taylor, 20 May 1948.
96 Letter, Drake-Brockman to Minister for Native Affairs, 22 July 1948.
97 Letter, McGaffin to Commissioner for Native Affairs, 29 March 1948.
98 Department of Native Affairs, Memorandum, 12 July 1948.
99 Letter, Scott to Commissioner for Native Affairs, n.d.
Smith, gave McLeod an assurance 'that the wages and conditions we had negotiated on Mt. Edgar and Limestone would be applied throughout the Pilbara'.\textsuperscript{100} The bans were lifted and workers returned to many stations. Weeks later, after shearing was completed and the clip had been shipped it emerged that the Department had no intention of honouring this undertaking.\textsuperscript{101}

**Conclusion**

For most of those involved this was the end of the strike. Many had gone to gaol and suffered considerable personal hardship but the strength of purpose demonstrated by the Aboriginal pastoral workers and their families had brought a new element into WA labour relations. While the strike did not end exploitation it limited the extent to which it would be possible to take Aboriginal labour for granted.

It is in this sense that the strike is a most significant event in Australian labour history. The balance of forces that operated around and within the events described here, however, also serve to set the action in a broader context. Most of the analysis of the strike has concentrated on it as an episode of black/white relations in this country. From McLeod's own recent thinking to Mandle's fine scholarly effort, the tendency has been to see the events in the Pilbara in 1946 as part of an answer to 'Australia's Aboriginal problem'.\textsuperscript{102} This is no doubt a reasonable approach to take, and in the context of wishing to be relevant to policy debates is perhaps the most effective. From a more purely scholastic viewpoint, however, the tendency to view the action of Aboriginal workers as primarily relevant to issues of race runs the danger of missing quite a lot.

In this case it has tended to underplay the importance of the strike for the labour movement, both as an issue of the day and as a touchstone of political attitudes. The role of the Communist Party has been greatly understated, by non- or former-communists, as well as by less involved commentators. This has led to a lack of appreciation of the broader political issues at stake in the strike. To take one example: Middleton's support for the Roman Catholic missionary, Father Bryan, may be seen as part of his assimilationist stance and as such merely a matter of policy direction. It may equally, however, reflect a desire on the part of the WA Establishment to balance the views of progressive churchmen such as Padre Hodge, not to mention the Quakers, at a time when radicalism was seen to be making some progress in this very conservative region. It might also be seen in the context of the post-war push by Roman Catholic anti-communists to influence the course of events in WA.

The strike has also tended to be over-shadowed by the fortunes of the self-supporting communities which grew up in its wake. While these fortunes have been mixed the fact that such communities still exist at all is testament to their ability to overcome difficulties, many created by Government policy, and to maintain their independence. That they came into existence a generation before the current land rights and out-stations movements suggests that their pioneering role deserves greater recognition and that their difficult histories require closer scrutiny. Tom Wright's vision of 'a new deal for Australia's Aborigines' had seen Government action as the lynch-pin of the move towards self-governing communities. The Pilbara pastoral workers' strike of 1946-9 shows that these Aboriginal workers were more than capable of initiating the necessary action themselves. It also shows, however, the difficulties such action faces where it is opposed by entrenched

\textsuperscript{100} McLeod 1984, p. 64.  
\textsuperscript{101} WA Parliamentary Debates, 23 August 1949.  
\textsuperscript{102} McLeod 1984, Mandle 1978.
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conservatism. The breaking down of such resistance would seem as urgent a task for the labour movement today as it was when Tom Wright raised it in 1939.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Many of the documents referred to in this article came into the author's possession during a period of teaching in Western Australia in the late 1980s. These include letters, Native Affairs files and Departmental memos. These are now all deposited in the Noel Butlin Archive of Business and Labour at the Australian National University, Canberra.


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AN UNEASY COEXISTENCE:
AN ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVE OF 'CONTACT HISTORY' IN SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND

Ysola Best

Christopher Anderson, Anthropology curator of the South Australian Museum, has identified a serious problem in attempting to describe 'the Aboriginal perspective of "contact history", [as] it is still very much a viewpoint seen through Eurocentric eyes'. The history of South-East Queensland in particular has not been addressed from a balanced perspective. Anthropologists and historians, including John Taylor and Bill Rosser, have tended to focus on the conflict and violence of the pastoral frontier, but have ignored the social interaction between Aborigines and Europeans which has been recorded in part, by W.E. Hanlon, F.W. Hinchcliffe, Lutheran Pastor Haussmann and others.

John Taylor's 1967 thesis, 'Race Relations in South-East Queensland 1840-1860', addressed the origins of conflict between the settlers and the Aborigines. Taylor admitted that his thesis lacked genealogical material and any sort of data on religious ties and beliefs and failed to appreciate that 'conflict' occurred because of the clash over two different economic systems. He wrote that 'The fundamental problem that beset the Aborigines was how they should deal with the settler and how best could they share in the superabundance of goods and stock that had suddenly descended upon them'. Thus Taylor assumed that Aborigines desired to control the squatters' herds and drays loaded with supplies because their own resources were inadequate, as if 'conflict' was the first solution to the Aborigines' problem. However, it could be argued that Aborigines were fighting to save their economic resources, that is, the water-holes, demanding that the land and THE PEOPLE be respected.

From an Aboriginal perspective, I will argue that Yugambeh people continue to fight a battle both social and environmental, to ensure that their cultural heritage is respected and not exploited.

Yugambeh people share a common linguistic dialect chain and utilize the river systems of the Logan, Albert, Pimpama, Coomera and Nerang rivers including all the adjacent streams and creeks. Yugambeh family groups include Kombumerri; Wangerriburra; Migunburri; Mulunjali; Gugugin; Birrinburra; Bolongin and link with people from the Tweed River, known as Minjinbal.

Yugambeh people were subjected to the arrival of many groups of Europeans who came into their country for different reasons. The strangers included shipwrecked sailors, convict runaways, timbercutters, explorers, missionaries, government officials, the military, settlers, pastoralists and surveyors. Those early arrivals created an interest for the

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3 Taylor 1967, p. 164.
Aborigines who, it can be assumed, were not seen as any immediate threat. By the time Brisbane was established, local Aborigines appeared quite used to the movement of many strangers in their midst and no doubt had developed strategies on how to deal with the intrusion.

Taylor's Eurocentric interpretation suggests that there is a need for continued research on the subjects of contact and conflict in south-east Queensland. For this purpose I have attempted to briefly assess some early historical records to determine, from an Aboriginal perspective, how Yugambeh people adapted to a changing environment and survived through an uneasy co-existence with newcomers to their land. I will conclude by questioning what benefit Yugambeh people gained by assisting the newcomers who moved into their country illegally, usurping the right of Yugambeh people to access their economic resource - the land. Indeed, had those many early European arrivals to southeast Queensland respected appropriately those Aboriginal individuals and communities who assisted their progress and aided their survival, the 'contact history' would have been easier to interpret.

In the 1850s the Aborigines had to cope with the intrusions of not only the ministers of religion and the timber cutters but also pastoralists who began taking control over vast tracts of land for the purpose of grazing cattle. The pastoralists sent a petition - unjust because no war had been declared - to the Government to call in a force of mounted troopers to 'disperse' those individuals who attempted to halt the intrusion of strange animals and people into their country. Aborigines became the victims of a legal system which clashed with their own values and beliefs: their resistance to the advance of the pastoral frontier meant either death through the violence of the Mounted Police or death sentences imposed through an unequal legal system. Individuals adapted their own strategies for survival which avoided conflict and the stories of Bilin Bilin and Jenny are included below as brief examples.

Henry Stobart

One of the earliest references to the Nerang Creek, a focal point of the southeast Queensland people, was made by the Reverend Henry Stobart who wrote a journal entry for 23 August 1853.\(^5\) Stobart's description of the Nerang Creek suggests that the area could be compared to the beauty of present day Kakadu, currently featured in an extensive mixed-media advertising campaign to attract tourists to the Northern Territory. Stobart's journal entry revealed that there were abundant resources; he collected 'a large number of a kind of Palm which the natives call Meechia' (Midjim Palm canes) which were already being marketed in England as walking sticks. A Mr Sheridan who worked as Tide Surveyor for the Customs Department accompanied Stobart on the trip.\(^6\) Sheridan was a competent guide, having already established a friendly relationship with Aboriginal people from the vicinity of Moreton Bay, employing them, defending their rights and giving them recognition for acts of courage.\(^7\) Stobart commented that:

The Aborigines in this part rarely see white men, except very bad specimens of them - sawyers chiefly, engaged in cutting timber - from whom they have

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\(^5\) Stobart indicated that his approach to a Yugambeh camp site had been observed and that the women and children had been hidden until it was determined that he was not a government representative whose presence they obviously feared.

6 Moreton Bay Courier, 27 August 1853.

7 Moreton Bay Courier, 8 October 1853, 28 January 1854.
AN UNEASY COEXISTENCE

learnt little else of our language excepting oaths, and by whom, they are, I fear, in too many cases treated very inhumanely.  

W.E. Hanlon

W.E. Hanlon, who lived most of his life in Yugambeh country, has provided a useful example of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal co-existence. For example, in a paper to the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, 27 March 1934, he gave a description of Yugambeh country as it was when he arrived in Australia in 1863. Taylor's thesis focussed on depredation committed by Aborigines against Europeans, but Hanlon wrote of the 'many blacks in the district':

on no occasion did they give us any trouble. On the contrary, we were always glad to see them, for they brought us fish, kangaroo tails, crabs, or honey, to barter for our flour, sugar, tea, or 'tumbacca'.

While revealing his own Eurocentric attitudes Hanlon at least noted many of his informants' names, as well as his respect for the people whose country his parents adopted as their own. My grandmother, Jenny Graham (1860-1943) was one of his informants.

F.E. Roberts

The Queensland border survey began in 1863 and was conducted by Surveyor F.E. Roberts over a span of three years in the company of several Yugambeh people. These individuals determined a rate of pay and working conditions which Roberts possibly had no option other than to accept. He used Yugambeh language in his journals to identify his survey points but not once in his copious notes did he identify those individuals, apart from calling them 'my blacks'. It is possible that Bilin Bilin (see below) would have been one of these individuals accompanying Roberts but more research is needed to verify this. No recognition is given to the contribution made by these individuals in developing the state of Queensland, but the study of their language by Yugambeh descendants has provided important evidence to challenge this historical oversight.

J.G. Haussmann

The Lutheran Missionary Haussmann arrived in Yugambeh country in 1866 and remained in the area until his death in 1902. Haussmann had previously been based in Brisbane and was once speared in a confrontation with Aborigines who tried to remove him from the hut in which he was living. His missionary career took him to Sydney to study theology and he eventually returned to set up a mission near Beenleigh, in Yugambeh country. He has been described as an 'untiring worker among the Aborigines', and it could indeed be said that the people experienced a spirit of co-existence with the Reverend Haussmann and his family, accepting him, but using his negotiating skills to develop strategies for future economic survival. For example, a letter written by Haussmann revealed that the Aborigines had asked him to negotiate for a useful area of land that they could develop for themselves. Haussmann formed a relationship with several people from

8 Stobart, Journal, 23 August 1858.
9 Hanlon, 1934, p. 210; Hanlon's unpublished notes and manuscript are held in the Fryer Library, University of Queensland.
10 Roberts 1866.
12 Logan Witness, 19 November 1881; land at Nerang was gazetted for this purpose but later withdrawn and declared open for general selection.
the Logan, Albert and Nerang rivers. His family grew up with my grandmother, Jenny Graham and her extended family.

Haussmann's writings reveal that he was intent on empire building and he spent his life trying to extend the area covered by his Ministry; but one must question what benefits Yugambeh people gained from this relationship which spanned a period close to forty years. He wrote:

In retrospect of the past 40 years, during which the Lord has permitted me to live in Australia, I have lived 36 years in my beloved Queensland and 6 years in Victoria. The promise of God has been realised in my time. Queensland is a miracle before my eyes, so many beautiful towns and fields in many regions which 30 years ago had nothing but desert and lonely places. How great and rich our German Nation in Queensland has become. The most of them arrived here within the last few years as poor people, now hundreds of them possess good properties and herds of cattle.13

Yugambeh people were not privileged to share these same economic benefits, and by the time he was writing, the Yugambeh people were being forced onto reserves such as Deebing Creek.

Haussmann's writings could be considered important primary source material for academic study. Here was a man who should have intimately known the people of the Logan, Pimpama, Albert and Nerang River, but through the self-absorption which is evident in his extensive writings, Haussmann failed to leave a record correctly identifying his neighbours of at least 36 years. He failed to acknowledge the extent to which his own survival may have been aided by his relationship with the people and he completely ignored, in his deliberation on German settlement, the rights of Yugambeh people to their land.14 Where he did refer to Aborigines, we learn that the local 'chief of the Albert and Logan river spent time discussing theology with him and also encouraged his extended family to sit down and listen to Haussmann preach.15 The man identified as 'King of the Logan and Pimpama' was Bilin Bilin.

Two Yugambeh people

Bilin Bilin

Bilin Bilin moved about in his own country, set up strategies to protect his family, negotiated work contracts, and refused to pay to travel on the new train which by 1887 was traversing his country. He officiated at ceremonies, presided at burials, and kept such 'sacred' locations a secret. Dealing with strangers of different nationalities, he was multi-lingual. There are several photographs of this man held in archives and reference has been made to him in journals, newspapers and letters. When Bilin Bilin considered that his life's work was done, F.W. Hinchcliffe reported that he 'sat' down at the Deebing Creek Industrial Mission with members of his extended family group. Bilin Bilin (whom Hinchcliffe referred to as 'Jackey') apparently was at that location because he and his friend Billy were too old to travel and that Mr. Meston had at last caught them to go to Deebin. [sic]16 Bilin Bilin wore a breast plate identifying him as the King of the Logan and Pimpama and

14 However it must be remembered that Haussmann's writings are translations and could suffer from a bias of the translator, therefore his writings as a primary source should not be dismissed but perhaps reassessed.
15 Lohe 1964, p.3.
16 F.W. Hinchcliffe, 'Jackey Jackey, King of the Logan and Pimpama', The Beaudesert Times, 12 June 1932. Archibald Meston was Chief Protector of Aborigines.
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it could be said that he wore this plate to assert the right of his extended family group to determine their own future. Evidence suggests that many of Bilin Bilin’s descendants remained in their own country and had the tenacity to adapt to a changing environment. It is the descendants of these individuals who continue the battle started by Bilin Bilin and his relations to demand respect for their cultural heritage. Their strength is not drawn from having access to the economic benefits of the land - which they were denied - but from their cultural and spiritual knowledge of their own country.

By this time, Haussmann’s grandson, George Appel, beneficiary of resources provided through access to Yugambeh land, had completed a course in law. He retired from practice by 1889 to become a farmer, began a career in politics and before he died in 1929, was a wealthy landowner. According to newspaper articles, Appel entertained extensively and lived a lavish lifestyle.17 Ironically, Appel was also the Home Secretary, whose responsibility included Aboriginal Affairs. One hundred years after Appel was accepted as a lawyer, the first descendants of Yugambeh people began to complete secondary studies, and it was not until about 1980 that Yugambeh people began to graduate with their first degrees and diplomas from tertiary institutions.

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17 Waterson 1972, p. 4.
Jenny

To conclude I will briefly relate the story of my grandmother Jenny who was born at the same time as George Appel. Since their mothers were friends, and since both resided along the Pimpama River, it is more than likely that George and Jenny played together as small children. Jenny never learned to read or write but she was well versed in the way the Government of the day functioned. She had her first child to a white man, Andrew Graham, and this union was eventually 'legitimated' in a Church of England ceremony in 1898. By this time the children numbered ten. Edith, my mother - child number eleven - was born in April, 1899. Andrew accepted his responsibility as a father and the eleven children bore his name.

Jenny accepted her own cultural and kinship responsibilities. She carried the marks of initiation or grief and raised a family of eleven children who attended school. She was fastidious in their dress and manner of speech. The children grew up utilizing the river systems of Yugambeh country, a resource that Yugambeh people had exploited, before European contact, for thousands of years. In spite of the intrusion of newcomers, this tradition continues in an unbroken family line to this present day, and in the new economic system, the business is known commercially as oyster farming.

Jenny lost a son in France, fighting in the defence of this country, and two grandsons, one of whom died a brutal death as a prisoner of war. Jenny's grandchildren, and many others in the extended Yugambeh family group, fought in those wars on foreign soil and returned to their own country. While they suffered the psychological scars that are a burden of warfare, they suffered also, once again, as victims in their own country from covert racism.

Discrimination is difficult to quantify because each Yugambeh carried his or her individual burden, and the trauma for some included being denied the right to marry people of their own choice. It could be said that not all suffered discrimination from exclusion, but there is oral evidence to suggest that individuals were conscious of barriers, real or invisible, which denied them access to employment, education, theatres, hotels and clubs. It is possible that being marginalised in this way by society had its benefits as it helped individuals to maintain a family link, which has become obvious, in later years, at family gatherings including funerals.

Jenny died before the end of the Second World War and therefore was unable to contribute support to those in her family who had to cope with the aftermath. Like Bilin, she knew her own country and developed strategies to leave her children with a heritage which ensured that her descendants would know their relationship to their own land. Her family continued to care for the extended family group and shared their resources. Jenny had provided an inner strength which is undefinable, but which enabled her descendants to retain pride in their heritage.

* * *

The only evidence that the relationship with the surveyors or the missionaries benefited Yugambeh people is found in the Aboriginal place names recorded by Roberts and the fact that Haussmann's grandson, George, the lawyer, politician, land-owner and Home Secretary, effectively saved an important ceremonial site in the middle of the Gold Coast from 18 Michael Aird, 1987, pers. comm. re archaeological assessment of shell mounds at Oyster Cove, now known as Sanctuary Cove.
AN UNEASY COEXISTENCE

destruction in 1913. The site is known as Jebbribillum Park and it remains today a landmark of Yugambeh cultural heritage. The Lands Department wants to give it back to the people as a statement of land rights (a privilege which includes having to pay the water rates) even though Yugambeh people advised the Department to lease it, as was their right as the cultural custodians. What does this generous statement by the Lands Department mean to Yugambeh people? Legally it would mean that as well as paying the rates, Yugambeh people would be required to maintain the Park which is an extensively-used public facility. Yugambeh people believe it is more practical for the local city council to maintain this park but they continue to set strategies in place to encourage extended family groups to enjoy its heritage value. Yugambeh people will continue to challenge the city council to alleviate the substantial rates which could become a financial burden in the future.

Jenny's and Bilin Bilin's grandchildren have taken up their cultural responsibility to fight for their country. The battle, fought in boardrooms and lecture rooms, is to prevent tourism entrepreneurs from exploiting our culture and to halt the development which threatens the destruction of sites and the pollution of our waterways. And it is a battle with the anthropologists and the historians who seek to tell us our social and cultural history.

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19 Nerang Shire Council, 1913 shire records, 1913, p. 148, Queensland State Archives. Information provided by Robert Longhurst, Historical Research Unit, John Oxley Library, Qld.

JOHNNY MULLAGH: WESTERN DISTRICT HERO
OR THE BLACK GRACE?

Bernard Whimpress

The town of Harrow was established on the banks of the Glenelg River around the time of Johnny Mullagh's birth in the early 1840s and grew in response to the needs of major grazing properties. The first squatter in the area was Thomas Norris who took up Kout Narin in 1840. When this station was subdivided in 1849 several well known properties such as Longlands, Clunie, Pine Hills, Mullagh, Miga Lake, Mount Talbot and Chetwynd were formed. The first police district in western Victoria (then south-west New South Wales) had its headquarters in Harrow and covered an area from Hamilton to the Murray River. By 1890 the town contained two hotels, three general stores, a drapery business, a blacksmith, a saddlery shop, a bakery, a shoe maker, a flour mill, Chinese market gardens and a brickworks.¹

Today Harrow is marked by a sign, 'Historic Harrow', pointing to a sleepy little town 150 metres off the Edenhope-Hamilton road. It has one hotel, a general store and a service station/garage. Before reaching that sign from the west, however, there is another much larger one advertising the Johnny Mullagh Caravan and Camping Reserve. Johnny Mullagh's story as the dominant cricketer of the 1868 Aboriginal tour of England has been told elsewhere by John Mulvaney.² My concern here is to concentrate on the years from 1868 until his death.

Johnny Mullagh died seven miles from Harrow in 1891. His body was discovered by James Edgar of Pine Hills station, where he spent much of his working life. His obituary in the Hamilton Spectator on 15 August, headed 'Death of Mullagh, the Cricketer', contains a number of revealing comments. It proclaimed him the 'Grace' of Aboriginal cricketers³ and lauded him as a finished, graceful, scientific batsman, a clean hitter who was most adept at playing pace bowling. It praised his long and loyal service to Harrow, adding that any club in Victoria would have readily availed themselves of his services. But it also noted some weaknesses which it generalised in racial terms. As a bowler he was criticised for falling under the influence of Tom Wills and developing a tendency to throw; and as a batsman it was said that like many of his 'sable compeers' he had a 'wholesome horror' of delusive slow bowling. Thus, he was respected but with reservations, the latter comments perhaps implying that he was a 'natural' who did not think enough about his game.

It is plain, however, why Mullagh was already a folk hero. According to his obituarist:

We may have another Grace, but never will Mullagh's reputation be surpassed by any of his race, for none in a few years will remain to show that... once they were monarchs of all they surveyed.⁴

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¹ Harrow Historical Society records.
³ W.G. Grace and Don Bradman are generally recognised as the greatest figures in cricket history.
⁴ Hamilton Spectator (hereafter HS), 15 August 1891, p. 3.
His deeds on the cricket fields of western Victoria made him a regional hero and had Mullagh had the advantages of Grace it seems certain his own career would have been outstanding. Writing in support of a Mullagh monument Mr A.A. Cowell described Mullagh as an object lesson in maximising limited opportunities.5

Johnny Mullagh.
Courtesy Harrow Historical Society.

After his death, praise flowed richly both in prose and in one poem, 'Mullagh', penned by a Harrow resident. In this poem the following verse appeared:

And Mullagh's dead! Let us lay him down
With honours due to his true right hand,
Remember lads, he deserves the crown
For the smartest eye, and the bravest stand
He made when the fight was fierce, an th' cry
Was 'Mullagh's' strength is our victory.

The poet suggests that Mullagh's cricket entitled him to be placed on a pedestal. However, ideas of 'ancient pedigree', 'ancestral fame' and 'nobility' which appear in the first stanza of the same poem are fanciful. What the poem demonstrates perhaps even more succinctly than other tributes is that heroism can work on several planes. Western Victorians took vicarious pleasure in his success in England in 1868 ("Ten thousand voices in Kensington/ Acknowledged his power with their loud "Well done"") and against Lord Harris's English team in 1879:

5 HS, 27 August 1891, p. 3.
JOHNNY MULLAGH

Of his powers in the cricket field,
Victoria knows, and shall surely say
How he strove for her, nor did he yield,
Until his score on one famous day
Stood highest of all, when England's might
Knew Mullagh's strength in that well fought fight.

But the poet stresses that western Victorians were also favoured to witness Mullagh's deeds in local matches.6 No doubt the poem was well intentioned but the romanticised view it offers is of a noble but modest conquering hero rather than a poor rabbiter who lived alone in the scrub with a pack of dogs and had to be rooted out when there was a cricket match to be played.7

It was not only his cricketing skills which led people in the western district to romanticise Mullagh. He excelled not only at cricket but on horseback and in other 'manly' sports, and was said to have surpassed all these accomplishments by his gentlemanly conduct.8 It was remarked that he was a credit to his race: that he was the most 'unassuming and retiring of men'; that he liked the simple life of fishing and shooting;9 that he was 'humble, upright, quiet, retiring and civil';10 that, as the Reverend J. Kirkland said at his funeral, he was 'a noble type of an almost extinct race' and thus he received a respectable interment.11

Respectability was an important consideration in colonial Victoria. The Harrow Cricket Club paid for his funeral and his team-mates placed the favourite bat he used so successfully and a set of stumps on his coffin, and interred them with him. In addition to several wreaths, each member of the club also put a sprig of black berries and yellow flowers on it as emblems of the Harrow colours which he had so often carried to victory.12 But honours could not be complete. Although the service was performed by an Anglican clergyman he could not be buried in a consecrated area of the cemetery. On his death certificate his name appears as 'John Mullah' and both his denomination and rank are recorded as 'Aboriginal'. This may explain why his grave was set fifty metres away from his contemporaries.13

As Reverend Kirkland suggested, it was in large part because Johnny Mullagh was one of the few remaining Aboriginal people in his district that his death was seen as so significant. Fourteen years before, according to the 1877 census, there were only 340 Aborigines in the western district and 227 lived on reserves. This means that 113 lived off stations in a vast area of 28 000 square miles. In the substantial area where Mullagh played most of his cricket there were 46 Aborigines and he was probably the only one in the immediate Harrow district.14 Thus, his comrades probably felt that they were burying not

6 HS , 3 September 1891, p. 3.
7 Written reminiscence of J.C. Fitzgerald, Portland, 5 August 1945, letter kept by Mr David Edgar, Nerrinyerie.
8 'E.G.' of Harrow, letter to the editor, HS , 27 August 1891.
9 HS , 15 August 1891, p. 3.
10 A.A. Cowell, letter to HS , 27 August 1891.
11 HS , 20 August 1891, p. 3.
12 HS , 20 August 1891, p. 3.
13 I measured this distance by stepping it out. Only in recent years have other graves appeared nearby.
14 The population figures for the western district are quoted in Cole 1984, p. 21. The area takes 143 degrees east as the eastern boundary in accordance with the proposal for separation of the western district as a separate colony in the 1860s. The further breakdown of population figures are taken from the Census Return of Aboriginal Natives taken in 1877. The total of
just a man but a symbol, and it is not surprising that they proposed a tribute to his memory. A committee of management and trust was formed to raise money for a monumental memorial with collectors in the major western district centres where he had played plus Mount Gambier, Adelaide and Melbourne.15

Mullagh's fame was also due to the fact that his position in society was unusual for an Aboriginal person of the time. The Government of Victoria remained inactive in Aboriginal affairs until 1859 when a select committee of the Victorian Legislative Council recommended that reserved land be set aside for Aborigines in their tribal areas. Increasingly Aborigines on reserves became segregated from the white communities but were taught self-sufficiency especially in agriculture. Aborigines' lives became more restricted after the Aborigines Protection Act was passed in 1869 and they were told where they could live and work, how to dress and take care of their children, and how to spend the money they earned.16 Mullagh, however, did not live on a reserve but was likely helped by settlers such as A.A. Cowell who, as a local guardian under the Act, may have been instrumental in helping him to obtain work certificates on pastoral properties. It seems possible, then, that where other Aborigines found an identity on the mission,17 Mullagh found his on the cricket field.

In the years after 1868 regular club cricket in the western district of Victoria had not been established. The fixtures that were arranged between neighbouring towns were chiefly scratch matches with the exception of one competition, the Murray Challenge Cup. Matches were rare. They seldom occurred before Christmas and, owing to the shearing season, were most often held in March and April.18 The clubs which took part in the Murray Cup were those in the largest towns and settled areas such as Hamilton, Coleraine, Casterton and Harrow although at other times teams from major centres further away such as Ararat and Portland also competed. Most games were arranged in conjunction with race meetings, the races taking place the day after the cricket.

After his return from England Johnny Mullagh, then aged around 28, played part of the 1869-70 season with the Melbourne Cricket Club as a professional living with the lodgekeeper and caretaker at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. This arrangement was terminated (it was said) because of a severe illness in his lungs when he was on the verge of intercolonial selection.19 The first report of Mullagh playing in a match in the western district after the 1868 English tour came in April 1870 when he appeared for Apsley against Harrow and made 59 not out, out of Apsley's 141. Harrow suffered an ignominious defeat,20 but in the second game Harrow won by five wickets. Mullagh was again the outstanding performer with 68 out of his side's 134 as well as taking four of the five wickets to fall. Perhaps what was even more remarkable was the fact that he captained the

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46 Aborigines is made up as follows (the population of a town district is given first, followed by the distance from Harrow in kilometres in brackets): Hamilton 1 (86); Coleraine 5 (54); Casterton 15 (64); Dergholm 2 (50); Merino 5 (75); Edenhope 12 (32); Apsley 1 (53); Balmoral 5 (29).

15 HS, 3 September 1891, p. 3.
16 Christie 1979, Appendix A.
17 Rowley 1972, p. 63.
18 Murray Cup matches usually began on the third Saturday of December and then were held at fortnightly intervals until the third Saturday of April. Rules of Murray Challenge Cup 1877-78 held in possession of David Edgar, Nerrinyerie.
19 Rex Harcourt, personal correspondence, 15 January 1993; Argus, 25 February 1870, p. 6; Australasian, 4 December 1875, p. 714.
20 HS, 2 April 1870, p. 2.
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Apsley team thus showing that prejudice regarding Aboriginal intelligence was put aside in this case. For nearly all of the remainder of his career Mullagh appeared for the Harrow club.

Over the next few years it is difficult to follow Mullagh's career. In November 1873 the *Australasian Sketcher* reported that he might be chosen for Victoria against W.G. Grace's touring party,21 but six weeks later the *Warrnambool Examiner* reported that he was presumed dead.22 It is remarkable that such a prominent Aboriginal sporting figure should have disappeared from public view to such an extent that reports of his death could seem credible.

In 1878 Mullagh made a chanceless 121 for Harrow against Edenhope prompting calls for his selection for Victoria. At the time he was said to be securing a living by selling kangaroo hides.23 In a return match shortly afterwards he top-scored and took 13 wickets for 60 runs24 but colonial selection did not come for another year. In the western district there appear to have been frequent calls for Mullagh's selection in intercolonial matches25 but reservations were expressed in Melbourne about the quality of his opponents. This led to a good deal of acrimonious debate about the relative strength of cricket in each region.26 The western district view was that they would not promote Mullagh's cause if he could not prove himself worthy of the recommendation.

A couple of scores of sixty against Edenhope and Hamilton in March 1879, however, finally brought him his sole first-class reward against Lord Harris's English team. It is often presumed that the reason why he was not selected earlier was Mullagh's preference for remaining in his own district but the evidence for this, though persuasive, is not conclusive.27 Perhaps he retained a strong link to the land and his traditional roots but he was also different from many other Aborigines: a transitional figure working (albeit in a subsidiary role) in the white world.

At the time his selection was not universally applauded and the *Age* commented that the selection committee had ventured on a 'bold experiment' which was 'hardly justified' when there were so many known capable players in Melbourne fit for a place in the team.28 Mullagh proved his critics wrong, though, and his performance against the English is remembered as a triumph. Batting at number nine in the first innings he made only 4 but elevated to number six in the second innings he top-scored with 36. The *Argus* commented on his style of play:

> The principal stand of the innings was by Mullagh and Alexander. Mullagh's play was an exhibition in itself. His long reach his cool artistic style, his judicious treatment of dubious balls, and his vigorous drives, called forth demonstrative applause.29

Mullagh was rewarded with more than applause. The Lancashire amateur A.N. Hornby presented him with a bat, and a purse of 50 sovereigns was collected for him on the ground

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21 *Australasian Sketcher*, 29 November 1873, p. 155.
22 *Warrnambool Examiner*, quoted in the *South Australian Register*, 15 January 1874, p. 5.
23 *Australasian*, reported in the *Adelaide Observer*, 2 March 1878, p. 10.
24 *HS*, 19 February 1878, p. 4.
25 *HS*, 6 March 1879, p. 2.
26 The bad feeling one notes in the press from time to time may have been a vestige of the western district's attempt to secede from Victoria under the name of Princeland in 1862. For further details see O'Donoghue 1984.
28 *Age*, 7 March 1879.
29 *Argus* quoted directly by Ray Webster in letter to author, 2 February 1993.
by the Hon. J.G. Francis, a former Premier of Victoria. The sum of money was equivalent to 50 pounds or about the same as the minimum male adult wage for six months.\(^{30}\) It would have been sufficient for him to have been able to build a small cottage.\(^{31}\)

Why, having had this success, did Mullagh not reappear for the colony? Harry Boyle was Victorian selector and captain during this season, and at the start of the following one when Mullagh opened the batting in November for a Victorian Eleven against the Next Fifteen. Presumably, then, he was again available and under strong consideration for selection. However, when he was dismissed for 5 and 4, falling on each occasion to the slow left arm Test bowler Tom Kendall,\(^{32}\) he may have decided that he would remain satisfied with his moment of glory and return to the bush. It is also conceivable that the 'capable players in Melbourne' began to assert themselves more strongly and he was not asked again.

Mullagh's skill did not diminish, however. In the western district he topped Harrow's batting three years out of four from 1878-9 to 1881-2 with averages of 39, 47, 43 and 44.\(^{33}\) Mullagh was 38 years old when chosen for Victoria but he retained his batting powers even though opportunities to exercise them seemed to dwindle in the 1880s. Part of the reason for his lack of opportunities to play seems to have been Harrow's claiming the Murray Challenge Cup after winning it for the third year in succession in 1883, and their exclusion from the mainstream local competition for several years thereafter. In the last of those years (1881-82) there is evidence of a strong rivalry and perhaps bitterness between Hamilton and Harrow. Mullagh made 110 in the match against Hamilton in good style before being stumped. Again the point was made locally that he should have the opportunity to display his mettle on metropolitan wickets in a big match.\(^{34}\) There is certainly little doubt that he played a major role in Harrow's ultimate success that season as he also scored 61, 97 and 47 in two matches against Casterton.\(^{35}\)

Harrow was subsequently only able to arrange occasional games against Apsley and Mullagh's appearances were even more spasmodic. Details of matches were scarcely reported. Around 1884 he was said to be working on a sheep station at Penola and not playing regular cricket although at the end of that year he toured Adelaide with a south-east fifteen which played several first-grade clubs. Although not scoring heavily he averaged 26 runs for four completed innings and is said to have played splendid cricket. He had one triumphant performance in carrying his bat for 43 not out against the premier club side Norwood in a match on the Adelaide Oval, where he faced the bowling of renowned Australian Test allrounder George Giffen.\(^{36}\)

Mullagh's last chance of a major representative game seems likely to have been for a western district team against the Melbourne Cricket Club at Easter 1885 but negotiations fell through when the MCC chose an unrepresentative side which the Hamilton secretary considered insulted western district cricket.\(^{37}\) By the mid-1880s the Hamilton Spectator

\(^{31}\) According to a report in the HS, 24 January 1882, p. 3, such cottages constructed of limestone or bluestone were erected on the Lake Condah Mission.
\(^{33}\) Harrow Cricket Club scorebook 1878-9 to 1882-3.
\(^{34}\) HS, 1 December 1881, p. 3.
\(^{35}\) HS, 3 January 1882, p. 2.
\(^{37}\) The secretary, Mr H.J. Bloomfield, seemed to be on strong ground since his club would have had to take the financial risk and foot the bill for several players coming at least sixty miles by coach. These details are reported in the HS, 23 April 1885, p. 3.
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usually only reported matches by Hamilton teams, while Harrow continued to struggle to find opponents, so records of Mullagh's achievements are sparse in this period. We do know that he top-scored in Harrow's 1887 loss to Coleraine, against Tarrakouyan and Apsley in 1888, and against Apsley in 1889.\(^38\)

According to a couple of accounts the 1890 season was Mullagh's last\(^39\) but new evidence has revealed that he played until several months before his death. Indeed he was able to take advantage of the Harrow club's installation of a concrete and cement pitch on which it was suggested batsmen should be able to score great numbers of runs.\(^40\) It was a luxury Mullagh was able to enjoy only briefly after years of battling on treacherous wickets. Perhaps appropriately Mullagh's last innings of 59 against Apsley and 54 not out against Chetwynd were scored despite strong opposition. Unfortunately for Mullagh his final game ended sourly and with a display of poor sportsmanship which might have deprived him of a century. After Chetwynd had been dismissed for 87 Harrow had reached 4 for 116 when some of the opposing team walked off the ground declaring they had had enough of it, and in spite of the persuasion of the remainder of the team would not come back. The Harrow correspondent reported, 'This was not very manly conduct and we hope we will not see any more of it in the future.'\(^41\)

Mullagh was a hero in 1891, and he is still remembered in Harrow a century later. His memorial overlooks an oval and the river and is adjacent to the reserve named after him. It is not hard to strike up a conversation about him in the Hermitage Hotel and in town one can obtain postcards of both the memorial and his grave. Johnny Mullagh's legendary status must be understood in terms of his local importance in Harrow and in the western district more generally. Mullagh emerged not long after the western district's battle to secede from Victoria under the name of Princeland, and even when that battle was lost claiming a cricketer as the best batsman in the existing colony could be a way of asserting regional pride. Mullagh remained when Harrow's importance as a regional centre dwindled as rail links were extended elsewhere. At such a time the former victories of the town's cricket team and its black star would have become something to savour.

Johnny Mullagh's legend transcends sport. His respectability brought him lasting esteem from the white community and in 1991 on the centenary of his death a pilgrimage to his grave attracted about sixty non-Aborigines. Interestingly, no Aborigines attended the ceremony.\(^42\) One can only speculate about the effect of the 1868 tour on Mullagh but his limited contact with English society may have turned his head forever. There is something of the tragic romantic about Mullagh: of his keeping pictures of English ladies, and his admission that while he was unwilling to marry a white woman, he was also unwilling to marry a black one.\(^43\) As an Aboriginal cricketer Mullagh showed what could be achieved in what white Australians of the time regarded as the most civilised of games. But in honouring a man who succeeded in at least one area of the white world the pastoral community was also glossing over its history of dispersal and dispossession.

\(^38\) Mullagh's scores in these games were 25, 67 and 61. *HS*, 29 March 1887, p. 3; 18 February 1888, p. 3; 28 February 1889, p. 3.
\(^39\) *HS*, 10 April 1890, p. 3; Mulvaney and Harcourt 1988, p. 162.
\(^40\) *HS*, 22 November 1890, p. 4.
\(^41\) *HS*, 7 March 1891, p. 12.
\(^42\) Rex Harcourt, personal communication, October 1993.
\(^43\) Mulvaney and Harcourt 1988, p. 163.
LIST OF REFERENCES

MURDER AND 'THE EXECUTION OF THE LAW' ON THE NULLARBOR

Peter Gifford

On 7 July 1881, after a 'very arduous' 1600 kilometre round trip on horseback from his base at Esperance Bay to the Eucla district near the South Australian border, Constable George Truslove of the Western Australian Police made a written report which went first to his Inspector at Albany, then immediately to the Superintendent of Police in Perth - at that time actually in command of all police in the colony. The Superintendent, Captain Matthew Skinner Smith, in turn thought the report of sufficient importance to justify passing it on to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Gifford, from whom it went in due course to the Governor, Sir William Robinson, who expressed the hope that 'Captain Smith will not lose sight of this case.' Ultimately, however, that is precisely what happened - even though the matter was raised again seven years later. Robinson became Governor for a third term in 1890, but by then official interest had lapsed forever. Truslove had been sent to the Eucla district, on the southern fringes of the Nullarbor plain, to distribute and collect papers for the census of 1881. While there (but not, apparently, as a first priority), he was to investigate claims that William Stuart McGill and his partners Thomas and William Kennedy had been mistreating 'natives' on their Mondra Bellae (now Mundrabilla) sheep run, 100 kilometres west of the Eucla Overland Telegraph station. Truslove’s report effectively accused McGill and the Kennedys of multiple murder. Its contents were mostly hearsay, which then as now was not admissible in a court of law. Yet as an experienced police officer he must have been aware of the gravity of such allegations, which would be seen at high governmental levels, and he cannot therefore have made them lightly. As will be seen, they were supported overwhelmingly by statements from the Overland Telegraph stationmasters at Eyre’s Sandpatch and Eucla nearly eight years later, but not acted on either in terms of criminal prosecution, even though both men were known to be of good repute.

What will be attempted here is an examination of the reasons behind such official inaction; to try to establish why a police officer’s report, obtained in difficult circumstances and even at some personal risk (from the elements, if not from the pastoralists) should have been allowed to slide into official oblivion. Likewise the statements from the stationmasters, William Graham (Eyre) and his son-in-law G. P. Stevens (Eucla), if taken seriously, should have been even more damning of McGill and his partners than Truslove’s original comments. This will necessarily involve some discussion of the wider political contexts of Aboriginal-European relations in Western Australia during the period concerned. Since Truslove’s report is central to much of what is to be discussed here, it should be quoted in detail. After his official preamble, Truslove stated that he:

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1 Smith to Gifford, 8 August 1881. CSO 527, No. 266/1880.
2 Comment by Robinson in ibid.
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was told by a native named Pady [sic] that Mr McGill about two years ago gave two natives some Pudding. One a man named Charley the other [a] woman named Jenny he believed there was Poison in it as both died [a] Couple of hours after eating it. A woman named Lucy says that her and another woman once found a bag with Sugar in it. They eat [sic] some of it made them very bad. They went to Mr Williams Station Master at Eucla and he gave them some medicine and cured them. Mr Williams says that these two women did go to him very bad he believed that they had been poisoned. He gave them some medicine and they got all right again. A native named Chinaman says that Mr McGill once shot two natives for stealing rations he did not see it done. A native Buckley saw it. Buckley is in the bush now. Also that McGill cut the throat of a native named Chadulbar. At the same time he shot a native named Yarrey with a Revolver. This native Yarrey saw McGill cut the natives [sic] throat and in making his escape from McGill he was shot in the side with the revolver - but he got away and recovered from the shot wound. This native is in the bush about 40 miles from Kenedy [sic] and McGill’s station. I was unable to see him. A shepherd named William Bufton once shot a little girl. A native Geordie who is in Kenedy and McGill’s employ saw it done and ran away. Bufton is supposed to be in Adelaide now. There was plenty of others shot and poisoned but those who were witness to the fact are dead. Most of these cases seem to have happened about 1878 or 1879 and some since. The natives that I saw say that McGill treats the natives very badly giving them nothing to eat scarcely and no clothing. They are frightened to run away for fear of being followed up and shot. A man named John Oliver ... says that he has often heard of McGill ill-treating natives and that he wrote to Mr Hare the late Govt. Resident [at Albany] but no notice was taken of it. I did not have time to look for these natives in consequence of having to return to Albany with census papers.3

That the census did indeed take preference is indicated not just by Truslove’s comment but by a telegram sent to him in Eucla in April 1881 from his superiors in Albany, instructing him to ‘collect census make inquiries ordered in reference to treatment of natives and return as soon as possible.’4 This is part of a pattern in respect of Aboriginal-related matters which marked the actions of many of those in positions of high authority in Western Australia during the 1880s. The argument is simply that despite constant protestations - particularly on the part of the colonial governors Robinson and Broome - of respect for the rule of British law and the protection it nominally afforded Aboriginal people, such protection was often not forthcoming or took a poor second place to other, more pressing matters such as the need to protect property or to gather accurate census figures (which did not involve Aboriginal people). This view is not new; Paul Hasluck wrote in 1942 that ‘The defect here was not in the law but in its execution.’5 Hasluck claimed, with some justification, that one of the main problems in obtaining convictions against white men for alleged wrong to natives was the difficulty involved in getting reliable evidence in court from Aboriginal witnesses - particularly under cross examination, when they tended to agree with contradictory suggestions put to them by defence counsel through lack of understanding of what was involved, and to avoid giving offence.5 But even when this factor is taken into account, it will be shown that the Mirning people of the

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3 Truslove to Smith, 7 July 1881, 266/80.
4 Sgt P. Furlong to Truslove, 16 April 1881, 266/80.
5 Hasluck 1942, pp.143-4.
southern Nullarbor were still denied anything resembling natural justice, since neither they nor credible European witnesses including Graham, Stevens and Stevens’s predecessor as station master at Eucla, W. Williams, were ever called upon to substantiate their charges against McGill and the Kennedys in a court of law.

In the case of the Miring, whose land had been appropriated by McGill and the Kennedys in the early 1870s, this lack of legal protection enabled McGill and William Kennedy eventually to retire from their station into the prosperous and respectable comfort of suburban obscurity in Melbourne. (Thomas Kennedy had died accidentally in 1896.) The Miring, meanwhile, who never numbered more than a few hundred because of the harsh environment and scarcity of water on their land, had been reduced in numbers to such an extent that very few of the full descent are now still alive in Western Australia, with all the accompanying cultural and other loss that such depopulation entails. The reasons for this depopulation appear thus: in the initial stages of colonisation, before expensive deep wells were sunk, the need to preserve non-permanent rockhole water for stock apparently outweighed any desire by McGill and the Kennedys to recruit the Miring as shepherds, while the Miring almost certainly brought retribution on themselves when they speared sheep to eat as their own natural food resources began to disappear. When, a few years later, the value of the Miring as labourers became apparent, some were probably killed for attempting to escape what amounted to slavery. The evidence will also indicate that McGill in particular was a violently abusive, quarrelsome man made worse by alcohol consumption, who may have delighted in cruelty for its own sake. At all events few details are now known by living Aboriginal people of Miring sites and Dreaming stories in Western Australia, as I realised when undertaking field work in the region on behalf of the W. A. Museum’s Department of Aboriginal Sites in October 1993 and January-February 1994. I was accompanied on both occasions by Arthur Dimer, now aged about 70, who is of Mirning descent on his mother’s side and of Ngadju (or Mulba, the Marring’s western neighbours) on his father’s, with a German-born station owner and a mounted policeman making up the European part of his ancestry. Arthur Dimer speaks both the Miring and Ngadju languages, and while his experience of Miring traditional culture was limited for various reasons to his childhood, he remembers clearly as a child seeing the same Geordie — by then an old man — to whom Constable Truslove referred in his report. In particular, Dimer remembers seeing a bullet wound on Geordie’s abdomen, which he (the young boy) was told had been inflicted by McGill:

This bloke by the name of McGill, he had Mundrabilla station and he had a Noongar bloke, Fred McGill. They was shooting blackfellows and

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6 Erickson 1978: 124, 126; see also the Western Mail, Perth, 7 March 1903, p. 15.
7 Ibid.; also A.E. Crocker, private notebooks.
9 The Miring lived (and still do) on both sides of the WA-SA border; this paper, however, is concerned solely with events in Western Australia. The only full-descent Miring still alive in WA now live in a close-knit coastal community near Geraldton, far from their traditional lands.
10 McGill actually described the ‘blacks’ as ‘troublesome’ during this period. Western Mail, 7 March 1903, p. 15.
11 Fred McGill, or McGill’s Fred, was a Noongar of the full descent, brought from the Esperance region by W.S. McGill when he and the Kennedys first settled in the Eucla district. The spelling ‘Noongar,’ rather than ‘Nyoongar’ or ‘Nyungar,’ is that currently used by Aboriginal people from the south-west of WA with whom the author worked in 1993-94.
poisoning them and all. ... I seen old Policeman Geordie, he was shot through the guts, the big bullet mark there where they shot at him. ... He run away to the - they were trying to find him - he run away in the bush and hid himself. He was a wild bushman, old Policeman Geordie. He lit a fire then, after, and rubbed ashes into the wound, and he walked and walked, and he got over it. He found his mob.12

It was as a result of this conversation with Arthur Dimer in February that a search was made by me on my return to Perth of Western Australian State Archives files, which turned up both Constable Truslove’s statement and those of William Graham and G. P. Stevens nearly eight years later. Dimer says he did not know any of these men, although he was friendly with Graham’s eldest son John, of whom more later. Dimer, incidentally, maintains he has never been in the Western Australian archives, which makes the following account by Stevens even more remarkable:

I have at the present time a native named 'Geordie' serving here as assistant linesman, who has repeatedly told me an unvarnished tale, without prejudice or the least display of vindictiveness, of how his brother’s throat was cut by these 'friendly pioneers', and how McGill crept up on their camp at night while they were asleep and discharged his revolver among a group of them, firing right and left while his ammunition lasted. On this occasion poor Geordie was brought very near to his end; he describes with unfeigned horror, his sensations when he started up from his sleep to receive a revolver bullet in his abdomen; how, terrified and bewildered he ran, till he dropped from sheer exhaustion; then, his realisation of his danger and his subsequent efforts to reach a rockhole to obtain water, and possibly find friends; how he eventually succeeded in reaching this spot only to be deserted by his comrades, who, believing him to be dying, abandoned him to his fate, as is their custom. But chance brought one of a bolder nature, who subtracted the bullet from his back, and he ultimately recovered. The places where the bullet entered his abdomen and was extracted from his back are plainly to be seen.13

Graham also mentioned Geordie, although not by name, saying Geordie’s ordeal had been made known to police, and that Constable Truslove had visited the graves of 16 natives who had all come to violent ends at their [McGill’s and the Kennedys’] hands or their servants. Mr McG. himself told me a native he had called Freddy McGill murdered a native whom I much valued named 'Pompey', & that he himself heard the row and the man’s groans when stabbed but he w[oul]d not interfere as the black b— gers were better out of the way.14

Stevens’s account, as well, had the Noongar Freddy McGill joining in the violence readily enough; being a stranger to the area and from a different linguistic and cultural background, self-preservation apart from any other consideration would almost certainly have motivated him to carry out the orders of his employers. As Arthur Dimer puts it, Fred McGill had a rifle and the Miming didn’t, and the Noongars and Miming had always hated each other anyway. Whether the Miming attempted to revenge themselves on Fred McGill is likely according to Dimer but not known definitely.15 Nor are the names and personal

12 Interview, 3 February 1994.
13 Stevens to R.C. Loftie, 23 February 1889. CSO 527, No. 2827/1888.
14 Graham to F. Hare, 13 February 1889, 2827/88.
details of most of those who died in the violence instigated by McGill and his partners. Such details were not recorded at the time, simply because the only European witnesses seem to have been the murderers themselves. As to resistance, inter-group Aboriginal solidarity leading to physical counter-attacks in such situations was not necessarily general then anywhere in Australia if it ever has been, given the European derivation of the concept. Dimer recalls the various Mirning groups as being well-disposed to one another, but an earlier observer, Daisy Bates, did not. By the same token, however, Stevens believed that both Freddy McGill and an alleged white accomplice named David Sullivan might well have told the truth about events at Mundrabilla if given the chance, and legal protection against prosecution. (Sullivan in fact was charged in 1885 with shooting an ‘Aboriginal native’ with intent to do him grievous bodily harm at or near Eucla and was committed to the Albany Quarter Sessions for trial, but the case was dismissed.) It is ironic that, from a current European perspective, but not necessarily a 19th century Aboriginal one, Freddy McGill seems to have been seen a few years later as a leader among his own people, in newspaper articles in the then new Goldfields centre of Coolgardie. There may also be some irony in the journalist’s description of the ‘exemplary darkie’ Fred McGill [sic] keeping the Esperance ‘blacks...in complete subjection’ at a social function in Coolgardie, the Noongars almost certainly well aware of Fred McGill’s fearsome reputation at Mundrabilla and the journalist almost certainly not. The irony is complemented by the fact that McGill the station owner had by now (1896) become a Justice of the Peace and local magistrate, and complained the following year to the Premier about being forced legally under the Masters and Servants Act to imprison an Aboriginal man for absconding from his master. McGill maintained that the Aboriginal man in question was deserving of leniency; he had run away only because his woman had been taken by a white man and he was pursuing them.

McGill, it would seem, had a preoccupation with miscegenation, although his apparent disapproval of the practice may not have extended to his partners. Thomas Kennedy, by McGill’s own account, ‘was speared in three places’ soon after the three men arrived in the Eucla district in 1872, while his brother William allegedly grasped a native woman by the ears and flung her to the ground in 1887, then beat her to death with a stick in July the following year. As elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia, spearing appears to have been a punishment among the Mirning for sexual transgressions, while the allegation (by Stevens) that the same woman was beaten more than once by William Kennedy, and on the first occasion was saved by the intercession of her Aboriginal partner, probably speaks for itself. As for McGill, on each occasion when white men lodged complaints about his

18 Stevens to Loftie, 23 February 1889.
19 Esperance Police Station occurrence books 1879-1885, notes 17 and 27 November 1885. AN 5, Acc. 781.
20 Coolgardie Miner, 28-29 December 1896. The fact that Arthur Dimer knew of Fred McGill’s reputation a century later speaks for itself in terms of Aboriginal knowledge and oral tradition.
21 McGill to J. Forrest, 12 December 1896. CSO 527, No. 96/1897.
22 Western Mail, 7 March 1903, p. 15.
23 Stevens to Loftie, 23 February 1889; see also Esperance PS occ. books, 1888-1890, notes July-August 1888.
25 Stevens to Loftie, 23 February 1889. Stevens does not, however, make any direct reference to the possibility of a sexual relationship between William Kennedy and the woman.
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treatment of Aboriginal people, they were replying in part to apparently slanderous allegations made by him,26 at the highest level in the colony, about their supposed moral standards in respect of those same Aboriginal people. For example, Williams, Stevens’s predecessor at Eucla, was described more than once by McGill as a 'larrikin'27 - a type portrayed in Henry Lawson’s doggerel poem ‘The Bastard from the Bush’ as basically criminal and content to live off the immoral earnings of women. 28 It was at least partly in response to Williams’s enraged reaction that Constable Truslove made his 1881 visit to Eucla - the first by a Western Australian policeman to the area. 29

In Graham’s case, McGill went even further, accusing him of using his ex-officio position as Protector of Aborigines to sign over Aboriginal people to his alleged business partners in kangaroo hunting, ‘men of the most worthless description whose whole idea seems to be to get what money they can for drink and keep native women for prostitution.’30 Graham’s own description of some of these men as ex-British army officers and old Etonians may simply have disguised their actual status as remittance men,31 although kangaroo hunting with its attendant hard work would seem to have been an odd occupation for upper-class loafers from the Old Country. Stevens made precisely this point in his defence of them.32 But the inclusion by McGill of Graham’s eldest son John as one of the ‘worthless’ types might well have proved expensive to McGill had John Graham been able to sue for libel in a late 20th century Australian court. John Graham, who died in 1941, the same year as his brother-in-law G.P. Stevens, still has a reputation among old European Nullarbor residents as having been an eccentric but hard-working, kind-hearted and essentially decent man. His so-called eccentricity seems to have derived from the unusual and isolated circumstances of his childhood; he grew up speaking fluent Miming and - according to Arthur Dimer - was free of any taint of racism. While John Graham may have enjoyed the favours of Aboriginal women, they were freely given, according to Dimer, and Graham ultimately married an Aboriginal woman and legitimised her son by a member of a prominent grazing family on the Nullarbor’s western fringe. The Miming, from Dimer’s account, held John Graham in higher regard than any other European man before or, probably, since.33 His bush survival skills were equal to theirs, which meant a fair division of labour in the actual business of kangaroo hunting, and he seems also to have treated them generously in terms of payment for their efforts34 - something extremely rare in European-Aboriginal labor relations at the time. Small wonder then that the Miming preferred if at all possible to work for him, rather than be driven by the McGill-Kennedy partnership and starved, beaten and even murdered if they showed any resistance. Before young Graham had offered them an option, the Miming had by Stevens’s account been

26 McGill’s language is frequently intemperate, and his allegations are not supported by any archival or oral evidence.
27 See, for example, McGill to CS (Gifford) 12 May and 1 October 1881, 266/80.
28 Lawson, March 1892, in Roderick (ed), 1979, pp. 69-71. Lawson was actually working with larrikins in the slums of Sydney during the 1880s. At that time the larrikin as personified by Ginger Mick was still at least 30 years away from being redeemed by C.J. Dennis.
29 See addendum, Graham to Hare, 13 February 1889 (a copy of an 1881 report from Williams to A. Helmich, Supt. of Telegraphs).
30 McGill to Broome [Governor], 1 September 1888, 2827/88.
31 Graham to Hare, 13 February 1889.
32 Stevens to Loftie, 23 February 1889.
33 Interviews, 6 and 8 October 1993; Crocker, private notebooks; interviews with Mr and Mrs J. Crocker, 1 February 1994, and Mr M. Harsett, 28 January 1994.
34 Dimer interview, 8 October 1993; see also Stevens to Loftie, 23 February 1889.
terrorised 'to such an extent that they (the natives) were glad to work for them ... rather than be hunted about the country and shot down like dogs.'

Alleged poaching of Aboriginal labour was certainly one of McGill's complaints. Graham senior maintained he had 'absolute proof that McGill wrote to a mutual friend: "this is a new dodge of Graham's signing over other people's niggers"' But Stevens probably reached the core of the matter in stating that McGill's 'chief grievance' was that he objects to officialism [sic] in any form, and he would be pleased to root it out, and take the natives under his own protecting wing, possibly to mete out kindnesses to them in the manner aforesaid, when officialism was not known at Eucla. You [Government Resident, Albany] are probably aware that both Mr Farrant & Mr Williams my predecessors have received somewhat similar treatment at the hands of Mr McGill to that which Mr Graham and myself are now undergoing.

Put another way, McGill and the Kennedys had things all their own way in the remote Eucla area until the completion of the Overland Telegraph line between Perth and Adelaide in 1877, when telegraphists arrived who - as resident civil servants - could also fulfil other duties such as being Protectors of Aborigines. One indication of how seriously they took these extra duties is indicated by the fact that Williams and Graham senior were E. M. Curr's acknowledged principal informants on the Mirning for Curr's four-volume anthropological work, *The Australian Race*, published in 1886-7. Any reading by McGill and the Kennedys about the Mirning and their country was probably limited, however, to John Forrest's reports of his exploratory trip through the region in 1870, after being instructed by Governor Frederick Weld to make accurate observations with a view to 'extending the area of pastoral enterprise.'

McGill, originally from Scotland, and the Kennedys, from Ulster, had come to the Albany district from South Australia in the mid 1860s. Being without much capital, they were attracted to the Eucla region by the government's offer of free land in exchange for 'opening up' this arid country. They made the arduous and dangerous journey overland from Albany in 1872 with a team of bullocks, a waggon, eight horses and 1,500 merino sheep, taking up 200,000 acres and shipping their woolclip from a beach 30 kilometres south of the station homestead. One reason for McGill's general rancour against authority was the government's failure to provide him with free land; while others did obtain such grants, his 200,000 acres was leasehold. It was not, moreover, until the goldfields of Coolgardie, Norseman-Dundas and Kalgoorlie were opened up in the 1890s that he and his partners really began to prosper, through the sale of mutton and beef to the miners. John Forrest had described the Mundrabilla area as 'grassy splendid feeding country extending in every direction.' The explorer's description was coloured by the fact that he passed through the area in June and July, the wettest months of the year; he realised nonetheless that the abundant water in the rockholes was seasonal only. McGill and the Kennedys would have noted that, in terms of its implications for running stock, but must also have

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35 Stevens to Loftie, 23 February 1889.
36 Graham to Hare, 13 February 1889.
37 Stevens to Loftie, 23 February 1889.
38 They were not, incidentally, responsible for Curr's apparent confusion of the Nullarbor Miring with another group inhabiting an area around King George's Sound.
40 *Western Mail*, 3 March 1903, p. 15; also *Eucla Recorder*, 21 July, 18 August 1900.
41 Ibid.
42 Forrest 1875, pp. 75, 106, 110, 114-118.
been influenced by Forrest’s description of the Mirning as ‘miserable specimens’ who ‘resembled pigs more than human beings’.43 This is not to say that the future Premier and Baron of Bunbury was advocating wholesale slaughter of the ‘grossly uncivilized’44 Eucla people, but Eucla in 1872 was one of the most isolated settlements in Australia, and McGill and the Kennedys may well have succumbed to the sense of absolute power which their superior weapons and ready availability of food, strychnine (officially for poisoning dingoes) and liquor would have afforded them in such a remote place. The Eucla Recorder, a newspaper published by and for telegraph staff, was not merely moralising when it claimed in 1899 that:

Perhaps the greatest evil is to be found in the peculiar tendency of bush life to take all the energy out of a man, leaving him in many cases with almost not an atom of determination wherewith to resist other evil influences. ... Only a bushman, of a few years’ experience, can describe how irresistible an offer of drink becomes. Space would allow us to enumerate the many other undesirable habits that a great number of bushmen assume; but some of our readers may possibly heed our warning to be very careful should they ever be compelled to adopt a bushman’s life.45

There are, perhaps, unconscious echoes here of Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness; although any resemblance between Kurtz and the tough but otherwise unheroic McGill is slight, their circumstances do have something in common. It was the great age of European imperialism and colonialism, with all their attendant racist brutality - in Australia just as much, proportionally, as in Africa. The novella was written in 1899, but is part of the ‘twenty years of tales to tell’46 which Conrad had accumulated during his years at sea around the world. And the warning by the Eucla Recorder is not just about succumbing to drink, but is about the dangers inherent for ‘white’ men in isolated places where ‘civilised’ standards no longer apply - a situation encountered just as much by McGill as by Kurtz. That McGill at any rate was violent in liquor is apparent from Stevens’s statement, in which he allegedly witnessed McGill attempting while drunk to shoot a European well-sinker - a ‘steady, hardworking young fellow’ - with whom McGill had argued.47

Stevens himself was a conscientious and able man who rose to become Perth manager of the colonial telegraph department before its amalgamation into the Commonwealth service in 1901, and who was for many years secretary of the W. A. Civil Service Association. He later became a founding member of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society and wrote several articles for its journal, Early Days; it is significant in view of his experience of official inaction in the McGill case that although some of these dealt with the Overland Telegraph, he nowhere mentioned the Aboriginal people of the Nullarbor.48 Aboriginal-related historical matters, when discussed at all in Western Australian historical circles at this time, were usually dealt with by the Chief Protector of Aborigines, A. O. Neville. Paul Hasluck was active in the Historical Society during the 1930s, but his MA thesis, published as Black Australians and a genuinely pioneering work in terms of recognition of the realities of Aboriginal/European relations in his home state, did not appear until a year after Stevens’s death. Neville’s interpretations, however, as published by Early Days in 1936 - even allowing for the very different historical

43 Ibid., pp. 75, 108-9; also Kimberly 1897, p. 252.
45 Eucla Recorder, 27 May 1899, p. 5.
47 Stevens to Loftie, 23 February 1889.
48 Obit., Early Days, December 1941, p. 47; also Stevens 1933, 1936, 1938, 1939, in ibid.
perceptions of the 1930s - are little more than a hagiography of the so-called European 'pioneers' of Western Australia. Some of these such as the young Maitland Brown, avenging three white men speared to death in the Kimberley in 1865, were no better than mass murderers, but their deeds (and this punitive expedition in particular) were described by Neville as 'inevitable in these days of the march of civilisation.' Neville as a civil servant had to be circumspect about criticising such people, but the fact that Brown could become an apparently revered Resident Magistrate and political leader says much about the state of the Aboriginal/European relationship in Western Australia both in late colonial times and after Federation.

Brown was also the brother-in-law of Rowley Crozier Loftie, Government Resident at Albany virtually throughout the period under discussion here. Albany, according to the then Governor in 1881, Sir William Robinson, was the sort of place 'where above all a gentleman is required' as Resident, and it was for this reason that Loftie gained the appointment. Superior social status in this colonial society was no guarantee, however, that the law would be administered impartially. Loftie did not hesitate, for example, to impose sentence of death on an Aboriginal man named Toppy, convicted of the murder of his own brother, Jack Shepherd, on one of the Dempster family stations north of Esperance in June 1889. (He was later reprieved - a course which could effectively have been carried out by Loftie himself had he directed that the man be convicted only of manslaughter). Yet although the Mirning man, Geordie, was actually brought to Esperance by Constable Truslove as part of his 1600-kilometre ride to Eucla and back in 1881, there is no record of anyone apart from G. P. Stevens ever taking anything resembling an official deposition from him. Geordie had a gaping wound in his abdomen, after all, and can have been in no doubt as to who inflicted it. Even when the difficulties associated with taking evidence from Aboriginal witnesses are taken into consideration, the fact remains that Stevens was able to obtain a clear account of the incident upwards of seven years later - and Geordie was still relating it to Mirning audiences including the child Arthur Dimer at least 40 years after that.

Given that both the Governor, Sir William Robinson, and Colonial Secretary, Lord Gifford, were interested in the case, it seems strange that a newly-appointed Resident would not have become aware of it, and - if at all energetic - have done something about ensuring that the prosecution proceeded. Not only did Loftie allow the matter to lapse, however, he also failed to act on his own behalf when it was raised again by Graham and Stevens in 1888-89 - even though he had apparently no qualms about sentencing Hoppy to death for the murder of another native a few months later. That Loftie was eventually fully cognisant of the accusations against McGill and the Kennedys there can be no doubt, since Stevens's complaint was addressed to him and was passed on in due course, along with that of Graham, to the Colonial Secretary and Governor. It could be argued that Loftie had

49 Neville 1936, p. 43. In Cowan 1988, pp. 87, 95, the most recent account sympathetic to Brown, it is acknowledged that 'in self defence' Brown and his companions killed or wounded 18 Aboriginal people in 'the first lesson taught the natives of this district of the superiority of civilised man and weapons over savage ...'
50 Ibid., p. 24.
51 Robinson to Lord Kimberley, 9 April 1881. Governor's confidential despatches, 1869-85, AN 395/1, Acc. 390, No.47.
52 Esperance PS occ. books 1888-1890, notes 30 June, 3-4 July, 20 September 1889; also Purdue 1993, p. 69.
53 Esperance PS occ. books 1879-1885, notes 15, 17 August, 16,17, 26 October 1882.
54 He was sentenced on 6 September 1889. Purdue 1993, p. 69.
fulfilled his duty merely by passing the letter on to a higher authority; against that, however, is the fact that he was officially Protector of Aborigines by virtue of being Government Resident. Simply passing on a letter (and probably that of Graham as well) does not excuse his inaction for the previous seven years over what were, in effect, accusations of multiple murder of Aboriginal people. While his official role was separate to some extent from that of the police, it is hard to credit that they would have ignored any request from him as either magistrate or Chief Protector of Aborigines in the district to act diligently in following through such an investigation.

Loftie, at any rate, had nothing to do with the decision to send Constable Truslove to Eucla a second time to follow up his initial report on the Miring murder allegations. It was on direct instructions from the Superintendent of Police in Perth that Truslove set off on 15 November 1882, to arrest McGill and, if necessary, the Kennedys and Freddy McGill. Truslove, however, was sick when he set out and became worse along the track; so much so that he had to be brought back by cart to Esperance and then taken by ship to Albany for medical treatment. But Geordie did not, apparently, accompany him to Albany, and what Truslove may have discussed or been told there in respect of McGill and the Kennedys is not known. At all events Truslove made no other official journeys to the Eucla region, and Esperance police records contain no further mention of allegations against any of the proprietors of Mundrabilla until 10 July 1888, when Truslove’s successor at Esperance, Lance Corporal John McGlade, was ordered to go to Eucla to investigate reports that a native woman had died as the result of a severe beating from one of the Kennedys. This incident, the same one to which Stevens referred above, did not result in a prosecution, partly because ‘natives [sic] statements cannot be relied upon’ and partly also because McGlade claimed to have been told by ‘four white persons who [were] there’ that the woman had not been ill-treated by Kennedy. Whether McGlade knew of McGill’s and the Kennedys’ reputation is not clear from the Esperance police records, but it is hard to credit that he was entirely ignorant of what had gone on at Eucla before his transfer to Esperance.

It cannot be said, however, that either Truslove or McGlade was entirely or even mostly responsible for the failure to enforce the law impartially as far as McGill and the Kennedys were concerned. Truslove’s initial report, after all, showed how things were at Mundrabilla. And if he made no arrests on that initial occasion, he seems to have had genuine difficulties in obtaining other than hearsay evidence. To arrest a white man of property for capital offences against natives was no small matter; Truslove may well have wanted to test the reaction among his superiors before proceeding with what would have been - among a certain section of colonial society - a highly unpopular prosecution. Likewise, McGlade may have decided to concern himself only with the here and now in his investigation of the beating allegation against William Kennedy; certainly he had no written or telegraphed instructions to do otherwise. McGlade may even have felt himself vindicated after taking part, on his return from Eucla, in the hunt for a white shepherd named Michael Griffin. This man, who had a record of violence toward Aboriginal people, took to the bush after allegedly murdering an Aboriginal man named Marabool while droving sheep to Fraser Range station. Griffin was duly captured, tried and discharged for lack of evidence, after which he returned to his old employment with the Dempsters. If a mere shepherd could get off in such a fashion, then what chance was there of

55 Ibid., 1879-1885, notes 15 August -18 December 1882.
56 Ibid., 1888-1890, notes 1, 4, 10, 20 July, 20 August, 7 September 1888.
57 For aggravated assault. Ibid., notes 11 April, 4 June, 1 July 1885.
58 Ibid., notes 9, 13, 14 October, 17 November 1888, 22 February 1890; also GR Albany, ‘Murder of Native by Michael Griffin’, CSO 527, 2937/1888.
successfully prosecuting a squatter - a 'tough customer' as McGill was known to be - and all this after a 1600 km. round trip on horseback through waterless country? What was wanting was the will, at higher levels in the administration of justice, to devote sufficient energy and resources both to the investigation itself and to ensuring that it would succeed.

That will was never forthcoming, even though Aboriginal people in breach of the law received little compassion or understanding in what had been a convict settlement for almost 20 years and was still trying to come to terms with the presence of relatively large numbers of expirees. Of 10,300 white males over the age of 21 in Western Australia in 1884, about 2,600 were expirees and a further 560 actual convicts and ticket-of-leave holders. In other words, a class-based jail (and jailer) mentality persisted throughout the colony for years after transportation from Britain ended; while transportation to Rottnest Island remained a fact of life (and death) for Aboriginal people, again throughout the colony, until the 20th century. In the early 1880s the Governor, Robinson, rejected a bill introduced by Maitland Brown to give settler magistrates (Justices of the Peace) the power to sentence summary offenders to terms of imprisonment for up to three years. As it was, Aboriginal men who speared even a single sheep belonging to a man such as the squatter Andrew Dempster could be - and often were - sentenced by Dempster in his role as Justice of the Peace at Esperance to 12 months on Rottnest, from where some never returned. To be fair to Dempster, he does not seem to have used his legal powers to have Aboriginal offenders flogged as additional punishment, as happened elsewhere in Western Australia during this period. But protection of property was paramount, as the police well knew. Indeed, for long periods in the 1880s and early 1890s, the Esperance police charge book records show that sheep stealing by Aboriginal people - Noongars, Ngadju and, occasionally, Mirning - was virtually the only 'crime' to come before the Esperance magistrates. A few examples: 'Paddy', aged 19, (a Ngadju or Noongar man), sentenced on 3 May 1889 by Dempster to 12 months on Rottnest for stealing one sheep, the property of George Scott, at Pine Hill; 'George', aged 45, (Ngadju), sentenced by Dempster on 27 May 1889 and 1 June 1889 to a total 12 months hard labour on Rottnest for stealing one sheep and one double-barrelled gun, at Fraser Range (a Dempster station; the 'hard labour' probably related to the stealing of the gun); and 'Dakin', aged 25, (Ngadju), sentenced by G. H. Bostock, JP, on 31 July 1892 to 18 months hard labour on Rottnest for stealing three sheep at Fraser Range. The hard labour actually began long before they reached Rottnest, as 'Benjamin', a Mirning man convicted of sheep stealing, told the 1883 Royal Commission into the treatment of Aboriginal prisoners of the Crown:

I walked from Eyre Sand Patch to Albany [about 1,000 km.] naked, with a chain on my neck. My neck was sore from chain. I knocked up from the long walk. Policeman Truslove no good. He hit me for knocking up. ... I came with a bullock chain around my neck from Eyre Sand Patch to Albany. When it rained my neck was very sore from the chain. ... I had no clothes given to me from Eyre Sand Patch to Albany.

The police were well aware why such breaches of the law occurred. Constable James Sherry reported in 1892 that in this district [i.e Esperance, north to Fraser Range and east

59 G. Phillips (acting CS) to Robinson, 18 September 1880, 266/80.
60 Broome to Lord Derby, 8 August 1884. Governor's c.d., 1869-85.
61 See, for example, Hasluck 1942: 80-86; and Thomas 1981, pp. 646-9.
62 H. Wrenfordsley (CJ) to Derby, 23 April 1883. Governor's c.d., 1869-85.
63 Esperance PS charge book 1889-1897.
64 Appendix I, RC report, 1883. AN 1/1, Acc. 495, Box 1.
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to the S. A. border] they are mostly driven to sheep stealing from starvation',65 while McGlade had informed Inspector Rowe in Albany the previous year that:
it would be almost impossible for them ['bush' natives] to subsist owing to the absence of game & the scarcity of kangaroos which are being fast exterminated [sic] in this locality.... In the near future their poverty will increase as the domestic cat has gone wild & spread for hundreds of miles over the district, killing all the small marsupials and birds, that formed the daily subsistence of the natives. Mr Ponton [Balladonia station] told me he believed that some of the natives were reduced by hunger to kill an occasional sheep.66

As for the police, they could claim with some justification that the well-being of Aboriginal people was not their problem but that of the government, which meant specifically after 1886, the Aborigines Protection Board. This organisation - bitterly resented by colonial landholders and their political representatives - was responsible through the Governor to the British Government and remained so even after representative self-government came into effect in Western Australia in 1890, until abolished by Sir John Forrest's administration in 1897. The colonists saw it, correctly, as a reflection on their ability to ensure the welfare of the Aboriginal people of Western Australia and, by extension, to govern themselves. That their actual record in terms of humane Aboriginal administration left much to be desired, they either hotly denied or ignored as irrelevant.67

The Board had been set up in the wake of the Gribble affair, in which the Revd. J.B. Gribble, an Anglican clergyman and missionary, had denounced the behaviour of settlers in the Gascoyne and Pilbara regions towards their Aboriginal inhabitants. Failing to get official backing (or even that of his Church) in Perth for his accusations Gribble published a booklet entitled Dark Deeds In A Sunny Land, and repeated his allegations in the eastern colonies newspapers. He subsequently sued for libel when the West Australian newspaper described him as 'a lying, canting humbug', but lost the case.68 As the judgement of the Chief Justice, Alexander Onslow, made clear, Gribble had not in fact been 'treated with the consideration which he had every right to expect', nor had he 'been granted a fair and patient hearing'69 in Western Australia. In this the Chief Justice was at one with David Carly, one of Gribble's principal informants, who claimed in a letter to a Melbourne newspaper that:
as an old hand at the North-West, ... no language can be too strong in exposing the fearful atrocities which I have seen, opposed, and reported to magistrates, judges, Governor Robinson and others. No notice was taken, except to draw down on myself silent vengeance. The Rev. J.B. Gribble is now bravely fighting on behalf of the natives, and I hope he will be well supported, as he richly deserves it.70

But to go public, and especially in 'monstrous dimension'71 among the 't'other siders' of Melbourne and Sydney was to place himself beyond the pale. Exactly how monstrous

65 Sherry to Sgt J. Farley, 16 August 1892, Esperance PS letter and report books 1879-1893.
66 McGlade to Insp. T. Rowe, ? February 1892, ibid.
67 See, for example, J. Forrest to Robinson, 22 November 1892, APB misc. reports, corresp., 1891-1897. AN 1/1, Acc. 495, box 1; also A. Forrest, V & P, LA, 7 September 1893; Crowley 1971, pp. 209-10; Battye 1924, pp. 395, 403.
69 Full transcripts of judgements in Gribble v Harper and Hackett are in AN 1/1, Acc. 388, Box 2.
70 Melbourne Telegraph, 3 May 1886, clipping in ibid.
71 Transcript in ibid.
the dimension was, or what form Gribble's 'disregard for the truth' had taken, Onslow CJ's judgement did not reveal, but the judgement was for the defendants. Gribble might well have been tempted to appeal to the Privy Council had he known that the previous Governor, Robinson, had described Onslow (then Attorney General) in a confidential despatch to the Colonial Office as a man who
takes up such strong views on most questions that his better judgment is too frequently obscured, and as he is hot tempered and dictatorial and is offensive to everyone who differs from him, I am sorry to say that he has failed to inspire me with that confidence in his impartiality and discretion which a Governor ought to be able to place in his Chief Legal Adviser.

In any event Onslow's efforts were not appreciated by the West Australian-pastoralist alliance, which felt that although he had found for them, his judgement was morally in favour of Gribble; accordingly, they attempted to have the Chief Justice officially censured. Fifty years later, A.O. Neville was still taking the same line, referring to Gribble's 'notorious assertions' and maintaining that they were 'thoroughly sifted and for the most part unsubstantiated.' In fact, Gribble's allegations were all the subject of an investigation ordered by the current Governor, Sir Frederick Napier Broome; the allegations were put to those policemen who had been stationed in the areas concerned in each case. They were solemnly denied, London was informed accordingly and that was that. Broome was no fool, but neither was he able to achieve the impossible. Without reliable witnesses independent of Gribble and his supporters, and particularly with the police off side, there was nothing to be gained in pursuing the matter.

Broome, a former journalist, had taken over from Robinson in 1883, by which time official interest in the McGill allegations raised in Constable Truslove's report had apparently subsided. There is no indication in Broome's regular despatches to the Colonial Office in London that he knew anything of the allegations against McGill before 1889. Given that he sent regular, detailed reports on important matters brought to his attention concerning Aboriginal people throughout his term, this would seem to indicate that the McGill case had been shelved before his arrival. He was aware, for example, of the case of Michael Griffin:

It seems one Griffin murdered a native, and fled to the bush. ... A party of police has been dispatched. ... This case seems an outrage of an ordinary criminal character, which may be adequately dealt with by the law.

In fact, of course, it was not. Hasluck's axiom applied again: the defect here was not in the law but in its execution. As to the shelving of the McGill case, this may have been through an oversight, itself brought on by the fact that Robinson had had problems with his Colonial Secretary, Lord Gifford, which were serious enough to warrant official complaints being sent to London. Gifford was both inexperienced in administration and, according to Robinson, prone to wilful, headstrong actions which had led him to associate with a group of 'political malcontents' led by the editor of the West Australian. As

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72 Ibid.
73 Robinson to Kimberley, 30 September 1881. Governor's c.d., 1869-1885.
74 Battye 1924, pp. 348, 350-1.
75 Neville 1936, p. 44.
76 Transcripts in AN 1/1, Acc. 388, Box 2.
77 Broome to Lord Knutsford 12 November 1888. Governor's despatches 1886-1889. AN 395/1, Acc. 390, No. 16.
78 Robinson to Kimberley 21 April, 19 June, 19 August 1881. Governor's c.d., 1869-1885; also Gibbney and Smith (1) 1987.
anyone who has worked in a bureaucracy can attest, lack of trust between people in
responsible positions can and often does bring about a marked decrease in administrative
efficiency - the more so when any of the parties is inexperienced or inefficient to begin
with. Gifford's eventual departure for Gibraltar virtually coincided with the aborted second
visit by Constable Truslove to Eucla. In such circumstances, the potential existed for an
inconvenient investigation simply to be placed to one side in the confusion surrounding the
changeover, and then forgotten. It is significant also that Robinson's term as governor (the
second of his three such Western Australian appointments) expired only a few months later,
in 1883.79

As far as the Aborigines Protection Board is concerned, it may have been independent
of the colonial politicians who would form the first representative government in 1890, but
it was constantly under attack from its inception until 1897, when the colonial government
assumed control of Aboriginal affairs. As Leslie Marchant has noted, the opposition was
most virulent during Broome's term of office, during which he pursued a policy of 'general
toleration' for Aboriginal customs; by 1892 the Board had become much more conscious of
the pastoralists' point of view.80 The Board was derided, with some accuracy, as a mere
distributor of blankets,81 even though its officials were also empowered 'to institute, carry
on or defend any court proceeding and to enforce any order or judgment of any court on
behalf of any aboriginal. '82 It had been established, at least in part, to address complaints
such as that of the Chief Justice, Henry Wrenfordsley, in 1883, that:

It is difficult for the legislator in England to realize the result of the vast
distances which separate the severall [sic] communities of this Colony. A
Resident Magistrate may be 150 or 200 miles from the place of innstigation
[sic] and a failure of justice must take place unless some legal machinery is
provided.83

In the case of Eucla, the distance involved was 800 km. But the actual setting up of the
Board, far from addressing the genuine problems involved, was what would be seen in
today's terms as a public relations exercise.84 (Broome, as a former journalist, must have
been aware of the value of at least being seen to be doing something, as far as his masters
in London were concerned.) Resources were at best limited in a sparsely-populated colony
which was only just starting to realise its huge mineral assets, and there were massive
logistical problems involved in effectively policing such a vast area where roads were bad
and railways still in their infancy. The Board was forced to rely to a large extent on the
services of police, local magistrates and civil servants such as William Graham and G.P.
Stevens because they were frequently the only people available in remote areas to act as
Protectors.85 Its own resources simply did not extend to hiring its own staff in the numbers
required to carry out protection as intended under the legislation of 1886. It was suggested
that the annual grant of 5,000 pounds which the Board had available to it would have been
sufficient to appoint at least one such person, but as the Revd. C.G. Nicolay, a member of
the Board, pointed out in 1892:

81 See, for example, Hasluck 1942, pp. 108-111,118-121; Green 1981, p.110.
82 Hasluck 1942, p. 111.
83 Wrenfordsley to Derby, 23 April 1883. Governor's c.d., 1869-1885.
84 This view is supported by the contemporary Roman Catholic newspaper, the WA Record, 13
October 1892. Cutting in AN 1/1, Acc. 495, Box 1, “reports on Aborigines”.
85 See Hasluck 1942, p. 111.
he could do very little towards giving us knowledge of things as they really are. He would, of course, go to the stations. ... The objects of his visit would be known, and those who had anything to conceal would take care to put it out of his way. ... As to the natives, they ... would interpret it to their own advantage, and thus an additional difficulty would be interposed between them and the settlers, and if he were not familiar with their habits he would be as easily deceived by them as by the settlers, even if he had anyone with him who could interpret what they said.86

Whether Nicolay had ever preached on the subject of Pontius Pilate is not known, but in this instance his own solution was to leave matters in the hands of the police rather than lobby energetically for sufficient resources to bring about a genuine improvement.87 It is little wonder then that Broome was at pains to mention to London that he had managed to provide 48 extra police in the Kimberley in early 1889, 'without additional expense',88 after complaining only three months earlier in the wake of the shootings of 'several' Aboriginal people at Goose Hill in the east Kimberley, that:

want of funds prevents an increased police force being maintained in the [Kimberley] district. The Aboriginal natives here are determined savages, hostile and warlike ... I fear there will be more bloodshed in this district ... All this is very regrettable. I shall continue to issue orders of a restraining character, and to do all in my power to improve the state of things now existing. Any unjustifiable outrage upon natives will of course be severely dealt with.89

Broome was of course writing in a Kimberley context, and it is fair to surmise that it was his major concern as far as Aboriginal-related matters went at the time. Certainly this was so in relation to his reports to the Colonial Office. But in fact McGill's letter of complaint about Graham and Stevens had been placed in Broome's hands at least a month before he made that initial Kimberley statement to London.90 Regarding McGill's letter, Broome ordered the Colonial Secretary, Sir Malcolm Fraser, who was also chairman of the Aborigines Protection Board, to have the Board consider it carefully and take 'prompt & effective action.'91 The Board did consider the letter, along with the replies cited above which it requested from Graham and Stevens, who it found had 'successfully vindicated their conduct from the aspersions of Mr McGill.'92

All that happened subsequently, however, was that Graham and Stevens were confirmed in their positions as Protectors and no further investigation was ordered into their counter-allegations against McGill and the Kennedys.93 The presence of 48 extra police in the Kimberley almost certainly meant that other areas were short of police as a result, particularly to undertake long and time-consuming journeys to investigate alleged crimes now years old. For their part, neither Graham nor Stevens seems to have raised the McGill matters again officially. But they were civil servants, after all, and had already done their duty in a manner which had required some consideration and even courage. They must have been well aware of what had happened to Gribble (and to a lesser extent Carly) only a little

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86 A.P.B. correspondence 1892, enclosure 5. AN 1/1, Acc. 495, Box 1.
87 Ibid.
88 Broome to Knutsford, 21 February 1889. Governor's despatches 1886-1889.
89 Broome to Knutsford, 12 November 1888. Ibid.
90 See Broome to Fraser, 2 October 1888, 2827/88.
91 Ibid.
92 R. Habgood (sec. APB) to Fraser, 8 April 1889, 2827/88.
93 Ibid; see also Fraser to Broome and Broome to Fraser, 8 April 1889.

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more than three years previously, and it should not have been up to them anyway to take
the matter further. Thus, even when all the difficulties facing the Board and the Governor
are taken into account, the very fact that they expressed confidence in Graham and Stevens -
steady, upright men of known good character - should have been sufficient reason to re-open
the case against McGill and the Kennedys, there being then as now no statute of limitation
for murder prosecutions. As Stevens had made perfectly plain, not only was the principal
Aboriginal witness - Geordie - still available, but his memory of the attempt on his life by
McGill was clear.

But the beleaguered Board - its members also conscious of what happened to those such
as Gribble who genuinely attempted to protect Aboriginal people under the law - did not act
beyond vindicating its officers, nor did it recommend that the Governor take further action.
For his part, Broome did not inform London about the nature of the Nullarbor material
placed in his hands. This may have been due to an oversight on his part; the statements of
Graham and Stevens were among the McGill documents put before him on 8 April 1889,
and he endorsed the Board's decision the same day.94 Given that both Graham's and
Stevens's statements were of considerable length, he may not have bothered to read them
thoroughly or at all. He had certainly read McGill's original letter, but it gave no hint that
allegations of murder would be raised as part of any replies. Nor, indeed, did any of the
subsequent comments by the investigating Board members. It had been six months since
the McGill letter had first been drawn to Broome's attention, with the delay being, as Fraser
put it, '... unavoidable owing to the infrequency of communication with the Eucla
district.'95 It could have been that Broome, also, was anxious to avoid unnecessary
Aboriginal-related problems in the wake of his Gribble experiences and his continuing
problems in the Kimberley. But Broome's other despatches on the subject of Aboriginal
affairs during his time in Western Australia do not show him as faint-hearted or lazy, and it
is at least likely that he would have done something more about the Graham and Stevens
allegations had he not been in such obvious haste to resolve the matter. In simply
forwarding those documents to him, however, without giving the slightest indication as to
their contents, it is quite possible that the Board effectively 'snowed' him to avoid drawing
down more attacks on its members by the pastoralist lobby. In other words, no lies were
told but neither was the whole truth, in the Board's findings and recommendations to the
governor, who in turn failed in his duty - at the very least - by not reading all the
documents thoroughly. This may have come about because Broome trusted Fraser; he was
apparently one of relatively few senior colonial officials with whom Broome had not
quarrelled, and with whom he enjoyed a good working relationship.96 Fraser, moreover,
would have been well aware of Broome's desire to clear up all unfinished business quickly.
The governor was intending to cut short his commission to enable him to appear before a
Select Committee in London in the same year, and Fraser was to be administrator during the
inter-regnum.97 At any rate, not only was McGill never prosecuted, he was seen later as a
fit person to be appointed a Justice of the Peace, with power to order imprisonment. In a
despatch to the Colonial Office in 1890, when self-government was imminent, Fraser
maintained that:

my endeavour will be to continue in the same course as the Government has
followed in the past, so far as my personal knowledge goes, and that is for
nearly twenty years back, which has been to carefully watch and guard the

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94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
97 Ibid, 336; Battye 1924, p. 299
aboriginal population against aggression, and there is evidence, I think, of this in every statute affecting the natives which has become law, and the Government has not failed to use every exertion in upholding the law.98

The Revd. J.B. Gribble had by then left Western Australia for good, but had he seen that statement, he might well have had cause to ponder what really constituted humbug under the law. So indeed might Graham father and son, Stevens, and not least the Mirning. These Aboriginal people had probably, after all, been rather more than decimated by McGill and were still on the receiving end from him and the Kennedys. The Mirning may not have known of Gribble, or of the expression 'humbug', but the situation for them had long involved their actual survival, and continued to confront them as (in the case of the man charged in 1896 under the Masters and Servants Act) they witnessed the execution of the law, in all its grandeur and solemnity, by Mr William Stuart McGill, JP.

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AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL DREAMING STORIES:
A CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY
OF PUBLISHED WORKS

Michael Organ

The following bibliography lists published works relating to Aboriginal stories which have been labelled by non-Aboriginal Australians with a variety of terms: myths or mythology, legends, fairy tales, superstitions, fables, traditions, stories, dreamtime stories, narratives or even ghost stories. Preference is now given to the use of the term 'dreaming stories'. For a discussion of the various definitions and classifications of such material by Australian anthropologists and ethnologists refer Hiatt 1975. Interpretation by local and overseas researchers and academics has not been addressed in detail within this bibliography as such a topic covers a vast field, but some such items have been included. The emphasis has remained on publications which contain collections of Aboriginal dreaming stories, though there are some exceptions to this rule, especially among the earlier references, for example, Tench 1789 and Collins 1798, where mere portions or retellings of such stories are to be found.

The following listing is by no means definitive, concentrating as it does on published collections or individual stories only. However an attempt has been made to include the major published reference works, along with a selection of journal articles. All the principal bibliographies of Aboriginal Australia have been consulted. Undoubtedly a large number of stories have been taken down in unpublished material and local newspapers, whilst within individual communities the storytelling tradition of course remains. In recent years a large collection of fiction based upon Aboriginal dreaming stories has appeared, for example, Patricia Wrightson's The Song of Wirrun trilogy. Material like this has in most cases not been included.

There has been some overlap in selecting items dealing with 'myths and legends' and discussions of Aboriginal religion, of which such stories formed an integral part. Some bibliographic references to Aboriginal songs and poetry (both Aboriginal and those derived from such stories) have also been included.

The listing is arranged chronologically, and alphabetically by surname within each year. For ease of reference, I have placed the year of publication at the end of each entry, and included pagination.

Acknowledgements

In the compilation of this bibliography I would especially like to acknowledge Jim Smith of Wentworth Falls for his recent work in this area with regards to stories of the east coast of New South Wales and the Blue Mountains.

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MUTUKA NYAKUNYTJA - SEEING A MOTORCAR

A PITJANTJATJARA TEXT

JACKY TJUPURULU WANGKANYTJA

Related by Jacky Tjupuru
Translated by Bill Edwards

Introductory notes by Bill Edwards
This story was related by Jacky Tjupuru, and recorded, at Amata community in the north-west of South Australia on Sunday, 12 August, 1973. He had previously told me part of the story and I took the opportunity to record it when visiting Amata from Fregon community, where I resided. The storyteller was a Pitjantjatjara man, born approximately 1907 in the Deering Hills, south of the Mann Ranges. The incidents described in the story took place when he was a young man, approximately 1930. He married and he and his wife had a son and three daughters. A classificatory son who was orphaned was also raised in the family. The family lived at Ernabella Mission in the eastern Musgrave Ranges following its establishment in 1937, the children attending the school. The eldest daughter became one of the first Pitjantjatjara school assistants. Jacky Tjupuru's wife and their eldest daughter died in the mid-1960s.

Jacky Tjupuru regularly visited his traditional homelands from Ernabella and became a guide to several patrol officers and researchers. He lived at Amata Community in the western Musgrave Ranges during the 1970s and spent some periods camping at Kanpi, on the southern side of the Mann Ranges, close to his birthplace. His last years, before his death in the mid-1980s, were spent at Ernabella and in the Hettie Perkins Hostel in Alice Springs. I met him soon after arriving at Ernabella in 1958, later accompanied him on several visits to traditional Pitjantjatjara sites and camped with him at Kanpi several times in his later years. As he is deceased, care must be taken in the use of his name, but his sons have given verbal permission for the use of the story. In recent years there has been some relaxation of the earlier Pitjantjatjara prohibition on referring to dead people. Pitjantjatjara people are expressing increasing interest in preserving oral histories and photographs.

The story provides several insights into the nature of culture contact in the far north-west of South Australia in the 1920s and 1930s. Most of the area referred to in the story was included in the North-West Aboriginal Reserve gazetted by the South Australian government in 1921. This forestalled further pastoral expansion and provided some protection for the Pitjantjatjara people from earlier incursions into their land by prospectors and adventurers. However, distance from police and Protection Board offices, limited oversight of the reserve. Pastoral blocks just outside the reserve were used as base camps by prospectors and 'doggers', white men who travelled into the Reserve with camels to trade.

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SEEING A MOTORCAR

with the Aboriginal people for dingo scalps. The government paid a bounty of seven shillings and sixpence on the scalps. Food, such as flour, tea and sugar was given to the Aborigines by the 'doggers' in return for the scalps. According to this story, Jacky Tjupuru had met one of these men, whom he identifies as Ted Colson, and with some of his relatives accompanied him on his return journey from Apara, a water spring, north-west of Amata to Moorilyana, a pastoral outpost, north-west of the site of Indulkana community. Colson's trade supplies were exhausted on the return journey and this led to an argument with two men who had scalps they wished to trade. The presence of Jacky and his kin obviously provided some protection for Colson from the wrath of the disappointed men.

Jacky Tjupuru at Mt Lindsay (Wartaru) in the mid-1960s. Courtesy Bill Edwards.

Edmund Albert (Ted) Colson (or Carlsen, 1881-1950) was born at Richmans Creek, near Quorn, South Australia, the eldest of the eight children of Peter Errick Colson (a farmer who had emigrated from Denmark) and his second wife, Ellen Amy, née Lines. In 1896 he sailed with his father to Western Australia where they pushed a wheelbarrow with their possessions to the Coolgardie goldfields. He married Alice Jane Horne at Kalgoorlie in 1904. They moved to Victoria in 1917, where he worked on the construction of the Maroondah Dam in the Dandenong Ranges. In 1926 he commenced a motor service between Healesville and Melbourne. In 1927 he moved to Oodnadatta in South Australia to work on the extension of the railway from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs. He ventured west on several occasions, in 1928 exploring west of the Goyder River and later, opening up the route through the Musgrave Ranges to Opparinna (Aparanya) Creek. In 1930 he was cameleer on Michael Terry's expeditions to the Petermann and Tomkinson ranges. On 28 December 1930, Terry at Day's Gully in the Mann Ranges, gave Colson food for two and a half
weeks for his return journey to Lambina or Moorilyana. Terry wrote: 'He is happy to follow slowly for he has several times been out here only with a myall. Nor has he any large load of tucker to incite the lawless blacks to take it from him.'\(^1\) In 1931 Colson leased Bloods Creek station at Abminga, north-west of Oodnadatta. He collected information on Aboriginal life and mythology and corresponded with Elkin and Tindale. On 17 November 1931 he wrote to Tindale; 'I have recently returned from the Everard and Musgrave Range country,' and on 6 March 1932; 'I will not be going out West again until May or June.'\(^2\)

In 1936 Colson and an Antakirinya man, Peter, undertook the first camel expedition across the Simpson Desert. His journal of that expedition is held in the Mortlock Library, Adelaide. There are no records of earlier journals which might have enabled me to find a reference to his journey with Jacky Tjupuru. I assume that it was one of Colson's westward expeditions approximately 1930. Colson later established the Colson Trading Co. at Finke in the Northern Territory.

Jacky Tjupuru and his kin came from land which they knew intimately. In their society status depended largely on this knowledge of the land, and of the resources, stories and rituals associated with it. Traditional learning revolved around such knowledge. Pitjantjatjara people took pride in the fact that they were *ninti*, or knowledgeable, of all things in their environment. Then they found strange people, species and objects introduced into this environment, things about which they had no knowledge. Reference is made in the story to the introduction of new foods, such as onions, which were thrown aside as rubbish because they were eaten raw and tasted bad. The learning of tracking skills was an integral part of education. A great amount of information could be obtained by reading the signs of tracks on the ground. With the introduction of horses, sheep and other new species, unfamiliar tracks appeared. Thus Jacky Tjupuru could not recognise sheep tracks and wondered if they were made by large echidnas. Once they mastered these new tracks they became more skilled in recognising these tracks and their significance than the whites who had introduced the new species. Reference is made in the story to the use of Aboriginal people as shepherds, an example of the widespread employment of the people in the pastoral industry in that era.

The story-teller's lively description of his first sighting of a motor vehicle is the central focus of the story. Motor vehicles are now an ever-present and central part of Pitjantjatjara life. The first vehicle owned by a Pitjantjatjara person in the region was a second-hand Land Rover purchased in 1961, by a man who was employed on a water drilling rig at Ernabella. He was given a small loan by a staff member to enable him to purchase the vehicle. As he was earning more than other workers he was able to repay the loan. By the end of the 1960s the number of privately owned vehicles had proliferated. Less than thirty years earlier the experience of a motor vehicle had brought a serious challenge to Tjupuru's view of the world. He had grown up in a world in which all phenomena shared in the legacy of the *Tjukurpa*, or Dreaming. *Kurunpa* or spirit, which had animated all living species, inhabited the land, rocks and other natural phenomena and people believed they could communicate with all things in their environment, as all things possessed *kurunpa*. This noisy apparition which came towards him like a moving rock had not come from the Dreaming. When, in fear, he sought to communicate with it, Tjupuru was told that it could not hear him and was not angry with him. The motor vehicle obviously had no *kurunpa*.

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1 Terry 1930, p.104.
2 Colson Papers, Anthropology Archives, SA Museum.
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Humans controlled it by technology rather than by ritual. His fear that he would fall from the vehicle has a sombre overtone in retrospect, in view of the number of Pitjantjatjara people killed in motor accidents in recent years. Added poignancy to the story relates to the fact that Ted Colson was killed in 1950 in a motor accident when driving a new Land Rover from Adelaide. The vehicle hit a power pole near Balaklava, approximately 100 kilometres north of Adelaide.

As in this story, reference is made in several oral histories to the practice in that era of sending messages or letters with Aboriginal people. Official mail services were provided to outlying pastoral settlements from centres such as Oodnadatta by contractors using camels. Beyond the limits of these services apparently it was commonplace to use Aboriginal people to convey letters to whites who were living or travelling further afield. In one story there is reference to a letter being given to a young man at an outstation between the present sites of Ernabella and Amata. The young man immediately burnt it. In another story there is reference to a letter being received at Ernabella when it was a pastoral lease. It stated that there was a white man starving in the Petermann Ranges. My informant, the late Billy Kulyuru, stated that as a boy, he accompanied a man of mixed European and Aboriginal descent, Gilpin Ward, and others, on a long journey to take food to the man. When they arrived in the area, the Aboriginal people said that they were too late. The man, Harold Lasseter, had died. The present story provides further evidence of this practice of sending letters with Aboriginal people.
A long time ago I was travelling from Aparanya with my grandmother and mother. I was bringing my friend, a whiteman, and also my grandmother, Tarijanukunu, Ivy, and my uncle, Ruringkukunu’s husband. This was before he married Ruringkukunu, when he was a young fellow. I camped at Alkarkarinynga and we two stayed at a big waterhole.

We two camped there. In the morning I gave some bread to my mother, a child and my grandmother Tarijanukunu. After the white man had eaten he came and I said: 'You two come slowly. We two are going to a distant place to camp, but you two come slowly. This camel has a big load. Perhaps we can’t mount it. It might buck.' Having said this to my grandmother, I went off, and she followed.

I was travelling to Marangakana and I gave her some onions in the evening, so that she could take them for supper. I just gave them to her without telling her to cook them in ashes. She tried them raw and shouted out: 'Hey, You gave me something bad.' She left them in a bag on the ground. She threw that food away as rubbish, without cooking and eating it.

We travelled on a long way and I saw two of my older brothers. I saw those two sons of Mintun and they were angry with the white man - not so much the younger one but his older brother was very angry - and they almost speared him in the ribs. I sent them off. They were angry because he couldn’t give them flour for their dingo scalps at Marangakana.
He was very frightened thinking, 'Perhaps they will spear and kill me,' and he said to me: 'What is this about?' I said: 'I don't know.' But I was lying. That man had been angry and nearly speared him in the side. He said to me: 'Get the camels quickly and get them moving.' He was frightened and mounted one quickly.

We came on foot and he got moving straightaway and we two were riding and going on the track to a place named Kulji. We were going along with no flour, or just a small amount, and with just rice and also porridge.

We camped on the track below Ngarinya in the evening.

We were drinking tea. He gave me a cup of tea, and having given me a little firewood said: 'Put the fire out.' I said: 'No. It's all finished with those two. My two older brothers have stopped talking.' Perhaps he thought they were following and was afraid of their spears. During the night a boobook owl made a noise. The white man was thinking, 'It might be them cursing me.' He extinguished the fire in case they saw the flame and came to spear him.

I said: 'No, that's not a man speaking. He is probably lying down. He was only talking like that because he was hungry and had no food.'
Kali munga winkili ila taimapira wantinytjatjanungku munga tjukutjukungka pinpatja ngalkuntjikitjangkuna walajunu kamula munu mapalku waqara mantjinu mai munguwa, mai ngalkula waqara mapalku mantjira karpirampala warpungkula Aliwanyuwanyukulta ma-pitjangi.

Aliwanyuwanyunya kantura pitjangu mina tjutinu, munu tii tjikintja wiya ngura nyara Uwalinyla wanu para-tjarpangu munu Tilunkitjangka tina ngalkunu, maa-pakaŋu Tilunkitjanguku, Tilunkitjanganu, Tilunkitjanguka maa-pakaŋu Ngarutjaraku para-ukalingu Anapalanya wiyała alatjikutu piriŋku anu apu-wanu, paluru ngulu, wati nyara kutjarangku nguwanpa wakanyangka ngulu anu


Ma-pakaŋula ngarira munga winki karpira ma-pakaŋu munu Tjaltinga, Tjaltinga tina ma-ngalkunu, Tjaltinga munkara, Tjaltinga wiyatu, Tjaltinga nyinanytja wiya ma-pitjangu. Munula Kinmula tjangaŋi Tjuwampila wanu-pitjangu.


We had tied up the camel nearby so early the next morning we untied it and let it loose while we had breakfast and as soon as we had eaten I followed it and brought it. After eating, following and catching it we loaded it quickly and went off to Erlywanyawanya.

Having reached Erlywanyawanya we got some water but without drinking tea we went on by way of Uwalinyi and went into Tilunkitja and ate dinner, and went off from Tilunkitja. We went on from Tilunkitja, having eaten there, and went down around Ngarutjaru but avoided Ernabella. We again followed the hills because he was afraid. Because those two men had almost speared him he travelled in fear.

And as we were doing this, what did we see? Mick’s father, my older brother was camping there. We arrived and put out some more dinner and tea and gave him some. After having a drink we went off again with some dingo scalps. We camped together at Kunaunpu. He (the white man) gave a small amount of flour in return for scalps in the evening and said: ‘The flour is finished, but I can give just a little.’

Having camped there we got up in the morning, loaded up and went off to Tjaltu and ate dinner at Tjaltu - just the other side of Tjaltu, not right at Tjaltu. We did not stay at Tjaltu but moved on and this side of Kenmore Park we went by way of Swamp Well.

We came to Kenmore Park in the evening and camped at Alkaritja. Then where did we go? We camped at Itiya (Echo Hill). We went past Itiya and camped the other side of Doctor’s Well, the other side of the dam, and it was very frosty in the evening.
Early next morning we loaded up and moved off and I saw footprints of sheep and I said: 'What this? What are these?' I tracked and followed them. I kept tracking and following, wondering what animals they were and thinking to track them to where they were lying down.

He said: 'Don't! They have hurried off a long way to their camp. You will see them clearly in camp later at Murulynga. They have gone off for food and a man is following them and he and his wife are following their tracks. I am not sure where they are. They could be a long way off, moving around eating.'

We went there and Tommy said: 'Come here and see them. Come, and see them standing around in the camp.' I saw them clearly and said: 'What are these like? They are like echidnas. Are they the same as echidnas? No, echidnas are small but these are tall. They are big animals.' I looked and looked at them and camped there and talked about them.

After this had happened we camped and in the morning we ate breakfast and were sitting there, and another white man came and said: 'You take these two camels out for food, to green grass. The nannygoats and sheep have eaten it here and finished it. Take them to some food and later on hobble them in case perhaps a wild camel will frighten and follow them, and they will come back to where there is no feed. But you look after them and later on leave them tied up after you give them water.'

I heard him say that he was going to a place, Indulkana, where there was a house, and to look after them at Mingkutjanu Well, and we were looking after them there.


Having camped there three nights while looking after them I was lying there and heard something. I was thinking it might be a camel growling angrily. Perhaps another camel is biting it - ur, ur, ur, ur - I was thinking it was a camel growling. This thing came closer, this rock-like thing. 'What is it? It is a rock. It will crush us.' I hid behind a tree. I was hiding beside a tree because I was unable to hide right behind it. This thing was brought around close and was stopped and I was standing hiding and looking from the tree and as I was watching like that they stopped it there.
It was the white man who was with us the other day arriving. Who was he? Teddy Colson. He came and said: 'Don't worry. This is a very good motor car. Don't be scared. It is really good.' They were touching it knowingly. Who was it? Winitja. And I was ignorant. Tommy also knew about it but I looked at it in ignorance.

He said: 'Don't worry, this thing is not angry. This is a dish that you climb into and move about. The white-fellow makes this thing go but the man does not just talk to it. Talk to it and it does not talk back. It just stays there without talking.'

He said to me: 'Yes, all climb in and let's go.' I climbed up slowly. He said: 'Hurry up man. Get in and we will go. We will go straightaway to hunt for meat.' Winitja said this to me and we climbed in straightaway and we were sitting there and I was clinging on to him. He said: 'This thing is not angry. You are frightened because of ignorance.'

He took us away and I was ignorantly thinking that we were still sitting at the camp, but I saw the camp moving away in the distance. It was as if we were sitting there making a noise. But it went off quickly, and I said: 'We have gone a long way in this. Don't let it throw me out.' He said: 'You won't fall from this. We are sitting down low here.' I talked ignorantly like this: 'No. Talk to it so that this motor car will move slowly. Talk to the motor car and it will go slowly.'
And he said: "No. This thing can't hear you. We can't speak to it. It does not go around by itself. This man makes it move around. This white man takes it around quickly but this thing can't just go on its own.' He said this to me and I thought: 'No. This thing just goes, and a man gets in and immediately it goes off with us.'

We stopped it and were shooting rabbits. He jumped down on his own while the engine was running but I couldn't jump off to go for rabbits. He knew all about it and went off but I stayed back. I was thinking: 'I will fall down.' I was completely ignorant about it, not even a bit knowledgeable. I was really ignorant. I had not been near them before, only near camels and horses.

They brought letters on foot. They would come a long way on foot with letters to Murulynga from Indulkana and Wanytjapila. Two men would bring food also which had been sent, and we would receive it and take it to Murulynga. The man with camels would say to us: 'Take this to the other camel-man.'

We would bring it this way and after following and following him, would arrive with the food, having eaten dinner on the way. Having waited for us he would give us some bread and we would eat and after he had written a letter he would send us back again.
SEEING A MOTORCAR

Kala piruku malakungku katipai, munula piruku nyangatja katipai wati panya palulakutu panya nghanmanyiju lita ungkul'iyantjalakutu. Kañi mai nyangangku ulu purita tinaku ungu kaña maitjarangku katipai piruku wati kutjupaku malaku nyinanyangka nyarakutu Anapalalakutu. Ka nyanganguru mai pulka ungkul'iyalpai ruuta nyangangka.

We would take it back again and we would take it back to the man who had first given us a letter. He gave me flour and bread for dinner and I would again take flour to another man who was living back at Ermabella. He would send a lot of food from there on this road.


We would camp out with the food and after camping out again nearby we would arrive there with all the food. We didn't have camels - we would go on foot. Having carried it from Wanytjapila for Murulyna we handed it over at Indulkana. Two children brought it this way from Indulkana and brought it to me, and I took it on and delivered it at Murulynga to the camel-man.


Some children from the east were living with those men at Indulkana. They would take things on foot, not on camels, and move quickly on the road. This is how it was with us and with me. I have finished talking.

Acknowledgments: Staff members of the Mortlock Library, (State Library of South Australia), Anthropology Department of the SA Museum and Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (SA Branch) Inc., for access to their collections of Colson Papers; the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (SA Branch) for permission to use the photograph of Ted Colson; Professor Colin Horne for access to his collection of Colson papers; Bill Watt (Geographical Names Board, SA) for locality map.

LIST OF REFERENCES


Between Two Worlds: The Commonwealth government and the removal of Aboriginal children of part-descent in the Northern Territory is a touring exhibition prepared by the Australian Archives in 1993, as part of the Commonwealth government's celebration of the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples. Between Two Worlds looks at two Northern Territory 'Half-caste' institutions run by the Commonwealth government: the Bungalow in Alice Springs and the Kahlin Home in Darwin, which both operated between 1913 and the 1940s. Using oral histories, photographs and documents drawn mainly from the Australian Archives' collection, the exhibition explores the experiences of the children who were placed in these institutions and follows the development of the government policy which shaped their lives. This article will describe the process involved in developing and staging Between Two Worlds, and consider some of the responses it has received since its Australia-wide tour commenced in Sydney in October 1993.

The Australian Archives is the Commonwealth government organisation responsible for preserving the archival records of all Commonwealth government agencies. In 1993, a Public Programs Branch was established to co-ordinate publications and exhibitions activity within the Archives as a means of raising its public profile and improving accessibility to the records in its custody. Apart from the Between Two Worlds exhibition, the Branch is responsible for a program of exhibitions in Kings Hall at Old Parliament House in Canberra. It also publishes guides to records held by Australian Archives, as well as cards, posters and postcards based on Australian Archives material. Two recent guides are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Commonwealth Records: A Guide to Records in the Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office compiled by Ros Fraser1 and 'My Heart is Breaking': A Joint Guide to Records about Aboriginal People in the Public Record Office of Victoria and the Australian Archives.2

Between Two Worlds had its genesis in a decision by the Commonwealth Government that Australian Archives should prepare a national travelling exhibition of its records relating to Indigenous Australians, to mark the International Year of the World's Indigenous People (IYWIP) in 1993. Helen Nosworthy, now the National Director of Public Programs at Australian Archives, was responsible for managing the exhibition project, and drew together the team which helped her bring the idea to fruition. As exhibition curator, I was responsible for developing the original concept, researching the subject, writing the exhibition text and selecting the exhibits, all with the help of Dr Peter Read of the ANU History Department, who acted as our expert curatorial adviser. Hewitt

Rowena MacDonald is the Exhibitions Curator at the Australian Archives.

1 Fraser 1993.
2 Australian Archives 1993.
Design Associates designed the exhibition, and other Australian Archives staff provided assistance with research, reprography and conservation work.

The objectives of the exhibition were threefold:

- to support the United Nations and Commonwealth government objectives for IYWIP, in particular the aim of furthering the process of reconciliation within Australia;
- to give insight into the impact of Commonwealth government administrations on Aboriginal Australians; and
- to give Aboriginal Australians a better understanding of what records about them and their people are likely to be held by Australian Archives or Commonwealth departments.

Given the vast range of Commonwealth records which relate to Aboriginal Australians held by the Archives, choosing the subject of the exhibition was a formidable task. We decided that this, the Archives' first major travelling exhibition, should be relevant, stimulating and challenging, and look not only at the development of Commonwealth policy, but at the impact of that policy on the daily lives of real people.

The Commonwealth government did not assume responsibility for Aboriginal affairs until 1967. Most government records relating to the daily lives of Aboriginal people before that time were generated by the states and are therefore held in state government archives. Generally, pre-1967 records about Indigenous Australians in the custody of Australian Archives relate more to Commonwealth policy development than day to day administration, where the stories of individual people and particular events are more likely to emerge. One of the exceptions to this rule is the Archives' collection of records relating to the Northern Territory, which was directly administered by the Commonwealth government from 1911 to 1978. (The other notable exception is the collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century records held in the Victorian Office of the Archives, which were inherited from the State government of Victoria when Aboriginal affairs became a Commonwealth government responsibility.) Peter Read, who had used records held by the Australian Archives during previous research projects, suggested that the story of the government-run 'Half-caste' institutions documented in these Northern Territory records might form the basis of a stimulating exhibition. Throughout the exhibition development process which saw his original idea eventually realised as Between Two Worlds, Dr Read provided guidance, encouragement and invaluable expert advice.

The need to consult with Aboriginal Australians about the preparation of the exhibition was recognised from the inception of the project, and was emphasised by the Cabinet when deciding that the exhibition should form part of the government's IYWIP program. This consultation process was taken very seriously by the exhibition team, which was faced with the question - with whom should we consult, and how should we do it? A number of constraints limited the options open to us. The Australian Archives has no permanently established mechanism through which Indigenous Australians could be consulted. In order to be launched within the International Year, the exhibition had to be brought to completion within only nine months, a relatively short period which would not allow time for widespread consultation. Helen Nosworthy sought advice on developing a consultation strategy from staff at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the Aboriginal Reconciliation Unit of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the National Museum of Australia. She also discussed the project with an Australian Archives Aboriginal staff member. The approach eventually adopted was to establish a small group of representatives of Aboriginal people, who advised the exhibition team throughout the development of the exhibition.
BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Once the subject of the exhibition had been determined, deciding on the appropriate membership of the Reference Group, as it became known, was made a little easier. Helen Nosworthy approached a range of people who have some involvement in the issue of removal, particularly in the Northern Territory. Those who generously agreed to assist were Colleen Starkis from Australian Archives; Brian White from the Central Australian Aboriginal Child Care Agency in Alice Springs; Barbara Cummings, the President of KARU (the Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agency in Darwin) and author of Take This Child; Colleen Burns, also from KARU; and Bob Randall, the Aboriginal Cultural Adviser at the Education Resource Centre, Queanbeyan and a former resident of the Bungalow. Assistance in developing particular aspects of the exhibition was also provided by Carol Kendall from Link-Up (NSW) and Gordon Briscoe, a historian and former resident of the Bungalow.

The assistance of the Reference Group proved vital to the development of Between Two Worlds. The members not only provided advice on all aspects of the exhibition, including its content and design, but also provided an avenue for wider consultation about specific aspects of the exhibition’s content. In this capacity, Brian White, Barbara Cummings and Colleen Burns put us in touch with six former residents of Kahlin and the Bungalow who generously agreed to share their stories. They were George Bray, Alec Kruger, Herbie Laughton, Emily Liddle, Hilda Muir and Daisy Ruddick. All members of the Reference Group from outside Australian Archives, and all the former residents of the homes who spoke to us were recompensed for the time they spent contributing to the development of the exhibition.

With our Reference Group scattered across the country between Sydney, Canberra, Alice Springs and Darwin, the logistics of consultation were complex. Telephone calls were frequent, but it was the face to face meetings which generally proved to be the most effective form of consultation. Helen and I travelled to Alice Springs and Darwin twice during the development phase, an experience which we found both productive and personally rewarding. On our first visit we met with Brian White in Alice Springs, who introduced us to Alec Kruger, and Herbie and Alan Laughton. Helen and I had come to the meeting with a rough agenda of issues we hoped to address, but after a short while the agenda was discarded and we found ourselves sitting on the floor of the ACCA office, absorbed by the stories of life in the institutions that Alec, Herbie and Alan were telling. Our meeting a few days later in Darwin with Colleen Burns, Barbara Cummings, Daisy Ruddick and Hilda Muir was similarly successful. We spoke only briefly about our plans for the exhibition, and spent most of our time listening to the women talk about their own experiences as removed children. These initial meetings proved vital in establishing a rapport with the Aboriginal people who would contribute so much to the eventual success of the exhibition.

It was on our second trip to the Territory several months later that we discussed the content of the exhibition in more detail. We had given members of the Reference Group copies of the draft text, and although they had little to say about specific matters of wording or interpretation, they were generally happy with the proposed content. We showed them copies of all the photographs we were considering using and sought permission from relevant family members to use several letters written by former residents or their parents. We also received guidance on the matter of naming and displaying photographs of people who have died. I spoke to each of the former residents at greater

3 Cummings 1990.
length about their experiences and borrowed photographs from them for use in the exhibition.

The terminology used in the exhibition text was determined on the advice of our Reference Group. During our second visit to the Territory we discussed the range of terms which might be used in reference to Aboriginal people, and established a set of preferred terms which were used consistently throughout the exhibition and all associated publicity material. They all agreed that the terms 'Half-caste' and 'mixed blood' were not acceptable, and preferred 'Aboriginals' to 'Aborigines', and 'Aboriginals of part-descent' to 'Aboriginals of mixed-descent'. The proposed title was also the subject of discussion. Some concern was expressed that the title 'Between Two Worlds' might imply that Aboriginals of part-descent were neither Black nor White, and therefore had no distinct culture or rights of their own. In the end, however, the former residents of the institutions strongly endorsed it, arguing that it aptly summed up their situation as children, torn from their Aboriginal families, yet never really accepted by White society.


Australian Archives.
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While we received a warm reception in Alice Springs from the Aboriginal community, the response from other locals was not so welcoming. The Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory is responsible for administering the Old Telegraph Station in Alice Springs which is now operated as an historic site, and was home to the Bungalow 'Half-caste' Institution between 1932 and 1942. During a visit to the Conservation Commission offices to view some photographs of the Bungalow which were eventually used in the exhibition, I met with several Commission staff who expressed concern about the way in which the Old Telegraph Station site would be represented in our exhibition. They feared that to focus on this aspect of the site's history might jeopardise the image which the Commission had been promoting for the site, which emphasises its role as a telegraph station. This encounter brought home to me just how sensitive the issue of removal is for those who live closely with its legacy, especially in the midst of post-Mabo tensions.

The majority of the photographs and documents included in the exhibition are drawn from the collection of Australian Archives. Researching and selecting the material for display was a time consuming but fascinating task. The development of the government's policy of removal is well documented in the files of the Department of the Interior held in the Archives' National Office in Canberra. These files also include correspondence about the establishment of the government's 'Half-caste' homes and official reports from government visitors. The process of researching the vast amount of relevant material was made considerably easier through the use of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Commonwealth Records: A Guide to Records in the Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office*, compiled by Ros Fraser and published by Australian Archives. Our Northern Territory office was a fruitful source of records documenting the day-to-day administration of the Homes. The unpublished 'Guide to Records in the Northern Territory Regional Office', also compiled by Ros Fraser and available for reference in Australian Archives search rooms, was also enormously useful in this research.

Additional material for display, mainly in the form of photographs, was provided by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory, the Museum of Victoria, the National Library of Australia, the Northern Territory Archives Service and the State Library of the Northern Territory.

As we researched the archival records it quickly became clear that the views of the Aboriginal people who were subject to the government's policies were unlikely to be found amongst the official files. With the exception of several letters from residents of the Homes or parents seeking access to their removed children, two of which are included in the exhibition, the government files almost exclusively document the dominant White view of the story. We decided that the best way to interpret the experiences of those Aboriginal people affected by the government's policy was to include oral history recordings and music, through which they could tell their own versions of the story. Existing oral history recordings of each of the former residents who had agreed to share their stories were lent by the Institute for Aboriginal Development, the Oral History unit of the Northern Territory Archives and Associate Professor Tony Austin from Northern Territory University. These recordings were edited to form the basis of three sound stations, at which visitors can select from several short excerpts. They were also incorporated into the six minute audio-visual presentation, which summarises the exhibition's story through a powerful collage of music, oral histories, photographs and moving footage.

It was through the words of George Bray, Alec Kruger, Herbie Laughton, Emily Liddle, Hilda Muir and Daisy Ruddick that we were able to explore the human impact of the government policy documented in the archival records. Where the documents
encapsulate the views of White officialdom, the words and songs of the former residents reflect some of the responses of those affected by the official policies. Where the government letters and reports state with sometimes shocking frankness the justification for the policy of removal, the oral histories reveal its shattering impact on the lives of individual Aboriginal people. Through their generous participation in the development of *Between Two Worlds*, George, Alec, Herbie, Emily, Hilda and Daisy gave it an added dimension which helps bring home the very real effects of past government activities on the lives of Aboriginal people today.

One of the basic principles of archival practice is that the archivist's role is not to interpret the records in their care, only to make them available for others to interpret. In an organisation with only a short history of presenting exhibitions, this was an attitude we often encountered from our professional colleagues. Those in the museum profession who have been presenting exhibitions for many years have long recognised that interpretation is not only an unavoidable element of exhibition development, but it is also an essential one if the exhibition is to engage, challenge or stimulate its audience. Decisions about which aspects of the story of removal to tell and which to leave out, which points of view to incorporate and which to ignore, how to present the chosen themes both visually and verbally, all formed part of the interpretive approach consciously developed by the exhibition team.

As one of the main objectives set for the exhibition was to contribute to the process of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, our interpretative approach was to attempt a balanced view of the subject which would be accessible to as wide an audience as possible. Our aim was not to condemn those responsible for the removal of Aboriginal children, but to explain how and why a practice which today seems so brutal, could once have been acceptable to a majority of Australians. We also aimed to explore the impact of the policy of removal on the lives of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, and consider some of their past and present responses to it. Some of those who share their stories in the exhibition remember fondly the camaraderie of life in the homes. Others, who hold much harsher memories of childhood, are still very bitter about losing contact with their families and their culture. The whole issue of the removal and institutionalisation of Aboriginal children is a very complex one with far reaching implications. It is this complexity which we have attempted to interpret, albeit briefly, in *Between Two Worlds*.

In the context of this interpretative approach, drafting the text was a challenging task. Attempting to tell an extensive story and communicate complex ideas in simple terms proved difficult. Using my research of secondary sources and archival documents, I drafted text for most of the story's fifteen panels. Peter Read also contributed draft text for several themes which required further research, and checked the accuracy of my text. All text was re-drafted many times, incorporating the comments of our Reference Group, until we were satisfied with its style and accuracy.

While work on the exhibition's content proceeded, Hewitt Design Associates designed its layout and graphic style. We were determined from the outset to avoid the visual clichés which sometimes characterise designs relating to Aboriginal themes, and to reject the appropriation of Aboriginal graphic motifs. Tom Hewitt and his staff developed a striking design, based on triangular modules made of metal towers and linked by calico panels. As well as being light and easy to pack for travelling, the modules could be rearranged to suit the unique requirements of each venue. The chronological story line of the exhibition, told through a combination of text, photographs, documents and oral history recordings, is unfolded over eight of these modules. At the core of this flexible structure is a triangular
space with a tent-like ceiling, which accommodates television monitors. Here the six-minute audio-visual, produced by Pritchard Productions, plays continuously, encapsulating the story of the exhibition.

On 20 October 1993, after over nine months of work, the day had finally come for the exhibition to be opened to the public at the Australian Museum in Sydney. The opening was attended by several hundred people, including George Bray, Alec Kruger, Herbie Laughton, Emily Liddle, Hilda Muir, Daisy Ruddick and Barbara Cummings, who had been flown down to Sydney by Australian Archives especially for the occasion. Charles Perkins, himself a former resident of the Bungalow in Alice Springs, officially opened the exhibition after Herbie Laughton gave a stirring rendition of his song 'Old Bungalow Days'. Media interest in the event was strong, and the former residents spent much of the opening posing for photographs and being interviewed. For me the highlight of the event came after all the guests had left, when I sat in the Museum foyer recuperating with Herbie Laughton and Alec Kruger. When I asked Mr Laughton what he thought of the opening, his reply was moving: 'I used to think that we were unwanted, that nobody cared about us, but now I see there's all these people who care. It makes life worth living.'

Overall, the response to Between Two Worlds has been extremely positive. In order to assess whether the objectives set for the exhibition had been achieved, we appointed a market research firm to undertake evaluation of Between Two Worlds during its Sydney season. Several weeks of visitor observation and interviews revealed that ninety per cent of visitors surveyed were impressed with the exhibition and about eighty per cent said that they had learnt something new about the history of Aboriginal Australians.

These findings are supported by comments entered into the visitors book during the exhibition's season at the Araluen Centre in Alice Springs in May 1994. Comments include:

- Presentation is excellent. The best part is the Aboriginal contributors who share their stories - THE TRUTH. Thank you, as it helps me and others to deal with the pain in a positive way.
- A must-see for all Australians, indeed all people. Our own 'holocaust' in a sense. Maybe a bridge, or part of, for reconciliation.
- A real eye-opener!
- Excellent. Shocking without being too maudlin, or too goody goody.
- An extremely disturbing experience.
- Wonderful exhibition! The information is presented in a very easy to grasp way, especially considering the amount of information and the emotionally charged subject. I am happy to have seen the exhibit and will continue to think about its contents for a long while.

The exhibition has so far travelled to the Australian Museum in Sydney, Parliament House in Canberra, the Araluen Centre in Alice Springs, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin, and the Tandanya Centre in Adelaide. In October 1994 it opens at the Western Australian Museum in Perth, before travelling to the Museum's outpost at Queens Park Theatre, Geraldton in January 1995. In May 1995 it travels to the Dubbo Regional Gallery in New South Wales, and completes its tour at the Museum of Victoria in Melbourne from July 1995. Assistance in funding the tour has been provided through the federal government's Visions of Australia program for touring exhibitions.

It is conservatively estimated that after its first three venues Between Two Worlds had been seen by over one hundred thousand visitors. By the end of its two-year tour, this figure is likely to have at least doubled. A companion publication, containing the exhibition text, a selection of the exhibits and a number of introductory essays, is to be
published in 1995. It is hoped that through this publication, the story of *Between Two Worlds* will be made available in a permanent form to a wide audience currently beyond the reach of the exhibition.

For Australian Archives, the development of *Between Two Worlds* was a new experience, but one which has proved surprisingly fruitful. Not only has the profile of the Archives been raised, at least amongst the museum-going public, but the organisation's relationship with Aboriginal communities has been strengthened and enriched through the active involvement of Aboriginal Australians in the exhibition's development. The months of research, consultation, writing, planning and organising involved in bringing the project to fruition have paid off in the continuing success of its nation wide tour.

**LIST OF REFERENCES**


BOOK REVIEWS


In this, the second edition of a monograph first published in 1983, the original text is unaltered except for minor corrections, but Diane Bell has added a short foreword and a 27-page epilogue. I reviewed the original text in _Aboriginal History_ (vol. 8) and stand by what I wrote then:- 'Her book ... represents a major contribution to our knowledge of past and present Aboriginal societies and demonstrates the significance of women in every aspect of community existence.' Since its publication a number of women have engaged in research into various aspects of the lives of Aboriginal women and have written MA or PhD theses of considerable importance. They have produced articles in books and journals, but no monographs. An outstanding collection about South Australian Aboriginal women edited by Peggy Brock was published in 1989 under the title _Women, rites and sites: Aboriginal women's cultural knowledge._

In her foreword to the new edition Bell explains that she had decided not to alter the original text (except for minor corrections) because this had historical relevance in reflecting some of the values of the early 1980s both in anthropology and in her own development. In her epilogue she describes some of the changes in anthropological theory particularly where the study of women's society is concerned. Much of the epilogue is a discussion of the development during the last ten years of feminist anthropological theory, a discussion which would be helpful for any woman embarking on fieldwork today.

LIST OF REFERENCES


Isobel White
Australian National University


_Living Aboriginal History of Victoria_ publishes personal experiences and recollections of some 57 members of the Victorian Aboriginal community, and as such it is the first major publication of its kind in Victoria, and complements the handful of booklets that have been produced by the Aboriginal History Programme from 1983 until 1988. Accessing Victorian Aboriginal experiences has never been easy in Victoria. Information has had to be gleaned from published histories, general ethnographic compilations, government enquiries and Aboriginal testimonies at coronial inquests.
A major difficulty the managers of this project were always going to have was determining subject and content: which members of the community would be included and what aspects of their personal interviews would be excluded from the text. Obviously a wealth of detail has had to be excluded, and many interviewees were omitted. Perhaps the solution is to hope that further publications may result from this project. Another difficulty with the publication is that we are only given fragments of the interviews held with each person, consequently we only gain glimpses of people, and we are not presented with the richness of detail that would have accompanied a volume that contained fewer entries with greater detail.

Despite these limitations I found the Victorian people selected confirmed the dynamic nature of contemporary Aboriginal culture as it is experienced in Victoria. The personal narratives are complemented by a large collection of historic and contemporary photographs and there is no doubt the book has become an important community resource since its publication. This is ensured by the fact that members have been selected from every major community in Victoria and by the fact that the selection includes community members who are prominent in community service, the arts, politics, education, and administration. The publication also achieves an admirable age and gender balance.

The entries in *Living Aboriginal History of Victoria* are varied and wide and this is one of the book’s strengths as it means that it is a mine of information. The communities at Cummeragunga, Ebenezer, Framlingham, Lake Condah, and Lake Tyers are represented. The book successfully demonstrates how contemporary Victorian Aboriginal people are continuing to practice ‘traditional’ arts and crafts such as basket weaving, emu egg carving, boomerang making and throwing, medicinal uses of plants, hunting and gathering of native animals and plants. Through the entries we gain personal insights into what it means to be a Koori in Victoria in the 1990s; we learn about the impact of government policies, such as assimilation and child removal and adoption, and we learn about the social conditions that Victorian Aboriginal people have lived through.

On a personal note, the last person in the book is the late Willy Alberts. I had the pleasure of working with Willy Alberts at the Brambuk Living Cultural Centre. By turning to his recollections on page 200, I am able to recall many good times and shared experiences. This ability to access people’s thoughts and memories and their opinions and values is this book’s major strength.

**LIST OF REFERENCES**


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Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
BOOK REVIEWS


As its title indicates this book is a practical guide to visiting rock engraving sites in the Sydney region. Its format, slim, light and very readable is clearly designed towards ease of use in the field by anyone with an interest in seeing Aboriginal art in its natural setting.

The main body of the book consists of brief descriptions of 23 selected rock art sites which are of reasonably easy access from a public road. A rather sketchy map delimits the region concerned and locates the sites. Each site description refers the reader to its principal features and points of interest, its preservation, visibility and to further reading and, importantly, to the natural setting of the site. A one-to-five star ranking system alerts the visitor to quality in terms of a site's interest, particularly its condition of preservation, visibility or setting. There are small scale site plans intended as an aid in locating and identifying the engravings rather than as formal site records. These are particularly valuable for visitors not familiar with such material - a foreign art style with the added problem of low visibility can be very difficult to perceive until some familiarity is achieved - and even then it is easy to overlook poorly preserved images, or to distinguish between worn engraving or natural rock features. Over 70 black and white photographs and 16 colour plates further introduce the visitor to the visual experiences of site, setting and engraved motifs.

I have not had the opportunity to test the directions to the rock art - but they appear clear and are provided by two authors fully familiar with the sites. The authors provide comment on ease of walking as well as distance. The majority of the 23 sites are managed for visitation by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW, or are now in urban surroundings where visiting cannot be controlled. For a few sites that are not managed or are on private property detailed directions are not given, and the reader is referred to National Parks for information on access.

A first chapter introduces the reader in clear straightforward language to some basic archaeological knowledge about Aboriginal rock art and about the visibility of rock art in different light conditions etc. The fragility of what appears a timeless heritage on solid rock is dealt with, and the authors place great emphasis on the need for responsible practice on site visits and appropriate ways to approach and photograph the sites.

The book is more, however, than a simple practical guide. The authors stress not only the practicalities of finding and seeing engravings but they emphasise the importance of the experience of seeing Aboriginal art. They direct the reader to the features of its setting, the sight and sounds of the bush. They enjoin the reader to take time to sit and absorb their surroundings: 'Try to imagine the Aborigines living in the landscape ... Imagine a small group of the first Australians on the rock. Then, and only then, turn your attention to the engravings again ...' (p. 13). The importance of such an experiential response is further underlined by the inclusion of the poems of David Campbell, inspired by his love for the Sydney bush and its Aboriginal heritage. While each one of us would surely express our intuitions differently, the emphasis on the individuality of our experiences and its colouring of the rationale of intellectual understandings are emphasised by the juxtaposition of poetry with academic presentation. The work underscores the transient nature of the cultural meanings of imagery and its power to transcend the distance of time to link us in the present with a sensed but unknowable past.

Andrée Rosenfeld
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One possible destination of a recorded historical interview with an Aboriginal person is the Oral History Unit of the National Library of Australia. Here the recording will be digitally remastered for the Tape Archive. If the interview has been commissioned by the Unit, a copy will go to a professional transcriber for a verbatim transcription which will then be sent to the interviewee for checking. The auditing copy, available (after permission) to the historian, descendant or friend will be made available in the listening room. The casual auditor is more likely to use the transcription.

Another possible destination of the original recording - depending on who has recorded the interview - will be the community office of the suburb, station or settlement where the recording was made. The literacy worker may make extracts for use in the school, the tape may be played from time to the family until the speaker dies, whereupon it may be heard no more. If the recording was made in the city, the tape probably will join the gathering list of community resource material for adult education, school use and the general interest of community and family.

Between the historian and the family are hundreds of thousands of Australians wanting to hear the experiences of Aboriginal Australia. These two fine books, the latest productions of the Institute for Aboriginal Development's busy publishing team, utilise two of the many forms which are available for the presentation of oral history, which now range from commercial cassette to the CD Rom, from verbatim transcription to a free translation. The presentation of the Kochs is new and experimental while Lester's is an older and more familiar form. Both books deal, more or less, with Central Australia. Grace and Harold Koch's Kaytetye Country starts from great-grandparent memories and finishes with droving and mining. Yami Lester's book starts with droving and mining and finishes with the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests and the Uluru Handback.

A previous IAD oral history publication was Peter and Jay Read's Long Time Olden Time: Aboriginal Views of Northern Territory History. This project, recorded in 1975-6, was eventually published in 1992 in cassette and book form, sold together or separately. The Reads, (that is, Jay Read and I) began with the assumption that Northern Territory Aboriginal English was sufficiently understandable for readers not to need a Standard English rendition. The Kochs decided that a Standard English version would enhance understanding, while the costs of production of cassettes (especially the cassette holder and the cardboard information insert) made the IAD reluctant to risk a second venture of a cassette/book package. Therefore this production is a book alone. The reviewer is too familiar with 'pastoral' Aboriginal English to adjudicate the necessity of the Standard English version here; but he always wondered what one would look like. Now we all know, and the result will be invaluable for teachers of linguistic as well as historical skills. Other stories in the book were told, and reproduced here, in Katyetye. These Harold Koch has translated by numbered sentences.

The Standard English version will leave readers able to understand the stories more readily, but they will also appreciate the nuances and subtleties of Aboriginal non-standard English. Koch's translations are always informative, but inevitably lack the directness of the original. On one occasion 'Poor buggers' disappears from the Standard English version.
BOOK REVIEWS

(probably this was an oversight). 'Nothing for - no happen that one' becomes 'That didn't happen' which will remind readers of the difficult transition from the spoken form to a written form in any language. Sometimes Harold Koch's rendition adds an explanatory note:

All them white fellers they don't got nice little lady
becomes
these whitefellers didn't have a nice little lady to do their work for them
Sometimes a shade of meaning is lost in the transition: 'nickie-nickie tobacco', with its connotations of inferior quality, is rendered merely as 'tobacco'. Though the meaning is less clear, one can admire the original cadences of

And he go around again, that old feller, he took-me-bout. Go back longa
Thankwe.

compared to

He was going along another time he told me, going back to Thankwe.

In the following, two different meanings of 'turnout' (rig, team/argument) are mixed together:

And something bin going wrong with this girl turnout now is rendered by
Harold Koch as

Then something went wrong and there was a bit of a turnout over women.

The text is printed in double columns, which is fine for the shorter stories, but the greater length of the Aboriginal English forces the texts of the longer stories one or two pages apart. It might have been better to insert spaces at intervals in the Standard English text to let the Aboriginal Non-standard catch up. The double column footnoting seems to have been too much for the IAD's software system, for some notes appear on different pages to their numbers, and sometimes do not appear at all.

The breadth of the stories is impressive, as is the gender balance (the Reads' book is somewhat deficient in both). Grace Koch has collated the material as three major sections: 'The Dreamtime' (for example, Arelpe - the Moon), 'Stories Our Ancestors Told Us' (for example, the Barrow Creek Massacre of 1874) and 'Our Own Stories' (for example, Birth in the Bush). There are useful historical notes, and the book is both a careful and valuable local history. I hope that it will be used nationally by teachers and students of oral, local, and Aboriginal histories as well as those interested in Australian dialects.

Yami Lester was born to a White father and an Aboriginal mother. His first language was Yankunytjatjara. He is blind (possibly the loss of sight was caused by atomic testing) and it is not clear how the book was written. The anthropologist Dan Vachon is thanked for 'helping Yami write down his story', but there is no indication of what form that help took. The text is chatty but tied to historical events. This is a representative sample:

There was another important thing happening in the early 1970s, when I was at IAD. I had heard about these people called the Gurindji, and how in August 1966 they walked off Wave Hill Station and went to Wattie Creek. I know there were other times when Aboriginal people in places like Western Australia had walked off the stations before that. But I think that the beginning of what everybody started calling 'Land Rights' happened with the Gurindji.

Lester's story is in a sense a continuation of the Central Australian Aboriginal experience from the 1940s to the present. Lester was different from the others: 'I lost my sight and my life changed for ever. If I had my eyes, I would probably still be a stockman. Because I haven't, I became a stirrer.' No doubt he was right. Charles Perkins said something similar: 'If I hadn't played soccer I wouldn't have gone to university. Simple as
that. Because Lester was different, he spent a number of years at the Royal Institute for the Blind in Adelaide, learnt how to read Braille and how to make brooms. He began courtroom interpreting before a magistrate in 1967, and joined the Adelaide Branch of the Aboriginal Advancement League. In 1969 Rev. Jim Downing invited him to Alice Springs to work for the Institute For Aboriginal Development. A few years later he returned to South Australia as Manager of the newly created Mimili Station (the old Everard Park) now under Aboriginal control, where he had worked as a drover twenty years before. A couple of years later he returned to the IAD as Director, and began a series of cross-cultural workshops for non-Aborigines.

Today Yami Lester is not opposed to all mining, nor to non-Aboriginal advisers. He's been to London with the Royal Commission, he's sat down with Land Councils, he's negotiated with BHP. He co-ordinated the celebrations following the Uluru handback. He still works for various Aboriginal organisations and he's shaken hands with Nelson Mandela. Yami Lester looks outward, the Kochs' Kaytetye people look inwards. Similar experiences might have awaited Kaytetye individuals, had they, like Perkins and Lester, been different. How much Aboriginal talent has never been seen by White people! How much leadership, linguistic skill, intellectual endeavour, spirituality - and fun - have been re-directed into and around the Kaytetye, Pitjantjatjara, Arrernte, Warlpiri and Yankunytjatjara peoples of Central Australia! These are qualities about which non-Aborigines knew and know little, because they wouldn't allow them to emerge outside Aboriginal society. We're all the losers.

Peter Read
Australian National University


Stephen Muecke's book examines textual representations, social rituals and speech events as aspects of Aboriginal culture. To do this, he covers a wide range of topics, through series of loosely related chapters. In examining these varied themes, he draws upon a range of theoretical approaches ranging from discourse theory to textual analysis and on the findings of disciplines such as linguistics and anthropology.

In the Introduction Muecke outlines the cultural gap which has existed between the indigenous inhabitants of Australia and colonists from the time of European settlement. The new colonists imposed their understanding of the ways in which life should be lived in Australia, relating their experiences and perceptions back to Britain. However, in spite of the cultural gulf and the European dominance, Australian Aborigines had a profound influence on the ways in which the colonists came to view their world. Muecke sees an obvious example of this in the adoption of Aboriginal place names by white settlers. Muecke sees the two cultural systems which have existed in Australia since 1788 as generating different, but mutually influencing, texts. Text, he defines as 'materials which have been worked upon by people to make them meaningful, and to be regularly treated as if they were' (p.4). This is an extremely broad view of text, and essentially it is not the one which prevails in the book. The text written about is language text, sometimes as a broad cultural activity, sometimes as a particular instantiation of this activity.
In the first chapter, Muecke examines the ways in which Aboriginality has been constructed in (European) discourse and argues that these ways of talking have limited ways of knowing what Aborigines are. Three primary, intertwined discourses about Aborigines are identified. The anthropological approach focuses on the otherness of Aborigines, but excludes dialogue with the Other, so that Aboriginal perspectives do not enter the official discourse. The romantic approach sees Aborigines as a doomed people who are condemned largely by their own natures. They become a mythologised people, who helpless and child-like, must be helped on the basis of love and concern. The racist approach designates Aborigines as something other than the ideal. In the discourse they appear as children, animals, and inanimate objects. This construction of Aboriginal identity has been outlined in more detail by Fesl (1988). The linguistic correlates of these approaches, although sketchily demonstrated are interesting and are similar to those elaborated for majority-minority discourses by van Dijk (van Dijk 1987; van Dijk and Smitherton-Donaldson 1988) and others. For example, Aborigines enter into white Australian discourse as third person plural pronouns, as patients rather than agents, as objects rather than subjects. Van Dijk (1987) argues that these devices reduce the power available to the minority discussed in the discourse and marginalise them as effective actors.

Chapter 2: 'Body, Inscription, Epistemology: Knowing Aboriginal Texts' examines the ways in which Aboriginal stories enter into literature. The Aboriginal text is seen as one of controlled performance and repetition. Western literature has approached these texts in a variety of ways such as paraphrasing, rewriting and adaptation. In chapter 3 'History as Texts: 'Pigeon' and the bushranger' Muecke moves on to examine the ways in which cultures create discourse about events, and he contrasts Western notions of historical, fictional and conversational texts as encoders of various levels of 'truth' with Aboriginal understandings of truth in text. Using a series of Western and Aboriginal reports of the same event, the capture of Sandawarra, Muecke establishes a series of oppositions in the texts such as the role of gaze versus words in the organisation of text. The chapter is a good illustration of different cultural approaches to story and indicates with insight the difficulties which underlie understanding of texts across cultures.

Chapter 4: 'From structuralism to post-structuralism - reading oral narrative' begins with a brief survey of the structuralist approach to the interpretation of narrative and then examines the ways in which such an approach is inadequate for a genuine understanding of narrative texts. In particular, Muecke criticises structuralism's lack of sensitivity to the conditions of the production of the narrative, and Aboriginal concepts of custodianship of stories, different conceptions of time and historicity. For Muecke, narrative has a content and ideology which is related through the structure, but also through the social understanding of narrative text. This idea is taken up again in chapter 5: 'Literature and politics - The repressive hypothesis' examines Aboriginal expression in terms of Foucault's (1988) repressive hypothesis which sees expression as growing out of repression, Muecke sees this nexus as an inadequate understanding of the genus of Aboriginal texts. By exploring two autobiographies, My Place and Wandering Girl, he examines the various motivations for the production of text and concludes that there are a range of determinations which give rise to particular types of texts. In both of the sections Muecke produces some interesting and valid criticisms. However, he fails to give his criticisms the solid base of evidence which is needed to produce a convincing case. A reader who shares Muecke's views will agree with the critique. A reader who does not will not find any substance to challenge her/his position.
Chapter 6: 'Aboriginal English and Aboriginal Law' is perhaps the most disappointing of the chapters. Muecke writes superficially about his translation of the text of the Australian Law Reform Commission's discussion paper on Aboriginal law (ALCR 1981). Muecke sees his translated document as a combination of three discourses: legislative, referential and Aboriginal. However, there is little real discussion of the three discourses, and the role of language in the creation of discourses is almost entirely ignored. The introductory material on approaches to discourse which occupy most of the chapter lead the reader to expect a rather rich synthesis of textual and discourse analysis which does not eventuate and the discussion of the discursive practices in the translation are treated, often simplistically, in only six of the chapter's twenty-six pages. The most obvious lack in this chapter is an analysis of how the three discursive practices are combined to create a document and how they interact in the text.

Chapter 7: 'Appropriation or Post-colonial Renaissance' examines the ways in which Aboriginal culture has begun to take part in the Australian cultural and industrial context. Muecke seeks to trace this primarily through the story of Jimmy Pike and the use of his designs in the fashion industry. The chapter sets up an opposition between appropriation and renaissance - an opposition for which there is neither a resolution, nor a critique of the validity of using such an opposition in discussing the question. The chapter seems to be pervaded with uncertainty - uncertainty about how stories such as Jimmy Pike's are to be interpreted; uncertainty about what significance they have for an understanding of Aboriginality; uncertainty about whether or not Muecke can actually provide a voice in the debate. The same theme is taken up from a different perspective in chapter 8: 'Margin or Mainstream'. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of a Yothu Yindi film clip and examines the rhetorical in terms of pan-Aboriginality, bridge building and economic and cultural achievement. Muecke goes on to demonstrate that the opposition between margin and mainstream is not a useful concept. The distinction between the two is much more complex and margin and mainstream interpenetrate in innumerable ways. In this chapter, the same uncertainties abound and the overall impression of this discussion is one of extreme tentativeness and some confusion.

Chapter 9: 'Dialogue with a Post-graduate Student Wanting to Study Aboriginal Culture' is stilted, polemic monologue with occasional interruptions from the hypothetical student. Its purpose in this book is difficult to determine - it is not really advice, nor is it reflection on the discipline of cultural studies. It is most usually a rambling stream of consciousness on postmodernist approaches to a random collection of topics. It is a most off-putting and self-indulgent end to the book.

In general, the book does not often get past the surface and there is little in the way of penetrating analysis. The critiques of disciplines such as linguistics and anthropology show this lack of depth, and frequently claim views of these disciplines which would be quite foreign to their practitioners. In particular, Muecke does not seem to be aware of developments in areas such as discourse, pragmatics and sociolinguistics in the past decade. For example, linguistics is criticised on page 92 for producing normative documents about standard languages. This may be what the popular mind conceives linguistics to be, but it does not represent any genuine contemporary approach in the discipline. The critique of the role of linguistics in Aboriginal discourses is unhelpful for a linguist because the treatment of linguistics lacks both insight and a firm enough grasp of the subject for a truly useful understanding. This is a disappointment, because a critique of the role of linguistics, and other disciplines, in the study of Australian Aboriginality would be both timely and appropriate in this context. Muecke at the same time uses linguistics as a tool of analysis. However, he does not demonstrate a complete, or adequate,
understanding of the tool. Many of his interpretations of linguistic data are naive. For a linguist this makes the claims of the book difficult to accept as they appear to be based on misunderstood premises - the non-linguist should be wary of the interpretation of the 'linguistic' evidence used.

The most significant problem with the book is the presence of assertions in the text which are not supported by adequate evidence, but which must be accepted by the reader, if the reader is to accept the argument of the book. Muecke's argument about Aboriginal iconography as a writing system is a typical example. Muecke claims that Aboriginal 'meanings as pictured in designs' (p. 6) constitute a non-phonetic writing system akin to Chinese. There is here no real consideration of the differences in relationship between spoken and written forms of the languages, nor of the level of the phenomenon encoded by the symbol systems, nor of the accepted and acceptable ways for decoding the symbol system. Moreover, it does not appear to be helpful to view Aboriginal semiotic systems as writing. In much of the literature about oral and literate cultures we can find evidence of the construction of oral cultures as somehow lacking, while literate cultures are more favourably constructed. (Walton 1993). What is needed is not to force Aboriginal iconography into a model of writing. What is needed is a re-evaluation of 'non-literate' iconographies themselves. Aboriginal iconographies are indisputably rich and structurally consistent semiotic systems which allow for paradigmatic and syntagmatic variation in ways similar to writing systems, but to assume that the system equates with a writing system is to transport the system into a new cultural domain and to obscure the value which Aboriginal semiotic systems have in their cultural context.

In conclusion, this is a book which does not meet the expectations it raises for the reader. The various concepts outlined in the title 'textual space', 'Aboriginality' and 'cultural studies' do not appear to have been developed in any way. The discussion is so filled with post-modern uncertainty that the readers state of knowledge is the same before reading as it is after reading. For those readers who share Muecke's ideas about Aboriginality, this may not be a problem, but for those who wish to learn something from this book, there is too little substance. There is nothing to sway opinion. Readers seeking elucidation will not find it in this book, although readers seeking confirmation probably will.

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T. Liddicoat
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This short booklet presents the text of John Summons' play, which has been touring schools in Sydney, followed by questions for discussion by school students. The play does not actually depict the 1838 Myall Creek Massacre, nor does it present any Aboriginal perspectives; rather, it looks at the reactions of a variety of White characters to the massacre. The play is written in simple language which is not intended to be 'authentic' but which does use some of the language of 1838 ('savages', 'gins') in order to illustrate White attitudes towards Aboriginal people. It is very effective in its presentation of the views of White men of different class and religious backgrounds, from convict labourers to Governor Gipps. However, because it is so short it would ideally be used in conjunction with further research by students into the massacre and its background.

The questions at the end of the book are grouped into several study units designed for use by students of English, drama, history and Aboriginal studies. Most of the questions allow students to make up their own minds about the issues raised by the play, though some (such as 'In view of the nature and ferocity of the massacre at Myall Creek, who were the savages?') clearly point them in a particular direction. There are other problems - a suggestion to 'Consider the Rodney King case in the USA' will probably seem puzzling in a few years, and a reference to the Weraerai people as a 'nation state' stretches the meaning of that term to a ridiculous extent. The omission of Henry Reynolds' books from the suggested reading list is also a serious oversight. Finally, though the play and the questions do make clear that Aboriginal people fought against the White invasion, the absence of Aboriginal characters and the continual emphasis on 'massacres' may give students the impression that Aboriginal people were passive victims. However, none of these problems is great enough to prevent this play from being a useful resource for teaching about the history of Black-White relations in Australia.

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This excellent volume aims to complement earlier Cambridge volumes entitled Language in the USA and Language in the British Isles and to '... provide a comprehensive account of the present linguistic situation in Australia, primarily from a sociolinguistic point of view.' (p. xvii). In this it largely succeeds, though there is a certain unevenness in this success. This review will concentrate on aspects more directly relevant to the indigenous people of Australia and their languages.

Romaine's introduction presents a brief historical and policy overview covering Aboriginal and Islander languages, migrant languages and English and compares Australia with other major English-speaking countries in the world. I would take issue with Romaine's statement (p.7) that '... the early [Northern Territory] programs of bilingual education ... taught Aboriginal languages only as an aid to the acquisition of English.' This may have been their primary policy justification at the administrative and funding level (though even this became more true a little later) but it is equally true that many of those
actual working in these programs in Aboriginal communities were (and are) strongly committed to Aboriginal language maintenance - even though, two decades on, we might now believe that they did not always go about it in the most appropriate ways.

The first section of the book deals with Aboriginal and Islander languages and includes a variety of papers 'traditional' indigenous languages: a useful overview of indigenous languages by Walsh; a very significant outline by Peter Sutton of the social and geographical variation in Aboriginal society and language in western Cape York; a study by Bavin and Shopen of language change and child language in Warlpiri; a sketch of Kalaw Kawaw Ya (Torres Strait) by Ford and Ober; and a valuable and insightful challenge to much current thinking on language maintenance - particularly as it applies to domain separation - by McConvell. Quite appropriately Aboriginal English is included here in the form of broad linguistic descriptions by Kaldor and Malcolm and by Koch and a much more socio-culturally and pragmatically oriented paper on communicative strategies by Eades. With the notable exception of the Sutton, Eades and McConvell papers, the material in this section on indigenous languages is disappointingly centred more on formal linguistic matters than on the 'sociolinguistic point of view', treating social and communicative matters rather briefly, if at all.

The second section covers pidgins and creoles (most of them also Aboriginal and Islander languages) with an overview by Mühlhäusler, a historical study of Kriol by J. Harris and sketches of Kanaka English (Mühlhäusler), Torres Strait creole (Shnukal) and Kriol (Sandefur) - a range of different creoles giving them proportionately much greater representation than that given in the volume to the diverse range of 'traditional' indigenous languages still spoken in various parts of the continent.

The third section is much more sociologically oriented and deals with 'immigrant' or 'community' languages other than English. There is again a good range of the numerically more significant languages covered in individual papers following a succinct overview by Clyne. These languages include Dutch, German, Greek, Italian and Serbo-Croatian. This focus on Indo-European languages perhaps reflects the weighting of existing research but gives a skewed picture of the community language situation in Australia, in which languages such as Chinese, Arabic and Vietnamese are included even amongst those most commonly used in the home as pointed out by Clyne (p.217).

Australian English is the subject of the fourth section, which includes summary results of a study of regional lexical variation (Bryant) and of socially determined phonological variation, including the impact of immigrant groups on language change (Horvath), finishing with an overview of the study of sex/gender differences in Australian English (Pauwels).

The final section on policy and social issues unfortunately does not include a dedicated study of policy as it relates to Aboriginal and Islander languages but restricts itself to national language policy and 'migrant' languages (Ozolins), English in the form of the plain English movement (Eagleson) and social class differences in vocabulary knowledge (Corson). The only coverage of the important area of Aboriginal and Islander language policy is in Romaine's brief introduction to the book and in very brief references elsewhere.

By and large this volume contains a valuable range of papers, most of them presented in terms fairly accessible to the educated general reader. Most of the papers are succinct presentations of material presented in fuller form elsewhere, but nowhere else brought together to present an overall picture. The volume provides fascinating insights into the language situation in Australia, especially from a sociolinguistic point of view, and it outlines developments in linguistic and sociolinguistic research in Australia. It could have done with a little strengthening in terms of socio-pragmatic aspects of 'traditional'
indigenous languages and in terms of policy relating to Aboriginal and Islander people and their languages. On the other hand, Romaine has achieved a significant degree of balance coupled with breadth of coverage in portraying a multilingual and multicultural nation/continent from a sociolinguistic point of view.

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Edith Cowan University


Captain Collet Barker was destined for an illustrious career. An able administrator with an enlightened attitudes to the Aborigines, he was the commandant of convict garrisons at Raffles Bay, near present-day Darwin, and at King George's Sound, in south-west Western Australia, between the years 1828 and 1831. Barker's strength of character, his administrative skills and his ability to establish and maintain harmonious relations with the local Aborigines soon came to the attention of the colonial authorities. He was recalled to Sydney where the Governor of New South Wales, Ralph Darling, intended to appoint him as the first Government Resident in New Zealand, his talents making him eminently qualified, in Darling's opinion, to restore 'Confidence between the Natives at New Zealand and the European Settlers'. He returned to Sydney from King George's Sound in 1831 by ship but, en route, he was ordered to examine the eastern shore of Gulf St. Vincent in South Australia. Barker and his men spent more than a week examining the coastal plains - the future site of the city of Adelaide - and the nearby Mount Lofty Ranges. On April 30, they reached the mouth of the River Murray, discovered by Captain Sturt the previous year. Determined to take some bearings from a high sandhill on the opposite side, Barker stripped off his clothes, tied his compass to his head and swam across the river. He was never seen again. His companions later learned that Narrinjeri tribesmen, mistaking him for one of the white sealers who for years had been harassing them and kidnapping their women, speared Barker to death and threw his body into the surf.

After his death, the journals that Barker kept at Raffles Bay and King George's Sound languished, unidentified, in the Colonial Secretary's Office for nearly a century until they passed into the collections of the Mitchell Library in Sydney and, eventually, to the NSW Archives Authority. Despite Barker's almost illegible hand-writing, the journals have been utilised by a number of researchers in recent decades as a rich source of ethnographic and historical data. 1 Commandant of Solitude, a complete edited transcription of Barker's journals, is a cooperative effort between John Mulvaney and Neville Green. Mulvaney, the principal editor, contributed the introductory chapters and historical commentary, as well as detailed and informative footnotes and two comprehensive indexes. The book is excellently produced and handsomely illustrated with more than 30 colour and monochrome plates, as well as several clear, concise maps and historical charts. The dust-jacket features George French Angas' sombre 1845 painting of the Murray mouth, the scene of Barker's death, and

other plates include reproductions of paintings and sketches by early British and French artists of Raffles Bay and King George's Sound and the Aboriginal inhabitants of both areas.

Apart from his journals and some official correspondence, Barker left behind no personal letters. No portrait of him is known to exist and apart from stirring eulogies by Capt. Sturt, a fellow officer of the 39th Foot Regiment, and other dignitaries, there are few contemporary references to him. Biographical research in England by Mulvaney and Green has revealed something of Barker's family background and his military career, but, as the editors acknowledge, little is known of the man himself. He was born in Middlesex in 1784 into a well-educated and well-connected English family with a strong Nonconformist background. In 1806 he joined the 39th Foot Regiment and he later served throughout the bloody Peninsular campaigns until Napoleon's defeat, rising to the rank of lieutenant. He fought in the American War of Independence and then served in Ireland fighting the 'Whiteboy' insurrectionists until 1828 when his regiment was posted to New South Wales and Barker himself was promoted to captain.

Barker remained in Sydney for less than a month before he was appointed the commandant of the Fort Wellington garrison at Raffles Bay. This settlement, established in 1827, was one of several ill-fated attempts between 1824 and 1869 to establish British footholds on the northern coast of Australia, intended principally to deter possible French or Dutch annexation. When Barker arrived there in September 1828, the garrison numbered about 30 soldiers and 40 convicts, plus several wives and children. The garrison was beset with many difficulties, including insecure supply lines and poor communication with colonial authorities in Sydney and London, as well as the physical hardships of the northern frontier: tropical storms, disease, continuing food shortages, mosquitoes, snakes and crocodiles. Barker's journal paints a vivid picture of the struggle for survival, documenting his efforts to maintain discipline among the soldiers and the convicts, the continuing losses of the garrison's valuable livestock to disease, dingoes and the bush, the thefts of food by the convicts and the fruitless search for Private Cook, who evidently cracked under the strain and wandered off into the bush, never to be seen again. Barker's journal shows him to be a determined and self-reliant man, one who bore the isolation, hardship and the pressures of command without complaint, a compassionate but firm commandant, with a genuine concern for the well-being of the soldiers and convicts.

At Fort Wellington, previous commandants had feared the Aborigines and generally shunned contact with them; in one incident early in 1828 an Aboriginal camp had been attacked, resulting in the deaths of a woman and a child. Barker, in contrast, actively sought the Aborigines out. With perseverance and a sensitivity rare among his contemporaries, and despite language barriers, he established friendly relations with the local clans. He freely handed out fishhooks, axes and other gifts and provided food and a place to sleep to any Aborigines who came in to the settlement. He recorded the names of 42 Aboriginal men and the 'class division' that he believed each man belonged to, and he also recorded vocabulary and local place-names. Scattered throughout the journal are many interesting observations of subsistence techniques, material culture, ritual activities and other aspects of Aboriginal life. There is, for example, Barker's description of his Aboriginal friend, Wellington, repairing the handle of his stone axe with vegetable gum, as well as what is probably the earliest reference to that remarkable musical instrument, the didgeridoo.

Of particular historical and ethnographic significance are Barker's observations of the visiting Macassan trepang-fishing fleet. His journal provides a wealth of information on the Macassans and on their relations with the local Aborigines. In the appendices are Barker's detailed records of all the 37 praus that visited Raffles Bay during the 1829 trepang season,
listing each prau’s commander and owner, the size of its crew and its date of departure from its home port. Barker welcomed the Macassans to Fort Wellington, hoping to promote trading links that would be of benefit to the future development of the northern frontier. However, Barker also made clear to the Macassan commanders that his primary concern was maintaining friendly relations with the local tribes and that he would not tolerate any mistreatment of the Aborigines by the visitors.

When Fort Wellington was ordered to be abandoned in August 1829, Barker assumed command of the King George’s Sound garrison. He took up duties there in December and remained as commandant until March 1831 when the settlement was absorbed into the administrative district of Perth. Barker’s predecessors had established good relations with the local Mineng clans and by the time he arrived, many of the Aborigines spoke a quite serviceable pidgin-English. Whereas at Raffles Bay, linguistic difficulties continually frustrated Barker in his attempts to communicate with the Aborigines, at King George’s Sound Barker’s skills as an ethnographer flourished and his journal entries constitute a veritable mine of information on traditional Aboriginal lifestyles in the south-western corner of the continent. There are, for example, references to the use of the stone fish-traps that still survive today at Oyster Harbour, hunting techniques, seasonal movements, burial and mourning practices and ‘clever-men’, as well as many other aspects of Aboriginal culture.

Barker was certainly ahead of his times in the sensitivity and respect he showed for Aboriginal customs. At Raffles Bay he had quickly become aware of the principles of reciprocity that governed most aspects of Aboriginal life and this carried through in his dealings with the Mineng people:

   Wannewar brought me a fish he had speared but which I would not accept, having no equivalent to give him.

When Barker was invited to attend a burial ceremony he sat down next to the corpse with his Aboriginal friends and ‘mingled’ his tears with theirs. When he became aware, in November 1830, of the taboo relating to using the name of a recently deceased individual, he issued an order to all his men to avoid causing offence to the Aborigines in that way. Barker’s journal presents a picture of King George’s Sound as one corner of early colonial Australia where Aborigines and Europeans lived together in an atmosphere of goodwill and cooperation, albeit briefly. His entries provide fascinating glimpses of the interactions between the races; of the Aborigines watching the first crop of potatoes being harvested and ‘giving a shout of joy & admiration at the turning of every root with a good produce’, of Aboriginal men helping the soldiers to hunt down dingoes that were harassing the sheep, and of bottle-glass replacing quartz flakes on the men’s taap knives. But there are also other entries that hint at the darker side of culture-contact; references to sickness and deaths among Aboriginal groups far beyond the garrison, apparently the result of introduced diseases, and an alarming level of feuding and pay-back killings.

Barker developed close friendships with several Mineng men. Foremost among them was Mokare, whose clan’s territory included the area where the garrison was established. Mokare’s portrait was painted by de Sainson during Dumont d’Urville’s visit in 186 and there are numerous other references to him in the historical sources relating to the early settlement of the Albany area. Indeed, Mulvaney suggests that Mokare was perhaps one of the most interesting and complex characters known in any detail from any part of Australia during the first 50 years of white settlement. An intelligent, inquisitive and amiable man, Mokare was Barker’s main source of information on local customs and his guide on several expeditions into the surrounding bush. Barker’s journal records tantalising fragments of the long discussions he had with Mokare about mythology, the spirit world, the ownership of
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land and resources and other topics. Barker’s curiosity about the Aboriginal world was perhaps matched by Mokare’s interest in the European world:

13 February [1830] ... Mokare very inquisitive about different things. What materials shirts are made of? What trowsers, etc? What was glass? ... Enquired the age of Ships, how long they would last before they broke up, or died, as he called it. How it was managed to build them on the water & in what way the carpenters continued to make a beginning, which seemed to puzzle him not a little.

On another occasion:
Mokare asked this evening ... what was the Government, arising from my having told Mills some piece of furniture was Government property. No little difficulty in explaining the term.

Commandant of Solitude presents a picture of Collet Barker as an efficient, dutiful and courageous commandant with an enquiring and observant mind and a keen interest in most aspects of natural history. His tolerant and enlightened attitude towards the Aborigines, his interest in their culture and his concern for their welfare quickly earned him the respect and affection of the local people at both Raffles Bay and King George’s Sound. Had Barker lived to take up his appointment as the Resident in New Zealand, the first step along the career path towards a governorship, his tact and sensitivity in dealing with indigenous people may well have altered the future course of race relations in that country. It was indeed a tragedy, as Mulvaney points out, that the Aborigines of the lower Murray River chose as a pay-back victim ‘one of the most humane friends’ that Aboriginal people had encountered in a responsible post since 1788. The publication of this book ensures that Barker will be remembered as a man blessed with a degree of understanding and humanity exceptional for his times, rather than as just another obscure explorer who met a lonely death at the hands of the Aborigines.

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Amalie Dietrich was a nineteenth century German naturalist who spent almost ten years in Queensland collecting specimens for the Godeffroy Museum in Hamburg. During that time she collated significant collections of Australian snakes, birds, spiders and plants as well as acquiring ethnological and anthropological specimens. Her work was honoured in the scientific community of the day and two species of plants and two wasps were named in
her honour. Following her death, her fame spread to a much wider German audience through the biographical work Amalie Dietrich: Ein Leben which was written by Dietrich's daughter Charitas Bischoff and was published in 1909. Dietrich has since become familiar to many Australians as the subject of an article in The Bulletin entitled 'Angel of Black Death' which focussed on Dietrich's role in the frequently grisly business which was European anthropology in the nineteenth century.

Ray Sumner's biography of Dietrich is divided into three parts; the first deals with Dietrich's early life in Germany and the years of her marriage; the second part gives an account of her travels in Australia and the third - and most ground-breaking - section explores the relationship between Dietrich and her daughter and the subsequent creation of Amalie Dietrich the semi-fictional heroine.

Amalie Dietrich was born in 1821 in Siebenlehn, Saxony; the daughter of a leather worker. She learnt plant and herb lore from her mother and married Wilhelm Dietrich, a local pharmacist, in 1846. Sumner suggests that the two would have shared a common understanding of and interest in natural remedies and plants. Amalie's existing botanical knowledge, coupled with what she learnt from Wilhelm, made her a valuable assistant in his work when he gave up pharmacy in order to become a professional naturalist. In 1848 her daughter Charitas was born.

Amalie worked extremely hard collecting and selling specimens for her husband and Amalie's mother helped with the domestic chores. In 1861 Amalie left Wilhelm after she discovered Wilhelm's infidelity with the woman hired to maintain the house after the death of Amalie's mother. She eventually returned and embarked upon a selling trip to Holland during which she fell seriously ill. Upon her recovery and return to Germany she found that Wilhelm had taken a position as tutor to the sons of a local nobleman and did not wish Amalie to accompany him.

Left alone with a child to support, Amalie continued to work independently as a naturalist. Her demonstrable expertise as a collector lead to her employment in 1862 by J.C. Godeffroy, the sixth generation Huguenot refugee and famous merchant and shipbuilder. Known in Germany as the 'King of the South Seas', Godeffroy decided in the 1860s to expand his considerable private collection of colonial curios into a museum and scientific institution. In 1863, leaving behind her 15 year old daughter, Dietrich left Hamburg on the clipper ship La Rochelle equipped with all that she would need for the collection and packaging of natural specimens.

This brings the reader to the second part of Sumner's account of Dietrich's life. For almost ten years Dietrich worked in the newly independent colony of Queensland. Her work took her far from the relative 'civilisation' of Brisbane to small settlements to the north such as Rockhampton, Mackay and Bowen. Amalie enjoyed the challenges and freedom which her unusual occupation brought her. Her pleasure in her tasks increased as she became increasingly assured of Godeffroy's confidence in her and of his support for her work.

Godeffroy was so pleased, in fact, that he offered to send Amalie an assistant. Max Thenau from Hamburg joined her in late 1866 to help with her Rockhampton materials and she 'also engaged a local assistant at this time' (p.37). The presence of an assistant or two and the companionship Dietrich enjoyed with a German family in Bowen illustrate one of the most interesting points made by this book. Amalie Dietrich was not always the lone intrepid explorer as she appears in the biography penned by her daughter. Less romantic, but no less remarkable for her day, in this account we see Dietrich as a capable, industrious and resourceful scientist working alone or with assistance, forming valuable friendships and essentially 'running her own show' on the Queensland coast.
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In spite of giving her name to two types of wasps and two species of plants, it is an incident which took place in Mackay that has brought Amalie Dietrich to the public's attention in recent years. She has been identified as the collector who on one, or more, occasion requested that an Aborigine be shot so that she could have the skin. Such a request so infuriated the Archers, a leading family of the district, that her stay in the area was brief (pp.44-45). Amidst sensationalism and controversy, the admiration which many feel for Dietrich as a female pioneer of science makes the knowledge of this 'dreadful request' difficult to accept. However, the facts as presented in this meticulously researched book indicate that such a request was indeed made. The very important observation is also made that during the nineteenth century many scientists were no less guilty than many settlers in their treatment of Aborigines as being somehow less than human.

The most valuable and fascinating aspect of A Woman in the Wilderness is - in my opinion - the way in which it 'de-mythicises' Amalie Dietrich through scholarship and research. Having read this book, it becomes clear that almost all previous accounts of Dietrich's life and work rely heavily on the biography written by Charitas Bischoff. Through careful research, this work exposes the errors of times and places, the borrowings from other works on Australia, the romantic symbolism and the outright fictions found in Bischoff's book.

In addition to this, reasons for these anomalies are suggested through an examination of the relationship between Bischoff and her mother. Dietrich's work enabled her to afford an excellent education for her daughter. Bischoff married well and was, apparently, somewhat embarrassed by her mother following her return from Australia. It was due particularly to the distaste which Charitas' husband Pastor Christian Bischoff felt towards Amalie's lowly manners that Dietrich and the Bischoffs were estranged for over 10 years. They were reconciled, however, and Dietrich died at the Bischoff home in Rendsburg in 1891.

Christian Bischoff died in 1891 leaving Charitas a widow with three small children. It may have been the resultant financial difficulties that acted as a catalyst for Bischoff's book, coupled with her longstanding love of literature and writing, and her complicated feelings towards her mother. The result was published in 1909 and was the best seller Bischoff had hoped it would be.

Bischoff's book has been the standard work on Dietrich ever since its publication. The partially fictionalised Dietrich it presents has become an exemplar for groups ranging from radical feminists to National Socialists to Communists, but as Sumner states 'it has little to do with Amalie Dietrich the scientific collector' (p.92). A Woman in the Wilderness, conversely, has everything to do with Dietrich the scientific collector, and has, in addition, rather a lot to do with Dietrich and Bischoff as people, which is even more interesting.

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This is a short book with a big title which evokes images of Roderick Flanagan's 'Black War' in Eastern Australia (as conceptualised in his *Empire* articles in 1853-54, and revived by historians in the last two decades), Governor Arthur's campaign in Van Diemen's Land, and wars of indigenous resistance throughout the colonial world. Historians of the Northern Territory and Aboriginal missions know, of course, that the title comes from sensational newspaper headlines in the south in relation to three separate killings of eight non-Aboriginal men by the Yolngu people of Arnhem Land in 1932-33 and the punitive attitudes of the Darwin administration. This account puts the episode in historical perspective at the same time emphasising its importance in awakening Australian consciousness to Aboriginal rights.

The author, Mickey Dewar, taught for two years at Milingimbi Bilingual School so that she experienced mission life at first hand, she had the opportunity of discussing events and personalities with a key participant, Mr Fred Gray, to whom she dedicates the book, and also Ms Connie Bush MBE, an Aboriginal member of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) mission on Groote Eylandt. The narrative which unfolds is well told and convincing.

The crux of the story is the 'success' of the Peace Expedition of 1934 whereby a party of CMS missionaries, seeking to avoid a punitive expedition, persuaded the persons known to be responsible for the killings to accompany them to Darwin to offer their explanations. What followed was a travesty of justice on the scale of the recent Guildford bombing trials in Britain; the Aborigines who came in good faith were arrested and exposed to police harassment both before and after the trial. They knew little of European law and they could not speak English.

If there is a weakness in Dewar's account it is that, except for Gray, most of the leading characters are cardboard figures, the missionaries being little more than denominational stereotypes in which the Methodists are mainly 'good guys' and the Anglicans are largely cast as 'bad guys'. With only Dewar's narrative as guide one is left feeling the contempt and even hatred for the Reverend Alfred John Dyer which many newspaper readers must have felt in the 'thirties, yet this is not the rounded character presented by John Harris in *One Blood* (Sutherland, 1990). As Harris describes Dyer, even if he seems fanatical with his solitary vigils and direct communication with his God, and naive in his faith in British justice and providential intimations, he was the same man who Connie Bush (in Harris) testified would throw his arm round the shoulders of a leper and drink from the same cup. Dyer also had a vision of an Arnhem Land State which in some ways anticipated the Arnhem Land Land Trust.

The strict paternalism of the CMS mission including thrashings for relatively minor offences may come as a shock to some readers but sixty years ago a god-fearing husband could thrash his wife and children for disobedience without raising much comment. In earlier times that father of missions, the Reverend Samuel Marsden, who probably never flogged an Aborigine, thought nothing of applying his stockwhip to the shoulders of the recalcitrant wife of a settler who 'could not manage her' - to good effect, according to Marsden's grandson, the Reverend James Hassall. Bible discipline still ruled a hundred years later but it was not applied on racial lines. Even in those earlier German missions where ears were clipped (i.e. cut) for lying, it was the missionaries' children whose ears were pared down and not the indigenes who suffered.
The Aboriginal characters in Dewar's narrative are also shadowy figures but at least the Yolngu people come across with their own proud identity. They were, after all, the first Aborigines to have contact with foreign visitors, the Macassans, a contact which had been made seasonally for at least 300 years, and this experience enabled them to deal more effectively with outsiders on their own terms. The book helps us to understand why the killings took place and why the unfortunate trial had far reaching implications for Aboriginal people everywhere. Dyer, despite his bitter feeling of betrayal, must have taken comfort in what he believed to be his inspired instructions opened for him at Esther 4:14: 'If you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will arise from another quarter ...' Relief and deliverance may have come but the sacrifice was made by Aborigines not by Dyer; and most of the country outside Darwin saw Dyer as Judas.

The illustrations are of good quality and those relating to the Peace Expedition add further poignancy to the story. The bibliography is impressive except that the Archival section is not organised for quick reference. It would have been more convenient for readers to list manuscript sources under authors, followed by the archival abbreviation and file numbers.

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'My heart is breaking' A joint guide to records about Aboriginal people in the Public Record Office of Victoria and the Australian Archives, Victorian Regional Office. Compiled by I. Macfarlane and M. Deverall. Australian Archives and the Public Record Office of Victoria, Canberra, 1993, pp.xi + 191. $11.95.

'My heart is breaking', published in 1993, is a joint guide to records about Aboriginal people in the Public Record Office of Victoria and the Victorian Regional Office of the Australian Archives. The book contains two sections: the first is a guide to the records at these two repositories, the second entitled 'glimpses from the past' presents excerpts from some of the these records.

As a guide to the holdings of the Public Record Office this publication adds little to its 1984 publication, other than presenting relevant records that can be consulted in the Victorian Regional Office of the Australian Archives. The Australian Archives section presents a useful index of Aboriginal case files and reveals the potential value of these records for people researching family history.

There is little difference between 'My heart is breaking' and the Public Record Office's earlier resource guide published in 1984, other than the fact that it presents the Australian Archives' records as well. I believe a major limitation of this new guide is that it does not publish a full description of the records. A complete listing has existed since 1982 and although it is possible to gain access to this more detailed guide when visiting the Public Record Office, it would have been more valuable if it had been published.

As it stands approximately two thirds of 'My heart is breaking' is devoted to part 2 'Glimpses from the past', which provides readers with useful glimpses of the kinds of information that can be found in these records. For my part I would have preferred this section to have been scaled down or, better still, rearranged so that the examples given were
placed throughout the fuller description of the records to provide a break from pages of itemised description.

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Nancy Cato's highly successful *Mister Maloga* was first published in 1976 by the University of Queensland Press, and in 1993 a revised edition was published. *Mister Maloga* is a history of Daniel Matthews and his efforts at establishing a Christian mission at his Maloga station to the region's Aboriginal survivors from 1874 until his death in 1902. His station was on the New South Wales side of the Murray River some 20 km upstream from Echuca. Maloga was apparently a Yorta Yorta word meaning sandhill.

The Matthews family arrived in Victoria in the early 1850s, a time when there was mass immigration to southern Australia, and much of it in part a response to the lure of 'gold fever'. In my case almost all my forebears arrived in Victoria in the 1850s, and became farmers, miners, agricultural labourers, and carriers. Cato describes this period particularly well, and from my own research into genealogy I found her ability to provide insights into the social climate of this time very satisfying.

Daniel Matthews, like James Dawson at Camperdown in western Victoria, stands out amongst his contemporaries for his passionate interest in Aboriginal justice. In 1873 he published a pamphlet entitled *An appeal on behalf of the Australian Aborigines* in which he argued that as the Aborigines had been dispossessed, and had a moral claim on the government, they should be given large grants of land.

Cato has had the benefit of very rich source material, for Daniel Matthews was fastidious at keeping a diary: he did this for nearly thirty years. Entries from this diary are liberally included in Cato's text, but as someone with a keen interest in this period, I would welcome the publication of Matthews' diary. Janet Matthews, Daniel's wife, also kept a diary and has written her memoirs, and these also merit consideration for publication.

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These women have a number of experiences in common. Their achievements are in spite of great difficulties. Some had happy childhoods with loving mothers, but of the thirty-four women whose stories are told seven were taken away from their families as small children.
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The missions and welfare agencies seemed to have no inkling that this was extremely cruel and yet it was perpetrated up to the nineteen-sixties by otherwise respectable and kindly-seeming citizens. These children were put into orphanages, often told that their parents had died. Only recently have many of them been allowed to see their original birth certificates and some have been happily re-united with their families. The policy was supposed to be 'for their own good', but it has meant that, because they had not been brought up in a loving family, they find it hard to recreate for themselves stable marriages where children are loved but at the same time disciplined.

It is amazing to discover how many and various are the occupations in which the women have succeeded - not only as nurses, teachers, health educators, administrators, but also as well-known entertainers, singers, dancers, film stars, film-makers, writers. I felt that the author might have included one or two more women who were important in their own communities as ritual leaders and upholders of the old Law, even though they might be little known to the world outside. There is one such woman: Mantatjara Wilson, a Pitjantjatjara woman has been drawn in to oppose the non-Aboriginal world and she says 'It is as though Australia took poison ... It has already been poisoned.'

Poisoned or not, the other women have followed the old precept 'if you can't beat em, join em', and have achieved success in the non-Aboriginal world and together they make an inspiring collection of biographies. The photography is wonderful and each photograph interprets the character of the subject.

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This tape is a recording of material broadcast in the ABC's Wednesday night series Songs and Stories of Australia. Rhoda Roberts, the story teller, is a descendant of the Bundjalung people of the Lismore area, N.S.W. Her father was the late Pastor Frank Roberts, and her great uncle Lyle Roberts and great great uncle have passed on information on the Bundjalung language and culture in earlier years. Rhoda is an experienced broadcaster, and has been presenter of Vox Populi on SBC TV. The stories she tells on this tape are interspersed with music from the group 'Gamilaroi' who were recorded in a special Songs & Stories of Australia concert in Sydney in January 1991.

The stories, mostly from the Bundjalung area, which she defines as including southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales, are traditional stories, many with a clear moral to them. Rhoda Roberts varies her voice in mimicking an old man's conversation in one, and an old woman telling the story in another, and the stories have appropriate background noises, of birds in many, and water and wind in others. She includes some words and a few short phrases of Bundjalung in her story telling. At the beginning of each side of the tape she makes introductory comments on the context of traditional story telling, and the purposes it served, to entertain, to instruct, and at times to help the listeners cope with their own emotions and growth. She emphasises the importance of gesture and mime in traditional story telling, and reminds her listeners that there are other stories she
cannot tell publicly - stories specifically for women and girls (and presumably others for men and boys).

As a linguist, and with exposure to the language from past speakers and from older sources, I could be critical of the narrator's version of many of the words and phrases, and of the spellings of a few words on the tape's box, but this would be to ignore the overall picture one gains from the tape. Many of the stories are familiar to me in various versions, and her telling of them is faithful to the core content of these stories, and is at times very moving. Her pronunciation of some Bundjalung words suggests she (or her teachers) learnt many of them from print rather than from active use, which is not surprising. Like English, the language can be spoken quickly with considerable slurring and abbreviation; the few remaining first language speakers of the language (if any remain now) use it minimally, and it is not heard enough for most people to learn it well.

I also know that those Roberts refers to as the northern Bundjalung, i.e. those from south-east Queensland, are at present adamant that they do not use, and have never used, the name Bundjalung for themselves on their language. While there is absolutely no doubt that the language once spoken around Beaudesert (Qld) and the Gold Coast (many words are still used there now), is a dialect of the same language as Bundjalung, there is evidence of some differences in cultural practices to back up the preference of the northerners not to be called Bundjalung. They use the name Yugambeh, just as Aboriginal people from Woodenbong refer to their dialect as Githabal or Gidabal and also reject the name Bundjalung. The differences between adjacent dialects was not great, and at the extreme ends of the dialect chain the differences were not impossible to bridge after some 'tuning in' and learning of some different vocabulary for common items.

I also have slight personal regrets that the musical interludes played by the Gamilaroi group are of music not typical of the area, nor even of the Gamilaroi area to the west of the Bundjalung. Didjeridus, used by this group, were not traditionally used in this part of Australia, however the selections are excellently played and recorded. There is a considerable corpus of songs recorded from Bundjalung and Githabal people. However the quality of some archival material is not high, although the ABC did a good job in 'cleaning up' some of it for a series in the 1985 school broadcasts on Bundjalung and Githabal language and culture. Songs need their own translation and commentary, which the didjeridu interludes on this tape do not need.

It hardly fair of me, however, to highlight such academic quibbles. The purpose of such a tape is to allow a wider audience than academic specialists in linguistics and ethnomusicology to gain some knowledge and appreciation for the traditional story telling art of Aborigines, for their traditional insights into human nature, and for their use of stories to teach respect, to teach that it is wise to take advice from older and more experienced people, to help young people through the emotions and changes of adolescence, and to teach love of and care for the land.

There are twelve stories on the tape, which runs for 67 minutes in all. Roberts explicitly states that one story is from south-western NSW, and one from the 'northern Bundjalung' (i.e. the Yugambeh) on their hero and expert boomerang thrower Jabrihn or Javreen, (the bora ring at Burleigh Heads, Qld, beside the Gold Coast highway) is associated with Javreen.) The stories include ones on the origin of the Clarence River, the creation of the Bundjalung people (including the northern group - sometimes called the story of the Three Brothers), the origins of the waratah and the leader dolphin, how the emu lost its wings (it succumbed to peer pressure and stupidly cut them off), and how Australia got separated from India (the sacred spring), how the sun was made (from an emu egg yolk thrown into the blue sky by the pelican who was jealous of the size of emu eggs)
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and others. The tender and touching story of the bulrush and the waterlily (lovers whose happiness was destroyed by a water spirit who loved the girl and made her into a water lily, and later took pity on the languishing young man) and the story of the origin of the moon and the rainbow (two young girls changed and put in the sky by Javreen) are from the Gold Coast area. The other specific love story, that of Waratah, immediately follows that of the bulrush and the waterlily.

In listening to the story on Gwando the Dolphin I could not but speculate whether there was influence on the version Roberts's grandmother told her grandchildren from the grandmother's understanding of the English word school in school of dolphins/fish, which Roberts indicates the children laughed about, and tried to correct her on. Gwando becomes the teacher (or leader) of a school of dolphins. However it is very likely the play on meanings of the word school is at most a minor addition to what clearly fits in the genre of the traditional 'how it came to be' stories.

For those interested in the genre of stories from Australia, as well as those specifically interested in Aboriginal stories or stories from this particular geographical area, I recommend this tape. It is well presented and Rhoda Roberts varies her presentation of the stories, and helps the reader realise the point of each of the stories she tells.

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Just a glance at the chapter titles reveals that Dingo makes us human is not a conventional ethnography. This study of an Aboriginal community in northern Australia is self-consciously different, its structure defined largely by a framing theme of autonomy-within-interdependence, which is well captured in the following quote:

a great deal of social and cultural life acquires its spice as people manage the tension between producing and reproducing the ties that bind while yet sustaining and manipulating the flexibility that prevents bonds from becoming shackles. (p.106)

Deborah Rose is an experienced and highly competent anthropologist, whose study abounds with evidence of well thought out, as well as deeply felt, perspectives and insights into the lives of the Yarralin people. Rose acknowledges the influence of Gregory Bateson and Stanley Diamond on her thinking and, in writing about Aboriginal religion and worldview, she shares with many other scholars a large debt to W.E.H. Stanner. Her work also shows the influence of the approach taken by Fred Myers in his monograph, Pintupi country, Pintupi self (1986). That the author is mindful of postmodernist critiques is indicated by the prominence she accords to Aboriginal voices and by her sensitivity to the authorial role in the reporting and interpretation of 'facts'; mercifully, her writing is largely free of the obfuscatory jargon that infects much postmodernist prose. Rose comes across to the reader as direct and honest as her construction of the text is meant to suggest. Her writing is rarely dogmatic and she is always willing to concede imperfect knowledge or understanding where relevant, as for example in her references to aspects of 'men's business'. Her perspective is unashamedly intellectualist in its fundamental orientation, and
while this may be problematic for scholars of a strongly materialist persuasion, it cannot be said that she divorces meaning from power or fails to ground her presentation in historical process. The opening chapter, for example, provides a strong historical account of frontier violence, and subsequent oppression, depopulation, exclusion and racism - and also describes Aboriginal resistance, both overt and covert. Rose uses a range of pertinent historical sources, and her choice of quotations from them aptly conveys attitudes on both sides of the frontier and subsequent patterns of race relations. Her data on Aboriginal constructions of history (Ch. 11), featuring such figures as Captain Cook and Ned Kelly, are fascinating, and the author's analyses of these stories are consistently enlightening, even if not always convincing.

No doubt in part as a result of her work on land claims in the Northern Territory, Rose's accounts both of territorial organisation and the importance to the Yarralin people of land rights are impressive. Her intensive research into cultural ecological matters is reflected in fine-grained accounts of people's relationships with their environment - the time spent out in the bush, learning from the Yarralin people, men and women, comes through strongly, and her writing reflects a deep feeling for Aboriginal connections to the land. Noteworthy, too, are the author's clear and well illustrated descriptions of social categories and how they relate to descent 'lines' and other elements of personal identity. In Chapter 10, which is about interpersonal relationships, she provides a rich and insightful account of how and why Yarralin people 'test' each other via 'frequent, persistent and imaginative' demands in a range of everyday interaction. I found her use of the term 'symmetry' to be inconsistent, but this chapter should resonate strongly with anyone who has lived in a remote Aboriginal community.'

One aspect of the book's unorthodox nature is the absence of much concern either to present an integrated picture of daily life in the settlement or to contextualise the data via comparative reference to the anthropological literature on Aboriginal Australia. There is no attempt, therefore, to establish what is unique about aspects of the Yarralin people's culture, since the author's concerns impel her to emphasise aspects of a shared humanity. While recognising much that is compatible with their own data and interests, scholars of Aboriginal Australia may find this frustrating, yet it is clearly part of Rose's aim to construct an atypical monograph. A reasonably extensive bibliography indicates that she is well grounded in the literature on Aboriginal Australia; however, her references encompass much broader and more general humanistic concerns, and Rose is more intent on addressing these issues than in locating Yarralin and its people within the social anthropology of Aboriginal Australia.

In general, the book is well written and coherently structured, enabling the author to focus on a number of different issues without impeding the flow of her major arguments. The approach is generally effective in conveying the richness of her data and the complexities of Aboriginal worldview. However, there are many places where she is writing in a more 'academic' mode and where the prose is so cryptic and the meaning so densely packed that it risks being poorly understood or remaining opaque to the non-specialist reader. The concluding chapter, perhaps the least convincing part of the book, contains passages where her otherwise fairly lucid prose unravels, degenerating at times into a kind of New Age gibberish (see the first paragraph on p.229 for a piece of communicative static so awful that Bateson would turn in his grave). This chapter begins badly, with Rose's assertion that Aboriginal people understand living systems 'scientifically'. They may well have evolved such understandings through 'observations and hypotheses developed and tested through time' (p. 218), yet for the people who live the culture, theirs is not a 'scientific' understanding - the Dreaming is not a hypothesis to be
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tested, however much, as Rose rightly notes, it requires people to make connections in an effort towards intellectual closure. Here, too, the author's penchant for reification gets the better of her, especially in the section entitled 'Systems at work'. In that same discussion, however, there is much of value, and her important theme about the simultaneous singularity, multiplicity and wholeness of the Aboriginal cosmic order echoes some of the insights of Burridge's *Encountering Aborigines* (1973). Nevertheless, the singularity-autonomy aspect of this theme is far less convincing than the rest of the equation. Although she also talks of cooperation, Rose characterises a country and its people as bounded like a closed system (p. 222), when the reverse is much closer to social reality: strong cultural values and practices foster interdependence rather than independence at this level. On a related point, Rose, whose use of the term 'autonomy' is ambiguous at the best of times, asserts that the Dreaming beings were autonomous (p. 222). This is certainly not true of the Western Desert region, where cultural stress on boundary permeability and interdependence derives from Dreaming models: myths, songlines and dances are replete with meetings, rituals, feasting, and the exchange of women and gifts between groups of creative beings who instituted and named a host of collective activities that structure human social life beyond the level of the family and band.

A major problem with the presentation is that Rose renders Yarralin voices in Kriol throughout but provides no interlinear translation, so the statements of her major informants, old men whose Kriol is far from fluent, will be experienced by most readers as fractured and confusing rather than subtle and knowing. Thus when Rose attempts to portray these men as intellectual giants by making explicit comparisons of the kind on page 190, where she states that Hobbles Danayarri exceeds Karl Marx in the eloquence of his political analysis (p. 190), the result is embarrassing - the gap between Rose's exegesis and the Hobbles quote is virtually unbridgeable, and it does more of a disservice to Hobbles than to Marx. Her subsequent claim (p. 197) that 'his narratives point to a theory and practice of otherness, of generating structures which empower, rather than diminish, people' strikes me as over-interpretation. Contrast the Kriol statements with the final quote of the book, in English, by her friend Daly when he took her to see where bulldozers had desecrated a site in 1986: "'We'll run out of history,' he said, 'because kartiya [Europeans] fuck the Law up and [they're] knocking all the power out of this country.'" This powerful and moving statement about domination, ruination and loss is doubtless no more insightful than those of Hobbles and others, but its rendering in English makes its impact immediate and memorable.

Fortunately, these shortcomings are not such as to detract badly from the significant contribution that this book makes to the literature; *Dingo makes us human* has things of compelling importance to say to specialist and non-specialist readers alike.

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In 1916, Ernest Scott proclaimed that his Short History of Australia 'begins with a blank space on the map, and ends with the record of a new name on the map, that of Anzac.'\(^1\) Nearly 80 years later, Creating a Nation, a new general history of Australia from 1788, begins with an Aboriginal woman giving birth in a continent full of diverse and complex Aboriginal societies. It ends, not with an established 'fact' such as the record of a new name on the map, but with a possibility: an Australian republic in which all can share in government and all can receive a fair share of the national income. In between lies an interpretation of Australian history which attempts to show how the Australian nation was created by people from a variety of gender, ethnic and class positions.

Although Creating a Nation is clearly the product of much collaboration and consultation aimed at producing a unified approach, each chapter is the work of an individual author. Marian Quartly deals with the period to 1860, Patricia Grimshaw’s chapters cover the period 1860-1912, Marilyn Lake takes the story forward to the present, and Ann McGrath writes on Aboriginal history from 1788 onwards. In the Introduction, Marilyn Lake outlines the overall approach of the book, which she says 'starts from the premise that gender is integral to the processes that comprise the history of Australia - that political and economic as well as social and cultural history are constituted in gendered terms' (p. 4). This is an explicitly feminist history, then, and the book’s treatment of gender as a crucial factor in shaping Australian history is its greatest strength.

As Lake says in the Introduction, ‘The creation of nations has traditionally been seen as men’s business’ (p. 1). The Australian nation is generally depicted in historical narratives as having been created through activities which were largely restricted to White men: going to war, working for wages and involvement in parliamentary politics, for example. This book, by contrast, adopts a much broader definition of creation, one which embraces women’s role in giving birth to the nation’s people and in sustaining the nation through unpaid domestic labour. It is also a book which is centrally concerned with the ideological creation of the nation, since nations can no longer be taken as a ‘natural’ entities.\(^2\) Instead, the authors believe the ‘nation state was welded, with more or less force, into a unity’, but one made up of people with many different backgrounds and interests. The tension between the assertion of difference and ‘the assimilationist drive of the nation state’ is one of the book’s major themes (pp. 2-3).

The nation is just one of the supposedly natural categories which feminists have called into question, and Creating a Nation reflects this questioning approach. ‘The meaning of femininity is never fixed and always contested,’ writes Lake.

It has changed historically in conjunction with changes in other domains such as the organisation of work and sexuality .... Just as the meaning of womanhood has been constantly in flux, so, too, has the meaning of manhood .... Feminist scholarship has drawn attention to the sexual specificity of men, who have for so long been able to disguise themselves in history books as sexless, neutral, historical subjects - as squatters, convicts, workers, politicians, Australians .... Recognition of the interdependence of femininity and masculinity and of the way in which they shape and are shaped by all

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1 Scott 1936, p.v.
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Social relationships and processes has led to the identification of gender as a central category of historical analysis (p. 4).

Thus, feminist history goes beyond simply including women in the story, although this is important in itself. It looks at society as a whole, identifying ways in which male power has operated historically. It does not take the categories 'male' and 'female' as given, but rather analyses the ways in which femininity and masculinity have been socially constructed in relation to each other. Historians have taken similar approaches to the study of class and ethnicity. Thus, E.P. Thompson's analysis of class as a phenomenon whose character depends on historical context and on relationships within and between classes was used as a model for Bain Attwood's investigation of the creation of Aboriginality. Such approaches make us aware that the categories of historical analysis are more fluid than they were often assumed to be, and this makes the job of historians more difficult as they must come to terms with historical subjects whose identities are multiple and dynamic. Feminist historians have generally been well aware that gender relations are intersected by class, ethnic and other relations, but working out the details and consequences of these intersections remains one of the major challenges for feminist theory and practice. The authors of Creating a Nation deserve applause for taking on this challenge in their interpretation of Australian history.

Because the authors see the Aboriginal experience as very different from that of non-Aboriginal people, Creating a Nation devotes three chapters specifically to Aboriginal history. However, aspects of Aboriginal history also arise periodically in the other chapters. The three separate chapters, written by Ann McGrath, take up almost one-fifth of the pages of text. The first chapter, 'Birthplaces', is largely a description of the Aboriginal society which the British settlers encountered in the Sydney region in 1788, and from the start we are made aware that our knowledge of this society comes from British observers. McGrath informs us that we know about the Aboriginal woman Warreweer's experience of giving birth, with which the chapter begins, from the observations of several British women 'mediated through Lieutenant David Collins's journal' (p. 7). This seems to me an appropriately subtle way of raising the problems of sources and interpretations, too often missing from general histories such as this. Though these problems surface only occasionally in the rest of the text, it is encouraging to read, for example, an admission that it is 'difficult to judge the exercise of power in Aboriginal society' since such judgements rely on culturally based criteria and on the evidence of British men concerned to assert the superiority of their own society. Furthermore, the power balance varied from place to place across the continent (p. 17).

Despite these reservations, McGrath depicts a relatively egalitarian Aboriginal society in which status was determined by gender, age and land associations and labour organised according to gender, age and family responsibilities. Women had 'a great deal of autonomy' and 'were valued as reproducers of people and producers of food', but men enjoyed greater ritual prestige, male elders probably 'held ultimate authority' and women 'often came off worst' from violence between men and women (pp. 17-20), British society, by contrast, was extremely hierarchical, with division of labour and status determined by gender, class and rank. In the British middle class ideal (though often not in practice) women performed domestic labour while men provided for and protected women, thus allowing women little independence. McGrath's other chapters tell the story of the clash between these two social systems, and of the imposition of the British system on Aboriginal people.

In chapter 6, entitled 'Sex, Violence and Theft: 1830-1910', McGrath is chiefly concerned with gender and ethnic relations in the context of colonialism. Aboriginal men, she argues, lost the basis of their status and their economic role when they lost their land, and were therefore forced to work for Whites where possible. White society constituted Aboriginal men as labourers (often unpaid), but also as potential threats, particularly to White women. For Aboriginal women, according to McGrath, the impact of colonialism was just as dramatic, but more ambiguous. They maintained their role in keeping families together as men became itinerant labourers. At the same time, women themselves often worked as domestic labourers, and sometimes as prostitutes. Where Aboriginal men were represented as dangerous, Aboriginal women were stereotyped as sexually available. The frequency of sexual relations between Aboriginal women and White men, however, gave Aboriginal women an important role as intermediaries.

What tend to get lost somewhat in McGrath's concentration on colonialism are the internal dynamics of Aboriginal societies. What of gender relations between Aboriginal men and women, and of the negotiation of new relationships within Aboriginal communities to which she alludes (p.150)? I think there are several reasons for her focus on the impact of colonialism. First, the internal workings of Aboriginal societies are a sensitive subject for non-Aboriginal people to write about. Second, there is a lack of information about what was going on inside Aboriginal communities. The increasing involvement of Aboriginal people in writing history may help overcome both of these problems. Third, it is more difficult to generalise about relationships within Aboriginal communities than about the relationships of Aboriginal people to colonial institutions and practices. Lastly, and most importantly, McGrath makes a convincing case that for Aboriginal people it was colonialism which shaped their lives most decisively. 'No matter what power struggles occurred between Aboriginal men and women,' she argues, 'these paled in comparison with the impact of outside forces on their family and private lives' (p. 296). Elsewhere in Creating a Nation, sexuality, reproducion and marriage are seen as issues of gender relations for non-Aboriginal women. But McGrath shows that for Aboriginal women it was such factors as missionary and government interference in marriage and government policies which broke up Aboriginal families, particularly through the forced removal of children, which were most responsible for their relative powerlessness in these areas.

McGrath's handling of her topic is, on the whole, excellent. Given the constraints mentioned above and the limited space available she does an admirable job of combining a coherent general survey of Aboriginal history with stories of particular people and places. Her discussion of Aboriginal people as workers, still an unjustly neglected topic in Australian history, is particularly impressive, as is her succinct yet comprehensive treatment of violence between Aborigines and Whites. Above all, she displays a keen understanding of the impact of changing racial ideologies on the lives of Aboriginal people.

The question which I find most difficult to answer in relation to Creating a Nation is whether the authors were right to separate the Aboriginal story from the rest of Australian history. Perhaps there is no correct answer to this question. Certainly it is true that 'the Aboriginal experience of British colonisation and Australian nation building' has been 'very distinctive' (p.5). Writing about this experience in separate chapters is a way of acknowledging its distinctiveness, and also of avoiding the practical problems involved in integrating such a distinctive history with the story of the colonisers. However, I would like to put the case for a more integrated approach.
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The importance of a book like this is that it takes the work which has been done over the past twenty years or so in such areas as women's history and Aboriginal history and makes it part of the more general narrative of Australian history. In so doing it 'challenges the conventional view of Australia's past as a creation of white men of British descent' as the cover blurb puts it, but it should also change our understanding of the history of 'white men of British descent' themselves. In the case of Aboriginal history, I believe this requires a recognition that for the past 200 years Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have existed not separately but in relationship with each other. Therefore, it is impossible to understand the history of one group without understanding the impact on that group of relations with the other.

For example, the fear and uncertainty which marked the colonial frontier must surely have psychologically affected Whites as much as Aborigines. An awareness of this helps to explain not only the continuing depth of White hostility towards Aborigines but also the insecurity of White society more generally (expressed, for example, in the fear of foreign invasion). There are also examples of the impact on Aboriginal people of interaction with non-Aboriginal society other than those which are most frequently cited. One such is the use by Aboriginal land rights movements of rhetoric about land as the basis of economic self-sufficiency, which is similar to and probably influenced by the rhetoric employed by non-Aboriginal closer settlement and 'back to the land' movements.

Looking at Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies together also allows illuminating links to be drawn, for example, between attitudes of dominant groups towards the less powerful. Thus, the exclusion of both women and Aboriginal people from the Anzac legend, in which going to war was the ultimate expression of citizenship, can be linked in terms of the exclusion of Aborigines and women from political and economic power. Likewise, it is important to look at attitudes towards Aboriginal people in the context of attitudes towards other minority ethnic groups (it is one of the weaknesses of Creating a Nation that while relations between Aborigines and Whites are extensively examined, ethnic relations more generally are rather neglected). By comparing attitudes towards different ethnic groups the broad outlines of dominant racial ideologies can be more easily delineated, while at the same time it becomes clearer what is specific about the experience of each group.

When Aboriginal history is separated from the rest of Australian history these kinds of links and influences become less apparent. A general history of Australia which treated Aboriginal history as part of the central narrative without rendering Aborigines invisible, including them only sporadically and tokenistically, or including them through a conservative 'we're all Australians' approach would be very valuable. Far from erasing the distinctiveness of their experience it could instead highlight the particularity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal experiences, just as Creating a Nation highlights throughout the particularity of women's and men's experiences.

Creating a Nation makes an important contribution to the writing of Australian history, and I hope it will inspire future writers of general histories of Australia to try new approaches and incorporate new types of history. Creating a Nation does not make earlier general histories obsolete; indeed, since it is largely written in response to these earlier histories it could be productively read in conjunction with them. Furthermore, since it is mostly thematic and interpretive rather than narrative in approach, those who are new to the study of Australian history will need to refer to more conventional narrative histories for additional information about people and events mentioned in passing. Unfortunately, Creating a Nation itself is less than helpful in directing readers to other sources on Australian history. Its endnotes are disappointingly sparse; there is no indication, for
example, of where the information for McGrath's excellent discussion of Aboriginal labour history came from. The endnotes aside, though, the book is easy to use and has a good index. It is well-written, and sprinkled with interesting vignettes about the experiences of particular people which help to bring history to life.

No doubt conservatives, if they bother to read Creating a Nation at all, will dismiss it as another example of 'the black armband school of history'. As I write the conservative backlash is being reflected in attempts to remove the word 'invasion' from sections of the draft New South Wales primary school syllabus which deal with the arrival of the British in Australia. In the face of such a backlash, and of the use of Australian history by the major protagonists on both sides of the republican debate to project a conservative, undifferentiated 'Australian identity', books such as this are more necessary than ever.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Saunders, Kay and Evans, Raymond 1992, 'Introduction' in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation, Sydney, pp. xvii-xxiv.

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The primary aim of Aboriginal Australia is, in the words of its editors, to offer a 'realistic and favourable' representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Its goal is to challenge non-Aboriginal Australians to examine their own understandings about indigenous Australians; in particular to reflect in a critical way upon those popular stereotypes which have prevented Europeans from actually seeing the uniqueness, the diversity and the survivability of Aboriginal culture - to redress, in other words, a fundamental and persisting failure, not just of will, but of vision.

In the terms which the book has set itself, i.e. to provide an Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies for (particularly) non-Aboriginal readers, Aboriginal Australia is a splendid success. It has four immediate virtues for which all of the contributors (mainly academics associated with the University of South Australia and the South Australian Museum) and more especially the editors deserve our admiration.

First, the book has an exemplary structure. After three more general chapters which look at ways in which Aboriginality has been - historically and contemporaneously - imagined and constructed by Europeans, each of the succeeding chapters examines in
detail an aspect of the life of indigenous Australians in pre-contact, colonial and post-colonial conditions. The aspects addressed include: demography, the law, spirituality, family structures, environment, language, health, education, art, economics and politics. In other words, the book is deliberately and ideally structured for educational purposes. It begins with some challenging critical reflections (two from Eleanor Bourke, one from Steve Hemming) on the way that our knowledge of what constitutes Aboriginality derives from an almost exclusively European vision and epistemology and then proceeds to build on that re-orientation of vision by showing us the detailed reality of indigenous existence from indigenous perspectives. This is not only a sound pedagogical strategy (important for a book to be used in the Open Learning TV program in Aboriginal Studies) but it also provides in the book as a whole a judicious balance of comprehensiveness and philosophical enquiry on the one hand and selective and focussed information and analysis on the other.

Second, while the perspective(s) adopted by the contributors to the book are universally indigenous ones, *Aboriginal Australia* delivers fairly and ethically on its claim to be an 'Introductory' Reader. It maintains an impressive academic and ethical rigour throughout. It presents those coming to the matter of Aboriginal Studies for the first time with the basic data they need within a framework of vision that is committed, certainly, but never slanted, intolerant or closed. Thus if the reader wants a basic introduction to Aboriginal spirituality and cosmology (Bill Edwards), or the - to European eyes - sometimes bewildering intricacy of kinship and family patterns (Colin Bourke and Bill Edwards), or the evolving attempts at political self-determination and economic autonomy (David Roberts), or the essence of the Mabo decision and its political implications (chapters by Edwards and Roberts), or the historical and contemporary condition of Aboriginal health and ill-health (Jenny Burden), then they will find it achieved here in clear, uncluttered and authoritative exposition.

The third impressive virtue of *Aboriginal Australia* is its thematic unity. Despite the majority of its chapters being devoted to single issues, a sense of focus is maintained through the recurrence in almost every site of analysis of two or three central themes. The diversity that underlies the supravening notion of Aboriginal communal and cultural life, for example, arises in chapter after chapter, nowhere more excellently illustrated than in Rob Amery and Colin Bourke's account of the number and variation in Aboriginal languages (270 at the point of contact) and dialects (over 600) and in Franchesca Alberts and Christopher Anderson's vigorous analysis of Aboriginal art and its constant adaptability to environment and new materials and media. The other recurring themes which come through most strongly are: the sheer durability or survivability of Aboriginal culture in the face of the European onslaught; the essentiality of land and the implications of the rupture of the bond between community and land (Colin Bourke & Helen Cox, and Bill Edwards); the incapacity of the Europeans to see, to actually envision what was there before them in the language and the life of the people (Olga Gostin and Elwin Chong); and the whole matter of ownership and control - not just of materio-spiritual entities such as the land itself - but of knowledge and the imagery and (mis)representation of Aboriginality, including its institutionalisation through education (Steve Hemming and Howard Groome).

Finally - the fourth manifest virtue of *Aboriginal Australia* - the book is well-written. The style is clear and accessible, the tone committed and passionate but never strident or accusatory. The importance of tone and style of address cannot be overestimated for a book with the aims and the wide potential readership that this one has (general readers here and overseas, as well as tertiary and secondary students, most of whom will be non-Aboriginal). The trick with such texts is to strike the right balance between provoking one's
readers - to reflection and self-analysis - and inviting them to share a different and potentially liberating 'other' vision. Indeed, as a non-Aboriginal reader, my own reaction to reading *Aboriginal Australia* precisely reflected this tension. I was, on the one hand, 'provoked' by the singular experienced of finding myself represented as the exotic other, but on the other I felt also constantly the subject of invitation. I was, in effect, being invited to take off my European glasses, to look around the land that I lived in - and to see.

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Peggy Brock is already known to many readers of Aboriginal History through her work on Poonindie Mission *Aboriginal History* 14, and through her book *Yura and Udnyu; a history of the Adnyamathanha of the North Flinders Ranges*, Adelaide 1985. The present volume revisits some of the same ground as these earlier publications: it is basically a history of three mission stations, Poonindie on Eyre Peninsula, Koonibba near Ceduna, and Nepabunna in the North Flinders Ranges. The emphasis of the present work however is different, it mainly serves to show what devastatingly dull and isolated places these missions were, truly ghetto-like in the way they removed Aboriginal people from the normal life of other Australians. The negative aspects of mission life are emphasised in the early chapters of the work. Thus we read regarding Koonibba p.82: 'the training and socialising of young children was being undermined by the mission school', and 'the mission made inroads into the camps'. It is however clear that in general the missionaries were operating amid a society that was in disarray and that their 'inroads' had many positive aspects. The criticisms are modified later on in the work (p.163): 'Some children's homes and dormitories might seem like prisons but for most adults a major fear was being banned rather than being retained on the institution'.

The history of Poonindie is of particular importance as it illustrates graphically the sense of home that the missions did manage to give, and consequently the great loss felt by Aboriginal people when a mission station to which they have had allegiance is closed, and particularly if they are dispersed and forced to live with people from another area.

As always Peggy Brock's work is both meticulous and broadly based: it is derived from research in public archives and missionary records as well as from personal letters and recollections of individuals. The work contains a number of short biographies and brief family histories. They are summaries of facts rather than oral history accounts and they therefore lack the spontaneity of personal narrative. These biographical sections will nevertheless be greatly appreciated by Aboriginal people, and especially by those who are writing up their own family histories. What emerges from these accounts is that on the whole life in outback towns was even harsher than on the missions. The general impression in the end is that the missions, however narrow-minded, did their utmost to give young people a good education. This applies quite particularly to Koonibba, and many eminent Aboriginal people were able to build on this early education to achieve success in later life.

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BOOK REVIEWS


This book was first published in 1975 as a polemic against Australian racism, and against an alleged failure of academics to recognise the historical roots of that racism. It has now been resurrected, with a new polemical preface, this time directed against so-called 'accommodationist' interpretations of the relations between white Australians and ethnic minority groups. In 1975, the target may have been well chosen; and there may have been valid historiographic and political reasons for publishing such a detailed recitation of violent actions and derogatory remarks by white colonial Queenslanders against Aboriginal, Melanesian and Chinese peoples. But for the purposes that Evans, Saunders and Cronin have declared in their 1993 preface, the book simply misses the mark.

For the intervening second edition of 1988, Evans and Saunders wrote a preface which located the book within the political and historiographic concerns of the early 1970s, admitting to its 'striidency of style' and its 'passionate intent'. Such remarks scarcely constitute a justification for re-publication, particularly while contemporaneous works - such as Rowley's trilogy and Reece's *Aborigines and Colonists* - remain out of print. But at least they explain something about the book and the context in which it was conceived. The 1993 preface, on the other hand, is little more than special pleading for a return to the good old days of academic radicalism, when the battle lines were clearly drawn and the enemy was easily identified; when good historians and true knew what needed to be said on behalf of the oppressed and what needed to be left out.

Prefaces and bibliographies aside, the text of all three editions remains the same. In the preface to the second edition, Evans and Saunders explained that the book was reproduced 'in its original form to stand as a durable artefact - as a conscientious product of its time'. For the new edition, they have changed tactics, fortifying themselves within their conflict model of Australian 'race relations' and defiantly declaring: 'We are ... sticking to our interpretative guns'. More than this, they argue that the history of interactions between white Australians, Aborigines, Melanesians and Chinese should, properly, be devoted to the issues of 'exclusion, exploitation and extermination'; other themes, insofar as they may be mentioned at all, must never be allowed to occupy the centre stage of academic analysis.

Much of the 1993 preface is devoted to criticising the work of 'accommodationist' historians who, by emphasising the agency of Aborigines, have supposedly 'marginalize[d] or den[ied] the ubiquity of force, conflict and violence' in the colonial encounter. Prime villains here are Ann McGrath and Marie Fels, with Bob Reece, Bain Attwood and Gordon Reid cast in subsidiary roles. Evans, Saunders and Cronin appear to be under the misapprehension that these writers constitute some sort of distinct 'school'; so much so that they cite a disagreement between McGrath and Reid as if it were evidence of weaknesses in their respective arguments. More importantly they seem unable to grasp the fact that the 'accommodationist' historians have revealed something of the complexity of interactions between Europeans and non-Europeans in Australia. By their denunciations of such writings, Evans *et al.* appear to wish to strip away that complexity, to entrench a simpler, dualistic model of coloniser and colonised, victor and vanquished.

In their 1993 preface, they maintain that the book does give due recognition to the active engagement of Aborigines, Melanesians and Chinese with the colonial power.
Certainly, there are references to Aboriginal resistance, Melanesian violence and Chinese strikes; but these are always depicted in simple oppositional terms, as if the motives of the resisters and strikers can be read off as self-evident, as merely the inverse of those attributed to the dominant whites. This unreflective usage of the concept of resistance, for example, has led Evans to apply the terms to any instance of Aboriginal activity which could be considered inimical to the interests of white settlers. Such a usage does nothing to illuminate the dynamics of the colonial encounter, and merely perpetuates a simplistic interpretation in terms of a convenient and conventional dichotomy. So attached are Evans and his co-authors to this loose concept of resistance that they take to task Fels and Reid for their denial 'that stock raidings by Aborigines represent clear examples of frontier resistance'. Surely, 'stock raidings' are clear examples of nothing but attempts to kill or harass sheep and cattle. A thousand different plausible motives could be suggested, only some of which would fall within any normal definition of 'resistance'.

The new introduction is at least stimulating and thought-provoking. After it, the book itself comes as an anticlimax. Page after tedious page recounts massacres and bashings, denigration and abuse: all strangely decontextualised snippets pasted together into a pastiche which purports to be an analysis of colonial racism. Little attempt is made to interrogate the allegedly 'racist' utterances of colonial Queenslanders for the significances and meanings they may once have held. Instead, the reader is conducted into a crudely contrived chamber of horrors, in which the nastiness of Queenslanders from the past is hung up for display. At the end of the book, a short section entitled 'Racism in colonial Queensland' by Raymond Evans raises the analytical standard somewhat. But even here, the analysis is pedestrian, as Evans attempts a critique of racism without any critique of the concept of race itself.

Moreover, Evans' Saunders' and Cronin's adherence to a simple, dualistic model of conflict, between Aborigines or Melanesians or Chinese on the one hand and Europeans on the other, places them uncomfortably close to the very racial theorists of the late nineteenth century whose works they decry. The impression they consistently convey is of two 'racial' entities in collision, from which one emerges triumphant, the other virtually obliterated. The late nineteenth century theorists, of course, celebrated the victors; Evans et al. commiserate with the vanquished. Yet there is an intellectual continuity between the two. Both imagine history as the violent collision of 'races'.

Had the new introduction been published alone, perhaps with modifications as a journal article, it would have made interesting and provocative reading. To re-publish the entire book is excessive; for more than anything else it illustrates just how limp yesterday's polemics can look. As a counter to more recent historical scholarship, the book has little to offer. Evans, Saunders and Cronin may well be 'sticking to [their] interpretative guns'. But their book reveals that at the end of the barrel there is merely a cork with a string tied on.

Russell McGregor
James Cook University of North Queensland
**BOOK REVIEWS**


Born in 1899 in rural New South Wales, he died in Miami, Florida 73 years later after leading an exemplary life as one of the most renowned and sought after circus artists and vaudeville performers of his era. Con Colleano was raised as a circus child in a family with 10 siblings of convict and Aboriginal descent. His feats of skill and daring along with those of his sister Winnie are recognised by the Circus Hall of Fame in Sarasota, Florida. Only one other Australian has been accorded that honour. This book tells of his life in an enchanting fashion which enticed me to lay aside Peter Corris and read the *Wizard of Wire* in one late winter's night sitting warmed by the pot-bellied stove.

The narrative leads one into the story of the Sullivan family by way of a description of the bush shows and the role of Aboriginal people in that early entertainment industry. Then focus shifts to Julia and Con Sullivan and their many talented children who performed as the Colleano Circus. The family circus travelled across outback New South Wales from time to time being cut off by flood waters requiring the performers to live for weeks on rabbits. It was under these Australian circumstances that the family developed routines which led to performances in Sydney and then on to the international big top.

Con was a striking figure who perfected the forward somersault which he presented to the circus public in New York under most dramatic circumstances to be rewarded by a standing ovation and a lifetime of recognition as the greatest wirewalker of his times. For those of you who have never tried it, I advise you not to. Stick with a simple backward somersault as it is far easier, you can see the wire to position your feet before landing. When going forward you have to land on a wire you cannot see. The wire is under considerable tension and a near miss brings injury at the least, and death or a crippling injury is always a possibility.

The author, Mark StLeon is to be recommended for this excellent book. StLeon is an Australian circus family and perhaps it is fitting that the Colleano story should be told by circus voices, as it is in the circus where origins are not everything, but your skills and contribution to that way of life are everything. Is it then fair to ask questions of this book, such as how would the story have differed if it had been written from an Aboriginal perspective as black voices are not featured? After all, Aboriginal people know about the Colleano family. My first inkling of this great performer was at Collarenabri when sitting under a pepper tree Con's name was mentioned and his feats were recalled. What a revelation and story waiting to be told! His name was stored away in my mind and some years later I acquired a postage stamp-sized photograph of Con which to this day is on my bulletin board. Thankfully StLeon with a wealth of circus lore, without academic pretensions of writing Aboriginal history, and a number of publications to his credit including *Spangles & Sawdust: The circus in Australia*, took up the challenge and pleasure of piecing the story together. For me the book brings on a lingering sadness for that glorious era of the circus and its free spirits, now commemorated at the Baraboo winter quarters of Barnum & Bailey only spitting distance from my childhood home. Knowing that Australian Aboriginal society made a substantial contribution to the international circus industry leads one to wonder what other quiet Black achievers lie hidden, their stories untold.

Brian Egloff
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This important work, brought to completion with the help of John Stanton, must be considered the crowning achievement of the great partnership of R.M. and C. Berndt. The fieldwork was begun by Ronald Berndt in 1939, and continued by him and Catherine in 1942 and 1943. It was therefore amongst their earliest joint enterprises and sadly this publication was to be their last.

The period of the forties and fifties was a critical time for traditional Aboriginal cultures, as some of the most brilliant Aboriginal elders were still alive: and even in an area of early European settlement such as the lower Murray there were such people who carried in their memory detailed knowledge that had been handed down to them, knowledge of 'a world that was' before Europeans came. In the case of the Yaraldi of the lower Murray there was a particularly fortunate turn of events in that Albert Karloan (b. 1864), the last fully initiated Yaraldi man, became a friend of the Berndts. He had been keenly interested in traditions since his early youth and therefore represented a closer link with the past than might have been expected from someone born so long after European settlement. There was also the famous Pinkie Mack (b. 1869), an outstanding singer, Mark Wilson and other knowledgeable people, who were eager to help.

The Berndts intended to write up their findings long ago, but never got a chance on account of their many other commitments. As the reviewer knows only too well there are difficulties in working on materials after a long interval. There is danger of being caught in a time-warp: one goes back to thinking in terms of the days of long ago, without taking note of recent developments in one's discipline. One can also arrive at an opposite view, one can be glad that the work was not completed long ago, because in the light of increased knowledge things can be seen in a broader perspective. This latter situation is what has clearly happened to the Berndts. Their work in many other parts of Australia has made them aware of the uniqueness of Yaraldi culture. This is one of the most important aspects of the book. Because of the strong survival of traditions in the Western Desert and because of pan-Aboriginality the great diversity of Aboriginal culture is sometimes lost from sight. This appears in ways of making a living - Yaraldi people lived in an environment of relative plenty. They had developed a sophisticated system of justice and a council, and the position of women approached equality.

The wealth and depth of information in this book is unbelievable, with details on kinship, genealogies, food gathering and hunting techniques, the life cycle from birth to death, ceremony and song, rules and justice, and the importance of mawi, spiritual power. There are maps of clan-territories and placenames. There is a detailed account of a number of important myths, particularly that of Ngurunderi. It might have been easier to follow the path of these myths if there had been special maps or possibly also some illustrations showing major sites. On other topics the illustrations in the book are superb. Even on very old photos the majority of the people are identified, which adds immensely to the significance of the photos from the historical and personal angle.

There are many valuable diagrams, mainly drawn by Albert Karloan himself or based on his information. These range from details of cutting up meat and fish, from the manufacture of nets and implements to the movement of some stars in the Milky Way.

The appendix contains 163 texts in Yaraldi. This is the only part of the work where there are problems, and clearly no linguist has been consulted. Anyone looking at these texts, which are most important and unique in content, would not realise that the Yaraldi
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language had several whole series of sounds which are not represented, such as retroflex and dental consonants. No distinctions is made between the two r-sounds. You could not guess that these texts are in a complex language with an intricate system of verbal suffixes, nominal cases and possessive markers. There would have been excellent phonological and grammatical information dating back to the days of Meyer (1840), then Taplin, and more recently Yallop and Grimwade (1975). The glosses correspond to the general meaning but not to the actual words, thus mimin, mimini and miminil are all translated as 'woman' without regard to case, similarly kon, koni and konild are all translated as 'man'. In other instances suffixes are detached from both nouns and verbs and are treated as separate words. This is a pity in view of the fact that we still have much to learn about Yaraldi and Albert Karloan was evidently a completely fluent speaker.

A World that was is a truly remarkable book, one that will be studied and appreciated for years to come. It will be welcomed not only by anthropologists but by all interested in Australian traditions, and particularly by people of Narrinyeri descent who maintain links with their culture. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the Berndts and to John Stanton.

LIST OF REFERENCES


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Some linguists, particularly during the last decade, were apt to make comments trivialising work on dictionaries of Aboriginal languages: they regarded such work as mechanical data-collecting which could be done by amateurs, and was somehow equivalent to stamp-collecting. We know such opinions to be false, but if ever we wanted a brilliant practical demonstration of quite how false they are, this dictionary is it.

Barry Alpher is a highly regarded scholar in the field of Aboriginal languages and his main interest for a long time has been Yir-Yiront, a language from the western side of Cape York Peninsula. The number of speakers is diminishing fast, and they are mainly centred on Kowanyama, formerly Mitchell River Mission. His original analysis of the language was begun in 1966 and was completed as a thesis in 1973, but this was never published. Alpher has continued work on the language since then, collecting and analysing many texts, which form an important corpus in the archives of the Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. The present work gives us the first comprehensive view of the language. The introduction contains what Alpher modestly calls a 'sketch' of the language: it is in fact a brief but excellent, clear and readable study of the grammar of Yir-Yiront. For those who, like the reviewer, are not familiar with Cape York languages, it
might have been interesting if a section on phonotactics had been included. The introduction furthermore contains unique ethnographic material, including a detailed account of the kinship system. There are also some important selected domain lists: plants, birds and quantity terms. There are about 200 botanical terms, reliably identified from specimens, and about 100 birds names. Clearly no effort has been spared in attaining a superb degree of thoroughness and accuracy.

The dictionary itself is far from being a simple list of words. Each item is shown in its context by a variety of sample sentences. This means that we have a record of the idiomatic phrases and standard expressions that are characteristic of Yir-Yiront. The most important aspect of the dictionary from the point of view of most linguists however is the etymological information, given for words that have known cognates in other Aboriginal languages. Alpher points out which words are Pama-Nyungan and which are derived from Proto-Paman, ie, which are shared by other Cape York languages, and which are Pama-maric, ie. shared by Paman and some of the Maric languages of Queensland. This is a major contribution to comparative studies: anyone interested in the history of Pama-Nyungan languages will find the etymological data indispensable. The reviewer has heard several colleagues commenting that they have already benefited from Alphers comparative information. The reviewer too has learnt much, but cannot resist wanting to make a few obscure minor additions, as for instance:

The word *kow* 'nose' (p. 204), derived from Proto-Paman *kuwu has cognates far away in the south along the Murray River: Yota-Yota has *kowo* for 'nose', Yita-Yita has *kap*, and Yaralde from the Murray mouth has *kope*.

*kathn* 'yam stick', from Proto-Paman *katjin has cognates in the Thura-Yura languages of South Australia, eg. Kuyani *katha*, Adnyamathanha *atha*, Kaurna *katta*.

The word *kaampa* 'to cook' is even more widespread than indicated: it occurs further afield than the Centralian and Western languages, in languages as far apart as Wanyi from the Nicholson River and the Thura-Yura languages of South Australia. Others too will no doubt want to make similar minor additions, but this is simply because the present work is so fascinating and is part of a developing field of study.

The Yir-Yiront dictionary is unquestionably a book of major importance, a model of what a dictionary can be. There is only one thing wrong with it, and that is the high price: this puts it out of the reach of the average person at Kowanyama and the average student. Unfortunately this is inevitable as it is a large, beautifully produced work on acid-free paper, and it really will endure.

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This review looks at two biographical books - one, Wayne Coolwell's My Kind of People and the other Evelyn Crawford's Over my Tracks. Both are books intended for a popular readership.
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Coolwell's book is a record of interviews with Aboriginal people who have succeeded in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal terms. People such as football players, journalists and artists talk about their lives and their understanding of what their Aboriginality means to them. These understandings present differently in people's lives. For Mark Ella, Aboriginality is a matter of personal pride but not of public politics. Gordon Bennet discovered his Aboriginality as an adult and uses his art as a political tool to rewrite Australia's racial history. Ernie Dingo consciously focuses his comedy routines on racist and negative assumptions about Aboriginal people in order to confront his audience with these assumptions.

Evelyn Crawford's autobiography tells her story of growing up in western NSW. Born about 1920, (her birth entered in the station stock book with the calves and foals), she spent the early part of her life as a stockworker, then settled on the banks of the river at Brewarrina to raise her nine children while her husband travelled back and forth as a drover. After his death she worked in education. Her book gives a view of the possibilities of life for western NSW Aboriginal people; the relative freedom of stockwork and life on the riverbank, contrasted to the destructive pressures of the Protection Board, especially that of mission life. I was conscious of the much more restricted life of Jimmie Barker, who spent most of his adult life as a mission inmate in the same area, or the lives of others on missions such as Erambie further east. Evelyn's life was at times extraordinarily difficult; she describes droving a plant of horses up into western Queensland accompanied only by her two year old daughter slung in a saddlebag beside her; rowing alone across the river to Brewarrina hospital while in labour for the birth of most of her children. The difficulties, because of her independence, become for the reader heroic and exhilarating rather than tragic, as do the lives of many mission inmates. Evelyn's account of growing up in south western Queensland and north west NSW shows some differences from the rest of NSW. Here the opportunity for skilled stockwork that did not require a formal education combined with the relative population sizes of black and white produced a quite positive life for many Aboriginal people, and allowed as late as the 1920s the passing on of much traditional education. However the shadow of bureaucratic control was not absent from Evelyn's life. One of the most remarkable passages in the book describes the flight from Brewarrina mission of a group of fair skinned children to the possible safety of relatives in south west Queensland. The parents believed with good reason that the children were likely to be taken away to institutions; so when Evelyn's parents left the Mission the children were smuggled out and followed the Crawford parents, by travelling through the bush. One was reminded of stories of escapes in occupied Europe. It is a most graphic instance of the 'alternative history' experienced by Aboriginal people in Australia.

Coolwell's book is lightweight; its style is personal and informal. Crawford's book gives the reader the chance to know something of the life of a courageous and independent woman. However the significance of the books is something beyond any individual virtues they might have. Both books are for the popular market, where in most part the readers are operating as far as the history of Aboriginal people in an information vacuum. There is almost no understanding of the indigenous history of south-eastern Australia, and only an unlocalised and a historical perception of indigenous culture. Even now, most schools do not provide any meaningful Aboriginal history. For many people their understanding of recent Aboriginal history has come from biographies - from Ruby Langford Ginibi, Jimmie Barker, Sally Morgan, Glenyse Ward and many others, some of which have had small and local sales, others national and international exposure. This historical ignorance is expressed in a stereotyped understanding of Aboriginality. As a teacher of Aboriginal studies at a tertiary level I am aware of this level of stereotype at which most of my
students operated in their understanding of Aboriginal society. For them, Aboriginal people were either victims, objects of compassion or scorn, or traditional people, objects of curiosity or possibly veneration. (They were amazed when I told them that Stan Grant, media presenter and one of the subjects in Coolwell's book, was a Wiradjuri man. He did not fit their stereotype of a 'real Aborigine'). It is an enlightening thought to consider that it would be difficult to imagine such a book as Coolwell's being published on any other ethnic group in Australia, implying as it does that it is 'normal' to be successful and Aboriginal. (Although possibly a book on something like 'women business executives' would be a parallel exercise.)

Crawford's book provides a personal understanding of that 'alternative history' that Aboriginal Australians have experienced, through the life of a person the reader would find both sympathetic and credible. For the immediate future, such books provide an understanding for the general public of Aboriginal history, an understanding that they are unlikely to find elsewhere.

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Mabo: A legal publishing revolution?

In Australia university law reviews are still a relatively unknown American import. Their slow growth started two decades after Fred Rodell explained why he did 'not care to contribute further to the qualitatively moribund while quantitatively mushroom-like literature of the law.' The Australian first nations have made relatively few appearances on their pages. A check under the entry 'Australian Aborigines' in the Index to Legal Periodicals, which indexes 620, or most, legal journals published in the English language, shows 66 entries between 1981 and the end of 1993. Before 1993 only 21 articles appear under this entry for Australian university law reviews. The frequency varies from peaks of 4 articles in 1992 and 1985 to troughs of none in 1982 and 1984. As recently as 1988 there was twice the number of articles published in university law reviews under this entry in the United States of America than in Australia. This may not reflect the depth of American concern for indigenous peoples as indicate the present size of Rodell's fungus.

In 1993 everything changed utterly. Two law reviews, on whose pages indigenous peoples rarely appeared, the University of Queensland Law Journal and the Sydney Law Review, produced special editions dealing with a single subject matter, Mabo v Queensland (No 2) 'the Murray Islands Land Rights case', containing 23 articles in all. Another law review, the University of New South Wales Law Journal, also published a special issue

1 Rodell 1991: 100-105. The article was first published in (1936-7) 23 Virginia Law Review 38.
2 (1992) 66 ALJR 408.
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dealing generally with issues of significance to indigenous peoples. Four of its 9 articles dealt with the case. The total of 27 articles published on this one case in these three reviews in 1993 is 6 more than the 21 indexed between 1981 and 1992, of which only one was on the Murray Islands Land Rights case.

By 1993 this case was a marketable commodity. Both reviews were transformed from the motley of their everyday covers. They appeared as paper back collections in glossy and colourful wrappers in the same bookshops as their literary cousins: \textit{Meanjin} and \textit{Southerly}.

\textbf{A tale of two titles}

The second thing a reader notices are the two titles. The Law Book Co, a commercial legal publisher, has chosen a title which prosaically but accurately describes the contents. The University of Queensland Press, an academic and a non-legal publisher, has chosen the startling phrase, 'a judicial revolution', which catches the consumer's attention and also prejudges the issues.

Nettheim, on the back cover of University of Queensland Press book congratulated the editors of it for 'producing the first book "off the rank"'. The book also encapsulates other metaphors from the taxi industry: the ethical values of the 'cab rank principle', used by the common law, permeate it. Redgum pointed out to non-indigenous Australians the problems with taxis:

Down at the port there's a sick black mum

Rings for a taxi but the taxi wont come.\textsuperscript{3}

Not everyone can afford the fare to attract the 'cab rank rule'. The taxi rank in Alice Springs and the adjacent Eager's lawn, on which Aboriginal people wait under the frequent harassment of the Northern Territory police, show that, as an indigenous person even if you have the fare, it is not always easy to get a place in the queue. Unless you have a recognised \textit{right} to be vindicated the drivers of the common law's taxis have no interest in you. The academic writers in this volume appear to extend their sympathy to those who previously had their rights carried in those taxis now that they will queue and share with indigenous peoples. Did the same social forces which keep Aboriginal people off Eager's lawn also keep indigenous peoples out of the pages of university law reviews?

The articles in the two law reviews published in Sydney are generally sympathetic to the decision and less willing to foresee difficult problems with its results. The general absence of indigenous peoples from the pages of law reviews makes it uncertain whether this reflects a wider difference in the legal culture between the south eastern capitals and the cities which are closer to the resources frontier.

\textbf{Mabo: a judicial revolution?}

The academic writers of a number of the articles in \textit{Mabo: A judicial revolution} challenge the power of the High Court to reach the result it did in the Murray Island Land Rights case.

R.D. Lumb gives the flavour to the title of the book.\textsuperscript{4} His argument that the decision is revolutionary has been answered by Nettheim.\textsuperscript{5} Lumb, in his concluding section, echoes Sir Harry Gibbs in the Foreword in describing the decision as 'the high point of judicial activism'. He criticises the High Court for relying on international standards, unless they are incorporated into domestic law by legislation, and the judge's understanding of the

\textsuperscript{3} Schumann: 53.

\textsuperscript{4} Lumb, during the period the case was before the High Court had argued against any finding of the kind which resulted, Lumb 1988: 273-284.

\textsuperscript{5} Nettheim 1993: 1-26.
'aspirations of the Australian people'. Nettheim makes the point that this understates the extent to which the decision was made on the careful evaluation of precedent in the common law tradition.\(^6\) The international standard used by the High Court has been imported into domestic law by the *Racial Discrimination Act*, 1975. Even if it had not been, international standards have been imported into the common law before. It is true that the judges did not inform themselves on the aspirations of the Australian people on native title. There is no evidence that judges did so when the customs of the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes and Normans were culled to form the common law or when they made law in the centuries which followed.\(^7\) Judges act every day on their understanding of the values of the 'reasonable person' in the community with no additional evidence of those values. To deny the judges this methodology towards the end of the common law's first millennium is revolutionary. In the final paragraph Lumb uses one of the standard arguments of the common law for doing nothing. It is known from its other metaphorical form as the 'floodgates argument'. However he refers to the possible extension of the principles from land to other aspects of the customary law of the indigenous Australians as opening up a 'Pandora's box.' This seems to be an offensive way to speak of the laws of the first Australians whose society was described by Blackburn J as 'a government of laws, and not of men.'\(^8\)

Moëns, while being careful to say that he does not question the moral justification for the Murray Islands Land Rights case, concludes that the court engaged in a 'revisionist view of the applicable common law and constitutes an example of political, as opposed to judicial, policy-making.' He is concerned that this will have 'profound negative implications' for the judiciary and the rule of law. The High Court failed to respond cautiously to changes in community values and attitudes and, in reversing long standing precedents, retrospectively altered legal relationships established by those precedents. He states 'the majority arrogated to themselves the role of leaders, with responsibility for discarding common law rules that are not in accord with international mores'. Moëns fails to anticipate the perspectives, drawn from legal theory, of Detmold in *Essays on the Mabo decision* which are impliedly critical of his views.\(^9\)

Moëns does not explain how one distinguishes between a political and a judicial policy. This is a long and unresolved issue in the common law. In the late eighteenth century the rationalist tradition, which gave judges greater freedom and more scope to reason from political principles, generated tension with the formalist tradition which restricted the criteria to be used by judges in making law.\(^9\) Legal theorists still debate the issue. Dworkin's theories support Moëns on the wider point about judges and political decision making but Dworkin acknowledges that judges are entitled to take into account political policies which relate to the protection of the rights of individuals. The Murray Island Land Rights case fits into this category.\(^10\) Moëns fails to recognise that requiring judges to decide cases in his way does not remove political considerations but effectively requires them to make decisions which reflect the political values of yesterday.\(^11\) He also fails to recognise the extent to which the common law has been affected by international mores in the past. The common law's greatest treasure, the privilege against self-incrimination, is not a home grown product but an import from a European *ius commune*

\(^6\) Nettheim 1993: 18.
\(^8\) *Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd*, (1971) 17 FLR 141, 267.
\(^10\) Cotterell 1989: 171-172, 219-220; see also Bell 1983: 204-225.
\(^11\) Hall 1972: 399; see also Devlin 1976: 1.
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adopted by common law judges in the face of the opposition of the crown. In terms of altering legal relationships the decision only affected land grants since 1975 and the Native Title Act 1993 has removed from individuals and placed on governments any adverse consequences.

O'Hair searches for a 'golden thread' in an economic analysis of the decision. It eludes him in a confused legal and historical argument that indigenous peoples were enemy aliens. While a war of conquest appears to have been fought in many parts of Australia it is difficult to see on what basis he argues that the Meriam people were treated as enemies or aliens after the annexation of their islands in 1879. A more convincing analysis of historical legal material leads Nettheim in Essays on the Mabo decision to conclude that there is some potential to argue that indigenous peoples in Australia were seen as domestic dependent nations. O'Hair arrives at the simplistic conclusion that the native title recognised by the High Court is inferior as it is not a fee simple and cannot to be sold to individuals: 'Why should people on Meriam Island (sic) not be able to sell up and get out, simply because of the colour of their skin?' He ignores much that is well known: that in the 1990s a fee simple in Australia does not confer many rights, that equating indigenous ownership in accordance with indigenous law with a bare fee simple may in itself be inherently discriminatory in failing to recognise the greater interests held under customary law and a large body of literature on the use of individual rights to deny the group rights of first nations.

Stephenson sees the decision as challenging the doctrine of tenures and thereby introducing a new element into the dimensions of Australian land law. The doctrine of tenures is the basis of the feudal land law the British brought to Australia: all land is held ultimately as a result of a crown grant from the sovereign as paramount lord. She notes that Toohey J found that there was another basis for the claim succeeding, the presumption from occupation at the time of the accession of sovereignty of a fee simple. The significance of this to the doctrine of tenures is not recognised by her although it is mentioned by Pearson in his article. Toohey J in arriving at that conclusion relied on the work of McNeil, Common law native title. McNeil argues that in England the doctrine of tenures was recognised as a legal fiction. Land owners under the Anglo-Saxon kings continued to own land under the Norman kings without a new grant. This is confirmed by the existence of a number of legal processes for determining what title the crown had to land which recognised the fiction underlying the doctrine. The doctrine in England accommodated land titles which existed before the Norman conquest. The doctrine in Australia also now accommodates land titles which preceded the British conquest.

Forbes continues the criticisms made by Gibbs. In addition he sees significance in the fact that individual Meriam people owned gardens which distinguishes the facts from any which could be found on the mainland. But the common law itself has precedents which show that there were valid collective rights in the gardens of the cradle of the common law, the Inns of Court, which permitted access to them by non-barristers. Puri and Mulqueeny deal with some of the contents of Lumb's Pandora's box. Puri considers whether the courts will recognise indigenous laws about cultural property, which he calls 'folklore'. Mulqueeny considers whether the courts can now recognise customary laws in

12 MacNair 1990: 66; see also Helmholz 1990: 962-963.
15 Grant v Kearney (1823) 12 Price 773 where a claim to perambulate the Liberty of the Rolls was found to give a right to walk through the kitchen gardens of Lincoln's Inn.
criminal procedures. Both are inconclusive and suggest that material originally cut for different purposes was restitched.

Brennan, Pearson, Reynolds and Keon-Cohen are supportive of the decision. Their articles are sandwiched between those which seek to identify problems with the decision or the way in which it fractures existing legal structures. They are used by the editors to create a pattern of alternating views in the book but it does not amount to a dialogue. Brennan gives a clear account of the decision and its consequences. Logically his article should start the book but it follows the article by Lumb. Pearson contrasts the difference of emphasis in the judgements of Brennan J. and Dean and Gaudron JJ. In Brennan J.'s analysis governments dispossessed indigenous Australians and a moral obligation is now seen to rest on government. Deane and Gaudron JJ. accuse the common law itself and consequently impose an obligation on judges as law makers to address the resulting injustice. Reynolds sets out an argument from historical documents that the reservation in favour of Aboriginal people on pastoral leases may have preserved native title. This is such a useful argument that the Native Title Act 1993 has attempted to preclude or limit its effect. Keon-Cohen demonstrates how the laws of evidence will have to change to respond to the hearsay contained in statements about personal rights and customs in an oral culture. As the common law has its roots in custom there are echoes of its own origin and the already existing exceptions to the hearsay rule based on necessity.

Essays on the Mabo decision

Less respectful of seniority this book opens with a clinical exposition of the judgements by Phillips to provide a background to the articles which follow.

Sharpe is one of the few people to write of the findings of Moynihan J. in the Supreme Court of Queensland. She describes his cultural bound and social evolutionist perception in which the gardeners of Murray Island are seen as more advanced than the Yolngu in the Gove Land Rights case. She also shows how he excluded from consideration the religious dimension of the Meriam people with the land and dismissed their synthesis of the law of Malo with Christianity and reduced their connection to the land to an economic one. She believes, consequently, that they were fortunate that the judge discerned some resemblances to his concepts, based on the common law, of title to land.

This leads naturally into Detmold's argument that it is the essential nature of the law to show difference and where it does not tyranny may develop. The High Court in rejecting the concept of terra nullius rejected the fundamental denial of difference - the existence of the other. He argues that the High Court failed. The history of the common law has been of recognising the differences between factual situations as the law develops. The High Court stumbled when the majority recognised differences in how indigenous and non-indigenous people receive title to land but recognised no differences on how that title is extinguished. Detmold does not explain how so many decisions about indigenous peoples fail to show difference. He appears to believe that any limits to the recognition of difference have not been crossed here. Consequently he does not have to wrestle with where those limits are so that justifiable community welfare and public interests can be preferred to other rights recognised by the law.

Bartlett maintains the theme of common law process but claims the decision as another triumph for it. He describes it as a millennium of human experience which responds in a pragmatic way to the disputes it resolves, particularly in protecting people from interference with their property. He notes the irony that critics of this decision have

16 Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd, (1971) 17 FLR 141.
BOOK REVIEWS

previously praised the common law for these very qualities. These qualities, in his opinion, explain its prevalence and longevity. He applies the classic common law declaratory theory to show that decisions like the Gove Land Rights case were bad and therefore never were the law. He praises the decision for its potential to be an effective compromise between indigenous peoples and developers wishing to exploit the resources the indigenous peoples now own. It is difficult to accept his triumphalist version of the common law. Mansell's comment that the decision is late but welcome poses the problem Bartlett skates over. Detmold's concern about the extinguishment of native title without compensation is also left unanswered. If the common law has the values Bartlett claims how did it go so wrong for so long in Australia and why does it still refuse to restrict the crown's ability to extinguish native title or require the crown to pay compensation?

Mansell seeks to analyse the reach of the decision in conferring resources and a land base on the first nations as part of their struggle for independence. This theme has potential significance. Hocking, in her first article, notes the significant implication behind native title of a pre-existing indigenous legal order. While the High Court did not disturb the sovereignty which descends from the British claim to Australia she argues that Australia must fall into a category of settled state of an implied cession of sovereignty from a previous and indigenous sovereign. The implication of this is that the subsequent sovereignty and titles to land derive from that previously existing sovereignty. Here there is an argument left ajar for Mansell's aspirations. Hocking's analysis of the common law is less triumphalist than Bartlett's. She appears to be willing to concede that the High Court could have mis-stated the law again in this case.

Nettheim returns to the subject of sovereignty in his treatment of the decision in the context of the political rights of indigenous people. He notes the refusal of the High Court to treat the question as one which is justiciable - capable of being ruled upon by a court - if the sovereignty of the first nations would displace that sovereignty derived from Britain. He turns his attention to a lesser form of internal sovereignty found in the common law of the United States which gives the first nations the status of domestic dependent nations. He notes the inconsistent decisions in the Supreme Court of NSW and infers a potential within the common law of Australia for a similar status to be recognised. He predicts that there will be further pressure on state and territory governments to relax their control over indigenous communities with developments in international law further strengthening the claims of the first nations to self-determination.

A number of the articles raise a question left unresolved by the High Court: whether the Crown owes a fiduciary duty to the indigenous people over whom it acquires sovereignty. Brennan observes the majorities' reluctance to embrace the position Toohey J. took following the Supreme Court of Canada in Guerin v The Queen although the High Court had left the question open in Northern Land Council v The Commonwealth. He believes that the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 has the potential to be effective as any principle of fiduciary duty in the future. Certainly the legal protection of either can only be removed by the commonwealth parliament legislating.

This position is adopted by Hanks in his article about the difficulties in legislation reversing such decisions, and one which became more significant in the negotiation of the Native Title Act 1993. Some of those developments are dealt with by Hocking in her

17 Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd, (1971) 17 FLR 141.
18 R v Murrell (1836) Legge 72 and Bonjon, 1844 8 British Parliamentary Papers, 'Papers relative to the Aborigines, Australian Colonies' 146.
second article in a postscript: the framing of the Native Title Act 1993 as a special measure under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. It is indeed a very special measure. As that term is generally understood it means something which advantages the people at which it is directed. Part of the Act appears to extinguish native title to land and resources. It invites litigation that such extinguishment cannot be a special measure.

Blowse returns to the question of fiduciary duty. He refers to the distinction in the common law between the concept of a trust, the breach of which is justiciable, and the concept of a higher political trust, belonging to the prerogative of the Crown, which is not justiciable. He notes how Toohey J. distinguished the application in Australia of the decisions dealing with the Crown's duty in this second sense. Claims based on breach of fiduciary duty may be made across a wide spectrum of interests. However using common law techniques for distinguishing cases to escape their binding nature as precedent is an imprecise art, in which judges frequently fudge, producing uncertain results.

Gray and Hocking deal with the effect of the decision on various kinds of interests in land. Hocking's article covers some aspects of the framing of the Native Title Bill and Premier Gosse's demands that all titles to land granted since 1788 be validated. It is a useful reminder a year later, as the sections of the Act are cited by bureaucrats as unalterable law, that the law, even statute law, is fluid. The category 1-4 acts used in the Act to achieve Gosse's wishes conceal what even now parliamentary counsel cannot put into plain English. To do so would too explicitly describe the 'conflagration of oppression and conflict which ... spread across the continent to dispossess, degrade and devastate the Aboriginal people and leave a national legacy of unutterable shame.'

LIST OF REFERENCES


Neil Andrews
University of Canberra

22 Mabo v Queensland (No 2) (1992) 66 ALJR 408, Deane and Gaudron J.J. at 449.

This is a collection of a number of papers presented at a conference held by the Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies in May 1991. They are accounts from the perspective of law, anthropology, history and politics of the varying impact of colonialism on the rights of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific. They deal with colonies and independent states in which the indigenous people are minorities or majorities. For those interested in the history of the indigenous peoples of Australia they provide comparisons with what might have been, is, could be or will be the results of the fatal impact.

The first article by Garth Nettheim provides the unifying theme of self determination for much of what follows. He notes that the original contact was frequently shaped by international law the significance of which faded in the late nineteenth century but which has re-emerged in the late twentieth century. He discusses the draft Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, the reluctance of nation states in the region to acknowledge the indigenous nations submerged within them and the hope that indigenous peoples have for international treaties where national treaties have failed.

A sequence of comparative articles by Paul McHugh, Sid Herring and Mary Ellen Turpel shows the differences in the political processes used by settler governments in New Zealand, the United States of America and in Canada to govern indigenous peoples. The last two articles show that in a federal political system there are already separate sovereignties. A federal system like Australia's could adapt to take into account the political aspirations of its indigenous peoples. Gerald McBeath returns to these states and shows that the present political structure of Australia is the one least hospitable to self-government. It lacks the judicial recognition of limited indigenous sovereignty in the domestic dependent nations of the USA or the guarantees of indigenous rights contained in the constitution of Canada. Ken Coates compares the struggle in Australia and Canada for land and cultural rights as the industrial frontier moves closer. Christine Stafford traces the continuation of a colonial mentality in the criminal justice systems of these two states.

Kenneth Maddock's article lacks the broader focus of the others but is of particular relevance to Australia. He argues that the term 'sacred site' was developed by anthropologists who introduced western ideas of the sacred into popular and legal discourse from where it has now been adopted by the indigenous peoples themselves. He observes that Durkheim relied on the work of Spencer and Gillen and Howitt to develop the concept of the sacred. From that source it appears in the writing of Australian anthropologists with its use spreading in the 1960s. It appeared in legislation in the 1970s. He notes that the legislation imports Durkheim's concept of the sacred by, inter alia, imposing penalties for entering, remaining on or damaging a sacred site. The effect is to make them forbidden, set apart and hedged about with prohibitions. This however is the effect of any criminal law seeking to protect a legal interest or a property right but that does not necessarily give that interest or right the quality of the sacred.

Maddock does not support his argument with evidence showing the adoption of the concept again by Aboriginal people. He admits that information about the processes to prove that a site is sacred is unsatisfactory as he is not aware of any court case. This is a curious remark. It confirms that there is an absence of evidence that Aboriginal people are adopting the concept from legislation. However most legal processes occur outside court rooms. Courts only hear disputes parties cannot otherwise resolve. A court is often not the place to look for such a process. His explanation discounts, without adequate
consideration, two other explanations. If the concept is used by Aboriginal people it may reflect the continuation of beliefs observed by Spencer, Gillen and Howitt. Or it may not be used by Aboriginal people with the same meaning that it has in the statute. The lexical conflation of secret and sacred has been documented amongst the Arrernte since Spencer and Gillen with little motivation for the speakers to distinguish the meaning of these words.¹

Maddock also asserts that beliefs about a sacred site may fluctuate over time and that profane interests may be pursued by designating a place a sacred site. Both of these statements may be true but it is unfortunate that he did not feel constrained to point out the substantial continuity of beliefs over a number of generations as, for example, with the sites recorded by Spencer and Gillen in Alice Springs or to give an example of a profane interest disguised as a religious interest. These comments appear to be made in the context of the Jawoyn claims about the significance of the sickness country. The Jawoyn's claims were vindicated by the Resources Assessment Commission in its report in May 1991.²

LIST OF REFERENCES


Neil Andrews
University of Canberra


This volume brings together articles by a number of indigenous politicians, writers and academics and other writers. It is compiled at a time of growing realisation that the customs of the indigenous peoples of Australia can be a source of law. It is divided into three parts on land, law and culture but the division is not sustained as the underlying theme of the rights of the indigenous peoples of Australia to self determination runs through all three.

This is the substance of Mick Dodson's article in which he identifies self determination by indigenous peoples as their basic right as peoples. He notes that such claims are uniformly opposed by states which hold them captive, including Australia. This opposition is built on the state's fear of its demise as its sovereignty is rooted in the dispossession of others. He believes that self determination can be pursued incrementally and in this context discusses the Eva Valley statement and the Aboriginal peace plan which was put to the prime minister, Mr Keating, in 1993 as well as the *Native Title Act* 1993.

Noel Pearson also seeks to examine why the Mabo decision which affected such a small part of Australia should have touched something so deep in the Australian

¹ Harkins 1993: 161, 166.
unconscious. He describes the experience of the indigenous people who negotiated with the Australian government when the Native Title Act was being drafted. Peter Poynton examines some of these issues in more detail in his article on Mabo v Queensland (No 2), the Murray Island land rights case. H.A. Amankwah sees that decision as bringing the common law more into line with international law and considers the implications that this may raise for self-determination.

Getano Lui Jr and Peter Yu describe how colonialism despoiled the Torres Strait and Kimberley regions. Lui argues for a full measure of self government similar to other island dependencies of Australia as Norfolk, Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) islands. Yu shows how a federal system involving the government of Western Australia continues the process of colonialism. He calls for a new arrangement in the public government of the region starting with the devolution of the power of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission similar to that in the Torres Strait. Paul Coe offers a different view of ATSIC. He describes the regional council structure of ATSIC as a fresh denial of self determination as its crosses traditional boundaries and treats Aboriginal peoples as an ethnic group but not as separate and distinct societies within Australia. He is critical of the Keating Government's negotiations with ATSIC over native title. By not sitting in its proper place on the government's side of the table in these negotiations ATSIC displaced independent Aboriginal peoples from their place.

The book concludes with the section on culture in which self determination again links the writers' views. John Collins writes of the work of Oodgeroo Noonuccal. Marcia Langton examines the politics of representation in Aboriginal art and film and John Scoit considers Aboriginal theatre. Finally Mandawuy Yunupingu writes of his Yolngu education which included the struggle to explain that which is important and sacred in Yolngu law to prevent Nabalco mining bauxite at Nhulunbuy and how that struggle to explain continues today.

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BOOK NOTES


This booklet discusses Canadian constitutional changes with regard to indigenous people, and it shows the relevance of these changes to the Australian situation.


This work discusses mining leases on Aboriginal land and stresses the need for consideration and negotiation.


This work powerfully conveys the message that Aboriginal languages were for a long time not just ignored, but actively discouraged. The work shows how many people were moved from mission to mission to live among others who spoke quite different languages and how this had devastating effects. It is an interesting work, but there is some inconsistency in the spelling of names of languages, and there are many minor errors, particularly in the bibliography.


This handsome book contains well-written biographical and artistic notes on contemporary Aboriginal painters, both traditional and modern and samples of their work; some of the illustrations are quite stunning. The work is ideal as an introduction to modern Aboriginal art.


This outstanding biography of F.W. Albrecht was reviewed by J. Mulvaney in Aboriginal History vol. 17. 1993 pp. 151-153. Anyone interested in Central Australia will be delighted that it has now appeared as a paperback, as this will make it the work more accessible.


This beautifully produced and illustrated work covers a number of interesting health-related and spiritual aspects of life in Arnhem Land.

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With the names of persons, bold type indicates authorship of an article or review; italic type indicates that the writing of the person is under discussion, usually as the author of a book under review. While the coverage of authorship of articles, reviews and books reviewed is intended to be complete, other references to particular individuals have involved a judgement. Some preference has been given to references to Aboriginal people.

With such a large and diverse body of material, the subject index is necessarily selective. A limited attempt has been made to go beyond terms actually used in the title or body of an article and it is hoped that the subjects chosen may serve to draw together some books and articles on related themes.

Spelling of names and other terms has been left as it occurs in the original.

An * against an entry in the Index means that illustrations are included for the subject indexed in a particular article. The page number asterisked does not necessarily indicate the page on which the illustration occurs, but shows the first page on which the subject is mentioned in the article.

Maps have been treated as illustrations, also that names for regions and areas will be asterisked if accompanied by a map in the article.

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1  Rowley 1971, p. 107; see also Barwick 1981.
3  Fison & Howitt 1880, p. 96.
4  See Cox 1821.
7  Riddett 1988, p. 6.
8  Victoria River Downs Manager to Administrator of the Northern Territory, 13 August 1953, Australian Archives (NT): CRS FI; 52/758.

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Cox, G. 1821, Journal kept by Mr George Cox on his late tour to the Northward and Eastward of Bathurst etc, MS, Mitchell Library, Sydney.


Saunders, Reg 1976, 'Parabar the shark', *Aboriginal and Islander Identity*, vol. 2, no. 10, pp. 27-8.

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