

ABORIGINAL HISTORY

Volume forty 2016

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Aboriginal History is a refereed journal that presents articles and information in Australian ethnohistory and contact and post-contact history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Historical studies based on anthropological, archaeological, linguistic and sociological research, including comparative studies of other ethnic groups such as Pacific Islanders in Australia, are welcomed. Subjects include recorded oral traditions and biographies, narratives in local languages with translations, previously unpublished manuscript accounts, archival and bibliographic articles, and book reviews.

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Preface

Liz Conor

Contributions to this issue of *Aboriginal History* range over the following topics: senior public servants in the state protection administrations, the voices of Aboriginal workers and mission residents in remembering and advocacy, institutionalisation and the sociospatial historiography of conflict, and the relation between policy and popular exhibitions. The diversity of encounter and the multiple impacts of violence, removal, isolation and surveillance are presented in fine-grained and quite revelatory scholarship that we are honoured to circulate.

A little-known, yet watershed, legal decision in the Northern Territory is presented in detail by Katharine Booth and Lisa Ford, which underscores the ideological paradox of mid-century Aboriginal welfare administration. A civil suit was brought by the federal government against the assailants of Aboriginal pastoral workers after they had been convicted in 1955. Through delving into previously untitled archives of interdepartmental correspondence, the authors find that the administration under Paul Hasluck sought to annul Aboriginal agency by insisting on the status of Aborigines as wards.

The interpretation of 'assimilation' by Stanley Middleton, Western Australia's most senior public servant, is examined by Angela Lapham. Middleton administered over 20,000 Aboriginal people between 1948 and 1962 but he had already served 22 years as a patrol officer in the Australian protectorate of Papua. Dismayed by the ruination of the Kamilaroi, people he had grown up among, he abhorred discrimination. As Lapham writes, Middleton reached beyond his role as a civil servant to recommend unconditional citizenship rights, access to social security benefits, housing and education to tertiary

level. But his discouragement of collective modes of living and unrelenting surveillance of people's 'progress' contradicted his relatively progressive stance – and challenges our understanding of the term 'assimilation'.

Isolation in leprosariums continued for Indigenous patients until 1986, four decades after effective treatment became available in Australia in 1948. Charmaine Robson queries this divergence of Australian leprosy control policy and argues it was clearly demarcated by race. Indigenous Australians, particularly from remote communities, incurred the cultural and social impacts of leprosarium institutionalisation. During the assimilation era, when Indigenous healthcare was ostensibly being incorporated into mainstream medical services, a racialised medical and bureaucratic discourse in the 1950s and early 1960s characterised Indigenous people as a public health risk and as unfit to live outside institutional oversight.

The 'entanglements' of Aboriginal and European people within farming and pastoral industries are recorded by Belinda Liebelt, Amy Roberts, Clem O'Loughlin and Doug Milera. They argue the local farming narratives on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda), South Australia, between Narungga Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal settlers were 'mutually constituted'. Aboriginal people's roles and lived experiences are accentuated, including geographic and social segregation and structural discrimination, in the establishment and development of Australia's agricultural enterprises.

The positive memories of Aboriginal residents on missions are interrogated by Laura Rademaker by sifting through their petitions to mission authorities in the 1960s. She uncovers rare instances of Aboriginal say-so asserted within the missionary archives. The petitions indicate the high expectations and indeed ownership residents felt over these missions, demonstrating their sense of agency. Authorities rarely responded to their demands however, yet the author observes the collective past of structural inequality can be remembered concurrently with a nostalgic past of personal meaning and agency.

In a collaborative article, Heather Burke, Amy Roberts, Mick Morrison, Vanessa Sullivan and the River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) investigate Aboriginal–European early contact on the western Central Murray. Adopting an innovative methodology, they visualise the sociospatial processes of violent engagement that occurred between Aboriginal and European people along the Overland Stock Route. This explicitly landscape perspective on the nature and scale of frontier conflict introduces a broader geographic scale and finds that certain spaces altered, affected or promoted certain actions.

The irrepressible Archibald Meston, Southern Protector of Queensland Aborigines from 1898 to 1904, is brought to life by Judith McKay and Paul Memmott. Meston is oft remembered as the major architect of Queensland's 1897 legislation that was to regulate its Indigenous people for almost a century. Yet Meston's bizarre venture as a showman of live Indigenous people, who he publicly paraded as 'noble savages', is shown to have shaped his policies leading to removal and institutionalisation. The authors argue Meston's often coercive rounding up and removal of people off their lands to perform as racialised 'other' in his exhibits informed his formulation of Queensland's *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act of 1897*, which he co-drafted. This influential legislation then served as a model for the institutionalisation of Indigenous people in other states.

In 1838, French Captain Abel du Petit-Thouars called on these shores and recorded his impressions. Colin Dyer provides a translation of the captain's journal. While it rehearses much of the already entrenched leitmotifs of Aborigines such as polygamy and dying race theory, this translation provides a new resource in English for researchers.

Early this year an esteemed and much cherished colleague, Patrick Wolfe, died unexpectedly, leaving the discipline of Aboriginal history bereft of an *éparter* thinker and an unassuming leading light. We include a memoriam of tributes in his honour, to acclaim Patrick's immense contribution and celebrate all he imparted to our discipline.

Thanks to our indispensable book review editor, Luise Hercus, assisted by Annemarie McLaren. Appreciation also to copyeditors Maggie Troup and Geoff Hunt and to Emily Tinker at ANU Press, along with the espousal of the board, particularly Maria Nugent and Peter Read. Volume 40 we hope continues our commitment to interdisciplinary, collaborative and inter-cultural history dedicated to Aboriginal voices and experiences.

Contributors

Katharine Booth graduated from the University of New South Wales with a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and Bachelor of History (Honours) in 2015. Katharine's article derives from her 2013 History Honours thesis entitled 'The Eva Downs Incident'.

Heather Burke is a historical archaeologist based at Flinders University. Her research ranges from the construction of class and status through material culture to the archaeology of cross-cultural engagement and the links between cultural heritage, place and contemporary social identity. Her most recent projects have been focusing on the archaeology of Indigenous–European conflict in Queensland and South Australia.

Liz Connor is an ARC Future Fellow at La Trobe University. She is the author of *Skin Deep: Settler Impressions of Aboriginal Women* (UWAP, 2016) and *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Indiana University Press, 2004). She is the editor of *Aboriginal History*, a columnist at *New Matilda*, and has published widely in academic and mainstream press on gender, race and representation.

Lisa Ford is Associate Professor in History at the University of New South Wales. Ford is the co-author with Lauren Benton of *Rage for Order: The British Empire and the Origins of International Law, 1800–1850* (Harvard, 2016); author of *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788–1836* (Harvard, 2010); and co-editor with Tim Rowse of *Between Indigenous and Settler Governance* (Routledge, 2013). Her research has been supported by the Australian Research Council: DE120100593 and DP110103832.

Angela Lapham is a librarian with a PhD in Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies. The article presented in this journal is based on her PhD thesis, which examines the implementation of assimilation policies by Stanley Middleton, the 1948–62 WA Commissioner for Native Welfare. Assimilation was also the

focus of Angela's Honours thesis, which investigated a voluntary organisation's efforts to prepare people living on the Aboriginal reserve Allawah Grove for housing in the mainstream community. Angela's other research interests include Eastern European history, and the histories of LGBTI people and immigrants in Australia.

Belinda Liebelt is a PhD candidate at the University of Western Australia. Her PhD focuses on the treatment of Narungga people's heritage on Yorke Peninsula/Guuranda by rural white Australians on farming properties. She is also a professional consultant archaeologist, working with Indigenous communities in South Australia and Western Australia.

Judith McKay is a historian and museum consultant based in Brisbane, formerly on the staff of the Queensland Museum. Judith's research interests have embraced various aspects of Queensland's cultural heritage, resulting in exhibitions and publications. Her interest in Archibald Meston was ignited many years ago when she wrote her doctoral thesis on colonial Queensland's participation in world expositions.

Paul Memmott is a trans-disciplinary researcher (architect/anthropologist) and the Director of the Aboriginal Environments Research Centre (AERC) at the University of Queensland. He has a half-time position in the School of Architecture and a half-time position in the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR). The AERC provides a focus for postgraduate research (up to 10 students) and applied research consultancy throughout Australia. The AERC field of research encompasses the cross-cultural study of the people-environment relations of Indigenous peoples with their natural and built environments. Services have been provided to remote and urban Aboriginal groups across most states of Australia. Research interests encompass the history of cultural change in Indigenous Australia and its relevance to contemporary social issues and problems, Aboriginal housing and settlement history, Indigenous constructs of place and cultural heritage, vernacular architecture and Native Title, and social planning in Indigenous communities.

Doug Milera is the Director of Tauondi College, an Aboriginal community college located at Port Adelaide, South Australia.

Mick Morrison is an archaeologist based at Flinders University. He has a particular interest in the archaeological investigation of Aboriginal political economy through the historical period and into the pre-contact past. His recent work has focused on how economies changed with the arrival of Europeans in western Cape York Peninsula, and in particular, Moravian and later Presbyterian missionaries from the 1890s onwards.

Clem O’Loughlin is a respected Elder in the Narungga community. In recent years he has worked on a number of collaborative Narungga research projects.

Laura Rademaker is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Australian Catholic University. She was awarded her PhD from The Australian National University in 2015. Her thesis, entitled ‘Language and the Mission: Talking and Translating on Groote Eylandt, 1945-1975’, was awarded the ANU J.G. Crawford Prize. Her current research looks at Aboriginal engagement with Catholicism and the history of Northern Territory Christian missions.

The River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) administers land on behalf of River Murray and Mallee people who have non-exclusive rights and interests to parts of their traditional lands around Renmark, Berri, Barmera, Waikerie and Morgan in South Australia.

Amy Roberts is an Associate Professor at Flinders University, South Australia, and is currently the Head of the Archaeology Department. She is an archaeologist and anthropologist who primarily works with Indigenous communities in South Australia. In particular, she continues her collaborations with the Narungga people of Yorke Peninsula and Aboriginal people from the Mid Murray and Riverland regions.

Charmaine Robson has a PhD from the University of New South Wales and a pharmacy degree from Monash University. The title of her thesis is ‘Care and Control: The Catholic Religious and Australia’s Twentieth-Century “Indigenous” Leprosaria 1937–1986’. She has taught Australian and European history at the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales. Her interests include religious, medical and welfare histories. Currently, she is writing a book based on her thesis.

Vanessa Sullivan is an archaeologist currently residing in the United States. She is a graduate of Flinders University, receiving her Master of Archaeology degree in 2015. Her thesis, entitled ‘Frontier Conflict Along the Central-Murray River in South Australia: A Spatial Reconstruction Approach to the Archaeology of Conflict’, focused on developing a holistic approach to identifying conflict in the archaeological record, using archival, archaeological and geographical methods. Currently, she works as an archaeologist for IVI Telecom Services, a CBRE company, where she manages regulatory compliance projects throughout the north-eastern United States and conducts archaeological surveys to Federal, State and Tribal standards.

Articles

Ross v Chambers: Assimilation law and policy in the Northern Territory

Katharine Booth and Lisa Ford

On 9 September 1955, Jack Chambers, co-owner of Eva Downs Station in the Northern Territory, had an argument with his Aboriginal cook, Dolly Ross. That morning, Ross had refused to prepare breakfast for her fellow Aboriginal pastoral workers because she said she was ill. Chambers claimed that Dolly was malingering because she had quarrelled with her husband. After the argument, Dolly, her husband Jim and a minor named Munro left the station. Chambers claimed that he had ordered them off the property. The Ross family testified that they had left in protest when Chambers threatened to 'liven up' Dolly if she did not do her work. Later that morning, Jack Chambers, Colin Chambers, manager Jack Britt, and stockmen George Booth and Francis Booth rode out from the station either to muster cattle or to pursue the Ross family. Either motive was possible: there were cattle to be mustered and all hands were needed on deck.

The two parties met on the road a kilometre from Eva Downs. Their stories about what happened next differ fundamentally. The Chambers brothers claimed that Dolly and her family blocked the road and aggressively brandished sticks and boomerangs. Dolly, Jim and Munro said that the Chambers party attempted to run them down and that they held up their swags to deflect the horses. Whatever occurred, their confrontation ended in Jim Ross's beating and the repeated horsewhipping of all three. They were then driven back towards the station. Just inside the homestead gate, the party was confronted by two Aboriginal stockmen, Isaac Isaacs and Dinny McDinny, who, by all accounts, had come to defend the Ross family against the violence of their employers. The Chambers brothers attested at trial, Isaac attempted to 'belt' Jack Chambers with an iron bar. George Booth then fired two revolver shots over their heads,

he claimed, to stop the 'murderous attack'.¹ The rescuers' efforts failed. Isaacs and McDinny were overpowered by the Chambers brothers and, McDinny's wife, Eileen, recalled much later, Chambers 'flogged them too, he rode them down and chased them back to the stockyard and he flogged them all again'.² Colin Chambers then beat Isaacs with his fists at the Eva Downs aerodrome.

The Ross family, Isaacs and McDinny went back to work, despite their injuries. Either that night, or eight days later, the whole party escaped together with their families in the evening, travelling at night to avoid detection.³ The Chambers brothers did not let them go without protest. They telegraphed Constable Corbin alleging that a group of Aboriginal employees were heading towards Anthony's Lagoon with a stolen axe and water bag. Corbin sent out a search party and, two days later, an Aboriginal tracker called Dick brought McDinny and Isaacs to the local police station. They had been sent ahead to get help because Jim Ross had been crippled by his wounds. Corbin drove out on 19 September to find the rest of the party. They were hiding at Turkey's Creek, 50 kilometres away, with neither the Chambers brothers' axe nor the water bag in their possession. Constable Corbin reported that Dolly Ross bore 21 lash marks, Jim Ross, 47 and Munro, 6. Ten days after the assaults at Eva Downs Station, Dolly and Jim's wounds were suppurating.⁴ The Chief Welfare Officer at Borroloola, Ted Evans, noted that many of Dolly's wounds were still open a week later.⁵ For their part, McDinny bore the marks of 4 lashes, whereas Isaac had 19 lash wounds on his body. McDinny carried the scars of this flogging 50 years after the assaults took place.⁶

The incident at Eva Downs is one of the best documented occurrences of violence against Aboriginal pastoral workers in the mid-century Northern Territory. The incident made national and international news.⁷ But this incident is much more than another story about racist brutality. It ended in the sensational conviction of the Chambers brothers for violence against their

1 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December 1955; *The Age*, 15 December 1955.

2 McDinny 1987.

3 Corbin to Officer in Charge, Southern Division, Alice Springs, NT, 23 September 1955, 10–12; contrast, Evans to Officer in Charge, Southern Division, Alice Springs, 23 September 1955, 9. Both in Northern Territory Welfare Branch – Eva Downs Station 1955–1958, NAA F1, 1955/1154 [henceforth NTWB 1955/1154].

4 Corbin to Officer in Charge, Southern Division, 23 September 1955, NTWB 1955/1154, 10–12.

5 Evans to Giese, 26 September 1955, NTWB 1955/1154, 8.

6 Roberts 2009.

7 'Natives flogged with stockwhips, counsel alleges', *Canberra Times*, 13 December 1955: 2; 'Whites beat five natives with stockwhips', *The Argus*, 13 December 1955: 7; 'Natives waited in ambush – cattle man tells court', *The Argus*, 14 December 1955: 1; "'No, no – please stop'", *The Argus*, 14 December 1955: 5; 'White men ambushed, accused tells court in whip flogging case', *Canberra Times*, 13 December 1955: 2; 'Natives had white men in dire danger', *The Argus*, 15 December 1955: 5; 'Cattleman weeps after "stockwhip" sentence. 2 Gaoled, fined £800 for flogging', *The Argus*, 16 December 1955: 1; 'Graziers gaoled and fined for whipping natives', *Canberra Times*, 16 December 1955, 1; 'Whipping of five Aborigines: Prison for brothers', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 December 1955: 9; Douglas 2004: 301, 304. See Douglas 2004: 301.

Aboriginal workers.⁸ Colin and Jack Chambers and the three stockmen were charged in the Tennant Creek Police Court on 17 October 1955, with 10 counts of assault occasioning actual bodily harm to the victims.⁹ The group (excluding Francis Booth, a minor) was then tried before Justice Kriewaldt without a jury from 12 to 15 December 1955.¹⁰ Justice Kriewaldt found Britt to be ‘reluctant and unwilling ... perhaps little more than a spectator’ and acquitted him of all 10 charges. George Booth was fined £25 for several counts of aiding and abetting their employers’ assaults and his licence to employ Aboriginal people was revoked. However, Kriewaldt found Colin and Jack Chambers guilty on most counts, fined each a sum of £400, and jailed both for six months with hard labour.¹¹ He had never before convicted let alone jailed a white person for assaulting an Aborigine.¹²

This article focuses on another, much less studied case stemming from the Eva Downs incident. In the months after the conviction, the Northern Territory Administration, under intense pressure from humanitarian groups and the federal government, brought a civil suit on behalf of Ross et al. against Colin and Jack Chambers. This litigation produced a little-known watershed decision by Justice Kriewaldt. He denied that the Crown could sue on behalf of the victims, reading down legislation defining Aboriginal people as wards of the state and strongly endorsing the legal standing of adult Aboriginal people before Australian courts.¹³ This repudiation of state paternalism deeply troubled the administration. As a result, the *Welfare Ordinance 1953* (NT) was amended to bolster the power of the state over Aboriginal wards.¹⁴ In this paper, we explore new archival materials that minutely document this litigation, and through it, the practical and ideological dilemmas confronting Aboriginal welfare administration in the Northern Territory at this watershed moment. The civil case collapsed in the aftermath of Kriewaldt’s decision. We show that it did so because of a combination of internal contradictions in the logic and practice of 1950s assimilation policy and practical difficulties arising from the distance and difference separating welfare officers from Aboriginal workers.

8 *R v Sydney John Chambers, Colin James Chambers, Jack Britt and George David Booth* (Unreported Judgment) [1955] NTSC No 55 of 1955, 291; Douglas 2005, 55–7.

9 See letter from J.C. Archer to The Secretary, Department of Territories, 29 December 1955, NTWB 1955/1154, unnumbered (59)–61.

10 Transcript of *R v Chambers*, NTWB 1955/1154, 35–59, 39.

11 *The Age*, 16 December 1955; Archer to Secretary, Department of Territories, 29 December 1955, NTWB 1955/1154, [59]–61. The sum of £400 was a considerable financial burden (roughly equal to AU\$10,500 today).

12 Douglas 2005: 59.

13 Transcript of Judgment, *Ross v Chambers*, April 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 86–102.

14 Correspondence makes clear that the 1957 amendments were drafted in response to Kriewaldt’s judgment: Lambert to Archer, 13 June 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 124. They took the form of s.4 of the *Welfare Ordinance 1957*, No. 42, 1957 (Marginal note, Welfare Ordinance, 1953–1960, www.austlii.edu.au).

The intellectual history of assimilation has been richly retold of late – Russell McGregor and Tim Rowse in particular have delivered nuanced expositions of deep commitment and deeper intellectual disagreements within the ranks of assimilationists about the value of preserving Aboriginal culture, and of the rich interface of government administrators with evolving humanitarian critiques. Rowse has recently pushed his analysis further – demonstrating the power of postwar bureaucratic thinking about population management and statistics to challenge countervailing discourses about Aboriginal culture and Indigenous rights.

This work engages deeply with the intellectual contributions of key policymakers – A.P. Elkin and Paul Hasluck. It is richly supplemented by the work of Alison Holland on Mary Bennett and Rani Kerin's on Charles Duguid, tracking their critiques and intersections with government policy. Our work builds most closely on a slightly different strand of this new historiography. It resembles John Murphy's very recent exploration of the pragmatic and principled discussions of government bureaucrats that underpinned the extension of welfare benefits to Aboriginal people after World War Two.¹⁵ In this article, we use newly discovered interdepartmental correspondence to tell a hidden, bureaucratic and legal history of Aboriginal subjecthood in practice. The *Ross* litigation exposed deep fissures between the administration and the judiciary, and within the administration, about the nature of state power over Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and the meaning of Aboriginal legal subjecthood, of assimilation and of the proper boundaries of protection in the aftermath of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A more nuanced understanding of 1950s policy lies somewhere in this minutely documented mess of principles and practice.

Assimilation and the Hasluck Administration

The Eva Downs incident occurred at a time of deep change in Aboriginal policy in the Northern Territory. Since the much-discussed national conference in 1937, Australian Aboriginal policy had shifted towards the notion that Aborigines were latent citizens and that Aboriginal citizenship was compromised by Aboriginal culture rather than Aboriginal race. This notion was only partly digested into legislation. After 1937, states around Australia had crafted policies aimed at incorporating 'half-caste' or mixed race Indigenous people into Australian

¹⁵ Holland 2015; Kerin 2011; McGregor 2011; Murphy 2013; Rowse 1998, 2012. For a formative overview of humanitarianism in Australian history that exemplifies the new scholarly impulse to take humanitarians seriously, see O'Brien 2015.

society.¹⁶ Though the Commonwealth Government lacked constitutional power to legislate Indigenous policy for the states until 1967, the Northern Territory Administration strove to lead the way by example. In 1939, J. McEwen declared a New Deal for Aborigines – promising a new administration, headed by a director and supported by anthropologically trained district and patrol officers distributed throughout the Territory, to protect Aboriginal labourers and educate and police Aboriginal people. ‘Half-caste’ children born out of wedlock would be taken into state custody and educated, chiefly, in useful trades. They and detribalised Aborigines would be educated into citizenship. Uncivilised and semi-tribalised Indigenous people required intergenerational assistance. They would be brought within the reach of government by patrols and trained, judged, imprisoned and/or cared for according to their needs on outback stations.¹⁷ McEwen’s plans were interrupted by the war. After the war, they were adapted and implemented by Hasluck – whose own thinking about assimilation was both transformative and eccentric.¹⁸ As Elkin argued, Hasluck advocated ‘a type of assimilation ... [predicated on] the complete change of Aborigines in all but skin colour’. This was a vision that Elkin thought ‘impossible’ and ‘demeaning’ to Indigenous peoples and their cultures.¹⁹ Hasluck’s core contention was that the ‘aboriginal problem ... was a social problem and not a racial one’. McGregor and Rowse describe this as a species of ‘liberal individualism’.²⁰ Membership of a political community, for Hasluck, was not ‘contingent on religion, class or race’. It was contingent on affective membership: ‘Not only must the majority absorb minorities, but the individuals from those minorities must relinquish their loyalties to any sub-groups of the nation.’²¹ Government policies coercive of Aboriginal people, in this light, were:

temporary measures, not based on race, but intended to meet their need for special care and assistance to protect them from any ill effects of sudden change and to assist them to make the transition from one stage to another in such a way as will be favourable to their social, economic and political advancement.²²

One of its enduring manifestations was the 1953 Welfare Ordinance which came into effect only as the *Ross* litigation was drawing to a close. This document has been described both as a ‘paradigm shift in the administration of Indigenous people’s lives in the Northern Territory’ and as ‘window dressing’ in which

16 For two of the most detailed analyses of state law in this period, see Haebich 2000; Galligan and Chesterman 1997.

17 McEwen 1939. See Rowley 1970: 328–32.

18 On his eccentricity, see McGregor 2005, 2011: 77.

19 Elkin as paraphrased by McGregor 1999: 244.

20 Though note that they disagree about the degree of individualism: McGregor 2011: 78 and 202, n9.

21 Rowse 1998: 109.

22 Rowse 1998: 110.

'most of the old injustices are continuing unchanged'.²³ The 1953 Welfare Ordinance embodied Hasluck's vision by couching Aboriginal welfare administration in the Northern Territory in the language of living standards instead of race. Using race-neutral language to implement racist policy is not a new trick in a country whose White Australia immigration policy was defended by a dictation test. But the Ordinance – at least in its drafting – was more sincere. The Ordinance used the word 'Aboriginal' in exactly two sections, one schedule repealing former Aboriginal Ordinances and another referring to state legislation on the subject. Its central provision gave the 'Administration' power to 'declare a person to be a ward' if their 'manner of living'; 'inability ... to manage his own affairs'; 'standard of social habit and behaviour' and 'personal associations' suggested that he needed 'special care and assistance' under the Ordinance.²⁴ Its implementation was less nuanced. Despite its careful wording, the Ordinance established a race-based system of administration. It extended wardship automatically to Aborigines subject to state Aboriginal protection legislation. Officers of the Welfare Administration automatically included anyone considered to be a 'full blooded' Aborigine (including all of the Eva Downs victims) in the list of Territorians drawn within its ambit.²⁵

By the time of the Eva Downs incident, the protection of Aboriginal labour was more than a bureaucratic concern. As Bain Attwood, Holland and Kerin have shown, interest in Aboriginal 'enslavement' and subordination had flowered in the 1930s.²⁶ Writers like Mary Bennett forged new links with the British Anti-Slavery Society and mounted powerful critiques of state and federal policy in the sphere of Indigenous affairs.²⁷ These critiques intensified and proliferated in the context of the explosion of human rights talk in the aftermath of World War Two. The Holocaust, the Declaration of Human Rights, and the fact that Indigenous men worked for the Australian army combined to add new force to pre-war calls for Indigenous rights. By the 1950s, Hasluck operated in fear of the electoral ramifications of humanitarian critique, as we will see. Indeed, Hasluck's dismissal of Aboriginal culture had come under strenuous academic attack by the time he left office.²⁸

23 Chesterman and Douglas 2009: 24; compare *CAR Bulletin*, no. 8, April 1956, quoted in Attwood 2003: 139. McGregor, in particular, emphasises its continuities with the 1939 'New Deal' and the Aboriginals Ordinance of 1918 – McGregor 2011: 82.

24 *Welfare Ordinance 1953 (NT)*, s.14; Chesterman and Douglas 2009.

25 Chesterman and Douglas 2009: 73–74.

26 Attwood 2003. In the context of welfare rights, see Murphy 2013: 213–17.

27 E.g. Holland 2001, 2015.

28 Rowse 2012: 39–44.

Meanwhile, Aboriginal men and women in the Territory were increasingly active in defence of their civil rights. By the end of the war, 662 Aboriginal men and 73 Aboriginal women were employed by the army.²⁹ Aborigines enjoyed a much higher standard of living working for the army than they did on cattle stations. The army guaranteed £5 per week to labourers at a time when many workers were not paid cash wages at all on cattle stations.³⁰ Rations, clothing, accommodation and medical services were provided to dependants, as well as basic schooling for Aboriginal children.³¹ According to Catherine and Ronald Berndt, prominent anthropologists who gathered first-hand data from various Northern Territory cattle stations from 1944 to 1946, employment in the army set a precedent below which it was unwise for pastoralists to fall.³²

Most important, according to scholars and Indigenous informants, was Aboriginal experience of relative equality and respect in the army. Ann McGrath suggests that the army gave Aboriginal people ‘that sense of being on the same standing, the same level as the whites. They saw that as equity, having tasted that’.³³ Alec Kruger, an Aboriginal soldier who fought in the war, stated that he had ‘seen a bit of the world where I was treated with a bit of respect, and I wanted to recapture it’.³⁴ When both the Commonwealth and station owners demanded Aboriginal people return to their subservient, pre-war role, they could not erase the new expectations of Aboriginal labourers. Many were angered by ‘the attitude of a staid group who wanted to subjugate, control and basically render people subservient again’.³⁵

Working with communists, unionists and humanitarians, Aboriginal workers turned to activism in the postwar North.³⁶ So much is clear from the increase in Aboriginal workers ‘walking-off’ cattle stations. One of the more famous examples is the 1946–49 strike on several Pilbara cattle stations for higher wages.³⁷ Similarly, on Wave Hill Station in 1947, a patrol officer reported that four Aboriginal employees had left the station and had said ‘they were just like white men and could leave the job when they felt like it’.³⁸ In September 1955,

29 Bunbury 2002; Powell 1982; Riseman 2012.

30 Hall 1989: 135. It was only in 1947 that Regulation 14 of the *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918* (Cth) was repealed. This regulation had allowed pastoralists to avoid paying wages where they were able to prove that they were maintaining the employee’s relatives and dependants: see *Aboriginals Ordinance*.

31 Powell 1982: 215–16; Saunders 1995: 114.

32 Catherine and Ronald Berndt quoted in Powell 1982: 217. Berndt and Berndt 1987.

33 Bunbury 2002: 44; Powell 1982: 216.

34 Kruger 2007: 146–48.

35 Bunbury 2002: 44.

36 See May 1994.

37 Broome 2010: 143.

38 Hokari 2011.

the same month as the Chambers assaults, Aboriginal staff at Wave Hill went on strike.³⁹ The following year, the Wave Hill Police Journal alleges that some Aboriginal stockmen again refused to work at Wave Hill Station.⁴⁰

Assimilation in practice

It is in this changing political and policy environment that the Eva Downs incident unfolded – and it exemplifies the awkward interface of the welfare and labour systems in a rapidly changing world. The incident was the result of Indigenous activism. According to Dawn May, Aboriginal pastoral workers could react to maltreatment in one of two ways – leaving the station or retaliating through physical force.⁴¹ The Ross family, Dinny and Isaac used both strategies. The Ross family walked out in protest against verbal abuse and the threat of violence. Dinny and Isaac rode out to physically defend them. Eileen McDinny suggests that Isaac and her husband, Dinny, shared bonds of kinship with the Ross family, and that the ‘Law’ required Dinny and Isaac to ‘try and save their uncle’.⁴² All involved in the incident asserted rights as workers or band members that clearly surprised and unsettled the Chambers brothers.

At another level, the Eva Downs incident exemplifies the successful functioning of the postwar Welfare infrastructure. Scholars have noted the significant post-1937 innovation of appointing local Welfare patrol officers to oversee and supplement policing of Aboriginal workers and of their pastoral employers in the Territory.⁴³ But the Eva Downs incident shows much more than mere oversight. It shows local Welfare officials working closely with local policemen to defend the interests of Aboriginal workers. The Chambers brothers justified their violence first by making the explicit and powerful argument that they defended themselves against Aboriginal aggression and second by alleging that their Aboriginal workers were thieves. Police complicity in pastoral violence had a long history on Australian frontiers.⁴⁴ Instead of collaborating in white violence, however, the local policeman, R.F.H. Corbin, worked closely with the local Welfare Officer, Ted Evans, to corroborate the complaints of the Indigenous victims. Corbin independently suggested to the chief officer at Alice Springs police station that indictments would have to be heard at ‘Alice Springs where a more competent Bench will be available’.⁴⁵ Indeed, his involvement in the

39 Sing 1992: 95.

40 Hokari 2011.

41 May 1983: 71.

42 McDinny 1987.

43 Douglas and Finnane 2012: 129–30.

44 Ford 2010: 97–107; Nettelbeck 2012; Nettelbeck and Foster 2007.

45 Corbin to Officer in Charge, Southern Division, Alice Springs, NT, 23 September 1955, NTWB 1955/1154, 10–12.

case was so consistent that, at their criminal trial, defence counsel argued that he had collaborated with the Aboriginal victims to firm up their story and to exaggerate their wounds.⁴⁶

The Northern Territory Administration also responded with alacrity to reports of violence. Timing mattered here. The Territory's recently appointed Director of Welfare, H.C. (Harry) Giese, was a committed advocate of new assimilation policy. Within two days of finding the party, he had contacted the Superintendent of Police to ensure that the case progressed smoothly.⁴⁷ The alleged perpetrators, Sydney John Chambers (Jack), Colin James Chambers, Jack Britt and George David Booth were indicted on 17 October, and the acting Northern Territory Administrator had informed the minister of the case by 19 October. Legal officers in Darwin and Canberra wrote briefs and analysed law to facilitate litigation. All levels of administration were involved in plans to ensure that the case came before Kriewaldt and was tried by a Queen's Counsel. Hansard reporters were sent to transcribe, verbatim, the evidence of the plaintiffs (though, unfortunately, the transcript seems to have been misfiled or lost).⁴⁸ In short, every level of governance in the Territory and in Canberra joined the cause.

They did so in part to ward off mounting humanitarian critique. The Northern Territory became the particular focus of advocacy groups interested both in augmenting Commonwealth authority over Aboriginal affairs and in advocating for Aboriginal equality. Hasluck had been appointed Minister for the Territory in the fallout of the sensational arrest and 'banishment' of Fred Waters for leading Aboriginal workers in a strike in Darwin in 1951.⁴⁹ The Eva Downs incident caused a similar media furore. Shirley Andrews, secretary of the Melbourne-based Council of Aboriginal Rights, led the charge to bring the Eva Downs case to the attention of the public and to pressure the Northern Territory Administration into action. The Council of Aboriginal Rights saw the case as a 'wonderful opportunity' to bring the plight of Territory Aborigines to the attention of the public. To this end, they collaborated with the Melbourne *Herald* to make the case front page news. The paper published exchanges between Andrews and Hasluck. When the criminal case ended in conviction, Andrews trumpeted 'the beginning of a new era for the station Aborigines' that would 'give to others the courage to stand up against ill treatment'.⁵⁰ All the while, she sent inquiries and suggestions to the offices of Hasluck.

46 *R v Sydney John Chambers, Colin James Chambers, Jack Britt and George David Booth* (Unreported Judgment) [1955] NTSC No 55 of 1955, 299.

47 Telegrams, 26–28 September 1955, NTWB 1955/1154, 2–5.

48 Archer to Lambert, 12 January 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 65.

49 Attwood 2003: 131–36.

50 Attwood 2003: 142–43.

Correspondence within the Northern Territory Administration makes clear that its actions in both the criminal and civil cases were calculated to minimise humanitarian accusations that they were ‘not treating the case with the seriousness it deserves’. At the insistence of the Crown Law Officer, the ministry retained senior counsel ‘at all costs’ – a path cast as ‘good tactics on the part of the Commonwealth’.⁵¹ ‘The point at issue’, he noted, ‘is that this case is likely to receive a great deal of publicity, irrespective of what the outcome is, and that publicity is bound to find its way overseas’.⁵²

The Acting Administrator, J.C. Archer, asked for guidance from Canberra about how best to manage correspondence from the Association for the Protection of Native Races and the Council of Aboriginal Rights about the case – correspondence that included enquiries about whether the administration was providing assistance to the ‘Aborigines when they are giving their evidence’;⁵³ pressure to bring a civil action against the Chambers brothers and Booth; criticism of the light criminal sentence handed down by Kriewaldt; and claims that the incident provided more evidence of the ‘enormous gap between regulations as they exist on paper and the carrying out of them by the station owners’ of the Northern Territory.⁵⁴ Ted Evans recalled in a memorandum to Giese that they had brought the civil action in part because of ‘press reports wherein demands were made by certain Aboriginal Rights Societies that damages should be sought on behalf of the natives’.⁵⁵

Hasluck later reflected on what he felt was the unfair response of humanitarian interlocutors to the incident. In *Shades of Darkness*, an account of Aboriginal affairs between 1925 and 1965, Hasluck complained of the ‘gross distortion’ of the situation of Aboriginal people employed on cattle stations by several organisations who were ‘active in spreading stories overseas to the discredit of Australia’ to the London office of the Aborigines Protection Society, within United Nations circles and in several African countries.⁵⁶ He referred specifically to an incident (likely the one at Eva Downs) where an Aboriginal worker was struck with a stockwhip by a white cattleman. Though the cattleman was subsequently arrested, tried and sentenced, Hasluck lamented that:

51 Lambert to Hasluck, 26 October 1955, NTWB 1955/1154, 14.

52 Lambert to Hasluck, 26 October 1955, NTWB 1955/1154, 14.

53 Swan to Hasluck, 28 October 1955, 15; Swann to Hasluck, 31 October 1955, 20; Unsigned (Canberra) to Admin Darwin undated, received 18 July 1956, 134; Lambert to Administrator of the Northern Territory, 29 May 1957, 186; Andrews to Hasluck, 24 February 1956, 81–82. All in NTWB 1955/1154.

54 For requests for guidance see, Archer to Lambert, 16 November 1955, NTWB 1955/1154, 198; and annotation on Archer to Lambert, 18 November 1955, NTWB 1955/1154, 19.

55 Evans to Giese, 13 January 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 71–72.

56 Hasluck 1988: 98.

This was not told as a story that it was against the law to strike an Aboriginal and that a strong penalty had been imposed on a white man for breaking the law. It was passed around as a story that black ‘slaves’ on Australian cattle stations were flogged when they displeased their slave-driving masters.⁵⁷

Hasluck’s protestations notwithstanding, that story of violence had deep roots in fact; as Ann McGrath showed previously, violence, the threat of violence, and Aboriginal memories of violence had played a key role in the organisation of Aboriginal labour on cattle stations from the outset.⁵⁸

In sum, the Eva Downs incident shows how genuine welfare reform combined with increasing public pressure pushed the Northern Territory Administration into frenetic action. The case provided an opportunity to model, not only for critics, but for the states, how Aboriginal welfare agencies might respond to protect as well as to infringe the civil rights of Aboriginal Australians. This goal was ultimately frustrated. Not only did the conviction of the Chambers brothers and Booth end in criticism and praise from the public, the civil case ended in ambivalence. *Ross v Chambers* forced the Welfare and Northern Territory administrations into the invidious position of pitting their desire to do justice and punish abusive pastoralists against Aboriginal legal subjecthood and the wishes of the Aboriginal victims.

The meaning of guardianship in a changing world

The case of *Ross v Chambers* made history without ever being fully resolved by a court. On 2 March 1956, the Crown Solicitor issued a writ against the Chambers brothers for more than £2,000 in damages (a sum claimed, according to the Associate Crown Law Officer, R.L. Odlum, on the very uncertain basis that Kriewaldt would treat the victims as ‘white persons’).⁵⁹ He did so as ‘next friend’ of the Aboriginal victims and without their knowledge or consent. On 19 March, the Chambers brothers’ solicitors applied:

to set aside the issue and service of the writ on the grounds that (a) no authority of the next friend had been filed at or before the issue of the writ; and (b) that the person named as next friend has and can have no authority to act as such under the Aboriginals Ordinance 1918-1953.⁶⁰

57 Hasluck 1988: 98.

58 McGrath 1987: 106–15.

59 Odlum to Archer, 16 January 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 74.

60 Transcript of Judgment, *Ross v Chambers*, April 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 102.

Kriewaldt upheld both of these contentions. In a remarkable endorsement of Aboriginal legal subjecthood, Kriewaldt declared that, 'Prima facie, an aboriginal of full age living in this Territory is subject to the same laws and entitled to the same rights and privileges as any other person living in the Territory'. While the provisions of the *Aboriginals Ordinance* as amended gave Aboriginal Australians some special rights and removed others, it did not remove the standing of Indigenous adults before the courts.⁶¹ Therefore, the Crown needed the permission of the Ross party in order to sue on their behalf.

This decision was not straightforward. Until 1953, section 7 of the *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918–1947* (NT) had provided that:

1. The Director shall be the legal guardian of every aboriginal and of every half-caste child, notwithstanding that the child has a parent or other relative living, until the chil [sic] attains the age of eighteen years ...⁶²

Kriewaldt held that, read in context, subsection 7(1) of the *Aboriginals Ordinance* only applied to children, Aboriginal and half-caste.⁶³ He did so notwithstanding that *obiter dicta* from the High Court in *Waters v Commonwealth* suggested that the provision actually made the Welfare Officer the legal guardian of 'all aboriginals' in the Territory.⁶⁴

However, Kriewaldt then discovered that this version of section 7 was no longer in force, as it had been repealed by the *Aboriginals Ordinance (No. 2) 1953* (NT), assented to on 25 June 1953. Section 7 therein had been simplified to read 'The Director is the legal guardian of all aboriginals'.⁶⁵ Kriewaldt read this section down on much less transparent grounds. He held, first, that the definition of 'aboriginal' was uncertain. He held, second, that the Ordinance, read as a whole, qualified or amplified the powers appertaining to the Director as 'legal guardian' so much that it rendered Aboriginal subjects nothing like 'wards' at common law. The Ordinance listed rather than assumed many powers that would automatically pertain to a 'legal guardian' at law. It purported to give the Director 'full care, custody and control' of Aboriginal adults only in enumerated circumstances. For example, it gave the Director explicit power to sue for wages, suggesting it gave no implicit power to sue for other ends. In other parts, the Ordinance imposed extraordinary limits on Aboriginal legal subjecthood: unlike wards, Aborigines were not emancipated on marriage nor on enlistment in the army. As the duties and powers of the Director could only

61 Transcript of Judgment, *Ross v Chambers*, April 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 101.

62 Transcript of Judgment, *Ross v Chambers*, April 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 100.

63 Transcript of Judgment, *Ross v Chambers*, April 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 99–100.

64 Transcript of Judgment, *Ross v Chambers*, April 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 197; (*Waters v Commonwealth* 82 CLR 188).

65 Section 7. An Ordinance to amend the *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918–1947* (No. 9 of 1953), aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/digitised_collections/remove/52398.pdf.

be properly derived from the terms of the Ordinance and not from common law, adult Aborigines retained their right and obligation to sue on their own behalf. Reading down legislation restrictive of civil rights is a long-established maxim of statutory interpretation. But Kriewaldt's decision, by his own admission, went against both High Court *dicta* and decades of practice. Crown Law Officer R.J. Withnall observed that:

It is true that the interpretation of the section does present a good deal of difficulty but it seems to me that the interpretation which his Honour has given to it involves the reading into the section of qualifications and ideas that are nowhere expressed or even implied. I do not think that His Honour's decision is right.⁶⁶

In this context, the *Ross* decision could be read as a product of policy as much as law – a robust endorsement of a basic tenet of legal assimilation. Kriewaldt contended, here and elsewhere, that Aboriginal inequality was transitory and did not alter their rights and obligations before courts of law.⁶⁷ His insistence that Aborigines should stand as equals before the law was very different, and much more antiquated, than Hasluck's vision. Legal incorporation underpinned metropolitan efforts to protect slaves and Aborigines throughout the British Empire in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.⁶⁸ Kriewaldt echoed sentiments expressed by Justice Burton of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in the infamous *Murrell* case of 1836 that extended British jurisdiction over crimes between Aborigines on the grounds that Aboriginal customary law could not survive the advent of British sovereignty in the colony of New South Wales.⁶⁹ A few years after *Ross*, Kriewaldt would argue openly that law was a 'civilising medium' for Aboriginal people.⁷⁰ Law would encourage Aboriginal people to forego extrajudicial punishments, like payback. Instead they would accept punishments and protections administered by the state. According to Kriewaldt, if Aboriginal people were to be assimilated 'in the sense that they shall become a permanent, integrated, and useful section of the community' they must be punished for crimes they committed, as well as obtain justice for those crimes perpetrated upon them.⁷¹ It was his opinion that 'all members of any given community are entitled to the benefits conferred by law, in return for which they become subject to the law and accept the restrictions laid down by the law'.⁷² Those benefits, it is important to note, did not extend to full credibility in giving evidence, or to the right to be tried by a jury of peers.⁷³

⁶⁶ Withnall to Giese, 9 May 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 117.

⁶⁷ Douglas 2005.

⁶⁸ Ford 2014.

⁶⁹ Ford 2010: 196–203; Douglas and Finnane 2012: 37–41.

⁷⁰ Douglas 2005: 35.

⁷¹ Douglas 2002, 2005: 15, 51; Kriewaldt 1960: 16.

⁷² Douglas 2005: 15.

⁷³ Re native evidence: Transcript of Judgment, *R v Chambers*, 47–50.

Nor did they operate to hold Aborigines accountable for violent crime; in his decisions in criminal cases against Aborigines, Kriewaldt repeatedly mitigated Aboriginal sentences to compensate for their imperfect understanding of and integration into settler law.⁷⁴

However qualified, Kriewaldt's was not the assimilation imagined by the Northern Territory Administration. Indeed, the administration's reaction to his decision is much more revealing of the logic of assimilation in the middle of the twentieth century. At one level, that logic reflected very real concerns about the disadvantages faced by Aborigines as legal subjects. As Giese pointed out to the Chief Administrator in early 1956, Indigenous people might be severely disadvantaged by their status as equal civil litigants before the courts. Some of these disadvantages were the result of government policy. Most insidiously, as systematically underpaid workers, and as wards whose access to wages was controlled by the state, Aboriginal litigants in the Territory had limited resources to bring suits. Giese worried that the Chambers brothers might challenge their suit 'on the grounds that the Aborigines have no means of paying the cost of such action'.⁷⁵

Second, Kriewaldt's finding put litigation in jeopardy because it required the administration to involve the victims much more intimately in the civil case. This was physically very difficult. Though Territory Aborigines numbered among the most administered and surveilled people in Australia, the Northern Territory was a big place. Aborigines involved in the pastoral industry worked on remote stations and their combination of wage labour with traditional practices like walkabout made them mobile. As a result, they were often temporarily outside the reach of the state. This mattered when, in theory, the Eva Downs victims had just 14 days after the delivery of Kriewaldt's judgment to decide whether they would like to pursue the litigation in their own names. The process of finding the Ross party after Kriewaldt's decision took nearly three months! The decision was handed down on 5 April 1956. The Crown Law Officer forwarded permission forms to regional welfare officers on 10 May.⁷⁶ Evans sent a telegram to 'Manager Webb' at Borroloola on 23 May speculating that Dolly, Jim and Munro may have moved on to Seven Emus Station.⁷⁷ Two days later they were believed to be *en route* to Borroloola.⁷⁸ Constable Corbin was then enlisted in the effort to transport the party to the 'Brunette Occasion Race meeting to meet Patrol Officer Lovegrove'.⁷⁹ Lovegrove forwarded signed permissions from

74 Douglas and Finnane 2012: 121–47.

75 Giese to Archer, 6 April 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 103.

76 Withnall to Giese, 10 May 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 111.

77 Evans to Webb, 23 May 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 114.

78 Webb to NT Administration, 25 May 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 115.

79 Evans to Webb, 12 June 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 120.

all of the Eva Downs victims on 26 June.⁸⁰ The Crown Law Officer, Withnall, did not hear of the permissions until 11 July.⁸¹ Demonstrating the continued importance of public opinion to the case, the minister asked that news of the permissions be sent on to the Council of Aboriginal Rights just one week later.⁸² The tight communication links between Hasluck and humanitarians contrast starkly with the enormous practical difficulties faced by Northern Territory administrators in bringing the *Ross* case back into court.

The other reaction of the administration to Kriewaldt's decision revealed the theoretical inconsistencies of assimilation policy. Administrators moved quickly to fill in the gaps in administrative control of adult Aborigines opened by *Ross v Chambers*.⁸³ Giese and the Crown Law Officer recommended immediate appeal to the High Court against Kriewaldt's decision. Withnall noted the danger the decision posed, not only to the welfare infrastructure established by the expiring Aboriginal Ordinance, but also to the new system established by the 1953 Welfare Ordinance.⁸⁴ Crown Solicitor, H.E. Renfree, disagreed. In May, he warned that an appeal might not be successful. Indeed, he agreed with Kriewaldt's finding:

whatever it does mean it [the phrase 'legal guardian'] cannot take away the legal right of aboriginals of full age and sane minds to conduct their own litigation. If that is not the Government's intention, I think the proper course is to amend the legislation to make it clear ...⁸⁵

Amendment became the first priority of the Department of Territories within a fortnight.⁸⁶ Secretary Lambert asked the Welfare Office in Darwin to help. As Assistant Administrator Lawrie put it in late August:

The Director should be able to exercise all the rights and duties that are normally entrusted to a guardian in relation to an infant ward and if the Welfare Ordinance, as it now stands, does not permit him to do so it should be amended appropriately.⁸⁷

Lawrie noted that the new Ordinance already gave the Welfare Administrator most of the powers of guardianship at law, and recommended that it be explicitly expanded to include the power to bring suits as a 'next friend'.⁸⁸ But this raised a number of problems. At law, a guardian or next friend was personally liable

80 Lovegrove to Giese, 26 June 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 131.

81 Giese to Withnall, 11 July 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 133.

82 Minister's Office to 'Admin Darwin', 18 July 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 134.

83 Lawrie to Withnall, 22 August 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 138.

84 Withnall to Renfree, 9 May 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 117.

85 Renfree to Lambert, 25 May 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 122.

86 Lambert to Archer, 13 June 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 124.

87 Lawrie to Withnall, 2 August 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 138.

88 Lawrie to Withnall, 2 August 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 136.

for the costs of litigation. It also raised a problem when wards sued each other as the 'Director could not be next friend to both'.⁸⁹ Withnall had addressed these problems in a new draft amendment by 3 September.⁹⁰ This amendment, designed to undo the radical ramifications of the Chambers case, operated to constrain Aboriginal subjecthood from 1957 to 1964. It gave the Director of Welfare unambiguous power to bring suits on behalf of Aboriginal 'wards'.

All that remained, then, was to conclude the civil suit against the Chambers brothers to the satisfaction of the administration's humanitarian critics. This process exposed important tensions within the administration about the character of Aboriginal subjecthood and the responsibilities of the state for their welfare. In September, Newell and Ward, solicitors for the Chambers brothers, offered very modest financial settlements to the victims – a total of £220, one-tenth of the damages claimed in the initial civil suit. Under this settlement, Jim Ross was offered £100, Dolly, £50, Isaacs, £50, Munro, £10 and McDinny, £10. Withnall refused to recommend this settlement to the Ross family. However, he recommended to Giese that the clients accept a more generous settlement of £520 (just over one-quarter of the original claim): £400 of this would go to the Ross family, £70 to Isaac Isaacs, and £25 each to Munro and McDinny.⁹¹

Archer resisted, a strained mixture of condescension and wariness of public opinion underpinning his response. The Chief Administrator for the Territory pointed out:

Right throughout the whole of the proceedings relating to this assault case, our actions and advice have been guided by our acceptance of a responsibility to see that substantial justice was not only done; but that it also much appear to be done.⁹²

It was not clear that this settlement would achieve either. He complained that the amount of damages initially claimed and the settlement proposed by Withnall 'differs so widely that I most certainly do not feel competent to sit in judgment on the matter'. If the Crown Solicitor could demonstrate that the initial claim was 'excessively high' then he might be 'prepared to consider advising a settlement in the public interest'. But as 'the Crown Law Officer does not feel able to do that', Archer felt that his duty under the Ordinance required him to allow 'the matter to proceed to judgment in the court'.⁹³

89 Withnall to Lawrie, 4 August 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 137.

90 Withnall to Giese, 3 September 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 140–41. Only subsection (3) giving the Director power to determine in which religious faith a ward 'should be brought up' was occluded. This last power, Chief Administrator Archer argued, was neither 'necessary nor desirable': Archer to Lambert, 10 September 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 143. Approved by minister, Lambert to Giese, 19 September 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 146.

91 Withnall to Giese, 7 September 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 145.

92 Archer to Giese, 22 October 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 151.

93 Archer to Giese, 22 October 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 151.

Archer's discomfort was reflected in Withnall's more fulsome reply. Withnall confined his examination to the case of Munro who, as a minor, could be represented without his consent by the Director of Welfare despite Kriewaldt's decision in *Ross*. Withnall explained that the difficulty with the case lay in determining the nature of damage sufferable by an Aboriginal worker like Munro. Ordinary cases of assault determined special damages on the basis of expenses. But ascertaining the wages lost by an Aboriginal child worker was not easy, and, though none of the party was employed between September 1956 and January 1957, only one week's lost wages could fairly be attributed to their wounds. Munro could expect no more than £3 for a week's work if he was paid as an adult. Dolly and other Aboriginal women could only expect 10/- to £1 per week.⁹⁴ General damages assessed non-pecuniary losses – for example, the 'pain and suffering endured' by the victims. These might range from nothing (for the 'transitory' pain of a 'slap in the face') to £5,000 for serious injury. The perpetrators alleged that Munro was scarcely beaten, and the Crown Solicitor thought that £25 would suffice to cover his pain and suffering. 'Exemplary' or 'punitive' damages might further compensate Munro for the outrage and 'indignity' of being beaten. This head of damage rested on evidence of the victim's wounded pride. However, 'the circumstances of the assault, namely a deserted road far from the presence of others, and the social standing of the plaintiffs as labourers on a pastoral station, does nothing to increase the prospect of any large award under this head'. Withnall was careful to note that the 'mere fact that the plaintiff is an aboriginal is not relevant to reduce the amount of damages'. But he did concede that 'the facts of his occupation and standing in the community are to be taken into account'.⁹⁵ Munro's 'standing in the community' could hardly be read without reference to his Aboriginality defined as race or culture. Under the old and new welfare legislation, Munro could not command equal wages, could not control his own money and could be told where to live and with whom he could associate. Archer clearly sensed the danger here. He argued, again, that 'because of the principles involved the matter should take its course and be settled in and by the Court'.⁹⁶

Regardless of the administration's decision in the case of Munro, the Crown Law Officer noted that Giese was obliged to offer the terms of settlement to the adult victims. He advised moreover, that, under the *Ross* decision, Jim and Dolly Ross, Isaac Isaacs and Dinny McDinny would 'have to decide for themselves' whether to 'accept an out of court settlement' without 'persuasion of any kind by an officer of the Welfare Branch'.⁹⁷ Archer was troubled by the ramifications of this advice: 'surely we still have some general responsibility and some form

94 Referring to memorandum, Giese to Withnall, 5 March 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 80.

95 Withnall to Giese, 25 October 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 152–54.

96 Annotation by Archer, 30 October 1956, on Withnall to Giese, 25 October 1956, NTWB 1955/1154, 152.

97 Archer to Lambert, undated draft (February 1957), NTWB 1955/1154, not paginated.

of status in an advisory capacity where an important matter affecting welfare is involved'.⁹⁸ Local officers worried that the victims would not understand the terms of settlement. When the trusty Constable Corbin related the settlement offer to Dinny McDinny on 7 January, he felt that McDinny had not 'fully understood what I was trying to explain to him'.⁹⁹ When he finally tracked down most of the party at Borrooloola in mid-March, Patrol Officer E.O. Harvey clearly felt it important to make some odd concessions to language difficulties. Each of the thumb-printed consent forms read 'Mr. Harvey bin explain to me that Chambers wants to pay me £[X] to finish that whipping business at Eva Downs Station. I understand properly and will take the £[X]'.¹⁰⁰

Importantly, when they signed these release forms the Ross family, McDinny and Isaacs declared that 'they would not want anything more to do with the case' of Munro.¹⁰¹ It was now early 1957, more than a year after the criminal trial, and the adult victims were all eager to move on. Withnall agreed with them. He worried that the passage of time alone would make the victims bad witnesses in Munro's civil suit, and if they refused to give evidence, he thought the case could scarcely succeed in their absence.¹⁰² Archer conceded that their reluctance might make it 'impossible for us to proceed with the case on behalf of Munro':

I am concerned that we have been forced into this position by Mr. Justice Kriewaldt's judgment and by the subsequent action of the four natives in accepting out of Court settlements, and I can appreciate that if and when it is known that a settlement out of Court has been agreed to by the natives, the Administration could come in for some criticism. However, I think we might find the position to be more damaging if we were to continue proceedings on behalf of Munro and then find in the absence of any evidence from the other natives that the decision went against us.¹⁰³

Archer wavered, however, when the post-*Ross v Chambers* amendment of the Welfare Ordinance came into effect. Section 24 gave him explicit power to act on behalf of all Aborigines declared to be wards under the 1953 Ordinance. This provision included all of the victims of the Eva Downs incident. He considered, again, whether he should force Ross and his kin into court both as litigants and witnesses. Withnall's response makes the tension between civil rights and protection very clear. He protested against the impropriety of dishonouring the agreements signed by the Rosses, McDinny and Isaacs in

98 Annotation by Archer, 15 January 1957 on Lambert to Archer, 9 January 1957, NTWB 1955/1154, 163; reiterated Archer to Lambert, 22 February 1957, NTWB 1955/1154, 166 (requesting advice from the minister).

99 Corbin to Giese, 7 January 1957, NTWB 1955/1154, 163.

100 E.g. Statement of Aboriginal Dinny, 18 March 1957, NTWB 1955/1154, 175 (compare 172-74).

101 Giese to Withnall, 10 April 1957, NTWB 1955/1154, 179.

102 Withnall to Giese, 11 April 1957, NTWB 1955/1154, 181.

103 Archer to Lambert, 15 April 1957, NTWB 1955/1154, 182.

that brief period in which they were considered to be legal adults. He pointed out that the duty of the Commonwealth lay, not in the defence of its policy, but in defence of the ‘particular welfare of the four persons in question’. Most importantly, he explained that pursuing the policy of the Commonwealth would require the forced relocation and testimony of the victims – a violation of their wishes and their interests.

[I]n light of the statements of the aboriginals as to their unwillingness to proceed you will, I am sure, realise that it is in the interests of the aboriginal plaintiffs to accept the offer which has been made and quite contrary to their interests to reject it. If the proceedings go on and it becomes obvious, as I feel sure that it must become obvious, that the aboriginals have been brought to Darwin against their wish, then I think quite proper and damaging criticism both from the Court and from the public may be directed at the Director of Welfare.¹⁰⁴

Archer bristled at this imputation. In a letter to the Secretary of the Territory in Canberra, he defended the conflation of policy and the victims’ welfare, arguing that Withnall had taken too narrow a view of ‘government policy’. The Welfare Officer, he noted, is something like a ‘member of the Legislative Council’: he is a representative of individuals and ‘an appointee of the Crown’. His decisions, therefore, affected ‘all concerned (including the aborigines)’ involved in the case. In Archer’s view, in this case, the general and particular interest required the cases to go to court.¹⁰⁵

Hasluck, however, sided with Withnall.¹⁰⁶ On 22 October, Lambert communicated Hasluck’s approval of the negotiated settlements and he authorised Withnall to agree to settle Munro’s claim out of court.¹⁰⁷ This payment, minus £42-2 costs deducted by the Crown Solicitor, was not placed at the victims’ disposal until sometime between May and October 1958, more than two-and-a-half years after their beating near Eva Downs – a telling performance of the hubris underpinning the Northern Territory Administration’s efforts at intimate Indigenous governance.¹⁰⁸

104 Withnall to Archer, 30 July 1957, NTWB 1955/1154, 197–99.

105 Archer, unsigned draft to Lambert, 31 July 1957, 200; Archer to Lambert, 7 August 1957, 202–3; Hamilton to Giese, 7 October 1958, 230 (‘wards’ contacted ‘some time ago ... and notified of their improved financial positions’), Hamilton to Giese, 24 October 1958, 231. All in NTWB 1955/1154.

106 JS to Giese, 28 August, NTWB 1955/1154, 207; Lambert to Archer, 30 August 1957, NTWB 1955/1154, 211.

107 Giese to Withnall, 30 August 1957, NTWB 1955/1154, 208.

108 Bill of Costs, undated, NTWB 1955/1154, 219–22; Approval of costs, Ryan to Archer, 20 January 1958, NTWB 1955/1154, 223.

Conclusion

This intricate story of shifting positions, practical difficulties, interdepartmental quarrels and public pressure demonstrates several important aspects of assimilation in practice in the 1950s. The case itself demonstrates the Northern Territory Administration's efforts to lead the states by example by holding employers accountable for the abuse of Aboriginal workers. It was also crafted in response to east coast humanitarian criticism: a sign of the sensitivity of government to United Nations scrutiny; and of its sense that Aboriginal rights were fast becoming an electoral issue in Australia. At the same time, by insisting on Aboriginal equality before the law, Kriewaldt's decision in the *Ross* case itself highlights the distance between assimilation policy and legal ideology at mid-century. Far from seeing the courts as a medium of Aboriginal civilisation, administrators saw them alternatively as a threat to Aboriginal subjects and as sites for the public performance of Aboriginal protection. Their desire to ward off criticism and to lead the nation was fatally hampered by Kriewaldt's formulation of Aboriginal legal subjecthood. If Aboriginal agency played a role in the incident at Eva Downs, then Aboriginal agency posed a deeper threat to the capacity of the administration to set a national standard for the protection of Aboriginal workers in the 1950s. In this logic, it is little wonder that the administration sought to close down Aboriginal agency by insisting that its Aboriginal wards were in the thrall of the state. The Eva Downs incident puts the ideological paradox of mid-century Aboriginal protection on full display.

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Stanley Middleton's response to assimilation policy in his fight for Aboriginal people's equality, 1948–62

Angela Lapham

From earliest childhood until I left home at the age of seventeen I heard so frequently the story of my birth and the role played by the kindly aborigines that it requires no effort even now to recount word for word as told to me by my mother. It never failed to stir me emotionally and the telling does to this day. I often considered in those early days, if ever and how I might be able to repay in some measure the kindness of these gentle people. Eventually that opportunity did come to me, not in my home state but on the opposite side of the continent. When I was placed in charge of the Native Affairs department in Western Australia I perceived the opportunity to contribute something towards their welfare and took as much advantage of it as the limits of Government policy, politics, money and public attitudes would permit. I know I succeeded up to a point but wish I could have done more. I – we – owe it to them.

Stanley Guise Middleton reflects on being the most senior public servant responsible for the administration of Western Australia's 22,763 Aboriginal people between 1948 and 1962, as well as the motivation provided by his early life on the Queensland–New South Wales border amongst the Kamilaroi people.¹ Middleton's appointment rested on his 22 years as a patrol officer in the Australian protectorate of Papua and the recommendation of Australia's most respected anthropologist, A.P. Elkin. Influenced by Elkin, the newly elected government had come to the conclusion that the poor socioeconomic position of Western Australia's Aboriginal population was due to ignorance of

¹ Middleton, S.G. n.d., 'The life and times of S.G. Middleton', typescript held by the Middleton family; WA Department of Native Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs* (hereafter *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*), 1949.

international Indigenous administrative practice.² Indeed, Middleton's training under Papua's Governor, Sir Hubert Murray, had prioritised studying the conditions of Indigenous people in Africa to help solve problems encountered in Papua, leading him to view all Indigenous peoples as the same.³ Australia-wide, governments and Indigenous rights organisations had from the late 1930s been lobbying for a similar policy to that in Papua.⁴ Following World War Two, anthropology had been included in the training of officers in the Northern Territory and New South Wales, and these two administrations together with Victoria also employed officers from Papua, as did Middleton when he became Commissioner.⁵

The Australian Government's administration of Papua, which it took over from Britain in 1906, had been its opportunity to show the international community it could govern Indigenous people humanely.⁶ The better position of Papuans struck Middleton when he returned to Australia two decades later. He was dismayed to find only a handful of the Kamilaroi people in Queensland he grew up seeing camped along the river, hunting, fishing, selling homewares and doing odd jobs left and 'an obvious increase in the number of so-called half-castes'. Middleton also attributed the Kamilaroi's demise to discriminatory treatment. When two shepherds were killed by Kamilaroi, a number of non-Aboriginal men in the district killed many Kamilaroi. Middleton said his father felt the Kamilaroi community never recovered from the tragedy and 'appeared to go down and down to what you can see of them today'.⁷

Middleton's work in Papua had been hands-on. To fund the administration and protect Papuans' kin networks and customary land tenure against European incursion, the administration turned Papuans' tradition of growing coconuts into the profitable venture of copra production.⁸ The job of a patrol officer,

2 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1953.

3 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1949.

4 In 1921 the League of Nations granted Australia a mandate to run the neighbouring territory of German New Guinea, governed separately from the Territory of Papua. In 1942 both territories were invaded by the Japanese and were put under military administration. Following World War Two the two areas were combined to form the Territory of Papua-New Guinea; Thompson 1990: 68; Lattas 1996: 142; Long 1992, 10.

5 Wise 1985: 319–20; Conference on Welfare Policies for Australian Aborigines. Armidale, 1960, 9, B C748.20/W1, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra.

6 Haebich 2005: 203–4.

7 Middleton, Stanley Guise n.d., 'The life and times of S.G. Middleton', typescript held by the Middleton family.

8 Haebich 2005: 203–4; Lett 1942: 125; Murray 1923: 15, 1926: 19; *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 15 March 1940, National Archives of Australia, Canberra (NAA hereafter) A452/1, 1959/5966; Lattas 1996: 151; Smith 1987: 55, 56, 74; Legge 1956: 177; *Papuan Villager* 2(6) and 13(3).

therefore, was to visit villages to enforce planting of these cash crops, as well as to enforce schooling in English and the construction/maintenance of municipal structures and homes with proper sanitation.⁹

Middleton adopted this system of surveillance in Western Australia, along with other strategies operating in Papua such as the subsidisation of missions that taught to Australian standards.¹⁰ However, unlike Papua, Australia was a settler society built on migrant settlement and ongoing dispossession and removal of Aboriginal people from their traditional lands. This positioned Aboriginal people as minorities to be assimilated into the nation via conformity to mainstream Australian values and cultural practices, thereby ignoring issues of sovereignty and colonialism.¹¹

The Western Australian Government sought to achieve the above by committing, alongside other Australian states, to a policy of social assimilation, which strove to make 'all Aborigines and part Aborigines ... eventually attain the same manner of living as other Australians ... enjoying the same responsibility, deserving the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties'.¹² Assimilation, as an ideology of incorporation, reflected a major change in state policy which legitimated the growth of pedagogical intervention as a means of resolving the Aboriginal problem.¹³

Nevertheless, in spite of this commitment, Middleton's recommendations of unconditional citizenship rights, access to social security benefits, housing and education to tertiary level were frequently opposed by politicians on both sides, many local authorities and much of the public. This article explores how a civil servant moved well beyond his role to publicly advocate for Aboriginal people.

Disagreements between Middleton and government over Aboriginal people's right to freedom and to access services is also the theme of research by Anna Haebich (2000, 2005, 2008) who analyses his administration in terms of its impact on child removal, Peter Biskup (1973) who emphasises his citizenship rights campaign to 1954, and Geoffrey Bolton (1981) who briefly considers his influence within a broader history of Western Australian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations. Middleton's treatment of rural Aboriginal people – not the focus of my study but necessary to understand the assimilation of urban populations – features in research by Jebb; Rowley; and Davenport, Johnson

9 *Papuan Villager* 6(11); S.G. Middleton, Territory of Papua patrol report, 27 September 1930; S.G. Middleton, Territory of Papua patrol report, 28 September 1929; S.G. Middleton, Territory of Papua patrol report, 15 November 1929.

10 Territory of Papua, *Government Gazette* XIV(12), (4 June 1919).

11 Haebich 2005: 45; *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 15 March 1940, NAA A452/1, 1959/5966.

12 Conference of Commonwealth and State Native Welfare authorities 1951, Hasluck box 33, 11, National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA); Haebich 2000: 498–534.

13 Morris 1989: 139.

and Yuwali. What all these studies do not do is ask how their findings complicate our understanding of the term 'assimilation'. On this point, Haebich stressed the need to analyse the multiple meanings, discourse, logic, and implementation of assimilation.¹⁴ My research attempts to do this.

It supports previous research that Middleton's progressiveness was accompanied by paternalism, a persistent characteristic of humanitarian policies in Western societies since the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁵ Quoting Papua's governor that Europeans were morally obliged to assist Indigenous peoples to 'advance', by 1953, Middleton boasted 90 per cent of Western Australia's Indigenous population was 'under the surveillance and general supervision of field welfare staff – evidence', he said, 'that the government was fulfilling its obligation to monitor the welfare of Aboriginal people'.¹⁶

Patrol officers recorded their interactions and submitted them in reports to Middleton.¹⁷ These reports form the basis of my research, providing insight into an often neglected aspect of historical research: the everyday effect of policy on individuals. The assimilation expected of Aboriginal people in the south made officers' reports far more detailed there than those for the north, describing individuals' relationships, accommodation and employment status, and the attitudes of local authorities and townspeople.¹⁸

Theories of assimilation

Social assimilation emerged out of the scientific consensus that all humans belonged to one species and that differences between 'races' were not biologically determined but merely due to evolution. Thus all people could be 'advanced' towards the pinnacle of 'civilisation' set by Europeans without having their physical characteristics 'bred out' as had been the case prior.¹⁹ This influenced Australia's approach to Aboriginal welfare as did international developments such as the newly formed United Nations enshrining equality for all human beings into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (of which Australia was a signatory), and Native and African Americans' fight for equality in the United States.²⁰ Suddenly, the Australian Government had reason to fear condemnation

14 Haebich 2002: 70.

15 Biskup 1973; Bolton 1981; Jebb 2002.

16 Haebich 2000: 279.

17 *The Herald*, 28 February 1940.

18 East Kimberley District patrol reports, State Records Office of Western Australia (hereafter SROWA) AN 1/7, Acc 993, 485/49; Middleton to Superintendent Cosmo Newbery, 25 October 1951, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 234/49.

19 Garn 1968: 250–54.

20 Haebich 2008: 189.

of its discriminatory policies.²¹ Equally, wartime suffering had made people desperate for 'normalcy', expressed in conservatism and circumscribed gender roles.²²

The new social assimilation policy was advocated primarily by Elkin and the Federal Minister for Native Affairs (responsible for overseeing the administrations of Papua New Guinea and the Northern Territory), Paul Hasluck.²³ Attributing the more southern population's 'cultural demise' and loss of economic independence to rapid, intensive European settlement, Elkin observed full-descent employees on pastoral stations had adapted their culture to colonisation.²⁴ Hasluck endorsed the anthropological position that Aboriginal culture was rapidly disintegrating, after his 1935 history thesis identified no homogenous cultural traits among the southern Western Australian mixed-descent population. He predicted that given opportunities and assistance, individuals would willingly conform to mainstream societal norms.²⁵ In contrast, Elkin believed Aboriginal people would always retain an element of difference from mainstream society, blending their culture with it, and that this presented no problem unless it overrode loyalty to Australia.²⁶ This was how he reconciled his belief in the universal human right to 'progress in civilisation' according to Enlightenment theory and the right of each human group to maintain its cultural particularity.²⁷

In his 1944 *Citizenship for the Aborigines*, Elkin assessed readiness for assimilation according to whether people lived in 'thickly settled', 'frontier' or 'isolated' regions, with the occasional individual falling outside these categories. Mixed-descent people were considered ready for assimilation, their 'whiteness' enabling them to take advantage of cultural and social influences.²⁸

Middleton's belief in this continuum of human development may have come from training under Murray, another disciple of anthropology.²⁹ Elkin regularly advised Middleton on policy, and Middleton often quoted Elkin's theories when justifying his policy decisions.³⁰ In 1960, Middleton referred to Elkin

21 Haebich 2008: 23–24, 44.

22 Haebich 2008: 23–24.

23 Indigenous administration was a state responsibility with the Commonwealth Government administering only the Northern Territory.

24 Haebich 2008: 115; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1950; Holland 2005: 89.

25 Hasluck 1953: 51.

26 McGregor 2005a: 172.

27 McGregor 2005a: 173.

28 Elkin 1944: 11.

29 *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 15 March 1940.

30 Elkin to Middleton, 29 March 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 196/49; Elkin to Middleton, 9 April 1953, P130, Series 41, item 454, Elkin Papers, Fisher Library.

as the 'greatest living authority on Aboriginal people' when he agreed with his observation that Southern mixed-descent people had adopted a welfare mentality that would have to be resolved for assimilation to take place.³¹

Middleton praised the way Papua dealt with its mixed-descent population. He said they were 'assimilated as a matter of course' by their 'white' fathers who sent them to missions.³² And then by working and living alongside the European community, they automatically accessed the same rights by declaring their separateness from full-descent Papuans.³³ Although assimilation was not Murray's objective, as The Australian National University PhD scholar, Allan Healy, commented, in his 1962 thesis, Murray without realising it 'placed Papuan administration in a strait-jacket, because he was totally dedicated to European attitudes and values and was determined that Papuans would exercise no authority until they "advanced" according to European notions'.³⁴ This was one of the paradoxes of policies towards Indigenous people. As I show, it was only when mixed-descent individuals were succeeding in employment or education that Middleton encouraged them to have cultural pride and adopt leadership positions representing the interests of Aboriginal people.³⁵

Nevertheless, in 1958, Middleton questioned assimilation policy's dedication to European values: 'Social gradations, colour, caste, ways of living – these do not necessarily make natives a people apart from ourselves, a people who need to be "assimilated" and so become as we are.'³⁶ That year also marked the first time assimilation was publicly questioned, as opposed to promoted, by an anthropologist. The anthropologist, W.E. Stanner, was a student of Elkin and while agreeing with him that Aboriginal people would blend their cultures with the dominant culture and that they had to be the ones to decide how to adjust to colonisation, declared it a fallacy to think of Aboriginal people as 'primitives' requiring instruction in the virtues of a European life to advance along a continuum of human development.³⁷ Likewise, although he was comfortable with Aboriginal people choosing a similar socioeconomic lifestyle to Europeans, he was – in contrast to Elkin and Middleton – equally comfortable with them resisting this transformation. Where Stanner advised that the best the

31 Western Australia, Department of Native Welfare, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1960; Haebich 2008: 79.

32 Western Australian Native Welfare Council first state conference, 1 February 1958, MN 1176, Acc 3491A/51, State Library of Western Australia (hereafter SLWA); Chesterman and Galligan 1997: 3, 10; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1953; Nelson 1982: 169–70.

33 Nelson 1982: 169–70.

34 Healy quoted in Thompson 1986: 81.

35 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1953, 1954.

36 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1958.

37 McGregor 2005a: 174; Stanner 2009: 14, 164.

state could do was to provide Aboriginal people with opportunities, Middleton paternalistically concluded: 'The native must inevitably adjust himself to our way of life and we must help him adjust.'³⁸

Even so, it is noteworthy that Middleton felt the need to soften what he meant by 'assimilation'. His negative contrast of it with the word 'adjust' suggests he saw 'assimilation' as implying cultural destruction – an end he wanted to disassociate himself with. 'Adjust' enabled him to reconcile his desire to see people fully participate in mainstream society with his desire to preserve their way of life beyond this.

From this it is reasonable to assume Middleton was not demanding all Australians adopt the same lifestyle when he questioned assimilation policy at a 1960 Conference of State Aboriginal administrations: 'Can't we say that naturalized New Australians who have their own clubs and ceremonies and live according to the way they formerly lived in their own countries still need to be assimilated?' Admitting only a 'layman's knowledge of assimilation' and that he was unclear about the intentions behind it, he asked Elkin for a definition. The question was extraordinary given he had spent the previous 12 years advocating and implementing 'assimilation'.

To Middleton, Elkin replied: 'We are only learning what assimilation is as we go along. We don't particularly know which way it is going'; definite only that it meant 'giving Aboriginal people the opportunity to share in the life of the community without any hindrances or prejudice'.³⁹ There could be no greater validation of Stanner's critique of assimilation: while conceding that those involved in Aboriginal administration were sincere, had high aspirations, and were extremely busy performing an ever-growing number of tasks, he posed the question 'do they really know what they are doing?'⁴⁰

Stanner's point is a good one, though it might also cause us to ask – did differing perspectives on the extent to which Aboriginal people should be able to determine their futures merely represent the lower level of responsibility an anthropologist had as compared with an administrator? An anthropologist did not have to create the circumstances for Aboriginal people to be able to make that choice. For instance, to give people the choice to either adopt or resist a similar socioeconomic lifestyle to Europeans, an administrator would need to impose mainstream schooling on them as children. But in doing so, they take children away from Aboriginal learning, denying them the opportunity to make a proper choice about this. In addition, an administrator has to contend

38 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1958; Conference on Welfare Policies for Australian Aborigines. Armidale 1960: 23; Stanner 2009: 164, 280.

39 Conference on Welfare Policies for Australian Aborigines. Armidale, 1960: 23.

40 Stanner 2009: 43.

with extra complications such as limited employment opportunities in locations where people live, prejudiced employers, and home conditions that may not be conducive to learning. Administrators are judged by the outcomes of their policies, and these policies have to be concrete, not abstract.

So, whether it was a decade of resistance by Aboriginal people and migrants, society's acceptance of migrants keeping their traditions, or a concern merely to overcome Aboriginal people's relegation to society's fringe, Middleton was now prepared to approach assimilation more open-endedly. Notwithstanding, while Aboriginal people may have held more power over their destiny than would be expected, to access assimilation's promise of freedom, individuals still had to be succeeding in education or employment – and, as we shall see later, to be living in a home that matched their level of success.

The same logic convinced Middleton that people meeting their needs through hunting and gathering should be left to do so. He criticised missionaries for enticing people with rations and refused to collude with the South Australian and Northern Territory governments' strategy of bringing hunter-gatherers in from the desert to assimilate them through station employment.⁴¹ Middleton followed Elkin in that Aboriginal people's adaptation to European life had to be at their own pace and by their own decision, the aim being to prevent social and cultural breakdown.⁴² In Papua too, villages that had no contact with Europeans were protected by a 'restricted areas' policy, which prohibited the administration from 'civilising' them.⁴³

While government and society prevented Middleton implementing many of his envisaged assimilation strategies, by the end of his career, in 1961, he was able to enthuse that Aboriginal people were:

metamorphosing at a speed which at first seemed impossible into a people with hope instead of despair, education in place of illiteracy, enlightenment where formerly there was ignorance; in short, a people whose feet are now so firmly placed on the ladder to complete equality with other members of our community that the attainment of that goal is now well in sight.⁴⁴

Even as attitudes were changing, Middleton continued to subscribe to the continuum of human development.

41 Middleton to Hon. Minister for Native welfare, 2 November 1956, Re: Adult subsidization in missions, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 483/51; Conference of Commonwealth and State Native Welfare authorities, 26–27 January 1961, Hasluck box 32, NLA.

42 Haebich 2008: 115.

43 Rowley 1971: 305.

44 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1961.

Legal equality

Middleton opposed the *Native Administration Act 1936* (WA), which forced Aboriginal people onto settlements, prohibited them from interacting with the non-Aboriginal community, denied them civil rights, and entrenched their socioeconomic disadvantage through excluding them from Commonwealth social security benefits and housing assistance.

The Act's policing of personal interactions aimed to prevent further growth of the mixed-descent population while it 'bred out' the Aboriginal physical characteristics of the existing mixed-descent population. A legacy of Auber Octavius Neville's long dominance of Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia, biological assimilation was based on the same theory as social assimilation: that humans belonged to one species. Its point of difference was that it relied upon erasing Aboriginal people's 'Caucasian ancestry' via 'white' genes predominating over 'black'.⁴⁵ Developing out of a context of non-Aboriginal men dissociating from their children, the assimilation of mixed-descent children required the government to gain control over them, which it achieved by defining them as different.

The only way an Aboriginal Australian could escape legislative control and access mainstream services and rights was by applying for exemption and arguing in court that for two years prior he/she had lived as a member of the non-Aboriginal community.⁴⁶ Middleton believed this achieved the opposite of assimilation: for as long as legislation defined mixed-descent people as 'natives' and restricted their lives it would 'create a class of people white or almost white in colour but still living after the manner of natives', a 'demoralized poverty-stricken people despised by the white community'.⁴⁷ Thus Middleton, too, associated biological assimilation with social assimilation, horrified at the prospect of biological assimilation occurring in the absence of social assimilation.

Equally distressing for Middleton was learning that Aboriginal people were frequently informing department officers they came under the 'White Act' or were applying for 'white rights'.⁴⁸ He commented, 'The vehemence manifested does not carry the pride of achievement but a pathetic aggressiveness bordering

45 Haebich 2000: 272, 1992: 317, 334; Jacobs 1990: 188–90; McGregor 2005a: 159–61; Biskup 1973: 193.

46 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1950, 1952; Minister for Native Welfare to all local authorities, 22 July 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 419/52; Conference of Commonwealth and State Native Welfare Authorities 1951, Hasluck box 33, 11, NLA; Wright Webster to Constable DC Ayling, Protector of natives Boddington, 8 October 1953, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 74/49; Great Southern patrol reports, Wright Webster, 18 July 1949–26 August 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 614/51; *Greenough Sun*, 12 January 1956.

47 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1949; Middleton to Under Secretary Premier's Department, 11 November 1950, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 262/50.

48 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1952; Applicant for citizenship rights to Wright Webster, 28 November 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 74/49.

on defiance'.⁴⁹ Middleton argued that a citizenship 'dependent upon individuals subjecting themselves to a humiliating investigation and turning their back on their identity, family, and culture' was 'incompatible with assimilation's aim of equality'.⁵⁰ The first commissioner to consider the psychological effect of such policies on individuals, he was also disgusted at the class distinctions arising out of citizenship being an earned status, with citizenship holders forming themselves into 'exclusive cliques' ashamed of the 'lower group persons' when they 'need[ed] to be united and loyal to their splendid Aboriginal heritage'.⁵¹

In 1949 Elkin wrote to Middleton:

Aborigines are British subjects and Australian born, and I think as soon as possible restrictions should be removed from them. We must not keep the Aborigines under wardship too long. They have been in contact with our culture for about two generations and, of course, there is a good deal of mixed blood in the situation also.⁵²

And in his Annual Report of 1952, Middleton says he discussed his concerns about citizenship with Hasluck, before arguing at the 1951 Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs organised by Hasluck:

This conference should press for the removal of all discriminatory legislation, and insist on the recognition of all Aboriginal natives as native citizens of Australia having full citizenship rights. If this is approved, then the way would be open for the introduction of special native welfare legislation which may apply at the discretion of the State Native Affairs authorities only to natives who, through possessing full citizenship rights in respect to other legislation, may still stand in need of its benefits.⁵³

Middleton's proposed legislation was not passed by the Western Australian Parliament.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Hasluck convinced the Commonwealth Government to pass legislation in the Northern Territory that reflected this same principle of providing paternalistic assistance on the basis of need and not race. Unfortunately, however, it resulted in the very situation it was attempting to combat: the denial of citizenship to most Aboriginal people. By 1960, only 1,300 out of 15,000 Aboriginal people had citizenship while the rest had been

49 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1952.

50 Biskup 1973: 252; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1952; Applicant for citizenship rights to Wright Webster, 28 November 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 74/49.

51 *The Helping Hand*, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 215/51.

52 Elkin to Middleton, 29 March 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 196/49.

53 Milnes 1985: 307; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1952.

54 Middleton to the Minister for Native Welfare, 3 October 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 1069/48.

declared 'wards' on account of lifestyle, personal associates, or inability to manage their own affairs. By contrast, only one non-Aboriginal adult had been declared a ward.⁵⁵

Elkin opposed the term 'ward', an administrator possessing the authority to declare individuals 'wards', and the promotion of a conception of assimilation that erased culture instead of blending it with the dominant culture.⁵⁶ He advised Middleton:

I suggest that you be very careful about details in any citizenship plan. Of course the aim of citizenship is to be realized by all Aborigines, full blood and otherwise, as soon as possible, but ... Mr Hasluck in his attempt to hasten matters has allowed certain features to appear in the Ordinance presented to the Northern Territory Council which are very undesirable.⁵⁷

Initially supporting Hasluck's legislation, Middleton now labelled it 'a tragedy – for the natives' and claimed 'Australia isn't yet prepared to render more than lip service to Aborigines and the adoption of the assimilation policy is merely a conscience palliative and window-dressing for the outside world'.⁵⁸ Although Middleton advocated legislation similar to Hasluck's, his did not use the term 'ward' or treat Aboriginal people as if they were indistinguishable from non-Aboriginal people.⁵⁹ Overtly excluding from citizenship those living outside mainstream society – hunter-gatherers and pastoral employees – Middleton insisted full-descent people needed to be 'legally, socially and in most cases economically, treated as being racially apart from the white' because they were 'not sufficiently assimilated to understand mainstream systems of education, politics and finances'.⁶⁰ While Middleton did not see biology as an impediment to 'advancement', the biological model still dominated how he and most people thought about Aboriginal people – in terms of a progression through 'octoroons' to 'half-castes' to 'full-bloods'. Furthermore, as observed by Jebb, Middleton's

55 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1952; Middleton to the Minister for Native Welfare, 3 October 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 1069/48; Partington 1996: 42–46.

56 McGregor 2005b: 522.

57 Elkin to Middleton, 9 April 1953, P130, Series 41, item 454, Elkin Papers, Fisher Library.

58 Middleton to Stilling, 14 September 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 204/54.

59 Introduced, through the Minister for Native Welfare. WA Native Welfare Council first state conference 1 February 1958, MN 1176, Acc 3491A/51, SLWA; Western Australia, Parliamentary Debates (hereafter WAPD), Legislative Assembly, 29 November 1957, 3975; Middleton to the Minister for Native Welfare, 3 October 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 1069/48.

60 WAPD, Legislative Assembly, 29 November 1957, 3975. Middleton recommended amendment of the *Electoral Act* to give them the right to optional instead of compulsory enrolment and voting. Introduced, through the Minister for Native Welfare. WA Native Welfare Council first state conference 1 February 1958, MN 1176, Acc 3491A/51, SLWA; ABC Listening groups 'In Focus' No 1 'In the privileges of citizenship?' 21 May 1951; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1955.

motivation also lay in keeping Aboriginal people employed, which was assumed to rest on pastoralists not having to pay them award wages or compete with social security benefits.⁶¹

Indeed, it was not until 1958 that Middleton advocated citizenship for full-descent people. Attempting to quell international condemnation, which in the late 1950s included charges of racial discrimination and genocide, he explained that as 'the educated and sophisticated mixed blood' could not be pushed 'back to the status of the desert nomad, so the only alternative is to make the status of the desert nomad identical to that of his more advanced brethren'. Echoing Elkin, Middleton advised, 'he probably will not know anything about it, nor is it necessary for anybody to go out of their way to inflict anything on him as a result of such a decision'.⁶² Formal recognition of people's universal human rights while ignoring these in practice allowed Middleton to reconcile his desire for equality with his desire to preserve Aboriginal people in their traditional state. Assimilation would not be inflicted on those outside mainstream society, and the pastoral industry would continue to gradually 'advance' people without causing them harm.

Parliament rejected every one of Middleton's proposed laws, alleging his promotion of 'citizenship as a birthright ... worked against assimilation' by provoking resistance towards applying for exemption and removing the incentive value of citizenship. Furthermore, the majority perceived citizenship to be harmful to the 'unassimilated', exposing them to alcohol, non-Aboriginal sexual predators, change they were ill-equipped for, and the frustration of having legal equality when society continued to discriminate against them.⁶³

Alcohol, Middleton publicised, was the main factor deciding any application for citizenship in Western Australia. What is more, he considered access to alcohol a civil right and that its effect was not determined by race, attributing much of the drunkenness among Aboriginal people to the type of alcohol available to them (wine, methylated spirits) and its consumption outside unlicensed premises. Middleton drew on experience: 'although it was an offence to supply a Papuan native with liquor, few people ... including the former Lieutenant Governor Murray ever denied trusted employees liquor in reasonable quantities

61 Jebb 2002: 228–29.

62 Haebich 2005: 35; Middleton's response to the Special Committee on Native matters, 12 March 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 1069/48.

63 WAPD, Legislative Assembly, 11 November 1952, 1958; 29 November 1957, 3975; 22 October 1958, 1663.

... and the effect on them was seldom noticeable'.⁶⁴ Middleton saw the solution as subjecting Aboriginal people to the same controls over alcohol that existed for non-Aboriginal people.

Government inaction on citizenship led Middleton to appeal to the public. In 1952 he anonymously published two articles in the state's newspaper, the *West Australian*. Entitled 'Not Slaves – Not Citizens', the articles paraphrased the central character in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock, a Jewish man outcast because of race and religion:

Not Pagans, not Christians; not white, not black; not half-castes but outcasts. Such are we, who are the descendants of the original half-castes, the progeny of white men – and not always the 'degenerate' types, my masters – mating with Aboriginal women ... We are natives whether we like it or not. Well then – Hath not [a native] eyes? Hath not [a native] hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt by the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means? If you prick us, do we not bleed, if you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? Have we not been turned away from your places of worship, and other public places?⁶⁵

The centrality of pedagogic intervention to Middleton's strategy shows in his criticism of government refusal to pass his proposed 1951 legislation to provide housing and welfare assistance to all Aboriginal people on the basis of need while still giving them citizenship rights:

If assimilation means removing all measures which assist and protect us while maintaining a solid front against giving us citizenship rights, then away with assimilation we say ... We do want to be treated like other human beings, to be given the opportunity to rear and educate our children in proper homes and good schools. At present we are being given a good education, but that is beginning in the middle.⁶⁶

Additionally, he wanted to be able to give department assistance to individuals who did not come under the Act as he recognised they still experienced difficulties obtaining apprenticeships or housing.⁶⁷

64 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1953; *State News*, 3 March 1954, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 184/53; Middleton's response to the Special Committee on Native Matters, 12 March 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 1069/48.

65 *West Australian*, 10 October 1952.

66 *West Australian*, 11 October 1952.

67 Beharrel to Middleton, 12 December 1956, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 654/51; Middleton to Secretary Lotteries Commission, 5 March 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 88/50; Middleton to Clerk of Courts Carnarvon, 13 April 1960, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 8/52.

Letters flooded in, with the editor rating it among the most thought-provoking articles the paper had published. New voluntary organisations formed to promote Aboriginal welfare.⁶⁸ The Labor Party, who was in opposition, also committed itself, and one member introduced a bill to extend citizenship rights to all mixed-descent people, supporting this with excerpts from Middleton's 1952 Annual Report.⁶⁹

To maximise the influence of voluntary organisations and enable them to raise politically sensitive issues, Middleton united them under an independent representative body, the Western Australian Native Welfare Council.⁷⁰ Instrumental in getting bills to Parliament, the council supported Middleton's citizenship campaign with petitions and public meetings discussing proposed legislative changes.⁷¹

Middleton's need for an outlet to express his views became clear when he was accused of writing 'Not Slaves Not Citizens' and subject to an enquiry (fortunately the Public Service Commissioner, a friend of Middleton's, accepted on his word that he was innocent. Middleton later admitted to writing the articles, in his autobiography).⁷² History repeated the following year when Parliament berated Middleton for consenting to a four-page article in *People* magazine praising his goal of citizenship against opposition from politicians and pastoralists, and for a speech he gave to a service club reported on by a local newspaper:

They must be given a point of commencement and that point is the immediate removal of this worthless legislation that bars their pathway to opportunity and eventual assimilation ... The remedy and the means of effecting it lie in the hands of the electors of the State.⁷³

Two months later, the newly elected Western Australian Labor government signed into law the *Native Welfare Act 1954*, repealing 28 of the 35 restrictions over Aboriginal people's lives in the *Native Administration Act 1936*, as well as allocating the Minister for Native Welfare land and machinery to be made available

68 *West Australian*, 10 October 1952; WAPD, Legislative Assembly, 30 October 1952, 1725; 26 November 1952, 2359; Middleton.

69 WAPD, Legislative Assembly, 30 October 1952, 1725.

70 R. Houghton, Town Clerk, Municipality of Bunbury and Bunbury Water Board to Middleton, 17 July 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 305/58; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1962.

71 Resolutions from inaugural meeting of proposed Western Australian Native Welfare Council, 30 January 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 565/44; Special Annual State Conference, 31 January 1959, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 43/59; Western Australian Native Welfare Council public meeting to consider the removal of all legal restrictions against Aboriginal natives of Australia notice, 4 November 1958, MN 1176, Acc 3491A/41, SLWA; Annual Report of the Western Australian Native Welfare Council, 18 March 1959, SLWA; *State News*, 5 November 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 184/53; Middleton's response to the Special Committee on Native Matters, 12 March 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 1069/48.

72 Middleton, S.G. n.d., 'The life and times of S.G. Middleton', typescript held by the Middleton family.

73 *People*, 7 October 1953; WAPD, Legislative Assembly, 26 November 1953, 2106; Middleton developed an understanding of journalism in his first occupation with a newspaper.

to Aboriginal people for farming (economically empowering – provided people had the requisite skills and contacts for selling produce).⁷⁴ Middleton applauded the bill, especially its changed reference to 'welfare',⁷⁵ which encapsulated the role played by pedagogic intervention in his assimilation strategy. But he was disappointed Parliament stopped at granting citizenship, commenting this failed to 'give legal recognition to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Human Rights'.⁷⁶ Middleton's awareness of international developments and his desire to base assimilation policy on the notion that all men were equal unfortunately conflicted with local anxieties about Aboriginal people's ability to accept the associated responsibilities. Middleton would have to wait until 1963, a year after his retirement, for the Native Welfare Act to be abolished.⁷⁷

Fortunately, access to the welfare state came sooner. Middleton applauded the Commonwealth Government amending the *Social Services Act 1947* in 1959 to extend social security benefits to all Aboriginal people except those deemed 'to follow a mode of life that was nomadic or primitive'.⁷⁸ Social security imposed assimilation through providing 'cash inducements to the Aborigine who was forced to orient himself or herself in the "white" direction'.⁷⁹

Also, at the level of implementation, Middleton was able to discourage department officers from cancelling or objecting to applications for citizenship rights, reasoning the department's task was to assist Aboriginal people to improve their status in the community and advising against any action likely to 'retard their assimilation'.⁸⁰ By 1957 he had convinced the Minister of Native Welfare to prohibit officers below senior level revoking 'citizenship rights' and then 'only in the most pressing circumstances'.⁸¹ There remained an element of taking advantage of the incentive of an exemption certificate, but this was to be avoided. Under Middleton's instruction, department officers encouraged individuals fulfilling the criteria for citizenship to apply for it:

Proceeded to house of [potential applicant], a native who works as a shunter in railway yard ... Married to a white woman. Their house and grounds would be a credit to any white man. The lawn was neatly mowed and the flower beds were full of flowers. They live in a Commonwealth-State rental home allotted for railways personnel, I think. While talking to [wife] – a plump, clear-eyed woman in her thirties I could see a good dining room suite and a very highly

74 *State News*, 15 April 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 184/53.

75 *State News*, 8 December 1954, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 184/53; WAPD, Legislative Assembly, 11 November 1952; 3 December 1953, 2640; Biskup 1973: 253.

76 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1955.

77 Hunter 2001: 82.

78 Chesterman and Galligan 1997: 164.

79 DeMaria 1986: 37–38.

80 Middleton to Clerk of Courts Mt Magnet, 13 March 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 78/52.

81 Middleton to District Officer North Central, 14 February 1957, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 78/52; Middleton to Minister for Native Welfare, 31 January 1957, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 78/52.

polished dining room floor. [The potential applicant] was not at home, his wife told me he had the forms but he was too proud to apply for citizenship (his father had applied and had been granted earlier this year). Went to the railway yard where [the potential applicant] was at work and spoke to [the potential applicant] pointing out the benefits of citizenship to him, to his family – he has five daughters. He promised when I left him, that he would put his application in soon. This man is well spoken of by the police. His wife told me that he would not even drink beer when his father brought it to the house. He appears to be accepted in the white society in which he mixes. [The potential applicant] is probably the most deserving case for citizenship rights I have met.⁸²

Another officer, inspecting a couple living in a State Housing Commission house, reported:

I found the house in a very clean condition. His wife was in the act of scrubbing the floor. The house was sparsely furnished but all essentials were present. The kitchen furniture included a kerosene refrigerator on which ten pounds remained to be paid off. The bedroom was furnished but the living room was bare.⁸³

These officers' reports are typical of the many I viewed, with assessments of assimilation reflecting a highly conformist 1950s society. Within this society, conformity was achieved via informal codes of behaviour, dress and presentation of the home; shared daily routines; the pursuit of consumerism and adherence to a rigid morality.⁸⁴ Securing Aboriginal people's conformity required regular monitoring, which would break down existing patterns of behaviour so that new ones could be constructed; that is, as above, women had to attend to their housework as a daily routine.⁸⁵ As Barry Morris, drawing on Foucault (1977), observed in his analysis of assimilation policies towards the Dhan-Gadi people of New South Wales, each individual was subject to a 'normalising judgement' and his or her 'performance' ranked according to his or her ability to conform to the set normative standards. The ultimate aim was to internalise self-regulation within each individual and thereby remove the need for surveillance.⁸⁶ Inspection of a rental property need only concern itself with cleanliness and maintenance, yet because this couple were subjects for assimilation, the officer saw fit to report on their lack of material comforts – the couple had not yet conformed to the expected standard.

82 Great Southern patrol reports, Wright Webster and Asphar, 26 September 1949–5 October 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 190/49.

83 Central District – patrol reports, Tilbrook, 26 June 1956–29 June 1956, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 106/56.

84 Haebich 2008: 100.

85 Morris 1989: 132.

86 Morris 1989: 129–30.

Assessed to have internalised the behaviours expected of members of Australian society, 'citizenship holders' still faced inspections of their own homes if their family contained 'natives'.⁸⁷ Knowing that citizenship holders tended to resent department interference in their family's affairs, Middleton cautioned department officers to approach them 'with delicacy'.⁸⁸ Another way Aboriginal individuals employed resistance toward citizenship that was not automatically theirs but had to be applied for was by navigating the legislation to their best advantage. An Aboriginal man with a block of land approached the department for assistance to build a cottage. When the officer pointed out that the man had completed forms for citizenship rights and that the department could not assist citizenship holders to obtain housing, the man decided not to proceed with citizenship rights until it was first decided whether he was in the running for a house.⁸⁹

Along with assisting Aboriginal people to secure citizenship rights, department officers also sought legal equality for Aboriginal people by challenging instances of discrimination within their districts. This included investigating employers not paying Aboriginal employees award wages and even overruling police officers.⁹⁰ When police ordered a cinema to refuse entry to Aboriginal patrons (after *two* Aboriginal individuals ran inside the cinema to escape police and could not be found in the darkness), the department officer informed the cinema the police were not authorised to do so. The cinema resumed admitting Aboriginal people.⁹¹ Officers educated (typically racist) local council authorities about the department's aim of complete equality for Aboriginal people; and monitored teachers' attitudes towards Aboriginal students, encouraging them to promote tolerance in the classroom.⁹²

Middleton's endeavours to reform legislation helped define an interpretation of assimilation that regarded civil rights, as opposed to privileges, and a racially tolerant society just as essential to assimilation's success as Aboriginal people

87 Great Southern District patrol reports – Narrogin sub-district, KI Morgan, 19 May 1958–29 May 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 605/57.

88 Employment for native youth, Patrol officer, Adams, 18 December 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 654/51.

89 Great Southern District patrol reports, Wright Webster, 26 May 1952–1 June 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 614/51.

90 Middleton to David Secker, 12 January 1954, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 185/55; AO Day to F Gare, 22 March 1954, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 76/54; Great Southern District – patrol reports, Hawke, acting inspector, 2 March 1949–11 March 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 190/49; Great Southern District – patrol reports, Wright Webster and Asphar, 26 September 1949–5 October 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 190/49; Southern District – Narrogin patrol reports, Wright Webster, 11 August 1954–20 August 1954, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 94/54; Jacobs to Wright Webster, n.d., MN 1252/95, Acc 3797A, SLWA.

91 Jacobs to Wright Webster, n.d., MN 1252/95, Acc 3797A, SLWA.

92 Middleton to Robertson, 17 July 1951, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 921/49.

practising a Western lifestyle. The second part of the article builds on this, showing how Middleton's campaign for equality and its assumptions of Western superiority influenced his approach to educating and housing Aboriginal people.

Housing

Arriving in Western Australia, Middleton was confronted by the incarceration of Aboriginal people on badly run government settlements. One of his first steps as Commissioner was to close these down or, following the practice in Papua, to transfer control to missionaries.⁹³ Housing Aboriginal people in the mainstream community became a priority, with Middleton fearing continued segregation would lead Western Australia to experience the difficulties the United States had integrating its African American population.⁹⁴ Complementing this, he announced a policy of decreased supervision in adults' affairs, ordering department officers to contact all adult 'natives' and give them the opportunity to manage their own money.⁹⁵

In his 1952 Annual Report, Middleton promoted the idea that Aboriginal people shared this dream, publishing a patrol officer's finding that '[i]t is the opinion of many natives though not all that integration of white and non-white people in private housing will largely solve the problem of racial tensions and discrimination in Western Australia. "We have got to know each other better" is what in effect they say'.⁹⁶ No mention was made of the sample size or of any opposition to the proposition.

The civilised status attached to housing is clear in the following officer's comments:

It [housing] will be a great step towards educating employers that natives are human beings with the same basic emotions, who enjoy the same nature and share in the same hope that we ourselves do, when we are able to assist them to purchase houses of their own as is now done unhesitatingly for non-English speaking background New Australians.⁹⁷

On this last point, the success of federal government policies towards immigrants was providing those in Aboriginal welfare with evidence-based solutions for assimilating minority groups.

93 Middleton interviewed by Bunbury, 1986.

94 Middleton to Minister for Native Welfare, 19 September 1956, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 498/52.

95 Circular memorandum 289, 12 October 1951, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 1026/48.

96 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1952.

97 Central patrol reports, A/patrol officer McCrae, 17 September 1951–7 May 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 498/52.

Unfortunately, however, deinstitutionalisation of Aboriginal adults did not end their segregation from society: low incomes and local government reluctance to grant building permits saw these adults join already large populations on reserves designated for Aboriginal people. In 1957, 85 per cent of families lived on reserves.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, between 1947 and 1961, federal and state assistance increased home ownership amongst the mainstream population from 50 to 70 per cent and offered a limited number of low-cost rentals to the socioeconomically disadvantaged.⁹⁹ As non-citizens, Aboriginal people were ineligible for the former and only eligible for the latter if approved by their local government.¹⁰⁰ Thus people relied on the department whose funding was so inadequate that its 1958 plan to build 60 houses annually had to be reduced to six.¹⁰¹

Repeatedly, Middleton petitioned the federal government to amend the Constitution to give the department access to federal funds.¹⁰² Refusal led him to equip reserves with basic amenities, and to exploit the assistance of Western Australian Native Welfare Council-affiliated organisations which, by 1961, had built 17 houses on reserves, along with shelter sheds, sanitation facilities, community halls and kindergartens.¹⁰³ Against this, he cautioned, a 'fine balance had to be struck between improving conditions to enhance people's hygiene, self-respect and acceptance by the community without improving them so much that people would want to live on reserves permanently'.¹⁰⁴ Elderly residents were the exception: Middleton argued they should be permitted to live on reserves since 'communal living' was 'all they had ever known'.¹⁰⁵

To overcome the communal lifestyle on reserves and encourage adoption of a Western nuclear family pattern, houses were built onsite, forming the first stage of a 'transitional housing' scheme. Residents' successful maintenance of these houses saw them graduate to a basic house on department-owned land at minimal rent. Then, provided they kept up with rental payments and successfully maintained the house, they could apply for a State Housing Commission home.

98 Jacobs to Wright Webster, n.d., MN 1252/95, Acc 3797A, SLWA; Haebich 2008: 98–99; Middleton to Minister for Native Welfare re Lower Great Southern Regional Council Conference 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 222/50; Notes of deputation from the Lower Great Southern Regional Council which waited on the Minister for Native Affairs, 27 June 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 222/50.

99 Haebich, 2008: 243; Eslake, 2013: 2.

100 Welfare inspector Moora to the Secretary Returned Services League Sub-Branch Carnamah, 12 December 1961, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 462/61.

101 Haebich 1992: 89; Middleton to Under Treasurer, 13 August 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 476/52.

102 Middleton to Innes, 20 March 1951, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 1044/47; Middleton to Under Treasurer, 13 August 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 3797A, 476/52.

103 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1961; Department of Indigenous Affairs 2004: 46; Notes for inclusion in report of Native Welfare Conference 1961, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 384/59.

104 Rowley 1972: 104.

105 Middleton informed by McLarty, 5 July 1957, Lower eastern wheat belt and survey of housing and employment, 30 May 1956–9 June 1956, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 106/56; Elkin 1951: 15.

Alternatively, they could keep the house by having the title of the property transferred to them when the total cost of the building had been reimbursed to the department.¹⁰⁶

Believing it would be 'psychologically beneficial' for tenants if 'Department control was not apparent', Middleton gave voluntary organisations, who were already assisting reserve dwellers, the authority to supervise, evict and collect rent from tenants. He also supplied these organisations with names of individuals financially able and willing to purchase land for them to supervise.¹⁰⁷ Intolerant of Aboriginal resistance to efforts to house them, Middleton enhanced the success of his policies by governing 'at a distance'. Authoritarian objectives were concealed within a context of volunteers teaching tenants cooking and other skills in their homes and gaining their trust in order to convince them of the value of moral and domestic improvements.¹⁰⁸

The schemes were judged outstanding successes, with tenants installing furniture, curtains and gardens, and some families saving to move into State Housing Commission homes.¹⁰⁹ In 1948, only two Aboriginal people in Western Australia occupied State Housing Commission homes. By 1961, voluntary organisations had assisted the Commission to build 97 houses and the department to build 130.¹¹⁰ As a point of comparison, in New South Wales only 39 houses were built in towns between 1946 and 1960.¹¹¹ Touring Australia in 1961 convinced Middleton that Western Australia's closure of 'large stations and settlements' placed it in an 'advantageous position' over other states 'for assimilating Aboriginal people' because it reduced communities to family-sized groups on reserves, missions and stations.¹¹² At the 1960 conference of state

106 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1959; Conference on Welfare Policies for Australian Aborigines. Armidale, 1960; Frank Gare interviewed by Bannister.

107 Middleton to Under Treasurer, 13 August 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 101/59; Manning to Graham, 16 May 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 101/59; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1959; *West Australian*, 9 September 1959; Conference notes Narrogin council chambers, 16 July 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 101/59.

108 Wright Webster to Middleton, 22 July 1957, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 464/52; Employment for native youth, Patrol officer, Adams, 18 December 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 654/51; Robinson 2000: 84.

109 Great Southern District patrol reports, Wright Webster, 8 May 1958–23 May 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 605/57; Acting Commissioner of Native Welfare to Wright Webster, 3 September 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 305/58; Southern District patrol reports – Narrogin sub-district, Wright Webster, 11 August 1954–20 August 1954, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 94/54; Wright Webster to Middleton, 2 February 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 57/49; Deputy Commissioner of Native Welfare, Anderson, to Minister for Native Welfare, 13 January 1961, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 101/59; Frank Gare interviewed by Bannister; First Western Australian Native Welfare Conference, 1 February 1958, MN 1252/51, Acc 3797A, SLWA.

110 Wright-Webster to Middleton, welfare projects Narrogin, 6 September 1961, SROWA AN 1/7, ACC 993, 835/60; Department of Indigenous Affairs 2004: 46, 74–75.

111 Goodall 1996: 328; Broome 2005: 313–27.

112 Jebb 2002: 252–53.

Aboriginal administrations the previous year, Middleton informed delegates that better accommodation was having the 'automatic effect of assimilating' people.¹¹³

Department officers encouraged people in employment to build or rent and inspected people's homes. Abolition of private space was essential to the task of totally controlling people in order to change their behaviours.¹¹⁴ The following judgements were made by one officer over numerous patrols:

Inside the house with the garden was a refrigerator, sewing machine, wireless, lounge suite, new stove etc ... The family is a fine example of what coloured people can do to rise above their environment without assistance from anyone if the desire to do so is real.¹¹⁵

Indicators of assimilation varied depending on the subjective judgment of the officer, and could be quite laughable: 'A chicken run and fowl-house, soundly constructed would suggest that the people who live here have reached a standard of living higher than many other native families.'¹¹⁶ The certainty of the declared goal of assimilation contrasted with the arbitrary, vague reflections of its achievement and the uncertainty expressed by Middleton and Elkin in the late 1950s over how assimilation might be measured.

Financial independence did not exempt people from department interference; on the contrary, it subjected them to even greater scrutiny: a man with a 'well-paying job' but living in a 'small, dirty corrugated iron house' assured the same officer he would buy materials to improve it.¹¹⁷ Likewise, the officer reported on another man:

Here is an example of one, who by his own actions, is retarding severely the chances of his family's social acceptance. One would wonder if he, or his people, want to be accepted in the community at large ... and then having wondered, put the answer in the negative. He earns about thirty pounds a week, his two boys earn approximately the basic wage each. There is probably about fifty pounds a week going into this household. The Austin 40 [car] is deteriorating rapidly, there is no garden at all ... dust blowing everywhere, the house while being large by native standards is not well kept exteriorly and inside there are few indications of homeliness. This family needs very tactful guidance and a lot of

113 Conference on Welfare Policies for Australian Aborigines. Armidale, 1960: 23.

114 Morris 1989: 131.

115 Central and Eastern Goldfields District – Kalgoorlie sub-district patrol reports, A.O. Day, 28 November 1955–1 December 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 298/52.

116 Central and Eastern Goldfields District – Murchison sub-district patrol reports, A.O. Day, 14 January 1953–21 January 1953, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 9/53.

117 Central and Eastern Goldfields District – Kalgoorlie sub-district patrol reports, A.O. Day, 18 November 1954–27 November 1954, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 298/52.

it. If this man has the real desire within him he could be living in luxury in one of the best houses in Coolgardie and he and his family largely accepted socially in the community.¹¹⁸

The desirability of a house in the suburbs with modern furniture and appliances led to moral condemnation of those who could afford the lifestyle but chose not to. Conforming not only signified assimilation but, together with improved hygiene, facilitated it through increasing the likelihood of non-Aboriginal people accepting Aboriginal people into their neighbourhoods.¹¹⁹ Such conforming showed its tenants were engaged in mainstream Australian employment and had become slaves to Western consumerism; the family had been redefined as the nuclear family, separated from customary Aboriginal kinships obligations. The house is more than a house; it is a space for atomising and disciplining consumption.

What officers' reports indicate is that many were satisfied with modest homes, or, conversely, that those desiring better homes were, sensibly, reluctant to commit to rent or the purchase of furniture because they lacked regular employment. People's eagerness to obtain employment was emphasised by officers, who wished they could do more to assist.¹²⁰ The requirement to work and support one's immediate kin (the nuclear family as the unit of consumption) reshaped kinship networks and destroyed relations of exchange and obligation with more distant kin.

Education

Middleton attempted to increase employability by educating Aboriginal children to the same standard as non-Aboriginal children and providing additional support to young adults transitioning to professional employment – the first Australian Commissioner to do so.¹²¹ Haebich acknowledges his efforts when she attributes Middleton's inaction on unemployment to his concentrating on the next generation of workers.¹²² Where in 1948, 1,592 Western Australian

118 Central and Eastern Goldfields District – Kalgoorlie sub-district patrol reports, A.O. Day, 28 November 1955–1 December 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 298/52.

119 Middleton to Minister for Native Welfare, 19 September 1956, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 498/52.

120 Patrol officer, Long, to Wright Webster, 8 July 1959, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 101/59; Central District patrol reports, 1 July 1951–30 June 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 695/51; Great Southern District patrol reports, Wright Webster, 22 May 1950–27 May 1950 and 31 May 1950–1 June 1950, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 190/49; Biskup 1965: 410; Native welfare projects, reports etc, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 90/57; Patrol officer, Long, to Wright Webster, 8 July 1959, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 101/59; Great Southern patrol reports, patrol officer Asphar, 12 June 1950–16 June 1950, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 190/49; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1955; Haebich 2008: 264–72.

121 Conference on Welfare Policies for Australian Aborigines. Armidale, 1960: 23; Holland 2005: 96–97.

122 Haebich 2008: 264–272.

Aboriginal children attended schools, by 1961, 3,526 attended – 384 of these at secondary schools.¹²³ Between 1950 and 1960, 22 children passed the Junior Certificate examination and five the Leaving Certificate examination. Four of the latter graduated from Teachers Training College, and one became the first Aboriginal person to study at university and the first Aboriginal department officer.¹²⁴ In addition, a number took up nursing, trades, and office employment. To put this into perspective, government secondary schools were only established in Western Australia in 1946 (between 1950 and 1958 for rural areas), with a mere 1,742 non-Aboriginal children having completed year 10 by 1952 and 5,147 by 1960.¹²⁵

Middleton's success 'assimilating' individuals into the middle-class defied government and previous commissioners who condemned Aboriginal people to basic schooling and low-skilled employment.¹²⁶ Indeed, it was working alongside highly capable Papuans that led Middleton to conclude intellectual ability was universal, confirmed in Australia upon witnessing the rapid academic progress of adolescents with a 'hunter-gatherer' background.¹²⁷ However, his belief in sociocultural assimilation did not mean he would force this on people still living a hunter-gatherer lifestyle.

Just as Middleton had argued Australia's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights obligated it to recognise Aboriginal people's citizenship rights, he argued it also conferred a responsibility to provide both full and mixed descent children with the opportunity to attend primary, secondary and tertiary education.¹²⁸ Furthermore, by 1962, Middleton had, like Murray, appointed Aboriginal people to roughly half of all department positions, pursuing a future where Aboriginal people 'administered their own welfare'.¹²⁹ To this day, employment within the welfare sector gives many an environment supportive of culture and the autonomy to make decisions affecting their lives.

123 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1949; Conference of Commonwealth and State Native Welfare authorities 26–27 January 1961, Hasluck box 32, NLA, 147–48; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1961; Bray to Thomas, 3 October 1945, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 921/49.

124 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1960.

125 Tully 1999; Helm 1979: 224.

126 Biskup 1973: 231–32; Department of Indigenous Affairs 2004; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1949; Southern District patrol reports, Wright Webster, 10 March 1952–19 March 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 614/51.

127 Middleton; Middleton to Minister for Native Affairs, 24 November 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 921/49; *The West Australian*, 6 January 1951; Murray 1923: 8–9.

128 Conference of Commonwealth and State Native Welfare authorities 26–27 January 1961, Hasluck box 32, NLA, 147–48.

129 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1954; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1960, 1961, 1962; Middleton to District Welfare Officer Carnarvon, 19 July 1961, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 656/61.

The centrality of education to Middleton's assimilation strategy showed in his 1953 Annual Report:

Education is perhaps the most significant index of overall native progress. As long as he is ignorant and illiterate the aborigine – including the 'half-caste' – is unqualified for the better jobs; without the improved income which comes from better jobs he is handicapped in finding better housing; poor housing breeds disease, crime and discouragement. Given education he is enabled to speak up for his rights; he increases the prestige of his community and his own self-respect and is able to thereby develop friendly face-to-face relations with the white population. Most of all he achieves real cultural status and the sense of social responsibility which exerts continual and inexorable pressure against the web of discrimination which confines him.¹³⁰

Middleton viewed education as more than just facilitating the economic goals of assimilation: by achieving mainstream measures of success, Aboriginal individuals earned the respect of non-Aboriginal society and, ironically, the privilege of enjoying pride in their Aboriginality – albeit framed in terms of their universal human rights rather than as Indigenous people. Again, this shows Middleton understood the impact societal judgement had on assimilation, and the complex psychological factors involved in empowering individuals.

To give children an equitable education, raise expectations of their abilities, and (as emphasised by Elkin) foster interaction between them and non-Aboriginal children, Middleton ended segregated department-provided schooling in favour of mainstream government schooling.¹³¹ Children in remote areas continued to be educated on missions, although they too learned the state curriculum; Middleton secured missions' compliance via subsidies, a strategy used in Papua and most British colonies.¹³² He said parents should 'treat missions as free boarding schools', reflecting how acceptable this institution had become in the education and disciplining of non-Aboriginal children.¹³³ Middleton guaranteed that 'the Education Department would bring outstanding scholars up to the standard where they would be 'economically and socially equal with any white

130 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1953.

131 Central and Eastern Goldfields District – Kalgoorlie sub-district, A.O. Day, 30 September 1953–15 October 1953, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 298/52; Middleton to Mrs K. McNeil, 18 August 1950, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 185/55; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1949; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1960.

132 Biskup 1973: 252; Smith 1987: 56; Middleton to Mr A.R. Astle, 20 July 1956, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 185/55.

133 Legge 1956: 177; Austin 1978: 33; Beresford and Omaji 1998: 47; Biskup 1973: 242; Haebich 2005: 211; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1953; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1957; Notes of meeting held at the Office of the Commissioner, 1 September 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 490/49. Prior to this, unqualified teachers had taught children to be domestics and station hands; Milnes 1985: 134; Morris 1989: 170.

child'.¹³⁴ Dominance of the Western economy made schooling necessary to secure socioeconomic equality, and schooling was such a commonly accepted institution within mainstream society that the political and cultural control it had over each new generation went unnoticed.¹³⁵

Viewing education as an 'effective means of overcoming nomadic habits and weaning children away from tribal life, particularly in matters that conflicted with mainstream society's laws', Middleton encouraged mission schoolteachers to only perpetuate 'worthwhile aspects of Aboriginal culture' and to insist on communication in English.¹³⁶ On Elkin's advice, Aboriginal people relying on a hunter-gatherer economy were left to do so.¹³⁷ Children living as hunter-gatherers were not schooled but kept under surveillance in case their circumstances changed.¹³⁸

In 1955 the Superintendent of Native Education advised Middleton that educating children in remote areas did them a disservice because of the lack of employment opportunities.¹³⁹ Accordingly, Middleton desired to move children to town centres. Furthermore, he directed missionaries to 'do everything in their power to discourage parents from following their children'.¹⁴⁰ The seamless continuum of evolution outlined by assimilationists was, in implementation, cruel and complicated. Middleton's support for the removal of children for education ran counter to his general commitment to keeping families together, as we shall see below.

Department officers tracked students' progress and singled out the academically gifted for higher education, promising assistance with training following graduation.¹⁴¹ Middleton considered one of his greatest achievements to be the

134 Minutes of a deputation to the Minister for Native Affairs from representatives of the Methodist Mission in regard to a proposal to take over the Moore River Native settlement, 10 May 1951, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 34/51.

135 Morris 1989: 133.

136 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, 1949; Middleton to Mr A.R. Astle, 20 June 1956, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 185/55.

137 Holland, in Rowse 2005: 87.

138 Central and Eastern Goldfields District – Kalgoorlie sub-district, A.O. Day, 30 September 1953–15 October 1953, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 298/52.

139 Superintendent of Education's Report on Native Education 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 185/55.

140 Superintendent of Education's Report on Native Education 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 185/55; Middleton to Secretary Mrs Telfer, 19 December 1956, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 794/51; WAPD, Legislative Assembly, 17 October 1956, 1414; 26 November 1956: 1108–09; 26 September 1956: 1108–09; 9 September 1958: 668.

141 Wright Webster to Miss Winsome Colbung, 17 February 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 669/49; Middleton to Mrs M.S. Niblock, State Secretary Country Women's Association, 6 April 1951, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 669/49; Middleton to David Secker, 12 January 1954, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 185/55; A.O. Day to F. Gare, 22 March 1954, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 76/54; Great Southern District – patrol reports, Hawke, acting inspector, 2 March 1949–11 March 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 190/49; Great Southern District – patrol reports, Wright Webster and Asphar, 26 September 1949–5 October 1949, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 190/49.

establishment of two city hostels providing accommodation for adolescents studying or undertaking skilled employment. Parental consent was required and those who could afford it paid their child's board.¹⁴²

Establishment of the first hostel, Alvan House, signified another instance where implementing assimilation required challenging prejudice. Located in the affluent suburb of Mount Lawley, it incited a public protest meeting at which Middleton successfully defended his plan. In turn, boarders' behaviour impressed neighbours so much that the second hostel, McDonald House, went unopposed in affluent West Perth.¹⁴³

Actually, boarders from both hostels quickly became the poster children for assimilation, featured in newspapers and invited to more functions than they had time to attend.¹⁴⁴ Under the heading 'Two worlds now live happily as one', *The Australian Women's Weekly* described the hostels as 'unique in Australia' and claimed the 'assimilation of these students challenged the critics and made Aboriginal parents keen for their children to be given similar opportunities'.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, department reports reveal several parents required years of convincing, and loneliness led some children to return home.¹⁴⁶

Aboriginal people's resistance to removal from community for education led Middleton to establish hostels closer to where Aboriginal children lived.¹⁴⁷ Assisted by missions, employers and prominent townspeople, he had built six remote hostels by 1961, accommodating 300 adolescents.¹⁴⁸ Middleton staffed hostels with Aboriginal guardians to make them more welcoming to boarders.¹⁴⁹ This challenges assumptions about assimilationists' desire to divorce children from their Aboriginality, although it should not be overstated since Middleton valued 'assimilated' Aboriginal people serving as role models for others to

142 Middleton to Under Secretary Premier's Department, 11 November 1950, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 262/1950; Middleton to Mrs M.S. Niblock, State Secretary Country Women's Association, 6 April 1951, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 669/49; Report on Alvan House October 1951–31 May 1951, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 375/51; Form 2 December 1954, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 47/53; Wright Webster to headmaster Jingalup State School, 28 August 1957, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 921/49; Middleton to Robertson, 16 July 1952, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 921/49; Middleton to Wright Webster, 26 May 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 47/53.

143 *State News*, 12 December 1950, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 758/1950; Biskup 1973: 243.

144 Report on Alvan House from October 1950 to 31 May 1951, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 375/51.

145 *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 2 July 1958.

146 Wright Webster to Mrs Pullen, 24 May 1955 and Constable at Boddington to Wright Webster, 11 February 1956 and Wright Webster to Middleton, 18 January 1956, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 47/53; Middleton to Wright Webster, 2 October 1958, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 47/53.

147 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1961.

148 Haebich 2000: 522.

149 Middleton to District Officer Carnarvon, 19 July 1961, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 656/61.

emulate.¹⁵⁰ Likewise, to facilitate assimilation, the Education Department accommodated Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students together in two northern-located hostels.¹⁵¹

Child removal

Acknowledging Middleton's determination to keep families together, Haebich attributes continued high removals to his imperative to educate children when schools did not exist in many areas where Aboriginal people lived, his surveillance of Aboriginal households, and the federal government's insufficient funding of welfare programs (as evidenced in the preceding sections of this article).¹⁵² To this I would add denial of citizenship, since ineligibility for Commonwealth social security benefits and housing made it near impossible for Aboriginal parents to provide the material conditions necessary for raising children.

Early in his administration, Middleton warned child health would be impeded until the government was able to launch an extensive housing scheme in Western Australia.¹⁵³ Then, in 1958, he publicised the case of a 16-year-old mother struggling to keep her baby because her Aboriginality disqualified her for a maternity allowance (for this Middleton was again attacked in Parliament).¹⁵⁴ Ineligibility for the maternity allowance – along with surveillance – played a huge role in the following intervention by a departmental officer who set out to reduce the number of women receiving department rations. Despite acknowledging that a widow with five children 'looked after them very well', he convinced her to send the three eldest children to a mission.¹⁵⁵ Tellingly, at the end of the patrol, he concluded: 'As soon as all the eligible children have been sent to missions and the mothers are working, this number will have decreased to nine.'¹⁵⁶ However, in an encounter with another widow who stood up to him, the officer allowed her large family to remain on the ration list. This suggests he knew his actions were unethical. Preference for removal was similarly indicated when rations were given to a family living in 'appalling conditions on no income'

150 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs, 1954; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare, 1960, 1961, 1962.*

151 Middleton to Minister for Native Welfare, 25 November 1957 and G.F. Thornbury to T.L. Robertson, 18 November 57, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 262/1950.

152 Haebich 2000: 524, 2005: 204–12, 217; Report of the Special Committee on native matters (with particular reference to adequate finance), NAA A452, 1958/3886.

153 Middleton to Miss A. Evans, Princess Margaret Hospital, 30 January 1953, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 32/53.

154 WAPD, Legislative Council, 22 October 1958: 1662–63.

155 Murchison sub-district patrol reports, J.C. Hendrikse, 7 February 1955–11 February 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 9/53; Frank Gare to Middleton, 18 February 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 9/53.

156 Murchison sub-district patrol reports, J.C. Hendrikse, 7 February 1955–11 February 1955, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 9/53.

only because there was insufficient space in the mission to accommodate the children. The department officer even assisted the husband (unsuccessfully) to find employment.¹⁵⁷

Middleton's frustration at his continued failure to reduce child removals, which more than doubled between 1957 and 1961, showed in his almost annual announcements that this would be the year the department moved away from institutionalisation towards keeping families together.¹⁵⁸ Extension of social security benefits to Aboriginal people and 'moderate progress in housing' saw him emphasise this in 1959. In his 1960 Annual Report he admitted that until the mid-1950s when the department's plan for better housing and living conditions was first implemented, missions were presented to parents as the solution to seeking better living and educational opportunities for children.¹⁵⁹ Certainly, Department Officer (and Middleton's successor) Frank Gare recalled a culture of avoiding child removal, with Middleton buying every department officer Dr John Bowlby's book *Child Care and the Growth of Love* that advised against separating children from their mothers. Gare said this led him to the regrettable decision of leaving a child with an alcoholic couple who subsequently rolled on to the baby, smothering it to death.¹⁶⁰ The psychological damage wreaked on a generation of parents removed as children and suffering the effects of welfare dependency and alienation from culture, kin and purpose presented yet another challenge to Middleton breaking with the past. So, too, the temptation to remove children might be found in the objective stated by Middleton in 1958: 'The social development of any race lies in its children and it is through them that the Department hopes chiefly to guide and direct the cultural change taking place among Aborigines.'¹⁶¹

Conclusion

An underappreciated figure in Aboriginal affairs, Middleton fought hard to secure Aboriginal people's civil and socioeconomic equality within mainstream Australian society. Believing Aboriginal people were of equal intelligence to Europeans and worthy of the same rights and responsibilities, a product of his international training in Indigenous administration and his early life, made him more progressive than most Western Australians. This prompted him to

157 Central District patrol reports, D.W. Hardwick, 23 June 1957–28 June 1957, SROWA AN 1/7, Acc 993, 106/56.

158 Haebich 2000: 524–25, 2005: 17; Marron 1994; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1961; Notes for inclusion in report of Native Welfare Conference 1961, AN 1/7, Acc 993, 384/59, SROWA.

159 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1960.

160 Haebich and Mellor 2002: 147.

161 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1958.

move well beyond his civil servant role to petition for Aboriginal people's inclusion within society. However, it was this same conviction that led him to assume Aboriginal people desired the European way of life and positioned them on a continuum of human development where environmental factors were responsible for the perceived differing levels of advancement by different 'races'. Consequently, Middleton's solution came to be to facilitate people's advancement through education and housing, the provision of unsolicited assistance, the discouragement of collective modes of living in favour of an individualist one, and continual assessment of people's progress via constant surveillance. In so doing, Middleton contradicted his progressive stance on civil rights and made families even more vulnerable to child removal. Understanding how such contradictions occur is important; for future motivations may, albeit unintentionally, replicate the assimilation era and governments may be tempted to renege on commitments to preserve Aboriginal culture, community and autonomy if these become costly, impractical, or incompatible with overcoming socioeconomic disadvantage.

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Ending isolation? Leprosy, welfare and Indigenous Australians 1950–86

Charmaine Robson

When Derby leprosarium in north-west Western Australia closed its doors in 1986, it finally ended the century-old Australian public health policy of detaining people with leprosy at special sites of isolation. As with its counterparts in the Northern Territory and northern Queensland – East Arm and Fantome Island, which closed in 1982 and 1973 respectively – the vast majority of patients were Indigenous Australians, mostly from remote parts of the continent. Under state and territory health legislation, these people could be compelled to enter the leprosarium and submit to treatment for as long as departmental authorities deemed. Members of other races were also susceptible to leprosy, but, from the late 1950s, most were treated for short periods in hospitals or at home, rather than in a leprosarium.

This article investigates why leprosarium isolation continued for so long, particularly for Indigenous people. This group was the most profoundly disadvantaged by the leprosy isolation policy of the twentieth century, being the most numerous and incurring the particular cultural and social impacts of leprosarium institutionalisation, both as patients and as members of communities. The toll of leprosy isolation was heavy for everyone affected, but policies concerning European Australians will be drawn on for comparative purposes only, here; their histories remain to be told more fully elsewhere.

It is difficult to explain the survival of rigid isolation measures into the late twentieth century, long after effective treatment for leprosy became available in Australia in 1948. From its instigation in Australia in the late nineteenth century until this time, compulsory isolation was more easily justified on the grounds that leprosy was a much feared, contagious disease for which there was no reliable medical treatment. In the interwar period, however, as historians

have argued, leprologists were divided on whether these considerations outweighed the inhumanity of the practice. Some also believed the policy was counterproductive to the eradication of the disease since the prospect of exile drove sufferers into hiding where the disease could be spread unabated. Others, including doctors who influenced Australian health policy, were unconvinced and staunchly supported stringent isolation practices.¹ Yet this once impassioned and public debate hardly surfaced following the successful introduction of leprosy drug therapy – a therapy that, by drastically reducing a patient’s infectivity, appeared to eliminate any argument for leprosarium isolation.

International studies indicate that in some other countries advances in drug therapy were slow to modify leprosy control policies. Michelle Moran argues that in the United States this development led to increased testing and research, and thus ‘initially intensified institutional control over patients’.² In the United States and Japan, medical developments had little effect on policy. Reform occurred gradually, with social and economic factors driving changes in law and the closure of the leprosaria.³ Angela Ki Che Leung’s argument that isolation measures in China intensified in the 1950s as part of the Great Leap Forward is a reminder of the persistent historical connections between the national political landscape and leprosy management.⁴ These findings suggest the need for caution in linking policy reform to scientific developments without consideration of the influence of wider social or political issues.

The divergence of Australian leprosy control policy along the lines of race from 1950 deserves particular attention. Historians have commented on this emergence of a more overt racially inequitable policy, but have not subjected it to sustained analysis, nor questioned why this continued for a further three decades. For Alison Bashford, it was not so much a change, as an intensification of the existing racial anomalies enabled through decisions ‘constantly made on the ground’.⁵ This bifurcation of policy coexisted with commitments by governments in the 1950s to iron out racial inequities in the healthcare and welfare sectors under the policy of assimilation. The *Welfare Ordinance 1953* (NT), the policy’s main instrument in the Northern Territory, emphasised the ‘physical well being’ and ‘social, economic and political advancement’ of Indigenous people so they could ‘take their place as members of the community of the Commonwealth’.⁶ As Anna Haebich has argued, assimilation implied the incorporation of Indigenous healthcare into mainstream medical

1 Bashford 2004: 89–90; Saunders 1990.

2 Moran 2007: 172.

3 Sato and Frantz 2005.

4 Leung 2009: 180.

5 Bashford 2004: 99–100; see also Parry 2003: 11.

6 *Welfare Ordinance 1953* (NT), Part II, s. 8.

services.⁷ Indeed, reforms of racially exclusionary welfare policies, such as the Commonwealth social security system, suggested the state's growing recognition of the rights and needs of aged and disabled Indigenous people, and a general shift towards equity in social policy. Yet it was in this period that divisions deepened between leprosy policy for Indigenous and other Australians.

A second task of this article is to identify divisions remaining embedded in healthcare and welfare systems of the 1950s and 1960s to determine their scope for assisting the recovery and deinstitutionalisation of leprosy patients, many of whom had developed physical impairments. From the 1940s, the Commonwealth Government's strengthened commitment to the rehabilitation and social re-assimilation of groups such as returned soldiers, tuberculosis sufferers and invalid pensioners resulted in a raft of welfare provisions including cash benefits, health services, and retraining programs.⁸ Historian Stuart Macintyre argues that these welfare measures looked to 'strengthening the social fabric' by maximising employment opportunities and protecting against hardship.⁹

This article draws on Indigenous disability studies. Helen Meekosha argues that the concept of disability in Indigenous people is inextricable from the disabling effects of colonisation on all Indigenous Australians, with or without physical or mental impairment.¹⁰ Imported diseases, the Western diet, dislocation, dispossession of land, and the removal of children left a legacy of chronic health problems in the Indigenous population. Included in these 'state-created impairments', to use David Hollinsworth's term, were the 'racist representations of Indigenous people and their consequent treatment', through, for example, practices of exclusion, intense surveillance and/or institutionalisation.¹¹

This study aims to contribute to an understanding of the [post]colonial 'disabling' of Indigenous people. Leprosy itself, introduced to the Indigenous race as a result of European settler society incursions in the late nineteenth century, was a tragic consequence of colonisation, as manifested in the deaths, maiming and serious illness it caused. Governments compounded this problem, enforcing policies and laws that prescribed leprosarium isolation and targeted Indigenous people under revised policies from 1950. Taking up Hollinsworth's perspective, I will argue here that these policies endured – when medical science and social change determined they should cease – in part because of the persistence of a racialised medical and bureaucratic discourse in the 1950s and early 1960s, framing Indigenous patients as unfit for living outside institutional oversight. In addition, I will take Meekosha's argument further, showing that

7 Haebich 2012: 141.

8 Waters 1976: 218.

9 Macintyre 1985: 82.

10 Meekosha 2011: 672; see also Gilroy et al. 2013: 45.

11 Hollinsworth 2012: 608.

the colonial legacy of inadequate living conditions, diet, healthcare and welfare services typifying the lives of many remotely based Indigenous people was used by health administrators as justification for extending leprosarium isolation and forced relocation of those with leprosy.

Since at least the early twentieth century, doctors have understood leprosy to be a mildly contagious bacterial disease caused by the organism *Mycobacterium leprae*. The precise means of transmission was unclear (and remains so), but was thought to occur either through the respiratory route or via skin contact. Essentially, the disease involves the nerves and skin; while its effect on some individuals is mild, it can induce serious, sometimes fatal conditions. Others survive for decades and, without treatment, may incur debilitating conditions such as deformity of the feet and hands, blindness and ulceration. By the interwar period, doctors distinguished between the more invasive and infectious form of leprosy and the non-infectious type ('lepromatous' and 'tuberculoid' types respectively). They also knew that the incubation period to be at least five years, so that by the time a person's condition became evident, others may have been infected. Nevertheless, isolating the patient from society was considered the only way of controlling the spread of the disease at a time when the only treatment available, Chaulmoogra oil, had limited value.¹²

Leprosy was first noticed in Australia when a minor, short-lived outbreak occurred in Victoria in the middle of the nineteenth century. In the 1890s, it became endemic in New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory and northern Western Australia, afflicting people of various races. In the same decade it was first found in Indigenous people, mostly in the latter three regions.¹³ In line with public health conventions in the colonies of Great Britain and elsewhere, Australian governments ordered the removal of individuals identified with leprosy and their permanent or long-term detention at remote sites or islands.¹⁴ Officially, the same fate awaited people of any race, as law and policy made no distinction in this regard. However, from the late 1920s, Indigenous notifications began outnumbering all others, and case-finding expeditions and institutional isolation measures targeting Indigenous people intensified across northern Australia.¹⁵ Consequently, three new leprosaria were established for Indigenous patients at Channel Island (1931), Derby (1936) and Fantome Island (1940). The first patients admitted to the latter institution had come from Queensland's Peel Island Leprosarium, which thereafter took only European patients. By 1950, 86 per cent of the 587 people in Australian leprosaria were Indigenous.¹⁶

12 Cumpston 1989 [1928]: 215–17.

13 Cumpston 1989 [1928]: 209.

14 Bashford 2004: 88.

15 Cumpston 1989 [1928]: 209.

16 Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics 1953: 303.

The new therapy

The breakthrough in therapy for leprosy can be traced to the Carville Leprosarium in the United States where, in 1941, researchers conducted successful trials with the patients using injections of Promin, a member of the sulphone group of drugs. By suppressing replication of the bacteria, this agent caused clinical improvement in patients and inhibited the progress of the disease.¹⁷ Through the 1940s, further research brought sulphone therapy within the reach of wider populations by yielding safer, cheaper and more convenient derivatives. Leprologists stopped short of hailing sulphone therapy as a cure, as not all patients responded well; rather, they used the term ‘arrested’ to describe the disease in those no longer displaying clinical and bacteriological signs.¹⁸ Nevertheless, in 1948, the Fifth International Leprosy Congress in Havana pronounced that the sulphones were the drugs of choice for leprosy.¹⁹ Their effectiveness was stressed that same year in a study by American researchers, G.H. Faget and Paul Erickson, with dramatic photographic evidence of the healing of severe facial lesions after several years treatment.²⁰ Two years later, a senior international research team concluded ‘we are ready to agree with others that a new day has dawned in the history of leprosy’.²¹

Medical research continued throughout the 1940s and 1950s in the quest to refine drugs and to treat the many conditions induced by the disease, such as other infections, eye disorders and deformities. By the late 1940s, surgery became available to repair deformities of the hands and feet resulting from nerve damage, thus restoring functions such as grasping tools.²² Because the drugs drastically reduced the infectivity of patients, it became increasingly difficult to justify their continued isolation in leper colonies and institutions, and health administrations in some countries began to modify their isolation requirements. In 1948, for example, Carville patients whose disease was still active were allowed to leave the leprosarium if they complied with certain requirements such as regular medical checks.²³

As scholar Zachary Gussow has argued, the formation of the World Health Organization (WHO) after World War Two and its establishment of the Expert Leprosy Committee in 1952 were integral in fostering changes in attitudes and the treatment of leprosy sufferers around the world in the second half of

17 Faget and Erickson 1948: 452.

18 Sloan et al. 1950: 5.

19 Anon. 1948: 209.

20 Faget and Erickson 1948: 453–54.

21 Sloan et al. 1950: 1.

22 Banerjee 2006: 137. Marion and Hargrave 1965: 36–37.

23 Sato and Frantz 2005; see also discharge of patients in Hawaii in Sloan et al. 1950: 5.

the twentieth century.²⁴ The committee consisted of a group of leprologists and epidemiologists with expertise and experience from around the world. They met regularly, reporting on the status of the disease internationally, and formulating international guidelines on leprosy management. Their targets were the health administrations, voluntary organisations and carers involved with leprosy sufferers globally. As Gussow's study highlights, the committee not only aimed to eradicate the disease, but it also emphatically recommended programs to promote the health and social welfare of leprosy sufferers.²⁵

Published in 1953, the committee's first report denounced strict leprosy isolation policies in light of the therapeutic inroads made by sulphone therapy: 'the more effective modern treatment giving better chances of recovery calls for a reconsideration of existing practices regarding compulsory isolation'.²⁶ Only 'infectious cases needed to be subjected to some form of isolation'.²⁷ The committee particularly disapproved of isolation at remote sites or islands, for 'the old idea that leprosy is so infectious that patients must be segregated in a distant place is one to be deprecated'.²⁸ It was opposed also because it deterred patients from coming forward for treatment, thus allowing the disease to spread. Further, it was considered detrimental to family relationships and to the financial welfare of patients' dependants.²⁹

Other recommendations in the first and the subsequent reports of 1960 and 1966 related to the recovery of patients and their adjustment to life outside the institution. The First Report advised that surgery should be 'given a larger place in all institutions caring for leprosy patients' to reduce deformity.³⁰ The Second Report devoted a whole section to the 'Rehabilitation of Disabled Patients', reiterating the need for more surgical programs, as well as occupational therapy and physiotherapy interventions 'so that [the patients] may be able to resume their place in the home, society and industry'.³¹ The Third Report turned its attention to financial welfare, stating: 'Governments should provide social assistance to leprosy patients and their families, according to existing facilities, in the same way as it is given to other disabled persons.'³²

24 Gussow 1989: 224.

25 Gussow 1989: 224.

26 WHO 1953: 9.

27 WHO 1953: 9.

28 WHO 1953: 9.

29 WHO 1953: 9.

30 WHO 1953: 18.

31 WHO 1960: 20–22.

32 WHO 1966: 18.

Australian leprosy policy after 1950

Sulphone therapy became available in Australia in 1947. Because the first supplies came only in injectable form, health authorities believed continual medical oversight was required, and restricted treatment to facilities such as Queensland's Peel Island Leprosarium where a medical officer was in residence.³³ In 1948, with the availability of orally administered medication, patients at all three Indigenous institutions finally commenced treatment.³⁴ The results in Australia reflected the experience overseas that, generally, patients' conditions improved dramatically.³⁵ Some patients took longer than others to respond and, indeed, there were several who did not respond at all, or suffered serious physiological reactions. However, developments in drug therapy continued apace during the 1950s and 1960s, with refinements of the sulphones as well as the addition of other agents, including corticosteroids and different antibiotics. Increasingly, drugs helped a wider range of patients in Australia and, for the first time, ameliorated many of the debilitating conditions arising from leprosy, such as ulcers.

By 1950, these positive results, together with changing practices overseas, prompted Australian health authorities to reassess leprosy control policy, in particular, the question of leprosarium isolation. It is important to explain how policy was decided and by whom. Legal provision to detain people with leprosy in specific institutions lay with state and territory government 'leprosy' ordinances, or clauses within health acts. This legislation also granted heads of health departments the power to release people from detention and retain them under surveillance, except the Western Australian act, which was silent on this matter.³⁶ The Commonwealth Health Department, however, also wielded considerable authority over leprosy policy: first, with respect to Northern Territory patients through its control of the Territory's health department; and, second, through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). This body financed research projects and devised health policy guidelines through expert committees comprised of scientists and specialist doctors. Australian leprosy management was one area under regular discussion by the Committee on Tropical Physiology and Hygiene (CTPH).

33 Qld Health and Medical Services Branch (hereafter QHMS) 1947: 7; A.J. Metcalfe, Acting Commonwealth Director-General of Health to J.G. McGlashan, Commonwealth Medical Officer, Northern Territory (hereafter CMO NT), 9 December 1946 in National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA) A1928, 715/38/1 SECTION 3; J.G. McGlashan, CMO NT to Mr H.I.C. Dent, Promotion Manager, Parke, Davis & Co, 6 November 1947, NAA A1928, 715/38/1 SECTION 3.

34 QHMS 1949: 13; Dr Herz, 'Notes' in Davidson 1978: 174; Humphry 1952: 573.

35 Humphry 1952: 573; QHMS 1956: 19 and 1957: 17.

36 *Leprosy Ordinance 1928* (NT); *Health Act 1911* (WA) s. 273, 'Treatment and Custody of Lepers'; *Health Act 1937* (Qld) s. 51, 'Leprosy'.

In 1950, the CTPH reviewed Australian leprosy policy in light of the recent therapeutic advances, concluding: 'The time is not ripe in Australia for abandoning the present prophylactic system.'³⁷ This statement was supported with the view that the drugs had not proved to be effective and that isolation was to be maintained in order to provide 'close and constant medical supervision for lengthy periods'.³⁸ This stance was maintained in the 1958 report, despite the accumulation of further scientific evidence of treatment efficacy, both in Australia and overseas.³⁹ That some Australian medical experts remained sceptical about the drug therapy at this time is evident in a warning issued in 1957 by the Commonwealth Health Department in its journal, *Health*, against 'the over-optimistic interpretations of work published by United States workers at Carville'.⁴⁰

The CTPH reports of the 1950s allowed for the discharge of patients from isolation after a period of treatment as long as certain criteria were satisfied. The committee members thus indicated their limited support for current therapies. Patients must have had two years of steady improvement in their condition, as well as an unbroken series of 12 negative results from monthly bacteriological tests. The reports also listed requirements regarding the conditions and facilities of the patient's intended destination on discharge. In summary, patients had to have access to a medical practitioner for regular reviews and the means to continue their treatment, a fixed address, 'separate accommodation and utensils, an adequate diet and no domiciliary contact with children'. If the patient had a physical disability, nursing and other support 'to preserve him from hardship, starvation or other factors lowering resistance' was required.⁴¹ The objectives here were the continued surveillance and treatment of discharged patients, and the maintenance of their health and hygiene, so that relapse and subsequent spread of the disease was avoided.

The CTPH reports added another, more explicit, layer of restrictions on Indigenous patients in a section defining the cases warranting isolation. 'Native full bloods' needed only to be 'clinically suggestive' of the disease, regardless of bacteriological results. For 'European patients', however, both bacteriological and clinical evidence were required. Decisions respecting another racial category, 'native mixed bloods', depended on the extent to which the individual's way of life resembled that of a 'full blood' or 'European'. Furthermore, exclusive to the category of 'native full bloods' were 'cases liable to relapse who cannot be

37 NHMRC 1950, 'Leprosy', NAA A1658, 258/1/1 PART 1: 2.

38 NHMRC 1950, 'Leprosy', NAA A1658, 258/1/1 PART 1: 2.

39 NHMRC 1958: 20–26.

40 Commonwealth Department of Health 1957: 21.

41 NHMRC 1950, 'Leprosy', NAA A1658, 258/1/1 PART 1: 3.

kept under satisfactory supervision outside the institution'.⁴² A medical source indicates that the term 'liable to relapse' referred to those patients who had the more infectious form of leprosy.⁴³

The general discharge criteria imposed long delays and obstacles to release for all patients. However, for Indigenous patients, many of whom came from remote districts with inadequate health services and living conditions, the requirements could be prohibitive. Add to these the specific isolation criteria for Indigenous people, and it is evident that the CTPH recommendations worked against the likelihood of their being released, and in favour of their prompt isolation. Indeed, the CTPH conceded that the implementation of these guidelines 'will necessarily involve discrimination between the races'.⁴⁴

Discrimination operated on two different levels. First, there was the kind alluded to in the report, that is, the automatic disqualification of many Indigenous people from acquiring liberty, due to poor home living conditions. The second form of discrimination can be found in the racial discourse informing the committee members' recommendations. The special isolation criteria for Indigenous people imply that these doctors saw them as a quintessentially irresponsible race whose members were safer in a leprosarium than free to manage their own health. This mistrust must have surely run deep to justify such an extreme measure, merely on suspicion of the presence of the disease, or on its chance of recurrence. More insights into this perspective may be garnered from a 1952 journal article by NT medical officer, A.H. Humphry. Explaining the NHMRC policy guidelines, he described the Indigenous person as follows: 'his standard of hygiene is poor, he will not sleep apart, nor can he restrain his intense fondness for children. He does not understand the word "infectivity"'.⁴⁵ This racial characterisation defined the Indigenous person as predisposed to unsanitary habits and the spreading of disease and, therefore, a potent public health risk. The focus on these perceived failings diverted attention away from the systemic problems of substandard housing and health services on many Indigenous settlements.⁴⁶

Interestingly, the opposite tendencies, such as sleeping apart and lack of contact with children, were listed as criteria for discharge in the CTPH's general recommendations. It seems, therefore, that, although ostensibly applicable to patients of all races, these criteria were devised on the basis of a body of 'knowledge' about Indigenous people: that their behaviour was at the root of the leprosy problem, and that policy had to be directed to suppress or contain that behaviour.

42 NHMRC 1950, 'Leprosy', NAA A1658, 258/1/1 PART 1: 3.

43 A.H. Humphry to Director of Welfare, 11 May 1956, NAA F1, 1954/321.

44 NHMRC 1950, 'Leprosy', NAA A1658, 258/1/1 PART 1: 1.

45 Humphry 1952: 572.

46 Beresford and Omaji 1998: 77–81; Kidd 1997: 170–73, 181–83.

Under the mantle of medical expertise, this racial discourse provided a strong rationale for the continued support for leprosarium isolation by the NHMRC. Conveyed to state and territory health bureaucracies, it revealed a disregard for the new medical treatment where Indigenous patients were concerned. David Piers Thomas has discussed the reinforcement of preconceptions about Indigenous people in medical texts, arguing for its influence 'on the way doctors and other Australians think about Indigenous health'.⁴⁷ In the case of leprosy policy, the circulation of these ideas also potentially informed decisions about Indigenous health.

Piers Thomas also noted that, by the 1950s, doctors were explaining Indigenous health issues in terms of cultural background, rather than innate characteristics, as in earlier decades.⁴⁸ These understandings were integral to social assimilation policies that, by promoting the re-education and resocialisation of Indigenous people, implicitly rejected 'fixed racial types' and, according to Haebich, 'rescued Aboriginal people from the stamp of race theories that branded them as inherently inferior'.⁴⁹ Historian John Murphy has shown that race, as a qualification for social services, also fell out of use and was replaced with mode of living, again linking this transition to government assimilation policy.⁵⁰ The NHMRC recommendations, then, seem rather regressive for their time in their bold formulation of racially differentiated policies. Yet the fading of racial terminology in Indigenous policy documents did not necessarily indicate the meanings it represented had also disappeared. As Russell McGregor reminds us, by designating all Indigenous people in the Northern Territory as wards of the state, the Welfare Ordinance equated their race with Europeans in need of special care.⁵¹

Australian leprosy policy implemented

Until the late 1950s, state and territory health departments generally adhered to the recommendations of the NHMRC regarding the isolation and discharge of patients. But, in 1958, the Queensland Government began to relax its isolation policy for its European patients following recommendations by the medical superintendent of the Peel Island Leprosarium, M.H. Gabriel. After visiting several leprosaria overseas, Gabriel wanted to bring 'the treatment and control of Hansen's disease in QLD into line with current world trends'.⁵² At a leprology

47 Piers Thomas 2004: 16.

48 Piers Thomas 2004: 90.

49 Raftery 2006: 164; Haebich 2008: 78.

50 Murphy 2013: 208–09.

51 McGregor 2011: 83.

52 QHMS 1959: 20. 'Hansen's disease' is an alternate name for leprosy.

congress in Japan, his presentation had recommended abandoning strict isolation practices, particularly for 'white patients and other racial groups enjoying high standards of housing, sanitation and nutrition'.⁵³ The first step was the reduction of the number of negative bacteriological results required for the discharge from 12 to three. Initially, Cornelius O'Leary, Director of Native Affairs, suggested that 'a similar procedure should be followed in respect of patients at the Fantome Island lazaret', and listed 11 who qualified.⁵⁴ On 'further consideration', however, health bureaucrats decided the modified requirements 'shall not be applied to coloured patients'.⁵⁵ This deeply disadvantaged Indigenous patients. If, after 11 months of consecutive negative readings, the twelfth one was positive, it meant at least one more year in the leprosarium.

The second step was the closure of the Peel Island leprosarium in 1959 and the transfer of the remaining patients to an isolation ward at South Brisbane Hospital. Thereafter, new European cases were admitted to this ward for short periods of treatment, and then released to 'home isolation' until their disease was arrested.⁵⁶ Similarly, from 1959, European cases in Western Australia began to be admitted to Perth's Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, rather than the Wooroloo lazaret, usually staying for just three to six months.⁵⁷ Wooroloo remained open a few more years as accommodation for some infirm patients.

Some of the people most affected by the implementation of NHMRC guidelines were Indigenous patients from remote areas. In 1956, Dr Humphry outlined the Northern Territory's policy to the Director of Welfare:

We are hesitant about discharging any patient to a locality that is remote or without a trained nurse or facilities for caring for the ex-patient. Such areas include cattle stations and such indefinite [sic] addresses as Mary River or Liverpool River. We do not discharge even the least infectious of cases to these areas as a rule. A few such patients who have had the disease very mildly and who we believe are completely cured are allowed to go. It would be unlikely that a patient with the infectious form of the disease would ever be permitted to leave for a remote area.⁵⁸

This policy did not necessarily mean that Indigenous people who had responded well to the medication remained in isolation in this period. But, rather than going home, many were sent to live at missions or settlements where authorities trusted they could be supervised and given adequate living conditions

53 QHMS 1959: 20.

54 C. O'Leary to Superintendent, Palm Island Settlement, 15 September 1958, Queensland State Archives (hereafter QSA), series 4322, item ID714735.

55 Under Secretary to C. O'Leary, 31 December 1958, QSA, series 4322, item ID714735.

56 QHMS 1960: 5, 26.

57 Davidson 1978: 133.

58 A.H. Humphry to Director of Welfare, 11 May 1956, NAA F1, 1954/321.

and care. There were many ramifications of this practice for former patients and their families, such as the prolonged separation from family and the social and emotional consequences for all involved. If the home area of Fantome Island patients was thought unsuitable, they were sent to Palm Island, sometimes forever. Robert Bismark of Cunnamulla remained there permanently because departmental officers, on a surprise inspection of his family's home, thought it was not clean enough. His family was not informed of his whereabouts and were heartbroken to learn of his fate, only after he had died.⁵⁹

At least eight patients originally from the Mapoon mission in Cape York were also compelled to remain on Palm Island because the closest medical centre was too far away from their homes. One man had spent 14 years in the leprosarium and expressed his despair to a patient welfare organisation:

We all have no real home to go to ... All the ex-patients from Fantome Island including myself WE ALL NOT TAKING OUR TREATMENT HERE BECAUSE THE CONDITIONS IS VERY POOR ... Palm Island is no place for me unless they have classed me as a murderer because Palm Island is a punishment island.⁶⁰

Subsequent inquiries by the Palm Island medical superintendent confirmed that this was a protest by the ex-patients, their intention being to induce a relapse of their disease and be returned to Fantome Island. The author of the letter, he noted, 'lives in a dirt-floored, corrugated iron structure containing a single stretcher ... its roof would undoubtedly leak' and survives on a vastly inadequate diet.⁶¹

As a result of these findings, the Queensland Director-General of Health, A. Fryberg, admitted that '[l]iving conditions at Palm Island are not conducive to the good health of native patients discharged from Fantome Island'.⁶² Yet 'good health' was ostensibly the reason for preventing Bismark and these other patients from going home. The health departments' objective of maintaining surveillance over the patients was evidently a more important factor. Still resident on Palm Island 30 years after his discharge from Fantome Island, Sandy Boyd from the Central Tablelands complained to an interviewer, 'you can't move here, you can't move there ... you move there, you go into jail. Over there you move anywhere you wanted to go. Trouble was I had to come here and get used to this'.⁶³ Other settlements may have been less restrictive and better resourced,

59 Hagan 2007.

60 Ex-patient to E. Hinton, Secretary, Relatives and Friends Association, 7 October 1954, QSA, series 505, item ID505017.

61 W.W. Wilson to Mr James, Secretary, Townsville Hospitals Board, 5 November 1954, QSA, series 505, item ID505017.

62 Fryberg to the Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 17 December 1954, QSA, series 505, item ID505017.

63 McHugh n.d., Interview with Sandy Boyd.

but every case of the forced relocation of former leprosy patients re-enacted the historical motifs of Indigenous family fragmentation and oppressive state control.⁶⁴

From about the middle of the 1950s, leprosy in Queensland showed signs of decline. Referring to the Indigenous population, Dr Fryberg predicted ‘in a few years time Hansen’s disease will be almost completely eliminated’.⁶⁵ Patient numbers at Fantome Island substantially dropped and by 1961, only 17 remained.⁶⁶ In 1965, the Queensland Health Department considered closing the leprosarium. Dr Gabriel supported the idea, arguing that if Indigenous patients were admitted to Brisbane Hospital with the European patients, they could receive superior rehabilitation services, and control of their own money. He argued, ‘We would be able to say that there was absolutely no discrimination between white and coloured patients with Hansen’s disease’.⁶⁷ But, it was eight years later when, with just six patients remaining, the leprosarium closed – by this time, in very poor shape. Buildings and equipment had been deteriorating for years with minimal repairs.⁶⁸ Neither surgical and physiotherapeutic advances nor rehabilitative services had ever been introduced at the institution. Any required surgery had to be carried out on the mainland, with the inevitable difficulties and delays this entailed. Apart from occasional visits from a doctor ‘who has little knowledge of about leprosy’, treatment was limited to nursing care and informal occupational therapy by the resident nurses.⁶⁹

In the Northern Territory, however, leprosy showed no signs of receding. Between 1950 and 1959, notifications more than trebled those of the previous decade: 459, including 447 Indigenous people. Between 1960 and 1969, there were 464, including 441 Indigenous.⁷⁰ This increase and spread to previously unaffected areas caused health authorities to strengthen their vigilance in identifying and detaining new cases.⁷¹ In 1953, Commonwealth Director-General of Health, A.J. Metcalfe, declared leprosy ‘the worst medical problem in Northern Australia’.⁷² Almost a decade later, NT Director of Health, Ian Byrne, ordered that any patient who had ever had a single positive bacterial test would be kept indefinitely in the leprosarium, thereby introducing tougher discharge criteria than those set by the NHMRC.⁷³

64 Haebich 2000: 13; Broome 2010: 172.

65 QHMS 1956: 19.

66 QHMS 1962: 17.

67 M.H. Gabriel to Fryberg, 17 September 1965, QSA, series 505, item ID505023.

68 M. Malone to P. Killoran, Director, Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, 19 January 1967; D. Bowler to Medical Superintendent, QLD Hospitals Board, 18 January 1971, both in QSA, series 505, item ID505023.

69 Gabriel to Fryberg, 17 September 1965, QSA, series 505, item ID505023.

70 Lush et al. 1998: 711.

71 Humphry 1952; Davidson 1978: 109.

72 ‘Leprosy increases hold on natives’, *The West Australian*, 18 February 1953: 1.

73 Byrne to J.C. Hargrave, Medical Officer, 22 August 1961, NAA A1658, 756/11/1 PART 2.

Despite this stringency, the NT Health Department modified isolation in other respects, as Suzanne Parry has argued. The transfer of the leprosarium from distant and barren Channel Island to a new, well-equipped facility at East Arm on the mainland in 1955 brought patients much closer to the town centre of Darwin. This move facilitated greater involvement of clinical practitioners in patient care. Initiatives in the late 1950s to the middle 1960s, such as the establishment of a leprosy treatment centre in Arnhem Land, the deployment of survey nursing sisters, the training of Indigenous health workers and the introduction of long-acting sulphone injections all contributed to transferring treatment and surveillance from the leprosarium to patients' home areas.⁷⁴

East Arm also led the way in introducing surgical and rehabilitative services in the same period.⁷⁵ In a Commonwealth Health Department report in 1965, the leprosarium was promoted as a normal hospital where the 'patients are treated as ordinary patients', and the 'gates are left wide open'.⁷⁶ Even so, under the *Leprosy Ordinance 1954–1957* (NT), the Chief Medical Officer's consent was required for patients to leave the leprosarium, and for the public to come within 366 metres of its boundaries.⁷⁷ The report explained that the leprosarium had changed its name to the 'East Arm Settlement', and emphasised its role as a surgical and rehabilitation facility. Accounting for the leprosarium's continued use as such, it said, 'it is better for patients to spend some time in a rehabilitation centre with other people who have the same problems'.⁷⁸ Whatever the practical benefits, this arrangement further segregated leprosy patients from society, and maintained separate health services for Indigenous people. In the 1970s, new case numbers dwindled, but only in 1980 the Leprosy Ordinance was repealed and leprosy was included with other diseases under the *Notifiable Diseases Act 1981* (NT). The leprosarium closed the next year and outpatient services were transferred to Katherine.

In the north-west of Western Australia, Indigenous notifications, although falling in the 1950s and 1960s (227 and 200 respectively) compared with numbers in the 1940s (439), kept a steady flow of admissions to Derby Leprosarium in these decades. Many of the newly discovered cases came from an area bordering the Northern Territory and were part of the same outbreak causing concern to authorities in the Territory. Others resulted from a reactivation of the disease in the western Kimberley area that continued until the mid-1970s. Inpatient numbers at the leprosarium remained around 180 in the years 1962 to 1968.

74 Parry 2003: 11–15.

75 Kettle 1991, II: 46–55.

76 Marion and Hargrave 1965: 35.

77 *Leprosy Ordinance 1954–1957* (NT), s.31, s.23.

78 Marion and Hargrave 1965: 37.

On average, these people stayed for 3.8 years.⁷⁹ This was well beyond revised NHMRC recommendations of 1967, stipulating a minimum three to six months of isolation.⁸⁰ The 1966 report of the Commissioner of Public Health stated that leprosy was declining in the Kimberley region and explained the constantly high numbers by the proportion of patients who were ‘old and non-infectious’, and ‘as they get older can no longer cope with their disabilities and require institutional care. There is no institution for the aged in the Kimberleys unless they have had leprosy’.⁸¹ Others were admitted for briefer periods for surgical repair of deformities.⁸² Thus, the leprosarium here, as in the Northern Territory, increasingly took on functions other than the quarantining of disease. These newer functions – surgery, rehabilitation and support of aged and disabled people – were clear indicators of the absence of those services outside the leprosarium.

Measures to enable outpatient care were not introduced in the region until approximately 10 years after their commencement in the Territory: remote area nursing care (mid-1960s), long-acting medication (mid-1970s), and Aboriginal health assistants (late 1970s).⁸³ Until these latter improvements were introduced, the WA Health Department had not heeded the NHMRC’s recommendations in 1967 and 1973 that ‘every attempt should be made by the States and Territories to avoid unnecessary isolation of cases requiring treatment by providing proper facilities for the regular outpatient treatment and reassessment of as many cases as possible’.⁸⁴

But by the late 1960s, treatment within the leprosarium was deficient. It had poor theatre equipment and other hospital facilities, could not provide patients with surgical boots and calipers, and had insufficient professional physiotherapy services, meaning that reconstructive surgery was either performed under difficult conditions or deferred.⁸⁵ Requests by staff to the government to improve facilities did not bear fruit until the mid-1970s, by which time patient numbers had fallen drastically.⁸⁶

In 1985, the Health Department decided to close the Derby Leprosarium on ‘economic and medical/social grounds’.⁸⁷ At last, officers of the department and doctors agreed that ‘[m]odern management techniques ... negated the need

79 Davidson 1978: 108–9, 113, 141–46.

80 NHMRC 1967: 1210.

81 WA Public Health Department 1966: 64.

82 WA Public Health Department 1966: 64.

83 WA Public Health Department 1968: 60, 66–67; 1973: 63; 1980: 176.

84 NHMRC 1967: 1209, 1973: 198.

85 WA Public Health Department 1968: 57; 1969: 49; 1971: 54.

86 WA Medical Department 1976: 4.

87 Health Department, LEP-01v1, Minutes 29 October 1985, SROWA, WAS 1454, Cons 4956.

for the long term isolation and treatment of patients'.⁸⁸ Four elderly patients remaining when the leprosarium closed the next year were relocated to aged care facilities. Thereafter, new leprosy cases in the north were treated at Derby Regional Hospital. Inexplicably, the Western Australian Government did not repeal s.273 of the Health Act; it remains in the current version of the Act with the pejorative title, 'Treatment and custody of lepers'.⁸⁹

Disability welfare services

This section examines some Australian Government welfare services in the 1950s and 1960s for people with disabilities and the extent to which they were available to leprosy patients. A government report showed that between 1951 and 1960, 48 per cent of Northern Territory patients had a disability in the lower limbs, and 57 per cent had upper limb disabilities. The figures for the following decade – 28 per cent and 37 per cent – were improved due to the benefits of drug therapy, but are still significant.⁹⁰ In order to attain some degree of independence or physical functionality, a range of rehabilitative and other services were desirable; for example, surgical repair for deformities, prostheses for amputations, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy. Physical dysfunction severely impacted on the welfare of the individual and his/her family, whether survival depended on traditional hunting and fishing, or on wage-earning labour. Opportunities for the latter were further curtailed by the persistent social stigma accompanying leprosy, so financial assistance was essential for patients and their families, as were psychological support services. Without such measures, it was difficult for some patients to survive and they comprised 'the crippled or other cases' deemed by the NHMRC to remain in the leprosy institution.

Financial support was hard to obtain for Indigenous leprosy sufferers, forcing many to remain dependent on the rations of poorly resourced settlements and missions, or on the leprosarium itself. Whether inpatients or discharged cases, most received no financial aid from the government for themselves or their families, apart from the low wage some earned as leprosarium workers. European and some mixed-descent patients who shared the same circumstances were eligible for the Commonwealth invalid, aged and service pensions, as well as a dependants' allowance from the Queensland Government if resident in that state. The 1959 amendments to the Commonwealth Social Services Act, extending pensions to all but 'primitive' Indigenous people, did little to relieve

88 Health Department, LEP-01v1, Minutes 29 October 1985, SROWA, WAS 1454, Cons 4956.

89 *Health Act 1911 (WA)* as at 6 September 2014, s.273.

90 Planning Division, Commonwealth Department of Health 1976: 3.

this disparity. The superintendents of settlements, missions and leprosaria withheld more than 25 per cent of residents' pensions under the 'institutional scheme' and, in addition, leprosarium patients had an additional 65 per cent retained by health departments to cover their treatment and maintenance.⁹¹ European patients had never been levied for their maintenance, nor were they subjected to the indignity and financial disadvantage of the 'pocket money' system.⁹²

Neither European nor Indigenous leprosy patients received an allowance equivalent to the federal Tuberculosis Allowance, which had been in effect since 1948. Throughout the 1950s, the NHMRC's CTPH had urged the Commonwealth Government to introduce this benefit, arguing that 'at no time has the sufferer from tuberculosis been compelled to endure the financial hardships and social disabilities imposed upon the leper by the drastic Australian methods of prophylaxis against leprosy'.⁹³ The allowance, the CTPH maintained, would provide the means for discharged patients to look after themselves and help to prevent relapse of their disease. The Tuberculosis Allowance excluded Indigenous people who were under the control of state and territory welfare legislation, so any corresponding leprosy allowance may have had the same restrictions. This payment was not as much a welfare benefit as a cash inducement to sufferers to give up their jobs and submit themselves for treatment. The government had no reason to offer inducements to leprosy patients, as they were compelled to present for treatment.

In 1941, the Vocational Training for Invalid Pensioners scheme was established to provide 'suitable treatment and vocational training at the Commonwealth's expense with a view to enabling them to learn some suitable craft or occupation whereby they may eventually become self-supporting'.⁹⁴ The participants were also given financial support and, if required, artificial limb replacements, surgical aids and appliances, free of charge. In 1953, the Department of Social Services turned down requests by the Relatives and Friends Association, a leprosy patient welfare organisation, for the inclusion of discharged Queensland patients in the scheme.⁹⁵ Following a departmental inquiry, the Director, Clive Burdeu, was convinced that 'the reestablishment of those who

91 Byrne to W.F. Refshauge, Commonwealth Director-General of Health, 13 October 1961, NAA A1658, 756/11/1 PART 2; H.W. Smetherham, Acting Director, WA Department of Social Services to Director-General, Social Services, 5 October 1964, NAA A886, C261; on the 'institutional' scheme as applied generally to Indigenous pensioners, see Kidd 2006: 96–97.

92 Mother Marion, Matron, East Arm Leprosarium to Refshauge, 18 November 1963, NAA A1658, 756/11/1 PART 2.

93 NHMRC 1950, 'Leprosy', NAA A1658, 258/1/1 PART 1: 5.

94 Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics 1951: 325.

95 F.H. Rowe, Director-General of the Department of Social Services to Clive Burdeu, Director of Social Services, 11 August 1953, NAA A886, C174.

have suffered is almost hopeless'.⁹⁶ Summarising his findings to the Director-General, F.H. Rowe, he argued that employers would not accept former patients in the workforce due to the 'ignorance and prejudice in the community', but that 'the problem is not a big one because the number of whites suffering from Hansen's disease is small'.⁹⁷ Twenty-three European patients at Peel Island had been under consideration, of which only four to five were thought capable of rehabilitation.⁹⁸

The Relatives and Friends Association repeated its request in 1956, by which time the scheme was known as the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service. This time the department revised its original policy, seeking, in Rowe's words, 'conformity with the modern approach to the problem'.⁹⁹ Newly inspired by advice from the Principal Medical Officer, Rowe was mindful of the government's responsibility to discountenance public fear of leprosy. He therefore permitted former sufferers to enter the rehabilitation program which, he assured the Minister for Social Services, was 'of considerable value psychologically as well as physically'. Again, the policy did not include Indigenous patients, for he remarked that eligible candidates would probably consist only of a few cases, all from Queensland.¹⁰⁰

In government correspondence, there was no discussion about the possibility of Indigenous patients accessing this scheme – perhaps because nobody approached the responsible department on their behalf. Few patients would have been in a position to make the inquiry themselves, let alone known of the scheme. Had Indigenous cases been tested against eligibility criteria of the scheme, they should have complied. The relevant legislation did not stipulate any racial grounds for exclusion from the scheme. Applicants were required to be in receipt of either the invalid pension or the TB allowance. This certainly limited, but did not entirely exclude, Indigenous leprosy patients from eligibility, as a few were pensioners by 1953. There would be many more after the removal of the last racial restrictions from social security provisions in 1959. Another requirement was determination by 'the Director-General there are reasonable prospects of [the candidate] engaging in a suitable vocation within a period of two years after commencement of training or treatment'.¹⁰¹ As highlighted above, officers were prepared to apply a wide interpretation of this clause to European leprosy patients. Their actions in that respect were proof that, although the

96 Burdeu to Rowe, 29 July 1953, NAA A886, C174.

97 Burdeu to Rowe, 29 July 1953, NAA A886, C174.

98 G.A. McLean, 'Rehabilitation of Leprosy Patients', 19 June 1953, NAA A886, C174.

99 Rowe to W. McMahon, Minister for Social Services, 4 May 1956, NAA A886, C174.

100 Rowe to W. McMahon, Minister for Social Services, 4 May 1956, NAA A886, C174.

101 *Social Services Consolidation Act (No. 2) No. 69 of 1948 (Cth)*, s.135a.

Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service was essentially a program to promote full employment, by the mid-1950s, officers were beginning to offer its services on the basis of direct health benefits to applicants.

Conclusion

Until the 1980s, the compulsory and long-term isolation of Indigenous people in leprosaria remained a feature of Australian leprosy control policy. Ground-breaking advances in therapy from the late 1940s did not curtail this practice, except for European patients after 1959. The new drugs did lead to vast improvements in patients' health and, to a limited extent, the modification of isolation practices. This study has shown that in the postwar period and beyond, this two-speed leprosy policy was shaped by two factors. The first was the characterisation of Indigenous people as intrinsically irresponsible with their health and, therefore, risks to public health, as promulgated in medical and bureaucratic discourse. Second, structural inequities in government health and welfare services prevented many Indigenous people, particularly those with disabilities, from attaining an adequate standard of living or undergoing rehabilitation. Rather than address these shortfalls, governments continued to operate the leprosaria so that treatment could proceed under medical surveillance. In some cases, the leprosaria provided rehabilitative and surgical care. Thus health services for Indigenous people continued to be supplied in a separate setting to that of European people, a setting that bore a stigma because it functioned as a detention centre for contagious patients and was off-limits to the public.

The perpetuation of the leprosarium isolation policy for Indigenous people and their disqualification from health and welfare services after World War Two occurred despite shifts in Indigenous affairs policies towards social assimilation in the 1950s and 1960s, and in spite of the extension of Commonwealth welfare benefits to a wider range of disadvantaged Australians in this period. The welfare apartheid operated insidiously, only visible by examining what DeMaria has called 'the private side of public welfare'; in the instances discussed above, the pension money given by one government to be snatched back by another; government resistance to supporting Australians with a particular disease where the burden of that disease fell mostly on Indigenous people; and, the failure of the system to reach out to remote Indigenous people with disabilities.¹⁰²

102 DeMaria 1986: 37.

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‘We had to be off by sundown’: Narungga contributions to farming industries on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda), South Australia

Belinda Liebelt, Amy Roberts, Clem O’Loughlin and Doug Milera

Aboriginal peoples around Australia have played a significant role in the establishment and development of many of the country’s successful agricultural industries. Despite this, Australian rural histories rarely acknowledge or celebrate Aboriginal people’s labour as an important contributing factor in the prosperity of agricultural ventures. This lack of recognition is often symptomatic of more widespread absences that exist within Australian historical discourse regarding Aboriginal people’s working lives since European colonisation.¹ These absences are often at their most pronounced in rural areas, where there has been a strong desire to erase any contrary evidence that could undermine ‘the pioneer success story’ or challenge the idea of European settlers as anything other than guileless agents engaged in ‘a struggle over adversity that became the foundation stone of nation building’.² Increasingly, however, these mediated absences are being contested as a greater emphasis is placed on documenting and including Aboriginal people’s historic and lived experiences within farming and pastoral industries around the country.³ One of the objectives of these studies has been to highlight how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people’s lives are often

1 See Healy 1997; Reynolds 1999; Rose 1991; Stanner 1969.

2 Birch 2005: 187 – see also Fox and Phipps 1994 for more commentary on the European enterprise to reconfigure history.

3 See Boyoi and Walker 1991; Brock 1995; Gill and Paterson 2007; Harrison 2004; Jebb 2002; May 1983; McCann 2005; McGrath 1987; Paterson 2005; Shaw 1986.

entangled, helping to negate narratives that presuppose Aboriginal people's exclusion and separation from greater Australian working life.⁴ Finding ways to accurately represent the specificities of these cross-cultural 'entanglements' in appropriate ways for both cultural groups has been an ongoing challenge.

Silence and sharing: Challenging dominant histories to represent entangled pasts

In the wake of 'reconciliation' movements from the late 1990s, academics have sought to promote research projects that help to bridge the perceived divides between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people's histories.⁵ Following criticism that Australian heritages and histories often reflect racial segregationist conventions rather than challenge them,⁶ efforts to record the 'shared'⁷ experiences of colonialism in Australia have increased. For example, Harrison⁸ has examined 'shared' histories and associated landscapes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians in pastoral New South Wales. Whilst warning against the production of 'trite and overly simplified historical truism[s]'⁹ regarding these combined cross-cultural approaches, Harrison has argued that a greater emphasis on the mutual or cross-cultural aspects of pastoral narratives can assist to elucidate 'a relationship between the deep prehistory of Australian Aboriginal people and the mutual histories of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working and living together after 1788'.¹⁰ In this regard, the term 'shared' for Harrison 'comes to mean 'mutually constitutive' rather than 'agreed', and includes the bad as well as the good'.¹¹ This contrasts with the work of McBryde, who questioned whether shared heritage is an achievable or desirable goal. Instead, McBryde argued that we consider shared heritage as a 'matter of sharing the process of understanding differing viewpoints and working to accommodate them'.¹² Comparatively, McNiven and Russell have argued that categorising the contact period as 'shared' is problematic in both its terminology and conceptual implications.¹³ Russell maintained that the concept of 'sharing' suggested an 'invitation to participate' and ideas of 'common possession and even common enjoyment', which can deny the reality that Aboriginal peoples were rarely

4 After Howitt 2001.

5 For example, see Harrison and Williamson 2002.

6 Byrne 2003.

7 Murray 1996, 2002.

8 Harrison 2004.

9 Harrison 2002: 52.

10 Harrison 2004: 5.

11 Burke 2005: 26.

12 McBryde 1995: 13.

13 McNiven and Russell 2005.

offered such courtesies.¹⁴ Attwood, through reference to the works of Rowley, Reynolds, Read and Chakrabarty, too, has provided significant exegesis of the 'shared history' concept and reiterates a primary question – how can a past be shared when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples profoundly disagree on the narrative?¹⁵ Other researchers have bypassed these complications, such as Macfarlane (through reference to the work of Thomas¹⁶), who contends that we should understand such histories as 'entangled' rather than shared, in an effort to highlight various 'interactions between people, objects and the physical and historical characteristics of a place through time'.¹⁷

For the most part, debates around 'sharing' are deeply tied to enduring national themes around Australian cultural identity and the contested ownership of the past.¹⁸ These broader themes are not explored exhaustively in this paper; however, they are relevant in the context of contesting dominant historical narratives within agricultural settler spaces. In this article, we grapple with this challenge through an exploration of the 'mutually constituted'¹⁹ local farming narratives on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda), South Australia (Figure 1), between Narungga Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal settlers and their descendants, paying close attention to both the communal and differing experiences that Narungga people have experienced in agricultural regions. We do this by specifically privileging the memories and voices (deployed as quotes) of Narungga people, as well as non-Aboriginal local farmers who have worked with and/or employed Narungga people. In doing so, we aim to contribute to the increasing body of research that highlights Aboriginal people's roles and experiences in the establishment and development of Australia's agricultural enterprises. Further, we work to directly challenge the mediated absences that exist in rural regions that work to erase Aboriginal people's histories, voices and distinctive experiences in Australian agricultural contexts.

14 Russell 2006: 59.

15 Attwood 2005: 246–48 – see also Chakrabarty 2001; Read 2000; Reynolds 1999; Rowley 1970.

16 Thomas 1991.

17 Macfarlane 2010: 363.

18 For an overview, see Colley 2002.

19 Burke 2005: 26; Harrison 2004.

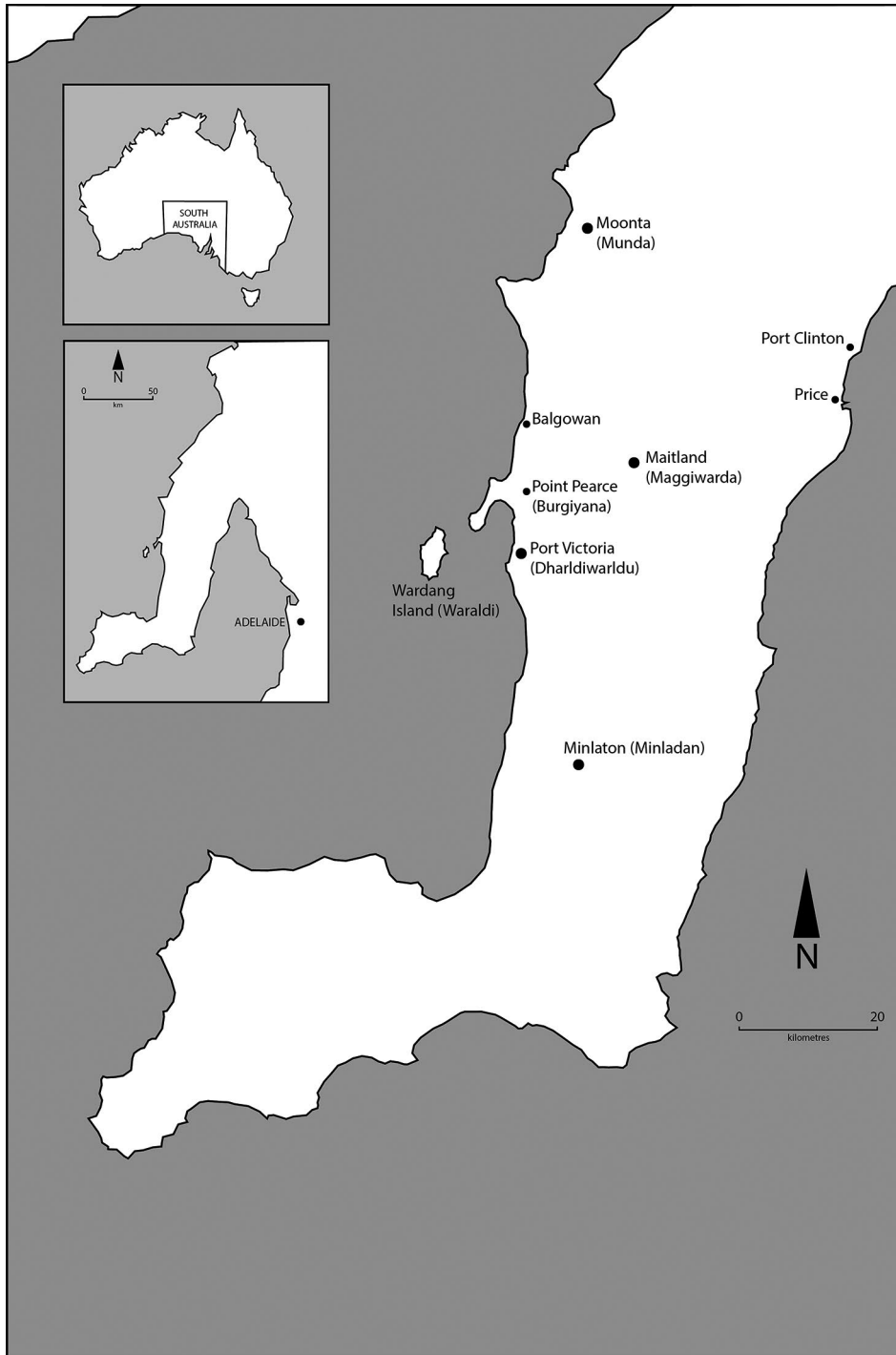


Figure 1: Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) and relevant placenames.

Source: Produced by Belinda Liebelt.

At odds with reality: Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) local histories

Many of the local published histories produced about Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) are emblematic of narratives that characterise Australian rural regions.²⁰ These histories tend to commemorate the creation of a 'settled' agricultural landscape, and document various local farming milestones, achievements and inventions.²¹ Simultaneously, they tend to overlook or downplay stories of agricultural demise or economic downturn.²² Gill, Paterson and Kennedy have suggested that public histories such as these tend to "'transcend nostalgia" and form a body of public history in which the values of the dominant "whitefella culture" are reaffirmed and made available as history'.²³ Concomitantly few of these histories document the differing experiences of Narungga people throughout the initial colonisation period, nor the ongoing consequences of European incursions into Narungga land. Similarly, these histories fail to document the contributions that Narungga people have made to farming on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda), an absence that tends to reinforce notions that Aboriginal people are not a part of agricultural life.

Whilst the 'elaborate exercise of historical facadism'²⁴ may have resulted in dominant settler histories, a number of publications written by or in collaboration with Narungga people do exist.²⁵ These often provide further detail about Narungga people's agricultural pursuits; however, such narratives are often enmeshed in the greater experiences of colonialism for Indigenous Australians and are rarely celebratory or commemorative in tone. Other 'archaeological' texts (often written by amateur researchers)²⁶ provide a wealth of information on Narungga people's material culture, but due to the era in which they were written tend to view Narungga people as 'prehistoric' rather than as a dynamic population with an agricultural history and ongoing working lives. As a result, most public local histories of Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) relegate Narungga people to the past, or confine them geographically to Point Pearce Aboriginal Mission (Burgiyana).²⁷ As in many parts of the country, the juxtaposing narratives that align farming 'progress' with Aboriginal demise or absence perpetuate deeply held myths of Narungga people's 'extinction' in the

20 For examples, see Carmichael 1973; Cook 1975; Heinrich 1972, 1976; Neumann 1983.

21 Gill et al. 2005.

22 Davison and Brodie 2005; Griffiths 1987.

23 Gill et al. 2005: 125.

24 Birch 2005: 188.

25 See Graham and Graham 1987; Wanganeen 1987; Krichauff 2011; Fowler 2015; Roberts et al. 2013, 2014.

26 E.g. Hill and Hill 1975.

27 See Howitt 2001; Lydon and Burn 2010; Nash 1984.

face of agricultural development.²⁸ As will be demonstrated, these narratives are often at odds with the reality of the continuous Narungga occupation of Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) and the significant contributions to farming work by Narungga people.

‘We do most earnestly wish to be self-supporting’: Share farming at Point Pearce Mission (Burgiyana) and Wardang Island (Waraldi)

Whilst we commemorate the contributions of Narungga people to agricultural work on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda), we must also acknowledge that initial instructions in farming labour formed part of greater attempts to Christianise and assimilate Aboriginal peoples into European economies. Victorian-era attitudes often aligned agriculture with Christianity, and saw agricultural cultivation as ordained by God.²⁹ Settlement of the country required that the ‘wild’ and ‘ungodly’ Australian bush be ‘tamed’ through cultivation and the bringing of Christian values, a ‘civilising’ experiment that also included Aboriginal peoples.³⁰ Further, training Aboriginal peoples as labourers and servants was integral to the attempted establishment of social hierarchies within Australia, in order to provide a class system that would separate those who owned land (and consequently power) with those employed in modes of production.³¹ Within these hierarchies, labour contributions by women, the working class and ethnic or Indigenous minorities were often hidden within the landscape.³²

On Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda), this line of thinking is apparent in the writings of Archibald who records that the early mission activities (prior to the establishment of Point Pearce Aboriginal Mission [Burgiyana] in 1868) were undertaken to ‘give them [Narungga people] not only religious instruction but also to accustom them to regular work’.³³ Further, efforts to assimilate Narungga people also reflected European motivations to restrict and confine Aboriginal peoples to mission environments, and remove their presence from the newly settler-occupied landscape. Indeed, Archibald bemoans Narungga people’s ‘roving propensities’ and ‘seemingly aimless migration’, which he viewed as the ‘base ingratitude and selfishness’ of Narungga people towards

28 Gill et al. 2005.

29 Cronon 1995; Merchant 2003, 2006.

30 Davison and Brodie 2005; Lydon 2009; Steele 2010.

31 Griffin 2000.

32 Bender and Winer 2001.

33 Archibald 1915: 10.

the then missionary, Rev. W. Julius Kühn.³⁴ Archibald also suggests that local non-Aboriginal residents' primary motivation for the initial establishment of a mission was due to a 'willingness to do something to ameliorate the hardships and privations of the wandering heathen natives in their neighbourhood'.³⁵ While benevolence may be understood as one incentive for such charity, there is little doubt that the establishment of a mission could also work to attempt to remove Aboriginal peoples from European view, as well as employ them in daily engagements and efforts that would serve to convert the landscape into a white settler space.

Subsequent to the establishment of the Point Pearce Mission (Burgiyana) in 1868, Narungga people increasingly resorted to living within its confines because (according to a visitor to the mission in 1872) they were 'being driven off their hunting grounds by the progress of the agricultural settlements' of the European settlers.³⁶ Thus, over time, Narungga people were progressively employed at the mission to undertake agricultural work, with the latter mentioned observer stating that Narungga people were paid a 'fair wage, *viz.*, from 6d to 1s'.³⁷ Tasks on the mission included carting posts, shearing, woolpicking, shepherding (which was often undertaken by the girls) and wheat reaping.³⁸ Kühn records in 1875 that Narungga people were also employed at various woolsheds around the peninsula during this time and that subsequent to 'the arduous work of shearing and harvest' Narungga people would 'take a rest; hence for a time they disperse themselves through the Peninsula, visiting different parts where may be friends are to be found, and where they can enjoy fishing, which is to them a great pleasure'.³⁹ These accounts suggest that Narungga people were often able to travel to and from the mission as required, while partaking in agricultural work when and if they chose.⁴⁰ As time went on, agricultural labour increasingly became a form of control over Aboriginal peoples through wages and exclusion (i.e. at Point Pearce [Burgiyana]) and/or a means of survival.

In 1913 a different view of fair wages and work emerges in the 'Progress Report of the Royal Commission on the Aborigines'. This South Australian-based investigation was designed to inquire into and provide a report upon 'the control, organisation and management of the institutions in this State [South Australia] set aside for the benefit of the aborigines [sic]',⁴¹ and ultimately recommended that all the Aboriginal missions within the state be taken over by the government, and that compulsory training be undertaken by all Aboriginal peoples at all

34 Archibald 1915: 10.

35 Archibald 1915: 9.

36 Archibald 1915: 15.

37 Archibald 1915: 15.

38 Kühn in Archibald 1915:17, 18.

39 Kühn in Archibald 1915: 12, 17.

40 Krichauff 2008, 2011, 2013.

41 SA Royal Commission on the Aborigines 1913: ii.

institutions to prepare them for labouring and service work.⁴² One useful aspect of the royal commission was that it recorded important Aboriginal perspectives on farm work. For example, under examination Alfred Hughes said of farm work at Point Pearce Aboriginal Mission (Burgiyana): 'I have had my nose to the grindstone the whole time. Meaning that I have had to work hard'.⁴³

Hughes also suggested he was unhappy with the share farming system, in which white farmers from the surrounding Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) district were working land (within the mission boundaries) which had been specifically set aside for Narungga people. He says 'we are not satisfied with the present conditions and would prefer to work the land on our own if the Government would help us'.⁴⁴ Similarly, both Alfred Hughes and William Adams made it clear that they opposed white farmers who had taken over the farming business at the mission and argued that the work should be given back to Aboriginal people.⁴⁵ In regards to farming work more generally, William Adams, Joe Edwards and Walter Sansbury all indicated that the work and conditions were unacceptable, and the money available to them was barely enough to get by.⁴⁶

Despite the mission being taken over by the government in March 1914 and converted to a working station, this does not seem to have improved the situation in the eyes of local Aboriginal people.⁴⁷ In 1924 residents of Point Pearce (Burgiyana) wrote a letter to the Rev. J.C. Kirby, again, requesting that they be given fair wages for work and areas of land in their own name. Kirby submitted this letter to the *Adelaide Register*, where it was published on Saturday 21 June 1924:

We do most earnestly wish to be self-supporting. About 15 years ago, when our trustees in Moonta had the management of this mission, we asked them for a portion of this land. They refused to give us what we asked for. We felt we were not doing any wrong, when we asked for a portion of this land: we were only asking for our right. We will never be any better off as long as we remain on this mission. We have some fine men and women here, who can hold their own with any white people. We would like you to come and see the work that is done here by our own people. We have our own masons here, also carpenters. We have practical farmers also, but for all the work that is done by our own people the wages are not good enough. The single men are paid at the rate of 5/ per day, the married men 8/ per day. Some of our married men get 6/ or 7/ per day, then out of that small wage they have to find their wives, children, and them selves in everything. Every winter the wages are reduced. A shilling is taken off every man's wages down here, but they won't cut the prices in our store. The things we get in our mission store are not first class, but they charge us top prices for

42 SA Royal Commission on the Aborigines 1913: ix.

43 SA Royal Commission on the Aborigines 1913: 112.

44 SA Royal Commission on the Aborigines 1913: 112.

45 SA Royal Commission on the Aborigines 1913: 117.

46 SA Royal Commission on the Aborigines 1913: 115–20.

47 Mattingley and Hampton 1988:199–200.

them. We have got to pay for our meat. The meat and flour are grown on our land. We would nearly all of us like to have a portion of this land, or if the Government cannot give us land here we would like them to lease the land to us, then we can feel that we are independent, not living on charity. There are several white farmers here at present in halves with the mission, taking the bread out of our mouths. Our people here, with large families, feel it most, with the scanty wages that they receive weekly.

Later, Graham and Graham also wrote about the work and wages of earlier times, indicating that there was plenty of work and that wages were paid, but argue that they were minimal:

The people also used to do a lot of shearing, bag sewing, lumping and crutching away from the Mission. They also used to do shearing, reaping of wheat and barley and bag sewing on the Mission. It was a paying concern in those days. After they'd done the work on the Mission, they'd work for the white share farmers and bag sewers, lumping the wheat down at Balgowan. Well, shearing was around about September, and then up until nearly Christmas, they'd reap and sew the bags. There was plenty of work, working for a wage, but it wasn't much money ...⁴⁸

In the 1930s, Norman Tindale observed aspects of Narungga people's involvement in farm work.⁴⁹ He suggests that much of the farming on Point Pearce (Burgiyana) was undertaken by the residents; however, he notes that it was conducted under the supervision of Superintendent Bray via a share farming system in which the men contracted for the station work and could only receive a percentage of the sales. Tindale wrote 'for with his [Superintendent Bray's] system it is possible, as no where else in Australia, to secure, from trained natives, work equal to that of whites'.⁵⁰ Similarly, other observers noted the skills of station residents; for example, an overview of farming progress in the Maitland (Maggiwarda) district appeared in the *Adelaide Observer* on Saturday 17 July 1926, and stated:

The natives are employed principally in agricultural work, and many of them are experts in shearing, wool classing, road making, fencing, building, carpentering, blacksmithing, painting, and indeed all work pertaining to farm life in all its departments.

By Narungga people's own words and through the evidence of observers, it seems clear that Narungga people took great pride in agricultural vocations. It also appears that, on numerous occasions, Narungga people fought hard to gain freedom and economic advancement through such work, as well as ownership over land in their own right. Under strict mission/governmental controls that

48 Graham and Graham 1987: 23.

49 Tindale 1938–39: 797.

50 Tindale 1938–39: 797.

sought to regulate every aspect of Aboriginal labour, it seems this was impossible to obtain. Despite this structural inequality, white observers often viewed the agricultural work that Aboriginal peoples undertook as a continued route to assimilation. In regards to the share-farming situation at the mission, Tindale wrote: 'in it may lie the future of the halfcastes [sic] during the period of their adjustment to life amongst whites'.⁵¹ Thus, while European commentators saw Narungga people's working contributions as evidence of successful assimilation and as fulfilling the state's requirement for affordable labour, Narungga people are more likely to have understood agricultural work as a possible means of maintaining connection to their land and remaining on country, while earning a living and gaining increased independence over their lives.

'They all want their bags sewed at once': Narungga memories of farming work

By the turn of the twentieth century, Narungga people were participating in various agricultural economies throughout the entire peninsula, including (but not limited to) ploughing, seeding, reaping, threshing, fencing, dam sinking, quarrying stones, sump and stone clearing, tank and drain excavation, general farm work, milking, butchering and boundary riding, care of sheep, cows and pigs, and carting grain, superphosphate and stores.⁵² Later, however, as farms were more established and sheep and cereal cultivation became dominant local industries, demand for Aboriginal labour became especially high for specific tasks such as shearing and bag sewing on farms around the peninsula (Figure 2). The latter industries, in particular, have allowed Narungga people to maintain connections to their country well beyond Point Pearce (Burgiyana) boundaries. Indeed, access to country provided by this work was particularly crucial in the era before the *Aborigines Act 1934–1939* (SA) was repealed in 1962.⁵³ Just as earlier generations of Narungga people had done, Narungga people in the mid-twentieth century would often combine other cultural pursuits in the course of participating in agricultural work, such as traditional fishing activities and the monitoring of significant places.⁵⁴ Further, shearing and bagging labour on farms provided a level of freedom away from the mission/station in which Narungga people were able to move about the countryside without the same level of scrutiny or restriction that was often applied by the strict regimentation of mission/station life.⁵⁵ Unfortunately however, not all segregation conventions could be avoided, as is explored further below.

51 Tindale 1938–39: 798–99.

52 Mattingley and Hampton 1988: 119.

53 See Mattingley and Hampton 1988: 54; Roberts et al. in prep.

54 Roberts et al. in prep.

55 After Byrne and Nugent 2004.



Figure 2: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal blade shearers working together at the Moody shearing shed (Innisfail) near Port Victoria (Dharldiwarldu) in 1928.

Left to right: George Reid, Lionel Hughes, Harry Richards (shed hand), L. Adams, Sam Moody and Tom Adams.

Source: Courtesy of S. Moody.

The working life of Narungga Elder Clem O'Loughlin provides insights into the ways that Aboriginal people lived and worked on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) in the mid-twentieth century.⁵⁶ O'Loughlin worked as a shearer his whole adult life, starting when his father (Alfred O'Loughlin, also a shearer) introduced him to the work.

BL: Sounds like you shore for a lot of different people?

CO: Yeah, started Moonta for the Cooper's when I was 15, old Charlie Cooper. Five miles out of Moonta, south towards Point Pearce. Was my first shed. Was battling then, 28 I got on my first day, 28 for the next three days. Gee my back ached! Then I got to, you know near the Cooper's there. I went to school with some of their kids, old Charlie Cooper's kids. But that's back in the '40s, or '50s? '50s. I left school in '48, when I turned 14. I was out the door then.

BL: And you were shearing until 1979, 1980?

56 See Mattingley and Hampton 1988: 48–49; Roberts et al. 2013: 89.

CO: Yeah, did a lot of days shearing. I didn't like it at first. My back was aching all the time. Then I got used to it. Then I went looking for shearing. Had a little stint down at Clarry Hoyle's at Minlaton, he was looking for shearers. I remember him saying, 'Clem, he's no trouble let's go and get him'. I wasn't a good shearer, but you know I used to get my 100 a day. That's why they wanted me to go down there. I'd help them finish it off too, by doing a neat score every day. When they wanted me to help finish the sheep off I just took my own package, made them work till five o'clock.

BL: Why did you stop shearing?

CO: I spent long enough shearing. I think maybe my back gave in, or something like that. Cos I shore at Point Pearce too. We needed to get permission to go there and shear the sheep. See how like white man then, I had my exemption, I wasn't on the mission, I was allowed to go in the pub, but others wasn't. Yeah.

And I lived down in Hollywood for a while, you know Hollywood? I had a little one room shack there cos I wasn't allowed on Point Pearce. So me and my wife and my two kids I had then, I was shearing from there. Then I bought a little bungalow in Moonta, three bedroom miner's cottage. I don't know what I got for it, it was cheap anyhow.⁵⁷

As O'Loughlin explains, because he was exempted, both his contribution to agricultural life on the mission/station and his residential choices were restricted. "Exemption" was a legislative provision under the *Aborigines Amendment Act 1939*⁵⁸ which was an 'invidious form of discrimination' that ultimately had the effect of declaring certain Aboriginal individuals and families as 'honorary whites' and was sometimes used as a punitive measure by the Aborigines Protection Board against a person's will.⁵⁹ Indeed, O'Loughlin's exclusion from life at Point Pearce (Burgiyana) had profound consequences beyond his agricultural/residential life and extended into his family life, particularly during the time when he was prohibited from visiting his wife at the mission/station (as she was not exempted).⁶⁰ Thus, he was forced to live at Hollywood (a small settlement just outside of the Point Pearce [Burgiyana] boundaries, occupied primarily by Narungga people who had been exempted or excluded from the mission), until he saved enough to buy property in Moonta (Munda).

O'Loughlin's experiences of the Aborigines Protection Board contrast with those Aboriginal people at Point Pearce (Burgiyana) who were not exempted. Whilst O'Loughlin had to live within the strictures of forced assimilation, those on the mission/station were suffering under segregation.⁶¹ The 'arrogance was vast'

57 Clem O'Loughlin interview with Belinda Liebelt, 15 July 2013.

58 Roberts et al. 2013: 89.

59 Mattingley and Hampton 1988: 48.

60 Roberts et al. 2013: 89.

61 See Reynolds 2000: Chapter Six for a summary of these views and their sway.

for both regimes and the European 'self-confidence quite invincible' – 'black should imitate white' or be otherwise 'confined to the fringes of society'.⁶² In reality, individuals like O'Loughlin had to endure the effects of both regimes: the (unsuccessful) attempt to remove him from Narungga society simply resulted in the segregationist curfews also impacting his own working life because he worked in cooperation with Point Pearce (Burgiyana) men – thus the 'off before sundown' rule applied:

BL: When you were driving around going shearing, did you just go shearing or did you ever do any other work?

CO: Oh we did other work in between. Maybe all the people we shore for, I sewed their bags at the end of the year, got all their bags sewn. Because I had up to 40,000 bags there one year to sew. And then I had to go to Point Pearce, and pick up shearers, ah sewers. Take out six to eight at a time. Because they all want their bags sewed at once, *anna* [true!].

I used to get permission to go there, because I wasn't allowed on Point Pearce see, I got an exemption. We wasn't allowed there, we lived in Moonta, because we moved out. They said I can live up there without coming to Point Pearce, we had to get permission to come to Point Pearce, to pick up our bag sewers and our shearers. We had to be off before sundown, hard to do in the winter time. We was doing shearing around that time, when the sun was going down. Away from home for 12 or 13 hours a day. Because of that, from Moonta you know, took me an hour to get down there, shear for 8 hours, and then head back. Tough. I had my family in Moonta. But, it worked out alright in the end. Kids went to school in Moonta.⁶³

And:

CO: Mostly Wanganeens and my brother Edmund O'Loughlin he was there [at Pine Point lumping wheat], Arthur Wanganeen. Cos they used to lump for all the ketches that came in there. I used to be out in the middle of the peninsula right – sewing all the bags, all the wheat bags and the barley bags. I had a little gang of sewers – come from Moonta – I used to pick my sewers up from Point Pearce, about six of them and take them out sewing, because I wasn't allowed out there before sunrise [due to exemptions]. I used to pick them up – I was supposed to drop them off before sundown, but some nights you used to sew bags until 10 or 11 o'clock, because the bag gets too tough. We had to stay out late to finish them ... Since I left school I been sewing bags – I had all those farmers I would shear sheep for ... Didn't get much to sew 100 bags *anna* [true!]. We used to get raw and sunburnt working. The first day you had blisters ... We used to live at Balgowan too – when dad was lumpin' wheat there. The catchers used to come round to load up off the jetty. Cause dad [Alfred O'Loughlin] used to shear for a couple of people around there.⁶⁴

62 Reynolds 2000: 233–34.

63 Clem O'Loughlin interview with Belinda Liebelt, 15 July 2013.

64 Clem O'Loughlin interview with Amy Roberts, 24 March 2006.

Despite these challenges, O'Loughlin recalls that there were many good times, and explained that farmers rarely treated him poorly. In particular, O'Loughlin remembers friendly employers such as the Hoyles near Minlaton and the Whittakers north of Maitland, who he worked with for over 10 years. However, as is evident below, O'Loughlin's mostly positive memories of the farmers are tempered with the 'Balgowan Walk Off':⁶⁵

BL: I was wondering what do you think about back then, compared to now?

CO: Back then was tougher than it is now. If you got a shed down there them days you was lucky you got a shed. But because we worked at Whittakers, we had them every year for the next 10–12 years. Didn't have to go looking for shearers. They used to come past pick us up on a Monday morning, drop us off on a Friday night. Bed and breakfast paid for.

BL: Did you ever get treated badly, or mostly okay?

CO: There was this shed up at Balgowan, not the Moody's maybe Frank Gregory's, anyway one day Uncle Diver [Cedric Varcoe] and some other *Nhanggas* [Aboriginal people] walked off the job – didn't think they were getting paid enough. They had to get someone to pick them up.

But when I start work at half past seven I expect to finish at half past five. Get your full eight hours in you know. To make your 20 pound a day, 40 dollars whatever it was. No I never had no arguments with any of them. They were good people around that area. And a lot of us used to go to Minlaton too. Blokes used to come out Monday, looking around, driving around the streets, looking for shearers. Clarry Hoyle, I don't know how you spell that. He had a depot shed down there (with a six stand plant).⁶⁶

In these interview excerpts, the extent of O'Loughlin's movements across the Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) are reflected in the many places he mentions throughout the district (Figure 1). Not included in these excerpts, O'Loughlin also speaks about shearing on the eastern side of the peninsula near Port Clinton, and also travelling off country for work, north of the Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda)⁶⁷ as well as 'cherry picking' (picking stones out of the paddocks and putting them on a pile) for minimal wages for Eugene Maloney at Maitland (Maggiwarda).⁶⁸ In relation to other agricultural activities, O'Loughlin also recalled that his brother Edmund and father Alfred also shored sheep in competitions at the Maitland Show.⁶⁹ O'Loughlin's memories provide a critical insight into how Aboriginal people contributed to agricultural ventures throughout the mid-twentieth century in rural South Australia.

65 This is the only oral history available we are aware of that details this event – more investigation about the circumstances that led to it would be beneficial.

66 Clem O'Loughlin interview with Belinda Liebelt, 15 July 2013.

67 Clem O'Loughlin interview with Belinda Liebelt, 15 July 2013.

68 Clem O'Loughlin, pers. comm. with Amy Roberts and Belinda Liebelt, 2 March 2016.

69 Clem O'Loughlin, pers. comm. with Amy Roberts and Belinda Liebelt, 2 March 2016.

Tangible evidence, too, remains of Narungga contributions to agricultural life – such as Clem O'Loughlin's hook and his brother's (Michael O'Loughlin) needle for bag sewing (Figure 3). Such seemingly functional objects become 'entangled' when considered in the context of the stories told in this paper. Indeed, as Macfarlane argues, the 'concept of entanglement that Thomas develops' encourages us to 're-think what is involved in people's exchanges' thus emphasising the "'mutability of things in recontextualisation", rather than any fixed or single properties of identity or function'.⁷⁰ Concepts around the entanglement of tangible objects in cross-cultural exchanges on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) are being explored by Liebelt as part of a broader project.



Figure 3: Clem O'Loughlin's hook and his brother's (Michael O'Loughlin) needle for bag sewing.

Source: Courtesy of M. O'Loughlin.

⁷⁰ See Thomas 1991: 28; Macfarlane 2010: 29.

'I expect probably most places had them': Memories from non-Aboriginal farmers

Narungga people's participation in agricultural labour across the peninsula has thus provided various settings for cross-cultural interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that may have otherwise not taken place. Speaking with local settler-descendent farmers, a number of individuals remember having Aboriginal shearers on their properties. One long-time resident (Jill Carmichael), living north of Minlaton (Minladan), remembers that Aboriginal shearers worked in many of the bigger shearing sheds around the region:

Well I certainly remember when there were a lot of the Aboriginal shearers, because they used to be at Hoyle's shearing shed. That was the big, a big shearing shed that people [from around the area] did thousands of sheep ... Often there were Aboriginal shearers used there. And then there were others that used them, I know, as well; we called it Kings. And they used to have Aboriginal shearers there. I expect probably most places had them.⁷¹

Similarly, Bob Edwards, whose grandfather lived alongside the Aboriginal man Charlie Adams on the Edwards property,⁷² also remembers employing Aboriginal shearers on their property from the late 1940s onwards. Here he recalls interactions between himself and some of the shearers, including Will Varcoe and Barney Warrior:

BE: In the 1940s, oh it would have been about 1948, we couldn't get shearers and the chap that was doing the shearing said would you take a team of natives and Dad said yeah they'll be alright. So they arrived, three natives, to shear and of course they were on good tucker, they did about half speed. Best shearing we'd ever had really. But they made it last.

They were a mighty lot. I used to take them back each weekend and Dad always said, if you are offered a cup of tea you drink it if it killed you, you know, don't refuse it. And I had many cups of tea when I got up there. Poor old Will [Varcoe] had only dirt floors and that but everything was spotless really.

BL: Do you remember the names of any of those old shearers?

BE: Yeah Will Varcoe. Barney Warrior. Who was the other one? Well he was the oldest of them. Barney Warrior's a bit shorter. I can't think of the other one ...⁷³

In the passage above, Edwards alludes to the differing social conditions that Aboriginal peoples often had to endure, suggesting differences in the availability of good food and home comforts.⁷⁴ Later in the interview, Bob Edwards also

71 Jill Carmichael interview with Belinda Liebelt, 26 July 2013.

72 Parsons 1987.

73 Bob Edwards interview with Belinda Liebelt, 12 May 2014.

74 See also Mattingley and Hampton 1988: 200.

gives an example of how relationships between white farmers and Aboriginal shearers could be reciprocal at times, recalling how his father gifted a horse trap and harness to the Aboriginal men after the shearing was completed, so long as they returned the horse that they used to take it away:

When it came time to go, they wanted the trap we had there. We weren't using it ... so Dad said well you can take it, take it home. They wanted the harness as well so he gave them the harness. And they said well what about a horse? Dad said well you can take the horse too but just let him go when you finish. So they drove him up there and let him go and about two days later the horse is back home again [laughing].⁷⁵

Of course, relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people could also involve tensions. While Clem O'Loughlin suggests that relationships between white farmers and the Narungga people working for them were usually on good terms (with the exception of the remembered 'Balgowan Walk Off'),⁷⁶ it seems apparent that at times the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people's lives have resulted in misunderstandings. As noted above, O'Loughlin recalls how difficult it was to travel across the peninsula, gain entry to Point Pearce (Burgiyana) under the exemption system, and pick up other shearers to arrive at the sheds early in the morning. Non-Aboriginal people on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda), who often have had little insight into the strict controls that Aboriginal peoples have been forced to live under, might not conceive of why 'sticking to times' may be difficult. During the interview with Jill Carmichael, she spoke with another farming local in the district (via telephone) who also remembered working with Aboriginal shearers. Carmichael recalls the discussion:

JC: He just said to me about working for Hoyle's when he was a real young boy. That was his first job and he went working for Hoyle's and in the shearing shed. And he said it was a very difficult process with them [Aboriginal people] because he said Monday morning you knew you'd lose half a day because you know, they were no good at sticking to times. And he said, you didn't know how many would turn up. You had no idea.

Sometimes a team would turn up and another time it would only be half of them [Aboriginal people] turn up, or a couple, or something like that, you see. And so he said it was very difficult working with them, because you know they just, well, what would you say? They didn't have any concept of time or didn't want to have any concept of time. You wouldn't know which it was. To try and keep them [Aboriginal people] to any sort of a routine was a very difficult situation ... But, they were very good shearers. Very, very good shearers.⁷⁷

75 Bob Edwards interview with Belinda Liebelt, 12 May 2014.

76 Clem O'Loughlin interview with Belinda Liebelt, 15 July 2013.

77 Jill Carmichael interview with Belinda Liebelt, 26 July 2013.



Figure 4: Front to back: Wellesley Sansbury, Clem O'Loughlin and Barry Will shearing at the Moody shearing shed, near Port Victoria (Dharldiwarldu) in 1963.

Source: Courtesy of S. Moody.

This contrasts with Clem O'Loughlin's recollections, as he suggests he was never late. He explains here why at times though, some shearers may have been late coming from Point Pearce (Burgiyana) as they had difficulties securing transport from the mission:

We were always on time, never late. Well I wasn't. Sometimes they were late coming from Point Pearce, sometimes they haven't got a car, and they looking around for a ride and all that. We were right on tap, cos we had our own car, and even when we shore with Barry Will, we were right on time with him too.⁷⁸

Above, O'Loughlin mentions Barry Will, a local white shearer with whom he had a good working relationship for many years. O'Loughlin explained how Will often assisted him (and Wellesley Sansbury) to get shearing contracts with local farmers.⁷⁹ Pictured in Figure 4 at the Moody shearing shed near Port Victoria (Dharldiwarldu), Will, Sansbury and O'Loughlin worked around the peninsula together in the 1960s and '70s. These cross-cultural relationships, between both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal shearers, as well as the farmers who employed them, demonstrate the complexity of the entangled histories that we examine.

'You couldn't get work you know': Changing times in the mid-twentieth century

In the excerpts above, O'Loughlin explained how he gave up shearing in the late 1970s, because of a sore back (a common shearing ailment). It was likely that it was also because times were changing and shearing work was much more difficult to secure. This timing coincides with a change in agricultural economies after the mid-twentieth century. While both World War One and Two and the Depression impacted wool prices, demand and labour negatively on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda), by the 1950s the local agricultural industry was booming again.⁸⁰ Overall, however, the importance of agricultural industries in Australia began to decline throughout the second half of the twentieth century, as agricultural economic income slipped within a century from a quarter of the country's output to approximately 4 per cent of the economy.⁸¹ Further, changes to the way that agriculture was practised, with advancing technology and mechanised processes for cereal cultivation, meant that demand for additional farm labour was decreasing. This, combined with higher wages for labourers, meant that securing farming work was increasingly difficult. Doug Milera grew up at Point Pearce (Burgiyana) in the 1950s and '60s, and watched his uncles

78 Clem O'Loughlin interview with Belinda Liebelt, 15 July 2013.

79 Clem O'Loughlin interview with Belinda Liebelt, 15 July 2013.

80 Yorke Peninsula Visitor Information Centre 2014: 71.

81 Davison and Brodie 2005.

coming and going from Point Pearce (Burgiyana) for farming employment in the local district. However, when it came time to find work for himself, the changed conditions of the late 1960s and '70s meant that farming work was increasingly scarce. Here, Milera explains the compounding reasons as to why Narungga people found it difficult to find agricultural work:

Growing up at Point Pearce, I went to school at Maitland. Getting work when I left school was difficult because you know, because you just couldn't wander into Maitland and get a job because obviously it was, say for example, farmers, they had their own kids to provide an income to as well. You couldn't get a job in a local store ... And during those days there was tension, there was racism, and so people from Point Pearce, not didn't ordinarily fit in, I mean, going back to the history of the old days of the initial set of Point Pearce and there after, there was links with the wider community where there was football and people did work on farms during those days because it was a time when you know, I guess labour was cheap to build a farm you really had to have labour to do that. And so people from Point Pearce were utilised and right back to the mission days when people were trained as domestics and farm hands and they would then be sent to go and work on local properties, surroundings properties. During the era that I grew up in, the '60s and '70s. During the '70s you couldn't get work you know. I basically had to leave the community. I joined the army that was my way of getting out of Point Pearce, to fight to actually make it in the big wide world sort of thing, so to speak.⁸²

Above, Milera refers to the tensions felt between people living in Maitland (Maggiwarda) and Point Pearce (Burgiyana) as one of the contributing reasons as to why it was difficult for Aboriginal people to secure rural work during this period. His observations resonate with research undertaken by Wundersitz, who in 1979 conducted a spatial study into prejudice on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda), focusing specifically on Maitland (Maggiwarda) and Port Victoria (Dharldiwarldu) regions. Wundersitz argued that it is important to consider the 'complex inter-relationship between cultural, social, physiological and locational factors operating within a definite spatial or environmental framework' when considering studies into prejudice.⁸³ Her findings suggested that a considerable degree of social separation existed between Aboriginal and white people at the time of study, with mutual distrust and suspicion on both sides. Wundersitz argued that the tensions she observed had arisen as a result of a single outstanding feature to the region; the residential proximity of a segregated Aboriginal reserve in the study area.⁸⁴ She argued that the segregation of Aboriginal people had led to a situation where 'Aborigines and whites have lived adjacent to, but have nevertheless remained essentially separate from, each other since

82 Doug Milera interview with Belinda Liebelt, 31 August 2012.

83 Wundersitz 1979: 3.

84 Wundersitz 1979: 294.

the first days of settlement'.⁸⁵ Thus, the combination of segregation factors⁸⁶ that contribute to racism in the region, along with decreasing demand for agricultural labour during the second half of the twentieth century, resulted in reduced Narungga participation in agricultural work. As a consequence, one of the primary settings for rural cross-cultural relationships between Narungga people and non-Aboriginal people on Yorke Peninsula (Guranda) has diminished. Comparatively, while the latter mentioned economic farming pressures were also experienced in the wider non-Aboriginal community, for local Aboriginal people, these economic factors must be considered in context with local histories of exemption, segregation and prejudice.

Conclusions: Cross-cultural entanglements and agricultural practice

The results of our explorations into the entangled histories between Narungga and non-Aboriginal people on Yorke Peninsula (Guranda) suggest that these two cultural groups do 'share' stories/histories, in the sense that there are many common elements appearing in the narratives of both sides. However, there are some serious disjunctures in the agricultural memories and experiences of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people interviewed in this research, which, we argue, arise out of the ongoing legacies of residential race segregation and structural discrimination, which are contextual to the specific agricultural region that we examine.

The perceived notion that Narungga people should largely be confined to 'mission life' as compared to the wider locally celebrated and agriculturally based 'country life' must be acknowledged as an ongoing contributing factor toward the tensions between (some) non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people on Yorke Peninsula (Guranda). The reality of continuous Narungga occupation, of Narungga presence throughout the landscape, and of the many similar historic and lived experiences working in agricultural vocations, tend to be offset by Narungga people's differing experiences of geographic and social segregation and structural discrimination over many years. These injustices often impacted on people's daily working (and personal and cultural) lives and their capacity for

85 Wundersitz 1979: 294.

86 Such factors extended beyond residential segregation to include other aspects of daily life – such as drinking [alcohol consumption], as already noted, as well as other facets such as medical segregation. Indeed, Clem O'Loughlin recalled how Aboriginal women were not allowed to have their babies at the Maitland Hospital but instead had to travel a much longer distance to give birth at Wallaroo (Wadlawaru) (pers. comm. with Amy Roberts and Belinda Liebelt, 2 March 2016).

economic self-development. Such structural inequalities are only emphasised when examining the various ways that Narungga people have contributed to agricultural industries in the local district.

At the same time, by exploring the historic and lived experiences of Narungga people's working lives on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) it is also possible to reveal the ways that many non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people interacted in the agricultural domain – with cordial accommodations often developing for the sake of economic benefit, whilst in some cases more respectful and trusting cross-cultural relationships were formed. The many entanglements between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people's working lives are illustrative of the actualities of agricultural practice in Australia, and narratives that reveal cross-cultural engagements and cultural contact between people over time. Exploring the multifaceted and entangled nuances of these cross-cultural relationships can help to elucidate existing local histories on Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) in greater detail, transparency and accuracy for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people living together in the district now and into the future.

Notes on Narungga toponyms

Traditional Narungga toponyms (using the current orthography from the Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association)⁸⁷ are included in this paper alongside European placenames at the request of the Narungga community. Indeed, we should not forget that the naming of places is always power laden.⁸⁸ Further, it should be remembered that European naming throughout the country has played a key role in the 'colonial silencing of [I]ndigenous cultures'.⁸⁹ By incorporating Narungga placenames for country, we acknowledge the entanglement of European and Aboriginal geographies that exist throughout Yorke Peninsula (Guuranda) and the ways in which these entangled geographies come to be known and named over time by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples throughout Australia.⁹⁰

87 NAPA 2006.

88 Berg and Kearns 2009.

89 Vuolteenaho and Berg 2009: 1.

90 See Hercus et al. 2002; Koch and Hercus 2009.

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‘We want a good mission not rubbish please’: Aboriginal petitions and mission nostalgia¹

Laura Rademaker

When Yulgi Nunggumadjbarr, a Nunggubuyu woman, described the Angurugu mission where she grew up, her memories were fond.

Everything was free not with money. People never been getting money yet, only just little bit ration. Fish, vegetable, sugar, flour, milk, tobacco ... Today is very hard. Before it was easy, it was good ... Work and get ration.²

Though rations fostered dependence on missionaries, her memories were overwhelmingly positive. On the Tiwi Islands, Barry Puruntatameri and Teresita Puruntatameri made a similar point about the goods and lifestyle missionaries brought:

Teresita: In the mission time, lotta people had jobs. Farm, they work in the farm, they work at timber, saw-mill, they made bush roads, picking up rubbish. A lotta people have jobs, but they were given \$14 plus rations. Because it was mission.

Barry: But that was better. It was better.

Teresita: Because ration got a lot of food and then there was \$17, \$14 whatever. And everybody enjoyed themselves, you know, people were happy.³

1 All spelling in this article is consistent with the original sources.

2 Yulgi Nunggumadjbarr, oral history interview with author, 9 September 2012.

3 Teresita Puruntatameri and Barry Puruntatameri, oral history interview with author, 23 November 2015.

Although Nunggumadjbarr and the Puruntatameris were among those who benefited most from missionaries – they adopted the missionaries’ religion and took positions of responsibility – they were not alone in their praise for the mission era. In my experience conducting oral history interviews with Anindilyakwa, Nunggubuyu and Tiwi people, I was surprised by the ways old people spoke highly of the missions. I was aware of the danger of mistaking what people thought I wanted to hear for their own views and especially of the gratuitous concurrence in Aboriginal cultures.⁴ But as I talked to older people I struggled to find anyone old enough to remember the 1950s and 1960s who did not see that period as better days. A number remain angry at how some missionaries treated their old people, silenced their languages and disrespected their culture.⁵ Their memories are mixed. Still, the majority would consider that time, on the whole, ‘the good old days’.

I am not the only one to be puzzled by such fond memories of the missions. A number of historians and anthropologists have been troubled by an older generation of Aboriginal people describing arguably paternalistic missions as an idyllic ‘golden age’.⁶ The issue is fraught. By acknowledging many Aboriginal people’s fondness for the past, as Tim Rowse argued, historians risk minimising the harms of colonisation.⁷ Some suggest that perhaps the older generation views the missions through rose-tinted glasses due to dissatisfaction with current government policies. Though dissatisfaction is strong, I am hesitant to dismiss Aboriginal understandings of the past as only ‘nostalgia’, especially where these understandings can serve as a corrective to stories of the missions that privilege non-Indigenous agency, that is, stories which cast Aboriginal people as only either victims or beneficiaries of the actions of missionaries.⁸

This article seeks to understand these positive memories of missions by examining a set of texts produced by that generation itself during the mission years: their letters of petition to the mission authorities. These petitions – in the form of letters – are an important rare example of Aboriginal voices within the missionary archives that shed light on the nuances of oral histories. I am not seeking to validate oral histories by whether they measure up to the archival record. Instead, I use the petitions to find continuities between Aboriginal voices from the recent and more distant past, to better understand Aboriginal experiences.

4 Eades 2013: 101, 176.

5 Rademaker 2014: 91–93.

6 Baker 2005; Cowlishaw 2006; Morphy and Morphy 1984.

7 Rowse 1988b: 28–29; Rowse 1988a: 57.

8 See also Riseman 2010: 183.

Looking at petitions deriving from three different Christian missions of different denominations in the early 1960s, I argue that this string of petitions indicate that some Aboriginal people felt ownership over these missions and had high expectations for the material, spiritual and social benefits missionaries could bring their communities. Though they express some concerns, they also demonstrate mission residents' sense of their own agency. Writing letters was part of the hard work people did to maintain the quality of the missions and extract value from missionaries. First, I discuss the question of nostalgia for eras historians might associate with oppression. I suggest the many ways people found meaning and expressed agency in difficult circumstances can explain, to some extent, fond memories of challenging circumstances. Then, I turn to the petitions themselves, finding these texts reveal consistencies with today's positive memories of the mission past. I also find that missionaries failed to grasp the extent of Aboriginal people's ambitions for themselves and expected Aboriginal people to be submissive and compliant. Both parties were in for a rude awakening.

Oral histories and the 'golden age'

Memories of idyllic golden ages can surface in what might be surprising places. This, I suggest, is in part due to the ways people have seized opportunities and made meaning in hard times. Dennis Walder pointed out nostalgia can be found, unexpectedly, among both oppressors and oppressed.⁹ Jacob Dlamini, for example, found black South Africans who remembered the apartheid years with fondness. Even his own childhood, he remembered, was happy. He argued that these feelings challenge the master-narrative of South African history as only redemptive struggle. They point, instead, to a more complex story where collaboration and resistance could coexist, even in the one person.¹⁰ In Australia, David Potts was similarly surprised to hear in oral histories among the working class that the Depression 'gave life meaning' and 'people were happier then'.¹¹ He argued that the popular 'myth' of the Depression as trauma functions to uphold community values but that personal memories of dignity in poverty are also true.¹² His critics subsequently pointed to the tendency of interviewees to be swayed by leading questions, the selectiveness of memory and the pervasiveness of nostalgia as reasons his evidence was unreliable.¹³

9 Walder 2010: 18.

10 Dlamini 2009: 81–82.

11 Potts 2009: 1.

12 Potts 2009: 4, 325.

13 Scott and Saunders 1993: 13; Spenceley 1994: 42.

There are many theories as to how people might remember hard times fondly. Older people might remember their youth as a time when they were strong and hopeful. People also make personal meaning by what they remember and how. For some scholars, nostalgia is rooted in critique of the present.¹⁴ But as Svetlana Boym pointed out, nostalgia's relationship to present dissatisfaction is complex; nostalgia is not necessarily for the past itself, but can be for unrealised dreams, alive in the past.¹⁵ Postcolonial nostalgias, for example, might remember fondly the solidarity and moral certainty of anti-colonial struggles.¹⁶

In Australia, the argument that nostalgia functions mainly as an Aboriginal critique of the present also has traction. Howard Morphy and Frances Morphy argued that Ngalakan people remembered the 1920s to the 1950s on the cattle stations as a 'golden age' to distinguish themselves from the supposedly 'wild blacks' of an earlier period and to criticise the present.¹⁷ On the other hand, historians Ann McGrath and Minoru Hokari found that Aboriginal people's experience of stockwork as meaningful work explained, in part, how Aboriginal descriptions of a 'golden age' on cattle stations operate simultaneously with memories of mistreatment.¹⁸ As part of a project of 'cross-culturalising' history, Hokari rejected what he described as 'the academic politeness of "we respect your story as 'memory' or 'myth',"' arguing that historians must recognise Aboriginal historical knowledge to avoid reproducing a power relationship that silences Aboriginal voices.¹⁹ Tim Rowse, however, expressed concern that such interpretations might minimise the colonising impact of paternalistic policies.²⁰

With regards to the missions, there has been similar debate as to how to explain the positive accounts from an older generation of Aboriginal people. Morphy argued that, as for the cattle stations, the violent period which preceded and the social disruption which followed the Yolngu missions of the mid-twentieth century 'biased oral accounts in the missionaries' favour'.²¹ Gwenda Baker also found that the mission time is now 'seen in a better light' due to dissatisfaction with current government policies.²² Gillian Cowlshaw concentrated on intergenerational difference in Aboriginal memories of mid-twentieth-century western New South Wales. The older generation, who do not remember their youth as marked primarily by anger and suffering, resist their memories being co-opted by a younger generation whose activism feeds

14 Todorova and Gille 2010: 7; Velikonja 2009: 548; Walder 2010: 10.

15 Boym 2001: xvi.

16 Bonnett 2010: 87. See also Dlamini 2009: 17.

17 Morphy and Morphy 1984: 473.

18 Hokari 2002; McGrath 1987.

19 Hokari 2011: 252.

20 Rowse 1988b: 28–29; Rowse 1988a: 57.

21 Morphy 2005: 42.

22 Baker 2005: 26.

on narratives of colonisation and oppression. She argued that autobiographical stories demonstrate a more complex experience. Yes, Aboriginal people were oppressed at missions and reserves, but they also formed respectful, productive relationships with mission officials and took pride in their work.²³

Cowlishaw's findings match what historians of Christian missions around the globe are increasingly discovering; despite missionaries' often colonising intentions, Indigenous peoples found ways to utilise missions in their own interests. Although missionaries may have longed for compliance from their 'flock' (and may have even believed they achieved this), Indigenous people were always agents, manoeuvring to reap spiritual and material benefits from missionaries.²⁴ Tony Ballantyne, for example, criticised the 'fatal impact' model of Pacific history, arguing that the Maori people 'co-opted missionary teaching' as well as skills, resources and ideas.²⁵ I am careful, therefore, not to take missionaries' sometimes paternalistic assumptions at face value. Indigenous people acted in ways missionaries could not always accept or even perceive. With these possibilities in mind, I turn to petitions composed during this period.

Aboriginal petitions in the mission archives

In 1960, some of the residents of the Church Missionary Society of Australia's (hereafter CMS) Angurugu mission on Groote Eylandt had a complaint. The superintendent of their mission had been sacked and replaced by the chaplain, a young man with little experience. Disappointed with the direction the mission's administrators were taking their community, they wrote letters. There are other similar writings from other Northern Territory missions during the same period. The archives of the Methodist Overseas Mission (MOM) contain a 1961 petition requesting the return of a sacked superintendent to Yirrkala. The archives of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (*Missionnaires du Sacré-Cœur* or 'MSCs') also contain a petition written in 1964, demanding the return of a favoured priest.

Aboriginal people have long turned to petitions to make their grievances known to colonising authorities, demanding humanitarian assistance, land or political representation.²⁶ They turned their new English literacy against the colonisers to challenge their impositions on their lives.²⁷ Their petitions also

23 Cowlishaw 2006: 188–90.

24 Elbourne 2012: 79; Samson 2004: 3.

25 Ballantyne 2002: 146–47, 151.

26 Attwood and Markus 1999, 2004; Barwick 1998; Curthoys and Mitchell 2011; Gamboz 2012; Goodall 2008; Horton 2012; McGregor 1993: 567.

27 Van Toorn 2006: 23; Morgan 2009: 45.

functioned to put complaints 'on the record' and to bind Aboriginal people together under a common political objective.²⁸ Petitions reveal Aboriginal people's conceptions of their rights and the particular nature of the grievances they perceived colonisers inflicted. Many concern land and self-governance. The Tasmanian exiles on Flinders Island petitioned Queen Victoria in 1846, insisting that a former superintendent not return, presenting themselves as 'free Aborigines', not captives and, therefore, deserving of rights.²⁹ The residents of Coranderrk wrote letters asking to retain land and for the return of John Green throughout the 1880s and 1890s.³⁰ In 1887, the residents of Maloga Mission, including William Cooper, demanded rights to their land.³¹ Cooper also coordinated a petition to King George V in 1934, arguing for Aboriginal political representation. Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus point out that this request was an implicit assertion of Aboriginal sovereignty.³²

Ravi De Costa argued that Indigenous petitions show us how it felt 'to represent oneself and one's community in the face of great power that denies your claims and even your existence'.³³ Yet the petitions I have uncovered suggest that this was not always the case. Some petitions function primarily for their symbolic value, but others are primarily practical, expecting their complaints to be redressed. The letters I found are the latter type. Unlike those above, they did not base their claim on having suffered injustice at the hands of colonisers. An important difference is their readership: they were addressed to mission authorities, known to the authors, not the state – so were presented in the form of letters and were more practical in their demands. They did not make grand statements, nor do they claim compensation or relief. But they are political acts and shed light on the complexity of Aboriginal experiences of colonisation.

The Angurugu petitions

The CMS was an evangelical Anglican society and, as a low-church organisation, prided itself that it was governed by a committee of lay people, free from the church establishment. Its work with Aboriginal people fell under its Aborigines Committee, led by the Secretary for Aborigines, who dictated mission policy to superintendents in the field.

28 Van Toorn 2006: 135.

29 Reynolds 2004 [1995]: 7–9.

30 Barwick 1998: 272.

31 Attwood and Markus 2004: 27, 305.

32 Attwood and Markus 2004: 9.

33 De Costa 2006: 694.

The CMS presence on Groote Eylandt began in 1921 with the establishment of the Emerald River mission for children of mixed racial descent. From around 1932, Anindilyakwa people moved into camps around the mission. During the Second World War, the children evacuated the island and the CMS established a new mission station – Angurugu – specifically for Anindilyakwa people of Groote Eylandt in 1943. The new mission adopted a policy of assimilation, considered a progressive, anti-racist approach in its day. Christian conversion and training in 'civil' behaviour would, missionaries hoped, allow Aboriginal people to realise their status of Australian citizens and be absorbed into white Australia. In pursuit of these ends, the missionaries established a dormitory for children, founded a school and enforced church attendance and work through the provision of rations.³⁴

Anindilyakwa people witnessed a rapid influx of staff and resources following the war as the Commonwealth Government increased its expenditure on missions. From July 1942, Child Endowment payments were available from the Commonwealth Government for children in institutions, so the CMS began receiving 10 shillings per week per child in the dormitory. This was in addition to its annual government subsidy of £725.³⁵ During the 1950s, there was heavy investment by the Commonwealth Welfare Branch in the mission. Capital grants in 1956–7 alone covered the costs of purchasing livestock, sawmill equipment, sewing machines, a new hospital and houses.³⁶ The range of government subsidies for missionary staff expanded, from covering teachers and nurses (who earned £250 per annum for the mission from 1951) to a number of other roles. By 1959, Angurugu had three teachers, one nurse, an agricultural supervisor and two hygiene assistants – all attracting government subsidies – and was expecting further subsidies to be granted for an agriculturalist, nurse and mechanic.³⁷

Though the mission imposed strict rules and discipline, Anindilyakwa people could and did act politically to shape the mission. In 1958, for example, they boycotted the church to protest the mission's policy on monogamy, leading eventually to government recommendations the mission abandon its stance.³⁸ In 1959, they effected the resignation of an unwanted superintendent. Superintendent John Mercer cited 'ward complaints' among his reasons for

34 Rademaker 2014: 81–83.

35 Minutes of the Aborigines Committee 9 September 1942, Mitchell Library (ML) MSS 6040/4a; Chinnery, 25 March 1942, National Archives of Australia (NAA) F1 1944/193 Part 1.

36 'Capital Grants and Operational Subsidies to Missions, 1956–1957', NAA A452 1957/638 Part 1.

37 Gallacher, 13 October 1958, NAA F1 1958/554; Long 1963: 2–11.

38 S.R. Warren, 'Chaplaincy Report, January 1958', Northern Territory Archive Service (NTAS) NTRS 1098, Box 1.

quitting and was reported to have been 'in an agitated state over unrest among the natives'.³⁹ Their letter-writing in 1960, therefore, was a continuation of this work of political manoeuvring.

In 1960, when the CMS appointed the newly arrived 28-year-old chaplain, Jim Taylor as Acting Superintendent over the older and more experienced Arthur Howell, many Anindilyakwa people were angered by Taylor's appointment, believing that he was too young to be their 'boss'. They wrote, anonymously, to the man responsible for the decision, J.B. Montgomerie, the CMS Secretary for Aborigines in Sydney.

Dear Mr Montgomerie. Just a few words from us and to you saying that all the people doesnt want Mr Taylor becuase we have find out that he is no good. All ready we dont wont him to be our boss put somebode as man please not young boy please. A lik mr Harris and Mr Howell a big man got lots of understanding and knows for people more about this place.

So I am tell to do something for us pleas if you dont well he is looking for a belting from the peopl here in this mission.

That if he is going to be the boss much to longer but wee dont want him to be boss. every body wants mr Howell when we had a meet last month because he is the only older man here in this mission and he knows more lots then other so wee all wont him and Mr Taylor can be our minister but we don't want him to be the boss he macks it to hard for the people and macks lots of mistak too and that what people don't want we want a good mission not rubbish please so there will be more letters asking for your helpe.

May God bless and keep you all ways and tell wee meet in haven

Letter from all the people

At Groote Eylandt⁴⁰

The four petitions remaining in the archives share a number of themes. They drew attention to Howell's knowledge, age and experience: important qualities in Anindilyakwa culture. He was 'a big man got lots of understanding'. They explained that 'he is the only older man here in this mission and he knows more lots'. They also raised their concerns about Taylor: he 'macks lots of mistak' and his mistakes meant the 'mission getting head [hard] for the people'.⁴¹ Taylor, they claimed, had started 'to change things aroun. And people doesnt like the way he doing things here'.⁴² He did not acquiesce to local people's requests as they believed he should. 'We ask him some thing that we want, and he say no.'

39 Morrison 1959, NAA F1 1957/1975; Bradford 1959, NAA F1 1963/1631.

40 'All the people at Groote Eylandt' to Montgomerie, n.d., ML MSS 6040/33.

41 'CMS Aborigines' to Montgomerie, n.d., ML MSS 6040/33.

42 'All the people at Groote' to Montgomerie, n.d., ML MSS 6040/33.

On one occasion, they had requested that he drive them to the Old Mission site, but he refused, making 'all people not happy'.⁴³ They also raised their concerns about the mismanagement of leadership appointments. 'We want only one boss in this mission' and 'not two or three boss.' They thought it a conflict of interest that the superintendent also be the chaplain. It was 'no good' for one man 'same time run this mission and same time work in the church'.⁴⁴ The petitioners emphasised that they represented the whole community, men and women. 'All the people doesn't want Mr Taylor', one wrote.⁴⁵ Another specified that 'men and women and old people don't like Mr Taylor'.⁴⁶ Instead, 'man and woman like to be Mr Howell Boss'.⁴⁷ One was signed, 'From all the people at Groote'.⁴⁸ Finally, they included statements of goodwill; Taylor could still be the minister in their church. He was 'all right for church' 'because is good man'.⁴⁹ They emphasised that they were motivated by a shared concern for the quality of the mission, 'we want a good mission not rubbish please'. Then, they closed with Christian blessings: 'May our God bless you all there in your office'.⁵⁰

Yet, the CMS did not welcome these petitions. Instead, the CMS Aborigines Committee doubted their authenticity. They consulted their most experienced missionary regarding the letters. He inferred that the letters were prompted by Howell: 'Arthur's conduct is not Christian and is not "cricket"'. It is not clear whether or how Howell may have been involved in the letters. For the CMS, the question was, how could Aboriginal 'wards', who they expected to be submissive and grateful, be so bold in their demands?⁵¹ Rather than exploring the ambiguities of the relationship between themselves and Aboriginal people, and the mismatch between their expectations for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people's visions for themselves, it was simpler to dismiss the letters. Taylor remained superintendent.

The Yirrkala petitions

Before writing their more famous petition in 1963 – that is, the Bark Petition to the Commonwealth Government demanding rights to their land – the people of Yirrkala wrote an obscure petition asking for the return of a favoured superintendent, Rev. Alan Rankine.

43 'Aborigines Native' to Montgomerie, n.d., ML MSS 6040/33.

44 'CMS Aborigines' to Montgomerie.

45 'All the people at Groote Eylandt' to Montgomerie, n.d., ML MSS 6040/33.

46 'CMS Aborigines' to Montgomerie.

47 'Aborigines Native' to Montgomerie, n.d., ML MSS 6040/33.

48 'All the people at Groote' to Montgomerie, n.d., ML MSS 6040/33.

49 'CMS Aborigines' to Montgomerie.

50 'All the people at Groote' to Montgomerie, n.d., ML MSS 6040/33.

51 G.R. Harris to J.B. Montgomerie, 3 November 1960, ML MSS 6040/33, Box 28.

The MOM established its first station in the Northern Territory on Goulburn Island in 1916. After that came its missions to Yolngu people: Milingimbi Mission in 1923; Yirrkala in 1935; and Elcho Island (Galiwinku) in 1942. The MOM was similar to the CMS. It drew its missionaries from the same pool of evangelical youth. Some of them even dated each other. Like the CMS, the MOM was governed by a committee, the North Australian District Board. This operated under the MOM Board in Sydney. Unlike the CMS, however, superintendents had much more freedom to shape the course of the mission.

The Methodists were more moderate than the CMS and more open to Aboriginal cultures and practices, to the extent that, as Ronald Berndt reported, they faced accusations from governments of being too sensitive to Aboriginal traditions.⁵² This was perhaps, in part, due to their governance whereby superintendents were freer to respond to local cultural preferences. Nonetheless, the MOM policy documents on assimilation are almost identical to the CMS (it seems the CMS based their 1944 assimilation policy on the MOM's).⁵³ The MOM affirmed the 'aim of the ultimate assimilation of the Aboriginal population within the life of the Commonwealth'.⁵⁴ Some MOM missionaries, most notably Arthur Ellemor, wanted to limit assimilation to legal and economic rights, claiming Aboriginal people did not want cultural assimilation.⁵⁵ The MOM also opted, generally, for slow assimilation. Missionary Gordon Symons later commented that the MOM's slowness to force change in Yolngu society limited the mission's achievements.⁵⁶ Perhaps this was exactly what Yolngu people themselves wanted: to engage with missionaries, but with minimal missionary intrusion.

The MOM abolished the dormitory system in the late 1920s and replaced it with a 'cottage' system whereby they focused on a few key families who became permanent residents at the mission.⁵⁷ The disavowal of dormitories initially made the MOM ineligible for child endowment payments (though it did receive this payment in later years).⁵⁸ Nevertheless, it too received a large influx of government money through the 1950s in the form of capital works assistance and staff subsidies. Yolngu people, like Anindilyakwa people, quickly gained access to new Western goods, new skills and knowledge and educational opportunities. 'I want[ed] to learn more about the other life, *balanda* world,

52 Berndt 2004[1962]: 29.

53 Minutes of North Australia District, 2 November 1929, ML MOM Meth CH OM 313.

54 'North Australia District Synod', 1952, NTAS NTRS 52, Box 11.

55 Ellemor, December 1953, 3-6. NAA A452, 1955/368 Part 1.

56 Gordon Symons, oral history interview, NTAS NTRS 226, TS124.

57 Kadiba 1998: 99.

58 Yolngu mothers at Yirrkala were also ineligible as they were deemed 'nomadic'. G.S. Knowles, 2 March 1942, NAA A432, 1941/976; Rowe, 31 October 1941, NAA A432, 1941/976.

they teaching how to read and write', Wandjuk Marika remembered.⁵⁹ Senior Yolngu man, Dick Yambal also explained that the missionaries brought many benefits: tobacco, tea, flour, clothing and teaching people to read and write.⁶⁰

In 1961, Superintendent Rankine's contract was not renewed. His superiors thought him capable of 'spiritual leadership' but believed he lacked 'qualities of leadership of staff and controlling and handling the people'.⁶¹ In late 1960, Rankine was assaulted by a Yolngu man whom Rankine had exiled from the mission as punishment. Some fellow missionaries thought Rankine's mismanagement of the situation was to blame.⁶² The MOM looked for a new superintendent to 'stabilise matters'.⁶³ Rankine acknowledged his difficulty in 'finding the balance between discipline and control' and asked to be given another role, perhaps chaplain.⁶⁴ Instead, he was refused further employment at the mission in any capacity.

On his departure from Yirrkala, Rankine sold his typewriter to Wandjuk Marika.⁶⁵ A letter to the Mission Board, protesting Rankine's removal, was one of the first things Marika typed (he later used it for the Bark Petition).

AUGUST 14th, 1961.

METHODIST OVERSEASE
YIRRKALA MISSION VIA
DARWIN N.T.

Dear M-iMission Bord here is the w-word-

for you that we going to talking to you with this-

a letter what we want SIR? Yes this is the words now for you

please we want Reve. Rankine to come back again to here Yirrkala.

Mission because he is a good Tecaher here in Y-Yirrkala that why we want - him to back again he tecahing us good and away and babetter to living we can not see this kind of man before ---- E- Like Mr. Rankine. All the people want him very much please Mission bord - and-sent Rev. Rankine back to Yirrkala again Please Rev. W. Chaseling. he going to staying with us for abotheranother 5 years Please all the -

Mission bords WE just let him go for holidays pLease all the Mission bord.

59 Marika 1995: 75.

60 Slotte 1997: 34.

61 Symons to Gribble, 14 January 1960, ML MOM 460.

62 Symons to Gribble, 22 January 1961, ML MOM 460.

63 Symons to Gribble, 5 August 1961, ML MOM 460.

64 Symons to Newman, 27 March 1961, ML MOM 460; Rankine to Gribble, 3 August 1961, ML MOM 460.

65 Symons to Gribble, 26 August 1961, ML MOM 460.

This is his words from Two Old Man here is his Name

The first one Mawalan and Mungarawoi. this ~~2old~~ TWO old Man want Mr. – Rev. Rankine and his wife to come back again to Yirrkala Mission.

IF he going to Living us then this Mission will be very Dirrfrin law.

~~That~~ That ~~wh~~ why we want him to come back again to Yirrkala Mission

Please all the Mission board. This is from Mawalan and Mungarawoi.

To you all please do that for me and Mungarawoi because ~~him~~ want him to come back again here to Yirrkala. . Mission please all the mission ~~ben~~ again all the Mission Board. and all the people want ever so much for Rev. Rankine and wife and his ~~CH~~ Children.

Because we are very interesting ~~for~~ ~~him~~ for him that why we want him to come back again and staying with us. please Rev. E-W. Chaseling. [??] all the other ~~m~~ Missioners so you all can read this a letter – from this people on Yirrkala Mission IF not writing to us?

SO we can know. BUT we still want Rev. Rankine TO come again here?

Because he very good teacher on here show us ~~about~~ about the love of God and his son Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I think that all the words for now from the people which the best to

YOUR all the Mission Boards Down N.S.W. of SYDNEY

Yours best friends⁶⁶

Marika wrote on behalf of Mawalan and Mungarawoi to C.F. Gribble, the MOM General Secretary in Sydney. He also wrote similar letters to Gordon Symons, the chair of the Board for the North Australia district and to the President of the West Australian Methodist Circuit ('it looks as though two of the locals have raided the typewriter!' the president remarked, presuming Aboriginal people would have no interest in owning a typewriter themselves⁶⁷).

The letter is bold; 'here is the word', it begins. The authors explained that they had 'let' Rankine go on holidays, but expected him to return. Rankine was a good teacher and the community liked him. Moreover, the petitioners were concerned that a different superintendent would make different rules. Like the

66 Letter to Mission Board, 14 August 1961, ML MOM 460.

67 Symons to Gribble, 26 August 1961; Sutton to Symons, 29 August 1961, ML MOM 460.

Angurugu petitioners, they emphasised that their views are shared by 'all the people'. They also emphasise their authority as old men, as is appropriate in Yolngu culture.⁶⁸

Symons reassured Gribble that he could safely ignore the letters. Mungarawoi and Mawalan, though influential, did 'not represent half the population of Yirrkala'. The men only wrote for personal gain (as if personal and community interests were mutually exclusive). Mawalan, he believed, was more concerned about payment for his bark paintings, which Rankine managed, than Rankine himself. Besides, they had not demonstrated affection for Rankine in the past; their relatives in Darwin made no efforts to farewell Rankine and Marika had complained about the exorbitant price Rankine charged for the typewriter. It was 'more probable that the matter has been organised by a missionary', he advised.⁶⁹ There is no response to the letters mentioned in the archives, but Rankine did not return to Yirrkala.

The Port Keats petitions

In 1935, Fr Xavier Gsell, the Administrator Apostolic of the Northern Territory, sent Fr Richard Docherty (MSC) to establish the Port Keats mission in 1935. Nuns from the congregation of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart joined the MSC priests at Port Keats in 1941. Most of the Port Keats community were Murrinhpatha speaking people, but there were also Marri Ngar people and people who spoke MagatiKe, Marri Tjevin and Marri Amu.⁷⁰ In its early years, the Port Keats mission ran on a tobacco economy. Aboriginal workers, paid in tobacco, moved into the mission, bringing family with them to enjoy the benefits of mission foods, healthcare and education for their children, as well as protection from settler and intertribal violence.

The MSCs staffed the missions from Sydney under the Father Provincial Mortimer Kerrins. But the missions were controlled by the Diocese of Darwin under Gsell (who became bishop) and, from 1950, his successor Bishop O'Loughlin.⁷¹ The Bishop made all decisions about staff placements and mission policy – there was no mission committee as with the CMS and MOM – but the Father Provincial could, nevertheless, influence decisions due to his financial resources and supply of staff.

68 Letter to Mission Board, 14 August 1961, ML MOM 460.

69 Symons to Gribble, 26 August 1961, ML MOM 460.

70 Furlan et al. 2008: 156.

71 Tatz 1964: 50.

Wanting to prevent the state from meddling in what he considered church matters, Bishop O'Loughlin refused government financial assistance for capital works on the missions. Fears of meddling from the secular government, however, did not prevent him from accepting government subsidies for the work of the priests, brothers and nuns in the school and hospital as well as child endowment payments for children in the dormitory. Like those at Yirrkala and Angurugu, the people at Port Keats experienced a rapid influx of new resources and opportunities to gain new knowledge through this government financial assistance.

Father John O'Bryan's placement at Port Keats in December 1963 was sudden. Bishop O'Loughlin needed to quickly replace another priest who he considered disobedient.⁷² O'Bryan himself did not stay at Port Keats long before he too was moved on, after only a year, in 1964 and relocated to a teaching position in Darwin. Brother John Pye remembered O'Bryan as 'young and vigorous'. His main contribution to the Port Keats Mission as superintendent was on the cattle run, relocating cattle to the Marchellindi Valley where there was permanent water. His successor, Father John Flynn, was very 'practical'. He ran an efficient mission and concentrated on securing the water supply, electricity, and improving the jetty and garden.⁷³

The MSC archives contain five letters with 18 names, petitioning Kerrins for the return of O'Bryan. The writers from Port Keats believed they had suffered greatly with the removal of O'Bryan. In 1964, they started writing to Kerrins in Sydney in small groups, probably families. They may have also written to the Bishop, who was directly responsible for O'Bryan's removal, but the diocesan archives are closed to researchers, so we cannot know for now.

Dear Fr Provincial

This is our first letter to you.

How are you getting on over there? We hope you are very well and happy.

We got no time to write you a long letter. But you might hear a lot from others. We couldn't know why Father Flynn close up We never seen a hard priest like this before. Old people and young people get sick tired and hungry because of Fr Flynn. We like Fr O'Bryan before he came. Do you think Fr O'Bryan had these things for himself? No he did not. He gave many good to all at Port Keats. He was grateful to us. We want him to be here as long as Fr. Docherty was here.⁷⁴

72 Leary to Kerrins, 10 April 1963, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Archives (MSC) 0565.

73 Pye, 'The Port Keats Story', MSC 0567/B.

74 Docherty helped established the mission in 1935 and did not leave until 1958.

We asking you to let him stay long as that. Please Father, we are asking you to take old Father back to there. We will keep young priest at here, (Father O'Bryan). We got no time to write you long letter, because the plane is coming here at 2'o'clock. Good-bye and God-bless you.

From Albert and Mavis (Louis)⁷⁵

The petitioners at Port Keats were full of praise for Fr O'Bryan. According to the other letters, under O'Bryan, the people were 'very rich'. He gave them 'clean clothes and many good food' when he was 'a boss'.⁷⁶ The people were 'very healthier' and 'never got sick or thin'. They were 'only fat and strong'.⁷⁷ O'Bryan was kind and generous, a model of Christian love.⁷⁸ One even stated that O'Bryan 'gave his live to all at Port Keats'. Since he was so good to the people, they explained, they were happy to work with him and 'did what He asked', the implication being that they might not be so cooperative under other leadership.⁷⁹

Fr John Flynn, however, was everything O'Bryan was not. 'We never seen a hard priest like this before', they complained.⁸⁰ They were all 'poor and thin' because of this 'very hard priest'.⁸¹ The sickness associated with Fr Flynn may also have been an indicator that he was spiritually unsuited for the task. Flynn 'close everything what we need'. This had made everyone 'hunger and thin and poor on this Mission'.⁸² Under Flynn, people were sick and starving. 'Old people and young people get sick tired and hungry because of Fr Flynn'.⁸³ Flynn 'never give us a clean clothes or good food. We feel hungary all the time'.⁸⁴

The letters emphasised that their views were shared by the whole community. One mentioned that 'the whole camp' was 'talking about writing this letter'.⁸⁵ Another mentioned that Kerrins should expect to 'hear a lot from others'.⁸⁶ They explained that 'everyone in this Mission want Fr O'Bryan to be the boss'.⁸⁷

75 Albert and Mavis (Louis) to Kerrins, 5 June 1964, MSC 0565.

76 Francis, Dominic and Brian to Kerrins, 1 June 1964, MSC 0565.

77 Justin, Phillip, Marcellin, Andrew, Hilary, Jerome to Kerrins, 4 June 1964, MSC 0565.

78 Francis, Dominic and Brian to Kerrins, 1 June 1964, MSC 0565.

79 Vincent, Martha and children to Kerrins, n.d., MSC 0565.

80 Albert and Mavis (Louis) to Kerrins, 5 June 1964, MSC 0565.

81 Justin, Phillip, Marcellin, Andrew, Hilary, Jerome to Kerrins, 4 June 1964, MSC 0565.

82 Francis, Dominic and Brian to Kerrins, 1 June 1964, MSC 0565.

83 Albert and Mavis (Louis) to Kerrins, 5 June 1964, MSC 0565.

84 Dave, Wagon, Charlie and Matthew to Kerrins, n.d., MSC 0565.

85 Dave, Wagon, Charlie and Matthew to Kerrins, n.d., MSC 0565.

86 Albert and Mavis (Louis) to Kerrins, 5 June 1964, MSC 0565.

87 Justin, Phillip, Marcellin, Andrew, Hilary, Jerome to Kerrins, 4 June 1964, MSC 0565.

They also express goodwill, remarking that 'we hope you are very well and happy'⁸⁸ and mentioned the good work that they had been doing for the mission, 'this Mission is getting big, and young men a able to do good work'.⁸⁹

The letters sit in the archive without comment. There is no evidence of a response nor of any discussion around the letters' legitimacy as for the letters in the CMS and MOM archives. Perhaps they were simply ignored. The following month, however, the Bishop visited Port Keats. According to *The Canberra Times*, the Port Keats residents raised concerns about mining exploration on their land, but the paper made no mention of their concerns about their white 'boss'.⁹⁰

Common threads

The petitions are strikingly similar; Aboriginal people at three missions under different denominations and organisational structures raised very similar concerns and made similar demands within a period of only three years. Perhaps people from the communities had made contact in Darwin. Or perhaps the similarity of the petitions can be attributed to their similar experiences of Christianisation, bureaucratisation, education and modernisation under the one Northern Territory Administration and Welfare Branch.

The petitions were forthright. The Port Keats letters often mentioned that it was the 'first time' they wrote, yet this was not apologetic, as if the authors were unsure whether they should approach the Father Provincial. Rather, it pointed to the importance of their claims. The act of writing a petition presumes the right to make such demands. They did not seem to expect their letters to be ignored, rather, they wrote as if they provided the mission authorities with useful information about how to improve the situation.

The letters each express a preference for certain superintendents. Again, these reveal Aboriginal people's expectations that they had a right to choose or at least veto their superintendent. A good superintendent brought substantial benefits. There were the material benefits of food and clothing. There were also spiritual benefits; the Christian gospel could be a new source of spiritual power and knowledge. There was also the benefit of keeping order, brokering peace among rival clans and negotiating with white authorities. The letters also express a preference for superintendents who, in the eyes of the missionary

88 Albert and Mavis (Louis) to Kerrins, 5 June 1964, MSC 0565.

89 Dave, Wagon, Charlie and Matthew to Kerrins, n.d., MSC 0565.

90 'Tribal Concern in N.T.', *The Canberra Times*, 12 August 1964.

organisations, were compliant to local people's demands. The petitioners expected superintendents who would not interfere too much in their affairs and, instead, support them.

Turning to oral histories from old people today, old people continue to praise a number of their 'bosses'. Jabani Lalara spoke highly of the first Angurugu superintendent, because 'he used to handle community right way'.⁹¹ He praised the subsequent superintendent, Kevin Hoffman, but made clear to me that it was Aboriginal people, in partnership with missionary superintendents, who made their community flourish.

Kevin Hoffman's been a really good man that's really established shops that's got the money from every stage he used to sell and bring money in. And that's why we've got first shop on the island, the store ... And no government didn't help us, only missions made money, Indigenous made money, very hard. Bring a lot of them arts and crafts to sell to Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne ... We had no problem with missionary.⁹²

This high regard, however, did not mean they were uncritical of missionary leadership. Nancy Lalara criticised the way the mission operated: 'it was just rule-bound, strict things'.⁹³ 'Missionary were the bossy ones ... they used to tell them what to do and they used to punish them', Judy Lalara told me in her oral history about Angurugu. 'Some missionaries were good, some missionary were bad. They didn't like Aborigine people.'⁹⁴ But, as Pirrawaygni Puruntatameri assured me, although missionaries did both good and bad, 'good outweighed bad'.⁹⁵

Many old people at former missions also feel that they had ownership over them and are proud of their work in their development. Tiwi Island women proudly told me of their fathers who built the mission church.⁹⁶ At Angurugu, Jabani Lalara expressed disappointment that Anindilyakwa labour and hospitality on their island were never acknowledged by the CMS.

Even though this old people came here to do this job, great job ... even though in those days people used to work, missionary and the government people, you know, and for our people what they've done, they never think of give them reward. They should have reward for that, for finding this place to give 'em to the missionary.⁹⁷

91 Jabani Lalara, oral history interview with author, 15 June 2012.

92 Jabani Lalara, oral history interview with author, 10 December 2012.

93 Nancy Lalara, oral history interview with author, 29 April 2012.

94 Judy Lalara, oral history interview with author, 12 December 2012.

95 Pirrawaygni Puruntatameri, personal communication, 17 June 2016.

96 Oral history interview with author, 23 September 2015.

97 Jabani Lalara, oral history interview with author, 10 December 2012.

According to the old people, it was the missionaries who should be thanking Aboriginal people. This expectation is consistent with the demands of petitioners at Port Keats who wrote that priests should be 'grateful' to the community who hosted them.⁹⁸ In fact, missionaries themselves fostered the impression that Aboriginal people were their hosts and would continue to have authority at missions. Gsell, for example, believed that Aboriginal people should be made to think they had ceded no authority to the missionaries:

When a new mission station starts there is a lot of work to be done & this can only be done if the natives give a willing helping hand. To attract their help one must be cheerful. They are big children, they like to play and to laugh & if you can manage to turn the work into a joyful game, you are sure to get this cooperation. God loves a cheerful giver & so does the blackfellow. He considers you the giver & such you are; you are their servant, not their boss. If you make them feel you are here to serve their needs, they will give in, they become friendly & trust you. Never play the boss; they ignore & resist any authority. They will tell you: This is my land, this is our fashion, me do what me like.⁹⁹

Gsell worked hard to give the impression that missions would only benefit Aboriginal people and not require much from them. This is not to say that Aboriginal people did not resent controls when missionaries did impose these, nor that Aboriginal people did not see through Gsell's scheme, but it does help explain why Aboriginal people might expect their complaints to be heard.

The petitions also reflect an expectation of, and concern for, material prosperity. Over the decades preceding the petitions, people in these communities witnessed a huge increase in educational and medical facilities available to them and gained new skills and knowledge. The government payment of the Child Endowment and subsidies for missionaries (and some Aboriginal workers) through the 1950s allowed for a massive expansion in mission activities. The generation who wrote these petitions was the first to see their children educated in government-funded schools with qualified teachers and a recognised syllabus. It was reasonable, therefore, for Aboriginal people's ambitions for themselves and their communities to continue to expand over this period and that they might protest where they deemed the services they received to be inadequate.

Missionaries were also aware that Aboriginal people might develop high expectations. Gsell warned the hypothetical future missionary not to 'spoil' his flock lest they come to resent it.

To give to the blacks anything without reason & without measure is to spoil them. They come to look upon your liberality as something due to them & if you try to curtail your gifts they take it as an injustice & become nasty & threatening.¹⁰⁰

98 From Albert and Mavis (Louis) to Kerrins; and Vincent Martha and children to Kerrins.

99 Gsell Manuscript 'My fifty years of mission life in North Australia 1900-1950' [195?], MSC 0700.

100 Gsell Manuscript 'My fifty years of mission life', MSC 0700.

Whereas Gsell used the paternalistic language of 'spoiled children', Aboriginal people had reason to consider themselves entitled to benefits the missionaries brought. Aboriginal people had granted missionaries safe access to their land.¹⁰¹ They guided missionaries to the appropriate place to establish missions, making sure these locations would be politically suitable for a range of clan interests. Many worked as interpreters, positioning themselves in strategic and powerful roles between missionaries and their kin.¹⁰² They had also made an effort to learn to understand the missionary religion, language and culture. Given the importance of reciprocity in Aboriginal cultures, it was reasonable to presume that missionaries should be 'grateful' and give something in return.¹⁰³

The conundrum of nostalgia in oral history and Aboriginal people's mixed, but largely positive memories, then, becomes easier to understand when considering these factors. The mixed memories of mission frustration and fondness are in fact consistent with the petitions that express assertiveness and confidence as well as concern. These petitions align with a complex story of both oppression and accomplishment. They reveal Aboriginal people's sense of ownership of the missions and their work to manage the missionary presence at the same time as disappointment at the direction authorities were taking.

A rude awakening

At each mission, the authorities failed to act as the petitioners demanded. It was easy for the mission organisations to ignore the petitions. Aboriginal people appeared childlike through their use of English rather than their own languages. The spelling errors and large script buttressed paternalistic missionary thinking. The mission authorities also presumed the letters were inauthentic, prompted by non-Indigenous interests. The accusation of ventriloquism based on assumptions that Indigenous peoples, as passive victims or recipients of aid, could not possibly make their own demands – has long been used to silence Indigenous claims.¹⁰⁴

The mismatch between Aboriginal people's expectations and the mission authorities' response (or lack thereof) must have been a rude shock. At Angurugu, the missionary dismissal of the petitions preceded a new 'eruption of violence', prompting the Welfare Branch to send an investigator to the mission in 1961.¹⁰⁵ Through the 1960s, there is evidence that Anindilyakwa

101 Baker 2005: 17.

102 Brock 2005: 133.

103 O'Donnell 2007: 199.

104 Belmessous 2011: 7.

105 Long 1963: 2–11.

people became disillusioned with the missionaries; there was a revival of interest in ceremony and dancing, and decreased engagement with the church.¹⁰⁶ At Yirrkala, the missionary dismissal of the petitions preceded the more famous Bark Petition whereby Yolngu people directly challenged missionary policy. The failure of the petitions, among other things, made it clear to Yolngu people that missionaries did not view themselves as partners but as authorities over them.

The boldness of the petitions reveals also a mismatch between some historians' perceptions of missions and an older generation of Aboriginal people's own understanding of their experiences. Whereas the missionaries saw Aboriginal people as recipients of aid and evangelism and themselves as dominant decision-makers, historians should be careful not to take the missionary rhetoric at face value. These petitions and oral histories together reveal that, in some places, Aboriginal people felt considerable ownership and agency in that context. They also reveal that Aboriginal people did not always see the missionaries as a homogeneous group; they preferred to work with some over others as they formed productive partnerships. In the case of the three missions I examined above, living on country, no doubt, played an important part in this experience of agency, but so did the nature of Aboriginal people's relationship with missionaries and the benefits they could extract from their presence. Of course, the missions were sites of inequality and colonisation; it was the missionaries who claimed authority on Aboriginal land, attempting to change Aboriginal people, not the other way around. Yet the old people who experienced the missions also worked hard to ensure that their missions were run 'proper way', to benefit their communities in ways missionaries might not have perceived or acknowledged. This work included writing petitions to mission authorities, making their expectations known. Despite the challenges they faced in the mission days, even now, many continue to insist that those days were indeed the good old days, thanks to their hard work.

These findings also have wider implications for the question of nostalgia and memory. Personal and collective memory can recall different aspects of past – both true – such that the collective past of structural inequality can be remembered concurrently with a nostalgic past of personal meaning and agency. Nostalgic memory, I suggest, can be closely connected to lived experiences past and so can assist historians seeking to interpret the archive. Historians do not need to fear nostalgia contaminating oral histories. Rather, nostalgia sheds light on people's most valued experiences, for which evidence can also be found in documentary sources.

106 Taylor to Leske, 1 June 1970, NTAS NTRS 1098, Box 2.

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The space of conflict: Aboriginal/ European interactions and frontier violence on the western Central Murray, South Australia, 1830–41

Heather Burke, Amy Roberts, Mick Morrison, Vanessa Sullivan and
the River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC)

Colonialism was a violent endeavour. Bound up with the construction of a market-driven, capitalist system via the tendrils of Empire, it was intimately associated with the processes of colonisation and the experiences of exploiting the land, labour and resources of the New World.¹ All too often this led to conflict, particularly between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Overt violence (the euphemistic ‘skirmishes’, ‘affrays’ and ‘collisions’ of the documentary record), clandestine violence (poisonings, forced removals, sexual exploitation and disease) and structural violence (the compartmentalisation of Aboriginal people through processes of race, governance and labour) became routinised aspects of colonialism, buttressed by structures of power, inequality, dispossession and racism. Conflict at the geographical margins of this system was made possible by the general anxieties of life at, or beyond, the boundaries of settlement, closely associated with the normalised violence attached to ideals of ‘manliness’ on the frontier.²

The ‘History Wars’ that ignited at the turn of the twenty-first century sparked an enormous volume of detailed research into the nature and scale of frontier violence across Australia. Individual studies have successfully canvassed the

1 Silliman 2005.

2 Evans 1993: 33; Hogg 2011; Woollacott 2009.

role of the Native Mounted Police,³ the semantics used to describe engagement,⁴ the nature of policing and judicial procedures⁵ and the specifics of particular massacres.⁶ While some have highlighted the need for more empirical research,⁷ historical archaeological perspectives on frontier conflict remain largely absent from the Australian literature.⁸ This is partly because the nature of conflict was so opportunistic and materially subtle that it is not amenable to conventional archaeological analysis.⁹ It is also the case that the mapping of frontier conflict is no straightforward matter, particularly when the documentation attached to it – both official and private – is widely acknowledged to be affected by silences and elisions, euphemisms and denials.¹⁰ As a result, archaeologists have emphasised the need for multiple lines of evidence to better understand the intertwined elements of frontier encounter. In particular they advocate the use of a landscape perspective to provide a broader geographic scale at which to examine the various strands of conflict, including those identified through primary and secondary historical sources, oral sources, anthropology and archaeology.¹¹ Part of a wider scholarly movement to map less conventional and more qualitative forms of data,¹² such research explores ways to visualise sociospatial processes. In other words, rather than focussing on the details of individual sites, landscape approaches favour integrating quantitative and qualitative data at a regional scale to provide a better understanding of how lived experience in the past may have related to place and how particular behaviours might emerge in specific geographical circumstances.¹³ Far more than just ‘telling stories with maps’, it has encouraged the asking of more spatially sensitive questions and provides an alternative means to understand choices, actions and reactions that might not have been made explicit at the time.

The narrative mapping work in this paper derives from a collaborative project between archaeologists and the River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) to investigate Aboriginal–European relations on Calperum Station, near Renmark, on the western Central Murray (Figure 1). Since it is not possible to understand the Aboriginal landscape of the historical period at Calperum without reference to the events that surrounded it, this paper presents an analysis of early contact in the wider region between 1830

3 E.g. Fels 1988; Richards 2008.

4 E.g. Curthoys and Docker 2001; Reynolds 2001; Ryan 2013.

5 E.g. Finnane and Richards 2004; Nettelbeck and Foster 2010b.

6 E.g. Ryan 2008, 2010, 2013.

7 E.g. Attwood and Foster 2003: 23; Reynolds 2001: 130.

8 But see Barker 2007; Cole 2010; Litster and Wallis 2011; Williamson 2002.

9 Litster and Wallis 2011; Barker 2007.

10 Foster 2009.

11 Barker 2007: 12.

12 E.g. Brennan-Horley et al. 2010; Cooper and Gregory 2011; Gibson et al. 2010; Kwan and Ding 2008.

13 Gregory and Healey 2007; Towers 2010.

and 1841. Specifically, it sets out to reassemble the patterns of often violent engagement that occurred between Aboriginal and European people along the Overland Stock Route as these can be reconstructed from primary and secondary sources. In seeking to map the location of these encounters we have drawn on the accounts of explorers and overlanders, police and volunteer police parties and later overland travellers.¹⁴ Official reports from the Police Commissioner and the Protector of Aborigines, the Protector's correspondence from 1840 to 1857, and the various statements provided by members of overlanding parties as part of the Rufus River enquiry, provided further versions of events in the region.

This wealth of historical sources pertaining to the western Central Murray provides an apt context in which to revisit the pattern of violent encounter. Prior historical analyses in this region have tended to concentrate overwhelmingly on the most widely known event – the Rufus River massacre in August 1841, in which approximately 30 Aboriginal people were killed as a result of two consecutive encounters with a group of overlanders subsequently reinforced by a police party.¹⁵ Nettelbeck and Foster have analysed the Rufus River massacre from several perspectives, mainly focussed around 'the chasm between the way in which violence was reported and remembered'.¹⁶ Teasing out the narrative dimensions of its subsequent literary treatments as it became transformed into a story of pioneer superiority and achievement over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries allowed them to chart the ways in which 'celebratory mythologies of foundation' were constructed through the changing language of its various iterations.¹⁷

Closer to the intent of this paper is the study by Hemming, who synthesised many of the same events along the Murray from the Darling to Nor West Bend. By adopting a broad geographical scope, Hemming was able to make a number of pertinent, yet preliminary, observations about the spatial aspects of conflict, particularly the tendency of Aboriginal people to attack parties at vulnerable river crossings, and the evidence for cooperation between neighbouring groups when conducting these attacks.¹⁸

Nettelbeck's, Foster's and Hemming's focus on the Rufus River above all other places and encounters, however, has failed to capture some of the meanings attributed to other places in the landscape where conflict occurred, in the process

14 For explorers and overlanders, see Bonney n.d.; Buchanan 1923; Crawford 1839; Eyre 1845, 1984; Hawdon 1952, 1952; Sturt 1833, 1838, 1849; Webster 1987. For police and volunteer parties, see Hawker 1841–45; O'Halloran 1841a,b, 1904. Other police recollections, such as Tolmer's 1882 and McLean's 1903 memoirs, provided only general information or repeated information from other sources. Unfortunately, Buchanan's original diary is missing from the State Library of South Australia.

15 Hemming 1984; Nettelbeck 1999; Nettelbeck and Foster 2010a.

16 Foster 2009: 68.1.

17 Nettelbeck 1999: 82. See also Foster 2009; Foster and Nettelbeck 2012; Foster et al. 2001.

18 Hemming 1984: 13–15.

rendering them less visible and meaningful. It has also emphasised the experience of the Maraura and downplayed the effects on the other Aboriginal groups that existed along this section of the river.¹⁹ This gap is perhaps understandable, as neither Nettelbeck and Foster nor Hemming were interested in capturing the spatial dimensions of encounter other than in a very general way, and also relied on a more curtailed collection of primary sources. In this paper we have consulted a wider range of contemporary accounts, including both Charles Sturt's and James Coutts Crawford's original journals relating to their overland journeys and the portion of Thomas O'Halloran's diary covering his two expeditions to Lake Victoria that was not deposited with State Records of South Australia.²⁰ Coutts Crawford's journal, in particular, varies considerably from the two later published versions of it, and specifically in terms of encounters with Aboriginal people.²¹ Many of these narratives provided geographic locations for events at various levels of specificity, most notably O'Halloran's military notations of distances between camps and major landmarks, James Hawker's and James Coutts Crawford's estimates of directions and distances travelled and Sturt's original, hand-drawn charts accompanying his 1830 journey along the river. Historical maps and newspaper articles were used to assist in the more precise identification of overlander travel routes, significant landmarks and the specifics of particular encounters.

The impetus for this paper derives from anthropological observations made at the time of the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee Region Native Title Claim, for which extensive genealogies were compiled. As part of this process it became clear that the current RMMAC membership could trace its descent from only approximately 30 individuals (the apical ancestors).²² This number is in stark contrast to the population estimates in observations from the 1840s that refer to hundreds of people at some locales, particularly those

19 For the purposes of this paper we have adopted Tindale's (1974) narrower group 'boundaries' and names, although we do not claim that his interpretations are without issue (e.g. a detailed analysis would involve an exegesis of the various ethnohistorical accounts and syntheses provided by Berndt et al. 1993; Curr 1886; Eyre 1845; Horton 1994; Howitt 1904; Radcliffe-Brown 1918; Richards 1903; Smyth 1878; Taplin 1879 and Tindale 1940, among others). Unlike in other areas of Australia, however, Tindale did conduct primary research with 'informants' in the area of the broader native title claim (e.g. Robert [Tarby] Mason, Peter Boney and Frank Fletcher) for this region (*Turner v State of South Australia* [2011] FCA 1312 18 November 2011).

20 The portion of O'Halloran's diary (1841a) held by State Records of South Australia (SRSA GRG 5/81) covers the period from 22 April to 5 May and 23 June to 8 July 1841. The 'missing' portion (1841b) covers events between 31 May and 22 June 1841 and has only recently been rediscovered. This portion is held by the South Australian Police Historical Society.

21 Crawford 1880; Pike 1965.

22 See *Turner v State of South Australia*. The South Australian portion of the western Central Murray was formerly covered by the native title claim known as 'First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee Region', which resulted in the determination (by consent) that native title exists in certain parcels of land within the original claim; see native title determination application no. SAD 6026 of 1998. Native title rights and interests from this decision are held in trust by RMMAC.

with more reliable water and other resources.²³ Further, none of the named Indigenous people who appeared in the early ethnohistorical accounts could be matched to these known apical ancestors, suggesting that – for whatever reason – they left no known descendants. In the context of discussions concerning conflict and the effects of colonisation, this is a sobering figure and one that flagged the necessity of investigating the contact history of the region in greater detail. The 1830s and early 1840s were crucial years for the development of contemporary and subsequent relationships between European and Aboriginal people in this area and affected population numbers and settlement patterns for decades to come.

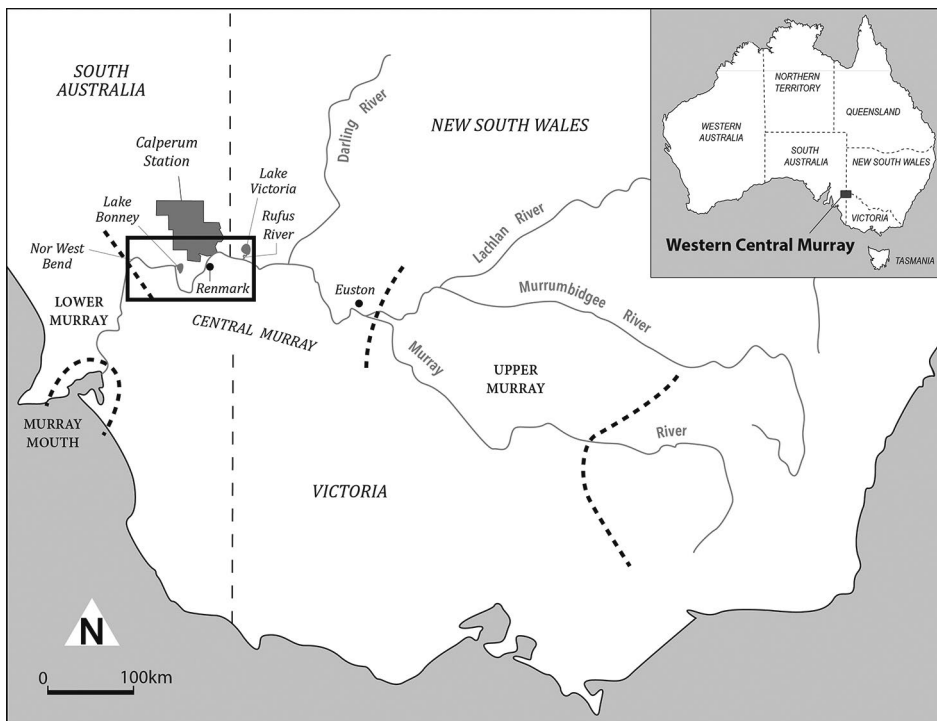


Figure 1: Location of the western Central Murray study area.

Source: Map created by authors. Murray River divisions are from Littleton 1998: 2.

By adopting an explicit landscape perspective on the nature and scale of violence across the western Central Murray we have been able to document the nuances of engagement in greater detail, making it clear that frontier violence in this space was both more sustained and highly complex than has previously been considered. We argue here that spatially visualising the narratives of conflict contained in primary and secondary historical accounts for a single region

23 E.g. *Southern Australian*, 10 June 1842; Sturt 1849: 91–92.

provides a better perspective from which to examine the more subtle ebbs and flows of action and response that occurred as a result of contact. Anchoring multiple historical sources to specific spaces highlights places of safety and danger in the landscape, reveals new perspectives on the use of European objects by Aboriginal people in the region in ‘conciliatory’ and ‘retaliatory’ ways, and allows some of the repercussions of this sequence of events to be unfolded across space and time.

Contact and conflict along the western Central Murray

The beginning: Early contacts 1830–40

It is likely that the first physical contact between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans on the western Central Murray took place when Charles Sturt travelled down the river in 1830.²⁴ Although frequently glossed as ‘friendly’, even these initial encounters were precarious. While Sturt reported no overt hostility, he was certainly armed for it and alert to its possibility, only narrowly escaping it at several points between the Rufus River and Nor West Bend.²⁵ Sturt’s anxiety was exacerbated by the repeated and intense interest shown in his party and their possessions and by Aboriginal people’s indifference to his demonstrations of European gunfire. At the Lindesay (now Lindsay) River junction Sturt found one group to be so ‘troublesome’ that he thought a ‘quarrel’ might result.

No other Europeans are recorded travelling through the region until the Overland Stock Route opened between Sydney and Adelaide in 1838. The first ‘overlanders’ to make the trek were Joseph Hawdon and Charles Bonney in April, bringing 335 cattle for the Adelaide market. Like Sturt, each man in Hawdon’s and Bonney’s party went armed, in their case ‘with a carbine, a pair of pistols, and a bayonet’, although this was as much for defence against bushrangers as anything else.²⁶ The party encountered one ‘troublesome’ Aboriginal group three days before reaching the Murray and Rufus River junction²⁷ and minor occurrences of attempted theft and cattle spearing between the Rufus and Nor West Bend.²⁸

24 Sturt 1833. Sturt was, however, preceded by the effects of European invasion via evidence of the spread of introduced diseases.

25 Sturt 1833: 138–39, 191–95.

26 Hawdon 1952: 3.

27 Hawdon 1952: 40.

28 Hawdon 1952: 40–49.

Hawdon and Bonney were closely followed by Edward Eyre in June and Sturt in August 1838, both of whom travelled overland with cattle. Eyre came through again in March 1839 with 1,000 sheep and found people to be 'for the most part tractable and friendly',²⁹ although he still kept his party's arms within easy reach. In June, west of the Rufus River he encountered 'a numerous and very troublesome' group, who, after a stand-off on the previous evening, returned at dawn. A second stand-off then ensued, prompting Eyre and his party to defend their drays:

The time passed slowly and anxiously for about two hours, the natives still keeping their position ... When the teams were yoked and all ready to move I went, alone and unarmed, to the assembled natives and distributed pieces of iron hoop cut and sharpened so as to make chisels and other little gifts. They seemed greatly pleased with the presents, gave a tremendous shout and we were all very good friends again ... I believe, however, that under God's mercy we had escaped a most imminent peril and that had there been the least fear or indecision shewn the whole party would certainly have been murdered.³⁰

Eyre, like Sturt and Hawdon before him, was observing the signs of incipient conflict, which quickly came to a head over the following three years. Based largely on newspaper reports and advertisements noting the arrival of overland parties and their stock for the Adelaide market, it is possible to reconstruct something of the scale of the overlanding enterprise in its first three years. Between April 1838 and April 1841 a minimum of 36 parties travelled the western Central Murray route, bringing with them at least 480 Europeans, 90,000 sheep and 15,000 cattle, as well as horses, bullocks, drays and goods into Aboriginal territories. Moreover, the stock route for which Hawdon and Bonney received the credit followed much older Aboriginal pathways (see Figure 2), a common occurrence across Australia that complicated Aboriginal people's access to traditional travel routes.³¹ By September 1840 – and indeed, probably much earlier – the overland route had become so distinct that it was a clearly visible road.³²

The end: The Rufus River massacre 1841

On 16 April 1841 one of these overlanding parties, led by Henry Inman and consisting of 11 men and 5,000 sheep, was attacked on the banks of the river 'at a place 40 miles to the eastward of Lake Bonney'.³³ According to Governor Grey:

29 *SA Gazette and Colonial Register*, 21 July 1838.

30 Eyre 1984: 158.

31 Spooner et al. 2010.

32 *South Australian Register*, 5 September 1840. Note that some parties also travelled along the south bank of the Murray for part of the journey, see Eyre 1984: 187.

33 Deposition of Henry Inman in Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons 1843, *Papers Relative to South Australia, Aborigines* (hereafter *PRSA*), Enclosure 1 in No. 87: 268.

[a] body of natives from 300–400 strong ... forcibly took possession of the sheep, drays &c, and dispersed the Europeans, severely wounding two, and nearly killing another ... and this notwithstanding a strenuous resistance was offered, and at least one of the natives killed.³⁴

This 'outrage' caused a police party to be dispatched to the area, led by the Commissioner of Police, Major Thomas O'Halloran, which was recalled before it reached its destination. In their stead a group of volunteers, including Henry Field, a member of Inman's original party, James Hawker and Field's brother, Lieutenant William George Field, offered to recover the sheep, setting out on 7 May. On 13 May they too

fell in with the same party of natives, between 300 and 400 strong, who attacked them, wounding one of their number, at the same time killing one, and wounding two, of their horses. The Aborigines eventually compelled them to a hasty retreat, although not without suffering a loss of from eight to ten men on their own part.³⁵

The attacks on Inman's and Field's parties sparked a concerted public reaction. In order to avoid a vigilante group, and in response to the news that another overlanding party, led by Alfred Langhorne, was presently en route, newly arrived Governor Grey swore in a batch of volunteers as special constables under the jurisdiction of O'Halloran and the Protector of Aborigines, Matthew Moorhouse. A large party of men, including mounted and foot police, left Adelaide on 31 May. They met up with Langhorne's party on 22 June, only to learn that they had been attacked two days earlier at the Rufus River, resulting in the deaths of four Europeans and the wounding of another two. Five Aboriginal people had been killed and approximately 10 wounded in the conflict.³⁶

In response to a formal request in July 1841 to protect a third group of overlanders, this time led by William Robinson, another official party, including police, three Aboriginal people and Moorhouse, again left for the Murray. On arriving at the Rufus on 27 August they met up with Robinson's party, who, like Langhorne's, had been attacked further to the east on the previous day. Five Aboriginal men had been killed, and 10 wounded, but there had been no loss of European life. In the hours following, Moorhouse and two others encountered a large party of men and women near Lake Victoria, who immediately ran towards them and a second clash ensued, despite Moorhouse's attempts to negotiate through interpreters. In the ensuing gunfire 'nearly 30' Aboriginal people were killed (although at the subsequent enquiry Moorhouse acknowledged that he had only seen 21 bodies),³⁷ 'about 10' wounded and four captured.³⁸ Of the Europeans, only Robinson himself

34 Grey to Russell, 29 May 1841, in *PRSAA* 1843, Enclosure 87: 267.

35 Grey to Russell, 29 May 1841, in *PRSAA* 1843, Enclosure 87: 267.

36 Moorhouse to Mundy, 4 September 1841, in *PRSAA* 1843, Enclosure 1 in No. 97: 294.

37 Testimony of Matthew Moorhouse to Bench of Magistrates, 21 September 1841, in *PRSAA* 1843: 299.

38 Moorhouse to Mundy, 4 September 1841, in *PRSAA* 1843, Enclosure 1 in No. 97: 294.

was wounded. A subsequent enquiry questioned the participants, including Pangki Pangki, the Aboriginal interpreter, and Pulkanta, one of the Rufus River captives, but eventually declared that the conduct of both European parties was justifiable.³⁹ Much later this 'collision' became known as the Rufus River massacre.⁴⁰

The Rufus River conflict is often seen as the end-point of conflict in the region, both because of its scale, since it signalled the largest number of deaths as a result of a single event, but also because reports of attacks on overland parties disappear from the literature after 1842. The arrival of such parties to Adelaide was no longer a novelty and only isolated accounts of travel along the route can be found into the 1850s.⁴¹ The government response was to establish a local military presence in the area, but also to try and pacify Aboriginal people by defusing social tensions and supplying them with rations.⁴² To accomplish this, Edward Eyre was appointed Resident Magistrate and Protector of Aborigines on the Murray and a military detachment of 12 men and a non-commissioned officer from the 96th Regiment dispatched with him to his pastoral lease, Moorundie. From here Eyre visited the Rufus River in the first half of 1842 and found the numbers of Aboriginal people much reduced, but also recommended that a rations post be established at the junction of the Rufus and the Murray.⁴³ The military were only a temporary control measure and were replaced by civilian police at Ral Ral in 1849. The intent of this station was expressly to counter 'the ferocious disposition of the aborigines in that district, and of the marauding habit they have acquired from a long series of successful attacks upon overland parties',⁴⁴ implying that at least some level of conflict may have continued throughout the 1840s.

Visualising a spatial narrative of encounter 1830–41

Having 'bookended' encounters along the western Central Murray by separating them chronologically, it is appropriate now to revisit these narratives and question them spatially. Plotting the distribution of events between 1830 and 1841 reveals numerous locations where actual or potential conflict took place and five 'hot spots' where repeated evidence of conflict occurred (Figure 2).⁴⁵ The most well

39 Bench of Magistrates, Minutes of meeting 20–22 September 1841, in *PRSA* 1843, Enclosure in No. 98: 302.

40 See Foster 2009; Foster and Nettelbeck 2010; Foster et al. 2001.

41 E.g. Gerstäcker 1853: 454–56; *Observer*, 7 April 1923.

42 Foster 1989.

43 Eyre to Mundy, 10 January 1842, in *PRSA* 1843, Enclosure in No. 101: 305–6.

44 *South Australian Register*, 18 August 1849: 4.

45 We define conflict as any event that caused friction between Aboriginal and European people, regardless of whether or not it ended in actual violence.

known of these is 'Langhorne's Ferry', where teams crossed the Rufus, since this was the site of the Rufus River massacre, as well as at least four previous violent encounters. Four other locations are also apparent, however, which have received comparatively less attention in the literature: 'Dead Man's Flat', west of Lake Bonney; 'Tolmer's Flat' east of Lake Bonney; 'Bluebeard's Den' near Ral Ral; and the 'Hornet's Nest', just inside the present boundary of South Australia.

Dead Man's Flat

In October 1839, George McLeod and Robert Flood were travelling east along the Central Murray with provisions for John Finnis's overlanding party. Overtaking Lachlan Mackinnon's party travelling west towards Adelaide, they soon learnt that Thomas Young, Mackinnon's overseer, had been killed about seven miles further to the east several days before. McLeod and Flood were themselves attacked the following morning in the same vicinity.⁴⁶ The circumstances leading up to, and following, Young's death were not mentioned by McLeod or the single published newspaper report,⁴⁷ and, for his part, Mackinnon merely remarked for the newspapers that '[t]he natives were very friendly and peaceable'.⁴⁸ The *South Australian Register* was subsequently given a description of Young's death which noted that, 'It is not known that any offence was given by the party to the natives to incite them to commit such a cold-blooded murder',⁴⁹ but which also omitted any reference to Mackinnon's party's reaction. In the following month at least two further encounters took place in this vicinity, including attacks on the provisioning drays travelling to meet Alexander Buchanan's party in November 1839⁵⁰ and on Nelson Tooth's party in December. In February 1841, Edward, John and Ephraim Howe's party thought they were being followed from this flat⁵¹ and when O'Halloran reached the location in April 1841, he described it as:

a spot where several parties have been attacked (Mr Eyre,⁵² Tooth & others) and where a European was killed by the natives and lies buried between 2 trees with an F upon one, this man belonged to Mr McKinnon's party – I shall therefore distinguish our present encampment as the 'Dead Man's flat' ... From what I can gather from some of the men who came overland – several natives have been killed upon different occasions – I understand the latter nearly took the life of Mr Tooth and Eyre was turned back and obliged to get further strength ere he could pass.⁵³

46 *South Australian Register*, 16 November 1839.

47 *South Australian Register*, 30 November 1839.

48 *South Australian Register*, 26 October 1839.

49 *South Australian Register* 30 November 1839.

50 Buchanan 1923: 75.

51 Webster 1987: 210.

52 This is not mentioned by Eyre.

53 O'Halloran Diary 28 April 1841a.

The Aboriginal side of these events is unknown, but the attack on McLeod and Flood and both of the November attacks could well have been reprisal raids for earlier deaths caused by Mackinnon's party. Alexander Buchanan took no chances himself in November, since, not long after passing through Dead Man's Flat, he noted that he had seen 'a good many blacks opposite bank of the river, fired upon them and killed one, the rest made off immediately'.⁵⁴

Tolmer's Flat

In this area Hawdon noted an attempted theft by the 'principal man' from a group of 90 Aboriginal people who had gathered near his camp,⁵⁵ and several attempts were made on stock, including that owned by Hawdon, Buchanan and the second police party.⁵⁶ Here also the combined parties of George McLeod, Huntly MacPherson and James Coutts Crawford 'drove off' a 'great mob' of about 50 people in April 1839 after several other encounters since the Rufus.⁵⁷

Ral Ral and Bluebeard's Den

This was the area for various events (see Figure 2), including another attempted theft from Hawdon's camp and one of Eyre's near collisions in 1838.⁵⁸ In 1839 Aboriginal people speared 11 or 12 of McLeod's and MacPherson's sheep, resulting in Coutts Crawford's cryptic phrase: 'Had some diver[?] shooting'.⁵⁹ It was also the location of Bluebeard's Den. This was the name given by O'Halloran to a place on Woolenook Bend where a well-known Aboriginal man, variously referred to as 'Old Bluebeard' by Buchanan,⁶⁰ or 'Greybeard' by Eyre,⁶¹ was killed by Charles Miller in December 1839 or January 1840:

Monday 27th June ... We are now encamped where the famous 'Blue Beard' mentioned in Sturts [sic] book, was shot some eighteen mths ago – He was a very old man with a long white beard; & tis said was shot ['by Miller' crossed out] when in the act of some treachery towards Millers party – I shall call this Blue Beards Den.⁶²

54 Buchanan 1923: 75. Buchanan's memoirs contain several asides in which violence towards Aboriginal people, including murder, was committed quite casually, see, for example, Buchanan 1923: 75.

55 Hawdon 1952: 48–49.

56 Moorhouse to Mundy, 4 September 1841, in *PRSA* 1843, Enclosure 1 in No. 97: 294.

57 Coutts Crawford Diary 4 April 1839 (Papers M600, M687–688, National Library of Australia).

58 Hawdon 1952: 47; Eyre 1984: 159.

59 Coutts Crawford Diary 3 April 1839. This is literally all Coutts Crawford has to say about the event, and no number of casualties is recorded.

60 Buchanan 1923: 74.

61 Eyre 1984: 158; see also Sturt 1833: 230–34.

62 O'Halloran Diary 27 June 1841a.

Sturt had originally met Greybeard in 1830 when he was guided by him along part of the western Central Murray. He encountered him again on his second journey overland in 1838 as an old friend.⁶³ Eyre felt similarly,⁶⁴ although Buchanan summarily dismissed him as '[a] noted chief and a great thief'.⁶⁵ Sturt further noted:

Here, or near this spot also, the old white-headed native, who used to attend the overland parties, was shot by Miller, a discharged soldier, I am sorry to say, of my own regiment ... He was shot by Miller in cold blood, whilst talking to one of the men of the party of which unfortunately he had the charge; but retribution soon followed. Miller was shortly afterwards severely wounded by the natives.⁶⁶

The Hornet's Nest

The vicinity of the Hornet's Nest was the focus for several violent encounters, including the attacks on Inman's overlanding party in April 1841 and on Field's volunteer party in May. Although Inman had noted that 'one native only was observed by the party to fall',⁶⁷ Field's party recorded eight Aboriginal deaths, a statement that was generally borne out by Moorhouse's interview of Aboriginal people at Dead Man's Flat in the following month:

They had heard from other natives that an attack had been made upon Europeans; That the natives had taken a large quantity of sheep, provisions & clothing; That one native was shot dead at the time and at a subsequent time, several others were shot by a party on horseback.⁶⁸

When O'Halloran arrived at the area in June 1841 he felt himself 'in the very nest of the hornets', and so named his fortified camp the Hornet's Nest.⁶⁹

Langhorne's Ferry/Rufus River

The first recorded encounters in this vicinity took place in March 1839 and involved the combined parties of Coutts Crawford and McLeod and MacPherson, who were attacked by a large group of Aboriginal people at sunset:

63 Sturt Diary 5 August 1838 (SRSA GRG 5/81).

64 Eyre 1984: 157, 187.

65 Buchanan 1923: 74.

66 Sturt 1849: 86–87.

67 Deposition of Henry Inman in *PRSA* 1843, Enclosure 1 in No. 87: 268.

68 Moorhouse to Mundy, 30 June 1841, Protector's Letterbooks 1840–1857, SRSA GRG 52/7.

69 O'Halloran Diary 217 June 1841a; see also Tolmer 1882: 232. It was jokingly referred to as Fort O'Halloran by others in the police party and the location was later plotted by Arrowsmith as Fort O'Halloran on his 1849 map of 'Capt. Sturt's route from Adelaide into the Centre of Australia'.

Wednesday March 28th

The cattle ... were going into the point when a number of blacks came up at the head with their spears. Riley who was ahead ran for it. They chased him up to the drays where the men gave them a volley and drove them across the river. Took 4 spears ...

Thursday March 29th

Rose at daybreak – the stockmen on going to count the cattle, found our black friends of the night before all collected, to the number of 50 or 60, with their spears among the cattle with some difficulty they drove them across the river. Took 6 spears, a nullah nullah and some sharpening stones ... Passed on over a flat alluvial land with a sand bank on our right ... MacPherson & myself were on ahead on the sand bank when we heard a sound of firing behind us and on returning that another engagement had taken place with the same blacks several of whom had at last got a good peppering with small shot. Took several spears.⁷⁰

According to Pike this encounter took place at the Rufus, but Coutts Crawford's calculations of distance from the Darling puts the parties slightly further to the west, so this event is likely to have taken place between the Rufus and Calperum Station.⁷¹ Moorhouse noted two further incidents at the Rufus later that year, although without naming either party:

Nineteen months ago [i.e. around December 1839], the drays of a cattle party were attempted to be taken at this very place by a group of Natives. Ten men on horseback all supplied with firearms were on the banks of the River at the time, and repelled the Natives at once by firing upon them. The Natives retreated as soon as they saw one or two of their tribe shot, but they were followed for about 15 miles by those on horseback & firing kept up the whole time. Thirteen months ago [i.e. around June 1840] a similar encounter took place on the same spot & the natives routed with great loss.⁷²

Langhorne's party of 16 were attacked at the same location in June 1841, leading to the deaths of four Europeans, the wounding of two others, and the deaths of five Aboriginal people.⁷³ One of the Europeans who was wounded here was the same Charles Miller who had travelled the route at least three times and who

70 Coutts Crawford Diary 28 and 29 March 1839. Pike's published version of this entry has very little in common with the original (see Pike 1965: 8) and contains considerable embellishment, including details of the encounter with Inman's party that occurred at the Rufus two years later.

71 Pike 1965: 8.

72 Moorhouse to Mundy, 12 July 1841, Protector's Letterbooks 1840–1857, SRSA GRG 52/7. Several overland parties moved through at these times, including, in December 1839, Charles Miller, Edward and John Howe, Cameron and Lewis Huon, and, in June 1840, William Spence Peter.

73 Moorhouse to Mundy, 30 June 1841, Protector's Letterbooks 1840–1857, SRSA GRG 52/7.

had been responsible for Bluebeard's death 18 months earlier. Miller was one of those to have noted the change in Aboriginal people's attitudes to overlanding parties, although without mentioning his own role:

Mr Millar [sic] ... said this is the third time I have come overland from Sydney; the first time I came the natives were of great assistance to my party; they helped us to drive our cattle for many miles; they did not attempt to steal or take anything from us. The second time they were more bold; they would pilfer and steal from our encampment and in the night they several times crossed the Murray and speared the sheep so that the shepherds were obliged to fire upon them. I never saw them to offer to attack the drays before the present time.⁷⁴

By the time Robinson's party reached the crossing in August 1841 they were well aware of earlier encounters and had combined with another overlanding party to present a force of 27 well-armed men.⁷⁵

The number of deaths across all of these encounters is unknown, but the fragmentary glimpses in primary sources suggest that at least 42 Aboriginal people were killed and 34 wounded. In comparison, only five Europeans are known to have been killed and 12 wounded (Table 1). In 1842, as part of his initial journeys into the region after the Rufus River massacre, Eyre recorded the only Aboriginal perspectives on this period, which clearly emphasised the casual aggression of overlanding parties:

The natives themselves have lately brought under my notice instances in which they describe the conduct of some of the parties ... as having been barbarous and revolting in the extreme. I have no reason to doubt the statements that have been made to me; on the contrary, my impression is, that they are but too true. I have found the accounts given at different times always the same, and where more than one has been received, they have been consistent with each other. I have myself seen the scars of the wounds said to have been inflicted on these occasions, and I do firmly believe the assertion made by the natives 'that, in many instances, they have been most wantonly fired at by Europeans, as soon as they have been seen, without the slightest previous provocation given upon their part, at points of the river where no disturbances have occurred with the natives, and in instances where the number (sometimes not exceeding two) could not afford even the shallow excuse of a dread of numbers'.⁷⁶

The Aboriginal statements given to Eyre and the genealogical work associated with the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee Region Native Title Claim would suggest that the numbers of unrecorded deaths on the Aboriginal side of the equation were far higher, although when and how this happened is not yet known.

74 Moorhouse to Mundy, 12 July 1841, Protector's Letterbooks 1840–1857, SRSA GRG 52/7.

75 *Southern Australian*, 9 July 1841.

76 *Southern Australian*, 10 June 1842.

Table 1: Known instances of violence against Aboriginal and European parties on the western Central Murray 1839–41.

Date	Aboriginal people killed	Aboriginal people wounded	Europeans killed	Europeans wounded	Location	Party
Feb 1839				1 (Foley)	~63 miles east from where the road leaves the Murray (Eyre 1984)	John Hart and William Pullen with 400 cattle
March 1839	No known deaths	Unknown: 'several of whom had at last got a good peppering with small shot' (Coutts Crawford Diary 29 March 1839)			Langhorne's Ferry/Rufus River	James Coutts Crawford with 700 cattle and George McLeod and Huntly MacPherson with sheep
April 1839	Unknown: 'Had some diver[?] shooting' (Coutts Crawford Diary 3 April 1839)				Near Rai Rai	Coutts Crawford and McLeod & MacPherson
Oct 1839	Unknown	4 or 5	1 (Thomas Young)	2	Dead Man's Flat	Lachlan Mackinnon with 3,000 sheep and 200 cattle
Oct 1839	Unknown: 'had it not been ... for one or two well told shots, the result would have been very different'. (SA Register, 16 Nov 1839)			2	7 miles (11.2 km) from Dead Man's Flat (however, no indication of whether east or west)	George McLeod and Robert Flood with provisioning drays
Oct/Nov 1839	Unknown: 'several natives have been killed upon different occasions' (O'Halloran Diary 28 April 1841)			1 (Tooth)?	Dead Man's Flat	Nelson Tooth with 600 cattle
Nov 1839	1				9 miles west of Dead Man's Flat	Alexander Buchanan with 5,000 sheep
Dec 1839	'1 or 2 shot' (not clear if killed or wounded) but Aboriginal people also 'followed for about 15 miles by those on horseback & Firing kept up the whole time' (Moorhouse to Mundy, 12 July 1841, Protectors' Letterbooks)				Langhorne's Ferry	Unnamed (parties through here at this time included Miller, Howe and Cameron)

Date	Aboriginal people killed	Aboriginal people wounded	Europeans killed	Europeans wounded	Location	Party
Dec 1839/ Jan 1840	1 (Bluebeard by Miller)				Bluebeard's Den, 12 miles west of the Hornet's Nest camp	Charles Miller
Dec 1839				1 (Tooth)	Dead Man's Flat	Nelson Tooth with 600 cattle
June 1840	'routed with great loss' (Moorhouse to Mundy, 12 July 1841, Protector's Letterbooks)				Langhorne's Ferry	Unnamed
April 1841	'at least 1' (Grey to Russell, 29 May 1841, in PRSAA)			3	40 miles east of Lake Bonney; 3.5 miles west of the Hornet's Nest camp	Henry Inman with 5,000 sheep
May 1841	8	Several		1 (Field)	40 miles east of Lake Bonney; 2.5 miles west of the Hornet's Nest camp	Henry Field (volunteer police party)
June 1841	5 (1 killed by Miller)	10	4 (incl. Martin)	2 (Charles Miller and a stock keeper)	Langhorne's Ferry	Charles Langhorne with 700+ cattle
26 August 1841	5	10			2 miles east of the Rufus River	William Robinson with 6,000–7,000 sheep and 580 cattle
27 August 1841	21 (Moorhouse) 30–40 (Robinson)	10? 30–40 (Robinson) 40–50?	1? Britcher? (mentioned in one later newspaper article, so uncertain)	1 (Robinson)	Rufus River	William Robinson and police party
Min. total	42	34	5	12		

Source: Compiled from sources referred to in text.

The toponymy and topography of violence

In a recent study of the Great Warriors Path (the 'warpath') in the United States, Snead urged a reconsideration of the role of travel routes as meaningful places in their own right.⁷⁷ Considering a travel path as a 'landscape of movement' emphasises a process of engagement with environment, topography and space that connects the experience of travel to wider cultural understandings on the part of those who use a route and it creates particular legacies around layers of previous experiences.⁷⁸ The 'layers' of the Overland Stock Route were similarly constructed from the history of engagements between Aboriginal and European people, as well as the histories of particular overlanders who travelled the route more than once, such that successive groups were no doubt well aware of previous encounters, their nature, location and consequences.

O'Halloran's naming of many of the hot spots along the route framed the European perspective on the perceived dangers of this landscape, partly as a cautionary tale, but also to formalise a history for an area that was regarded as notably 'troublesome'.⁷⁹ For Europeans like O'Halloran the area of greatest threat began immediately east of Lake Bonney: 'Crossed Lake Bonney and got to the N. side of the lake, and upon a ridge of scrub the commencement of the country of the hostile tribe at 11 a.m.'⁸⁰ To Moorhouse the Aboriginal guides named this country *Mettilltila Yarta* – 'Thief Land' – pronouncing the inhabitants 'notorious thieves'.⁸¹ It is not clear why Moorhouse and O'Halloran regarded the area west of Lake Bonney as less dangerous, however, given that some of the earliest encounters occurred here and in the space of three months (October–December 1839) one European and at least one Aboriginal person were killed (although probably many more) and other attacks made on people, livestock and property (see Figure 2).

Foster, Hosking and Nettelbeck have noted the ways in which the events leading up to the Rufus River massacre were transformed by later histories into ideological narratives of Empire and a triumph of civilisation over savagery.⁸² Many such accounts exploited a recurring motif of Aboriginal treachery that Foster et al. argue served to deflect responsibility for the violence away 'from the Europeans who pulled the triggers [and on] to the Maraura themselves'.⁸³ O'Halloran's toponymy accomplished a similar feat in that it highlighted a tension-filled

77 Snead 2011.

78 Snead 2011: 486.

79 Although it must be noted that not all of O'Halloran's names commemorated contact-period violence.

80 O'Halloran 1904: 82. See also Moorhouse to Mundy, 4 September 1841, Protector's Letterbooks 1840–1857, SRSA GRG 52/7.

81 Moorhouse, Protector's report 30 June 1841, in *PRSSA* 1843, Enclosure 2 in No. 92: 280.

82 Foster et al. 2001.

83 Foster et al. 2001: 40.

conception of space, but also transformed that space into a series of discrete places with known histories of violence against Europeans. Even the naming of Bluebeard's Den, nominally an acknowledgement of a major Aboriginal death, was transformed into an 'act of some treachery' against Europeans, the choice of the term 'Den' implying some element of criminality or vice on Greybeard's part. The location of Dead Man's Flat has since been memorialised with a plaque by the National Trust, elevating one European death over all others as the sole marker of conflict events along the Overland Stock Route.⁸⁴

The only Aboriginal perspectives on these events are the fragments that are contained in, and constrained by, European records. As a traditional travel pathway, Aboriginal people would have been well aware of the topographical nuances of the Overland Stock Route, although the meanings they attributed to particular spaces are not a focus of this paper. Places of durable memory were no doubt constructed from the physical remains of former encounters – certainly Inman's and Field's engagements both left traces that were visible for some time. O'Halloran, for example, noted on his arrival at the Hornet's Nest that 'the whole of the sheep had long before been slaughtered, as we saw their carcasses and bones thrown about in vast heaps in various places, where the blacks had formed large encampments',⁸⁵ and Hawker noted that the flat was still strewn with bones five years later.⁸⁶ O'Halloran also described a recent Aboriginal burial mound near the Hornet's Nest camp:

We came ... to a grave recently formed and very tastefully covered round with boughs in the shape of a dome, and where many blacks are buried. Our Adelaide native said that they were the bodies of those killed by Field's party. This grave lies about 100 yards from the river.⁸⁷

At the Rufus a large burial mound similarly marked the site of previous conflict, as pointed out to Sturt and Eyre in 1844: 'The natives who accompanied us ... informed us that thirty of their relatives laid underneath; but they did not seem to entertain any feelings of revenge for the loss they had sustained.'⁸⁸

84 Part of the plaque reads, 'In retaliation, the party reportedly killed eleven Aborigines that day ...'. This figure seems to be local oral tradition and is not referred to in any contemporary accounts; see Joseph Kingsley Mack notes and clippings, SLSA PRG 1470, State Library of South Australia.

85 O'Halloran, Report of the Commissioner of Police, 27 June 1841, in *PRSA* 1843, Enclosure 1 in No. 92: 278.

86 Hawker Diary 16 July 1846 (Borrow Collection, Flinders University).

87 O'Halloran 1904: 86.

88 Sturt 1849: 93.

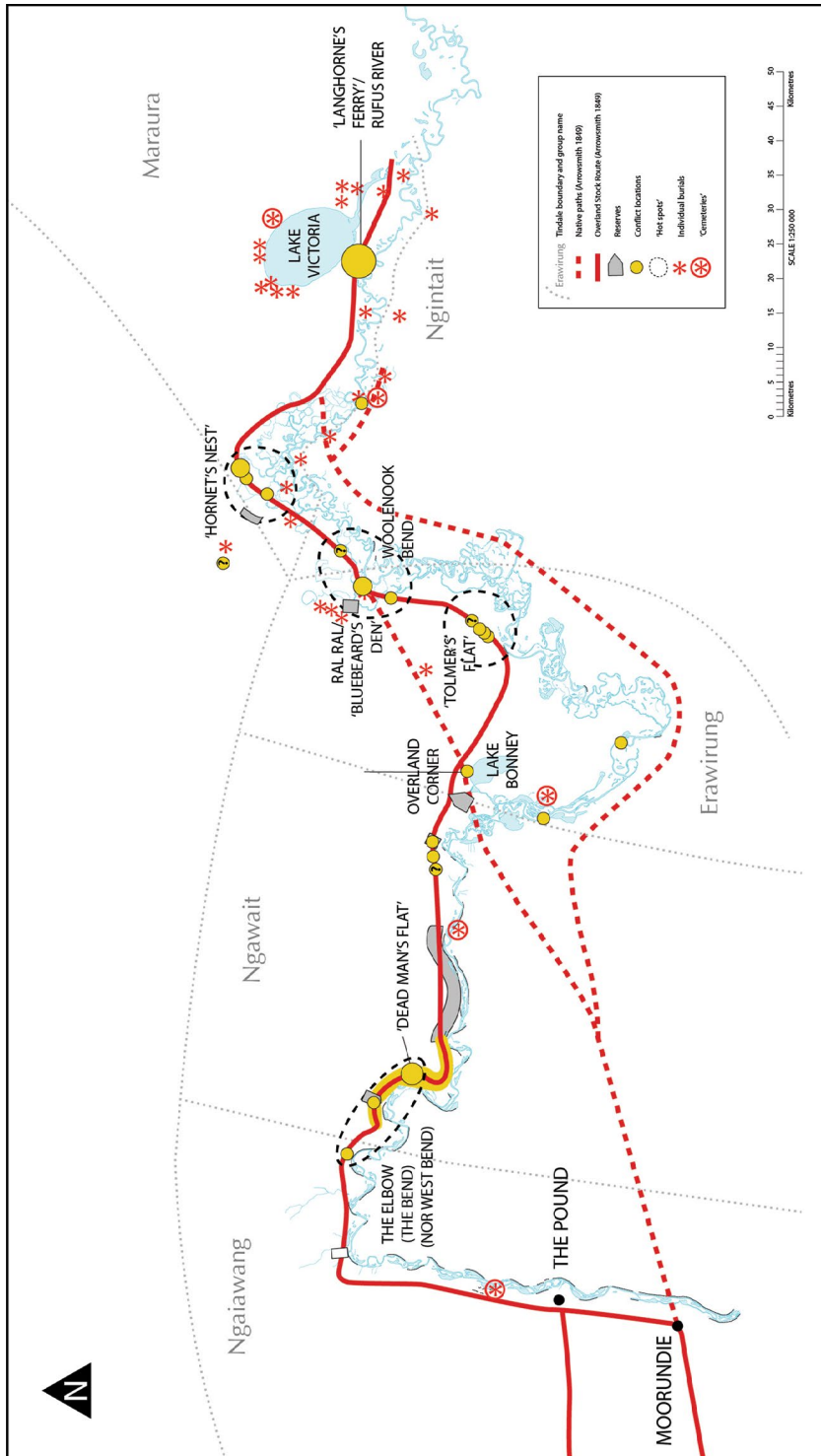


Figure 3: Conflict locations mapped against burial locations.

Nettelbeck has suggested that at least part of the violence may have derived from the Maraura protecting such cemetery sites,⁸⁹ but this is not substantiated by our plotting of the data, since smaller and larger concentrations of burials⁹⁰ are distributed throughout the region (Figure 3). Furthermore, Aboriginal people's attitudes to burial sites seem to be at least partly determined by the age of the interments. Recent research at the Gillman Mound on the Adelaide Plains, for example, has suggested that periods of burial (usually associated with avoidance) and occupation (obviously associated with ongoing engagement) at sites were often temporally separated, even though, to some extent, people remained aware of the presence of the long dead within their camping places.⁹¹ This suggests complex sets of attitudes towards burial locations that do not help to connect them directly to the patterning of conflict.

More direct patterning is discernible in the physical locations for attacks, however, that were often highly sensitive to the nuances of topography. Figure 2 shows that many attacks occurred at points that considerably slowed the progress of European parties, such as steep inclines (Dead Man's Flat), river crossings⁹² (Langhorne's Ferry), and camping places where stock and goods had to be protected overnight (Tolmer's Flat). The attacks on Field and Inman near the Hornet's Nest took place in the area dubbed 'The Islands' by Sturt – a tangled landscape of lagoons, creeks and thick scrub that gave great advantage to Aboriginal people.⁹³ Even more effectively, by 1841 attacks at these topographic 'bottle necks' were being enhanced by the use of highly practical tactics. Several members of Inman's and Hawker's, Langhorne's and Robinson's parties all described a similar pattern of engagement in the eastern extremity of the study area by which Aboriginal people formed themselves into a semicircle before attacking, allowing them to flank the European party and their stock. John Allan, for example, observed that '[t]he natives attacked ... in the form of a crescent, and on the party going within 40 yards of them, they gave their war-cry and threw a number of spears, on which several of the party fired their carabines [sic], and generally with effect'.⁹⁴ Frederick Walker, first commander of the Queensland Native Mounted Police, referred to this half-moon tactic when used in Queensland in the 1860s as 'stockyarding', linking it specifically to the most efficient use of spear throwers to concentrate a shower

89 Nettelbeck 1999: 224.

90 Whether or not any of these can be termed 'cemeteries' is a matter of conjecture, see Pardoe 1995; Littleton 1998; Hiscock 2008: 258–59.

91 Littleton et al. 2013.

92 Hemming 1984: 14.

93 Hawker Diary 13 May 1841 (SLSA PRG 209/2).

94 Deposition of John Allan in *PRSA* 1843, Enclosure 3 in No. 87.

of spears.⁹⁵ More interestingly, after talking to people along the Murray during his time as Protector, Eyre described this as a tactic that was peculiar to attacks on European parties.⁹⁶

Other Aboriginal responses to violence

Apart from their effective use of topography, the historical records suggest that a range of other strategies were also being employed by Aboriginal people to deal with the advent of Europeans into their territories. These were both conciliatory and retaliatory. Conciliatory responses included the nets, fish and women that were gifted by Aboriginal people to Europeans⁹⁷ and the use of the European objects that were received in return to signal previous successful exchanges. Several glimpses illuminate an importance being given to European objects within Aboriginal systems of meaning. One of Eyre's potential conflict encounters was spurred by a large group of people 'crowding around us and the drays and ... handling everything they could get near, so that our whole time was taken up in watching them and in trying to keep them off',⁹⁸ and Hawdon, Sturt and Buchanan all noted various attempts by Aboriginal people to remove portable items – notably cutlery, iron pots and other metal objects – from their camps,⁹⁹ indicating a general importance being attached to such items.

More specifically, the actions of Greybeard – one of the key early figures in the region – suggest the deliberate use of European items as strategic symbols of communication. In reflecting on Greybeard's murder, Sturt noted how he had 'made him a present, which he had preserved, and shewed to the first overland party that came down the river, and thenceforward ... became the guide of the parties that followed along that line'.¹⁰⁰ Although Hawdon failed to mention this moment, Greybeard was clearly using a carefully curated exotic object to signal his previous meeting with the only other European to have come through the region. In June 1838, Eyre noted that none of the hundreds of people he saw at the Rufus, including Greybeard, wore clothing of any kind,¹⁰¹ but when Sturt met with Greybeard two months later in August, he was wearing a European

95 Walker 1861: 149.

96 Eyre 1845: 224–25.

97 See various comments by Eyre, Sturt and others on the efficacy of peaceful means of negotiation, such as exchanging goods, particularly metal, for goodwill.

98 Eyre 1984: 157.

99 Buchanan 1923: 74; Hawdon 1952: 47–48; Sturt Diary 7 August 1838.

100 Sturt 1849: 86–87.

101 Eyre 1984: 157.

frock shirt.¹⁰² As a self-appointed ambassador, Greybeard was often recorded as assisting parties in various instrumental ways, including in defusing tensions that could have erupted into violence.¹⁰³ In this context, Greybeard's conscious decision to put on a frock shirt – mimicking the European deployment of such an item – may have signalled an important act of cross-cultural communication. For the Europeans the wearing of clothing connoted a range of deeply held normative values and therefore would have been read by them in particular, and to some extent reassuring, ways. Moreover, clothing would have signalled as such *from a distance*; something that may have been particularly meaningful in the context of encounters that had come perilously close to violence several times before. Within his own cultural context Greybeard's access to European goods would also have reinforced his status as a senior man, echoing the use of European coats and jackets by Aboriginal men in Sydney to fashion 'rough alliances' with individual Europeans, as well as more general symbols of the status of senior men as leaders and diplomats in forging alliances between Aboriginal groups.¹⁰⁴

Certain retaliatory tactics were closely linked to these initial conciliatory ones. When Major O'Halloran, just before reaching the Rufus, asked one of their Aboriginal guides: 'Why did these blacks attack the Europeans?', they replied simply 'because the Europeans were in their territory'.¹⁰⁵ The answer was probably not so simple, although territorial ingress by Europeans was no doubt a primary catalyst. In this context, clothing again seems to have assumed a central role. Langhorne, after his attack in June 1841, noted that the bags of flour, tea and tobacco had been emptied on the ground, but all of the bedding, clothing and cooking utensils had been taken.¹⁰⁶ The cooking utensils were presumably metal, but clothing seems a more unusual choice and hints at a continued importance being given to it in Aboriginal systems of meaning. At this time and in this place Aboriginal people had been successful at attacking two previous European parties (Inman's and Hawker's), so the removal of items from Langhorne's drays was no longer a signal of peaceful exchange but quite possibly the reverse: an indication of successful resistance. Unlike Greybeard's use of the frock shirt, in deliberately choosing clothing in this context Aboriginal men may well have been symbolically capturing items that had already acquired particular layers of meaning within an Aboriginal context but that were also highly personal to, and therefore valued by, the

102 Sturt Diary 5 August 1838. This was presumably given to him by Eyre, since he noted that he gave Greybeard a 'shirt, tomahawk and some other little presents' in February 1839, so perhaps also on his previous journey in June 1838, Eyre 1984: 187.

103 See, for example, Eyre 1984: 187; Sturt 1899: 150–51; Sturt Diary 5 August 1838.

104 Karskens 2011: 14, 30.

105 O'Halloran 1904: 78.

106 Langhorne to O'Halloran, June 22 1841, in *PRSAA* 1843, Enclosure 3 in No. 92: 282.

Europeans in theirs. The testimony of the Adelaide interpreter, Pangki Pangki, may hint at another, more mundane, rationale when he uses the terms 'clothing' and 'blankets' interchangeably: 'The three natives said they would spear the Europeans and take away their clothing ... they showed fight for food and blankets.'¹⁰⁷ Although we cannot know the precise range of meanings attributed to European clothing by Aboriginal people on the western Central Murray, it was certainly being targeted as a preferential resource.

Other, more esoteric responses are hinted at by the treatment that was meted out to the body of Martin, a member of Langhorne's party, after his death at the Rufus in 1841:

Thursday 24th June ... we were unable to make the River Rufus where Mr Langhorne's party was attacked till 1/2 pt 3 pm; when we discovered to our horror that one of the four Europeans lately murdered by the Blacks (& all of whom had been thrown into the River by their Comrades) had been again hauled out of the water by the blacks, his thigh bones taken out, & a green bough in mockery (as emblematic of peace) put into his right hand.¹⁰⁸

This was a key moment in the sequence of events along the western Central Murray, but unfortunately the primary witnesses made no comment on the meaning of these actions at the time. Without direct Aboriginal testimony the placing of the green branch in Martin's hand is an ambiguous act. Green boughs elsewhere along the Darling and Murray (but also further to the north and south-east) were often used to signify a peaceful greeting to unfamiliar people,¹⁰⁹ although their use was also context-dependant. Mitchell, for example, noted on the Darling that they were occasionally used by Aboriginal people to signal rejection and to deter him from any further interaction.¹¹⁰ The removal of Martin's thigh bones, however, suggests a sorcery motive. As a symbolic way of spearing a victim, pointing bones were typically made from long bones,¹¹¹ and were important sorcery objects involved in projective magic. While there are no known direct references to this practice on the western Central Murray, Howitt noted that pointing bones on the Darling were sometimes made from human

107 Testimony of Pangki Pangki to Bench of Magistrates, 22 September 1841, in *PRSAA* 1843, Enclosure in No. 98: 302.

108 O'Halloran Diary 24 June 1841a. His subsequent report to Grey described the entrails as also having been removed. O'Halloran to Grey, 27 June 1841, in *PRSAA* 1843, Enclosure 1 in No. 92: 279. Hawker (Diary 26 June 1841 [SLSA PRG 209/2]) claimed that Martin's heart was taken out, although he did not accompany O'Halloran to the scene. Moorhouse only recorded the abdomen and chest as having been cut open, Moorhouse to Mundy, 30 June 1841, Protector's Letterbooks 1840–1857, SRSa GRG 52/7. Later versions by Bull added the removal of 'the vital organs, with the kidney fat', as well as the arm bones, Bull 1884: 226. For further discussion of Bull's additions, see Nettelbeck 1999.

109 Buchanan 1923: 67; Eyre 1984: 155–56; Hawdon 1952: 30–31; Lewis 2005.

110 Mitchell 1839: 245–46.

111 Although usually from animals rather than humans, see Walshe 2008.

long bones¹¹² and, according to Moorhouse, many of those involved in the Rufus River conflict came from the Darling 'and the country to the north of Lake Bonney'.¹¹³ The removal of Martin's thigh bones may have been for just such a purpose, although whether directed against specific individuals or Europeans in general cannot be known. Reynolds has alluded to the significant symbolic role played by sorcery in Aboriginal resistance, arguing that it provided a powerful psychological mechanism by which Aboriginal people could attempt to influence otherwise inexorable and devastating events.¹¹⁴

Layered on top of this were the existing laws and customs relating to traditional land ownership. Early accounts¹¹⁵ make it clear that there were strict rules regarding entry to the various Aboriginal territories along the river, even where groups were welcoming of one another. In part, this system sometimes aided Europeans in their traversing of Aboriginal country, since representatives of each group would be delegated to accompany the parties and hand them on to their neighbours.¹¹⁶ In other ways, however, once relationships with European parties had broken down, such pre-existing relationships also formed the basis of cooperative resistance. The ethnohistorical record makes specific mention of such collaborative resistance in the Rufus River clash, for which Aboriginal people came from as far south and west as the Pound (see Figure 2), and as far north and east as the Darling.¹¹⁷ This makes it clear that it was more than just the Maraura who were caught up in these events.

Conclusions

In positing regionally specific paradigms for the responsibility of frontier violence, Rogers and Bain note that, in southern Australia, conflict was mainly perpetrated by convicts and settlers, whose behaviour was shaped by a deep racism and fears of victimhood centring around the isolated nature of shepherding and stock work.¹¹⁸ In northern Australia, however, where pastoral expansion took place outside of a convict labour system, the police, and specifically the Native Police, were the party responsible for most of the violence towards Aboriginal people. In analysing frontier violence holistically in this way, Rogers and Bain have noted the gap in this framework that is represented by South

112 Howitt 1904: 360; see also Elkin 1984: 45.

113 *Southern Australian*, 24 September 1841.

114 Reynolds 2006: 92–93.

115 E.g. Eyre's description of the 'meeting' at Moorundie of a group of 'neighbouring tribes' and the 'Lake Bonney' people and their 'friends', Eyre 1845: 219.

116 See, for example, Sturt 1833: 222; Moorhouse to Mundy, 30 June 1841, Protector's Letterbooks 1840–1857, SRSA GRG 52/7. See also Hemming 1984: 4 for a similar perspective.

117 Moorhouse to Mundy, 4 September 1841, Protector's Letterbooks 1840–1857, SRSA GRG 52/7.

118 Rogers and Bain 2016: 86.

Australia: of all Australian frontiers, they argue that the early South Australian frontier is the least well known and speculate that it sits somewhere between the northern and southern paradigms because of its explicit exclusion of convicts and its ostensible humanitarian platform for dealing with Aboriginal people.¹¹⁹

What is clear from historical sources is that many of the stockmen in overlanding parties were former, and sometimes current, convicts,¹²⁰ as well as pastoralists with interests in Victoria and New South Wales, which suggests that their behaviour and its consequences will have more in common with patterns associated with the southern paradigm than the exceptionalist claims made by South Australian governments or later proponents of Empire would suggest.¹²¹ Understanding the wider patterns of engagement across the western Central Murray between 1830 and 1841 makes it clear that frontier violence in this space was both sustained and highly complex. Fear, or at least anxiety, conditioned many European responses to travelling through this landscape, and even the earliest parties went armed and alert for trouble because of their prior experience. It was the initiation of the Overland Stock Route in 1838, bringing enormous quantities of men, arms, goods and stock within what was a highly territorialised Aboriginal landscape, that crystallised the tone of later encounters. Certainly many overlanders were undeterred and traversed the route more than once, including those who had been injured or attacked on previous occasions. This, combined with the proprietary attitude of Europeans towards their stock and possessions as precious sources of personal profit, was a deadly mix.

As layers of encounter built up along the route, attitudes towards Aboriginal people hardened and violence become ever more acutely anticipated. In many instances it was also self-fulfilling. O'Halloran's notes to himself on the second police expedition highlight the extent to which anxiety conditioned the response of his party to the danger around them:

When very close to the blacks avoid if possible a night atta[ck] from them, by moving after [dark?] into the scrub in single fil[e] & by a winding route – Laying down armed & saddled, with a double vidette upon the track at 150 or 200 yards from the main body – no fires, or if any black fires well concealed. With such rules well Enforced by the Officers & steadily & Coolly obeyed by the men – with Horses & firearms in order & 40 rounds of ammunition pr man, our party ought to route [sic] a thousand of the most determined & active blacks.¹²²

119 Rogers and Bain 2016: 86.

120 See, for example, Eyre 1838: 187; Hirst 2012: 125; Sturt 1833: 132.

121 See, for example, critical discussions of South Australian judicial policies in Foster 2013, Foster and Nettelbeck 2012 and Nettelbeck and Foster 2010b, as well as their analyses of the elisions of memory as squatters became settlers and settlers became citizens in Nettelbeck 1999 and Nettelbeck and Foster 2010a.

122 O'Halloran Diary 1841b, undated entry, emphasis in original.

O'Halloran was well aware of the location of previous encounters; his precautions, while militarily precise, were echoed by others in various ways through similar expectations of violence along the route and the reactions that this evoked. For their part, Aboriginal people deployed a range of responses to deal with the new situation. These included reciprocity, the use of European goods, particularly clothing, as symbolic means of communication, sorcery, the particular tactic of 'stockyarding' – which may have been developed in direct response to European conflict – and effective collaboration with other, similarly affected, groups. From this it is clear that many western Central Murray groups were involved in, suffered from, and reacted to, contact-period violence.

Translating the information contained in primary and secondary accounts into a spatial representation of such behaviour has provided a means to analyse documentary sources in a way that is other than purely textual. In doing so, we have been able to add greater and new details to the existing literature on frontier conflict along the western Central Murray and show how certain spaces altered, affected or promoted certain actions. In seeking to approach the growing atmosphere of anxiety along the Overland Stock Route as a cartographic problem, this paper has explored some of the ways in which spatially visualising 'fuzzy' qualitative data can open up a space for additional reflection.¹²³ One limitation of our emphasis on publicly available documents has necessarily led us to reconstruct the Overland Stock Route as a place of conflict largely from the European perspective. Later stages of this project, in collaboration with RMMAC, will explore the material correlates of wider Aboriginal responses to European presence along the western Central Murray throughout the nineteenth century. One clear outcome of this project has been that the early contact period violence – regardless of how endemic and widespread it was – does not seem to have been the immediate cause of the drastic reduction in people who survived to have descendants. This raises questions about the nature and tone of encounters in this region once the violence of the Overland Stock Route transitioned to relationships associated with pastoral properties and permanent settlement. A number of oral histories and other accounts exist that make reference to individuals as survivors of massacres in this region¹²⁴ and it is the later contact history and the narratives of RMMAC members that will be explored in the future. The ways in which Aboriginal people 'made culturally determined and perhaps individual choices' in response to contact and conflict is the story of the accommodations generated across the frontier.¹²⁵ As a process, the frontier

123 Cooper and Gregory 2011: 98.

124 Martin 1997.

125 Broome 1994: 76.

was constituted by the various boundaries that were recognised, negotiated or ignored on both sides – leaving little room for mutual understanding – and the dispossession that lay at the heart of the imperial project.

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Staged savagery: Archibald Meston and his Indigenous exhibits¹

Judith McKay and Paul Memmott

Archibald Meston is remembered as the major architect of Queensland's 1897 legislation that was to regulate its Indigenous people for almost a century, and also as its Southern Protector of Aborigines from 1898 to 1904. Meston's contribution as a policymaker and Protector has received much scholarly attention,² however, his activities as a showman – that is, in exhibiting live Indigenous people and himself joining in the performances – are not so well known and have been documented only sporadically.³ Even his best known offering, the Wild Australia Show, which was the subject of an exhibition held by the University of Queensland's Anthropology Museum in 2015,⁴ has not been fully explored. This article takes a closer look at Meston's exhibiting activities, which can now be traced more easily with the help of online searching of newspapers. It shows that these activities were central to his policies for solving Queensland's 'Aboriginals problem' and to his work as a Protector, and eventually gained him a national reputation (or notoriety) as a showman. Further, Meston's forays into the sphere of popular entertainment highlight a paradox in the treatment of Indigenous people in Queensland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whereby these people were publicly

1 The content of this article is partly based on a chapter of Judith McKay's PhD thesis research (see McKay 1996), with additional material on the Wild Australia Show and Meston's ideology from Paul Memmott's parallel research which began in 1980 with work on the Wakaya Land Claim in the Northern Territory and recently culminated in the University of Queensland's exhibition in 2015. (Memmott and others have also received a grant for ongoing research on the Wild Australia Show – ARC LP 160100415.) The authors wish to thank Raymond Evans who kindly read the manuscript and gave useful advice.

2 For example, Thorpe 1984; Evans 1991; Evans, Saunders and Cronin 1993; Ganter and Kidd 1993.

3 Blake 1987: 56–58; McKay 1998: 238–45; Waterson 2000; Walker 2002.

4 Aird et al. 2015.

paraded as ‘noble savages’ while behind the scenes they were being dispossessed, institutionalised, or at worst, exterminated. Meston’s activities also highlight the narrow line of demarcation that existed at the time between ethnology and entertainment, enabling him to claim scientific credibility for his observations of Aboriginal life that were mostly more sensationalist than accurate.

Enter Meston

Meston was one of Queensland’s most colourful personalities of his day, described variously as a journalist, historian, politician, protector, ethnologist, orator, crocodile hunter, athlete and explorer. Born in Scotland in 1851, he emigrated with his parents as a child and spent his early life in the Clarence River district of New South Wales where he learnt the rudiments of farming. Leaving the district in 1869, he worked in a solicitor’s office in Sydney and then settled in Queensland five years later, by which time he was already indulging his passions for exploration, shooting and recording Aboriginal language. In Queensland, he worked as a journalist and newspaper editor before being elected in 1878 to the colonial parliament as member for Rosewood; he held the seat until 1882. Thereafter he resumed journalism and moved to Cairns, in the north, where he managed a sugar plantation until bankruptcy forced his return south. In 1889 he led a government-sponsored scientific expedition to the Bellenden-Ker Range, south of Cairns, followed by other expeditions in 1891 and 1904; his explorations earned him membership of the Royal Society of Queensland in 1892. Later, in 1895, he produced his *Geographic History of Queensland*. In 1909, near the end of his life, he became director of the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau in Sydney.⁵ Not only a jack-of-all-trades, Meston was a complex character. He was vain, arrogant and to some, mean and heartless. Proud of his physique, he supplemented his outdoor activities with weight-lifting and boxing, and always carried a walking stick weighted with lead. According to his obituary published in the *World’s News* of 22 March 1924, he was ‘probably the strongest man of his age in Australia’. His appearance, with waxed moustache, carefully coiffed hair and theatrical bearing, was as picturesque as the prose that flowed from his pen. As a contemporary observed, ‘he has the heart of a frog hidden under the plumage of a peacock’.⁶ Indeed, he was a born showman.

5 Stephens 1974.

6 Newspaper cutting, ‘The sultan of Fraser’s Island. A cruel monster’, June 1902, in Southern Protector of Aboriginals Office, batch files, Queensland State Archives (QSA) item ID717006, 1902/8655.



Figure 1: Archibald Meston.

Source: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, image number 17065.

Growing up in the newly agricultural region of the lower Clarence River Valley, Meston came into contact with Aboriginal people, catalysing his interest in ethnography by his late teens. It was not until his late twenties, when he became editor of the Ipswich *Observer* and then a parliamentarian, that he began developing his views on Aborigines.⁷ Initially he saw them as treacherous savages who could be ruled only with a gun and spoke openly of killing people with his own gun.⁸ However, he was to modify these views later in the 1880s when he was living near Cairns, a frontier region that was still under the patrol of the Native Police. Haunted by the spectre of the violence that was decimating Aborigines and observing the demoralised condition of many of the survivors, he appealed to his fellow colonists to extend sympathy to 'a dying race'. Increasingly he saw a future for himself as an 'expert' in Aboriginal ethnology, basing his claim on his supposed mastery of several dialects, his youthful participation in an initiation ceremony on the Clarence, and on his membership of learned societies which gave him some scientific credibility.⁹ By 1891, when he began his exhibiting activities, he had joined the Brisbane Aborigines Protection Society, in which capacity he visited local missions and settlements. While rejecting the prevailing Social Darwinist ideology that Aborigines were doomed due to the law of natural selection, he formed a complementary view that they were dying due to exposure to alcohol, opium and other urban vices. This was a convenient catchcry for a showman offering glimpses of rare and fast disappearing specimens. But his admiration extended only to those who were fine physical specimens and as yet uncontaminated by the vices of civilisation. He had little time for the 'tobacco-loving blacks' to be seen on the fringes of Australian cities and townships,¹⁰ posing the threat of 'race mixing'. His live exhibits were all carefully selected for their physical prowess and the visual interest of the 'other'.

Prelude

Meston made his debut as showman on 29 and 30 September 1891 by presenting two lectures on Aboriginal ethnology at Brisbane's Theatre Royal; these were under the patronage of the Aborigines Protection Society with proceeds to go to the Bribie Island Mission and the Brisbane Hospital.¹¹ These so-called 'illustrated lectures' established a pattern that he was to follow in future years. Typically, he would stand before a backdrop of bush scenery, sharing the stage

7 Thorpe 1978: 40–43.

8 Ørsted-Jensen 2011: 141; Evans 2010: 20.

9 Thorpe 1978: 22–25. By 1894, Meston was also a member of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science and on the committee of the Myora Aboriginal Mission, Dunwich.

10 *Queenslander*, 10 December 1892: 1149.

11 *Telegraph*, Brisbane, 30 September 1891: 4; *Brisbane Courier*, 1 October 1891: 6.

with recreated gunyahs and stuffed native animals, and illustrate what he had to say with lantern slides, artefacts and live people – in this case from the Moreton Bay region. The Aborigines would be elaborately ‘made up’ with paint, feathers, etc. and bearing weapons to emphasise their savagery, though beneath their finery they would be wearing loincloths or short pants for the sake of modesty. At some point in the proceedings Meston would slip into black tights so he could demonstrate his skill in using native weapons, engaging in mock combats with his performers. As well, the Aboriginal troupe performed corroborees, war dances, nulla-nulla and spear fights; and, ironically, enacted their own demise by staging attacks on white settlers and consequent ‘dispersals’ by Native Police. Meston used these horrific tableaux to expose the ‘wholesale slaughter’ of Queensland’s (and indeed Australia’s) Aboriginal people at the hands of Native Police, an evil that led him to later call for their disbandment.¹² His message fell on many deaf ears as violent reprisals were accepted practice on Australia’s frontiers.

Meston’s first lectures were a novelty for an audience of city-dwellers who, by the 1890s, had little contact with tribalised people and may have never before witnessed corroborees and the like. Such representations of savagery appealed to an urban appetite for the exotic and reinforced the notion that Aboriginal people were at the other end of civilisation’s scale from white settlers. The lectures were enthusiastically received, so much so that many would-be patrons had to be turned away, and no doubt were a financial success. They provided stimulus for a much more ambitious project, this time commercial rather than charitable.

The ‘Wild Australia Show’

This project, billed as the ‘Wild Australia Show’ and ‘Meston’s Wild Australia’, was to take a troupe of Queensland Aborigines on a tour of Australia, parts of Europe and eventually, in 1893, to America to perform at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition which was to include extensive displays of native peoples.¹³ In this venture Meston took on a junior partner, Brabazon Harry Purcell, a Brisbane financial and stock and station agent who had been his stage manager for the recent lectures; he was to continue in this role and share a third of the profits. Following an agreement made on 16 November 1891, the partners borrowed money ‘all over the place’, including from Patrick Perkins, a local

12 An official report of 1896 (published 1897) by William Parry-Okeden, Queensland Police Commissioner, also recognised the excessive brutality of the Native Police; this led to their dismantlement as a paramilitary force in Queensland.

13 The whole Wild Australia saga is recorded in QSA, item ID847483, file 1893/12837; and in Supreme Court reports published in the *Brisbane Courier* of 22–24 November 1893.

parliamentarian and brewer, and from Meston's brother-in-law, Alfred Shaw of Sydney.¹⁴ Having secured their funds, the partners travelled around Queensland to recruit 'wild' people and artefacts for their troupe, seeking out examples with distinctive features that would made them particularly curious as show specimens. The press reported that Meston was to concentrate on the Russell River area south of Cairns and the coast north to Cooktown, while Purcell was to go further afield: first to the far west along the Queensland–South Australia border, and later to the north-west in the Normanton region, and thence north to Prince of Wales Island off the tip of Cape York Peninsula.¹⁵ In July 1892, Purcell's activities in the western border area brought allegations of brutality and forcible abduction from the police magistrate at Boulia,¹⁶ a charge that Purcell later refuted. Meston's activities also caused concern, as J.T. Embley, a surveyor from the north, reported:

When men like Meston come amongst the blacks they do a great deal of harm by taking their weapons and giving little or nothing in exchange ... I have lately seen a number of natives with whom Meston had come in contact. Their general opinion was 'He no good'.¹⁷

While recruiting, Meston was annoyed to find that R.A. Cunningham, a Canadian showman and agent for the American Barnum and Bailey Circus, was in the north assembling another troupe for the Chicago exposition.¹⁸ Meston later stated that he was not impressed by the 'ordinary tame town blacks' his competitor had recruited, adding that he himself would not have bothered with such poor specimens.¹⁹

14 Letter from Purcell to Colonial Secretary, 21 July 1893, QSA, item ID847483, 1893/12837, in-letter 93/8474. Some of the financiers later withdrew from the venture.

15 Newspaper cuttings, Meston papers, John Oxley Library, Brisbane OM64-17: box 2, items 4 and 5; *North Queensland Herald*, 8 June 1892: 8; *Northern Mining Register*, Charters Towers, 8 June 1892: 35.

16 Letter from Meston to Under Colonial Secretary, 18 July 1893, QSA, item ID847483, 1893/12837, in-letter 93/8366.

17 Embley to Commissioner of Police, 3 August 1897, QSA, item ID6826.

18 Poignant 2004: 208–13.

19 Newspaper cutting, Meston papers, John Oxley Library: box 2, item 5.

NOVEMBER 1, 1892.] THE QUEENSL

Wild Australia! Wild Queensland!

LECTURES ON
"Wild Australia" and "Wild Queensland"

BY

A. MESTON,

ILLUSTRATED BY

THIRTY ABORIGINES!

Selected chiefly from the Wild Tribes of North Queensland,
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ON THE WAY TO CHICAGO AND A TOUR OF THE WORLD!

The Lecturer, Mr. A. MESTON,

The well-known Queensland Writer and Explorer, is the greatest
Living Authority on the Habits, Customs, Dialects and General
Ethnology of the Australian aboriginals.

Besides the finest existing Australian Ethnological Collec-
tion, Mr. Meston will take specimens of all Queensland's
Native Products, and Limelight Pictures of the most
beautiful of Queensland's Magnificent Scenery.

Figure 2: Advertisement for the Wild Australia Show.
Source: *Queensland Punch*, 1 November 1892.

Eventually Meston and Purcell rounded up 27 people for their troupe (21 men, five women and a child). Among the first to be enlisted were Wakaya people from the central-east of the Northern Territory, taken from around Glenormiston Station on the Georgina River while visiting over the Queensland border. They were particularly prized by Meston and Purcell as members of a tribe noted for practising the sub-incision of males known at the time as 'Sturt's terrible rite',²⁰ a practice that fascinated city audiences. Other people were taken from a range of language groups in the McKinlay, Cloncurry, Croydon and Gilbert districts of the north-west, including one Kalkadoon man, a group from the Selwyn-Argylla Ranges who were characterised by Meston and Purcell as fierce cannibals. As well, five people were taken from Prince of Wales Island in the far north, including a so-called king and queen and their child; these were said by Meston to be a link between Australian Aborigines and Papuans of New Guinea.²¹ They were in fact Kaurareg people who identified as an Aboriginal group. Only one of the troupe was taken from southern Queensland; this was Yamurra, said by the press to be 'Meston's favourite', one of the Kabi Kabi people from the Mary River.²² Besides rounding up people, Meston and Purcell allegedly collected about 3,000 artefacts, many from the far west and including examples that were said to be previously unknown to whites. It was intended to sell these as they travelled overseas to cover costs.

By late September 1892 the full troupe was brought to Brisbane and subjected to strict medical examination to ensure that all members were healthy.²³ A rehearsal campsite was established on the north side of the Brisbane River on the site of where the University of Queensland now stands at St Lucia. On 12 November, the troupe travelled upstream to Chelmer to perform for members of the Queensland Press Club who were on a picnic outing aboard the paddle steamer *Natone* in honour of the visiting English newspaper correspondent Flora Shaw.²⁴ This was effectively a dress rehearsal at which the entire troupe was photographed by a government photographer believed to be Will Stark.²⁵ The show opened on 5 December 1892 at Brisbane's Her Majesty's Opera House and no effort was spared to create a spectacular entertainment. As the curtain rose 'a typical wild Australian scene' unfolded, with gunyahs and a stuffed kangaroo and emu set against a panoramic backdrop of Mount Bellenden-Ker – a reminder of Meston's northern exploits – painted by the noted scenic artist Carl Frederick Vennemark. Again, Meston delivered his ethnological lectures

20 *Queenslander*, 13 August 1892: 295; *Warwick Argus*, 8 July 1893: 2.

21 *Brisbane Courier*, 11 January 1893: 6.

22 Aird et al. 2015: 5. Troupe members have been identified by photographs recently found in various collections in Australia and the United Kingdom; these were taken on the troupe's Australian tour by the well-known photographers Charles Kerry and Henry King in Sydney and John W. Lindt in Melbourne.

23 *Brisbane Courier*, 11 January 1893: 6.

24 *Queenslander*, 19 November 1892: 967. At the time Miss Shaw was Colonial Editor for the London *Times*.

25 Michael Aird, pers. comm. 20 December 2015. Also see Aird et al. 2015: 8–11.

with the aid of his live exhibits who performed 'every phase of savage life as seen by the early settlers of Australia'.²⁶ This time, with such a diverse troupe, the performances were more varied, ranging from Kaurareg dances from Prince of Wales Island to Wakaya corroborees from the upper Georgina basin, though at times the whole troupe performed together, joining in pan-tribal synthesised performances of singing and dancing. After a week the show moved to the Breakfast Creek Sportsgrounds and later to the Exhibition Grounds, where the corroborees and boomerang and spear throwing could be seen to better effect and more tableaux and 'pyrotechnic effects' (possibly using electric light) were added.²⁷ The night-time performances featured 'campfire displays' and the 'aerial flight of fire-tipped spears and boomerangs'. By popular demand, the show continued in Brisbane until 21 December. Henceforth Meston's presentations were generally both indoors and outdoors, the former comprising lectures and stage performances and the latter involving more athletic display, including by Meston as he pitted his strength against that of his Aboriginal performers.

Though bizarre by today's standards, the show would have been readily acceptable among the 'ethnological' entertainments at its intended destination, the Chicago exposition. At its premiere, the show was likened to the Wild West shows that had toured Australia in the wake of 'Buffalo Bill' Cody's famous re-enactments of the American frontier.²⁸ In 1890–91 a former partner of Cody's, 'Dr' Frank Carver, had toured Australia's southern colonies with his Wild America troupe of buck-jump riders, lassoers and American Indian dancers.²⁹ Meston and Purcell could have seen similar shows in Brisbane: in early 1891, within a year of Meston presenting his first lectures, Harmston's American Circus and Wirth's Wild West Show came to town.³⁰ The lasso throwing and riding stunts that were central to these shows could have inspired the feats performed by Meston's troupe, and they also featured tableaux of frontier violence, though the losers were Indians who attacked stage coaches instead of swagmen's camps. More familiar throughout Queensland, however, were American-based black minstrel shows, which were then at the height of their popularity in Australia and set a derogatory stereotype for black performers.³¹ The well-known Charles B. Hicks's American Colored Minstrels visited Brisbane in 1890–91. Minstrel shows undoubtedly gave Meston's show its burlesque and comic features and could have influenced his own role as an interlocutor figure.

26 *Queensland Punch*, 1 November 1892: 163; *Brisbane Courier*, 6 December 1892: 5.

27 *Brisbane Courier*, 21 December 1892: 2.

28 *Queensland Punch*, 1 January 1893: 16.

29 *Brisbane* 1991: 118.

30 *Brisbane Courier*, 7 and 19 February 1891: 5; *Boomerang*, 14 February, 28 February 1891 and 7 March 1891:10.

31 Waterhouse 1990 outlines the impact of minstrelsy in Australia.



Figure 3: Wild Australia Show tableau of a native trooper ‘dispersing’ Aboriginal attackers; this was photographed in December 1892 on Sydney’s Tamarama Beach near Bondi by Charles Kerry.

Source: Courtesy of Tyrrell Collection, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney.

On 23 December 1892 the Wild Australia troupe left Brisbane by sea for Sydney without any bond or agreement being settled with the Queensland Government, though Meston claimed he had official support. Just before it departed from Brisbane he boasted to his partner: ‘The Government won’t interfere with me as I know too much about the way they have treated the blacks of this country.’³² The first Sydney season was from 26 December at the Bondi Aquarium and later some night-time performances were given at the Sydney School of Arts. Sydney audiences were not so enthusiastic. The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* panned the show as ‘merely an indiscriminate assortment of blackfellows ... having no proper supervision, and run purely as a speculation’, though it conceded that the tableau of the massacred swagman was ‘worthy of the best efforts of the melodramatic school’.³³ On 24 January 1893 the troupe departed for Melbourne and two days later began performing in the city’s famous Exhibition Building. Within a week the performances stopped because the Australian Natives’ Association, the sponsor of the troupe’s Melbourne visit, broke the contract

32 QSA, item ID847483, 1893/12837, in-letter 93/8474.

33 *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 6 January 1893, in box 2, item 5, Meston papers, John Oxley Library; and 9 January 1893: 4.

on the grounds of having been misled by Meston as to the scale of the show. Realising that the venture would no longer return the profits he expected, and in conflict with Purcell, Meston fled back to Queensland, washing his hands of the venture and leaving Purcell with the outstanding debts and the care and sustenance of the troupe. On 3 February, at short notice, Purcell had to stand in for Meston to provide a guest lecture on Queensland ethnology to the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia's Victorian branch.³⁴ Later that month the Victorian police reported that the troupe was left destitute in Fitzroy.³⁵

Yet to be defeated, Purcell managed to find enough money to keep the show going. He arranged for more performances to be given at Melbourne's Rotunda Hall in Bourke Street, beginning on 8 March 1893 and continuing into April. To raise public interest in the undertaking, he offered new drawcards, including 'tableaux illustrating the more startling incidents of cannibal life' and lectures to male-only audiences on Sturt's terrible rite, describing the brutal initiation rites he had observed on his Queensland travels.³⁶ Purcell and the troupe then returned to Sydney on 22 May to perform at Her Majesty's Theatre. In Sydney, Purcell continued his lectures, speaking on this occasion to the Royal Geographical Society's New South Wales branch,³⁷ and on 21 June he directed the troupe's performance in the Domain before the New South Wales Governor.³⁸ By July the troupe had run out of engagements and Purcell was no longer able to sustain his charges; it was only then that he abandoned all hopes of reaching Chicago and cabled the Queensland Government for help.³⁹ The Queensland Colonial Secretary, Horace Tozer, agreed to repatriate the troupe at government expense, hoping that its fate would be 'an object lesson' for future attempts to abduct Aborigines from Queensland.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Meston and Purcell squabbled over the project's failure, with Meston accusing his partner of misappropriating funds and stealing the remaining artefacts and scenery, and Purcell accusing Meston of callous contempt. On 14 July 1893, when Purcell and the troupe arrived back in Brisbane, he was arrested on a charge of larceny brought by Meston, but later the charge was dismissed and he countersued Meston for libel and malicious prosecution. Purcell was successful on both counts and his opponent had to pay damages. The court case showed the laxity of the financial arrangements between the two partners and that Meston himself had sold some

34 Purcell's Melbourne lecture of 3 February 1893 was published in the *Transactions of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, Victorian Branch* 11, (1894): 17–21.

35 *Queenslander*, 7 September 1895: 451.

36 *Age*, Melbourne, 6 March 1893: 5 and 11 March 1893: 8.

37 Purcell's Sydney lecture of June 1893 was published as 'Rites and customs of Australian Aborigines', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, Transactions* 25, (1893): 286–89.

38 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1893: 4.

39 Letter from Purcell to Under Colonial Secretary, 1 July 1893, QSA, item ID847483, 1893/12837, in-letters 93/7608 and 93/7698.

40 Marginal comment by Tozer, QSA, item ID847483, 1893/12837, in-letter 93/9117.

of the artefacts. Meston lamented that the whole project had cost him '£1200 and two years of valuable time'.⁴¹ The troupe members also had regrets having been left without the wages they had been promised.⁴²

Entr'acte

Despite the Wild Australia fiasco and the tabling of relevant correspondence in the Queensland Parliament, Meston emerged unscathed and his status as an Aboriginal 'expert' enhanced. However, he was anxious to put the fiasco behind him; when reminded of it a few years later, he retorted that 'public interest has long since vanished'.⁴³ His former partner, Purcell, was not so fortunate and died in Toowoomba of nervous disorder in 1904, aged only 47 years.⁴⁴ From the time he started exhibiting, Meston called on the Queensland Government to address the plight of the colony's Aboriginal people. He had lost patience by September 1893 when he wrote to Colonial Secretary Tozer: 'This question of the aboriginals is not to be indefinitely postponed. If you decide to do nothing, it will come before the colony in a shape that will not be pleasant for Queenslanders to contemplate.'⁴⁵ In 1895 Meston presented Tozer with a lengthy account of his proposals 'to improve and preserve' these vulnerable people, in particular to establish a series of reserves to which they would be removed to protect them from civilisation's vices. Meston's lobbying led to his appointment in March 1896 as a Special Commissioner to report on the condition of Aboriginal people throughout the colony. While undertaking this work he kept exhibiting, for his ambitions as a showman were not quashed by the Wild Australia fiasco. He gave a series of 'illustrated lectures' on 'The tragedies and comedies of early days in Queensland' at various country centres – Ipswich in August 1894,⁴⁶ Maryborough in April–May 1895, Bundaberg in May 1895,⁴⁷ the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales in October 1895,⁴⁸ and Cairns in August 1896⁴⁹ – using local Aborigines as his live exhibits. Being such a novelty the lectures were well received, though a Maryborough newspaper was not impressed, complaining that Meston presented 'not a connected story, but a miscellaneous collection of narratives of notorious murders, shipwrecks, encounters with blacks ... and other entertaining flotsam and jetsam'.⁵⁰

41 *Queenslander*, 14 September 1895: 503.

42 *Brisbane Courier*, 17 July 1893: 6.

43 Letters to the editor, *Queenslander*, 29 June 1895: 1226, 6 July 1895: 21, 7 September 1895: 451 and 14 September 1895: 503.

44 *Darling Downs Gazette*, 28 March 1904: 2.

45 Letter from Meston to Colonial Secretary, 11 September 1893, QSA, item ID847532, 1895/15056.

46 *Queensland Times*, Ipswich, 4 August 1894: 3.

47 *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, Grafton, 25 May 1895: 3.

48 *Richmond River Herald*, 11 October 1895: 7 and 18 October 1895: 4.

49 Jones 1976: 333.

50 *Maryborough Chronicle*, 1 May 1895: 2.



Figure 4: Meston and his warriors welcoming Lord Lamington to Brisbane.

Source: *The Queenslander*, 11 April 1896.

Meston's finest hour as a showman came in April 1896 when he organised a troupe of 24 Aboriginal warriors to welcome the new Governor, Lord Lamington, to Brisbane. Following the Wild Australia example, he gathered the men from all over Queensland, including from the Russell River, Diamantina and Maranoa districts. On the Governor's arrival they staged a traditional welcome and then formed a 'guard of honour' to accompany the vice-regal procession as it passed through Brisbane's streets. Meston, resplendent as a Scottish chieftain (he was proud of his Scottish heritage), led the band on horseback. As the *Queenslander* newspaper noted, the procession was 'a triumphal progress' worthy of ancient Rome, with Meston like a victorious general with his band of captives marching behind.⁵¹ In August 1897 he organised Aboriginal entertainments for the Queensland International Exhibition. This time he gathered another 30 warriors from various districts, though most came from the Fraser Island Aboriginal Reserve which Colonial Secretary Tozer had established earlier that year on Meston's advice as a precedent for the reserves system. The warriors performed near the exhibition's close, providing a 'most profitable' attraction. Each day they gave demonstrations of boomerang and spear throwing, running and mock combats, and staged corroborees and tableaux, with Meston himself taking an active role. Some of the evening performances had to be moved from the ring into the exhibition buildings due to the cold weather, as the warriors were wearing only paint and feathers. The sight of such 'fine specimens' convinced many visitors of the efficacy of the reserves system. The *Brisbane Courier* reported:

Only five months ago these men were ... in an utterly demoralised and hopeless condition, under the influence of drink and opium. What they are today the public may see by visiting the Exhibition. Sir Horace [Tozer] deserves hearty congratulations on the success of his humanitarian method.⁵²

Visitors were denied access to less impressive specimens; just as the exhibition opened, Meston ensured that all Aboriginal people 'rambling around Brisbane ... in a more or less demoralised condition' would be despatched to reserves.⁵³

Protector and showman

Meston's reports of 1895 and 1896 became the basis of Queensland's *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act of 1897*, which was passed in January 1898 and gave official sanction to the reserves system and also to Meston's appointment as the colony's first Southern Protector of Aborigines.

51 *Brisbane Courier*, 26 March 1896: 4; *Queenslander*, 18 April 1896: 724.

52 *Brisbane Courier*, 31 July 1897: 4 and 3 August 1897: 7.

53 Letter from Meston to Under Home Secretary, 11 May 1897, QSA, item ID17981, 1897/6112.

His experience in conscripting and drilling Indigenous people as show exhibits can be seen as a rehearsal for his future scenario for these people, overseeing 'abductions' of hundreds of people from their tribal lands across Queensland and removing them to distant reserves under strict regimes of behaviour. In November 1892, just before the Wild Australia Show opened, the *Brisbane Courier* remarked:

It was not to be supposed that savages gathered as these have been from districts separated by many hundreds of miles, speaking dialects and practising customs which rendered them as strange to each other as they are to the white man, could be brought at once to act in concert. They are now well acquainted with each other and what is required of them.⁵⁴

The success of the drilling process, which had taken over two months, must have given Meston, renowned for his own physical strength, substance for his theory that physical power appealed to Aborigines 'as to other savage races'.⁵⁵ Moreover, he used his exhibits to demonstrate the superiority of tribalised people over semi-civilised fringe-dwellers, which was central to his policies. His Wild Australia Show and other entertainments embodied the same notions of control and racial purity, and disregard for attachment to country that underscored his policies. Whereas earlier historiography accepted that the reserves system was motivated by 'humanitarian' concern, Raymond Evans argues that it was a mechanism for keeping Aborigines at a safe distance from whites, unless they could be pressed into cheap labour, and for exerting rigorous control. Evans substantiates that widespread fears of contamination, both hygienic and eugenic, prompted Meston's brutal abductions to these reserves.⁵⁶

It is not surprising that Meston, following his appointment as Southern Protector, should have continued his exhibiting activities, using these to enhance his status and demonstrate the efficacy of the reserves system. In August 1898, soon after his appointment, he proposed taking a troupe from Queensland to the forthcoming Paris Exposition and on to London and Europe, but his proposal was greeted with scorn;⁵⁷ the *Australian Town and Country Journal* of 8 October 1898 suggested that Londoners could do without 'still another barbarous show from one of the Empire's outposts'. Instead, he had to conserve his energies for the celebrations for the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia a few years later. In January 1901, at the request of the New South Wales Premier, he took a party of 25 warriors, originating from various districts in Queensland, to Sydney to participate in a reenactment of Captain Cook's landing at Botany Bay.

54 *Brisbane Courier*, 23 November 1892: 4.

55 Meston 1895: 30. Meston recommended that Aboriginal Protectors be 'men of strong physique'.

56 Evans 1991: 12–18. See Meston 1895: 30 and 1896: 14 where he prescribes the functioning of proposed reserves.

57 *Morning Post*, Cairns, 11 August 1898: 2.

During the re-enactment, held on 7 January, the men ran down a hill to confront Cook's approaching boat, brandishing their spears and 'looking exceedingly weird and barbaric',⁵⁸ but quickly retreated after one of them was wounded in the leg by musketry fire. The wounded man put on a fine performance, as Melbourne's *Argus* reported: 'no actor with a life-time of experience behind him could have surpassed the facial expression of the wounded savage, who hobbled off with the whites of his wide open eyes rolling back in a look in which fear, pain, and astonishment were depicted to the very life'.⁵⁹ The men's part in the spectacle was applauded and they were invited to give another performance two days later at Botany's Sir Joseph Banks Grounds, thrilling their audience with spear and boomerang throwing and nulla-nulla fights.⁶⁰ Soon afterwards, on 17 January, Meston oversaw a similar performance back in Brisbane; this was for the visit of the Imperial troops who were touring Australia as part of the Federation celebrations. The performance, involving 50 men mostly from the Durundur Aboriginal Reserve, was at night at the Exhibition Grounds.⁶¹

Meston's greatest contribution to the Federation celebrations was in May 1901 when the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (later King George V and Queen Mary) visited Brisbane while touring Australia after the opening of the first Federal Parliament in Melbourne. For the royal visit, Meston convinced the Queensland Government to erect one of the most spectacular street decorations ever seen in Brisbane, the so-called Aboriginal Arch, erected in George Street near the Executive Building (between Queen and Elizabeth Streets). The most remarkable feature of this towering structure was that it was to support a large group of Aboriginal people drawn from various districts, including the Fraser Island and Durundur Aboriginal reserves, along with a range of artefacts. The idea of using Indigenous people to add spectacle to triumphal arches was not original, having been tried in Queensland since 1868,⁶² but it was Meston who took up the idea with flourish. This 'Mestonian triumph' was described by the *Queenslander* in some detail:

The foundation of the arch is covered with tea-tree bark, carefully and neatly affixed, and this in turn decorated profusely with grass-trees, staghorns, and bird's nest ferns. On top of each buttress is erected a typical aboriginal gunyah, occupied by gins and piccaninnies with emu and kangaroo skins, mats, boomerangs, spears and dillybags, etc., displayed before them. Beneath the arch itself there have been hung strings of beautiful shells, glinting in the sunlight, and surmounting the whole is a magnificent specimen of the grass-tree

58 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 1901: 5.

59 *Argus*, Melbourne, 8 January 1901: 5.

60 Correspondence on the Captain Cook re-enactment, QSA, item ID17982, 1901/983; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1901: 5.

61 *Brisbane Courier*, 16 January 1901: 6; *Telegraph*, Brisbane, 19 January 1901: 14.

62 McKay 2009: 3–5.

... The arch was manned by no less than sixty aboriginals, ten of whom were 6 ft in height, and the Cooper's Creek man on the apex was 6 ft 4 ins. On his right and left were a man from each of the other States ... They were all profusely decorated with emu feathers, and their bodies lined out with red and white ochres, whilst they carried weapons from all parts of Australia.⁶³

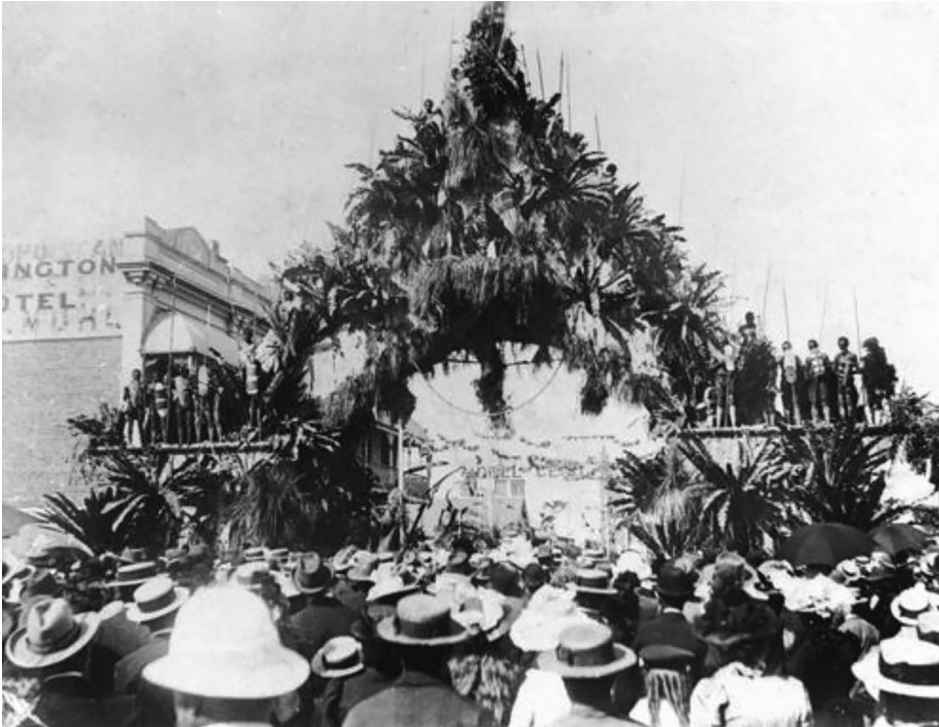


Figure 5: Aboriginal Arch erected in Brisbane for the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, 1901, a 'Mestonian triumph'.

Source: Courtesy of John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, negative number 149581.

The arch was not only wondrous in its variety of Indigenous life, indeed it was 'an excited living arch': on 22 May, as the Duke and Duchess drove beneath, it 'howled and corroboreed ... with all its might'.⁶⁴ The assemblage was applauded by the royals and spectators alike and it was generally agreed that it was the 'the most unique and striking feature' of all the city's decorations.⁶⁵ Later, at night, the men performed a corroboree at Government House where the Duke complimented Meston on their appearance, saying they were the best built and most intelligent-looking coloured men he had seen since leaving London. He also expressed concern for their future welfare; and well

63 *Queenslander*, 25 May 1901: 977.

64 Newspaper cutting, Meston papers, John Oxley Library: box 2, small cuttings book.

65 Waterson 2000: 47.

he might, for three of the performers were to die as a result of cold exposure and pneumonia contracted on that occasion.⁶⁶ More performances followed on 23–24 May, this time given at the Woolloongabba Sports Ground. In all, some 80 Aboriginal people were involved in the entertainments for the royal visit, representing a huge organisational effort for Meston. The *Queenslander* of 1 June 1901 concluded:

Really the Duke and Duchess should not carry away bad impressions of this little colony. In our welcome we gave them Archie Meston's aboriginal arch and his corroborees, something distinctively Australian, while on their way back we managed to cram into an hour or so enough colonial experience to last them for a while.

Following the royal visit Meston kept exhibiting. In February 1903 he staged a spectacular series of performances in Rockhampton to raise funds for the local hospital, involving Aboriginal people from all over Queensland and some from the Northern Territory and South Australia. The performances were so well organised that special excursion trains were run by the Railway Department to bring country patrons, and local brass bands were engaged to add musical accompaniment.⁶⁷ The performances were later repeated in Mount Morgan. By this time, however, Queenslanders were becoming tired of Meston's exhibiting, being so obviously part of his own advancement. In November 1902, when he brought out Fraser Island warriors to entertain the visiting German strongman Eugen Sandow, and at the same time showed off his own skill with a boomerang, the *Queensland Figaro* newspaper was moved to comment:

Opinions differ as to the treatment which should be shown to travelling showmen like Eugen Sandow, but there cannot be two opinions as to the utter ridiculousness of employing the Protector of Aborigines for the sake of entertaining such visitors with exhibitions of savagery. This sort of thing has passed the farcical stage. Either let Mr Meston start as a state entertainer to globetrotters or compel him to run a nigger company without state aid.⁶⁸

While Meston was exhibiting he was neglecting his other duties and already it was apparent that the reserves system was not arresting the decline of Queensland's Aboriginal population. The reserves functioned more as correctional and custodial institutions, where the regimented and demoralised inmates lacked basic sanitation, medical care and adequate diet. The reserves, as Raymond Evans writes, 'removed the drama of destruction to a remote stage, where it might be played out, unadvertised, in virtually closed houses'.⁶⁹ The Fraser

66 Waterson 2000: 48; Evans 2001: 78.

67 *Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, 5–11 February 1903.

68 *Queensland Figaro*, 6 November 1902: 3.

69 Evans 1991: 27.

Island Reserve, which Meston had created as a precedent, was handed over to the Anglican Board of Missions in 1900 and finally closed in 1904; many of its inmates already at rest in two very full cemeteries.

Encore

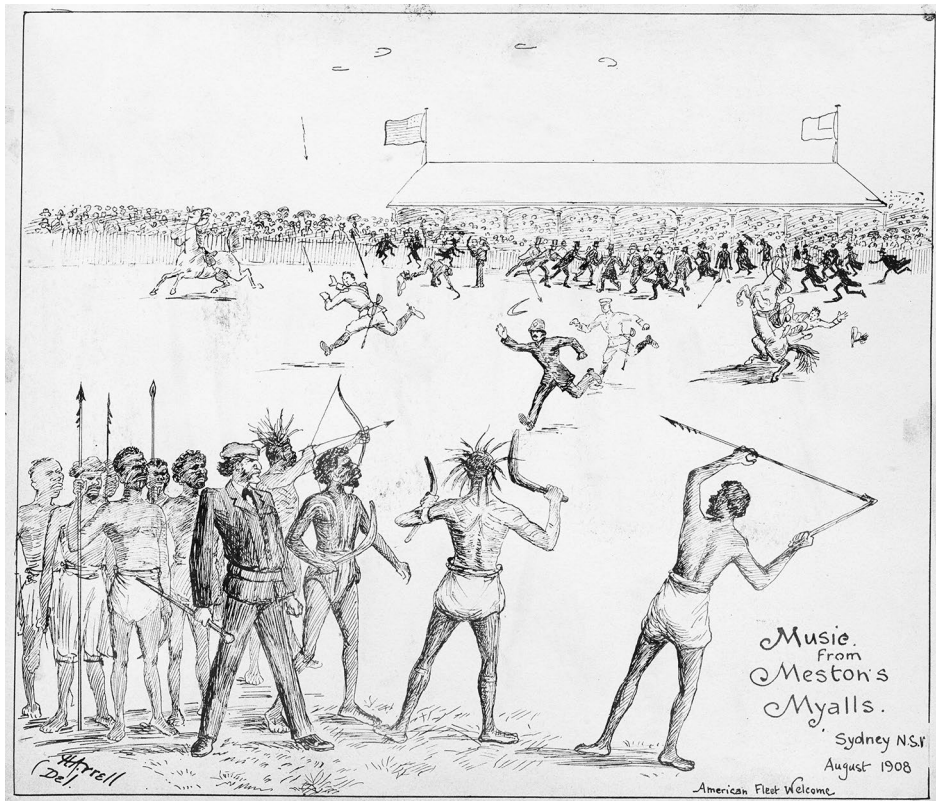


Figure 6: Meston and his troupe performing in Sydney for the visit of the American fleet, 1908, showing spectators fleeing; this is from a drawing by Henry Arrell, a draftsman in the Queensland Survey Office.

Source: Courtesy of Museum of Lands, Mapping and Surveying, Brisbane, accession number M629.

In December 1903 Meston was retrenched as Southern Protector, being replaced by his competitor from the north, Dr Walter Roth, who became Chief Protector for the whole state. Though affronted by his loss of official status, Meston continued to promote himself as an Aboriginal 'expert' and, remarkably, kept exhibiting. In March 1905 he gave a lecture on 'Picturesque Queensland' in Ipswich, using some men from the nearby Deebing Creek settlement as his live

exhibits.⁷⁰ He intended to repeat the lecture on a tour to other cities but this failed to eventuate. A few years later, in August 1908, he took a troupe from Queensland, six men drawn from various districts, to Sydney to participate in celebrations for the visit of the American fleet to Australia. In Sydney, they performed at the Royal Agricultural Society Grounds where their boomerang and spear throwing was so impressive that spectators began fleeing, thinking that they would be hit. They also gave a special performance for the Governor-General, the Earl of Dudley, in the grounds of Government House.⁷¹ Their performances were applauded; the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 25 August 1908 reported that these were 'the most Australian feature of the whole week's entertainment' for the visiting fleet. A year later, in August 1909, Meston and a larger troupe of 35 men and 5 women gave more displays for the Governor-General on his visit to Brisbane.⁷² Following Meston's appointment in 1909 as director of the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau in Sydney, his exhibiting was curtailed; though he had not run out of steam by 1915 when he wrote to the federal Minister for Defence offering to take a troupe of 100 Queensland warriors to the Western Front, this time to fight rather than entertain.⁷³ His final exhibit, again featuring a Queensland troupe, was for a patriotic carnival in Sydney in July 1915.⁷⁴ Archibald Meston died in Brisbane in 1924.

Finale

Although Meston's Wild Australia Show and his later displays purported to emphasise certain positive traits of Aboriginal people, they effectively portrayed them as the very different 'other' and thereby legitimised Meston's ideas and role in the formulation of the legislation that was to follow. Queensland's *Aboriginals Protection Act of 1897*, co-drafted by Meston, became a model for the institutionalisation of Indigenous people at a national level, being followed by similar legislation in Western Australia (1905), the Northern Territory (1910) and South Australia (1911).⁷⁵ In hindsight, it is sobering to think that such influential legislation had parts of its origins in ventures to exhibit Indigenous people for profit and amusement. Also that Meston, a man of dubious character and more a showman than a serious scholar of Indigenous culture, should have had been given so much credibility in his day, though it is apparent from the popular media that by no means did all his contemporaries admire him. His contribution to anthropological research in Queensland is now not only

70 *Queensland Times*, Ipswich, 11 March 1905: 4 and 18 March 1905: 12.

71 *Telegraph*, Brisbane, 19 August 1908: 7; *Singleton Argus*, 29 August 1908: 7.

72 *Brisbane Courier*, 25 August 1909: 4.

73 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 June 1915: 8.

74 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 July 1915: 5.

75 Rowley 1970: 227, 1971: 107; Thorpe 1984: 52.

seen as minimal, but confusing, contested, and challenging to deal with in Native Title claim evidence. By contrast, Roth, his peer and rival as a Protector, has left an ethnographic record that, notwithstanding its theoretical limitations for the time, is far more rigorous and valued by anthropology today. There still remain many questions to answer about Meston's various exhibits, not least being the performers' perceptions of their city audiences, to whose fascination with primitiveness and savagery they were pandering.

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Translation

The Aboriginal people in Sydney as seen by Captain Abel du Petit-Thouars, 24 November to 9 December 1838¹

Colin Dyer

Abel du Petit-Thouars was 45 years of age when he arrived in Sydney in November 1838. He had joined the French Navy at the age of 11, and served in the Mediterranean during the Napoleonic wars. He later spent four years at the French Naval Station in the Pacific, looking after the interests of French commerce along the war-torn Pacific coast of South America. He was thus a well-experienced seaman when he was appointed to lead an expedition around the world to support French trade generally and, more specifically, to assist the ailing French whaling industry in the Pacific. With a view to impress the people he would meet, he was given a large three-masted vessel, the frigate *La Vénus*, and a complement of no less than 468 officers and men. His instructions were to travel around the world in a westerly direction.

On 29 December 1836 he left Brest in the north-west of France and arrived in Rio de Janeiro on 4 February 1837. He and his men then rounded Cape Horn, battling the raging seas and floating ice, and arrived in Valparaiso on 26 April. They stayed here until 13 May (carefully avoiding becoming involved in Chile's war with Peru) and then sailed on to Callao (the port of Lima) before crossing to the Hawaiian Islands where they arrived on 8 July. They stayed here until the 24 April, before leaving the warmth of Honolulu to sail north to the freezing climate of Petropavlovsk in the Russian territory of Kamchatka.

1 This translation may be compared with my previous article in *Aboriginal History*: Dyer 2013.

After two weeks here, their itinerary became circumambulatory. On September 16 they set out for California, then to Easter Island, and then back to Valparaiso where they had stayed a year earlier. After six weeks here, they went north again back to Callao, then out across the Pacific again but this time to Tahiti where they arrived on 28 August 1838.

On 17 September Du Petit-Thouars left Tahiti and 'island-hopped' his way (Rarotonga, the Cook Islands and the Bay of Islands in New Zealand) to Sydney where he arrived on 24 November to a very cool reception. The English were suspicious and anxious about his activities in Tahiti (they feared he had annexed it for France) but he firmly declined to discuss this subject and refused to accept that he was in any way accountable to the English. During his 16-day stay, however, relations between him and his hosts gradually became less strained, and he was later quite happy to accept an invitation to visit Governor Gipps at his Parramatta estate.

On leaving Sydney (on 9 December 1838), he travelled south and then veered west into the powerful winds of the 'Roaring Forties'. The ship plunged through the waves and, by the end of January, was talking in water at the rate of two feet a day! He headed north-west and, after passing Cape Leeuwin, the weather improved rapidly as he sped towards l'Ile Bourbon (today's La Réunion) where he arrived on 5 March. After taking on ample supplies of food and water in preparation for the long and hazardous voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, *La Vénus* set out once again and finally, on 8 May, arrived at the island of Saint Helena, where Napoleon lay buried since 1821.² From here the journey was uneventful, and du Petit-Thouars finally arrived back at Brest on 24 June 1839. He and his companions had been away for two and a half years.

In 1841 Du Petit-Thouars was made a Rear-Admiral, and returned to the Pacific as Director of the Naval Station. It was he who, in 1843, claimed French sovereignty over Tahiti. He returned to France in 1844, and was promoted to Vice-Admiral two years later. He died in Paris in March 1864.

² The year after Du Petit-Thouars' visit Napoleon's remains were taken to Les Invalides in Paris, where they are to this day.

Translation of Du Petit-Thouars's text, vol. 3, pp. 275–83³

'The indigenous people [*indigènes*]⁴ of New Holland offer remarkable particularities which make them usually looked upon as a race apart, very distinct from those who live in Polynesia, to whom the name *Papuans* [*Papous*] or *oriental Negroes* [*nègres orientaux*] is almost universally given.

Wherever you go in New Holland, these indigenous people have thick protruding lips, prominent cheek-bones, small deep-sunken eyes, rough long black hair, and a high narrow forehead. Their head is elongated and depressed on the top, and they have a large nose although not flat like that of the Africans. They also have black skin, which is much darker than that of the New-Zealanders but less so than that of the negroes [*nègres*]. It is said, however, that there are also in New Holland tribes of a whiter colour and like that of the Malays. Their legs are spindly and their tummy is protuberant. Such are the general characteristics of the natives [*naturels*].

Those we saw in Sydney conformed to this description. They were of average height. The women were less tall than the men, and they had small feet and hands, and harmonious voices. We have no information whatsoever on the number of indigenous people who exist in New Holland, but it seems that this island [*sic*] contains very few inhabitants.

They feed on roots and on the product of their fishing and hunting. In the country of Cumberland no-one has ever found a single house built by them. They take shelter either in the hollow of a rock, or quite simply under a piece of bark leant against a tree.

Towards the north-west and south-west of the island, huts made of tree-bark, roughly made and with no decoration (and even with no household utensils) have been found. In different places, tree-trunks hollowed out by fire, and pieces of bark bound at their two ends and caulked with clay (which they doubtless used for crossing rivers), have also been found.

Of all these objects which they have created the fishing nets made with stringy plants are the ones we noticed as being the most curious. Their only sharp instruments are made of hard stone or jasper, and attached with hardened gum onto a split stick. Their weapons are the spear, the *womera* (used to throw the spear) and the *boomerang*. There are also several kinds of clubs, named *nullah-nullah* and *waddie*. They have never been seen with bows or arrows.

3 This text has not been edited.

4 Du Petit-Thouars uses this term (which here in French is a noun) throughout his text.

The spears in use among the indigenous people of New Holland are a little more than three metres long, and are as thick as a finger. They have a point hardened by fire, and are sometimes barbed. The natives [naturels] are very skilful in using them, and send them with great force and precision over a distance of 18 to 20 metres. The force of the projectile is greatly increased by the *womera*, or throwing-stick. The *womera* is a piece of wood about a metre long and eight to nine centimetres wide at one end, and decreasing in width up to the other end where it comes to a point. At this point there is a hook, which is placed into a notch,⁵ purposefully made at the end of the spear. When throwing the spear, the *womera* is held by the wider end, and acts in a way like a bow in relation to an arrow. A strong man can reach 30 metres with a spear when thrown in this manner.

The boomerang is a weapon with a very peculiar and curious shape. It is a piece of very hard wood, curved and about a metre long. It is from six to eight centimetres at its widest, and becomes narrower on each side up to the point. The concave part is from four to eight millimetres thick, and the convex part is entirely sharp. An indigenous person can throw this instrument 40 or 50 metres, parallel to the horizon and skimming the ground without touching it at about one metre or one metre 30 centimetres elevation. Then, at this distance, the boomerang suddenly rises in the air up to 50 to 60 metres and, describing a great curve, it comes back to fall at the feet of the individual who threw it. It thus comes back around on itself, rather like a billiard ball hit below its centre of gravity, goes away at first and then returns to its point of departure. The boomerang turns on itself with great rapidity during its flight, like a piece of wood on a pivot, and produces a whistling sound in the air.

In the hands of a European, the boomerang is just a simple inoffensive stick, but this becomes dangerous for the person who wishes to use it without knowing how to do so. As a consequence, Europeans have wounded themselves when they have tried to throw it like the natives, because sometimes the boomerang comes back and hits the person who threw it. In the hands of the indigenous people, however, the boomerang becomes a terrible weapon with which they inflict mortal wounds.

The *waddie* and the *nullah-nullah* are clubs of different shapes and sizes. The *tomahawk* is a piece of sharpened stone (usually quartz), fixed into a split handle with hardened glue. The natives [naturels] use this to make notches in those trees which are too wide to be embraced. By this means they climb to the top of the highest trees, although these trees often have no branches and are 15 to 20 metres above the ground.⁶

5 In the French text (p. 277) 'engougure', a word not known to the present translator.

6 Du Petit-Thouars 1840–43: 275–78.

The indigenous tribes are not very numerous, and the social unit seems to be the family. They live separate from one another, and each one contains thirty to forty members at the most, women and children included, and they occupy a certain stretch of land. It is very probable (as among other aboriginal [sic] peoples) that these territorial limits are the most frequent cause of the continual wars which reign here.

Polygamy is in use among these tribes, in which moreover the feminine sex is treated in the most cruel manner. It is said that, to procure a companion, a man goes to the neighbouring tribe during the night where he hits a girl on the head until she loses consciousness, and then drags or carries her away to make her his wife.

These tribes are not held together by any political bond, or at least none has been recognised as existing. A fact regarded as accepted truth by the English, is that these indigenous people are cannibals and that, not content with eating their enemies killed or taken prisoner in combat, they never let an occasion go by to satisfy this cruel passion at the expense of any European who falls into their hands.⁷ The colonists claim that they had multiple proofs of this fact, and that it frequently happens that they kill and eat their own children. The colonists also assert that other indigenous people bleed themselves in order to cook their blood and eat it when they wish to appease a devouring hunger. These ferocious customs are the result of a long-standing way of eating, and this is the only excuse one can find for these acts of such a great barbarity.

No objects relating to a cult have ever been seen among these natives, and nowhere have idols or anything resembling them been found. They are not, however, without several superstitions. For example, when a person of their tribe dies, they believe they must immediately kill an indigenous person of another tribe. Why? They don't say, perhaps for an excellent reason: they themselves don't know and have nothing to propose to justify this practice, if only that it is the custom.

The indigenous people of New-Holland bury their dead in large cemeteries. Their tombs, like those of many aboriginal peoples, are indicated by a small elevation, a kind of *tumulus* which is either oval-shaped or sometimes conical.

It has been noticed in New Holland (as can be seen everywhere that Europeans have established themselves) that the indigenous population has decreased rapidly since the beginning of the colony. Here, however, this destruction (which is caused in part by war, famine and sickness) has been even more rapid.

⁷ Delessert will declare in 1845 that he remembered 'an elderly native' whom he had 'once questioned on this subject' who told him that 'he had eaten human flesh when a child' (Dyer 2013: 95), but there are no actual eyewitness accounts by French explorers of cannibalism (see Dyer 2005: 71).

The natives who live in the towns or other establishments of the colony do it only by begging. They have a great aversion for work. Some of these indigenous people who have been employed in agricultural work, have been unable to resist the tiredness this brings on, and have run away. Sometimes, however, they have been employed with success by the police as *assistant-constables* to act as trackers and to find deserting convicts in the woods. They are gifted with an extraordinary sense of smell, and can recognise all kinds of tracks left in a wood or on untouched land. These qualities enable them to render excellent services – when, however, they can be persuaded to do so.

A story is told in Sydney as a very surprising example of this kind of aptitude.

An inhabitant whose farm was situated on the great western road having disappeared, the convict overseer led people to believe that he had left secretly for England and had put him in charge of the property. This report seemed very suspicious, because this inhabitant had very good conduct, and had no problems and no debts.

This affair was already almost forgotten when, one Saturday during the night, another inhabitant coming back from market with his horse and cart, and arriving at the part of the road bordered by the fence of his absent neighbour's property, thought he saw him sitting on the gate. Whipping up his horse, he approached him and called out but, upon receiving no reply, he got down from his cart and walked towards him. It was then that his neighbour got off the gate and went off across a field, making his way towards a pond in the direction of the house he was supposed to have abandoned. The farmer found this behaviour very strange, but got back on his cart and continued on his way.

However, the next morning he went to his neighbour's farm where he thought he would meet him, but found only the overseer who laughed at his adventure and told him that his master was at that moment probably very close to the coasts of England. However, this explanation seemed so improbable to the farmer that he went to the nearest Justice of the Peace and told him what had happened, adding that he thought some bad deed was afoot. A black indigenous man attached to the constable's station was sent with a detachment of police on horseback to the spot where the farmer thought he had seen his absent neighbour.

This spot was indicated to the black man, without telling him in which direction the man sitting on the gate had gone. He looked around very carefully, and thought he picked up a track. He then walked off in a straight line towards the pond where, having noticed some kind of grease on the water's surface, he picked some of it out with a leaf and tasted it. He thereupon declared that it contained *grease from a white man*. He then walked around the pond and saw a few bits of broken leaves and grasses. Following these along, he discovered a spot where the earth seemed to have been recently disturbed. He then asked his colleagues to dig here, and this is where they discovered the body of the unfortunate proprietor. His head was smashed in, and seemed to have stayed for

some while in water. The overseer who, by this murder, had come into the dead man's possessions, was brought before the criminal court. The circumstances we have reported were regarded as sufficient proof, and the overseer, declared guilty by the jury, was condemned to death and led to the scaffold, where he still protested his innocence. But, at the last moment, his firmness abandoned him, and he confessed his crime. He was walking, he said, behind his master when he went through the gate where the farmer claimed to have seen him, and killed him by striking him on the head. He then dragged the man's body to the pond and threw him in, only to draw him out a few days later to bury him.

The black man's shrewdness was much admired and this wonderful tale, told down the ages, will still serve for a long time to lull little children to sleep. The aboriginal [sic] races, already very reduced in numbers and pushed back into the interior where they no longer find the means of existence they had near the sea, are destroying themselves in a frightful proportion. This can leave no doubt that before long they will have completely disappeared. Today the people of Sydney who seem to be the best informed do not believe this population is above five thousand souls in total'.⁸

It is here that Du Petit-Thouars leaves the subject of the 'indigenous people'.⁹ Other French explorers visiting Sydney, however, had also discussed the possible future of these people.

In Sydney in 1819 Louis de Freycinet had declared that 'some educated English people here ... deliver themselves of the opinion that ... perhaps it would be better if they died out completely'. In this same year, his companion Jacques Arago also wondered if the English wished, 'in their culpable lack of concern, to let this race annihilate itself?'

In 1825 Hyacinthe de Bougainville had believed that 'the Australians [meaning the Aboriginal people] ... will probably never yield to the forms of civilisations which ... will end up, according to all appearances, by annihilating their race'. In Tasmania in 1827 Dumont d'Urville thought that 'as a consequence of on-going aggression between these people and the settlers, the number of natives has rapidly decreased and ... it is probable that, within forty or fifty years, this whole race will have completely disappeared'.¹⁰

8 Du Petit-Thouars, pp. 279–83.

9 Du Petit-Thouars goes on to say that he had attended a 'banquet at the Australian Club', and then 'accompanied the Governor [Sir George Gipps] to Parramatta'.

10 Sources here are Freycinet 2001: 309; Arago 1839: 88; Bougainville 1839, I: 457; and Dumont d'Urville 1987, I: 189.

Perhaps the worst indictment of the English colonisation, however, was that of Nicolas Baudin as early as December 1802 when he had predicted in a letter to Governor King that 'the small number of those [Aboriginal Australians] surrounding you will not long exist', and that the English would then 'remain the peaceful possessors of their heritage'.¹¹

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11 The full text of this letter may be found in Peron 1971: 42–43.

In Memoriam
Patrick Wolfe
1949–2016



In Memoriam Patrick Wolfe

Liz Conor

Voltaire's Calligrapher was the title of the novel Patrick loaned me when I visited his bush haven in Chum's Creek in December 2015. I'd snuck up there after we'd swotted and commiserated through our respective ARC Future Fellowship applications. Not liking my chances, I sought his tips on doing the work you love, sometimes without 'the lash of wages'. Patrick had seemed to make a fist of his scandalous precarity, if not a virtue. In the way these prosaic transactions and happenstances assume import when a life is lost wretchedly too soon, I hadn't quite known what to do with Patrick's borrowed novel. I couldn't pick it up – until these heartfelt tributes came in from Patrick's colleagues, comrades and friends, categories he revelled in muddling.

The jacket blurb describes the novel as 'a (mischievously) historical novel, a thriller, a philosophical work too, a novel of adventures', and Patrick went on leaping off the page throughout. In one small detail, a 'little iron stove' called to mind his proud tour of his home, protractedly rebuilt after the Black Saturday fires of February 2009. On cold nights, he explained, he'd shut down the house and retreat to his study for days, cooking on the stove top and writing into the deep silence. From here Patrick was bringing history to life, reframing understandings with his indispensable diachronics of race-making.

But on the dazzling December day I visited, all the doors were thrown open. He and his son Sean were rendering around a planted bed. Patrick was in fine form; genial, attentive, jovial. Also there was the dignified reserve with which he walked me through the fruit trees in the orchard dedicated to his recently lost sister Mary. Just off the amphitheatre cemented over the huge water tank, a fire bunker was dug into the hillside. It opened like a Dorothy hurricane hatch, with a peekaboo window to witness the front passing over. Enough oxygen for

six hours for six people he nodded assuredly, and I could see Patrick holed up in there sheltering and no doubt entertaining half the mountainside. He seemed invincible, all set up and raring to go after these daunting setbacks.

Over his famous 'pasta simplicimus', out on the veranda, we swapped fire stories, looking through the recovered gums down to Coranderrk (it is this vista, and how it placed him, that he so decorously presents in the first chapter of his book *Traces of History*). I blathered about climate and even fell for it when this virtuosic scholar said with characteristic self-effacement, 'I know nothing, tell me everything'. Knowing I was heading to Paris for a spot of guerrilla theatre at COP21 (United Nations Climate Change Conference) he extolled the Knitting Nannas who blockade the Toolangi coupes. Then he drove me up there, first putting me in a pair of his knockabout sandals.

Patrick knew a shortcut onto the boardwalk that wound through fairy dells of tree ferns along a pristine creek. He pointed out primeval stalks of fungi and after an interlude of me plapping along the wooden trail, shod like a hobbit, he bid me close my eyes and led me by the elbow to a 'surprise'. 'Now', he said and standing there before us was one of the few remaining Grand Old Dowagers of the ancient forest, vaulting into the birdsong. Six grown men could not have spanned her; god only knows how they managed to fell so many like her. As I craned, marvelling, Patrick could barely contain his delight, beaming and jiggling from foot to foot as though he'd just introduced me to Rosa Luxemburg. Still, these could never be places indulgently removed from his central preoccupation, 'There is no such thing as wilderness, only depopulation', he writes in *Traces of History*.

I didn't know Patrick half so well nor so long as many of the contributors to this memorial. Each of the tributes that follow reflect the singularity of their collaboration, comradeship, friendship and rapport. The gyre of his analysis is manifest, as is the span of his curiosity, his vivid historicising and hawkeyed erudition, all internationally celebrated. We thought a dedicated homage from those so engaged with Patrick Wolfe's work was more than warranted. We pulled it together in something of a scramble so we apologise to the legions of colleagues we may have overlooked.

Patrick brought to our attention the 'xenologies' by which human collectivities have been differentiated and insisted that difference under colonialism is invariably hierarchical; 'to vary is to be defective'. He had a gift for the memorable theoretical zinger: race is 'already an "ism"'; it is 'not so much a concept as a sensation'; it 'enabled universality to presuppose distinction'; it is a 'process not an ontology'; it is 'an ever-shifting contest'; it is 'immune to emancipation'. In lucid majuscule he drew out the intimacy between industrialisation and colonialism. His brisk scrutiny of supposition led to startling assertions:

dispossession was not merely a transferral of ownership, but the replacement of one system of ownership with another. Never far from Marx, he saw blood as 'like money, which also invokes liquidity to disguise the social relations that sustain it'. Colonisers 'did not set out to create racial doctrine. They set out to create wealth'. You 'can be an ex-slave, but you can't be ex-black'. And who can (or should) forget Patrick's locomotive tenets: 'Invasion is a structure not an event'. Settler-colonialism inheres a 'logic of elimination'. With these stonking, barnstorming interventions he simply remapped the field of colonial history.

When the grant somehow came through for me, he was nothing but big-hearted and cheering. It felt bittersweet, even unseemly after all his mentoring, for such a *sui generis* researcher to be so summarily snubbed. He replied from Ramallah, just before negotiating the Qalandiya checkpoint, 'Hey – I'm a survivor'. What can that mean now?

In the idiosyncrasy of grief, each will no doubt have their own version of what it is about Patrick that is inextinguishable. Acclaimed here are his élan, his bearhugs, his expansive laugh, his teaching, his activism, his acuity, his thoughtfulness. These qualities all shine through these heartfelt and eloquent tributes, all tellingly personal, they all express indebtedness to Patrick's prodigious contribution: they each do him proud. Doubtless, they were all difficult to write and we are all the more honoured to draw them together in these pages. In *Voltaire's Calligrapher* the French philosopher remarks, if your path is history it will be accompanied by the departed. Historians are accustomed to their company and sometimes their guidance. But Patrick's unique exuberance and luminosity will carry us into new inquiry with the very best company we could ask for. We remain 'as ever' in his wake.

Talking race: Patrick Wolfe's scholarly activism

Tracey Banivanua Mar

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To read Patrick's scholarship is to listen to him speak. His voice talks from the page with the fullness of thinking, the distillations of knowledge, and the enthusiasm for inciting change that defined him as a scholar. In the same way, complex encapsulations and analyses of injustice and the long-term structures of power that continue to churn out generations of oppression could tumble easily from Patrick's everyday speech. Fully formed and ready for battle. The intellectual integrity that bound his voice, his scholarship, and his underlying activist imperative to generate transformation through words, for me, defines the lasting legacy of his work.

What Patrick has contributed to the study of colonialism and imperialism, and especially to the burgeoning interrogation of settler colonialism has been explored extensively both before and after he passed away. But in his most recent scholarship he seemed to return to the enduring inquiry that pre-dated his interrogations of the state of settler colonial nations. Race, and the twisted histories of its construction and capacity for recapitulation, its behaviour as a regime of oppression, its endurance, and its petty idiosyncrasies remained always at the core of Patrick's scholarship. From his place and relationship to the structures of racialised power in Australia, he interrogated race most explicitly as a contingent regime. His was, in a sense, a personalised interrogation that eventually, in his most recent book *Traces of History*, led to highlighting the linkages that bound the making and operation of race to an inherent territoriality (his words not mine, *Traces of History*, pp. 34–37).

Re-reading Patrick's work offers a reminder that it was the struggle against racism, and the position he occupied as a white man in Australia – a most live and ongoing site of colonial and postcolonial oppression – along with his own initial, and readily admitted naivety regarding the ways race is experienced, that seemed to drive his interrogation of settler colonialism. This trajectory is followed in both *Traces of History* and *Settler Colonialism*. In colonial territory, with its varied historical, economic and spatial particularities, lay a key to understanding the shifting mythologies that attached to racial regimes. Here lay the logic for the seemingly random distinctions in the ways racial fantasies attached to observable and imagined physical difference – the way a natural talent for rhythm attached itself to different categories of Blackness for instance, or the differing means by which a single drop of coloured blood could be discursively dispersed. Patrick's scholarship, in other words, grew out of implicit and explicit acknowledgements of his own racial privilege. He used this to articulate a powerful, and now extensively cited language with which to scrutinise and unpick the intimate workings of sites of colonial displacements of Indigenous peoples.

If Patrick's scholarship accentuated the historical and territorial, his activism revolved around the politics of positionality. This bled inexorably into his teaching and mentorship. When I first encountered him as an honours student in the University of Melbourne's Department of History, it was a time, much like the present, when a student of colour could complete a university degree in History without ever encountering a teacher the same colour as themselves. This could be, and is, profoundly alienating and silencing. Patrick was a rare teacher who explicitly saw colour as an historically structured asset and a strength, a key to unlocking deeper insight. His approach could make students feel they had something valuable to say, not despite being Brown or Indigenous, but because of it. At the same time he brought vast fields of knowledge together, and could carry students through impossibly complex histories of the seemingly simple daily myths of racism. Most of the reading he set was written by Brown and Black authors speaking and writing their own critiques of colonialism and race, and he made students engage with the way they used their voice. While positionality and the voice, or the question of who is speaking, why, and with what innate authority remains for some a formulaic tool of academic critique. For Patrick it was his moral compass.

Patrick used his voice, not just to articulate a new discourse and analysis capable of undermining structures of power. He also used it to maintain a space of academic silence, one into which the historically gagged could speak for themselves. His work could slide over detail in the quest for overarching structures and logics, but the visceral reality, the violence and lived experiences of the processes he studied were never far from his analysis. As such, he

hoped not just to write about race and colonialism, but to engage and assert the transformative power of knowledge. His work has helped to map the ways race, colonialism and settler-colonialism were not natural states, but were made and therefore could be unmade. Their seemingly unspeakably deep, sinuous histories could be articulated, untangled and detached from the future. As he said in the conclusion to *Traces of History*, 'race, being historically contingent, can be overcome' (p. 271). This activist edge, his engagement in the stuff of changing the ruts of histories of oppression, epitomises Patrick's spoken and written persona. Reading him remains, 'as ever' he might say, like listening to him speak.

Good Patrick

Tony Birch

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The Aboriginal community of Victoria have an intellectual, cultural and emotional investment in both our own history and the colonial past we share with 'settler' society. Behind the gates of university campuses intellectual practice is regarded as the fundamental value underpinning academic history, while 'culture' remains a ubiquitous but ill-defined attachment of the discipline. A serious concern for many academics is emotion. It supposedly threatens objectivity, undermines reason and causes the *professional historian* discomfort. Aboriginal people working in academia are not subject to the same heartburn. In fact, according to the professionals we harbour an abundance of emotion. We are *inherently* emotional people. We have an emotional attachment to the past. And at times we are perceived as *over-emotional*, even when we possess a professionally certified PhD. As a consequence, however close we come to the profession, we are never quite part of it. We remain *tainted*, as does our scholarship.

Patrick was one of the true intellects of colonial history, both in Australia and globally. My first meetings with him were during an Honours level class, *History and Theory*. I was one of many students in the room who found 'doing theory' threatening and difficult. While Patrick was not teaching the class, in a formal sense, at least, he was a wonderful teacher. Not unexpectedly, he had read more widely than any person in the room. Equally, while most of us attempted to decipher such concepts as hermeneutics with limited success, Patrick was able to engage with the most sophisticated ideas and apply them to the *realities* of our engagement with the past. Patrick could have so easily have paraded

his intellectual prowess. Many male academics, in particular, do so. He never behaved in such a manner. Patrick was cheeky. And he was mischievous. But he was never intellectually arrogant or narcissistic.

I began the first of two decades of many conversations with Patrick about history in that classroom; conversations that grew into a deep friendship, based initially on mutual respect, and eventually love. Patrick himself also believed that Aboriginal people have an emotional investment in the past. He understood why this is so. He knew that the deep injustices suffered by Aboriginal people at the hands of colonial violence impact deeply on contemporary Aboriginal society. As far as Patrick was concerned, this did not set us apart from academic history, not in an inferior intellectual sense. If anything, he strongly felt that our *subjectivity*, rather than being a dirty word, was an intellectual asset. For this reason alone, I remain indebted to his deep sensibility. Further, let us not forget, that while Patrick was a true intellect, he was also an openly emotional thinker.

For a time, Patrick taught versions of Aboriginal and colonial history at the University of Melbourne. He did so during the mid-1990s. It was both a challenging and invigorating time to teach in the area. Political debate surrounding university walls at the time was politically charged. Regardless of whether the reactionary Pauline Hanson was a puppet of the then prime minister, John Howard (a proponent of the *relaxed and comfortable* view of history), or if it was Howard occasionally dancing for her, between the partnership they pushed the necessary populist hot-buttons of the history and culture wars. Their bad behaviour was able to penetrate the walls of the academy – even the seemingly impenetrable sandstone of the University of Melbourne. Taking these people on did require a *war*, rather than some genteel debate left to the Masonic-like aristocrats of the profession. Patrick possessed the rigour to successfully challenge those driven by the mentality of colonial throwbacks. Thankfully he remained something of an outsider, never losing the swagger and determination of the street-educated kid who knew a serious arsehole when he saw one, and was prepared to call it how he saw it.

In recent years I have written more fiction than academic writing. Many within universities regard the genres as mutually exclusive. Not Patrick. On each occasion that I published a new book he would contact me, firstly to tell me how much he enjoyed the writing. Secondly, and usually over lunch, he would talk about the insights into our shared understanding of the past that my writing provided. Always, I walked away from those conversations buoyed by his remarkable capacity for generosity. In our final exchange, following the release of my most recent novel, *Ghost River*, he wrote that he was proud of me. Patrick – he *was and always will be* a good and giving person.

Reflections on Patrick Wolfe

Philip J. Deloria

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I did not know Patrick Wolfe nearly as well as I would have liked. Continental drift meant that our paths crossed primarily at the annual meetings of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, where he was a generous, lively and well-respected figure. Our email communications – I now see, with the clarity of retrospection – were far too occasional, and far too utilitarian. In our last exchanges – mostly about blurbing what turned out to be his final efforts (*Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* and the edited collection *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarism in Colonial Studies*), Patrick also wrote of a recent visit to Israel, of having a gun pointed at his stomach, and of finding time during my upcoming visit to Australia to travel to the mountains. He was a bold and courageous thinker, traveller and scholar. Patrick was, in my experience, a thoughtful provocateur with a hearty politics, but also a man with the ability to laugh heartily, to greet a stranger, and to maintain a twinkle in his eye. He did all these things when I first met him – including the provocation – and it proved a joyful intellectual experience.

Patrick offered many North American scholars a first introduction to the concept of settler colonialism. He arrived among us bearing gifts: articles and books that told us that settler colonialism was a distinct category all its own; that it was not an event but a structure; that it carried within it a logic of elimination that crossed political, legal, economic, social and cultural categories.

These gifts arrived at a critical moment in American Indian history. The field had rejected longstanding synthetic organising strategies built around political history – which privileged the policy and law of the federal government (over Indian people) – and cultural history – which focused on non-Indian

ideological imaginaries and their material consequences. Scholars had turned to a productive brand of American Indian social history, built in the tradition of the 'bottom up' social history that emerged from the 1960s, but which focused on Indian communities, issues of accountability, agency and self-determination. We built methodological toolkits informed by ethnohistory, oral history and tribal epistemologies. Powerful and important pieces of work, these studies nonetheless failed to offer analytical and synthetic frameworks for making sense of – and continuing to build – American Indian studies as a diverse, but also coherent field.

In that moment, to think 'settler colonialism' was to hit 'refresh' on your browser. It sent a pulsing wave through the field, engendered new debates, offered new synthetic ways of thinking. 'Settler' became the adjective of choice; one barely needed to say the word 'colonialism'. We all knew what it entailed and what it meant: critique, politics, analytical power, and most importantly, intellectual liveliness. It was a joy and an honour to cross paths with Patrick Wolfe at a conference. And I think it important to reaffirm the weight, importance and respect accorded his work in the broader context of indigenous studies in North America.

In the end, I ended up writing a blurb not for the large manuscript, *Traces of History*, but for the edited collection, *The Settler Complex*. Patrick's introductory essay to that volume makes his own intellectual integrity crystal clear. In a powerful analytical defence of the binarism that (he argues) distinguishes the indigenous from the settler society, Patrick engages the many complicating factors that have been the hallmark of the intellectual conversations surrounding settler colonial theory. Drawing on *Traces of History*, he takes on the question of race, drawing out of comparative analysis both complication and clarity. Situating a Gramscian analysis within the context of settler–indigenous binaries, he seeks to address the question of indigenous agency, particularly in relation to forms of violence that are simultaneously premises, promises and omni-presents. Recognising both the limits and the inevitability of indigenous agency, Patrick addresses in sophisticated terms that particular line of critique. As impressive, in that book, he wove together into a cogent whole a series of quite distinct essays, recapitulating in the form of the collection the power that his own theoretical assertions had for the field as a whole. Patrick Wolfe occupied a critical place in American Indian Studies and in global, comparative and connective forms of Indigenous Studies. He will be missed: personally, by the many friends and interlocutors he developed over the years; and intellectually, by all of us who have been, and will continue to be, pushed, bolstered, provoked, and inspired by his thought and scholarship.

Lynette Russell

Director, Monash Indigenous Studies Centre,
Monash University

This is intentionally brief, in part because no matter how much I write I can never do justice to Patrick Wolfe, scholar, teacher, historian and colleague. Instead, I want to share a few personal reflections on the breadth and depth of the man it was my privilege to call my friend. Patrick Wolfe was the most extraordinary man I knew.

Patrick was my PhD supervisor. The first day I met him nearly 25 years ago he seemed to me to be the most energetic, frenetic, and fully engaged person I'd ever met. He grasped my convoluted idea of a PhD thesis and ran with it. 'Have you read Said?' he asked. In my embarrassment I confessed I had not, which did not faze him at all, and he thrust a copy of *Orientalism* into my hand. He and Said changed my life. I used to tease him that I could neither thank him enough or totally forgive him for introducing me to Edward Said's work.

A few years later when I named our dog Said, Patrick for some reason would always call her Fidel. When asked why he said, because Fidel is a real hero's name. You see, Patrick wore his politics boldly, and courageously. Once in the late 1990s I had been trying to reach him for days, having rung and left messages to no avail. Finally, when I did get on to him, he answered the phone with 'MUA here to stay', as he had spent the last few days at the Melbourne wharves protesting and supporting the Maritime Union of Australia. He was an unapologetic stirrer, agitator and activist.

His enthusiasm for life was vast and he could fill the room with his warmth, wit and of course his unsurpassed intellect. He was, and I suspect always will be, the smartest person I have known. He had read every book, knew every event, he operated on an international scale and his impact was enormous.

But beyond all of that, Patrick was my friend, my mentor and my conscience. Being friends with Patrick meant knowing there was someone you could rely on. He let me know he had my back and he was always in my corner. He never failed to tell me how proud of me he was, and he did so without even an inkling of paternalism.

When my husband, Ian, had to undergo a rigorous regime of chemotherapy two years ago, Patrick seemed somehow to absorb every detail. There was not one 'chemo' day that he did not call, text or email. Wishing us luck, asking if he could help and concluding 'as ever love, Patrick'. He even offered to keep Ian company during treatments.

Last year we were living in Oxford and I sent him a message from Oxford. It was, I joked, a long way from Airport West. He wrote back and told me that he loved that I took a little bit of Airport West to the hallowed halls of All Souls, and I would no doubt do the reverse on my return. He knew me well.

A few years ago we arrived in South Africa to see the terrible Healesville bushfires on TV screens. Frantic calls finally reached him, and he told us that he had lost the house. Despite this, and never one to dwell on negativity, all he wanted to talk about was the politics of South Africa – what had we seen, where had we been?

Patrick's final book, *Traces of History*, arrived at our home a week before Christmas, complete with the note 'in celebration of our long standing and very valuable friendship, much love Patrick'. I quickly sent him an email, congratulating him and suggesting we get together to celebrate. His response was 'I am in Ramallah' and we went back and forth and, in his last email from Palestine he told me he could hear gunshots and explosives, but, he wrote 'the greatest threat, and most effective resistance, is simply to live well'. And Patrick knew how to live well. If nothing else is to be learned from his sudden passing, it is the certainty that we must all learn to live well.

I will miss my friend, I mourn my mentor, I lament what we have all lost. Too soon, much too soon.

Looking forward to hosting you, amigo – and, yes, we won't run out of red!¹

Jon Altman

Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University

I am pretty sure that it was anthropologist Chris Houston who introduced me to Patrick Wolfe's *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*² not long after it was published. At least that is the recollection of my partner Melinda Hinkson and she is usually correct on such matters. It was the book that introduced me to Patrick's theory of settler colonialism and his oeuvre and which fundamentally altered my way of thinking about territoriality, property rights, political jurisdiction and postcolonial possibilities in Australia and other settler states. Patrick is without doubt the Australian intellectual who has had the most profound impact on my theoretical thinking in the last decade or so; his radical framework helped me make some sense of what was unfolding here: invasion not as history, but as an ongoing and very contemporary process with the overarching project the elimination of native societies through 'advancement to integration'. Patrick's materialist and structural theorisation of the settler project of destruction aligned with my empirical observations in remote Indigenous Australia. This was especially so in the aftermath of the Northern Territory Intervention and state attempts to recolonise spaces that had almost accidentally become domains that were too Indigenous for Australia's political and bureaucratic elites to tolerate after the early twenty-first-century-purported 'end of history'³ and the neoliberal turn.

1 Patrick Wolfe to Jon Altman, email correspondence, 16 February 2013.

2 Wolfe 1999.

3 Fukuyama 1992.

In an email from Patrick dated 15 July 2013 with the subject line ‘There’s no such thing as a throwaway line’ he alerted me to his use in a publication of a verbal comment that I had made when co-launching an exhibition by Garawa artist Jacky Green.⁴ With characteristic humour he emailed ‘I hope you like the acknowledgement!’ and signed off ‘As ever, Patrick’. And there in endnote 35 with his wonderful informality, deliberately flaunting academic convention: ‘Personal communication. Thank you, Jon’. Patrick was my sort of intellectual, at once hyper-scholastic, but also highly personal and not at all self-important. I made numerous references to Patrick’s publications in my writings, but I regret missing the opportunity to just say ‘Thank you, Patrick’, one of two deep regrets in our sadly truncated friendship that I now seek to belatedly rectify. More on the other regret later.

I met Patrick, incredibly, on the same day that I met Malcolm Brough.

From its launch date of 21 June 2007, I had been highly critical of the Northern Territory Intervention and of political leaders John Howard and Malcolm Brough for their racist vilification of Indigenous Australians under the protective umbrella of parliamentary privilege. The now defunct Bennelong Society had its annual conference in Melbourne, at the Windsor Hotel on 19–20 June 2008, provocatively timed, it seemed to me, to coincide with the first anniversary of the Intervention; and provocatively titled ‘The NT Emergency Response: Appraisal and Future’. And so, visiting Melbourne, I decided to register and attend for a day to see if I could glean any sense of conservative self-assessments, maybe even find some reflexivity. I was deeply disappointed.

It was on that day coincidentally that it was announced that Brough as Minister for Indigenous Affairs was to be awarded the Bennelong Medal with the citation: ‘for bringing hope to the women and children living in remote Aboriginal communities, for a future free from violence and appalling abuse’.⁵ I am not sure that recent revelations at Don Dale Detention Centre in what *The Economist* weekly dubbed ‘Australia’s Abu Ghraib’⁶ reflect Brough, architect of the Intervention, as a worthy winner even by the norms of his peers.

As I left the venue I ran into Brough. I had raised a few issues, when allowed, during the day and so he knew who I was and was aware of my published views. But that did not stop him from shaking my hand. I in turn congratulated him on his medal and diplomatically apologised for missing the evening medal presentation dinner; I explained I had a prior commitment at Brunswick Bound,

4 Reference in an introductory article: Wolfe 2013.

5 Wikipedia, ‘Bennelong Society’, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennelong_Society (accessed 10 August 2016).

6 ‘Australia’s Abu Ghraib’, *The Economist*, 30 July 2016, www.economist.com/news/asia/21702807-abuses-juvenile-prison-prompt-national-inquiry-australias-abu-ghraib (accessed 10 August 2016).

an independent bookshop on Sydney Road, where I was to launch the latest issue of *Arena Journal* with its own special focus on 'Indigenous Futures: After the Intervention'.⁷

It was at Brunswick Bound and at the subsequent dinner when we sat together that I first met and engaged with Patrick.⁸ My launch speech, from what I recall, was a somewhat breathless account of the paternalistic and strongly assimilationist views held by those powerful people at the Windsor and a plea to the Arena group, with whom I was and remain closely affiliated, to critically engage with such views. Arena of course had earlier commissioned and published the collection *Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia* as a rapid political response to the Intervention in the lead-up to the 2007 election when both Howard and Brough lost their seats. And later on it published a landmark volume *Stolen Lands, Broken Cultures: The Settler Colonial Present*,⁹ deeply influenced by Patrick's theorisations and that ended with an essay by Patrick: 'New Jews for Old: Settler State Formation and the Impossibility of Zionism'.

At the launch, Patrick introduced himself very warmly, I think with one of those almost de rigueur inner-Melbourne man hugs. We were pretty familiar with each other's work and political positions; and I was sympathetic to his critical challenge to my discipline of anthropology to reflect on its role in the colonial project. Patrick was a critic of the establishment, which for me enhanced his standing. Indeed, I took an instant liking to Patrick, which is always a great relief when you especially like someone's published scholarship: liking the author as an empathetic human being so enhances the appeal of their work. Patrick was deeply and genuinely engaged both with his own life project and with those of others.

That first meeting formed the basis for an abiding connection around the twin and related questions of brutal dispossession in Australia and Israel, where I happen to have been born. Afterwards he sent me a now-treasured hardcopy offprint of his seminal 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native'¹⁰ with the scrawled inscription: 'Jon – Good to meet you. Good to have started talking. This is a more recent extension of the approach. Hope you like it. Looking forward to catching up for a proper talk in Canberra. Best wishes, Patrick.'

7 *Arena Journal*, New Series, no. 29/30, 2008.

8 I had further meetings with Patrick, one with Malcolm was enough.

9 *Arena Journal*, New Series, no. 37/38, 2012.

10 Wolfe 2006.

We never did that, but we did enjoy a blossoming email relationship after our first meeting: it was very yin/yang, his views historical, theoretical and abstracted, mine anthropological, empirical and grounded: there was interconnectedness between these apparent opposites that worked very productively for us. From what I recall, we only met a few times; we did badly in overcoming the 'tyranny of distance' between Canberra and Healesville.

One memorable occasion was more than four years later on 11 October 2012 at what was then BMW Edge, now Deakin Edge, in Federation Square at the launch of a book *People on Country, Vital Landscapes, Indigenous Futures*,¹¹ the culmination of a five-year project with seven ranger groups in the Northern Territory and New South Wales who were actively participating in a 'caring for country' social movement. Patrick was vitally engaged by the project and the activism of the participating rangers with whom he enthusiastically interacted, and he was highly appreciative of the vast geographic and cultural distance the Aboriginal rangers had travelled to participate in this event. Patrick was particularly captivated by Jack Green, a senior Garawa man from the southern Gulf of Carpentaria, who has been involved in land rights and conservation issues for over 30 years in the Northern Territory and Queensland. In an email the very next day¹² Patrick expressed his approval of 'people on country' that challenged the project of elimination through the assertion of environmental and political jurisdiction: where people occupied and cared for their country in accord with custom despite settler societies' efforts to clear them off their country, especially in the Gulf, where frontier violence was known regionally as 'the killing time'.

In that same email he lamented having left his copy of *People on Country* at some Indian restaurant in the city where he had gone for dinner after the event. We speculated in email exchanges about who might have found the book and what they might have made of it. But then Patrick remembered the name of the restaurant, Flora Indian Restaurant, emailed from Healesville and informed me, delighted, that they had found and were holding the book for him to collect: 'my dinner there's gone back down from \$37.00 to the \$7.00 I thought it was costing me! (not bad for an excellent masala dosa, hey?). Pity about the missed random inspiration. Oh well'.¹³

11 Altman and Kerins 2012.

12 Patrick Wolfe to Jon Altman, email correspondence, 12 October 2012.

13 Patrick Wolfe to Jon Altman, email correspondence, 13 October 2012.

We next met at the Arena Project Space in Fitzroy on 14 February 2013 when Jacky Green had his first solo art show, 'Flow of Voices: Paintings from the Gulf of Carpentaria'. On this occasion Jack was resisting elimination with his highly political figurative art: 'I want the government and the mining companies to know that we are still here. We aren't going anywhere. We aren't dead yet. We are still here, feeling the country.'¹⁴ The exhibition was opened a little unconventionally by the artist, Sean Kerins and me.¹⁵

Patrick was captivated by the occasion (see Figure 1).

As soon as the speeches concluded Patrick grabbed me. He was moved and emotional, and was adamant that he wanted to purchase the painting *Four Clan Groups*, a very busy painting with a complex story (see Figure 2).¹⁶

Patrick had lost his home near Healesville and most of his possessions in the Black Saturday bushfires of February 2009; he was impoverished. And yet he was the first on the night to make what was for him a major financial commitment. It was a painting, he confided to me, that he was keen to have for his to-be-built new home on his block high up on Lowes Road near Healesville. His brother Mike informs me that the painting never got a permanent home at the new house as Patrick was still waiting for decorators before hanging the art. 'It leaned instead on top of the wardrobe in the room in which I slept', Mike told me, 'I like it very much'.¹⁷

¹⁴ Artist statement on exhibition invitation.

¹⁵ Elsewhere Sean Kerins talks of Jacky Green challenging conspiracies of silence with his art and draws on Patrick's 'The Settler Complex' – see Kerins 2013.

¹⁶ As related by Jack Green to Sean Kerins: 'These are the four clan or language groups around Borroloola. On the left in white and black at the top are the Yanyuwa. To the right of them are the Mara. Underneath in yellow and black are Gudanji, with Garawa on the right in black and white. While we are four different groups we are all related through ceremony, culture, land and marriage. The circle represents the ceremony that ties us together. The boat in the centre represents a prau that the Macassans used to sail from Indonesia to the Gulf of Carpentaria. My great-grandfather saw one of these and he went and painted it on his country at a cave at Spring Creek. The Macassans are part of our history; they came long before white people. We traded with them. In the box at the top of the painting are three groups of people. On the left are Aboriginal people wondering what's going on. In the middle are pastoralists. On the right are government people. This represents us as separate groups, not working together. On the right are four boxes. At the top is a government man. The man with white hair represents the boss of the mine, not caring about what happens to our country. Below him are miners. At the bottom are two miners standing in front of some rock art. They don't care about the rock art or our sacred sites. They go looking for them, taking pictures, or they ignore them when the mines go in'. Sean Kerins to Jon Altman, email correspondence, 9 August 2016.

¹⁷ Mike Wolfe to Jon Altman, email correspondence, 9 August 2016.



Figure 1: The launch of 'Flow of Voices', with Patrick Wolfe at left.

Source: Courtesy of Jessie Boylan.



Figure 2: *Four Clan Groups* on Jack Green's immediate right.

Source: Courtesy of Jessie Boylan, with permission from Jack Green.

The years slipped by. My second regret is that I never took up Patrick's standing invitation to visit him at his new house just to chat or talk about his new and powerful comparative magnum opus *Traces of History*¹⁸ summarising decades of research. This was especially the case because Melinda and I visited Healesville and the Coranderrk cemetery on 1 January 2016 and had considered an impromptu drop-in. Tragically, by the time I visited Patrick's home for the first time two months later he was no longer with us; it was for his funeral.

I drank some red wine on the verandah that day overlooking Healesville where he wrote much of *Traces of History*. And I thought about his writings and the terrible things that were done at Coranderrk. Patrick notes in his book how he came across the descendants of these people in Healesville: 'They are in our town but not of it. They are of Wurundjeri country, which I am in, but not of.' Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin told us, in a moving tribute of Patrick as a dear friend of the Wurundjeri people, how her people welcome his ashes which are now buried on Wurundjeri country on the eastern border of his property in accordance with his wishes. He is now both in and of Wurundjeri country, an honour fittingly bestowed on someone who not only believed that histories should be written responsibly, but actually did so with grim determination.¹⁹

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¹⁸ Wolfe 2016.

¹⁹ This paragraph draws on *Traces of History*, p. 45.

Patrick Wolfe, my ‘Bondhu’: In memoriam

Dipesh Chakrabarty

Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service
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Some deaths are crueller than others. The untimely death of my friend Patrick Wolfe (b. 1948) in Melbourne on 18 February 2016 robbed the international scholarly community of a superb researcher who would have surely given us many more books and articles of first-rate scholarship if he had been, as they say, spared. Patrick was born and raised in England – his last book, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (2016), acknowledges the intellectual gifts of the ‘Jesuits of my boarding-school unhappiness, who blended their sadism with critical rigour’. By the time I met him, he had won the Faculty Prize of the Arts Faculty of the University of Melbourne for an honours thesis in Indian Studies and was preparing to go to London to pursue a doctoral degree in social anthropology. Personal circumstances returned him to Melbourne armed with a Masters in his chosen subject. He began research for a Melbourne PhD that he completed in 1995. Through a variety of peculiar circumstances, I ended up being the formal and final supervisor of his doctoral dissertation though, needless to say, I received more intellectually from our exchanges than he.

Patrick’s first book, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, published in 1999, was a remarkable study relating the birth of several anthropological theories, including the idea of an Aboriginal ‘dreamtime’, to practices of the settler-colonial state in Australia. It was not surprising that it led to many stimulating debates both in Australia and overseas. Not all agreed with Patrick but there was no doubt about the arrival of a powerful scholar with an imaginative, analytical and original mind whose commitment to the idea of justice was unshakable.

Patrick's domestic and international acclaim followed. He was feted around the world, invited to lecture at various venues in different countries, offered prestigious fellowships at universities such as Harvard and Stanford. In Australia, he held a variety of research and teaching positions at the University of Melbourne, Victoria University, and La Trobe University. Patrick now began to take a serious interest in comparative studies of settler-colonial societies. Out of that effort came his recent outstanding study of race and racism across a range of countries including the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa and Israel. Patrick was by now a distinct voice in the fields of his specialisation. An Australian friend recently wrote to me, mourning Patrick, that he was 'one ... [of the] truly rare spirits who allow you to catch a glimpse of a better world'.

Patrick was enviably erudite and an impeccable researcher in the fields that interested him. What really illumined and brought life to his erudition, however, was his unusual and sometimes unfashionable intellectual courage. We have made a cliché of the expression 'speaking truth to power'. Oftentimes, inspired by the likes of Michel Foucault, we even question whether 'truth' could indeed be separated from the workings of 'power'. Patrick grew up as part of the global generation that got mesmerised by Foucault's scepticism; but he never fully succumbed to the discreet charms of the French master. Not because he could not appreciate the subtleties of postmodern analyses; but because, being an extremely knowledgeable and conscientious historian of colonial rule and race relations, he was convinced that there are certain moments in human affairs – and they constitute, sadly, not a small number of instances – when power assumes such arrogant and brazen forms that it wraps itself up in all kinds of falsehoods about the oppressed and their pasts. At such moments, the only way to make the powerful squirm is to tell the truth. An enemy of oppression and discrimination until his last breath, Patrick never reneged on what he had come to see as his essential duty: telling the truth about the past. It did not always make him popular. I sometimes wondered if it were his uncomfortable views that made it impossible for him to obtain a permanent academic position, but whatever it was, I have never seen him lose his sense of humour or his spirit of generosity over it.

Patrick and I met, as I said, as two young scholars in Indian Studies. I stayed with Indian Studies, he moved on. But he never lost his interest in what he learned about India, and always retained some knowledge of my own language, Bengali, that he had learned at Melbourne University. My copy of *Traces of History* that I received as a New Year gift from him bears an inscription in Bengali, addressing me as 'bondhu', the word for 'friend'. And it even uses the Bengali word for 'but' – 'kintu' – as a way of gesturing to the 'yes, but' game that we always played while arguing with each other.

Many will miss arguing with Wolfe. For such a good sparring partner is rare in academic life. Even rarer is the generosity, kindness, intelligence, knowledge and humanity which my *bondhu* radiated in debates. Not just in debates. Patrick's humanity, made even richer by his terrific sense of humour, was in evidence in everyday relationships as well. I remember one occasion in the late 1980s when I was a lecturer at Melbourne University and Patrick a struggling graduate student (who was also then the father of two boys) of Patrick suddenly turning up at my door around midnight. He looked like he needed something. 'What's the matter?', I asked. 'Could I borrow that blue shirt of yours', he asked. Surprised, I said, 'Yes, of course, but why?' I will never forget the reply he gave me: 'so-and-so is in trouble, and I have to attend court tomorrow to testify to his character. But I have no good shirt to wear'. That was Patrick: kind, humorous, erudite, sharp in arguments, but always ready to fight for the underdog, in borrowed clothes if need be! How could one resist the charms of this remarkable man? He was indeed my *bondhu* for life.

Many have mourned Patrick's untimely and sad departure. The gap he left in the hearts of his friends is simply irreparable.

Patrick Wolfe

Robert Kenny
Deakin University

Patrick's loss is for so many of us a loss of a friend as well as a colleague and a scholar. I first met Patrick at the beginning of 2008. We had both just taken up fellowships in History at La Trobe University. I was returning to where I had completed my doctorate, and so at the first staff meeting of the year was surrounded by many familiar faces. But as we waited for the meeting to begin this very energetic man, who I had only seen at a staff seminar a short time before, was circulating the chairs around the table and introducing himself. When he came to me and we swapped names, there was recognition on both sides, which was surprising. I, of course, knew Patrick's *Settler Colonialism* but had never had any contact with him, so a well-known name was suddenly given form but I was surprised when he said, 'We have to talk soon'. It was a mark of Patrick's style to not wait for a round table introduction in which names can lose their connections to faces and interests almost immediately, but to move around the chairs to *engage* in an introduction. And we did talk several times over that year. Our interests overlapped: the history of how ideas worked in society, particularly ideas of race and concepts of humanity, focused in the settler colonial sphere.

There were things in common that drew me to Patrick aside of the themes of our scholarship. We had both come to academia late, and after a life of a variety of activity, and we both had chosen to live on rural properties after long attachments to inner-city living – and to a certain extent old-style bohemian inner-city living. It was this move to the country – he to forest outside Healesville and me to pasture country in central Victoria – which led to a closer bond for us. On 7 February 2009 – Black Saturday – we both lost our houses to the fires, evidence of how widespread the fires were. Patrick called me on the Sunday morning having heard of my loss and to tell me of his. It was a very emotional

mutual commiseration. The houses we had both loved were now piles of ash and twisted metal. We had never visited each other's houses before Black Saturday. But now we visited each other at the sites of our erstwhile houses, cleared then to bare earth. Although I did contemplate moving at various stages, it could never happen. Patrick knew this better than me. The fire had sharpened and strengthened our sense of belonging. I think we both felt that to not rebuild would betray place, would be to turn our backs on its reality, and our reality (although we both knew that our financial uncertainty might mean we had no choice at some point). He was living in rented accommodation and I in a shed on my land. As our building proceeded and we both struggled to get our life as scholars and writers back on track, we became aware of how much rebuilding related to ourselves as historians whose major focus was the settler colonial. There was no walking away from fire any more than there was walking away from the troubled settler legacy. Both fire and history confronted us with the Indigenous reality of our places. It was for this reason I decided I needed to take a scholastic detour into looking at my experience of fire in the context of the human relationship, to fire on this continent and elsewhere. This 'Fire Book', as I called it, was encouraged by Patrick from the start, a means to ground my recovery. I think similarly of the Coranderrk passages in Patrick's *Traces of History*, although I do not know if they were written before or after February 2009, whether on the balcony of his old house or his new house. If before, I am sure they were revisited and deepened on the balcony of the new house. *Traces of History* is a major testament, part of a burst of creative and intellectual energy that seemed to parallel the building of his beautiful new house. That the book and the house should have come to fruition at the same time is no accident, that this should have been so shortly before his too early death is a tragedy that leaves us with a gaping personal and intellectual absence. Like so many I value the conversations we had and will not stop missing the conversations I meant to have.

Brian Matthews
School of Humanities and Creative Arts,
Flinders University

It happened at a conference on the coming Millennium in 1998 or '99 at which I was giving one of the keynote speeches. My contribution was called 'Millenarian Anxieties' and I began like this:

(In loud, dramatic, apocalyptic mode): The world is about to end; mountains will split open; seas will overflow their shores; the air, static with power and burdened with thunder, will be sucked out of the heavens in a cosmic gasp; the planets flung from their orbits will hurtle into the chaos of deep space and death will at last have dominion.

(In 'normal' radio-announcer 'cultured' tones): In the afternoon, however, conditions will moderate, rain will contract to the east and temperatures should be average for the time of year.

Aside from the fact that I had shamelessly stolen and adapted this scenario from (I think) a Monty Python sketch, I claimed it as one – albeit extreme – version of millenarian language, expectation and imagery and in this way was able to get launched into my paper. It worked pretty well and got a good laugh during which I was conscious of one very hearty laughter somewhere in the audience.

When the paper and question time were done with and we were all having a drink, the 'loud laughter' from the audience came over to me and introduced himself. It was Patrick Wolfe. What happened then was one of those meetings where you feel as if you've known this person all your life: Patrick's engaging smile, his enthusiasm and that sort of bubbling pleasantness which distinguished his effortless sociability were all quickly apparent as we chatted over a couple of drinks. But so also was the sharpness of mind, the range of reference and the exciting, labyrinthine resources of ideas and possibilities which fed even the lightest and most inconsequential of his conversations. I had just become Director of the newly established Europe-Australia Institute (EAI) at Victoria

University. When Patrick said that he would like to join me in the new venture and contribute to the institute's programs and research projects I couldn't believe my luck.

As I and my colleague, Deputy Director Professor Ron Adams, quickly discovered, Patrick was a dynamic personal and intellectual presence in the EAI. To write this tribute, I looked back over some of the records I have of those very heady, exciting years. Patrick's periodic reports to me of his work, plans, meetings and burgeoning ideas are laced with his characteristic ironic humour and vibrant with the breadth, insight and sheer speed and élan with which he attacked his programs. Here are some extracts, which were preceded by his introductory note: 'Dear Brian, You'll want to organise and format this according to your own magisterial überplan, so I haven't bothered to make it fancy. If you want, though, I can always tart it up to your specification ...'

July 22. Member of public panel on Native Title organised by the Defenders of Native Title group. October 12. Public lecture on Native Title in Moonee Ponds Civic Centre, organised by Defenders of Native Title. December 14: Talk on Aboriginal history to cultural exchange group from Kyoto Seika University, Japan. December 22: Seminar presentation on Aboriginal history to Students International Training group from the US.

Overseas trip, October/November 1998:

I attended (by invitation) a conference (entitled 'Making History, Constructing "Race"') at the University of Victoria, Canada, on October 23–25 and presented a paper, entitled 'Genetic Arithmetic', which sketched out my intentions for the research project that I am carrying out at the EAI under the terms of my fellowship. The convenors asked me if they could include it in the published proceedings of the conference, but I have other plans for it.

November 9–17. UK. Had a number of meetings with Cassell, during which I proof-read my book for the final and final-final times (they still stuffed it up), negotiated publication dates ... and an Australian price ... got them to agree in principle to co-publishing ... in the monograph series ('Writing Past Colonialism') of which I'm an editor and discussed two manuscripts that had been submitted for the series ... all of which took much more time (and lunches) than it might sound. I also went up to Leeds (the Brotherton Library) to consult Frazer's notebooks on totemism and kinship for the Morgan article.

November 18–21. University of Seville [checking] ... the possibilities of researching the export of Spanish discourses on Jews and Muslims to the New World, where they got reapplied to Amerindians (i.e. the New World was quite old in some ways) ... I came to the conclusion that most of my blinding hypotheses were actually common places of Spanish scholarship. Oh well. The silver lining is that this made a crunch decision easy – whether to learn Spanish and study Latin America or learn Portuguese and study Luso America

(Brazil). No sooner had I got back than I started to investigate learning Portuguese. I've now started weekly lessons and the Brazilian part of the project looks better by the day.

In January, I was made a member (the only one from the southern hemisphere) of the editorial board of the History of Anthropology series, which is the benchmark publication for the discipline. My book, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*, was published by Cassell in London in January. The Australian launch is to be on April 23rd at the end of our first EAI global seminar.

Patrick was an extraordinary, creative presence during the EAI's short (six years) productive, exciting and crowded life. From the most ordinary of tasks – ushering at one of our evening productions, for example – to highly sophisticated, brilliant seminar chairmanship or delivery of one of his own landmark research papers, Patrick was an unassuming star of our adventure. Perhaps above all, though, he was a considerate, affectionate and true friend and a devoted father to Maeve. I was stunned to hear of his death, incredulous that such vitality, intellectual depth and acuity and such capacity for love and friendship could be so summarily and prematurely ended. On behalf of Ron Adams, Niki Poposki and the EAI to which he brought such shining gifts, I salute him and mourn him.

Patrick Wolfe's dialectics

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Patrick Wolfe's *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* appeared in 1998. Wolfe's provocation was to look for settler colonialism in the ongoing subjection of indigenous peoples in settler societies. The contemporary settler polities, he later argued, have been 'impervious to regime change'.¹ It was an Australian-produced response to the consolidation and global spread of postcolonial studies as discourse and method (quite interestingly, postcolonial studies had also originally been an Australian intellectual export). Wolfe's call became very influential and inspired the consolidation of settler colonial studies as a distinct scholarly field. This tribute focuses on his method and influence.

Patrick Wolfe was an unusual scholar. Always somewhat at the margins of Australian academia and yet holding at different times fellowships at Harvard and Stanford, he was able to contribute seminally to a variety of fields: anthropology, genocide studies, the historiography of race, indigenous studies, and the study of colonialism and imperialism. He was educated in the best English schools and was successful in the United States. The 'cringe' still fundamentally shapes many aspects of Australian cultural life but he remained marginal; the cringe did not apply.

He was my teacher, even if never in a formal capacity, but we had significant differences in approach. These differences have been neglected in criticism of settler colonial studies as a scholarly endeavour. We have been lumped together – and it was a great privilege. I'll get to some of these critiques in a minute, but let me focus on our differences. Basically, in my thinking, settler colonialism was like a waltz, a three-step dance involving settlers, indigenous

1 Wolfe, 2006: 402.

peoples and exogenous others; for him it was like a salsa involving indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Two is not three, and even though this sounds like a diatribe medieval theology scholars may engage in, it was not a small difference.² He regarded all non-indigenous peoples as ‘settlers’ and I do not. And there was another fundamental point of dissension: for him settler colonialism was a type of colonialism, for me they were antithetical modes of domination. One is not two – the medieval scholasticists again. Our focus was also dissimilar: my interest is settlers and what they do and what they think they are doing. For him, the focus was indigeneity under attack. He had promised that he would respond.³ I will not enjoy that even greater privilege.

He typically proceeded against fashionable scholarly trends. Dialectics and binaries had ceased to be familiar methodological approaches in scholarly pursuits decades before, but they still worked for him. And they worked for those who read his work, and they were many. Similarly, area specialisation was not his call. Reframing stubborn problems actually required him to think outside established disciplinary boundaries. As a result, as well as interdisciplinary, his work was eminently and inherently comparative. He was able to contribute to educating a generation of younger scholars working in a remarkable variety of national settings: Australia, Hawaii, North America, Brazil and Palestine.

This was his dialectical method: anything could be better understood by looking at what it wasn’t. He believed that the rigorous analysis of a specific topic could shed light on another, that one could understand the racialisation of African Americans in the United States by looking at the dispossession of indigenous peoples; that one could understand the current dehumanisation of Indigenous Australians by looking at the ways in which a nascent scholarly discipline had at once proclaimed their humanity while reflecting on their alleged failure to reproduce. He set aside the self-reflecting and self-centred gaze of identity politics and ethnic and minority studies.

2 He noted: ‘the “Natives” irreducible externality to the settler social contract ... prompts me to register an appreciative disagreement with Veracini, who has aptly pointed out – my disagreement being with his inference rather than with the point itself – that settlers bring their sovereignty with them. This enables Veracini to distinguish between settlers and immigrants, the latter being those who do not bring a sovereignty with them. On its own terms, this distinction seems questionable (where, for instance, does it leave White settlers of Irish descent?)’. In a note he then added: ‘My disagreement is not with Veracini’s observation that, while settlers found political orders, immigrants encounter those orders already founded. It is with the implication that this distinction within sovereignty discourse detaches immigrants from the settler project of Native replacement, an implication that ultimately (or so it seems to me) hinges on voluntarism.’ Wolfe 2013: 258, 276, n. 11.

3 ‘I am saving my disagreement with Lorenzo over his next line – “This is why settler colonialism is not colonialism” – for another time. This article is long enough as it is’. See Wolfe 2012: 163, n. 7.

This feeling was reciprocated. The burgeoning field of Black studies, for example, has had little time for him – although there are exceptions to this non-engagement. Aziz Rana, for example, followed Patrick's lead and looked at the ways in which settler conceptions of 'freedom' shaped policy with regards to *variously* racialised alterities and emphasised the binary nature of settler constituent practice.⁴ More recently, Jared Sexton offered a critical response to the consolidation of indigenous and settler colonial studies.⁵ Sexton is concerned with the ways settler colonial studies and native studies neglect slavery as a problem as much as they neglect 'abolition' in their approaches to settler decolonisation.⁶ For native studies, Sexton summarises, 'anti-racism without indigenous leadership is a wager for black junior partnership in the settler colonial state'.⁷ He dismisses this placing: there are ways out of settler colonialism other than being indigenous (or an 'ally').⁸ 'Abolition' (understood flexibly and in an expanded way) will liberate all because abolition is not about indigenous sovereignty as opposed to the settler one, but against sovereignty *per se*. Indigenous and settler peoples may be the 'peoples of sovereignty', Sexton argues, but it is genocide that unites radically different experiences. Genocide is inherent to slavery: enslavement is the prohibition of enslaved to reproduce 'as people'.⁹ Slavery is prior to indigenous dispossession, it is an *Ur* dispossession, the mother of all dispossessions: 'Slavery is not a loss that the [indigenous] self experiences – of language, lineage, land, or labor – but rather the loss of any self that could experience such loss.'¹⁰ I imagine that this criticism would have prompted Patrick to offer a reply. He would not respond to criticism that misrepresented his work, he did not defend straw men that bore his name, but he was keenly aware of the strategic uses his scholarship could be made to work for.

I once told Patrick that his work on racialisations (note the plural) was recuperating a line of inquiry that was last seen with Colette Guillaumin's work in the early 1970s. He took it as a compliment and added her to his notes.¹¹ Guillaumin had seminally distinguished between 'hetero-referential racialisation' (i.e. 'they are black and therefore we are white'; we are therefore defined as *not them*) and 'auto-referential racialisation' (i.e. 'we are human and

4 Rana 2010.

5 Sexton 2014: 1–15.

6 Sexton 2014: 2.

7 Sexton 2014: 5.

8 See Sexton 2014: 7.

9 Sexton 2014: 9 (emphasis in original).

10 Sexton 2014.

11 Wolfe 2006: 404, n. 2.

therefore they are not'), even though she had emphasised, as Patrick would, that different ways of constructing racialised alterities are always interwoven and very rarely operate in their 'pure' form.¹²

Comparisons in a register of difference and the theoretical implications of this work were central to Patrick's approach. He was suspicious of postcolonial discourse and its embrace of 'hybridity' and its assertion of a putative discontinuity with the colonial past. His rejection paralleled that of Peter Gran and preceded that of Haim Hazan.¹³ Patrick's recuperation of 'binaries' preceded Kieran Healy's parallel rejection of 'nuance'.¹⁴ In a paper now forthcoming in a most prestigious sociological journal, Healy concludes that 'demanding more nuance typically obstructs the development of theory that is intellectually interesting, empirically generative, or practically successful', and notes:

Connoisseurs call for the contemplation of complexity almost for its own sake, or remind everyone that things are subtler than they seem. The attractive thing about this move is that it is literally always available to the person who wants to make it. Theory is founded on abstraction, abstraction means throwing away detail for the sake of a bit of generality, and so things in the world are always 'more complicated than that' – for any value of 'that'.¹⁵

Patrick was never constrained by nuance. He would have approved.

In recent years, and largely following Patrick's prompt, settler colonial studies consolidated into an autonomous comparative scholarly subfield. The scholarly journal of the same name and the emerging literatures that Edward Cavanagh and I have monitored since 2010 are a testament to this strengthening.¹⁶ Possibly an indication of its relative success, settler colonial studies as interpretative framework has more recently been the object of sustained critique. This criticism was not coordinated and emerged from quite different scholarly settings. It should be taken seriously. Some straw men here, but not all straw men.

I'd like to focus on two examples. In a brief note published in the October 2015 issue of *Perspectives on History*, the professional magazine of the American Historical Association, Nancy Shoemaker has reminded us that settler colonialism

12 See Guillaumin 1972: 247–74. As a rule of thumb, a colonial world would prefer the first type while a settler colonial world would opt for the second. Auto-referential racialisation (i.e. what Leon Poliakov described as 'Arianization') fits in with settler colonialism's logic of elimination. On the contrary, hetero-referential racialisation (i.e. what Gayatri Spivak describes as 'Othering') works better within the colonial necessities of exploitation. Can this distinction be condensed in the opposition between an imperial form of whiteness and a republican form of whiteness? See Poliakov 1974; Spivak 1985: 252–57.

13 Gran 2004; Hazan 2015.

14 Healy forthcoming.

15 Healy forthcoming: 1–8.

16 See *Settler Colonial Studies* (www.tandfonline.com/toc/rset20/; accessed: 23 December 2014), and 'Settler colonial studies blog' (settlercolonialstudies.org/; accessed 23 December 2014). The blog has alerted its followers to more than 1,500 scholarly works dedicated to various aspects of settler colonialism.

is only one among many types of colonialism (she identified 12 types). What prompted her reassertion, Shoemaker noted, was that 'settler colonial theory has taken over ... Native American studies', and that 'settler colonial theory is now dogma'.¹⁷ While the content of this reaction is incontrovertible (there are many colonialisms, and yet this was never contradicted in the first place), the context where this is stated is telling: settler colonial studies is forcing a redefinition of established disciplinary boundaries. Similarly, Kēhaulani Kauanui, who has worked closely with Patrick, also distinguishes between what Patrick actually said from the way his work is used. It is too often asserted: settler colonial studies and its rapid consolidation can obliterate indigenous presences. She concludes: 'Settler Colonial Studies does not, should not, and cannot replace Indigenous Studies'.¹⁸ To 'exclusively focus on the settler colonial without any meaningful engagement with the indigenous – as has been the case in how Wolfe's work has been cited', she noted, 'can (re)produce another form of "elimination of the native"'.¹⁹

If Shoemaker was concerned with the ways in which 'settler colonial theory' compromised the position of Native American studies within the historical discipline (but note: this theory should not be characterised as 'settler colonial', rather it is critical of the mode of domination that it explores), Kauanui was concerned with the ways in which the reception of Patrick's work and its routine embrace was compromising the position of 'indigenous studies' within American studies. Kauanui referred to a paper by Alyosha Goldstein presented at a panel during the 2015 annual meeting of the American Studies Association (ASA) tellingly entitled 'The Settler Colonialism Analytic: A Critical Reappraisal'. Goldstein criticised the ways in which Wolfe's project had been reduced to the 'structure, not the event' quip. She also cited Robert Warrior's unease: 'I had a growing anxiety, however ... that the rise of Settler Colonial Studies has become – not everywhere by any means, but in some circles – an answer to the chronic need for more attention to and awareness of Native and Indigenous studies', an attention and awareness that, Warrior felt, should be fulfilled by native and indigenous studies themselves.²⁰ Kauanui, however, took care in not blaming Patrick for his followers' excesses.

Yet again, Shoemaker's search for primacy, with imperial and colonial histories holding on to subordinate fields, is perhaps as unwarranted as Sexton's search for priority. Settler colonial studies never suggested that colonialism did not shape the world we live in, and the two dispossessions could profitably be thought as simultaneous. They may ultimately be co-dependent. Besides, settler

17 Shoemaker 2015.

18 Kauanui 2016.

19 Kauanui 2016.

20 Kauanui 2016.

and indigenous peoples are the ‘peoples of sovereignty’ only in the sense that one’s sovereignty is asserted as the other is denied. One could by the same logic respond that white and black folks are the peoples of embodied property, whereby one’s ability to own bodies is asserted precisely because someone else’s is denied. Catherine Kellogg’s recent reading of Judith Butler and Catherine Malabou’s exchange regarding Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* compellingly suggests that dispossession is necessarily and dialectically structured into two valences.²¹ Patrick would have recognised his seminal input.

Criticism aside, Patrick’s work is truly reshaping scholarly boundaries, especially in the United States. The role of Patrick’s work in redefining American studies as a discipline was discussed at a roundtable scheduled for the 2016 meeting of the ASA, a conference dedicated to the theme of ‘home’. The rationale for the roundtable is telling:

A central contention of *Traces of History* [Patrick’s latest book] is that racialization ‘represents a response to the crisis occasioned when colonisers are threatened with the requirement to share social space with the colonized’.²² The implication of this argument – that race and space are inextricable, and that racialisation results from colonizers being confronted with the threat of having to share social space with the colonized – leads to the proposition that race distinguishes those who belong in the national home from those who are deemed out of place in it. ... On this roundtable, scholars consider contributions *Traces of History* makes, including the challenges it poses and the possibilities it opens to American studies and its approaches to home. Panelists approach the discussion of Wolfe’s book as experts in one or more of the racial discourses and histories it takes up, and from different disciplinary homes. As they do so, they explore how and why the study of sites of settler colonialism have and have not found a home in American Studies. Of particular interest will be how the book provokes a rethinking of erasure narratives that have characterized historical writing in what became the US. They also consider ways a comparative approach – their own, in dialogue with the one Wolfe takes in *Traces of History* – can enable new and necessary understandings of the articulations among racisms as they take place in disparate sites that are linked through circuits of imperialism. Interrogating how *Traces of History* is and is not at home in American Studies, in other words, offers an opportunity to take up larger questions about the future of American studies.²³

The scheduled roundtable is studded with international ‘stars’. Possibly culminating this work of collective appraisal, an international conference dedicated entirely to Patrick’s work will be held in March 2017 at UCLA. The call for papers is also telling:

21 Kellogg 2016.

22 Wolfe 2016: 14.

23 ASA Program Committee n.d.

The similarities that connect the histories and displacements of indigenous populations from Hawaii and Australia to North America, South Africa and Brazil, are rarely connected to broader questions of race. Yet interdisciplinary study of indigenous peoples in the context of settler colonialism has given rise to important new scholarship on the operation of race as a conceptual category and as a structure of subordination. Seminal insights in this area were developed by the Australian scholar Patrick Wolfe (1949–2016), to whose memory the conference is dedicated ... Drawing the distinction between colonialism and settler colonialism, Wolfe launched a rich field of inquiry, enabling researchers to develop new paradigms for the study of race that contribute to political theory, constitutional theory, historical understanding and new ethnographies of indigeneity. His untimely passing has created a moment to bring these many strands of inquiry into conversation.²⁴

* * *

Patrick once confessed to me that he was a ‘still a Marxist’. I would take it as a compliment but was surprised. I knew he had read Marx, of course, but I had grown up with very, very different Marxists and he did not quite fit the bill. I’d like to suggest he was a Marxist especially because of his scholarship and methodology. The referent here was perhaps the young Marx: someone digesting the best that Hegelian traditions could offer and discovering that things are not things in and of themselves but through relationships. In a sense, he was a Marxian. Dialectical materialism was his method, and he wrote a book about settler colonialism by looking at anthropology (and vice versa), and another about the racial formation that follows the emancipation of slaves by looking at its opposite: indigenous assimilation.

A parenthesis on what I mean here for ‘dialectics’ is perhaps needed. Let me refer to another teacher of mine, Carlo Ginzburg. He once noted that the ‘human species tends to represent reality in terms of opposites. The flow of perceptions, in other words, is scanned on the basis of markedly opposing categories: light and dark, hot and cold – high and low’. He referred to Heraclitus’s motto, ‘that reality is a War of opposites – a motto that Hegel retranslated in terms of their dialectical conception’ to emphasise how dialectics is essential not to construe reality but to perceive it.²⁵ So dialectics is needed not to express the way things ‘actually’ are, but to make them understandable. The reason we may think dialectically is not metaphysical. We think dialectically because of perception, because of aesthetics, and dialectics is needed primarily for heuristical purposes. It is here that I would like to base my claim that Patrick was a great teacher.

²⁴ Pers. comm., 4 August 2016.

²⁵ Ginzburg 1986: 109 (my translation).

There are scholars that imagine their interlocutors in a Machiavellian way, and there are scholars that imagine them in a Socratic way. They are either informing the prince or their students (there are many other possible approaches, of course). Patrick always had a Socratic approach, he was never Machiavellian; that is also why he was at times criticised for not proposing explicitly *political* solutions.²⁶

Let me focus again on his books and his dialectics (even though it was in the shorter essay that he was in my opinion at his best). *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* was ostensibly a history of Australian anthropology. He once told me that the reference to ‘settler colonialism’ in the title was only added at the very end and at the request of the publisher. As far as he was concerned, when he wrote it, settler colonialism as a mode of domination was not the main focus. And yet, to explain the evolution of this academic field Patrick defined settler colonialism as a distinct mode of domination. No one had theorised it before and in a systematic way. It was his ability to understand settler colonialism that enabled him to frame the provenance and evolution of anthropology; it was his knowledge of the ways in which anthropologists were embedded in a particular mode of domination that enabled him to conceptualise settler colonialism. Similarly, *Traces of History*, which appeared earlier this year, utilises his analysis of racism under settler colonialism in order to explain racism everywhere else (and vice versa). That such an explanation actually provides a compelling typology of racial formations is an added bonus. The definition of settler colonialism and the typology of racial formation are heuristically compelling and were not even the main point. Or were they?

He was my teacher but he was also my friend. Patrick taught me how to make sure a fire shelter is OK. I mentioned how removed he was from Australian academia. But he wasn’t removed from the community he lived in. The Coranderrk Aboriginal community were his neighbours. He was a victim of the 2009 bushfires. In succeeding months we visited often and my eldest daughter was the first one to dance on top of the cement watertank he had built in front of what would become his new house. New building regulations demanded that a wider clearing be opened before rebuilding. So we worked to clear the land. I worked at settler colonialism with him as well as on it. I say all this not to claim privileged access in interpreting his work, but because I would like to emphasise how Patrick’s scholarship was especially grounded. He was unconcerned with departmental squabbles, metrics, rankings, measurable impacts, and ERA eligible outputs. He took my daughters to rustle water from loggers. I would like

26 See Rowse 2014: 297–310.

to think of him as what once would have been called an 'organic intellectual'. This still is a compliment; these days if you want to sell anything wholesome it must be 'organic'. He was staunchly organic to his community if not his class in a way that was indeed revolutionary. This included an ongoing recognition of the importance of emotions. After losing his house, in a letter that was widely syndicated in the Australian press, he had noted:

My house was on 4.8 hectares of bush outside Healesville, above Chum Creek. It went up in flames on Saturday. There's nothing left but some unusable steel framing and a cracked concrete slab. Friends, neighbours, family, colleagues, strangers have all been wonderful. Alongside the sadness and the not knowing what's going to happen, their humanity has been truly uplifting.

I wasn't impressed to see the Prime Minister cuddling a crying man on camera. If he'd come across me while I was crying, I would have resisted his embrace, especially if the media had been present.

I don't need a public show of empathy from the Prime Minister. I need him to do something meaningful about climate change so that fewer of us will have to lose our houses, our animals and each other.²⁷

His scholarship was adopted globally but it was irreducibly Australian. It was conceived in relation to Australian developments. Whether it is overcited or not, Patrick's work is famous principally for two statements: one was about the 'structure', the other about the 'logic' of settler colonialism.²⁸ But attention to the specific context in which these statements were developed is necessary. That 'settler invasion is a structure, not an event', should be contextualised in the 1990s: the 'Age of Mabo'.²⁹ Similarly, his contention that settler colonialism is driven by a 'logic of elimination' should be contextualised in the 2000s: the age of forced 'normalisation' (the age that would see the Northern Territory 'intervention' and ATSIC's executive dissolution). The former was a warning against what Elizabeth Povinelli would call the 'cunning of recognition', the latter a warning against a type of normalisation that resembled forced assimilation.³⁰ Crime fiction novelist Catherine Aird said that if 'you can't be a good example, then you'll just have to be a horrible warning'.³¹ Patrick focused on crimes that were not fictional and issued two exemplary warnings instead.

He was somewhat removed from academia but never out of touch with the world that surrounded him. And yet, the 'structure' and the 'logic' are somewhat incompatible: one identifies permanence, the other supersession. Some have

27 Wolfe 2009.

28 Wolfe 1999: 163, 2006: 387.

29 See Attwood 1996.

30 Povinelli 2002.

31 Quoted in Kleiser 2005: 95.

recognised a focus shift between these approaches,³² but I'd like to emphasise methodological continuity. Writing in 1990s Australia, when following Mabo and the Native Title Act many felt a new beginning was possible, he warned against settler appropriations of indigenous struggles. Writing in the mid-2000s, he insisted on the need to prioritise resistance. There is no contradiction here and the two stances are merely two sides of the same coin. The times had changed.

He was planning to work on territorialisation and I was able to read an early draft of his next project. I suspect that he would have relied on his analysis of the ways in which settlers organise their relationship with the land to understand the ways in which other collectives do the same. Understanding settler colonialism as a mode of domination was in his scholarship always an accessory for something else, a means to some other end, one way of understanding a relationship. Like the British, who had supposedly set up an empire without really wanting to, this committed anti-imperialist scholar kickstarted a scholarly field in a fit of absentmindedness. Or did he?

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Book Reviews

The Australian Medicine Man (Der Australische Medizinmann)

by Helmut Petri, translated by Ian Campbell, edited by Kim Akerman

xi + 195 pp., Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 2014,
ISBN 9780859055833 (pbk), \$55.00.

Review by Kim McCaul
Culture Matters Consulting, Adelaide

Helmut Petri was a German anthropologist who first visited the Kimberley as part of the so-called Frobenius Expedition in the late 1930s, just prior to World War Two. He would return to Australia repeatedly after the war, in the 1950s and '60s, but this treatise on the Australian medicine man as well as his ethnography on the Kimberley groups he worked with (*The Dying World in Northwest Australia*, also translated and published by Hesperian Press, Petri 2011) were both the result of his first Australian fieldwork stint.

The original German text of this book was published in 1952 and 1953 across two volumes of the Vatican's ethnographic journal *Annali Lateranensi* (Petri 1952, 1953). As such it came seven years after A.P. Elkin's seminal *Aboriginal Men of High Degree*, but does not cite that work despite referencing other writings of Elkin's with clear appreciation. In the postwar, pre-Internet era, it is understandable how Petri could have been unaware of Elkin's important contribution on this subject. More surprising is that Elkin seemingly remained unaware of Petri's contribution even in the revised 1977 edition of *Aboriginal Men of High Degree*. Given Elkin's extensive scholarship this is a good indication of just how obscure Petri's original choice of publication was. That in itself makes this English translation of *The Australian Medicine Man* a laudable effort by Hesperian Press. Prior to this publication, Elkin's work had long been the principal source on what could perhaps be called Australian shamanism (Petri briefly considers whether shamanism is an appropriate term for the Australian context and concludes that it is (see also Lommel and Mowaljarlai 1994)), and as such I will be drawing some comparisons throughout this review.

Petri's work, much like Elkin's, is part literature review, part original ethnography. Unlike Elkin, who worked across many different regions of Australia and was able to draw on additional contemporary data from his PhD students such as Ron and Catherine Berndt, Petri only worked in one area and spent a comparatively brief nine months in the Australian field. Yet in many ways it is the first 34 pages of original data and its subsequent application at different points of the book that are the clear highlights of this text.

Without personal background in Wunambal and Ngarinyin culture I cannot comment on the accuracy of Petri's account, but it is clear that he was able to obtain deep and detailed insights into the people's psycho-spiritual world view. And so despite his introductory qualification that his data 'is perhaps no less fragmentary than many other sources', what he presents is unmatched by any of the other literature he reviews in this volume.

We learn from Petri that the *banman* (the term for 'medicine man' in this region) obtains his power from the rainbow serpent (*ungud*) who initiates him over the course of extended mystical experiences. This initiation involves the manipulation of the initiate's *yayari*, or spiritual essence, and leads to the development of a host of psychic powers, such as clairvoyance, the ability to heal all manner of ailments by psycho-spiritual means and the capacity to send one's soul on journeys beyond the body. Petri records the term *miriru* as capturing this collection of spiritual powers held by a medicine man.

Leaving the body during sleep states is well documented as an important concept across Aboriginal Australia (e.g. Elkin 1977, Glaskin 2008, Hume 2002, McCaul 2008) and it is clear from Petri's account that it was one of the key skills that set the *banman* apart from ordinary people. The *banman* was seen as not sleeping like a normal person: 'If he is lying in camp and has his eyes closed, then that is not sleep in the ordinary sense, it is *miriru*, and he is sending his *anguman* (shadow) away like a willy-willy' (p. 12).

These journeys can take the *banman* to the land of the dead, to encounter the creation ancestors, or to observe distant events among the living. Petri suggests:

We must accord these dream journeys a special place in the Aborigines' intellectual life, for through the medium of the Doctor as a chosen and inspired personage they help to tie more closely the bond between human society and the operative forces of fertility, generation and increase in nature that is so important for the continuance of all life (p. 13).

Cultural change was a topic that dominated much of Petri's anthropological work, and this interest shines through also in the points he highlights with regard to the soul journeys of the *banman*. Corroborees are one of the creative products of soul journeys, which allow the *banman* to create new ceremonies on

the basis of their extra-corporeal observations among the ancestors or in distant lands. In a fascinating ethnographic vignette of cultural contact, Petri describes what his informants called the 'White Town People' corroboree, which had been devised by a *banman*, 'whom the dream journey reputedly took to Perth almost 2,000 miles away [and who] was trying to express in this way how the whites move about in a large city' (p. 14). According to Petri, the composer had never physically left his land.

Another instance of social transformation noted by Petri was the appearance of a new kind of doctor in response to the *Kurangara* cult ceremonies arriving from the Western Desert and beyond. These doctors were apparently called 'devil-doctors', not because they were inherently bad but because they were working with new kinds of spirits, the *djanba*, who introduced the *Kurangara* ceremonies and were considered extremely dangerous (see Petri 2011 for a more detailed discussion of the *Kurangara*, also Swain 1993). But more fundamentally challenging to the traditional order, according to Petri, was the appearance of the Flying Doctors, who manifested some of the same skills that for so long had been the prerogative of the *banman*: healing people and the ability to fly, albeit with planes, thereby seriously undermining the *banman's* social standing. Much like Elkin, Petri believed that traditional cultural values and practices, including the role of the medicine man, were doomed to extinction. As of 2016 this has not yet come to pass, for even in what would be considered highly acculturated urban and rural areas I continue to meet people who use and know of men and women who are believed to have remarkable psychic healing powers (McCaul 2008).

Also like Elkin, Petri's work is couched almost exclusively in terms of medicine *men*. His literature review includes only one brief example of a medicine woman conducting a ceremony in New South Wales. Given this lack of data, it is somewhat surprising when he concludes, almost as an afterthought on the final pages of his text:

Certainly medicine women were observed now and then, who even received respect and recognition from the tribal community. But they were never able to gain power and influence to the same extent as their male colleagues. Medicine women hardly had any importance worth mentioning in social life. We have passed over them here chiefly for these reasons (p. 183–84).

This reason seems disingenuous as the question of power and influence is only one of numerous angles of analysis Petri pursues. Much more time is spent, for example, on how people obtained their powers and it would have been very interesting to learn whether the process for women was the same as for men. And in any event, it is clear from the ethnographic examples Petri has assembled, that many medicine men also did not enjoy greater social standing

than any other initiated man. I doubt that Petri deliberately excluded data about medicine women and consider it more likely that he simply did not have sufficient information for an informed discussion. It would have been nice had he admitted so much. Based on more recent work among the *ngangkari* of the Western Desert (NPY Women's Council 2003) and also based on oral history accounts I was given by people from the corner country of South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales, it is clear that medicine women could develop the same kinds of powers and be held in the same high social regard as medicine men.

Topics Petri covers as part of the literature review include the way in which medicine men obtain their powers (always some variation of mystical experience induced by spiritual forces), the kind of powers they manifest (dream journeys and mediumship, shape-changing and clairvoyance) and the medicine man's responsibilities for society. Elkin assembled similar data, but interestingly Petri includes sources not covered by Elkin. Like any literature review it can feel a bit like browsing through a catalogue and so does not make for the most gripping read. But Petri was clearly a thorough scholar, considering the inevitable limitations of access to material at the time of his work in Germany, and for any serious student of this subject matter this book will form a useful access point to the sources and a valuable complement to Elkin (1977).

As already stated, Hesperian Press has done us a favour in publishing this obscure work. They are also to be commended for including the original journal page numbers in the text, allowing the serious scholar (the most likely audience for this work) to go back to the original if they feel the need. However, small changes could have made the product even better. Including an index could have added great value as could have adding some headers for signposting throughout. Unlike the original German publications, in this book quotes are not always clearly distinguished from the text, which can cause confusion on occasions, and unfortunately there are a fair number of typos. The translation is good for the most part, but some sections are clunky and perhaps too much guided by an attempt to follow the original words than convey their meaning. It was also surprising that the translator expressed his inability to translate the admittedly obscure word 'Subache', when a Google search revealed it as a term used by Leo Frobenius for a particular kind of African witch. As such Petri's use of it in the Australian context seems to have been as a term of art from his particular ethnographic school, much as anthropologists in Australia embraced terms from one region and applied them across the country for similar phenomena (the Pilbara term *talū* for 'increase ceremonies' comes to mind). While these minor editorial issues may distract the casual reader, they are unlikely to dissuade the serious researcher from taking advantage of this important contribution to our understanding of the Australian shamanic tradition.

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Country Women and the Colour Bar: Grassroots Activism and the Country Women's Association

by Jennifer Jones

229 pp., Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2015,
ISBN 9781925302967 (pbk), \$39.95.

Review by Sue Taffe
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When we consider the complex issues involved in any movement for social change and reform we tend to place the action in cities. Country towns, generally thought to be more interested in preserving the status quo than challenging it, do not usually come to mind. *Country Women and the Colour Bar* is thus an unusual work in that it is about social change, and the unsettling of community preconceptions regarding Aboriginal Australians in half a dozen towns in the mid-twentieth century. Jennifer Jones examines Country Women's Association (CWA) branches which collaborated with Aboriginal women, during the period from 1956 to 1972, to establish CWA Aboriginal branches and thus assist in their cultural assimilation into the broader communities. During these 16 years the political landscape changed dramatically as the author observes, from segregated Aboriginal communities to a more politicised landscape when Charles Perkins and the Freedom Riders visited in 1965.

The book is a fascinating study of the social attitudes and preconceptions about Aboriginal people held by non-Indigenous country women in New South Wales towns close to Aboriginal reserves. Without power, sewerage or water, Aboriginal residents were often spurned by the broader community. The gap between the white and Aboriginal women was immense: the Aboriginal women were poor, with large families, no private transport and were controlled by restrictive state legislation, while the white women had stoves and cars, their citizenship was unencumbered and they were confident in their view of the world.

Aboriginal CWA branches were established at Boggabilla in Queensland, just over the New South Wales border, and at Grafton, Kempsey, Taree, Griffith and Nowra in New South Wales. *Country Women and the Colour Bar* is structured as a series of six case studies which examine the circumstances of leading local women to present arguments for the establishment of an Aboriginal CWA branch and the various strategies which are employed to bridge the cultural gap between the two groups of women. Near each town was an Aboriginal reserve where people lived segregated lives without access to services. The CWA women who supported the establishment of Aboriginal branches acted within an assimilationist framework offering friendship, and education to assist Aboriginal women to make their way in the broader community. These women were also educated by the contact. 'You mean to say you haven't got stoves!' a representative of the Taree branch clarified with the Aboriginal residents of Purfleet. This led to a successful campaign to get stoves installed in all the cottages.

We also gain insights into an Aboriginal view of the social interaction with white women. The baking of scones, seen as a hallmark of successful country women, was introduced to Aboriginal women who had been cooking scones in the coals for generations. They were amused at the white women's ignorance. Aboriginal CWA members had to learn that every request had to be put in writing before a decision could be made. This was valuable experience in negotiating within the CWA committee structure.

Negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people were recognised as a serious impediment to Aboriginal assimilation into the wider community. CWA branches employed inclusive strategies to encourage acceptance. The Burnt Bridge-Greenhill CWA, near Kempsey, held its first baby show where white judges assessed the beautiful, chubby Aboriginal babies. At Grafton the annual Queen of the Jacaranda festival competition was used to promote a poised, attractive, young Aboriginal woman. Rachel 'Dolly' Mundine was nominated and supported by the Copmanhurst-Baryulgil Branch of the Country Women's Association in 1968. Mick Mundine, Dolly's brother, acknowledged that it was 'a big thing for Aboriginal people, to go and try to be the Jacaranda Queen'. Dolly was not crowned but, as Jones points out, the fact of her inclusion validated Aboriginal women's interest in fashion and demonstrated their abilities in public speaking and fundraising, providing entrees into white country women's social world.

On both sides of the cultural divide successes in collaboration and communication could be traced to the drive and vision of women who were prepared to listen and negotiate. Thelma Bate, a member of the CWA executive, worked tirelessly, believing that integration of Aboriginal children into the mainstream white community depended upon the education of their mothers. Foundation president of the Purfleet CWA, Ella Simon, was a dogged advocate for supported

self-help. These women, and others like them, were responsible for practical improvements, such as the acquisition of stoves, and less tangible advances such as the development of pride in Aboriginality, expressed through the Gillawarra Gift Shop set up with the support of the Taree CWA to sell Aboriginal artefacts to tourists.

By the early 1970s Aboriginal CWA branches had closed or were in decline. Branches closed for a number of reasons, some local, others due to changes in the wider community. In the post-referendum period there was a growth in Aboriginal confidence in forming their own organisations, and with the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972 such initiatives were supported financially. In a publication marking the 50th anniversary of the organisation, however, Aboriginal behaviour was given as the reasons for the demise of Aboriginal branches, indicating an unpreparedness to acknowledge the validity of different cultural understandings and priorities on behalf of the white CWA members. It took time for a more reflective view to be expressed, with CWA historian Helen Townsend suggesting in the 1980s that closures were more likely to have been due to Aboriginal women developing their own priorities. White women retired hurt when 'the tenuous common ground was broken' according to Townsend.

Based on interviews with more than 40 people, *Country Women and the Colour Bar* provides us with valuable insights into how the CWA in some New South Wales country towns tried to assist isolated and impoverished Aboriginal communities. Given the power imbalance and the growth of an Aboriginal voice in these communities in the mid-twentieth century it is not surprising that the collaborations eventually waned.

Visuals add another dimension to the book. Gloved and hatted women, well presented for the world – Dolly Mundine with the other Queen of Jacaranda contestants, Ella Simon addressing the Purfleet branch – all help us to remember the very different world of the mid-twentieth century. A map is provided marking the towns where CWA branches worked for the establishment of Aboriginal branches in the nearby Aboriginal settlements. For readers who are unfamiliar with the location of the Aboriginal settlements and their proximity to country towns, however, it would have been very helpful to have them marked on the map as well.

Appreciation of the difficulty in achieving and maintaining cross-cultural collaborations continues to be necessary today. Acceptance of cultural difference can go hand-in-hand with support, as Indigenous people strive to empower their youth to find their futures in both their communities and in the broader world. This book makes a valuable contribution, showing the inevitable misunderstandings as well as the successes, in the long story of relations between Indigenous and settler Australians.

Defending Country: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Military Service Since 1945

by Noah Riseman and Richard Trembath

xi + 243 pp., illus, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2016,
ISBN: 9780702253977 (pbk), \$34.95.

Review by Joan Beaumont
The Australian National University

Much of the so-called ‘memory boom’ in Australia has been driven by the politics of recognition. Diverse groups who have felt marginalised – or, to use that overworked word, ‘forgotten’ – have claimed a place in the national narrative of war, the Anzac legend. Australia’s Indigenous servicemen and women are one such group. In the past decade particularly they have mobilised across Australia to gain recognition of the Indigenous experience of serving in war and the Australian defence forces across the twentieth century.

Defending Country makes an important contribution to our understanding of this experience in the years since 1945, a period not covered as well as the two world wars in earlier scholarship. Deftly interweaving archival research and life stories captured in nearly 50 interviews with Indigenous men and women, Noah Riseman and Richard Trembath explore the multiple dimensions of Indigenous military service: among them are the Vietnam War; regional surveillance units including NORFORCE; the evolution of government policy regarding Indigenous recruitment; the skilling of Indigenous women; the relationship between the Returned and Services League and Indigenous veterans; racism in the Australian armed forces; and the role of the Australian Defence Force in Reconciliation.

Racism is clearly the most important of these issues, shaping, as it did, all aspects of the Indigenous experience of military service. As is well known, for the first half of the twentieth century Australian government policy excluded Indigenous peoples from military service, on the grounds that they were ‘not substantially of European origin or descent’, as the *Defence Act 1909* put it. Despite this, some Indigenous men, for a mix of reasons which we can only

surmise, managed to evade this prohibition, which was itself relaxed, especially so far as men of mixed descent, or 'half-castes', were concerned during the manpower crises of both world wars. In the postwar years, when military service was seen by government authorities as a strategy in assimilation, Indigenous men could *volunteer* for national service. Unlike white males, they were still not obligated to serve – although, given that definitions of 'Aboriginality' varied bizarrely between states and the Commonwealth, some Indigenous men found themselves being penalised for not registering for national service in the 1960s.

Notwithstanding this racism in government policies, Riseman and Trembath conclude that many Indigenous people encountered little overt prejudice once they were actually serving in the defence forces. Racial epithets may have been used during the (traditionally brutalising) military socialisation of training, but in combat the need for unity of fighting units in the face of a common enemy ensured that colour mattered little. Whether this constituted 'egalitarianism' might be questioned. All military organisations are, after all, deeply hierarchical and a more significant indicator of equality might be the rates at which Indigenous men were promoted through the ranks.

Given this absence of overt racism – not just in combat, but also in war-zone hospitals and burial practices – it is difficult to speak of a distinctively 'Indigenous' experience of battle. Rather, the differences that Indigenous men and women encountered were more at the point of entry, and at exit when they found that they were denied the benefits of the full citizenship to which military service presumably entitled them.

One of the most intriguing chapters of this book documents how the Returned and Services League (especially in the southern states) championed the cause of Indigenous veterans' rights after World War Two: notably, for them to be allowed to consume alcohol and to vote in federal elections. Whereas at the local level some RSL branches excluded Indigenous veterans from Anzac Day marches, the federal RSL played a critical role in lobbying the federal government to grant Indigenous veterans the franchise in 1949. This was despite the RSL's leadership remaining passionately committed to White Australia. However, Riseman and Trembath argue, this tolerance on the RSL's part declined in later decades, especially when Bruce Ruxton became president of the Victorian branch of the RSL.

In the 1980s and 1990s, too, racism became more evident within the Australia Defence Force – at least in the perceptions of the Indigenous men and women interviewed for this book. It was not necessarily widespread but it reflected, Riseman and Trembath argue, a growing 'polarisation of popular opinion and entrenchment of anti-Indigenous biases' (p. 137) within Australian society since

the 1980s. Presumably also, Indigenous perceptions of racism owed something to the heightened sensitivity that accompanied growing political activism in recent decades.

Notwithstanding this, today's Australian Defence Force, the authors conclude, has made significant progress in recruiting Indigenous personnel and countering racism: in 2011 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders constituted 1.4 per cent of the total ADF (p. 129). Meanwhile, the wider commemoration of Indigenous service, which has been supported by governments at both the state and federal levels, has granted the recognition that has long been denied Indigenous service. How this interfaces with the agenda of recognising 'frontiers wars' as part of Australia's military history is a much more contentious issue, however.

On balance, then, the judgment of this book is positive: taken collectively, military participation provided a means whereby Indigenous men and women could acquire skills and employment opportunities often denied them elsewhere, and thereby represented one particular route for their empowerment across the last half century.

Experiments in Self-determination: Histories of the Outstation Movement in Australia

edited by Nicolas Peterson and Fred Myers

368 pp., ANU Press, Canberra, 2016,
ISBN 9781925022896, \$45.00.

Review by Tim Rowse
Western Sydney University

What was 'self-determination'? Is 'was' the right tense? Historians and others are beginning to treat 'self-determination' as a discernibly bounded period in public policy, a sequel to 'assimilation' which was a sequel to 'protection'. The subsidised formation of outstations has been one of the more obvious ways in which Aborigines sought greater autonomy within the settler colony. To move away from settlements and missions and back onto ancestral homelands (or 'outstations') seemed paradigmatic of 'self-determination'.

We have reason to think that 'self-determination' began around 1973–74 in the Whitlam Government's Aboriginal affairs policies and terminated around 2004–07, when the Australian Government extinguished the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), amended the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* unilaterally, placed new conditions on public expenditure (including welfare benefits) in Aboriginal communities judged to be 'dysfunctional', and reoriented the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) policy towards the graduation of the welfare-dependent into what some called 'real jobs'.

Another element in this package of changes was that the Australian Government in 2007 transferred responsibility for outstations to the Northern Territory Government. As most outstations are in the Territory, this put fiscal pressure on what has always been a state-subsidised 'experiment in self-determination'.

This book of 16 chapters historicises the outstation movement as the moment when two histories intersected: the history of remote and very remote Aborigines' ambivalent response to the opportunities and pressures of their colonised condition, and the history of the settler colonists' ideologies and practices of guardianship.

The latter is the easier history to grasp and to polemicise about. An optimistic policy ideology – increasingly vulnerable to doubts – sustained the 30 years of self-determination. Peter Sutton in 2009 called it the 'liberal consensus'.¹ This ideological formation credited Indigenous Australians with certain capacities for self-governance that 'assimilation' had eroded and/or obscured. Released from the paternalistic authority of governments and missions, Indigenous Australians, empowered partly by recognition of their customary land tenure, would choose the degree and manner of their accommodation to colonising Australian institutions.

The intersecting history – how Indigenous Australians were responding to the hazards and affordances of the colonial order – is the more difficult to write. This book will help us write it, because most of its contributors have been witnesses and fellow travellers. Many of the authors draw on field notes written at or soon after the 1970s initiatives of the outstation movement. However, they look back through the lens of recent debate about whether the experiment has benefited Aboriginal Australians.

The editors and some contributors acknowledge the current influence of the arguments of Helen Hughes and Gary Johns that outstations have been a failure, to be remedied by encouraging the aggregation of the remote Indigenous population in centres large enough to create economies of scale in the provision of public services (health, education, policing).² Mike Dillon and Neil Westbury, noting census evidence that very remote Aborigines already find such remote townships attractive, have argued that governments have been structurally disengaged from remote and very remote Indigenous communities, large and small, to such a degree that in remote Australia we are witness to a 'failed state'.³ Their 2007 indictment included the argument that some elements of government policy that had seemed to be steps towards 'self-determination' – making ATSIC responsible for certain programs, allowing communities to choose to receive CDEP funds instead of unemployment benefits – were in effect central to the state's failure to engage. Certain experiments in Indigenous autonomy were, in effect, essays in state irresponsibility. This argument raises the difficult

1 Sutton 2009: 17. I have discussed Sutton's account of the substance and the vulnerability of the 'liberal consensus' in Rowse 2013: 152–56.

2 Hughes 2007: *passim*; Johns 2011: 253–54.

3 Dillon and Westbury 2007: 30–49.

question of how public policy could renew and elevate government engagement with remote and very remote Indigenous Australians while leaving scope for them to choose the manner and degree of their engagement with Australia's economic and political institutions.

Some critics of 'self-determination' policy have pointed to the profound challenge – for a settler-colonial liberal capitalist nation-state such as Australia – of 'self-determination', understood as 'the right to political autonomy, the freedom to determine political status and to freely pursue economic, social and cultural development' which may or may not be effected through 'separate statehood'.⁴ Indigenous lawyer Larissa Behrendt points to the not impossible steps that Australia would have to take to operationalise 'Aboriginal sovereignty': entrenching a bill of rights in the Constitution; strengthening native title; institutionalising Indigenous processes of collective decision-making; increasing expenditure on services to remote and very remote Australia.⁵ For Marcia Langton, such rights-based perspectives give too little emphasis to two linked ways that Indigenous Australians can and should act in their own interests: commit to education and gain employment in the industries that have attracted public and private investment in remote Australia.⁶

Because remote and very remote regions of Australia continue to figure as the critical case in these diverse considerations of what is possible for Indigenous Australians, the book under review is pertinent. That is, what made the outstation movement 'experimental' was that (1) it suspended belief in the hitherto assumed model of Indigenous futures: that aggregated, sedentary residence is essential to acculturation to the demands and opportunities of mainstream Australian institutions, and (2) it shifted agency from settler-colonial authority to Indigenous localised leaders and a new breed of white men and women who were determined to help them. Australians now ask: were these mistakes?

The essays in this book take us to regions colonised relatively recently (mostly in the period 1920–60) by missionaries and public servants, and little changed by public and private investment in new land uses (with the crucial exception of graded roads and airstrips): the western desert (as far east as the western Macdonnell Ranges), Arnhem Land, western Cape York. Though some of the Aboriginal people in these case studies had experience with cattle herds (e.g. at Hermannsburg and Aurukun missions), none of the communities from which these people decentralised were pastoral stations.

4 Short 2008: 20.

5 Behrendt 2013: 163–77.

6 Langton 2013.

As several contributors make clear, decentralising tendencies were already present in the work of missions and government settlements well before the Whitlam model of 'self-determination' began to bless such movements with funding. Gradualist approaches to the assimilation of the most recently colonised permitted missionaries such as Harold and Ella Shepherdson (in Arnhem Land) and public servants such as Harry Giese, Ted Evans, John Hunter and Jeremy Long (whose chapter reveals the 30-year genesis of a government settlement at Docker River in the Northern Territory) to consider pragmatically the question of Aboriginal (dis)aggregation. Sanitation problems, the logistics of water (for humans and livestock) and fighting among residents raised practical questions about how and where to service the people gathering in their care. And, as chapters on Warburton (David Brooks and Vikki Plant), Hermannsburg (Diane Austin-Broos) and Aurukun (David Martin, Bruce Martin and Peter Sutton) point out, the decentralising residents could continue their sense of always having lived on their country, as the management of mission cattle or the harvesting of dingo scalps had provided new sites, for one or more generations since the mission formed, and had occasioned revised temporalities of movement, beyond the mission site itself. The chapter by Frances Morphy and Howard Morphy on Yilpara outstation is particularly effective in evoking the formation of that place (on the north coast of Blue Mud Bay) in a longer timeframe. Yilpara has been an episode in 'a continuing adjustment by Yolngu to the process of colonial encapsulation', allowing Yolngu 'to re-emplace a regional system of relationships' that colonial intrusion in the 1920s and 1930s had caused to change (p. 303).

Assimilation policy created one of the enabling conditions of such adjustment. Entry into full welfare state entitlement – effected in a series of legislative and administrative steps in the years 1959–75 – gave people more choice about where to provision themselves. On outstations they could combine foraging with shop purchases, as long as they could get back to a store or arrange for goods to be delivered. Increasing access to motor vehicles, aircraft and boats – by private purchase or public provision – was essential to this new mix of material supports. Aboriginal purchasing power was boosted by the global success of Indigenous art. Art sales were a boon to the Pintupi, as Peter Thorley points out, but also a new kind of vulnerability, as Jon Altman shows in his narrative of the Kuninjku.

Several chapters underline the significance of the new breed of outback whites who – with tacit or explicit support from some progressive missionaries and public servants – assisted Aborigines to decentralise. Bill Edwards recalls – evidently with mixed feelings – 'hippies' who encouraged Pitjantjara to feel entitled to support without reciprocating 'work' as a previous generation of whites (such as Edwards himself) had defined it; some even introduced

marijuana to the lands. Contributors a generation younger than Edwards recall the assistance and encouragement that they gave. Fred Myers positions himself as a young PhD student who reciprocated the hospitality of his Pintupi hosts at Yayayi, as they broke away from Papunya. Ambivalently, he recalls that he was in implicit dispute with those who foresaw health problems for the Yayayi mob (pp. 92–93). David Martin remembers his own work as ‘absolutely central to the everyday operations and social sustainability of [Aurukun’s] Outstation Support Group’ (p. 211) that serviced up to 300 people on outstations south of the Kendall River in the late 1970s. The support group persuaded outstation residents to contribute to transport costs from their welfare benefits; it distinguished between committed and merely symbolic requests for assistance, and it insisted, before repairing tractors, that the Wik devise rules to manage their use. Peter Sutton, hoping to do fieldwork at Aurukun, was enlisted by a family that aspired to develop Peret, a former mission cattle camp with no living patri-clan to own it. Sutton became Peret’s store-keeper, organising a flow of tea, sugar, flour, powdered milk tobacco, matches and ammunition, on a line of credit from Burns Philp (p. 233). He too found himself at odds with whites who asked how children on outstations could be schooled. More recently, outstation supporters have included non-government organisations: the Centre for Independent Studies and the Sydney Cove Rotary club have combined to contribute buildings at Yilpara, and the bio-anthropologist of the Yolngu, Neville White, engaged the Rotary clubs of East Keilor and Melbourne to help build for Yolngu families at Donydji in Arnhem Land. Much less happily, Scott Cane wonders how he might better have advised the residents of YaggaYagga (an outstation of Balgo Mission): ‘Should I have refused to develop the program in haste and let the remaining \$3.7 million return to Treasury?’ (p. 273). Noting the recent despondency of his long-time friend Balang (aka the artist John Mawurndjul), Jon Altman now feels ‘deeply frustrated and angry at my inability to make a difference’ (p. 282).

The prominence of white support workers in this collection of papers makes clear that what outstation families have sought to get away from is not necessarily the ‘white-feller’ world (which, in certain forms, they continued to find indispensable to their quest for autonomy) but other unfamiliar or hostile Aboriginal people with whom colonisation has sometimes forced them to reside. When some Aboriginal people made the best of mission or settlement authority by refusing to share its benefits with others (quite possibly on good customary grounds), they created the motivations for those others to establish outstations as the basis for their own particular claims on the colonists. The political scientist Rolf Gerritsen made this decidedly unromantic point in what Kingsley Palmer shows to have been more romantic times (early 1980s): Aboriginal people compete for colonial resources.⁷ Cane’s account of YaggaYagga tells how

7 Gerritsen 1982.

the flow of resources to Balgo – in the form of infrastructure for artists and royalty income from Tanami goldmining – made it harder to keep crucial older people at YaggaYagga. Sarah Holcombe presents the formation of Mt Liebig by those calling themselves Luritja as self-determination ‘in relation to both other Aboriginal [non-Luritja] and non-Aboriginal people’. She cites not Gerritsen but Nicolas Peterson and Peter Sutton who have modelled long-term Aboriginal processes of territorial expansion and contraction. All three writers are relevant to understanding the territorial micropolitics of colonised Aboriginal Australians – before, during and after the ‘outstation’ years considered in this book.

Self-determination is intrinsically forward-looking. Before they were colonised, Aboriginal people devoted much effort to ensuring that the next generation was equipped with the knowledge and emotions that they would need to deal with a world that was not expected to change from that which sustained their parents. In postcolonial self-determination, Aboriginal authority cannot assume this continuity of world and therefore cannot expect that what socialised them will work as a socialisation of their sons and daughters. One way in which outstations were an experiment in ‘self-determination’ was that they allowed elders (or so it was hoped) to reclaim control of socialisation processes that they had ceded (willingly or not) to the colonists. But what futures were such elders imagining?

Some of these studies reveal the difficulty of making outstations the primary sites of the socialisation of the young. White laments ‘the lack of educational and training opportunities for [Yolngu] youth and young adults who are not equipped for formal secondary education’ (p. 342). Frances Morphy and Howard Morphy report that Yilpara adults have had to work hard politically to get the schooling they thought their children and youth needed. Altman worries that there is no clear alternative to being trained on Kuninjku country as an artist. YaggaYagga teenagers were left without role models, reports Cane. Bruce Martin (a Wik schooled beyond his homeland) finds on returning to Aurukun youths who have gained neither ‘deep cultural knowledge nor the ability to work between two worlds’ (p. 223). Brooks and Plant do not see among Ngaanyatjarra any development of a capacity to engage with the outside world. Holcombe briefly mentions that the youth of Mt Liebig – as in some other western desert communities – have troubled their elders with petrol-sniffing.

For the government, the imagined Aboriginal future’s central feature was the reduction or withdrawal of public financial support for outstation residents. That is, according to a Department of Aboriginal Affairs instruction (reproduced in Nic Peterson’s account of Nyirrpi) outstations were worth enabling if their intending residents proposed to be ‘self sustaining (cash flow, food and satisfaction of other basic needs)’ and if the local public servants saw ‘potential of project to be self-sustaining’ (p. 166). I doubt that the Aboriginal residents

understood this to be their venture's rationale: as 'disadvantaged' citizens they have had good reason to expect the state to finance the gap between what they earn and what they need to live even a materially poor existence. And did any of their local public service and mission champions believe that outstations would become 'self-sustaining'? Peterson doubts that policymakers have ever been able to imagine with any confidence 'the future for Aboriginal people in remote desert Australia', and he sees this as an instance of a worldwide problem of 'populations that are surplus to the labour requirements of their national economies' (p. 177). That is the deep structural problem to which outstations have become the much-debated experimental solution.

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Finding Eliza: Power and Colonial Storytelling

by Larissa Behrendt

211 pp., illus, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2016,
ISBN 9780702253904 (pbk), \$24.95.

Review by Peter Read
National Centre for Indigenous History
The Australian National University

Larissa Behrendt, distinguished Professor of Law in the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology Sydney, has extended her redoubtable talents into film-production, fiction and history. This short but punchy book begins with the variety of ways in which the story of Eliza Fraser, shipwrecked off Fraser Island near Hervey Bay in 1836, has been interpreted by many writers of many generations. Fraser's story has been conflated with popular tales of Native American and Man Friday-style savages, which served to exaggerate the supposed barbarism of her hosts and enabled subsequent writers to place her story firmly into the sensational category of female captivity narratives. In this she traverses the same ground as other writers, especially Kay Shaeffer and Veronica Brady.

A short chapter addresses the Butchulla people, amongst whom Fraser lived. The Elder Olga Miller, following an oral tradition, believes that a Clever Woman, on Fraser's unexpected arrival, marked her with white ochre which continued to protect her until her rescue. Fraser was indignant at being asked to carry out camp chores which Olga Miller interpreted as her necessary contribution to her being cared for.

From this point the book widens into a broader discussion on literature, including an analysis of Pritchard's *Coonardoo*. Many, including Manning Clark, welcomed the book demonstrating that love was possible between whites and Aborigines (as if such a proposition needed to be verified). Behrendt is a harsher critic, arguing, rightly, that the book is also an 'unacknowledged legacy of colonisation on Aboriginal women: their inability to freely consent to sexual

relations with the white men, who had the power of life and death over them, was fundamentally constrained'. She gives a series of well-known examples to demonstrate the point of 'life and death'. I'll add another, not at all well known. In October 1889, an employee of Bradshaw's Run (Northern Territory) wrote in his diary:

5 October. [1889] Found the runaway Charles Kolomboi, and Yarinbella, chained the former up all night.

Fri 6th. Ivan [Egoriffe, the station's psychopathic overseer] gave Kolomboi the father of a bumping and set him and the lubra to glory.

In Chapter Seven, Behrendt introduces Eddie Burrup and the book changes gear. As is now well known, Elizabeth Durack constructed her *nom de brush* Eddie Burrup, whose paintings first were shown in the exhibition *Native Title Now* in 1996. Her sister Mary wrote the very powerful 'Lament for the drowned country' in 1972, about the country flooded by the Ord River dam. She always made it clear that she had written it, and it was not held much against her. So what's the difference? After confessing to the fraud in 1997, Elizabeth stated that Burrup was an alter ego, the result of her own creative processes. She even developed – after the revelation – a fictitious biography of Burrup in which he accepted the British occupation as justified, and describes the whites whom he had met as benevolent. 'Barrup' thus set aside the long history outlined in the previous chapter. Behrendt concludes, 'It is impossible to view her position and claims of friendship with and endorsement by Aboriginal people without remembering the backdrop of dispossession and frontier violence. Clearly, Durack created an Aboriginal person whose views of colonisation reflected her own'.

To me the second half is the better part of the book as Behrendt considers some contemporary but analogous issues. True, Elizabeth and Mary Durack had and have many supporters. Elizabeth showed herself to be a product of a rural upbringing that recognised many Aboriginal close associates, patronising as these relationships may have been. She outed herself and seemed surprised by the commotion. Behrendt endorses the view that Durack failed to respect the very law and culture in which she claimed empathy and understanding.

From here we proceed to the US writer Marlo Morgan's fictionalised work *Mutant Message Down Under*. More offensively than Durack's Burrup, Morgan portrayed her 'good' Aborigines as unlike anyone modern, university trained or urban. Her imaginary people are spiritual, noble, traditional, real – and uniting the two traditions of noble versus animal-like savage that Behrendt has been tracking – cannibalistic! The book was a US best-seller for months. Though this fictitious tribe seems a long way from the benevolent Burrup, in one fundamental way the productions are the same: both imaginary entities accept colonisation

as inevitable and are resigned to disappearing. So a positive, 'noble' portrayal of contemporary people is as offensively dangerous as the negative one with which the Fraser story was surrounded: no resistance, no confrontation and no connection with actual people.

The dichotomy between outback nobility and urban disagreeableness lives with us still. Nugget Coombs and Billy Wentworth were two national administrators influenced by it, I believe, while Behrendt carries her argument in a legal direction to the YortaYorta case. Olney J ruled famously that 'the tide of history has indeed washed away any real acknowledgement of their traditional laws ...'. 'Traditional' people did not manage land and waters or protect sacred sites (p. 173); the YortaYorta had not maintained their legally required (but very narrowly defined) connection to land or custom. Behrendt approvingly quotes Brennan J of the High Court, that there should not be unquestioning adherence to law if it offends the 'values of justice and human rights'. Blackburn had no choice, but, runs the implication, Olney certainly did. Perceptions change. Sixteen years after the YortaYorta finding the Butchulla had their claim of native title over Fraser Island granted.

That's one logical conclusion to the book, but I would have liked the author, independent-minded and fine scholar that she is, to take the analysis a little further into what seems to be a territory studiously avoided by everyone: that sparring Indigenous factions, especially in urban lands, use those same Olney-style arguments against their protagonists; that irrespectively of how well or ill the local traditional custodians have adapted to modern life, the tide of history has washed away their claims. Their illegitimate place must, it seems, now be taken by their opponents who have moved into their country from elsewhere.

I See Something Better Soon: How a Remote Community Was Transformed through Empowerment

by Jim Heslop

312 pp., Hesperian Press, Perth, 2016,
ISBN 9780859056380 (pbk), \$60.00.

Review by Elizabeth Marrkilyi Ellis (with Inge Kral)

The title *I See Something Better Soon: How a Remote Community Was Transformed through Empowerment*, suggests that this book is about the transformation of a remote community through empowerment. In actual fact it is an account of research that took place in the Warakurna School Aboriginal community in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands region of Western Australia from 1992–94.

By coincidence we, Lizzie Ellis and Inge Kral, were in Warakurna Community in July 2016 when we read Jim Heslop's book. It is now more than 20 years since the research took place so we read the book with the benefit of hindsight: Ellis as a community member and educator, who was born nearby, and Kral as an educator and researcher who has worked with Ngaanyatjarra people on and off since 1997. This review is written from our insider/outsider perspective.

Jim Heslop was the Principal of Warakurna School and worked with Bernard Newberry, the Education Department Aboriginal Liaison Officer (and later long-term Chairman of the Ngaanyatjarra Council) to set up a Parent Committee at Warakurna School and a reference group to oversee his research. The core issue addressed in Heslop's research was the process of shifting decision-making power from non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal hands in the school domain, and by implication across other areas in the community. Data was gathered from his journal entries, interviews as well as accounts from other non-Aboriginal staff on incidents and interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the community.

From Ellis's insider perspective this book is a useful history of people and events that otherwise would not exist. It recounts events associated not only with education, but Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal interaction in other domains at Warakurna and in nearby communities. Ellis even found a story about her own father – an incident that involved her father walking out of the community and whitefellas not going to help. Heslop also gives a history of the early days of government schooling in the Lands. He provides insights into the hardships of those times and the nature of the interdependent relationship between *yarnangu* (Ngaanyatjarra people) and school staff at that time. This gives the reader an insight into how the Education Department was doing its own thing and leaving out Aboriginal people. This set up a pattern of behaviours that has lingered to this day.

Ellis appreciated Heslop's discussion about inequality in power relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups, allowing her to think about the historical context and how Aboriginal people have always been powerless and most are often oblivious of this and the racist behaviour of outsiders: 'When most whitefellas come they tend to be bossy and disrespectful to local people. They don't recognise that they are in someone else's country and don't respect their home and their practices and wishes.' This brings us to the core of Heslop's research endeavour: catalysing the process of empowerment. As Ellis describes it, 'when *yarnangu* are ignorant of these power relations they stay ignorant'. Heslop outlines an ideal model of a school community, a model where there is strong input from community members, integration of Ngaanyatjarra language and culture in the curriculum and an empowered role for Aboriginal staff in the school.

Heslop describes various responses to the prospect of change brought about by the establishment of the Parents Council at Warakurna School. *Yarnangu* were keen to be involved in school governance, but some felt overwhelmed rather than empowered as they had no previous experience and often no training. The Parents Committee exemplified a shifting balance of power: when given an opportunity to be vocal, *yarnangu* made an effort to participate. However, according to Heslop, the Parents Committee was seen as stirring up trouble by other non-Aboriginal staff and there was opposition to the Parents Committee.

Ultimately, the research period ended and the changes brought about by the Parents Committee were not long-lasting or structural. Heslop had initiated a new model, but he also let people down despite all his good intentions because he too stayed only a short time. Nevertheless, as Ellis points out, the research process was like waking up a sleeping giant. It provided a turning point for formal education in this region that cumulatively led to a review of education in Lands in 2000 and a short-lived Memorandum of Agreement with the Western Australian government around the establishment of the semi-autonomous Ngaanyatjarra

Education Area. Unfortunately, Heslop's book, although published in 2016, focuses primarily on what is now outdated research. Subsequent initiatives in the Lands schools are not discussed nor is there any situating of the research method and outcomes in a broader sociohistorical or political context. From this vantage point Heslop's research can be considered yet another positive initiative in Indigenous education that has not led to deep structural change.

It is unclear who the audience for the book might be. Educators will find it of interest; however, it is unlikely that any *yarnangu*, other than Ellis, will read it. For example, Heslop's lengthy literature review of past education reports and recommendations may be useful for some, but it is too much for local Ngaanyatjarra readers. Nevertheless, for a reader like Ellis, now a university researcher herself, it reveals the value of research and has given her ideas on how academic support can be instrumental in supporting *yarnangu*, showing them the big picture and planning the incremental steps that can lead to change. We finish on a final positive note with Ellis's observation that something like this should be happening in every Aboriginal community, getting universities involved in effecting change and long-term planning with communities from the micro level to the macro level. In this way Heslop's book provides a model of Indigenous education research practice of value to educators and a useful historical account of Indigenous education in remote Australia.

Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia

by Ann McGrath

xxxi + 503 pp., illus, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2015,
ISBN 9780803238251 (hbk), US\$45.00.

Review by Liz Conor
La Trobe University

In the opening pages of her engaging comparative history of interracial marriage in the Australian and American settler-colonial contexts, Ann McGrath makes a pivotal qualification: 'colonizing nations were hardly conducive to happy marriages' (p. 8). Indeed, the accustomed historical treatment of the frontier foregrounds Indigenous women's sexual vulnerability and the violence ensuing from the failure of settler men to fulfil kinship obligations committed to through their sexual relations with Aboriginal women. In earlier colonial print 'primitive' sexuality has been embellished with prostitution, polygamy, child bestowal and bride capture. McGrath notes in settler fantasies of the frontier Aboriginal women 'appear only as an antidote to sodomy and as a dirty joke' (p. 23). McGrath does not discount sexual violence on the frontier and in its aftermath, but decisively repudiates that this was the only expression of sexual contact. In her eye-opening telling of enduring romances and marriages across the racial divide, McGrath interrogates these reductive tropes and reinstates the agency of Indigenous women some of whom have spoken 'candidly' with her, even 'joyfully' (p. xxiv), of engaging in relationships of varying length and commitment depending on their preference.

Throughout *Illicit Love* the tenderness, desire and love of Indigenous and settler men and women for each other confounds a stockpile of tropes associated with racialised sexuality, from captivity narratives with their sexual enslavement of seized white women to the subjection of 'Squaws' and 'Lubras' by their 'brutal overlords'. McGrath dubs these 'narratives of mismatch', deployed to guard the 'borders of gender and frontier' (p. 81). Through her telling of the intriguing

connections created by intermarriage, McGrath lays bare 'unseen networks' more repressed than forgotten because of the ways they entwined Indigenous and settler sovereignties. McGrath's focus on sovereignty refrains throughout. Racial regimes were thereby perforated at the inception of nation-making, or federation in the United States and Australia respectively. She wryly observes (since a lot of us live in them and those of us who are debarred may know this better) 'all marriage choices have a certain political element' (p. 203). But far more than the private means to enforce gendered proscriptions and monogamous heteronormativity McGrath assigns 'Marriage, the flag of empire' (p. 114).

The function of marriage in European diplomacy and trade is commonly understood. We're informed the word sovereignty has its provenance in the King James Bible's Genesis where it refers to man's sovereignty over his wife and slaves (p. 181). The revelatory outlook of *Illicit Love* is its foregrounding of the other side of settler desire. For Aboriginal Australians intimate relationships were integral to the storied landscapes that forged the topography of their dreaming, 'In this personal landscape, configured out of human relationships over millennia, mortality tales remind people of the drastic results of infringing marriage laws' (p. 102). McGrath details the ways Aboriginal marriages were already formalised. They cemented complex kinship relations and granted access to outlying nations, incorporating distant people within law and embedding trade routes. All of which were robust forms of strictly observed marital diplomacy. She adds, for Indigenous communities marriage was a 'means of asserting and extending [their] land-based sovereignty' (p. 294). All of which, as McGrath reasons, was indubitably *civil*.

Perhaps her most bravura assertion is that marriage is 'a performance of sovereignty' (p. 2) as well as of kinship and diplomacy. Through the stories of interracial couples she returns us to her newly conceived domain, 'the marital middleground' and convincingly argues 'these were grounds where dual and duelling sovereignties were enacted' (p. 3).

The affair of missionary Ernest Gribble and Jeannie Forbes was a remarkable breach of the sexual strictures he enforced in his mission, with often gratuitous humiliation. Gribble characterised 'native' marriage as inherently debasing and exploitative. Yarrabah Mission was designed to end any observance of custom characterised as polygamy and child bestowal. The missions ostensibly protected native women and girls from the sexual depredations of white men. All the more mortifying then when Gribble's own brother was accused of raping a 15-year-old Aboriginal girl who then carried his child. His sister conceived a child with an Aboriginal man and eventually clandestinely married him, becoming Mrs Wondunna. The pervasive frontier vulnerability of Aboriginal women was a central rationale for protection-era state administrations and the removal of Aboriginal peoples to missions. Perhaps Gribble was incapable

of imagining the reciprocated desire and sexual agency of Aboriginal women until he was literally drawn into the open arms of Jeannie Forbes. McGrath observes, 'any consent she exercised was much qualified' (p. 144). Yet *Illicit Love* advances the prospect for mutually fostered, returned love which defied the racial homogeneity these nation-states pursued.

Gribble had gone to enormous lengths to enforce monogamy, building gender segregated dormitories, imposing curfews, and prohibiting extended families from staying in matrimonial homes. His elaborately public white weddings brokered new geopolitical relations. McGrath writes,

On what was classed as "Crown land," the British sovereign, the public spectacle of a Christian wedding ceremony had a double meaning. It implied a new form of governance that was premised upon imperial and colonizing hierarchies. It was embodied in, and underwritten by, new forms of gender and marital relations (p. 118).

Yet with his imposition of Christian monogamous marriage Gribble contravened Aboriginal laws that were so stringently observed some indiscretions carried the death penalty. Gribble was blundering blind into Indigenous marriage laws, disrupting the intergenerational obligations and compensations of kinship landowning contracts. To disguise his own unborn child he rushed Jeannie into a union with a man already tribally married. The ensuing strife was descriptive of the inadvertent destabilising of families and communities wrought by myopic missionaries.

McGrath takes a novel approach to marriage restriction enforced through Queensland's 1897 *Aboriginal's Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act*. She draws attention to state surveillance of white supplicants for the hands of Aboriginal women in marriage. The protectors Meston and Roth effectively appointed themselves 'fathers of the bride to all Indigenous women' (p. 270), in a regulation that, as it transpires, could not actually be enforced. Nevertheless, this affront to white masculine sexual liberty was bitterly resented. It infringed, men argued, on their democratic entitlements. For the Djabugandji, Yidinjdji and Gunggandji people removed to Yarrabah, the contractual and kinship obligations of inclusive marriage law incorporated outsiders and newcomers into Indigenous authority and into the relations governing lands and its life-giving resources. These protocols of intimacy were transgressed and hybridised when Indigenous and settler people comingled. When 'that uncategorizable concept – love' exerted its exquisite pleasure and pain across the cleave of race, 'ever-expanding constellations of people open into the future of humanity'. As they do they 'reproduce the polygamous sovereignties that are settler-colonialism today' (p. 392).

The relation of marriage to statecraft is the focus of McGrath's account of the marriage between Cherokee leader John Ross and 16-year-old Quaker Mary Stapler just after his intense negotiations of the Treaty of New Echota in 1835 and as he frantically struggled to contest the Indian Removal Act. When Cherokee land was given to Georgians in lotteries, Ross's first wife died on the 'Trail of Tears', along with 4,000 of her people either en route or soon after. Dexterously interweaving Ross's treaty negotiations with his playful love letters, McGrath divulges 'the parallel between the gendered politics of marriage and the transnational politics of negotiating his nation's future' (p. 229).

As a defence of Cherokee sovereignty against white 'intruder' men who used intermarriage to gain access to Cherokee women's matrilineal land inheritance, Ross and his council imposed intermarriage and citizenship restrictions that were overtly pro-segregation. But by adopting representative 'modern' models of governance the political authority and economic autonomy of Cherokee women was eroded. Being allotted the status of the white wife was hardly an advancement for Cherokee women. Indeed, the white women who moved into their community by marrying Cherokee men faced often terrifying ostracism by their own white families. When Harriett Gold's betrothal to Ellias Boudinot was announced, her brother led a mob which burnt her effigy on the village green. McGrath notes, white women who married Indigenous men were being unfaithful to their race. The implications for colonial sovereignty by intermarriage is that it could only ever be incomplete, 'imperfect' indeed 'polygamous' in its very constitution and complexion.

By implication these arguments confer a certain intelligibility on women's sexual consent. When colonisers defined European Christian monogamous marriage as an indice of civilisation, they did so by characterising 'primitive' marriage as inherently debasing of women. Arguably, anthropologists' origin theories of marriage, along with companionate marriage instated women's consent as a central demarker of civilisation. In McGrath's enthralling telling of entwined sovereignties in the formative decades of Australia and the United States becoming modern nation-states, we trace lost ancestries, hidden in 'worlds wedded and unwedded' (p. xxvii). We realise that interracial love was 'inherently transnational', and that 'Indigenous sovereignties live on in love' (p. 32). Through creating families across the frontier, these entwined sovereignties are carried by descendants 'in their bodies'.

Illicit Love is superbly written. At time of writing McGrath won the prestigious New South Wales Premier's General History Prize. From the opening line, 'We are waiting on a file' every historian will be hooked. But the moving stories she tells of the radical valency of unguarded love will touch many readers' hearts, all with an entirely new appreciation of the shattering potential of the adage, love conquers all.

*Indigenous Intermediaries: New Perspectives
on Exploration Archives*

edited by Shino Konishi, Maria Nugent and Tiffany Shellam

xv + 205 pp., ANU Press, Canberra, 2015,
ISBN 9781925022766 (pbk), \$43.00.

*Brokers & Boundaries: Colonial Exploration
in Indigenous Territory*

edited by Tiffany Shellam, Maria Nugent, Shino Konishi
and Allison Cadzow

xiii + 212 pp., ANU Press, Canberra, 2016,
ISBN 9781760460112 (pbk), \$36.00.

Reviews by Kristyn Harman
University of Tasmania

It is sobering to realise that a generation has passed since Henry Reynolds's ground-breaking work *With the White People*, tellingly subtitled 'the crucial role of Aborigines in the exploration and development of Australia', was published. Building on earlier research into race relations and frontier expansion across Australia, in *With the White People* Reynolds specifically engaged with the vital importance of, and multifaceted roles played by, Aboriginal people in the white exploration and colonisation of Australia. Until recently, very little scholarly work on Indigenous intermediaries or cultural brokers in an Australian context has emerged to build on Reynolds's foundations.

Fortunately, two extensive new resources were recently published following the 'Local Intermediaries in International Exploration' conference at The Australian National University in July 2013. The first of these two new edited volumes has a particular focus on innovative methodological approaches to uncovering the 'hidden histories' of Indigenous intermediaries, while the

second volume focuses more closely on Indigenous 'brokering' and boundary crossing. Both volumes have a geographical focus on the wider Australian region, extending well beyond Papua to as far away as Tahiti.

Indigenous Intermediaries opens with a chapter co-authored by the editors in which they chart a shift since the 1990s towards 'a more complex and multivocal account of the practices and politics of European exploration'. The intermediaries referred to in the title are explained as being 'professional guides or other labourers who accompanied expeditions'. One of several really interesting facets of this edited collection is its emphasis on methodological innovation. The editors and contributing authors are conscious of aiming to go beyond simply replacing accounts of white heroic explorers with similarly constructed accounts of Indigenous people. Instead, their foci are the nuances and complexities of encounters, journeys, and aftermaths.

Nine chapters follow. Felix Driver examines key issues around how we think about actors and relationships, sensitivity to politics of naming, and a need to 'tread a fine line between ... salvage biography and critical history'. The next three chapters focus on Australia, beginning with Catherine Bishop and Richard White's exploration of historical memory and popular celebrity in relation to expeditions. Bishop and White usefully posit four periods in what they have termed the 'cycle of celebrity'. Maria Nugent's engaging, forensic account of Jacky Jacky's narrative of his expedition with Kennedy to Cape York highlights how it is 'at moments of crisis that Indigenous people become visible in records of exploration'. Nugent highlights the importance of adopting sophisticated interpretive approaches that take into account processes and performances when reading exploratory records. Traversing New South Wales and Western Australia, Tiffany Shellam draws into her discussion the sometimes overlooked elements of encounter between Indigenous intermediaries and 'strangers' encountered by expeditionary parties, referring to these as 'histories from between'.

The following four chapters focus on Oceania. Bronwen Douglas traces evidence of Indigenous 'auxiliaries' from the recorded start of European exploration in Oceania from 1511 through to the nineteenth century, focusing on several personalities from the latter. She examines the roles of Indigenous peoples as co-producers of knowledge about Oceania. Acquisition of knowledge, particularly in the field of natural history, is the focus of John Gascoigne's chapter where he argues that Europeans valued Indigenous knowledge more highly in earlier phases of encounter rather than later when European systems of scientific knowledge were rising to the fore. Harriet Parsons offers a new reading of Tupaia's artworks on Cook's *Endeavour*, suggesting they afford glimpses into creative collaborations between Pacific peoples and the British. Antje Lübcke

then explores the relationships between photographers and their subjects in 1885 in New Guinea. She demonstrates how the success of such ventures was dependent on local participation and expertise.

The final chapter in *Indigenous Intermediaries* is a fascinating conversation between Len Collard and Dave Palmer in which Collard acts as an intermediary between Palmer and the ‘old people’, engaging with the ways in which the latter interpreted explorers’ journals and white incursions onto country.

Brokers and Boundaries recasts exploration as ‘a collective effort’. Shino Konishi’s chapter explores parallels in the lives of two high-profile Aboriginal cultural brokers in early colonial New South Wales, Bennelong and Gogy. She demonstrates how both men leveraged off the presence of newcomers to enhance their own status and power within their Indigenous societies. Nicole Starbuck then examines early nineteenth-century French and Papuan encounters, demonstrating how the former oscillated between essentialising the latter and describing them ‘with ... admiration’. She also charts a shift in the balance of power, with Papuans becoming more astute traders over time. Mark Dunn’s focus is on Indigenous guides in New South Wales’s Hunter Valley between 1818 and 1830. He demonstrates how their role was crucial to early European expansion into the region. Unusually, Aboriginal women are the subjects of Allison Cadzow’s chapter. She draws on the experiences of Dray, who guided Conciliator of Aborigines George Augustus Robinson in Van Diemen’s Land and Turandurey, guide to surveyor general Thomas Mitchell in New South Wales, in the 1830s to offer an interpretation of ‘women’s actions in their own social and cultural contexts’. Clint Bracknell utilises the story of Noongar man Bobby Roberts in Western Australia to highlight how Aboriginal people were active agents pursuing their own interests when collaborating with explorers but with ‘decreasingly limited options’ over time. Roberts’s shifting subject positions amply illustrate Bracknell’s points.

Dario Di Rosa explores the fascinating roles played by Torres Strait Islanders in mediating ‘from afar’ European encounters with Papuans in the 1840s. Later in the same century, in 1890 and 1891, the British Administrator of New Guinea William MacGregor visited the Trobriand Islands. Andrew Connelly examines how bodies of knowledge acquired by local chiefs through earlier visits by whalers and such like informed their reception of MacGregor and their management of relationships with him. Chris Ballard’s chapter rounds off this collection with a focus on explorers who travelled into New Guinea’s interior between 1872 and 1928. He charts a series of stages that were accompanied by transformations in relationships between European explorers and local peoples. He concludes with an apt rhetorical question: ‘... who amongst us – is not an intermediary in someone else’s narrative?’

*A Journey Travelled: Aboriginal–European
Relations at Albany and the Surrounding Region
from First Contact to 1926*

by Murray Arnold

304 pp., UWA Publishing, Crawley, 2015,
ISBN 9781742586632 (pbk), \$39.99.

Review by Chris Owen
University of Western Australia

More recently the historiography on the interaction between European colonists and Aboriginal people on the frontiers of Australia has been moving away from narratives emphasising one-sided European domination, conflict and conquest to ones that reveal more nuance and detail while emphasising accommodation and exchange. Often of a more localised and intimate style, these histories recognise considerable diversity in both European and Aboriginal interactions. Belonging to this emerging style is Arnold Murray's *A Journey Travelled: Aboriginal–European Relations at Albany and the Surrounding Region from First Contact to 1926* that documents the survival of the Noongar people, the traditional owners of the south-west of Western Australia.

The period covered refers to the 100 years from the 1826 establishment of the British garrison at King George Sound (later becoming the city of Albany) to its centenary in 1926. Murray's aim is to draw attention to what he regards as the 'neglected' history of Albany and the nearby regions. He claims the work as 'a fresh and fundamentally different approach by focusing on Aboriginal–European relations in one major town and its hinterland'. Murray frames his narrative by introducing and outlining the changing nature of Australian historiography of colonisation – from one where Aboriginal people were often ignored and seen as part of the environment to be overcome, along with thirst and drought, to one where Aboriginal actions are given agency and motive.

Murray's achievement is to produce a detailed study in a beautifully written and engaging style. Periodised into seven chapters Murray sympathetically details how local Noongar people 'interacted with a considerable degree of peaceful and close interaction'. Indeed, the relatively slow colonisation and development of the district (due largely to poor farming land and slow population growth over a very large area) meant there was relatively less conflict than in other parts of Australia such as the north-west and Kimberley districts of Western Australia. In the early period Murray brings forward ample evidence of close relationships, mutual interest and even friendships, most notably in the well-documented and published interactions between Noongar man Mokare and Captain Collet Barker. Murray shows how this early period was characterised by colonists showing great interest in those they had colonised, though this interest would dissipate by the 1850s and earlier attempts to 'Christianise and civilise' Noongar people, who did not willingly concede their culture, would fall away to be replaced by increasing government surveillance and control.

Murray details how the advancement of the railway aided European expansion as numerous towns opened up along those lines, leading to extensive land clearing and further contact with Noongar groups. By the late nineteenth century Murray finds evidence of Aboriginal people becoming incorporated into the expanding European world yet whilst they were being acculturated into European ways many retained core aspects of Noongar culture and some, such as Tommy King, formally and passionately sought to claim rights to their land and associated resources. The final chapter deals with the introduction of the *Aborigines Act 1905*, which, far from helping Aboriginal people, simply exacerbated social marginalisation. This period was set against a background of concern about inter-race breeding and the emerging 'half caste issue'. Aboriginal people, far from dying out as was earlier forecast, were increasing in numbers. Murray ends the book with an account of local Albany Noongars Yorkshire Bob and Moses Wybung performing a well-attended corroboree ceremony as evidence of cultural continuity in the district in exactly the spot where Mokare and Barker had exchanged information 100 years earlier.

The value of these new histories for the informed reader is the references cited, although an examination of these in *A Journey Travelled* reveals perhaps its chief limitation. Having set himself the task of writing a local 'intimate' history and going into great depth to emphasise the importance of local histories that dispel the trope of Aboriginal people 'fading away', what is revealed is a comparative lack of engagement with primary sources and oral history material. In the latter chapters these are utilised more forcefully to draw the historical and familial strands together. Murray relies largely on secondary accounts to construct the narrative. Its relative weakness then, having commented on the 'wealth of official documentation' held at the State Records Office of Western

Australia, is how much more of it could have been utilised. There are other puzzling omissions. Murray bemoans the fact that 'no comprehensive study has been published of Aboriginal–European relations anywhere in the state's south-west between 1840 and 1900' but then fails to use one of the key texts for this period – Neville Green's *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, vol. VI (UWA Press, 1989). Unambiguously titled *Aborigines of the Albany Region 1821–1898*, this dictionary contains many hundreds of primary source entries of individual Noongar names from Albany and the 'regions beyond Albany' as European expansion continued from 1840. It contains Colonial Secretaries' Records that detail exactly when and where Noongar people went. Similarly, the wealth of oral history from many descendants of Noongar people from Albany and the wider south-west 'hinterland towns', where Noongar families have remained for generations, could have been better utilised. The result of this is the first five chapters appear richly detailed in terms of Aboriginal cultural detail compared to the final two chapters. These limitations aside, *A Journey Travelled* is an engaging read and Murray's nuanced and detailed interpretation of day-to-day interactions adds greatly to the wider understanding of the Noongar people of the Albany region.

Just Relations: The Story of Mary Bennett's Crusade for Aboriginal Rights

by Alison Holland

xv + 453 pp., UWA Publishing, Crawley, 2015,
ISBN 9781742586878 (pbk), \$45.00.

Review by Fiona Paisley
Griffith University

In this excellent book, Alison Holland provides the first full-length study of the life and career of one of Australia's most outstanding national and international advocates for Aboriginal rights in the twentieth century. Her study of Mary Montgomery Bennett is impressive for its rich research, thoughtful analysis, and for the sheer breadth of its reach and perspective. While this is a significant study of a woman activist and commentator on Aboriginal rights in Australia, it is also an expert investigation of the overlapping spheres of British, Australian, and Aboriginal history from the 1920s to the 1960s, and of international humanitarianism and settler colonialism in an era of emerging Dominion Australian identity on the world stage.

The importance of remembering Bennett is thoroughly and thoughtfully set out in this book. One of the many indications of Bennett's impact, ironically, was official efforts to close down her legacy soon after her death. Holland opens and closes her book with the removal by authorities of Bennett's personal archives from her home; thanks to the persistence of close friends, they were eventually reclaimed but, improbably, disappeared once again this time permanently after being stolen in the night from a garage where they had been stowed for safe keeping. In this startling story Holland sees powerful evidence of government concern regarding Bennett's accusations, despite abiding official rejection of her calls for urgent reform. From the late 1920s, despite her own critique and that of many of her friends, correspondents and colleagues in Australia and overseas (all of whom are present in this book), Australian authorities remained resolutely indignant at the idea of humanitarian intervention in national affairs.

The longevity and resilience of Bennett's pursuit of Aboriginal rights can be measured also in the series of important publications she produced, each discussed by Holland in some detail. From 1927 until (posthumously) 1957, Bennett authored significant books, pamphlets, conference papers, newspaper articles and memoranda: each directed at Australian and international readerships towards changing public opinion and reconfiguring official policies. They include *The Australian Aborigine as a Human Being* (1930), *Teaching the Aborigines* (1935) and *Hunt and Die* (1950). Then there is the evidence she gave at inquiries, her letters to newspapers, and various commentaries on government conferences and official reports. In combination, they indicate a level of public debate in Australia about Aboriginal affairs, pointing to the vibrancy of contemporary critique rather than its absence. From the interwar years to the postwar decades, the names of policies changed but Bennett saw in them the same fundamental errors and cruelties. She gave evidence at the Moseley Royal Commission in 1934, for example, only to reprise many of the same arguments almost 15 years later at the Bateman inquiry also in Western Australia. Drawing from government reports providing evidence in support of her argument, she was in dialogue with overseas organisations including the Anti-Slavery Society and the British Commonwealth League (the Dominion women's organisation) to which she contributed important information and ideas. Throughout, Bennett insisted that humanitarian standards circulating as best practice internationally via the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization should be applied within Australia. One of the great insights of Holland's book is the significance of British Africa in shaping Bennett's narrative about rights for Aboriginal Australians.

Given this was a life driven by a commitment to the cause, many prices were paid during Bennett's lifetime and one of those very real costs came with the theft of her papers after her death. Holland calls this act a 'violation' upon her life's work stating that her papers 'were a dossier of state malpractice and neglect on a significant scale' (p. 382). Against this violation and its attendant forgetting, Holland has set about reconstructing a political life of seemingly endless energy and determination. Bennett was an inveterate letter writer, a tireless networker and a resolute commentator, and so she appears in archives ranging across Australia and in the United Kingdom, as well as Geneva. Bennett also read widely, and her publications incorporate numerous sources reflecting her proliferation of contacts and connections in Australia and England. Her research and reading, referenced in her publications, in turn mapped an imperial and transnational world view. Holland handles this wealth of archival and published materials with dexterity.

Such a degree of activity expressed not only Bennett's passionate commitment to the cause but the importance of establishing and maintaining a community of like-minded individuals. Sharing information, acknowledging achievement, and mourning failure with correspondents provided vital sustenance for someone who was so often at odds with the status quo. Even a woman as determined and prone to 'self-righteousness' (p. 359) as Bennett clearly was sometimes also experienced despair, because she saw at first-hand the impacts of inhumane policies upon Aboriginal communities while teaching their children on missions, or when supporting many of those who bravely presented evidence on their own behalf at inquiries. Reflecting on Bennett's character, Holland sees the strength of her evangelical outlook, a way of being political that drew as much from the revitalisation of anti-slavery politics in the interwar years as it did from interaction with Aboriginal people themselves.

Holland identifies a crucial moment in this growing sense of commitment when in 1929 Bennett met Anthony Martin Fernando, an Aboriginal man who was also a critic of Britain living in London where he protested outside of Australia House on the Strand and spoke at Hyde Park Corner. Taking his advice to heart that she should work directly with and for Aboriginal people, in middle-age Bennett returned to Australia where she found allies in Rodney and Margaret Schenk at Mt Margaret Mission in Western Australia. Encouraged by their example, she pursued a reform agenda built on self-determination through land, community and education, and the end of so-called protective and assimilationist policies including the removal of children and indenture contravening international standards to which Australia was a signatory. While Bennett was involved in numbers of organisations such as the Council for Aboriginal Rights in the 1950s, during the interwar years only the Aborigines' Protection League shared her commitment to indirect rule for Aboriginal people through the establishment of a central inviolable reserve.

Throughout this sympathetic but also critical study, Holland represents Bennett as inevitably complicit in the complex relationship between humanitarianism and imperial and state control. Even her most radical aim (that of indirect rule), as Holland points out, had already shown to enhance colonial authority when applied to the case of British Africa. And certainly Bennett endorsed western ideas of progress, if seeing an urgent need for their humanisation by learning from Aboriginal social relations and connection to place. She hoped that finding just relations with Aboriginal people would re-humanise modernity, which she considered (in the aftermath of a world war) to be dangerously competitive. As Holland readily admits, from this viewpoint Bennett might well be seen alongside a generation and more of maternal feminists who hoped to secure a place in imperial affairs by claiming to speak in the name of 'native' women's exploitation by white men or by men in their own societies. And it is

the case that women's networks were important to Bennett's career: numbers of leading Australian women reformers and their organisations appear in the pages of this book as her friends and fellow evangelists (while in most cases not supporting her more radical aims). But Holland concludes that Bennett should be remembered instead for much more than welfare reform: for asserting a set of rights for Aboriginal people based on land, employment and education, and above all the ability to determine one's own future.

Several interrelated contexts for understanding Bennett's relatively radical vision are offered in this multifaceted study. Among them is her upbringing, described tangentially in Bennett's glowing account of her father and his treatment of the Aboriginal people living on the land her family occupied in Queensland. Holland writes that she found it hard to interpret aspects of *Christison of Lammermoor* (1927) in which Bennett appeared to valorise her father's use of force in celebrating the supposedly freely negotiated, mutual engagement between himself and the Dalleburra people.

But such contradictions are important to Holland's account, and she goes a long way to answering her difficulty by interrogating Bennett's larger experience as a British Australian woman of middle-class background who found inspiration in the humanitarian style and language of anti-slavery. Along with the League of Nations and the centenary of abolition in 1933, the United States was a crucial element in this heightened global interest in people living under conditions 'akin to slavery'. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was an inspirational text for Bennett, one she hoped Australia would someday match. At the same time as she published her biography about her father, Bennett presented an alternative policy for Aboriginal people at the Dominion women's British Commonwealth League conference (to which she was introduced by fellow activist in London, Edith Jones). Another agenda-setting paper of hers would be read at the same organisation in 1933. In these more political writings, Bennett promoted an idea of White Australia based on cooperation with and respect for the rights of the original inhabitants.

A third context for Bennett's emergence identified by Holland is a changing outlook within Australia towards 'the Aborigines'. During the interwar and into the postwar decades Bennett clashed with administrators like A.O. Neville on the meaning of Aboriginality as well as the white nation-state, but she, too, was influenced by the rise of 'scientific humanism' then driving new ideas about the modernisation of 'native' management nationally and around the world. New interest in Aboriginal people as reflected in public and popular culture saw the proliferation of organisations (whose membership included anthropologists) calling for the reform of Aboriginal policy and the end of injustice. Their activities were spurred on by events at Coniston in 1927 and Caledon Bay in 1933 that revealed to urban Australian and international publics

horrifying evidence of violence and injustice involving police and authorities, as well as ordinary citizens in northern and central Australia. Perhaps more might have been said in this book about the impact of Bennett's work in dialogue with Aboriginal activists themselves, as we learn that she was a correspondent with both the Aborigines' Progressive Association (going to Sydney to attend the Day of Mourning it organised in 1938) and the Australian Aborigines' League, of which she was 'one of the few non-Aboriginal life members' (p. 208).

Bennett's determination to make a difference reminds us of the importance of individuals in efforts to bring about change, in this case by campaigning for Aboriginal rights through mobilising a global discourse on the humanitarian reform of colonisation. This substantial scholarly study reflects the author's own commitment to that struggle and its legacy. In her ambitious account of this life, Holland confirms that Bennett's 'crusade' remains important to our present-day understanding of the history of Aboriginal rights. While worthy of recognition in its own right, that history and its leading figures – like Bennett – continue to have implications for contemporary debate about the relationship between rights and self-determination. Reflecting on the concern of Aboriginal commentators regarding the emphasis on welfare since the New Deal announced for Aboriginal people in the 1950s, Holland reminds us of Bennett's rejection of that approach when it was first introduced, declaring its claim to empower Aboriginal people as little more than another version of the protection and assimilation it purported to replace. If Bennett were here today, Holland concludes, '[she] might have interpreted the crisis of recent years as, at least in part, the failure to heed hers and the humanitarians' warnings before the war' (pp. 365–66).

Land and Language in Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf Country

edited by Jean-Christophe Verstraete and Diane Hafner

x + 492 pp., John Benjamins Publishing Company,
Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2016,
ISBN 9789027244543 (hbk), US\$165.00.

Review by Fiona Powell

This volume is number 18 in the series Culture and Language Use (CLU), Studies in Anthropological Linguistics, edited by Gunter Seft of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen. It is a Festschrift for Emeritus Professor Bruce Rigsby. His contributions to anthropology during his tenure as professor at the University of Queensland from 1975 until 2000 and his contributions to native title have profoundly enriched the lives of his students, his colleagues and the Aboriginal people of Cape York.

The editors and the contributors have produced a volume of significant scholarship in honour of Bruce Rigsby. As mentioned by the editors: 'it is difficult to do justice to even the Australian part of Bruce's work, because he has worked on such a wide range of topics and across the boundaries of disciplines' (p. 9).

The introductory chapter outlines the development of the Queensland School of Anthropology since 1975. Then follow 19 original articles contributed by 24 scholars. The articles are arranged in five sections (Reconstructions, World Views, Contacts and Contrasts, Transformations and Repatriations). At the beginning of the volume there are two general maps (Map 1 of Queensland and Map 2 of Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf Country) both showing locations mentioned in the text. There are three indexes: of places (pp. 481–82; languages, language families and groups (pp. 483–85); and general matters (pp. 487–92). The volume is further enhanced by the inclusion of other maps and illustrations in several articles.

The research histories of a number of contributors indicate the influence of Bruce Rigsby. Several are former students – David Trigger, Diane Hafner, Chris Anderson, Peter Sutton and David Thompson. Full appreciation of all 19 articles requires some expertise in all the four fields of the Queensland School. From the point of view of sociocultural anthropology and social history I found the articles by Paul Memmott, Erich Round, Daniel Rosendahl and Sean Ulm of particular interest, and I wish there were the resources, time and expertise to record similar data for other places in Cape York and the Gulf Country. Drawing on all four fields, their contribution presents a hypothetical model of changing linguistic and territorial arrangements across the Wellesley region over the last several thousand years.

The introductory chapter ‘Land and Language in Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf Country’ by Jean-Christophe Verstraete and Diane Hafner gives an informative overview of the development of anthropology at the University of Queensland under the stewardship of Bruce Rigsby. However, the reference to Ursula McConnel (p. 6) omits mention of her important work in south-east Cape York and her contribution to the mapping of languages and language-named groups in Cape York.

The first section, Reconstructions, draws on articles that in one way or another demonstrate the four fields of the Queensland School. The first contributor is the linguist Barry Alpher. His article ‘Connection Thaypanic’ draws on Bruce Rigsby’s study of ‘Aboriginal languages in their social context’. It is of importance to discover in what circumstances and from whom ownership and/or speaking facility in various languages was acquired, and to use these data to map language diffusion. This article is of major significance: it sets out the basis for the construction of a particular genetic group of languages (Alaya-Athima) and suggests links of this with east coast languages, in particular Kuku-Yalanji and possibly Guugu Yimithirr, Djabugay-Yidiny. Having worked with speakers of these languages I think that any comparative linguistic study would be enhanced by taking into consideration these speakers’ intertwined social histories.

Noelene Cole’s article draws on the knowledge of George Musgrave, Bruce Rigsby and Peter Sutton about Stories (p. 73) and finds that ‘the Laura Basin rock art, like totemic systems, functioned as a symbol of cultural identity’ (pp. 73–74), and that ‘the unity of Quinkan rock art style testifies to a cohesive, relatively wide-ranging social and territorial network of clans and land using groups with related languages and shared identities’ (p. 76). Her article indicates there is much more research to be done, in order to understand the ‘complex history and articulation of rock art style in the Laura Basin’ (p. 78).

The findings of Peter Sutton's informative contribution 'The Flinders Island and Cape Melville People in History' in relation to traditional affiliations, the clan system and landownership, and relationships between groups is applicable to the Cooktown–Cape Bedford region. On p. 90 there is mention of the 'killing by Aborigines of Mary Watson at Lizard Island in 1881' that is sourced from Robertson (1981). Mary Watson fled Lizard Island with her baby son and a Chinese servant after the island was attacked by Aborigines. All three died of thirst on No. 5 Island in the Howick Group not far from Cape Flattery.

The article 'Fission, Fusion and Syncretism' by Memmott et al. draws on linguistic, archaeological and environmental data to outline a hypothetical model of changing linguistic and territorial arrangements across the Wellesley region over the last several thousand years. This fascinating article, with its concepts of fusion, fission and syncretism suggests a resurgence of interest in sociocultural change and continuities that were key areas of interest of the University of Queensland's first Department of Anthropology. The authors' identification of a linguistic-cultural event 'which we term "syncretism"' (p. 119) may be a useful tool for anthropologists working in the native title arena in situations of conjoint or seemingly overlapping claims of ownership.

Section II, World Views, contains one anthropological contribution (by Benjamin Smith) and three articles by linguists or linguistic anthropologists. Through work relating to the transfer of freehold title to Batavia Downs to the Northern Kaanji, Atambaya and Yinwum-language-named groups (mentioned in footnote 28, p. 155), Benjamin Smith's analysis of personhood amongst the Northern Kannju shows the value of the Thomson archival field data and the importance of taking note of Indigenous metaphors with respect to explicating social organisation. As noted on p. 150, 'filiation' rather than 'descent' is the keystone to understanding the serial accession to ownership of a particular set of places or country.

Lacking linguistic expertise, I hesitate to comment on the articles by Alice Gaby (Hyponymy and the Structure of Kuuk Thaayorre Kinship), Mary Laughren (Possession in Kuuku-Thaypen through a Comparative Lens) and Francesca Merlan (Correlation of Textual and Spatial Reference This and That). I found Alice Gaby's article interesting in that it gives a new perspective to these systems by including consideration of all four registers (referential, vocative, bereavement and gestural). Francesca Merlan states on p. 15 that the language discussed in her article, Jowayn, is a Gunwinyguan language 'just outside our area of interest (but from a family of languages well-represented in the western and northwestern Gulf of Carpentaria)'. This work is of general linguistic interest.

The contributions by three outstanding anthropologists and a well-known historian mean Section III, Contacts and Narratives, is likely to appeal not only to specialists but also the general reader. Marcia Langton's contribution 'Botanists, Aborigines and Native Plants on the Queensland Frontier' took me back to my recording from an elderly Yidindyi speaker of her people's slow death by starvation after the destruction of much of their food supplies for cane farming. This important article draws attention to the 'introduced diseases and cumulative effects of dispossession (including destruction of traditional food sources, which resulted in malnutrition' (p. 223) and the 'starvation that befell so many groups as their traditional economy collapsed' (p. 238). The legislation that resulted in land clearing and the killing of 'feral' animals (including possums, koalas, kangaroos), and the impact this legislation had for Aboriginal people trying to survive in the bush are matters that should be considered by anthropologists working on native title claims. There is no mention in Marcia Langton's article of Eric Mjoberg's 1913 field excursion in Cape York, from Laura to the Alice River region, perhaps because this information was not available when the article was prepared. The reference to the establishment of the Lutheran mission at Cape Bedford in 1904 (p. 228) is an error; this mission was established in 1886. It is clear that the ration system became the dominant source of sustenance for the Aboriginal inhabitants of mission reserves; this should be understood not only in relation to the loss of customary sources of food, but also to the desire of Aboriginal parents to maintain contact with their children, who were held in the mission's dormitories. In this respect, there is anecdotal evidence collected during native title research that the implementation of the Education Act also contributed to changes in Aboriginal people's accessing of customary bush foods.

I found Chris Anderson's contribution 'Multiple Views of Paradise: Perspective on the Daintree Rainforest' very interesting. When I revisited Bloomfield River in 2007, I was astonished at the extent of the devastation of this region through land clearing and closer settlement, but not surprised. These developments were in train even in 1970, when the local Aboriginal people who at that time lived in camps along the Bloomfield River were being encouraged to move to the newly formed 'Top Camp' (now known as 'WujalWujal').

Chris Anderson's representation of parallel universes raises the question of how they could best interface. At the end of his contribution he acknowledges Bruce Rigsby 'for bringing me to an analysis where language (labelling) and culture (how one thinks about the world around) plus a power imbalance can create the exclusion of whole peoples and their way of life' (p. 282). The question arises: how can this be redressed? Perhaps the time has come for Kuku-Yalanji people to follow their Guugu-Yimithirr neighbours and conduct their own tours,

and thus make visible what has been concealed for so long: 'their thoughts, perspectives and views ... in the discourse of conservation and eco-tourism' (p. 280).

David Trigger's contribution 'Shared Country, Different Stories' presents a case study of such a situation. This emerged during a workshop of local writers held at Burketown to discuss cultural belonging (p. 288). This article provides readers with a glimpse of the rich social history of the Gulf of Carpentaria and the overlapping, competing stories of connection of its inhabitants. The mentions of Bruce Rigsby's seminal paper about Indigenous and 'non-Indigenous' (pp. 285, 299, 300) relate not only to the issues now confronting Australia's non-Indigenous, as the continent's Aboriginal history is disseminated via the settlement of native title cases, but also to issues arising from interpretations of the term 'native' sometimes encountered in early genealogical records.

Section IV, Transformations, allows the reader to revisit some of the people and places encountered earlier in this volume and to explore others. The reader is then transported with the Nic Evans article back to the Wellesley Islands, and with Ray Wood's article back to the Kuku-Yalanji people. The article 'Same But Different' by Ilana Mushin, Denise Angelo and Jennifer Munro takes us to the Aboriginal settlements of Cherbourg, Woorabinda and Yarrabah, where people removed from locations in Cape York were sent. From there, the reader is introduced through contributions by David Thomson and Helen Harper to people associated respectively with Lockhart River on the east coast of Cape York and Bamaga, at the top of Cape York. Nic Evans's article explores transformations and continuities in naming systems and gives the reader a glimpse of what it's like to be a Kaiadilt Bentinck Islander and how despite changes, current personal naming practices continue to connect people to country and family line.

Ray Wood draws on the concept of 'shifter' terms, which Bruce Rigsby introduced into Australian anthropology in his unpublished and published work (see footnote 12 on p. 347). With its focus on issues associated with interpreting the meaning of 'Kuku Buyunji' and related labels found in archival materials and during field research, Ray Wood highlights the importance of context when explicating the meaning of such terms.

David Thomson's 'Going Forward Holding Back' describes how Lockhart people incorporate those aspects of new lifestyles and technologies that do not interfere with 'their foundational family solidarities and customs' (p. 379). 'Same but different', mentioned above, sets out the authors' findings about similarities and differences between the contemporary vernaculars of Cherbourg, Woorabinda and Yarrabah. Perhaps their further research may extend into Cape York, and encompass the consideration of contemporary vernaculars of Palm Island where numbers of people were sent from Cape York and the Gulf Country (as well as

other places) and the former mission stations of Mapoon and Hope Vale, both of which had the dormitory system. At least until the 1970s bilingualism prevailed at Hope Vale, and some of the oldest residents could read and write in both Guugu Yimithirr and English. The final article in this section – ‘The Story of Old Man Frank’ – takes the reader into the world of the late Goodie Massey. He was the brother of the late Miriam Crowe, a major consultant with Atambaya and associated peoples. He was also related to Larry Macdonald, who assisted with Bruce Rigsby’s work at Bamaga.

With respect to language maintenance at Injinoo, while it is true that Jomen Tamwoy strictly enforced the official policy relating to the speaking of traditional languages by school children (p. 415), I found anecdotal evidence from older Injinoo people that they circumvented this policy by singing in ‘Langgus’.

The two articles in the final section of this volume, Repatriations, show that it is not a straightforward process. While Lindy Allen, who has worked closely with Bruce Rigsby and Diane Hafner, has been able to assist the Lama Lama people reclaim their cultural property, John Haviland found that the time was not right for those he hoped would take possession of what he held and regarded as their cultural property.

John Haviland’s article completes the reader’s journey into Cape York and the Gulf Country. It shows how linguistics and anthropology are inextricably linked through their focus on investigation of meaning and relationships, as recorded in linguistic, sociocultural, historical and pre-historical data. John Haviland’s focus on the politics of reparation is a fitting end to this volume. It highlights the fact that the knowledge that one may hold really belongs to others. This could place a burden on both parties that may take generations to resolve.

Volume 18 in the series Culture and Language Use is indeed a showcase of ‘the Queensland School’. Should the volume be reprinted, I recommend that its cover should state that it is a Festschrift for Bruce Rigsby. I heartily recommend this book to the specialist and more general reader.

Long History, Deep Time: Deepening Histories of Place

edited by Ann McGrath and Mary Anne Jebb

xxv + 252 pp., ANU Press, Canberra, 2015,
ISBN 9781925022520 (pbk), \$40.00.

Review by Iain Davidson
The University of New England

This book raises an important issue that should be of great concern to readers of *Aboriginal History*: the relationship between the genres of historical knowledge produced by people from different disciplines and from different intellectual backgrounds. This volume does not resolve the issue, but it demonstrates that if the work is done, it will be very productive.

As McGrath outlines in her introductory paper, the three principal genres at issue are: G1, history from documents; G2, archaeohistory – the historical narrative derived from archaeological evidence; and G3, oral histories and traditions among the people who may otherwise be the objects of historical or archaeohistorical research. This review will outline the contents of the book, and end with a discussion of what has or has not been achieved in relation to the issue the book raises.

This book is an outcome of an ARC project led by Ann McGrath on 'Deepening Histories of Place' that 'attempted to address the limitations of the short time span of Australia's history'. The papers were originally presented at a symposium in Canberra in 2013. The book contains 14 chapters and two prefatory pieces, one by the godfather of 'Deep History', Daniel Smal. The contributors included nine historians (11 if you include the prefatory writers), three archaeologists, one physicist, and two non-archaeological anthropologists; four of the contributors are identified as Aboriginal. That is a good start.

The first chapter is an introduction by McGrath which outlines the intentions of the ARC project and sketches the main contributions of the other chapters. The overarching question was: is it 'possible to enlarge the scale and scope of history?' The question we might add to that is: 'in whose interests would it be to enlarge the scale and scope of history?' In addition to historical approaches to this question, several other people have been interested quite recently, either as archaeologists (e.g. Davidson 2008 – 'the stories created from the archaeological evidence – what I have called lost histories – through their newly minted memories could demonstrate the cultural heritage of continents'), or as historians (e.g. the godfather of 'Big History' – Christian 2005). Notice that with very few exceptions it is difficult to find published accounts in the third category, G3, though they probably exist but are not often acknowledged (e.g. Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation 2008; Ngarjno et al. 2000). G1 does have some Aboriginal authors (such as Perkins and Langton 2008); G2 has very few narratives that have been written by Aboriginal people.

One issue is the nature of Aboriginal beliefs and narratives about the past. Diana James (Chapter 2, '*Tjukurpa* Time') addresses the intersection of history, song, memory and spirituality among the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara peoples of the Western Desert. 'Their sense of history is one embedded in an intimate spiritual and physical sense of place' (p. 35), a notion illustrated by several examples of 'Dreaming' stories. One worthy outcome of research of the nature proposed by McGrath would be some unpacking of the ways in which such an Indigenous sense of history might be similar to or different from more conventional meanings of the concept.

Karen Hughes (Chapter 5, 'Arnhem Land to Adelaide') documents how Dreamings 'irrupted into' more conventional histories of the recent past and uses of the past for political purposes. The songs and stories associated with the beliefs that are lumped together as 'The Dreaming' (Wolfe 1991) can be shown to be successively revealed (e.g. Tonkinson 1974: 84–86). This process allows new circumstances to be incorporated into the spiritual understanding of the world. It is less clear that Dreamings can irrupt into any sort of history once those spiritual connections have been broken. The sorts of history discussed in Hughes's chapter are distinct from text-based history or material-based archaeohistory because they have a capacity to recover lost histories. Indeed, it is a curious convergence that by such recovery both history and archaeohistory are, like the Dreaming, successively revealed and reconsidered.

Two papers consider this sort of revelation in the context of literature. Rob Paton (Chapter 4, 'The Mutability of Time and Space ...') steps sideways and quotes Irish poet Seamus Heaney, whose view of the past is very different from that of a historian or archaeologist. But, writes Paton, Aboriginal people often show an appreciation of archaeologists' views of the past, but can 'not

understand why archaeologists did not seem to reciprocate'. The poet may be closer to the Aboriginal position; archaeologists do not usually reciprocate to poetry, either. For the other point of view, Jeanine Leane (Chapter 9, 'Historyless People') analyses parts of Alexis Wright's magnificent novel *Carpentaria* to show how the author addresses historical truth in different cultures, how the function of storytelling about the past varies between cultures, and how different constructions of pasts use different sets of assumptions about the capacity of present day knowledge to serve as a proxy of one sort or another for understanding that past.

Luke Taylor (Chapter 6, 'Categories of "Old" and "New" in Western Arnhem Land Bark Painting') considers two moments of the collection of Aboriginal bark paintings, an early one associated with the museum collection of Baldwin Spencer and a recent one resulting from the development of a market in bark paintings. In doing so he surveys some of the history of Aboriginal art being incorporated into the non-Aboriginal art market. In making this comparison, Taylor exemplifies the cultural gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities of interest, but shows the agency of the Aboriginal artists in both maintaining and crossing the gap. The question it raised, for me, was to what extent Aboriginal people want an engagement which would seek Deep History. The imaginative uses of historical knowledge described by Leane (using Wright) would certainly support such questioning: in this example, the Aboriginal people wanted limited engagement with non-Aboriginal approaches to their history, but above all wanted their own agency in the process.

Similar thoughts arise from the papers by Peter Read (Chapter 7, 'Dispossession is a Legitimate Experience') and Julia Torpey Hurst (Chapter 8, 'Lingering Inheritance'), which both discuss the situation of the Darug Aboriginal people around Sydney. Read, tellingly defined the 'historian's task, which is to contextualise and explain the social context of any period under discussion, upon which basis non-specialists may then form their own judgments' (p. 121). In both of these studies there is a significant point about the visibility of Aboriginal histories, as a result of Aboriginal negotiation of identity in settler society and the identification of disciplinary contexts for framing it. What, in the end, is an acceptable narrative of the history of Aboriginal groups when their identity is so often represented by historians primarily in opposition to the settler society, and place is so contested by that society? Hurst produced the sentence of the book in which she said that 'The people ... have often been walking across the land silently, between the loud voices and larger shadows and, for many, their history and identity has been unspoken, has tried to be forgotten, or does not fit nicely into what is imagined to be Australian Aboriginal history' (p. 140). The 'loud voices and larger shadows', of course, are mostly not of Aboriginal people.

There follow three chapters by archaeologists and one that sounds like archaeological history by Bruce Pascoe (Chapter 10, 'Panara'). Pascoe covers some of the same ground as historian Bill Gammage (2011) in looking at early settler texts that described the state of the environment that was new to their eyes in terms that would be sufficiently familiar to their readers. Both authors concluded that the land was managed and Pascoe has gone further to be explicit about widespread Aboriginal practice of agriculture. While Pascoe's account is less critical than some, it does make important points about how food was extracted from the environment, and how the texts of early non-Aboriginal settlers were blind to the implications of what they saw and the way they described it. At the same time, Pascoe's approach invites readers to question what is meant by the concept 'agriculture'. Harry Allen's chapter addresses some of the reasons both for this blindness (the philosophical discussion about the stages of human 'development' beginning long before Darwin and before the European settlement of Australia) and some of the argument in the archaeological literature about what he calls 'The Neolithic problem' (Chapter 11, 'The Past in the Present'). Allen gives a straightforward account of how archaeologists have approached their evidence to produce a quasi-historical narrative of archaeohistory. I think both Pascoe and Allen underestimate the extent to which the agenda for Australian archaeohistory has been distorted by European preconceptions of what the narrative of human achievement should be.

Martin Porr, from the generation of European archaeologists imbued with late twentieth-century philosophical ideas, considers issues of the Dreaming, and the progressive nature of archaeological interpretation (Chapter 12, 'Lives and Lines'). He is optimistic that by deconstructing some of the traditional approaches of the 'current scientific narrative of human origins' it should be 'possible to integrate so-called scientific and Indigenous knowledge' (p. 206). Bruno David (2002) pioneered the attempt to use archaeology to inform on the emergence of the Dreaming, so others have thought along similar lines. It is a pity Porr did not refer to this work.

Nicola Stern describes recent archaeology under her leadership at the most famous of Australian archaeological sites, Lake Mungo (Chapter 13, 'The Archaeology of the Willandra'). The complexities of the site and the evidence found there go some way to explain why, in McGrath's words (p. 2) 'archaeologists have tended to publish their findings as scientific reportage around distinctive sites rather than as peopled, connected histories in a contextualised landscape'. Stern correctly points to the potential for conflict between writing a narrative of the archaeohistory and the need for empirical validation of the elements of that history. It is this empirical validation that presents the greatest challenge if historians seek to approach a Deep History without appropriate experience in the many disciplines of archaeology.

The book concludes with a chapter by McGrath written with Malcolm Allbrook (Chapter 14, 'Collaborative Histories of the Willandra Lakes'). The chapter sets out the purpose for historians to engage with the past as constructed by other people. The discussion highlights the cultural differences between disciplines: archaeologists, historians and Aboriginal people all have self-consistent accounts of the past. The really important challenge is for the practitioners in all of these cultures to engage cooperatively with the cultural values of the others (rather as Porr seems to be implying) – to mutual benefit.

The issue, in the end, is about the purposes of histories. Allbrook and McGrath (p. 243) write about 'the need for a continental and an inclusive history of nation [sic] which should not ignore the much deeper human histories of Australia'. There is an awkward contrast in this paragraph between the 'unchanging and undocumented prehistory' and the 'well-documented "history" ... based on written, textual sources' undervaluing (perhaps by incautious phrasing) the painstaking documentation of change during archaeohistory (as exemplified by Stern) and the problematic nature of some textual interpretation. This goes to the importance of primary sources in the work that all sorts of scholars do. Archaeologists have the task of turning material remains from the past that have survived to the present into intelligible data about the past, and then turning that intelligence into a narrative. Historians have other primary data, mostly written texts derived, ultimately from some version of oral testimony or intangible memory (as discussed, for example, by Atkinson 2002). Aboriginal people have songs and stories of the Dreaming, once interpreted in some ways or other by non-Aboriginal non-archaeological anthropologists (there is a discussion of the ways such anthropologists turn their understandings into knowledge for a public in Davidson 1995), but now, finally, being interpreted to non-Aboriginal people by the knowledge holders themselves. (Leaving aside the fact that most such anthropologists have historically depended on the genius of their Aboriginal informants to interpret their own knowledge to the anthropologists (Sutton 2009).)

It is worth noting, here, that for 80 per cent of the time concerned with human occupation, Australia was part of a single continent of Sahul which included New Guinea as well as Tasmania, such that it would be appropriate to consider the oral histories and traditions of the peoples of New Guinea too (e.g. Wiessner and Tumu 1998) and how they connect not only to the archaeohistory and history of New Guinea, but to the summed accounts of the past of the rest of Sahul (there is some discussion in Davidson 2014a, 2014b; Davidson 2013). As the papers show, there is currently very little connect between these three genres of historical knowledge and these three cultural approaches to the past. This is not unique to the study of Australian (or Sahulian) pasts given that, for example,

there is a longstanding disconnect between the interpretation of Pleistocene archaeohistory as primarily ecological and Holocene archaeohistory as primarily social (e.g. Davidson 1981: 28).

So, my conclusion is that this is quite a good start but there are some disturbing questions about appropriate ways of doing history. Smail invokes the phrase 'people without history' without acknowledging the irony implicit in social anthropologist Eric Wolf's use of the phrase in his title (Wolf 1982). In his text, Wolf referred to 'the active histories of "primitives", peasantries, laborers, immigrant, and besieged minorities'. Is it necessary for people to write texts about their past for them to have history? Should we discount oral traditions and other sources of history including archaeology?

What would be needed to go further? I think that what we need to define is not 'need', so much as 'purpose'. What is history (I know the question has been asked before) and what is it for? In the darkest days of World War Two, the most celebrated Australian archaeohistorian, Gordon Childe, saw that there was a political purpose to writing about 'What happened in history' in terms of 'the main stream of human progress' (Childe 1964), as Allen discusses in his chapter. Grahame Clark wrote in the foreword of the book that Childe 'showed how by using the data won by archaeologists and natural scientists it was possible to gain a new view of what constituted human history'. Such Whiggish narratives may have been appropriate in the face of fascist and racist triumph in a vicious war, but they would be inappropriate both in the modern world and specifically in the context of seeking collaboratively to integrate the different genres of history associated with colonised and settler cultures.

The word 'history' has many meanings – at least four – which are not quite disentangled in this volume. It refers generally to 1) a time period in the past; 2) events or acts in that time period; 3) the interpretation of those events or acts in terms of the actions of people and the institutions they constitute; and 4) the uses of such interpretations. Given the three different genres of historical interpretation that I have outlined here, it is really important to isolate the methods and theories by which the four meanings of history can be addressed in each of them. This will involve dealing with the question of time and how it is measured (Peter Riggs, physicist, has a chapter (Chapter 3, 'Contemporary Concepts of Time ...') in the volume on how a physicist conceptualises time), as well as making decisions about whether the narrative is about people, places or time periods.

It will also involve questions about how to deal with disparate sources of primary evidence and whether, for example, the G2 archaeological report becomes a primary text for G1 historians who, in other contexts, deal with the textual product of memory and oral history. And it will have to deal with questions of scale and context and the politics of interpretation. Most importantly, it will have

to address questions of agency, where text-based historians deal with events or acts as the product of the behaviour of human agents, while G2 archaeohistorians generally have no such agents to write about. In many places around the world those involved with G3 oral histories very often address big questions about the processes that formed their social and geographical contexts by creating mythical agents of the changes that created the society of those modern people (e.g. Minc 1986). Reconciling the oral and mythological with other sorts of history will be full of politics and those of us who are not from the culture of the oral historians need to tread very carefully so as not to appear to appropriate the oral past by claiming our version of ‘truth’ is superior to all others. In many ways Leane’s chapter is the most perceptive in the book because it seems to recognise that stories explain the past and that there are different types of stories for different types of explanation. Reconciling those differences is a big task, and incorporating them into different genres of history will serve different interests.

The advertising for the book says: ‘Long histories that incorporate humanities, science and Indigenous knowledge may produce deeper meanings of the worlds in which we live.’ It is difficult to disagree with that. This book is a step in the right direction: it should be possible to enlarge the scope of historical inquiry, provided the interests of all historical stakeholders are respected.

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Loss and Renewal: Australian Languages Since Colonisation

edited by Felicity Meakins and Carmel O'Shannessy

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This book originated from a 'Language Contact Symposium' held at The Australian National University in Canberra, 6–7 March 2014, organised by the volume editors as part of an annual Australian Languages Workshop. Although written by linguists and largely for linguists, the book should nevertheless be of interest to students of Aboriginal history. Its topic deals with the after-effects of the European colonisation of the continent, in particular how the advent of English to Australia has impacted on traditional Indigenous languages. Considerable attention has previously been given to the decline and loss of traditional languages, as Indigenous people have given up their languages in favour of English (e.g. Schmidt 1985, 1990; McConvell and Thieberger 2001; Marmion et al. 2014), as well as issues of language maintenance and revitalisation (McKay 1996, Walsh 2014, Hobson et al. 2010).

In place of this narrative of loss, the book under review devotes its attention to the processes and products of change that have led to new forms of language, whether new varieties of English (Aboriginal English), alterations to traditional languages, or new languages that combine material from both English and Australian languages (pidgins and creoles). In this review I summarise the contents in relatively non-technical language for a readership of non-linguists, and at the same time provide a sample of the kinds of changes to language that have taken place throughout Australian post-contact history.¹

1 I follow an order of presentation that differs from that of the book.

The most striking early result of contact between English and Australian languages was the creation of New South Wales Pidgin, a hybrid and at first rudimentary code used for communication between the European immigrants and Aboriginal people, and eventually also as a medium of communication between Indigenous people who did not know one another's languages. The vocabulary of NSW Pidgin was largely drawn from English, although a considerable number of words from the Sydney language also became part of the new code. The pronunciation and grammatical features, however, were heavily influenced by traditional languages (see Troy 1994, Amery and Mühlhäusler 1996, Koch 2011).

Meanwhile, English words were borrowed into Australian languages and Australian English received loanwords from Australian languages. Especially prominent among the latter were Indigenous placenames, which were adopted by settlers as names of the properties they established. David Nash ('Placenames evidence for NSW Pidgin'²), in the only chapter that deals with Pidgin, demonstrates for the first time the likelihood that a number of placenames, especially in New South Wales, were jointly constructed by Europeans and Indigenous Australians using the medium of NSW Pidgin. Thus names like Boree Cabonne and Boree Nyrang use the Pidgin terms *gabun* 'big' and *ngarang* 'small' (both derived from the Sydney language), with the word order (adjective after noun) characteristic of NSW languages.

NSW Pidgin spread out with the moving frontier, including into Queensland. By the twentieth century most Aboriginal groups had shifted from speaking both traditional languages and NSW/Queensland Pidgin to varieties of 'Aboriginal English' that contained traces of both their traditional languages and the earlier pidgin. Furthermore, many Indigenous people were displaced from their traditional homelands and relocated on government reserves, alongside people with different heritage language backgrounds. Ilana Mushin and Janet Watts ('Identifying the grammars of Queensland ex-government reserves: The case of Woorie Talk') study the variety of English now called 'Woorie Talk', that was spoken at the Woorabinda reserve near Rockhampton. They try to tease apart features (a) that continue the earlier Pidgin, (b) that reflect the input from English as spoken in Queensland, (c) that may reflect traditional languages from which the residents came, and (d) that may derive from the speech of other Queensland reserves, given the mobility between these communities. They make a case that varieties of Aboriginal English can be expected to differ in different locales depending on the specific patterns of language contact, which

2 I cite the chapter titles in the form given in the chapter itself, which in a few cases differs from that given in the Contents and the Introduction.

in turn reflect the distinctive social history of each community. Thus 'Aboriginal English' cannot be treated as a uniform kind of contact language (see Eades 2013 for an overview of Aboriginal English research).

NSW Pidgin spread in the nineteenth century from Queensland to the Northern Territory. In the Roper River area it developed into a creole language, now called Kriol, when in the first part of the twentieth century it became the first language of some Aboriginal people in an area where a considerable number of traditional languages were spoken (Sandefur 1979, Harris 1986). This volume includes five chapters devoted to aspects of Kriol.

Greg Dickson ('Rethinking the substrates of Roper River Kriol: The case of Marra') addresses the question of which local languages provided the main input into the Kriol centred at the former Roper River Mission, established 1908 (now the Ngukurr community). He makes a strong case that Marra was the language which provided the most local vocabulary. His new data comes from the lexical domains of kinship terms, ethnobiology (bush medicine plants and lizard names), and especially verbs. His recent PhD research identified 50 previously unrecognised Kriol verbs, of which the majority come from Marra (and to some extent two other related Marran languages, Alawa and Warndarrang). These findings provide a more nuanced view of the influence on Kriol from local languages than previous studies (e.g. Munro 2004), which assumed equal influence from a number of languages.

Several papers discuss grammatical features of Kriol. They demonstrate both the continuity of forms from English and how they have been reinterpreted in modern varieties of Kriol, whether under the influence of Australian traditional languages or by means of the natural mechanisms of language change, or a combination of both factors.

Denise Angelo and Eva Schultze-Berndt ('Beware *bambai* – lest it be apprehensive') discuss the function of the particle *bambai*. Although it derives ultimately from English *by and by*, (via Pidgin) meaning 'later', in Kriol it has developed a further usage, which corresponds to the 'apprehensive' of Australian languages. This grammatical category signals that an event may take place which is undesirable, with the implication that some other action should be taken to avoid it. They discuss alternative scenarios, relevant to the models of language contact, of how this meaning, characteristic of Australian languages, came to be attached to the *bambai* which came into the language through the earlier Pidgin.

Sophie Nicholls ('Grammaticalization and interactional pragmatics: A description of the recognitional determiner *det* in Roper River Kriol') explores the use of the grammatical word *det*, which derives from the English demonstrative *that* via

NSW Pidgin. She shows that in modern Roper River Kriol it no longer functions as a demonstrative ('the one there') but rather more like an article ('the') but especially with a recognitional usage ('the one that I assume you are familiar with') – a function which has been transferred from traditional Aboriginal discourse practice.

Maia Ponsonnet ('Reflexive, reciprocal and emphatic functions in Barunga Kriol') studies recent developments in the Kriol variety spoken in Beswick/Wugularr of the forms *miself*, *mijelp*, and *gija*. The first two forms both derive from English *myself*, in the informal pronunciation *meself*, but refer to all persons (myself, yourself, himself, herself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves). The last form derives from English *together*. The *-self* form has split into two separate words, each with its own function. *Miself* is an exclusive adverb, indicating 'by myself, yourself, etc.', 'alone', 'separately'. *Mijelp*, with an older, less English-like pronunciation, after verbs marks the functions of both reflexive ('VERB myself, yourself, etc.') and reciprocal ('VERB each other, one another'). This dual function copies a pattern characteristic of many Australian languages. *Gija*, which formerly signalled co-participation (cf. English *together*), has been reinterpreted as a marker of reciprocal (like *mijelp*), but only for participants which are not the direct object of the verb (so 'to/with each other'). The coexistence of two markers of reciprocal has been exploited to make a rare kind of distinction between direct and indirect reciprocal object marking.

While the three papers on Kriol grammar demonstrate that the Kriol has evolved over time, the chapter by Rikke Bundgaard-Nielsen and Brett Baker ('Fact or furphy? The continuum in Kriol') challenges an earlier view (e.g. Sandefur 1979) that the variable pronunciation of Kriol may be described in terms of a 'continuum' of slightly different phonological systems ranging from a basilectal system that contained only the phonemes of traditional languages to an acrolectal system identical with Standard Australian English. On the basis of acoustic, perceptual and production experiments with native speakers of Roper Kriol, they find that Kriol has indeed a stable system of distinctive sounds that incorporates features from both English and the local traditional languages but is identical to neither. (For example, there is no contrast between *s* and *z* in Kriol, unlike English, but there are retroflex consonants as in local languages, but not English.) They explain the previously observed wide variability in pronunciation by the fact that there are many Kriol speakers for whom Kriol is not a native language, and these speakers substitute many pronunciations from their native languages.

There are two chapters that deal with mixed languages, a rare type of language that has attracted much attention in recent years by students of language contact. In the latter part of the twentieth century, children in Gurindji-speaking communities and the Warlpiri-speaking Lajamanu community (all in

western parts of the Northern Territory) developed a new linguistic code that consists of grammatical elements from both their traditional language (Gurindji or Warlpiri) and Kriol (Meakins 2011, O'Shannessy 2005). In these two new languages, called Gurindji Kriol and Light Warlpiri, within a single sentence the verb and markers of tense and subject pronouns are derived from Kriol and the inflection of nouns (number and case suffixes) largely continues the forms of the traditional language. The two papers on mixed language in this volume explore ongoing changes within these new codes.

Carmel O'Shannessy ('Entrenchment of Light Warlpiri morphology') compares children's production of language in 2010 to that of 2005, with respect to noun suffixes. She finds an increase in shorter forms of the suffixes that mark dative case ('to', 'for') and ergative case (subject of transitive verbs). The dative uses more instances of just *-k* (or *-ik*) in place of earlier *-ku* or *-ki*, while the ergative has more frequent *-ng* (or *-ing*) in place of the longer *-ngku* and *-ngki* and largely generalises *-ng* for words that earlier used an alternative ergative suffix *-rlu* (or *-rli*). These changes make Light Warlpiri more different from Warlpiri. On the other hand, the ergative subject marking is used more consistently in 2010 than in 2005 – a change which makes Light Warlpiri more similar to Warlpiri.

Felicity Meakins ('No fixed address: The grammaticalisation of the Gurindji locative as a progressive suffix') illustrates a surprising change in Gurindji Kriol. A locative suffix (meaning 'at'), which in Gurindji is attached to nouns, is found in Gurindji Kriol on verbs, marking that the event is in progress. She shows how (and by what intermediate steps) this kind of grammatical change, which is not without parallels in other languages, is likely to have taken place in Gurindji Kriol.

Traditional languages which have survived the onslaught of English typically show changes. Some of these result from the fact that they are not being learned as well as previously because their speakers use another language (English or a creole) as their primary language. Other changes are attributable to borrowing from English. Two papers in this volume are devoted to changes in traditional languages.

Earlier studies have explained changes in terms of language 'obsolescence' or decline (e.g. Austin 1986, Schmidt 1985). Here Felicity Meakins and Rob Pensalfini ('Gender bender: Superclassing in Jingulu gender marking') describe recent changes in the gender-agreement system of Jingulu, which is now only spoken by a few elderly people and is no longer being learned by children. They argue that the documented changes are not random effects of language loss but are shaped by the semantic structure inherent in the class system and follow patterns of change found in non-obsolescent languages. Specifically, they reveal

that in the four-class system of Jingulu masculine is dominant over feminine for animate nouns, and neuter over vegetable class for inanimate nouns, and that masculine is the ultimate default class.

John Mansfield ('Borrowed verbs and the expansion of light verb phrases in Murrinhpatha') explores the effect of English on a traditional language which is still actively spoken. Borrowing from English by young people in the Wadeye (Daly River area) community in recent decades has resulted in a massive increase in a kind of verb phrase construction that was formerly quite marginal in the Murrinhpatha language; for example, 'I'll record you two' is rendered as approximately 'recording I'll-do-for-you', where *recording* is a separate word from the rest of the complex verb.

Two of the papers refer to language contact in precolonial times and find possible parallels with the kind of changes that have been documented in the postcolonial era.

Patrick McConvell ('Kinship loanwords in Indigenous Australia, before and after colonization') calls attention to the prevalence of borrowing of kinship terms, both in European languages and in precolonial Indigenous languages, and the general finding that in-law terms and collateral terms (uncle, aunt, cousin) are more readily borrowed than lineal terms (parents, siblings). Where the English terms for 'uncle' and 'aunt' are accepted into the speech of Australian Aboriginal people, they take on the semantics of traditional languages, with 'uncle' being confined to mother's brother, since father's brother is terminologically a father, and 'aunt' being likewise restricted to 'father's sister', while *mami* may refer to mother's sisters as well as mother. The widespread modern term *pantyi* or *bunji*, which is thought to derive from the archaic English *fancy-man*, a woman's lover, has taken on kinship meanings such as 'spouse', 'sibling-in-law', and even 'cross-cousin', following principles of Aboriginal kinship classification. McConvell wrestles with the puzzle of how the English term *cousin* (*kajin*) has come to mean 'mother-in-law' in Kriol and varieties of Aboriginal English.

Nicholas Evans ('As intimate as it gets? Paradigm borrowing in Marrku and its implications for the emergence of mixed languages') discusses the strange case of Marrku, a language formerly spoken on Croker Island, where it appears that two verb paradigms ('work' and 'want') have been borrowed in their entirety from the nearby languages Iwaidja or Garig. It is usually thought that borrowing inflections like this is hardly possible – although a few similar cases are known. This situation may provide a clue to how some mixed language structures attested elsewhere got started.

An introductory chapter by the editors ('Australian language contact in historical and synchronic perspective') provides an orientation to the history and study of Australian contact linguistics and summarises the contents of the chapters. The book is amply illustrated with some 50 figures, including maps, and over 40 tables of data, and is provided with an index. A 14-page preface dedicates the volume to Patrick McConvell, summarises his career, lists his publications, highlights his contributions to topics relating to language contact, and emphasises his impact on research in this area of study.

Altogether these studies bring together into one volume a rich sample of the evidence from Australian languages that is being brought to light by current research and which contributes to contemporary worldwide research interest in the processes and results of language contact. At the same time they provide a perspective on Australian postcolonial history from the viewpoint of the linguistic consequences of colonisation.

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*The Memory Code: The Traditional Aboriginal
Memory Technique that Unlocks the Secrets
of Stonehenge, Easter Island and Ancient
Monuments the World Over*

by Lynne Kelly

xviii + 318 pp., Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2016,
ISBN 9781760291327 (pbk), \$32.99.

Review by Denis Gojak
University of Sydney

The first impressions are certainly not encouraging. The pastel-dominated graphic design, the title itself and, not least, an image of Stonehenge above a gushing cover blurb offering 'groundbreaking insight' into the lives and minds of 'the ancients' all suggest that this book came from the New Age consciousness section of a bookstore. This is unfortunate as science writer Lynne Kelly is aiming to make a rather more interesting argument about the past.

The book is focused on understanding Britain's Stonehenge and, to a lesser extent, other enigmatic archaeological sites including Easter Island, the Nasca lines and Carnac. Her argument is that all can be understood by considering them not just as marvellous and unique places within their own cultural contexts, but as part of larger landscapes. No surprises there, except her landscapes are not matters of physical geography but are modelled on concepts borrowed from Australian Aboriginal songlines, which she terms memory spaces.

The description of Aboriginal songlines and, more broadly, traditional environmental knowledge sets the scene early in the book, mainly through a mix of anecdote and generalisation, interspersed with observations from anthropologists, explorers and others that fit her case. Kelly finds that Aboriginal people had prodigious memories and knew the names of everything they encountered and did this because knowledge meant survival in unpredictable environments. Songlines helped to ensure that traditional spatial knowledge

was structured, repeatable and decentralised, with individual places acting as mnemonic devices to entrench the narrative elements that carried information into an unchanging order. She does not dwell much on the connection of person and place in creating and affirming identity. Remember though that this is written for a niche audience and their focus is on obtaining the ancients' memory tricks.

Embedding memory in physical places allows her to springboard into a reanalysis of Stonehenge. Recent archaeological work on Stonehenge has revealed multiple connections – the transport of stone, the movement of goods and visitors in networks far more extensive than hitherto believed. By applying the memory space concept to describe the intertwining threads of different paths of knowledge, resources and movement that connect Stonehenge to a constellation of other places Kelly enriches our appreciation of its complexity. While her arguments, and the archaeological evidence, is not completely convincing, she offers an interesting and challenging view of the past that is certainly worth exploring in more detail. Note that she does not imply any parallels between Neolithic Britain and Aboriginal Australia, beyond a central role for knowledge managed through spatial mnemonics.

It is unfortunate that the book has been packaged as a new-age guide to developing memory power like 'the ancients'. Kelly has based this on a much more rigorous scholarly work (Kelly 2015), but much appears lost in its translation to a popular format. Nonetheless, it is well-written and provides a very readable introduction to the archaeology of some well-known ancient places. It will not, however, provide much for those seeking to understand how Aboriginal people connected place, knowledge and belief.

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Native Title from Mabo to Akiba: A Vehicle for Change and Empowerment?

edited by Sean Brennan, Megan Davis, Brendan Edgeworth
and Leon Terrill

xii + 273 pp., Federation Press, Annandale, 2015,
ISBN 9781862879980 (pbk) \$84.95.

Review by Pamela Faye McGrath
The Australian National University

In 2013, 12 years after Leo Akiba first lodged a native title claim over approximately 37,800 square kilometres of sea country between Cape York and Papua New Guinea on behalf of a coalition of Torres Strait Islander peoples, and 21 years after the landmark Mabo case, the High Court of Australia handed down a decision that for the first time recognised commercial native title rights.

The Akiba decision will probably never achieve the iconic status of Mabo, but it nevertheless marks a critically important step forward – conceptually at least – in progressing land justice for Indigenous Australians. It marks the point at which the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders’ traditional rights went from being largely symbolic, surviving only where they have not been extinguished by the imposition of new forms of land tenure, to having actual potential to influence people’s socioeconomic circumstances. As editor Sean Brennan (Chapter 4) argues in his contribution to this significant collection, the Akiba decision was a signal to both government and others that it was time to get on board with native title. Things just got real.

Given their legal significance, the Mabo and Akiba decisions make sensible bookends for a volume of interdisciplinary essays that collectively attempt to understand whether native title has the potential to change people’s lives for the better. This framing, however, is somewhat deceptive, for it suggests the existence of a grand narrative to help make sense of the journey of native title

over the past two and a half decades. But *Native Title from Mabo to Akiba* is not a linear tale of a journey from one radical legal moment to another. Rather, like the native title regime itself, its character is more rhizomatic.

Bret Walker's sharp reflective assessment of the flaws of native title law (Chapter 2) combined with Paul Finn's concerns about its tendency to 'Balkanise' Indigenous landowning groups (Chapter 3) set the tone for the volume, which might at best be described as a form of tenacious optimism qualified by hindsight but actually teetering on the edge of pessimism.

For, as the contributions to this volume make clear, despite the possibilities of native title its remedial potential remains considerably limited by both law and policy. To give but a few examples, Lisa Strelein (Chapter 5) alerts us to the unnecessary constraints placed upon economic rights, while Marcia Langton describes some of the burdens that nevertheless accompany them (Chapter 12). Ciaran O'Faircheallaigh (Chapter 11) makes a strong case for self-government being essential to enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander landowning groups to fully benefit from their rights, but reminds us that, as it currently stands, native title does not include an inherent right to self-government. And David Trigger (Chapter 14) argues that the beneficial reach of the native title system as a whole is constrained as it cannot and does not bring all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders along for the ride.

Nevertheless, the loose threads of a greater, positive historical force is visible throughout, weaving in and out of the frames of various chapters. Brendan Edgeworth's essay (Chapter 7) comes closest to providing a cohesive historical anchor from which the contributions of other authors is moored. In the context of his analysis of how the jurisprudence of native title has contributed to the construction of an influential narrative about the history of property rights, Edgeworth argues that native title represents one of the most important and dramatic social developments in the late twentieth-century history of Australia. In effect, the Mabo decision corrected the historical record, revised legal doctrine, and cemented a new form of inclusive national identity that recognised a dual system of land ownership, an identity that is manifest in the 'land title revolution' so powerfully visualised by Jon Altman and Francis Markham (Chapter 9). As a result, Edgeworth argues, a new 'vibe' can be sensed around our collective social identity and the fears of non-Indigenous Australians about stolen backyards and beaches have given way to 'grudging acceptance' (p. 98).

Tim Rowse's chapter about Indigenous incorporation as vehicles of empowerment (Chapter 13) attempts to unpack why it is that, somewhat paradoxically, such 'grudging acceptance' of native title is not so apparent among some in the academy who otherwise remain deeply suspicious of Australian public policy in general and native title in particular. The answer lies, Rowse suggests,

in the 'default pessimism' of contemporary critical theory about the Australian colonial state and the Indigenous political condition that focuses not on the enabling effects of government policy but on its inherent cultural disrespect (p. 187). His is a nuanced and measured argument about the need to historicise and not essentialise Aboriginality in critiques of self-determination strategies such as native title.

One of the most positive and perhaps prophetic accounts to emerge from this volume is one in which native title rights have *not* been recognised, but rather have proven to be a vital bargaining chip in negotiations towards a regional settlement of the kind that Noel Pearson recently suggested is a form of quasi-treaty making. Glen Kelly and Stuart Bradfield (Chapter 17) have been instrumental to assisting the Noongar peoples of south-west Western Australia to negotiate the South West Native Title Settlement, the most comprehensive native title agreement proposed thus far. The historic agreement involves around 30,000 Noongar people and covers approximately 200,000 square kilometres, and when finalised will provide not only millions of dollars in benefits to Noongar people but also a guaranteed ongoing relationship with the Western Australian Government. In exchange, the Noongar people will surrender their native title rights. In the depressed political and economic environment created by the mining downturn in Western Australia, the South West Native Title Settlement is no small achievement. What it brings home more clearly than perhaps any other contribution to this volume is the extent to which the true empowerment offered by native title is not achieved via traditional rights themselves, but rather via the strategic opportunity their potential recognition presents to forge new kinds of political and economic relationships with non-Indigenous Australia. What's more, the fact that the Western Australian Government is prepared to pay such a high price to take native title rights off the table, so to speak, suggests that native title is still considered a significant threat and has not, perhaps, lost all of its original rhetorical potency.

Overall, the impression left by this extraordinary collection of essays, along with the editors' deft connections between them, is that leveraging native title rights in order to help improve people's lives is very hard work, both conceptually and practically. Building and sustaining the relationships between traditional owners and third parties is enormously difficult, and the internal and external pressures on Indigenous communities are immense. In the end, native title may well prove to be a vehicle of empowerment that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples choose to ride with for a while, before disembarking to engage with another more promising strategy. But although the jury may still be out on the question of whether native title has been a force for positive social change, this volume confirms that its historical importance is beyond dispute.

The Politics of Identity: Who Counts as Aboriginal Today?

By Bronwyn Carlson

vi + 294 pp., Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2016,
ISBN 9781922059963 (pbk), \$39.95.

Review by Russell McGregor
James Cook University

Carlson's book, based on a manuscript which won the 2013 Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' Stanner Award, explores what it means to be Aboriginal today. Weaving together personal, political and sociological inquiries, she focuses especially on the formal Confirmation of Aboriginality process and on divergent conceptions of Aboriginality among Aboriginal people themselves. Fundamentally, it is a critique of the gatekeeper role some Aboriginal organisations and individuals have arrogated to themselves.

Carlson is frank about her personal investment in the issues she investigates. The book's very first sentence acknowledges her childhood bewilderment at the family tensions provoked by having been 'touched by the tar brush'. She goes on to recount a youth filled with restless movement, around Australia and across to New Zealand, giving her no anchorage in a geographically defined Aboriginal community. She acknowledges her lack of the 'classic' outward markers of Aboriginality such as skin colour and physiognomy. She tells of instances where other Aboriginal people have flatly denied her Aboriginality. Yet in recounting these experiences, Carlson never relapses into complaint or self-indulgence. Rather, she uses the personal to illuminate the political, the experiential to elucidate her argument.

The book's historical chapters (roughly, the first third of the text) are the weakest. In charting the changing definitions and conceptions of the 'Aboriginal' from the early twentieth century to the 1970s, Carlson relies on far too narrow a selection of secondary sources. Numerous studies relevant to this topic have

been published by historians, anthropologists, sociologists and other scholars over the past 20 years, but these chapters show scant awareness of them, giving an unfortunate impression of thin scholarship.

The calibre of the scholarship, and of the argument, improves markedly once Carlson gets to grips with the complexities of Aboriginal identity today, a topic with which she is evidently much more comfortable than with probing the past. Without condemning them out of hand, she expresses serious misgivings about essentialist and fixed conceptions of Aboriginality. She expresses stronger reservations about the reification of 'the Aboriginal community'; and stronger still about the power vested in 'the community' to determine who is and is not 'Aboriginal', particularly via the official process of Confirmation of Aboriginality determinations. Through this process, she argues, the 'community' has been given powers analogous to those once wielded by settler bureaucracies to determine a person's Aboriginality – and 'communities' have proved as ardent and as arbitrary as bureaucracies in exercising those powers. Indeed, she goes so far as to claim that Aboriginal 'communities', in assessing people's Aboriginality, have applied 'the same criteria as hostile non-Aboriginal commentators such as Andrew Bolt' (pp. 151–52).

On such matters, Carlson backs her claims with solid evidence, but the book suffers from one notable absence: the international context. Carlson writes of the politics of identity as if it were an exclusively Aboriginal preserve (apart from a few nods toward New Zealand and the Maori). It is, of course, perfectly reasonable to focus on the identity concerns of Aboriginal Australians, but to fully elucidate those concerns it is essential to put them into global perspective. The politics of identity has been high on the international agenda since the 1970s; the same issues about which Carlson writes in relation to Aboriginal people have been at the forefront of minority and Indigenous political movements throughout the world for the past half-century. 'Who counts as Aboriginal?' is merely the local, Australian, variant of a question that resonates around the globe; and our answers to that question are inevitably diminished by inattention to the bigger picture.

Yet while the study has some notable gaps, it remains a brave and innovative foray into important issues that demand greater attention than they have hitherto received. 'Who counts as Aboriginal?' will always be a contested question; answers will never be singular or stable or command universal agreement. But in an age of identity politics, it is vital that we grapple with the question and, like Bronwyn Carlson, eschew simplistic answers.

Rattling Spears: A History of Indigenous Australian Art

by Ian McLean

301 pp., illus, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 2016,
ISBN 9781780235905 (hbk), \$59.99.

Review by Sasha Grishin
The Australian National University
School of Languages, Literature and Linguistics

The subtitle of this book, 'A History of Indigenous Australian Art', could mislead a reader into expecting to find in this book an account of Indigenous art, within a historical framework, from the ancient petroglyphs of the Burrup Peninsula to contemporary Indigenous art in all of its fabulous manifestations. That reader will be disappointed. Ian McLean's purpose in writing this book is quite different as he sets out to illustrate a thesis that he presents in the opening pages of his volume. Namely: 'This book is a history of how Indigenous artists engaged with, and responded to, this meeting with modernity and in the process became modern artists, eventually making for themselves a place in the discourse of contemporary art' (p. 11).

It is an account that is presented through a poststructuralist and postcolonial lens with terminology frequently drawn from critical theory and structural Marxism. He concludes that his 'book maps the discursive field of Indigenous art in the modern period, arguing that it has been a rich ground for transculturation' (p. 257). Within his intellectual framework, Bennelong's spearing of Governor Phillip is interpreted as an act of 'art performance' (p. 41); William Barak is the first Indigenous bourgeois artist (p. 56) who may have 'wanted to be part of the modern ethnographic project' (p. 57), while the art of the Western Desert is 'like so many Italian Renaissance city-states, [where] art centres began to appear in communities across remote Australia, each with its own look' (p. 147).

Ian McLean, who is a Senior Research Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Wollongong, has divided his account into three major sections: Empire, Nation and Post-Western. Within this structure appear the subsections 1) Origin Stories: Dreamtime in Botany Bay, 1770; 2) Indigenous art and empire in Sydney, 1788–1830; 3) Post-contact Indigenous art in the Australian colonies, 1835–1900; 4) Indigenous art in White Australia, 1900–1970; 5) The invention of Indigenous contemporary art, 1970–1990; 6) Remote masters, 1985–2015 and lastly 7) Post-identity: Urban Indigenous art, 1987–2015.

Although McLean's account of Indigenous art does touch on many of the major Aboriginal artists, especially from the post-1970 period, there are major lacunas that are difficult to comprehend. For example, there is no mention of the artists from the Torres Strait Islands and it is difficult to imagine how a comprehensive history of Indigenous art can be narrated without an understanding of the impact of artists including Dennis Nona, Alick Tipoti, Brian Robinson, Ken Thaiday, Ellen José, Clinton Nain and a host of others. While the medium of photography is given a degree of prominence throughout the text, printmaking, which is critical in any discussion of the interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous art in Australia, is largely ignored. The critical role played by Kevin Gilbert, as a visual artist, is ignored and, outside of Papunya Tula, many of the artists of the Western Desert are passed over in silence. Other significant artists, including Treaahna Hamm and Karen Casey, who have played a significant and distinctive role on the national stage, are also omitted from this construct of history.

While this may be seen as a criticism, it needs to be kept in mind that McLean is arguing a thesis and has selected those artists who can be seen to illustrate his thesis and thus such sins of omission become inevitable. On the whole, the 149 illustrations in the book are of a high quality and some of the selected artists are generously rewarded with several illustrations of their work.

In an area that is so densely populated with significant artists as is Australian Indigenous art of the past half-century, there will inevitably be arguments over inclusions and omissions. McLean tactfully foresees this difficulty and writes, 'my second acknowledgement is to all those Indigenous Australian artists who do not appear in this history. They are there between the lines, holding up the text' (p. 285). His eloquence can only be applauded, even if his choices may be disputed.

McLean's argument, which he has rehearsed in a number of earlier publications, including his useful anthology of sources *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art* and *White Aborigines Identity Politics in Australian Art*, is presented in this book in far greater detail. He argues that Aboriginal artists encountered European modernity with the first contact and responded with

their own version of modernity. However, in this case 'aesthetics is a signifier of ancestral presence or Dreaming, rather than reified into a Kantian ideology in which abstract feelings of beauty and the sublime signify the individual subject's search for freedom' (p.19).

McLean's book presents a close reading of certain aspects of Indigenous art within the context of a rigorously pursued academic argument. Publications on Australian Indigenous art in recent years have created a crowded field in which *Rattling Spears: A History of Indigenous Australian Art* is a welcome newcomer. Readers seeking a good overall survey on the topic still have Wally Caruana's *Aboriginal Art* (Thames & Hudson) as the go to volume, which has now entered its third, updated edition.

Surely the time has arrived and we have matured sufficiently to have an Indigenous voice present a history of Indigenous art in this country. Hetti Perkins's *Art + Soul* was a wonderful and popular introduction to the topic, but the time is ripe for Indigenous people to take control of their own discourse on their own cultural traditions.

Settler Colonial Governance in Nineteenth-Century Victoria

edited by Leigh Boucher and Lynette Russell

ix + 224 pp., ANU Press, Canberra, 2015,
ISBN 9781925022346 (pbk), \$38.00.

Review by Amanda Nettelbeck
University of Adelaide

In recent years, there has been a strong revival of scholarly interest in the nature of the humanitarian politics that came to reshape British imperial policy from the 1830s, an interest driven in good part by the burgeoning field of critical imperial studies. In particular, this body of scholarship has focused on the ways in which the very endeavours that were intended to protect Indigenous peoples from the dire impacts of colonial violence and dispossession were inextricably bound to new technologies of colonial governance. In bringing an array of new regulatory measures to bear upon Indigenous people around the British Empire, policies of protection were not just intended to ameliorate the consequences of colonisation but also to facilitate their transition into becoming governable subjects.

Arising from a workshop on the particularities of settler colonial governance in nineteenth-century Victoria, this collection is an important and timely addition to this recent body of work. Victoria was exceptional in that a centralised system of Indigenous 'management' was implemented there well before similar processes were attempted in the other Australian colonies. The speed and intensity of the 'settler revolution' (as James Belich has termed it) that took place in the then-Port Phillip District through the 1830s and 1840s, followed by the shift to self-government in the mid-1850s, helped to create the conditions for a concentrated model of settler colonial governance that would not be seen in the other colonies until considerably later.

The system of colonial governmentality modelled in Victoria in the wake of self-government and the coming decades did become familiar around Australia by the early twentieth century. This was a system defined by the segregation of Aboriginal people onto reserves, which later segued into a program of enforced assimilation for so-called 'half-caste' people, and the introduction of a statutory model of combined protection and management that would legalise governmental intervention into every facet of Indigenous life. As editors Leigh Boucher and Lynette Russell note at the start of their introductory chapter, in the decades after 1835 – the year of John Batman's attempt to negotiate a private treaty with the Kulin and its rejection by the Crown – Victoria could be seen as 'an historically condensed example of the creative destructions of nineteenth-century British settler colonialism' (p. 1). Even so, a counteractive feature of Victoria's elaborated system of colonial governance was that it helped to produce a powerful movement of Aboriginal political activism that was arguably more pronounced and persistent than anywhere else in nineteenth-century Australia.

In tracing the local manifestations of colonial governance and their connections to the shifting currents of governance around the British colonial world, this collection offers both a 'deep' account of the changing forms and consequences of settler colonial governance in a single jurisdiction, and a broader account of how expressions of colonial humanitarianism went hand in hand with the imposition of colonial authority. As the editors state, if Victoria is taken to be a 'laboratory' of colonial governance, it was one in which the rejection of colonial violence was principally envisioned through the introduction of an alternative framework of 'epistemological violence' (p. 4). Accordingly, in addressing the various forms that settler colonial governance took in the decades after 1851, when Victoria ceased to be New South Wales's dependent jurisdiction of Port Phillip and became a separate colony, the questions that frame the collection revolve around Victoria's status as being in some ways exceptional and in other ways emblematic of British colonialism. What shapes did settler colonial governance take after the achievement of self-government in light of local commitments to the development of colonial democracy and the maintenance of settler respectability? At the same time, how can colonial Victoria be seen to sit 'at the intersection' of both local and global forces? These questions are explored in detail in the contribution from Jessie Mitchell and Ann Curthoys, who address the core question 'how different was Victoria?' by considering its policies of protective governance from a comparative perspective.

Working broadly in the theoretical domain of settler colonial studies on the understanding that settler colonialism functions as 'a structure rather than as an event', as Patrick Wolfe famously proposed, each of the essays in this collection examines a different aspect of the structural, institutional, discursive or embodied trajectories of settler colonialism in nineteenth-century Victoria, and

its relationship to the Indigenous peoples it was designed to engage, reform or classify. Underlying the question of how settler colonial governance unfolded, then, is the more tangled question of Indigenous agency, to which all the contributors are attuned. In examining the relationships between Indigenous people and the various kinds of colonial actors with whom they intersected – from administrators to missionaries, from protectors to ethnographers – the focus of the collection is not just on the institutional impacts of settler colonial governance but also on how everyday practices of governance were exerted and challenged, how their imperatives were reworked by Indigenous people, and how the authority of the settler state was partial.

In pursuing these themes, the essays collected here follow a loosely chronological timeline and revolve around a set of concerns that deal with how different forms of colonial knowledge were produced, how they circulated through different cultural frames, and how bureaucratic structures and practices were tied to the quotidian level of everyday relationships. Throughout, the contributors are also particularly mindful of the ways in which different kinds of colonial space were socially coded, and the active role of Indigenous people in intersecting with them. In her essay on Indigenous ‘begging’ in the urbanising city of Melbourne, for instance, Lynette Russell reconceives a colonial understanding of Indigenous destitution in order to explore how Indigenous people adapted to the colonising landscape by engaging in economic action that provided access to European resources. Other essays by Claire McLisky and by Joanna Cruickshank and Patricia Grimshaw focus on the space of missions, analysing them not just as sites geared towards the spiritual and moral regulation of Indigenous people but also as ‘sites of intimate relationships, shifting power balances and complex interdependencies’ (p. 165).

Colonial institutions and practices were also directly influenced by the shifting terms of circulating colonial knowledges. As Rachel Standfield, Leigh Boucher and Jane Lydon explore in different ways, the consolidation of ethnographic discourse later in the nineteenth century helped to reshape and legitimate strategies of settler colonial governance that became increasingly geared around classifications of racial authenticity and exclusion. At the same time, as Samuel Furphy’s and Jennifer Balint et al.’s chapters suggest, institutional forms of governance in colonial Victoria never operated with blanketing power but were always themselves contested spaces, subject to internal tensions and serving as lightning rods for Indigenous political protest.

It is not uncommon in collections arising from workshops to appear somewhat disparate, joined together by broad themes but insufficiently interlinked by grounding principles. This is not the case here, where the collection’s concentrated focus on a single jurisdiction provides a detailed account of how settler colonial governance evolved over the course of decades, while it still

offers reflection on how Victoria's case speaks to the history of British colonial governance elsewhere. An effect of this focused approach is that the essays share some degree of overlap in outlining the forces that shaped colonial policy in Victoria over time, from the early protectorate of the 1840s to successive administrative phases that encompassed the workings of the Central Board, and the powers and effects of the 1869 and 1886 protection Acts. To some extent, however, this degree of overlap is unavoidable; it would be impossible to trace the deep evolutions of colonial governance in Victoria without returning to these key institutions and statutes. More broadly, given Victoria's particular place in the history of British settler colonialism both before and after the age of settler self-government, the contribution of this collection is that it deepens our understanding of settler colonial governance not just in this single jurisdiction but also in the wider context of colonial Australia and Australia's position in the British settler world. The relevance of such a project is not just historical but is ongoing. As Balint et al. remind us in their closing chapter, to live as contemporary citizens of Australia is to live inside the 'unfinished business' of settler colonialism. In drawing out the 'complex mosaic of historical phenomena' (p. 25) that comprised the workings of colonialism in the regional setting of Victoria, this collection contributes to the important work of comprehending the unsettled histories of settler colonialism and its enduring legacies more widely.

Skin Deep: Settler Impressions of Aboriginal Women

by Liz Conor

xi + 514 pp., UWA Publishing, Crawley, 2016,
ISBN 9781742588070 (pbk), \$50.00.

Review by Barbara Dawson
The Australian National University

In May 2016, a 'Four Corners' program on national television dealt with the death of an Indigenous woman, who died at the hands of two white men, five years ago. No convictions ensued at that time. The initial anonymity of the woman in media coverage (except as an Aboriginal woman and single mother) and the lack of public outrage mirror the argument, presented in Liz Conor's book, of the disregard and indifference to violence against Aboriginal women. Conor's argument is that, from the earliest colonial representations, Indigenous women have been depicted as racial stereotypes and not seen as individuals. They have been typecast in a 'surface-based, half-knowing' (p. 2) way that has robbed them of their identity and intrinsic value. Knowledge of these women has been only 'skin deep': hence the title of the book.

Ten years in the making, the book was informed by the author's concerns, from around 2007, about the 'fraught period in Australian racial history' (p. 369) from about 2007. Two other factors formed an impetus for her incisive investigation: her settler-historian grandmother's disregard for the Indigenous local history of the Ovens River valley, Victoria, and a haunting image of an unidentified woman in Alice Duncan-Kemp's *When Strange Paths Go Down*. Who was she? The author's intrigue and her sense of injustice spurred her on to a long trail of inquiry about the way Aboriginal women were depicted or disregarded. What she found was misogyny and entrenched racism.

The main body of the work deals with the reiteration of themes in texts and images that denigrate Aborigines. Conor has pinpointed, illustrated, and elaborated on the idea that the stereotypical depiction of Aboriginal women has

maligned the group in one overriding representation in the settlers' interest. To counteract this stance, she offers explanations and contributing academic argument to refute the entrenched viewpoints.

At the heart of the study is the role that the print media played, first in setting down racial distortions, and then by the widely repeated reproduction of them in Australian colonial media. After the introduction of the telegraph, these descriptions and graphic images were projected to a global readership. In her pursuit of the origin (and truth) of the observations concerning Indigenous women in settler print media, Connor found that most accounts could not be verified and that only a few were from 'first-hand' informers. Some of these drew accusations against Indigenous mothers. From her intellectual probing, Connor posits that the secret nature of women's customary rites or rituals led to misunderstanding and therefore to misinterpretation. One area of trenchant inquiry was into a native mother's role in childbirth and childrearing. She offers arguments to suggest that certain clan meanings of actions hid the truth from the eyes of male (and some female) settlers. Among settler women, only those who had borne children themselves were allowed inclusive authority to this knowledge. Daisy Bates *had* had a child, but she did not seem to have enjoyed the necessary inner-sanctum knowledge of the Mirning women (pp. 226–31).

'Bride capture' was another recurring trope that became entrenched in settler interpretations of Indigenous culture, and their social and gender relations. This racialised depiction of brutal enslavement circulated the idea of Aboriginal violence against their women. Connor explores and dissects the hearsay and cites contradictory textual reports that refute a generalised reading. As with rituals to do with childcare and the death of a child, the intricacies of marriage rites were unknown, and could therefore be misinterpreted by settler onlookers. Some informants confirmed that elopement, for example, was known to occur – a happening that may have become confused with 'bride capture'. Connor argues that these racist generalisations and judgements, which supported an ongoing argument that Indigenous people were inferior, encouraged governments to introduce child removal and condoned the appropriation of Indigenous lands. It compounded the popular perception of Aborigines as a doomed and 'dying race' – an idea expedient to the aims of the pastoral imperialists. Connor states that this false notion about Aboriginal women's so-called inferior position in Aboriginal society 'enabled settlers to [literally] get away with murder' (p. 96).

As a way to illustrate how Aboriginal women have been stereotyped, and their identity stripped from them, the author looks at the monikers used from the early nineteenth century to describe them. Those of 'native belle', 'sable siren' and 'spinifex fairy' were often accompanied by visual images from sketches and, later, photography. This young beauty was depicted purely as a physical being, with graceful limbs and an elegant, 'dignified' comportment.

Older women, the elders of the group, were seen merely as 'absolute frights' (p. 326). The female workers, who were the backbone of the domestic economy on outback pastoral properties, were caricatured and ridiculed by cartoonists and commentators. Unable to understand the Indigenous need – unencumbered by shoes – to have sensory contact with the land beneath their feet, they depicted domestic workers in white women's houses as having grossly enlarged bare feet. This seems strange when the muscles of their lower legs were described as 'deficient' – giving them the appearance in graphic representation of being spindly. The depiction of all these categories of Aboriginal women is, again, only 'skin deep'.

In this prescient study, Conor reveals the 'tissue of errors' (p. 365) that has been promulgated in 'longstanding imprints of racialised gender relations' (p. 366). She hopes that *Skin Deep* will promote a 'heightened awareness' of these distortions, as she pleads for the safety of Aboriginal women against violence. In a nutshell, her argument underlines the modern adage of 'Don't believe everything you read in newspapers'!

The study is jam-packed with theoretical argument, observations, scholarly quotes and referencing footnotes. Some of this information gels together in long paragraphs which, if broken into smaller thematic chunks, would have brought the interesting mass of information into even more punchy and graphic focus. Well indexed, with a long bibliography and with a good smattering of cartoons and other graphic images, this book will be a boon to researchers in the fields of Women's Studies and Australian History. Hopefully, it will also reach out further to grab the attention of the wider public.

Southern Anthropology – a History of Fison and Howitt’s Kamilaroi and Kurnai

by Helen Gardner and Patrick McConvell

xx + 329 pp., Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2015,
ISBN 9781137463807 (hbk), €98.79.

Review by Raymond Madden
La Trobe University

A quote from the preface sums up the importance of this work:

Working through the primary material, Gardner and McConvell, from their different areas of expertise, became convinced of the ongoing value of this evidence and the singularity of Fison and Howitt’s anthropological vision from a southern perspective. This point became the central thesis of this book. (p. xx)

The book is set out across five sections (1. Southern Anthropology, 2. Finding Kin: Fison in the Antipodes, 3. Kin and Skin, 4. From Encounter to Page: The Writing of *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, 5. The Reception and Legacy of *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*) and these five sections are divided into 18 chapters. There is a generous list of figures, as well as a list of maps and tables. As well, there is a useful ‘Note on Spelling’ to assist the reader. Furthermore, the book contains an excellent foreword by Nicolas Peterson, which appropriately positions Southern or Antipodean Anthropology in the global world of ideas about the human condition.

While many anthropologists may be aware of the influence of Howitt, especially in south-east Australia, the importance of the combination of Fison and Howitt and the influence of their work on an anthropology moving away from evolutionist ideas to one more influenced by human relativity is worth reiterating and *Southern Anthropology* effectively makes this point. Helen Gardner, from Deakin University, Australia, and Patrick McConvell, from The Australian National University, were each responsible for sections of the text, with Gardner writing the core of the book and McConvell authoring

the opening and closing sections. In this way they were able to bring their expertise, in History and Anthropology respectively, to bear to the final product. The result is a pleasing text, both technically well-presented and yet still accessible and easy to read. The influence of Howitt and Fison on Morgan, and vice versa is very much worth noting as these ideas have gone on to be influential even today. In particular Howitt and Fison's contribution to kinship studies is illuminated, both historically and anthropologically.

Southern Anthropology is an excellent revision of the import of *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, which was first published in 1880. *Southern Anthropology* lays out how ideas laid out back in 1880 have gone on to have an influence that is worthy of remark, and worthy of serious reconsideration of the place of southern anthropology in the global world of ideas about the human condition.

Strings of Connectedness: Essays in Honour of Ian Keen

edited by Peter Toner

xxii + 336 pp., ANU Press, Canberra, 2015,
ISBN 9781925022629 (pbk), \$43.00.

Review by Ingrid Slotte
School of Global Studies
University of Gothenburg

Ian Keen is well known and respected within his field of Australian Aboriginal anthropology. Over a span of four decades he has published widely on Aboriginal religion, kinship, social organisation and language, with a particular focus on the Yolngu people of Arnhem Land. Other areas of research and publication include land claims, Indigenous people in 'settled' Australia and Aboriginal economies at the time of colonisation.

This volume is a Festschrift, initially compiled to mark Keen's 75th birthday in 2013, comprising a collection of 13 chapters in honour of his academic achievements by former graduate students and one current colleague. The chapters are organised chronologically, in order of Keen's connection with the contributors. With one exception, the chapters concern Aboriginal Australia, four of them being focused on Arnhem Land. While the volume may have appeared more coherent by concentrating on Aboriginal Australia alone, the chapters reflect Keen's wide span of research interests and reinforce the utility of Keen's key concepts, even beyond Australia.

The volume opens with a foreword by Nicolas Peterson, friend and colleague, who initially recruited Keen to The Australian National University. It traces the outline of Keen's career, his early days as a graduate student, first fieldwork at Milingimbi in Arnhem Land in 1974, and later his time as a lecturer at the University of Queensland and at The Australian National University, all

interspersed with Peterson's personal reflections and anecdotes. Being a graduate student of Keen myself in the 1990s, the foreword certainly conjures up some nostalgic memories of people, places and a vibrant academic environment.

The editor's introduction is particularly helpful in providing a detailed overview of Keen's production, key ideas and areas of research. Themes which reflect the contributors' connection to Keen's work include ambiguity in Yolngu ritual language, the dynamic and fluid nature of Yolngu social life where individuals negotiate their positions through 'strings of connectedness' and 'the incommensurability of Western European and Aboriginal tropes' (p. 13). The contributors also refer to Keen's emphasis on empirically grounded research, comparative method and the need to question the value of orthodox anthropological concepts such as 'clan', 'phratry', 'tribe' (pp. 9, 103).

There are four chapters on Arnhem Land, the region where Keen did his initial fieldwork. Craig Elliott examines Marrangu Djinang cosmology and the spirit beings Mewal and Merri, demonstrating that religious understandings of the characters fluctuate and are far from static, resonating with Keen's notion of conceptual ambiguity. Toner focuses on ritual music and demonstrates in detail that Yolngu performances are not following a set formula, but are contextually based, claiming inspiration in part from Keen's analysis of the dynamic nature of Yolngu sociality. Bentley James analyses the Yolngu use of the concept of 'märr', arguing that its meaning is far more complex than just 'spiritual power', echoing Keen's 'call for greater attention to local tropes and idioms' (p. 236). Louise Hamby, together with Gumbula, an Indigenous man from Arnhem Land, provides a chapter on the history of art collecting at Milingimbi. What were the motivations by collectors during different time periods? What were the motivations of the local Yolngu people who participated in the trade?

Other chapters in the volume resonate with Keen's wide range of interests beyond Arnhem Land. Trigger presents two cases of land claims in the Gulf of Carpentaria where succession to land has taken place according to traditional law, while Levitus's chapter explores how the advent of land rights changed 'the terms of engagement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people', from labour force to landowners.

Diana Eades was Keen's first graduate student and contributes a chapter on the understanding of Aboriginal identity by judicial officers in the criminal court system, referring to Keen's volume *Being Black* (1988) as groundbreaking work. Paul Burke's chapter surveys a Warlpiri female diaspora and the choices that some women make as they break with traditional expectations and move away from Warlpiri country. Heather McDonald traces the history of development of Christian dichotomies such as good and evil, heaven and hell, from their

earliest beginnings, beliefs that are now presented in the churches at Halls Creek as ‘universal truths’, affecting how Aboriginal Christians in the local community categorise themselves and their Indigenous spirit beliefs.

The diversity of topics is a continuing feature of the volume. John White presents a historical chapter on the economy of the Yuin people, in the Eurobodalla region, New South Wales, at the time of colonisation and applies a comparative model developed by Keen, examining regional ecology, economy and institutions. Patrick McConvell provides a highly detailed linguistic chapter, considering the historical diffusion of kinship terminology, in particular affinal kin terms, across northern Australia. Uhlmann’s chapter is the ‘odd one out’, being the only chapter in the book concerned with an area outside Australia. He presents an ethnographic study of university Arabic grammar instruction, and inspired by Keen’s material on Yolngu metaphors, he points towards the ‘incommensurability of two systems of knowledge’.

The volume ends with an afterword by Borsboom, another Arnhem Land colleague, praising the ethnographic contributions as ‘thick description’, followed by a very useful appendix, listing all of Keen’s publications.

I recommend this volume as a valuable resource – it brings the reader an excellent overview of Keen’s production, and contains insightful chapters on Aboriginal Australia of interest to both anthropologists and historians. In reading the chapters and contemplating the ‘strings of connectedness’ between Keen and his former graduate students, I could not help but reflect on the production of academic knowledge, how fields of knowledge and research are defined and ‘inherited’, and how new questions and fields are generated in the process. Two volumes in the same genre which immediately come to mind are the volumes in honour of Les Hiatt (Merlan et al. 1997) and the volume in honour of Nicolas Peterson (Musharbash and Barber 2011). Together with the present volume, they display the work and influence of three ‘generations’ of anthropologists – as Hiatt supervised Peterson’s doctoral thesis, and Peterson in turn supervised Keen’s thesis.

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Wanjina: Notes on Some Iconic Ancestral Beings of the Northern Kimberley

by Kim Akerman

xiii + 179 pp., illus, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 2016,
ISBN 9780859056281 (pbk), \$85.00.

Review by Michael P. Rainsbury

Kim Akerman has spent his life researching Aboriginal culture. In this book he collects his thoughts of more than 40 years, plus rare published and previously unpublished material, to give a comprehensive overview of the West Kimberley Wanjina cult and the belief systems of the traditional people there.

Akerman's book is published at an opportune time. It is more than 10 years since Blundell and Woolagoodja's *Keeping the Wanjinas Fresh*, over 20 years after Mowaljarlai and Malnic's *Yorro Yorro*, and Layton's *Australian Rock Art: A New Synthesis*, and almost 50 years after Ian Crawford's *The Art of the Wandjina*. Mike Donaldson's three recent volumes on Kimberley rock art illustrate Wanjina art in glorious colour plates but with only brief accompanying text. Akerman now provides solid content for appreciating and understanding the paintings and the culture behind them.

The book is of value and differs from the previous works mentioned through Akerman's new research discoveries, the first being the work of Yngve Laurell of the First Swedish Scientific Expedition to Australia (1910–11). Laurell, an ethnologist, stayed at Mount Barnett Police Station for several months and drew and photographed in detail. Akerman located photographs and drawings, some of which he has included. He has published the full story as the subject of a separate book.

The main body of work presented for the first time is that of anthropologist John McCaffrey who undertook fieldwork in Mowanjium in the mid-1960s. McCaffrey was interested in the 'process of creation of visual art objects' and recorded the creation of Wanjina art, as well as painted coolamons, along with

interviews with the painters. Akerman's transcription of McCaffrey's notes provides insight into the artists he worked with in Mowanjum, and offers an intimate portrait of how they painted.

The final piece is the collection of information relating to Sea Wanjinias and their activities on the west coast involving the Rock Cod and the Baler Shell, as well as Namarali. Akerman attempts a synthesis, or at least determines common links, between the coastal legends and those of the inland. As his chapter heading asks, are these two sagas or one great saga?

The book is 179 pages long with 79 figures, the main text making up the first half of the book at 93 pages. The remainder consists of nine comprehensive appendices. Section headings within the main text show the breadth of the subjects covered: History of Wanjina Research and Recordings; Wanjinias, Rainmaking and Control of Elements; Sea Wanjinias, Coast Wanjinias – Two Sagas or One Great Saga; Wanjina Art – A General Statement.

The second half of the book consists of appendices covering a range of topics and is the part researchers will use repeatedly. Appendices 1 and 2 describe Wanjina anatomy from diagrams and research literature references. Appendix 3 is a major work by Akerman, a table of all published Wanjina names with their locations and references. Appendix 4 is an analysis of the relationship between Walanganda, Unggud, Galeru and Wanjinias. In the central Kimberley the core of Wanjina mythology is the abuse of Dumbi the Owl and the ensuing battle leading to the dispersal of the Wanjinias throughout the land. This is covered in Appendix 5 where Akerman has collated almost all the published stories on the saga. The coastal stories of the Baler Shell and the Rock Cod are collected in Appendix 6. There is a crossover between the two sets of sagas and this is illustrated in a four-page table which becomes Appendix 7. The final two appendices are concerned with other beings associated with Wanjina rock art and their mythology.

The book is a comprehensive review and analysis of Kim Akerman's research and other literature on the subject. Physically the book is A4 (21 x 29.7cm) in size and printed on gloss paper. Photographs are in full colour and are good quality. My main criticism is in the design of the book, as it resembles a basic printed manuscript, and some of the photographs should have been printed larger. The front cover photograph though is stunning and shows a storm cloud with a Wanjina head superimposed, approaching over water. The fluffiness of the cloud provides the body and the rainfront the legs to this ancestral being. That a picture can say a thousand words is illustrated by this photograph summarising at least two or more pages of text within the main body of the book.

Kim Akerman's *Wanjina: Notes on Some Iconic Ancestral Beings of the Northern Kimberley* is an important piece of work and I consider it a necessary purchase for libraries and researchers' bookcases.

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Footnote style

1. Rowley 1971: 107. See also Barwick 1981.
2. Fisher to Hassall, 20 July 1824.
3. Fison and Howitt 1880: 96-108.
4. *Evening Mail*, 12 March 1869.
5. Solly to Stokell, 4 March 1869, AOTCSD 7/23/127.

Footnote numbers are placed after punctuation marks in the text. Please do not use *ibid.* or similar abbreviations, but repeat the short citation.

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