Unsettled Settlers: Fear and White Victimhood in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, 1788 – 1838.

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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

Signed: Mick Warren

Date: 8 June 2017
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Abstract
Fear of Aboriginal aggression was a reality for the early settlers of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, but it only gained imaginative currency through the trope of white victimhood. This discursive emotional frame continues today, providing a means for many contemporary settler Australians to reconcile with a colonial legacy defined by frontier violence and dispossession. In engaging this dialectic between the past and the present, this thesis seeks to understand how fear and white victimhood gained such purchase upon the Australian settler imaginary.

In their response to and coverage of frontier violence, colonial newspapers and administrators did much to validate the unsettled feelings of settlers and their servants as they consolidated the dispossession of Indigenous people. Despite the language of “amity and kindness” which guided the settlement of Australia, early governors were quick to deploy “terror” as a means of arresting Aboriginal resistance to European occupation. This provided settlers an immediate means through which they could channel their emotions and expectations of frontier policy as the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth. Terrorising Aboriginal people was framed as the most efficient means of consoling their anxieties over the tenuous nature of their lives and properties in this unfamiliar land. A direct relationship thus came to exist between the acknowledgment of settlers as victims and the “eliminationist logic” of settler colonialism.

This thesis provides a critical commentary on the collective emotional experience of Europeans during the colonial era. It analyses the ways in which newspapers like the Sydney Gazette developed a narrative that juxtaposed the “unfeeling” disposition of Aboriginal people with the passive victimhood of settlers, facilitating the circulation of fear across geographical, although administratively porous, boundaries. It also explores how colonial elites cloaked their responsibility in this formation of settler subjectivity in the hope of maintaining a belief in their own humanity towards Indigenous people. Through a discourse of sympathy and compassion men like George Augustus Robinson increasingly sought to challenge the destructive impulses of settler colonialism, emphasising the depravity of convicts and frontiersmen. As this challenge became the central platform of humanitarian governance throughout the 1830s, however, it was less a vehicle for the representation of Indigenous rights as it was a means for colonial elites to retrieve their own sense of Britishness predicated upon the paradox of humane colonisation.
### Abbreviations

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<td>CSP</td>
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<td>PROV</td>
<td>Public Records Office Victoria</td>
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<td>SR NSW</td>
<td>State Records of New South Wales</td>
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<td>TAHO</td>
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Introduction

On 17 May 1997, Prime Minister John Howard addressed a community meeting in Longreach, Queensland, regarding the potential co-existence of Native Title and pastoral leases in the wake of the 1996 Wik decision. This was an early opportunity to outline the recently elected Coalition government’s 10-point plan to amend the “administrative nightmare” created by Wik and the Native Title Act more broadly. He consoled his audience:

I can understand the fear in the community that people who have no connection at all with your land can come from a distant part of Australia and say, well years and years ago my relatives, or my ancestors, or my friends, or the other members of my tribe had a connection with this property, and therefore I've got some right to come onto your property and to exercise my traditional access rights. Well under the amendments that we are framing that can't happen. Unless somebody has a current physical connection with the land, I repeat that, unless somebody has a current physical connection with the land, than access rights cannot be obtained.¹

This rhetoric relayed anxieties regarding the security of European title across Australia that had been mounting since the Mabo decision in 1992. In leading the charge against Mabo in opposition, then leader of the Coalition John Hewson made the claim that Australians had “genuine concerns about their home, or their mine or their farm”.² Even after Howard “put beyond any legal doubt” the threat Native Title posed to freehold title in 1997, which did nothing more than reiterate the Native Title Act’s provisions regarding “extinguishment”,

some members of his government continued to echo the precarity of non-Indigenous land
title, alluding to Australian “backyards in peril.” Rivalling this heightened rhetoric was One
Nation leader Pauline Hanson’s 1996 maiden speech to parliament, in which she proclaimed:

I am fed up with being told ‘This is our land’. Well, where the hell do I go? I was born here, and so were my parents and children...I draw the line when told I must pay and continue paying for something that happened over 200 years ago. Like most Australians, I worked for my land; no-one gave it to me.

In examining the strong hold of victimological narratives upon the Australian imaginary, from pioneer legends to battles with the natural landscape, Ann Curthoys has detected both “practical and figurative resonance” in these words. At once Hanson voiced practical concerns already evinced by other parliamentarians at the state and federal level, but also the “fear of a symbolic loss, of the legitimacy and permanency of the non-Aboriginal Australian’s sense of home.” This dual concern poses a threat to the myth that settler Australians achieved their ownership of land through suffering and hardship, an implicit declaration of *terra nullius* in defiance of the historic precedent established by the *Mabo* decision and the *Native Title Act*.

Through such emotive responses to Native Title, Curthoys identifies “a white Australian version of *ressentiment*”, Nietzsche’s concept of the “triumph of the weak as weak”, otherwise exacerbated by forces which have deprived members of Western society a sense of social and economic agency in a globalized world. The clearest implication of the

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3 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 December 1997.
prevalence of the growing self-identification with white victimhood for settler societies such as Australia is a form of historical blindness, an inability to recognise one’s role in the suffering of Indigenous people in particular.\(^6\)

The recent revival of Hanson’s One Nation party and the 2016 election of Donald Trump to the American presidency indicate the growing purchase of political rhetoric which speaks to a class of people convinced that they have been left behind by globalization.\(^7\) This economic insecurity easily finds as its political scapegoat the difficulty of integrating people of diverse cultural backgrounds within an ostensibly white society. As it was with people of Asian heritage and Native Title with Hanson’s initial political platform 20 years ago, so it is with people of Islamic heritage today, a platform bolstered by the global insecurity of a post-9/11 world. The rise of groups such as Islamic State is offered as evidence of the threat people from predominantly Muslim nations pose, in ignorance of the role Western powers have played in creating the regional instability from which such groups have emerged.\(^8\)

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\(^6\) Curthoys, ‘Expulsion, exodus and exile in white Australian mythology’ p. 18. A similar conception is Anthony Giddens’ “juggernaut of modernity”. “To live in the world produced by high modernity”, he writes, “has the feeling of riding a juggernaut. It is not just that more or less continuous and profound processes of change occur; rather change does not consistently conform either to human expectations or to human control.” Gloria Wekker provides similar insight in the context of Dutch society through the phrase “white innocence”, a construct referring to the inability of the Dutch psyche to confront its perpetration of colonial violence in places like Indonesia given the way the Netherlands suffered as a result of German occupation in World War II. This is one of several paradoxes Wekker describes at the heart of white Dutch self-representation allowing the nation to perceive itself as devoid of racial discrimination and colonial violence whilst perpetuating a culture of xenophobia and white dominance. Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 28; Gloria Wekker, White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race (London: Duke university Press, 2016), pp. 12 – 21.

\(^7\) Although, as David Marr has recently argued, there is little evidence that Australians who voted for Hanson’s One Nation Party in the 2016 election did so on account of economic marginalization as a result of globalization. Rather, being “in work and middling prosperous” the main drive of One Nation voters is a nostalgic yearning for an Australian past untroubled by the contemporary politics of race. David Marr, ‘The White Queen: One Nation and the Politics of Race’, Quarterly Essay, no. 65 (2017), pp. 52 – 55.

\(^8\) This risks simplifying the complex recent evolution of Islamic radicalism (Salafi jihadism) of which IS is but the most recent manifestation. However, on top of a broad ranging clerical and racial animus, a common denominator of this tradition is its preoccupation with undermining the hegemony of Western power in the Middle-East, hence the attacks upon New Your and Washington on 11 September 2001. Whether one interrogates the incoherent ethnic synthesis of Iraq as a result of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, or Shi’a exposure to Sunni extremism following instability in the country after it was invaded in 2003, America and its allies helped set the scene for a civil war which allowed the emergence of Islamic State. This is not to underestimate, however, the role of figures such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in targeting the general Shi’a population. See Robert Manne, The Mind of the Islamic State (Carlton: Scharwtz Publishing, 2016), p. 16.
global constellation of historical and economic circumstances involving an array of anxieties expressed towards people of certain racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds must therefore be taken into account in explaining the prevalence of white victimhood in settler nations in particular, where non-Indigenous belonging is a necessarily fragile concept.

The specific significance of *Mabo* and its consequent legislative implications lies in the ease with which it exposed this fragility, and clarity and penetration of its critique of the legitimacy of Australia as a nation state. This relationship between white victimhood and Indigenous political agency is otherwise more subtly present in recent Australian history. The retirement of Sydney Swans Indigenous AFL player Adam Goodes at the end of 2015 is a clear example. During the 2015 season, AFL crowds began to boo Goodes whenever he touched the ball. This behavior increased in intensity from the Indigenous Round in May, during which Goodes had confronted booing Carlton (the opposition) supporters with a war cry, climaxing in what appeared to be the throwing of a spear.

As I was able to glean from attending a match in July 2015, rather than targeting Goodes on the grounds of race, a consensus seemed to be emerging that he had long been booed given his tendency to unfairly manipulated umpires into awarding him penalties. For journalists such as Miranda Devine and Paul Sheehan, the genesis of the booing (to which Goodes partly attributed his retirement from the game) could in fact be traced back to the star’s ‘outing’ of a 13-year-old girl who called him an ape during a game against Collingwood in May 2013 (the girl was subsequently ejected from the ground). Failing to recognise his many other achievements on and off the field, Devine went as far as to surmise that Goodes was awarded Australian of the Year in 2014 principally for targeting “a
powerless little girl”.⁹ “The Adam Goodes Fire”, as Sheehan coined it, a moment laden with political and historical meaning, thus came to focus upon “the self-chosen white victim”.

Instead of reflection, by throwing his imaginative spear Goodes only managed to evoke “fear of illegitimacy”, a characteristic inability to recognise the harm done to others, to allow a more inclusive and coherent national narrative to emerge.¹⁰

Such moments sharply evoke what W.E.H Stanner referred to in 1968 as “a cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale”, a structural deficiency in the national historical consciousness throughout the twentieth century regarding Aboriginal people and their views.¹¹ As Mark McKenna has observed, this willful blindness remains relevant to settler histories despite attempts to address Stanner’s call to end the “Great Australian Silence” and acknowledge Australia’s history of frontier violence.¹² McKenna makes this point with specific reference to the relationship between history and memory in places marginal to the broader national frontier narrative. Having long internalised this sense of marginalisation, extending to neglect at the hands of successive governments, communities such as Eden on the New South Wales far south coast naturally adopt the status of victims in the face of being challenged on the grounds of colonial dispossession.¹³ Like Curthoys McKenna also more broadly frames the overall reaction of Australian conservatives to the post-Stanner focus upon narratives of Aboriginal dispossession, murder and forced family removal in terms of

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¹⁰ Curthoys, ‘Expulsion, exodus and exile in white Australian mythology” p. 18.


¹³ McKenna, Looking For Blackfellas’ Point, pp. 138 – 154.
national moral legitimacy. Captured by objections to Australian history drifting too far towards a “black armband” view of the past, led by historians such as Geoffrey Blainey and Howard’s role as prime minister, Australian conservatives rallied around the argument that despite occasional “blemishes” the “Australian story is a story of heroic achievement in the face of extraordinary odds.”

According to McKenna, this reaction has clothed the disenfranchisement of Indigenous political and legal agency in the language of historical methodology, hence attacks upon historians such as Henry Reynolds. In so doing it has also jeopardised the understanding of Australia’s past by channeling it through contemporary political discourse, “a new myth concerning Australian history” McKenna aims to disrupt by focusing on regions that have received little historical attention. In striving to achieve the historical complexity inherent to this approach, if not its methodology of place, this thesis first and foremost aims to illuminate how white victimhood gained such strong purchase upon the settler imaginary, and the role of emotion more broadly in forming colonial subjectivities in the first fifty years of Australian settlement.

The violence of the frontier wars, which punctuated the European invasion of Australia across the nineteenth century, elicited far more literal expressions of fear than the existential concerns over belonging which marked the twentieth. Fear frequently bound settler communities threatened by violence, transcending class boundaries as it coalesced in the broader expression of white suffering. As hutkeepers deserted their posts rather than suffer at the hands of Aboriginal warriors, this translated to the anxiety settlers and

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14 McKenna, *Looking For Blackfellas’ Point*, p. 31.
15 McKenna, *Looking For Blackfellas’ Point*, p. 31.
16 McKenna, *Looking For Blackfellas’ Point*, p. 32.
landholders felt regarding the security of their property. When memorials arrived on the desk of colonial administrators requesting military protection, they did so in stark racial terms, clearly delineating the contours of white victimhood.

But the political valence of whiteness only went so far, given colonial elites misgivings regarding the role played by convicts and frontiersmen in initiating frontier violence. After all, despite the hardening of racial hierarchies which marked British imperialism between 1780 and 1820, it was with “amity and kindness” that Arthur Phillip was tasked in engaging Aboriginal people in the establishment of New South Wales in 1788. As will be emphasised in chapter 1, however, this instruction was little more than a token of elite chivalry, what Deidre Coleman has described as “the velvet glove which makes the iron fist of colonisation and dispossession in New Holland more palatable, a type of gestural diplomacy masking dominion as kindness, gallantry and good intentions whilst bolstering the intruders’ sense of their own superiority.”

Against a backdrop of good intentions, the administration of settler colonialism was in this way characterised by a certain emotional ambivalence towards frontier violence from the beginning of European occupation in Australia. By introducing the language of “terror” in explaining the coercive measures that they took to pacify Aboriginal resistance so early in the governance of New South Wales, early governors achieved little by way of “amity and kindness”. In the hope of maintaining a belief in their own chivalry, they implicitly

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recognised white victimhood, establishing the expectation that “terror” was the only way to calm the fears that grew with every new movement of the frontier.¹⁹

Through the prism of victimhood, emotion was thus involved in the fashioning of starkly different colonial subjectivities, framing the politics of recognition that would in time shape the history of settler society and the broader course of British imperialism. With the Imperial humanitarian movement diverting its attention away from slavery by the 1830s, the destructive consequences of colonisation upon Aboriginal people became even more central to the negotiation of British identity, what Alan Lester has described in terms of a “rupture between bourgeois metropolitan Britishness and colonial Britishness”.²⁰

In seeking to draw this “rupture” further into the realm of settler emotional life, this thesis will draw specifically upon the importance Lester places on the colonial press. By way of Benedict Anderson’s broader insight regarding the relationship between print media and the modern emergence of nationalism, Lester writes,

nineteenth-century newspapers did not simply give expression to the united ‘we’ of their readership, they actively helped to forge such a collective identity. In the colonies, settler-edited newspapers allowed their readers to envisage the actions of thousands of other settlers, apparently similar in attitudes and backgrounds to

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¹⁹ This approach also needs to take into account the tacit acceptance of Indigenous law in conjunction with settler sovereignty that Lisa Ford has assigned to New South Wales throughout the first decades of European settlement. Rather than outright lawlessness, as Ford argues, the New South Wales frontier was initially more reflective of “jurisdictional pluralism”. Acknowledging the existence of Indigenous jurisdiction, and the principle of retaliation this entailed, New South Wales officials at once allowed the frontier to be managed according to the jurisdictional discretion of local magistrates. But to the extent that this recognised Aboriginal agency in the sorting out of frontier disputes, it also excluded them from British law thus making them “objects as well as perpetrators of unrestrained intercultural violence.” It was not until a string of court cases in the 1830s featuring a number of criminal convictions against Aboriginal men, that the colonial centre acted directly upon the perceived imperative of imposing a form of territorial sovereignty which undermined both Indigenous and peripheral jurisdiction. Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788 – 1836* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 43 – 44, 178 – 202.

²⁰ Alan Lester, ‘British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire’, *History Workshop Journal* vol. 54 (Autumn, 2002), p. 44.
themselves, engaged in the concurrent endeavour of carving out new lives on remote and inhospitable frontiers. They encouraged individual settlers, in Anderson’s phraseology, to imagine themselves part of ‘a sociological organism’ engaged in the arduous process of civilising hostile landscapes and their ‘native’ inhabitants.21

From 1803 with the emergence of the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, the colonial press was crucial to the circulation of emotive, even “demonic”, representations of Aboriginal people. This imaginative currency flowed both within and between New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, allowing a form emotional communion during heightened periods of frontier conflict which transcended relatively distinct administrative boundaries. This discourse was also a trans-imperial phenomenon, accessing what Lester refers to as the “circuits of empire” that bound British colonies across the globe. Settlers across the empire could learn of the inherent “savagery” of their counterparts’ respective frontier foes, a flow of information which equally facilitated humanitarian discourse into the 1830s.

This circuitry also encompassed the broader Anglophone world, with many newspapers describing the difficulties, and successes, experienced by settlers in regions such as North America. The mid-Atlantic region during the struggle for American independence has in fact been the focus of particularly penetrating analysis regarding settler society and the salience of white victimhood. Peter Silver, for instance, highlights the depth and breadth of fear which developed across rural communities under British rule in the context of the Seven Years War, describing the emergence of an “anti-Indian sublime” in American public

discourse. Silver demonstrates how frontier communities comprising people of various European religions and ethnic backgrounds gained social coherence under the political exploitation of this discourse in line with an ever-growing fear of Native people. The “anti-Indian sublime” offered frontiersmen a means of marginalizing groups such as the Quakers, who through their concern for the safety of Indians, failed to properly address the growing political imperative of white victimhood. At the same time the rhetoric of fear was a crucial component of a revolutionary milieu and progression of the idea of a sovereign people, a social agenda built upon the ideal of social tolerance and inclusion, even if it was premised upon the exclusion of Native Americans. The westward movement of settlers from the mid-Atlantic region beginning with the Ohio Valley from American independence was largely predicated upon this “exclusive inclusion”.

Nicole Eustace has similarly underlined the political valence of emotion during this era of American history, pointing to the way in which “expressions of emotion inevitably served as the vector of social communication...never simply for the outer realisation of inner consciousness.” Emotion not only featured in the negotiation of individual settler subjectivity but also played an inter-subjective role, one which was, moreover, porous to discursive influence both domestically and from the metropole. As Eustace demonstrates, this relationship between emotion, colonial authority and the role of metropolitan discourse was particularly important in terms of how British colonists negotiated the fallout from frontier killings of Native American people.

24 Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, p. xxiii, 301
The main example of emotion facilitating this negotiation of settler identity in Eustace's study of colonial Pennsylvania focuses on the fallout from the 1764 Paxton massacre at Conestoga, where a group of armed backcountry settlers murdered a number of unarmed Indians, including women and children. In detailing the emotional responses to this incident, Eustace develops an image of the Pennsylvanian frontier in which metropolitan humanitarian discourse vied with the ideal of masculinity, as embodied by anger, within the imagination of governing elites as they wrestled with their emotions in reconciling the paradox inherent to the prospect of humanely expanding the colonial frontier.

As knowledge of events at Conestoga circulated, writes Eustace, “[m]embers of the colonial elite [including Governor John Penn] agreed that events had exposed the frontier settlers as being beneath the level of humanity.” This was a view that owed considerably to the emotional standards set by metropolitan humanitarian discourse, in conjunction with the pacific influence of a Quaker dominated Pennsylvanian Assembly, which juxtaposed the maintenance of civility and compassion with the expression of anger and violence. As Eustace observes, “critics reserved their strongest condemnation for frontiersman’s anger, arguing that in its extremity lay the chief source of their inhumanity”, a characterisation which equated them as people “more savage than the Indians”. Along these lines the governing elite derided the possibility of frontiersmen being directly involved in the civilised governance of the colony.

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28 Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, p. 35.

29 Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, pp. 38, 40; As Eustace observes, while the elites were in a sense representing the interests of the Indian victims of the massacre, much of their rhetoric was predicated on the idea that civility and its accompanying moral sentiments did not naturally extend itself to Native Americans.
Far from simply explaining their actions in terms of anger, however, those responsible for the killings characterised themselves as victims of relentless Indian violence. They portrayed their actions as those of necessity. Anger was an emotion that came only as a last resort following their grief at having long suffered at the hands of Indian aggression. What particularly bothered the Paxton representatives was the questioning of their humanity when the governing elite made no effort to recognise the grief of backcountry settlers, nor take action to protect their communities from Indian violence, thus compromising their own claim to humanity.\textsuperscript{30} Compounding this sense of victimhood was the governing elite's own ongoing lack of emotion and condolence in view of European fatalities resulting from Indian violence, something they were all too ready to express when it came to the deaths of Indians.\textsuperscript{31}

The turning point in this crisis came when instead of allowing anger to be represented as a negative emotion, the Paxton rebels pointed to its virtue as an essential element of masculinity, portraying the elite as emasculated and timid in the face of Indian aggression. This line of argument eventually led to a significant turnaround in the attitude of the governing elite towards the frontier killings of Native American people. In a stark demonstration of the political capital of emotion in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, Penn's growing opposition with the Quaker dominated Assembly led him to a far more sympathetic and opportunistic understanding of the frontiersman's plight.\textsuperscript{32} The end result of this change of heart being a stark transition from the Assembly's initial denunciation of settler violence to a renewed appreciation of masculine aggression and its role in the governance of the colony, which of course did little to bolster the rights and security of Native Americans. Nor did this change of heart entail any recognition of the rights of lower order frontiersmen to govern. As Eustace writes, “[i]nstead British American men in power undertook ever more complex

\textsuperscript{30}Eustace, \textit{Passion is the Gale}, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{31}Eustace, \textit{Passion is the Gale}, p. 49.

\textsuperscript{32}Eustace, \textit{Passion is the Gale}, p. 51.
tasks of emotional calibration in the quest to validate continuing colonial conquest”, thus allowing a reconciliation between aggression and civility.\textsuperscript{33}

Elite chivalric discourse, and the British Imperial humanitarian movement in the 1830s in particular, can be understood in much the same vein of “emotional calibration”. Emotions such as compassion and sympathy, when they were directed towards Aboriginal people across the British Imperial world, were as much as anything a means of navigating the paradox of humane colonisation. In attributing the destructiveness of settler colonialism to depraved Britons, at no stage did the delineation of suffering suggested by such rhetoric indicate a willingness of colonial administrators to part with the overarching causes of frontier violence. The brute fact of dispossession was elided in the hope of reorienting British imperialism on a trajectory more in accordance with the “virtues” of Western civilisation. Moreover, in maintaining that Aboriginal people were the victims, colonial elites only exacerbated the sense of white victimhood growing between settlers and their servants. As with Pennsylvania, this increased the likelihood of settler protection rivalling the safety of Aboriginal people as the foremost political contingency in the administration of the New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land frontiers.

A further more theoretical means of understanding this reprioritisation of suffering is also offered by Barbara Rosenwein’s theory of “emotional communities”, a framework for analysing how certain emotional discourses came into existence and gained favor according to time and context.\textsuperscript{34} William Reddy has similarly described emotional expression in terms of discourse, or “overlearned cognitive habits”, a realm of culture porous to the operation of power. Reddy thus attributes emotion with the highest political importance, positioning its

\textsuperscript{33}Eustace, \textit{Passion is the Gale}, p. 57.
management through a normative framework in terms of an “emotional regime” as being essential to the endurance of any political structure.\textsuperscript{35} The “emotional suffering” this inevitably entails, results in the emergence of “emotional refuges”, styles of emotional expression which allow for the individual pursuit of “emotional liberty”.\textsuperscript{36}

Hoping to escape the binary of “emotional regime” and “emotional refuge” with her theory of “emotional communities”, Rosenwein asks us to rather

Imagine…a large circle within which are smaller circles, none entirely concentric but rather distributed unevenly with the given space. The large circle is the overarching emotional community, tied together by fundamental assumptions, values, goals, feeling rules, and accepted modes of expression. The smaller circles represent subordinate emotional communities, partaking in the larger one and revealing its possibilities and its limitations.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} William Reddy, \textit{The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 124 – 125, 47, 94. This only explains half of the theoretical potential inherent to Reddy’s theory of emotion, which argues that emotions are inherently and exclusively part of the self but at the same time only able to be expressed through language and are thus inevitably moulded by culture. \textsuperscript{36} Herein lies the potential of emotion to function as a means of understanding historical change. In the realm of “emotives” through which an “emotional regime” gains its purchase, according to Reddy, “emotional suffering” is an inevitable result. This is the case owing to the potential incongruence between the goals inherent to individual emotional experience and expression and the expectations around emotional expression imposed by an “emotional regime”. However, rather than simply according with the normative strictures of this regime, those experiencing emotional suffering are able to gain solace through an “emotional refuge”. For Reddy the protection offered by such refuges at once provides the possibility to pursue “emotional liberty”, the central means of “challenging the high-level goals currently guiding emotional management”, which also allows the development of “new forms of sociability”. The key example Reddy provides to demonstrate the emergence of an emotional refuge and how it can lead to social change is the French Revolution, namely the flowering of sentimentalism as a reaction to the stifling standards of emotional expression promulgated in Louis XIV’s aristocratic honour code and the role it played in the eventual overthrow of that monarch. But as Reddy is keen to point out it is equally important to consider how such an elevation of a emotional refuge can easily amount to another form of emotional management and cause further emotional suffering, a phenomenon all too clearly embodied by “The Terror” which followed in the French Revolution’s wake. Although this pursuit of “emotional liberty” seems all too elusive, Reddy’s theory nonetheless offers a compelling means of involving emotion in the coherence of historical events, “a partial answer to the question why.” Reddy, \textit{The Navigation of Feeling}, pp. 126, 129, 145, 209, 328. See also Rosenwein, \textit{Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages}, p. 17. \textsuperscript{37} Rosenwein, \textit{Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages}, p. 24.
In offering this framework Rosenwein is quick to emphasise the discrete nature of such communities, that rather than being coterminal as in “a crowded street” an “emotional community is a group in which people have a common stake, interests, values and goals.”

Taken as an “overarching emotional community” settler colonialism appears emotionally agnostic, its “fundamental assumptions” of conquest and land acquisition limiting the possibility a common sense of humanity and feeling emerging between Europeans and Aboriginal people. This limitation formed the basis of humanitarian discourse, its status as a “subordinate emotional community” consisting in a willingness to extend compassion across the frontier. With their common denominators of fear and victimhood, settler communities such as New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land were subordinate only insofar as they offered an emotional response to Aboriginal people at all. Although each community took their bearing from a common sense of Britishness, the inherent compatibility of white victimhood with the overarching goals of settler colonialism rendered humanitarianism toothless.

Up and above the emotional protests of humanitarians, settler subjectivity defined through the prism of white victimhood in this sense accorded more directly with Patrick Wolfe’s identification of settler colonialism’s “eliminationist logic”. Rather than understanding dispossession in piecemeal fashion, however gradually it took place, this logic demands that settler colonialism be analysed “as a structure rather than an event”, a recognition of colonisation’s manifestation in the present as much as the past. No matter what

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38 Rosenwein, Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages, p. 24.
39 For a Hobbesian analysis of the ways in which fear can become a “touchstone of a people’s commonality”, see Corey Robin, Fear: The History of a Political Idea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 11, 28, 32, 33 35, 37, 43 – 44.
humanitarians felt in their hearts, the economic imperative of land acquisition and Indigenous dispossession that drove settler colonialism aligned more clearly with the racist beliefs and exterminatory agenda of settlers substantiated by their self-identification as white victims. As the subjectively held humanitarian beliefs of colonial decision-makers became subordinate to these beliefs, the paradox of humane colonial governance was exposed.

This capitulation has led Dirk Moses to ask important questions of genocide and settler society: “how did authorities respond when Aborigines did not “melt away”, and put sufficient resistance to pastoralists and pastoralism – a key sector of the economy – such as to threaten the viability of one of the colonies?”

The answer is that governments in the metropolis came under intense pressure from the frontier periphery, and sometimes were prepared to entertain “final solutions” to the “Aboriginal problem”. Instead of arguing statistically that the colonisation of Australia was tout court genocidal, or insisting truculently that it was essentially benevolent and progressive, it is analytically more productive to view it as a dynamic process with genocidal potential that could be released in circumstances of crisis. The place to look for genocidal intentions, then, is not in explicit, prior statements of settlers or governments, but in the gradual evolution of European attitudes and policies as they were pushed in an exterminatory direction by the confluence of their underlying ideological assumptions, the acute fear of Aboriginal attack, the demands of the colonial and international economy, their plans for the land, and the resistance to these plans by Indigenous people.\footnote{A. Dirk Moses, ‘Genocide and Settler Society in Australian History’, in A. Dirk Moses, eds., \textit{Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History} (New York: Berghan Books, 2004), pp. 32 – 33. See also Raymond Evans, “Crime Without a Name”: Colonialism and the Case for “Indigenocide”, in A. Dirk Moses, eds., \textit{Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History} (New York: Bergan Books, 2008), p. 141.}
Recourse to victimhood, and its relationship to colonialism, likewise features in Moses’ analysis of the Holocaust in which he outlines four colonial logics at the heart of the Nazi fantasy in Eastern Europe: the planned liquidation and enslavement of Slavic peoples in Ukraine and Poland through the Hunger Plan associated with *Lebensraum*; the racist nationalist drive which imagined Germans as an Indigenous people under threat from World Jewry, equating Jewish extermination with subaltern genocide; the accompanying mythology which justified Jewish persecution on the grounds of their alleged responsibility for the German defeat in 1918; and the representation of Jewish people in terms of the “traditional colonial Other: dirty, lazy, stateless, uncivilized”.

In his conceptualization of the “settle archive”, the “repertoire of images, notions, concepts, narratives, stereotypes” mobilized in the practice of settler colonialism, Lorenzo Veracini likewise envisages a discursive collapse between the Holocaust and colonialism. He points to the synchrony of two realms of racial difference in the European imagination, attitudes to Indigenous peoples and anti-Semitism, and how “their respective archives have grown side by side”, citing their common origins in 1492. In both cases a form of victimhood presents the central narrative which justifies the extermination of a whole people.

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Don Watson’s recent description of settler colonialism’s rapid northern progress during the second half the nineteenth century as “Lebensraum for sheepmen” remains nonetheless provocative in view of these arguments.\textsuperscript{45} Its clash of settler “dreams of grandeur” and existential crises risks relegating Indigenous people to the status of victims – a deprivation of agency that many Australian historians have sought to address.\textsuperscript{46} As James Boyce reminds us, however, although this “well-intentioned” research has enriched our understanding of the nuances of frontier history, it tends “to give a distorted sense of the experiences of the overwhelming majority of Aborigines in the immediate aftermath of conquest.”\textsuperscript{47} As this thesis aims to demonstrate, the inverse of this also holds true. Triumphantist narratives of Australian history, particularly ones that emphasise the ingenuity of settler Australians in the face of hardship, can only be asserted through the recognition of white victimhood.

A question the history of emotions can assist in answering is how much of a relationship the history of this trope shares with the reluctance of non-Indigenous Australians in the present to offer a more empathic response to the history of Indigenous dispossession and its ongoing consequences. Inga Clendinnen warns that we should be unwilling to “impose our conveniently simplified alphabet of emotions – ‘fear’, ‘pity’, ‘anger’” in our pursuit to understand the experiences of historical actors.\textsuperscript{48} The sheer distance which exists between our “physical security” in the present and the realities of the past renders historical empathy an impossibility: “[t]wo hundred years ago people were more familiar with death

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\item[46] A notable recent example of which is Robert Kenny \textit{The Lamb Enters the Dreaming}, which traces the life of the Wotjobalik man Nathaniel Pepper as he adapts to the post-frontier of the Wimmera pastoral district of Victoria. Rather than having Christianity imposed upon him, Kenny weaves a narrative whereby Pepper’s negotiation of modernity and relationship with God is driven largely by his own volition. Robert Kenny, \textit{The Lamb enters the Dreaming: Nathaniel Pepper and the Ruptured World} (Melbourne: Scribe, 2007).
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than we are. Death, pain and violence were always at the elbow.”

Contemporary Australians should, therefore, not misconstrue their shared language with British colonists as providing both the necessary and sufficient cultural literacy to understand how they felt.

But the clarity of this point need not preclude the possibility of emotion functioning as an important mediator between the past and the present. Alan Atkinson is critical of historical scholarship which doesn’t pay heed to the key Enlightenment tenant of common humanity, and is particularly scathing Carol and Peter Stearns’ hope of delineating between emotions which are “durable” or biological and those which are “transient” or culturally caused.

“Historians who fail to register the importance of feeling, whether explicitly or not,” he writes, “cut themselves off from the roots of their discipline”. Excluding historians such as Henry Reynolds from this category, Atkinson makes a particular point of Aboriginal history being written with feeling in mind, “its usual purpose [being] to make an emotional point, or rather to make an intellectual point sharpened and coloured by emotion.”

The problem with the “pitilessness” of historians such as Keith Windschuttle is that by eliding their own “self” in their interpretation of the past, they remove themselves from the discipline. For Bain Attwood as well, the feelings engendered by questions arising out of Aboriginal history have become an important vehicle by which historians can understand how they are embedded in the past they hope to interpret, rather than accord with an “epistemological tradition” which demands historical distance.

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49 Clendinnen, ‘The History Question’, p. 26
50 Clendinnen, ‘The History Question’, p. 23
52 Atkinson, ‘Do Good Historians Have Feelings?’, p. 23.
53 Alan Atkinson, ‘Do Good Historians Have Feelings?’, p. 25
54 Alan Atkinson, ‘Do Good Historians Have Feelings?’, pp. 23 – 24.
The ongoing prevalence of anxiety regarding the latent political potential of Indigenous claims to sovereignty such as *Mabo* demands frontier history be pursued as such a “dialogic enterprise” between the past and the present.\(^\text{56}\) In detailing how and why fear and victimhood gave settlers a sense of “imagined community”, this thesis makes no case for any direct relationship existing between the emotions of past and present settler Australians. It is disingenuous for settler Australians to claim they fear Indigenous Australians as they once did. Rather, it is beholden upon them to accept the nature of settler colonialism as “a structure rather than an event”; that past injustices will be maintained and perpetuated in the present so long as they cleave to the myth of white victimhood. It is equally important that non-Indigenous Australians inversely understand that in seeking to more empathically come to terms with the legacies of frontier violence, they do so in accordance with their own hopes of fashioning a more legitimate Australian identity.

In presenting how this emotional dialectic has come to shape the interpretation of Australia’s colonial history, this thesis is driven geographically as much as it is chronologically. Beginning with the settlement of Port Jackson and the Sydney hinterland, chapter 1 explains the contradiction of “terror” emerging as a clear performative emotional strategy for colonial administrators given the overarching imperial ethos of “amity and kindness” which arrived with Arthur Phillip in 1788. The expectation that force was the only way of ameliorating frontier unrest was soon provided more imaginative ballast by the establishment of the colonial press in 1803; the *Sydney Gazette* was the first of many papers which provided a central narrative through which settlers could cultivate their collective fears and inherent right to official protection. The fact that when settlers challenged this narrative they maintained their anonymity through pseudonyms such as *A Settler* and *Philanthropus*.

\(^\text{56}\) Bain Attwood, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History*, p. 169.
indicates the difficulty of contending emotional expression outside the normativity of fear and white suffering.

Just as colonists carried their cultural cache of newspapers and racial hierarchies over the Blue Mountains in 1815, they brought their emotional baggage too, mobilising the violence of the New South Wales frontier westwards across the Bathurst Plains, and to the Hunter Region in the North. It is with reference to this momentum that Deborah Bird Rose has coined the phrase “a rolling Year Zero” – the idea that colonial expansion can be understood in terms of an incremental transfiguration of Aboriginal life in accordance with the rolling moment of European contact. Taking this logic further Grace Karskens suggests that,

[w]e might think of this great wheel of colonisation…in terms of frontier violence too: rolling relentlessly into “new” country, its heavy freight of dispossession, abduction and loss of food sources setting off new cycles of bloody attacks, which in turn triggered “rituals of terror” from the Europeans.\(^{57}\)

The responses of settlers in both regions to the increasing Aboriginal aggression which came as an inevitable response to the colonial juggernaut indicates how thoroughly they had internalised the political platform offered by the expression of fear and victimhood, how easily it could be construed to prompt official anxiety regarding the economic viability of the colony.\(^{58}\)

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\(^{58}\) In adapting Giddens idea of the “juggernaut of modernity” David Smith has coined the “juggernaut of colonialism” to describe how British imperialism rode “roughshod over the Oriental reality”, demeaning the existence of colonial subjects by equating them with objects whose essential physical and temporal differences to Europeans relegated them to either the zoo or the museum. David Smith, *Hinduism and Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 25 – 26. See also Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 25.
As will be shown in chapter 3, the validation of settler emotions in New South Wales throughout the 1820s pastoral expansion in the form of mounted police, but more specifically martial law, set equally clear parameters for the administration of the frontier in Van Diemen’s Land. In the case of Van Diemen’s Land in particular, settler colonialism’s “eliminationist logic”, and how it could be activated by settler emotion, would become particularly clear following Lieutenant Governor George Arthur’s declaration of martial law in 1826 along with subsequent measures such as the “Black Line”.

Ultimately, however it is the ostensibly humane policy embodied in George Augustus Robinson’s Friendly Mission and its object to conciliate the Aboriginal people of Van Diemen’s Land which ironically exposes Australian history to the claim of genocide. In otherwise presenting the complexity of settler emotional experience, in the form of an emotional biography of Robinson during his Friendly Mission, chapter 4 argues that in securing the safety of Aboriginal people Arthur and Robinson were more than anything responding to settler hopes of achieving a “native free” Van Diemen’s Land.

Highlighting the paradox of humane colonisation even further, the emotional means through which colonial administrators sought redress for settler colonialism’s destructive impact upon Aboriginal people across the British world in the 1830s will be the central focus of chapter 5. Their horror at events on the Liverpool Plains frontier such as the Myall Creek massacre in 1838 allowed humanitarians in both Sydney and London to juxtapose their emotional style with the increasingly shrill emotions of settlers, aided by the colonial press, as they became more and more aware of the important role they played in maintaining the imperative of dispossession at the heart of colonial prosperity. In challenging settlers on the ground of victimhood, colonial administrators in fact only made their job even harder, their status as saviours of Aboriginal people more and more obscure. As will be offered in
conclusion, in shaping a new paradigm of settler colonialism which emphasised the rights of Aboriginal people, humanitarian elites did little to trammel the “juggernaut of colonialism”, being as likely as “inhumane” settlers to exploit the frontier for their own discursive emotional ends.
Chapter 1: ‘When the Moon shall become as large as the Sun’: Unfeeling Enemies and the Hope of Striking Terror, Sydney 1788 – 1816.

On 4 June 1814 the Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser\(^1\) reported that a rumour had taken hold of the Cowpastures settlement outside present-day Camden. According to the Gazette, the local Dharawal people had “coalesced” with Aboriginal people from Jervis Bay declaring, “that when the Moon shall become as large as the Sun, they [would] commence a work of desolation, and kill all the whites before them.” And although “no depredations on the cornfields” had taken place, in accordance with this declaration settlers resolved to keep watch over their farms in preparation for the imminent attack. The full moon of 3 June 1814 came and went without bloodshed.\(^2\) Nonetheless, it seemed that fear had truly come to unsettle the beginning of winter 1814 for the settlers of Western Sydney.

The literary tone of this ultimately unfulfilled prophecy, the sense of impending doom it evokes, gives us some insight to Kate Grenville’s metaphor of settler huts as “compressed cubes of fear” on the nearby Hawkesbury river at the same point in New South Wales history.\(^3\) Both of these areas of remote Sydney out-settlement exposed Europeans to the dangerous consequences of dispossessing Aboriginal people of their land, a process that inevitably created conflict over land-use. This contingency was often exacerbated by the disregard many Europeans extended not only to the land rights of Aboriginal people, but often their right to life itself. From the early stages of New South Wales, there was a growing belief that the contingency of violence on the frontier was driven by atrocities committed by convicts, an elite discourse which obscured the brute fact of dispossession itself. However it transpired, as the anecdote from the Cowpastures demands, there is a need to understand how fear and anxiety functioned within settler communities and the role they played in fuelling

\(^{1}\) Hereafter referred to as the Gazette.
\(^{2}\) Sydney Gazette, Saturday 4 June 1814. [emphasis in original]
violence. In particular, how did the press and colonial administrators assist the growing sense of white victimhood associated with these emotions?

Henry Reynolds has recently observed of the Australian frontier across the nineteenth century, “[f]ear was contagious, fanned by every story of atrocity, which swept through the frontier districts like a communal fire.” It is in this realm of fear’s discursive potential that the Gazette’s coverage of settler anxieties on the Cowpastures in 1814 is so illuminating, rendering believable the possibility of such a geographically remote and hostile coalition of Aboriginal people. The paper did not provide just a representation of events, but a means by which settler communities could imagine themselves as such: communities under threat of imminent violence, haunted by a common savage enemy. This representation at once allowed a space for empathy between colonial centre and periphery, a connection between those physically consolidating the dispossession of Aboriginal people and those potentially with a vested interest in this process.

In tracing how the Gazette gave clear expression to this grievance, encouraging settlers to “imagine themselves part of ‘a sociological organism’ engaged in the arduous process of civilising hostile landscapes and their ‘native’ inhabitants” to borrow Alan Lester’s words, this chapter will outline the relationship between fear and white victimhood and how it came to shape settler subjectivity from the early stages of New South Wales Settlement. The Gazette also played an important role in the complex relationship between this negotiation of subjectivity and the evolution of frontier policy under successive early New South Wales governors. As the first colonial newspaper established in 1803, it often

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5 The system of absentee land-holding characteristic of the early settlement of New South Wales, however, meant that this emotional coherence across class boundaries was less driven by genuine empathy, as it was self-preservation.
functioned as the mouthpiece of the colonial administration. It was not until October 1824, with the first publication of the *Australian*, that the paper ceased to be the subject of official censorship. By this stage much of the violence between settlers and local Aboriginal groups around Sydney had subsided, only to reignite as the frontier spread elsewhere. Along with the *Gazette’s* first editor George Howe, successive governors of early New South Wales were thus complicit in the cultivation of settler victimhood through their authorisation of negative and fearful representations of Aboriginal people.

Compounding this argument is the fact that, despite their chivalric leanings clothed in humanitarian sentiment, many early governors explicitly deployed ‘terror’ as a means of arresting Aboriginal aggression. Well before the establishment of the *Gazette*, early colonial administrators were quick to establish the instrumentality of fear in maintaining the legitimacy of colonial power in the hope of strengthening law and order on frontiers otherwise taking shape under the guise of jurisdictional pluralism. What began as a performance of military strength, coupled with the vain hope of maintaining an adherence to chivalric discourse, in time became a conduit for the expectation that ‘terror’ was the only language that would appease settler anxieties while at once taming ‘unruly savages’.

Decisions of early New South Wales governors couched in the language of ‘terror’ must therefore be considered in tandem with the emotive language of the *Gazette* in helping to understand how New South Wales settlers developed a consciousness paradoxically drawn between Aboriginal subjugation and white victimhood.

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The official use of ‘terror’ against Aboriginal people featured so strongly in the early development of New South Wales is in stark opposition to the instructions which accompanied Governor Arthur Phillip in 1788. With respect to Aboriginal people, Phillip was
instructed “to conciliate their affections, enjoining all [British] subjects to live in amity and kindness with them.”

Writing to colonial secretary Lord Sydney in July 1788, Phillip felt comfortable to claim, “I have the honour of informing your Lordship that the natives have ever been treated with the greatest humanity and attention, and every precaution that was possible has been taken to prevent their receiving any insults.” While violence did indeed become a salient feature of the relationship between British settlers and Aboriginal people as the colony expanded, it was less characteristic of early more amicable encounters. As Grace Karskens explains, when violence did occur it was “often contingent, dependent on place and season and the webs of relationships settlers and Aboriginal people had made with one another.” This contingency came to the fore when it became obvious that the various Aboriginal groups of the Sydney region would have to accommodate the settler presence and the exploitation of their natural resources.

In ensuring Lord Sydney of his accordance with the obligation of kindly treating the native inhabitants of the colony, Phillip also imparted the news that two convicts had been murdered in May while out cutting rushes in the vicinity of Darling Harbour. Prior to this incident, there were also reports of convicts returning from the outskirts of the settlement with signs they had been in violent encounters. Unable “to observe a single trace of the natives” at the site of the violence involving the two convicts, yet still eager to register his displeasure with those responsible, Phillip and a party including Surgeon-General John White marched toward Botany Bay where they quickly found themselves surrounded by 200 armed

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8 Governor Phillip to Lord Sydney, 10th July 1788, *HRA*, series 1, vol. 1, p. 65
10 Karskens, *The Colony*, p. 14
12 Governor Phillip to Lord Sydney, 10th July 1788, *HRA*, series 1, vol. 1, p. 48.
Aboriginal men.\textsuperscript{14} According to Phillip, the two groups managed to part company on “friendly terms” despite what was a highly volatile situation.\textsuperscript{15} This in itself speaks to Phillip’s intentions to uphold the instructions with which he was issued. He was also convinced that the Eora people with whom he had mostly dealt were in no way inherently hostile to their new neighbours.

Following this event, despite his initial displeasure, reconciling Aboriginal aggression seemed a simple matter for Phillip. It was not that the Eora and other Sydney Aboriginal groups were reacting expressly against the presence of the invaders, but rather that their inherent magnanimity was pushed to the limit by convict indiscretions. Writing again to London in 1790, Phillip explained attacks on such “stragglers” by the “natives” as natural given the former’s intent to steal spears and other Aboriginal possessions.\textsuperscript{16} In his account of events leading to the discovery of the two bodies in May, deputy Judge Advocate David Collins reported that the victims had “a few days previous to their being found, taken away and detained a canoe belonging to the natives; for which act of violence and injustice they repaid with their lives.”\textsuperscript{17}

John White, having the unenviable task of examining the bodies of the deceased convicts, William Okey and Samuel Davis, was similarly “inclined to think that [the perpetrators] must have been provoked and injured by the convicts”. This White deduced “from the civility shewn on all occasions to the officers by the natives.” It seems apt to mention that in White’s opinion “fear, united with cold and wet, in a great degree contributed to [Davis’] death” given he “had only some trifling marks of violence about him.” Okey on

\textsuperscript{14} White, \textit{Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales}, p. 135.
\textsuperscript{16} Governor Phillip to the Right Hon. W.W. Grenville, \textit{HRA}, series 1, vol. 1, p. 179
\textsuperscript{17} Collins, \textit{Account}, p. 25.
the other hand had sustained far more violent head injuries. As Collins would add in August following similar convict indiscretions, “every misfortune of the kind might fairly be attributed, not to the disposition of the natives, but to the obstinacy of their visitors.”

How terror became a feature of colonial policy at first seems difficult to reconcile given the tenor of such explanations which position neither Aboriginal people nor colonial officials, but convicts as, as the instigators of violence. To do so requires examining how British understandings of the operation of law and the structures of class became manifest in a colonial context such as New South Wales. Rather than framing the early difficulties of maintaining law and order in early New South Wales in terms of lawlessness, Lisa Ford argues that early colonial administrators allowed a form of legal pluralism to develop which implicitly included a form of Indigenous jurisdiction to evolve by way of the principle of retaliation. By the same token, as New South Wales expanded, officials allowed the frontier to be managed according to the jurisdictional discretion of local magistrates. But to the extent that this recognised Aboriginal agency in the sorting out of frontier disputes, Ford crucially points out, it also excluded them from British law thus making them “objects as well as perpetrators of unrestrained intercultural violence.”

It was not until a string of court cases in the 1830s, featuring a number of criminal convictions against Aboriginal men, that the colonial centre acted directly upon the perceived imperative of imposing a form of “perfect settler sovereignty” which undermined Indigenous and peripheral jurisdiction.

Without necessarily contesting Ford’s claim of jurisdictional pluralism, it is important to consider the possibility that when the language of terror featured in the rhetoric of early

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20 Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty*, pp. 43 – 44.
21 Ford, *Settler Sovereignty*, pp. 178 – 202. However, in her conclusion Ford makes the important point that pluralism persisted beyond this legal revolution, see p. 204.
governors it embodied a latent anxiety to engender a more stable jurisdictional platform upon which the colony could develop. “Perfect settler sovereignty” this was not, but a demonstration of how emotions such as fear can play an important role in political scenarios in which uncertainty exists with respect to the rule of law. In early New South Wales this was both a factor of cross-cultural interaction but also the difficulty of governing a convict based society.

This helps explain how reflexively colonial elites qualified the incidence of frontier violence by way of convict indiscretion, insulating the integrity of their humane approach to colonisation. While it may have held in the earliest cases of frontier violence, this integrity is far more difficult to defend in view of the establishment of more permanent zones of settlement such as the public farm at Parramatta in November 1788. Karskens characterises such moves as “undisguised invasion”, which in no way considered Aboriginal rights to land or the integrity of their food sources. Ultimately it was such developments in the relationship between settlers and Aboriginal people which would lead to the ideal of “amity and kindness” coming undone, an unravelling which increased with the granting of land on the more fertile Cumberland Plain and along the Hawkesbury River. Phillip’s conciliatory stance becomes vacant of all meaning when considering his evolving response to the Aboriginal aggression precipitated by this usurpation of land and other circumstances, however it may have been driven by the need to establish the colony’s ability to feed itself.

This tension is described well by Deidre Coleman, who argues that whatever chivalry and ‘softness’ historians have detected in Phillip’s position on early race relations in New South Wales diminishes in view of the punitive measures he took in response to Aboriginal aggression in the early 1790s which went hand in hand with dispossessions. Phillip’s policy of

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kidnapping Eora men under the pretext of diplomacy, first Arabanoo, then Coleby and Bennelong, seem equally hard to reconcile in the context of rhetorical chivalry. However it is detected, in Coleman’s words “chivalric discourse is the velvet glove which makes the iron fist of colonisation and dispossession in New Holland more palatable, a type of gestural diplomacy masking dominion as kindness, gallantry and good intentions whilst bolstering the intruders’ sense of their own superiority.” 23 Not only superiority over Aboriginal people but also “uneducated Europeans”, who are left to explain the hatred which “gradually became the prevailing sentiment between Black and White”, eliding elite culpability. 24 But to expand Coleman’s point, this culpability cannot go unaccounted for in view of the open use of force which became a fixed feature of frontier policy from very early in Australia’s history. It makes little sense to attribute the violence of the frontier to a blind and mindless animus, however it is clothed in the language of chivalry.

In the same letter despatched to W.W. Grenville in 1790, Phillip expressed his lack of concern regarding the prospect of attack from Aboriginal people upon buildings within the colony. This was not on account of their lacking bravery, wrote Phillip, but their awareness “of the great superiority of our arms.” 25 Writing towards the end of January 1788 White was already “well convinced that they know and dread” this fact. 26 This observation notwithstanding, following further attacks upon convicts around Botany Bay in 1789, and adding to the erosion of his humane agenda, Phillip ensured that the “natives” were made

25 Governor Phillip to the Right Hon. W.W. Grenville, HRA, series 1, vol. 1, p. 179.
26 White, Journal of a voyage to New South Wales, p. 111.
aware of their deficiency in weaponry by sending out armed parties. No level of intimidation would prevent the British moving where they wished.\textsuperscript{27} 

The most notable instance of this occurred following the spearing of Phillip’s gamekeeper John McIntyre in December 1790 by the Bidjigal man Pemulwuy. In an action marking the beginning of over a decade of resistance, Pemulwuy became the central target of an armed party sent out by Phillip with a directive to “either destroy or make prisoners”.\textsuperscript{28} Although less explicit in official despatches, Watkin Tench’s journal reveals that in line with securing a martial superiority over the people of Botany Bay Phillip’s aim in this expedition was “to infuse an universal terror” amongst the Bidjigal given his belief that they had become the principle aggressors.\textsuperscript{29} Ten men were to be “destroyed” and their heads brought back to the settlement.\textsuperscript{30} On hand for McIntyre’s final moments, Tench was doubtful of the man’s death-bed claim “that he had never fired but once on a native, and then had not killed” given “his general character, and other circumstances.”\textsuperscript{31} Tench, too, was a participant in the early narrative which retrieved colonial elites from any responsibility in the breaking down of cross-cultural relations. But his sympathies with those on the other side of the frontier were otherwise genuine; following his protestations six prisoners as opposed to ten heads were deemed a sufficient display of force in response to McIntyre’s murder.

Superiority of arms or no, Phillip did hold concerns about the security of the young colony’s already precarious means of subsistence. “Setting fire to the corn I feared most,” he wrote to Grenville, “but which they never have attempted.”\textsuperscript{32} Indeed, while these concerns didn’t materialise for Phillip until the final year of his tenure, for proceeding governors

\textsuperscript{27} Collins, \textit{Account}, p. 47. 
\textsuperscript{28} Collins, \textit{Account}, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{29} Watkin Tench, \textit{Sydney’s First Four Years: A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay and A Complete account of the Settlement at Port Jackson} (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1961[1789]), p. 208.
\textsuperscript{30} Tench, \textit{Sydney’s First Four Years}, pp.207 – 208.
\textsuperscript{31} Tench, \textit{Sydney’s First Four Years}, p. 206.
\textsuperscript{32} Tench, \textit{Sydney’s First Four Years}, p. 206.
contending with Aboriginal crop raids on top of physical violence was a significant source of anxiety. On 18 May 1792 an Aboriginal group confirmed suspicions that corn was being stolen from settlements outside of Parramatta when they were sighted conducting a raid from a settler’s hut. What followed from this event established a train of events both familiar to what Phillip had already anticipated, that Aboriginal groups would only respond with violence by way of retaliation, yet more tragic in scale and demanding of an official response.

The shots fired at this particular raiding party were presumed to have at least had some affect as shortly after a convict had been found murdered in the vicinity, purportedly with 30 spear wounds and his teeth knocked in. Collins surmised that this was an act of revenge for shots fired by the settlers during the raid.33 There is little indication that Phillip sought to respond directly to this incident by way of military force, nor is there any official report of similar events occurring prior to his departure from the colony in December 1792.

Military caution on this occasion aside, Henry Reynolds rightly attributes New South Wales’ first governor with the initial desire to infuse Aboriginal people with terror, a strategy “echoed again and again by his successors” and strongly impacting the settler imaginary long into the nineteenth century.34 Indeed, from 1793 the explicit use of ‘terror’ was frequently being resorted to as a means of dispersing and intimidating Aboriginal groups identified as being “troublesome” throughout newly settled areas. Around this time there were growing reports of convicts being assaulted and accosted of any goods they possessed as they travelled between settlements. In June 1793 Collins recorded the sending out of small armed parties “to throw a few shot amongst” such groups but with explicit commands not to cause any fatalities.35 But the growing incidence of Aboriginal raids upon the ripening corn growing on

33 Tench, Sydney’s First Four Years p. 147.
34 Henry Reynolds, Frontier, p. 38.
public and private farms, particularly at Toongabbie and the Hawkesbury River region, framed a whole new contingency upon which the need to preserve life became less and less of a priority. In March of 1794 watchmen at Toongabbie were responsible for the deaths of at least three Aboriginal men, an encounter resulting in one Aboriginal man’s head being taken back to Sydney.\textsuperscript{36}

It is a telling paradox that as similar violence and cruelty was perpetrated by frontier settlers upon Aboriginal people along the Hawkesbury River, the response from colonial administrators was at once admonishing yet similarly callous. In August 1794 at least seven Aboriginal men were killed as they attacked a settler’s hut. According to Collins, “[t]his mode of treating them had become absolutely necessary, from the frequency and evils of their visits”\textsuperscript{37}. Yet, echoing Phillip’s sentiment, Collins was equally convinced that the incidence of such violence could only spawn from European misconduct: “there was not a doubt that many natives had been wantonly fired upon.”\textsuperscript{38} In October Collins was able to corroborate this opinion from evidence that the attack upon the settlers in August had been in response to the horrible murder of an Aboriginal boy. In his account “some [settlers] had seized a native boy [whom they suspected of spying], and, after tying him hand and foot, had dragged him several times through a fire, until his back was dreadfully burnt, and in that state had thrown him into the river, where they shot at and killed him.”\textsuperscript{39}

Given this reservation on the part the Sydney elite regarding the cause of Aboriginal aggression, Phillip’s interim successor Captain William Paterson’s response to the situation on the Hawkesbury as it devolved into a state of “open war” in April 1795 is a further example of the jarring realities of early New South Wales history. In response to the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[36] Collins, \textit{Account}, p. 223. See also Karskens, \textit{The Colony}, p. 459.
\item[37] Collins, \textit{Account}, p. 236.
\item[38] Collins, \textit{Account}, p. 236
\end{footnotes}
eagerness with which the Dharug people conducted their “depredations” upon the Hawkesbury cornfields, and following the death of a settler named Thomas Webb, a detachment of soldiers was despatched by Paterson from Parramatta with a directive “to destroy as many as they could find of the wood tribe”.  

Death not equating to a sufficient deterrent against further incursions on the cornfields, it was ordered that victims be left dangling from gibbets “in the hope of striking terror” among any survivors. Although it was reported that several killings took place, in consequence of their bodies not being found the grotesque intensity of this use of force did not reach its intended heights. Either way the severity of these orders are explained well by John Connor, who in describing the Hawkesbury as “the first front in Australia’s frontier” at once underlines the impossibility of Europeans and the Dharug coexisting on account of their respective uses of the land for growing corn and yams. Paterson was well aware of the danger the Dharug crop raids posed, threatening the abandonment of what he considered “the most fertile spot which had yet been discovered in the colony.”

In an act of retaliation, a settler and his son were soon after killed on a farm at Richmond Hill as the soldiers returned to Parramatta. Some of these soldiers were likely among those sent out to confront this renewed hostility, upon which occasion they were reported to have seen little of their enemy. Hanging bodies or no, it seems that a point may have been made. So went one cycle of British terror. As Collins remarked, in accordance with what now seemed a permanent duty under Governor John Hunter “soldiers were distributed among the settlers for their protection”, not that he necessarily felt such a provision was deserved. Whatever Collins’ feelings on the matter this scenario provides clear evidence of

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the state of fear that had developed in such areas of out-settlement and the growing imperative to preserve the lives of settlers up and above those of Aboriginal people.

What can be made of the incongruence between the nature of such officially orchestrated violence and the rhetoric which qualified its necessity in view of elite opinion as to the true instigators of frontier unrest? Collins in particular reads as being deeply ambivalent about the administration of justice in regions of the colony such as the Hawkesbury where conflict was frequent. Such ambivalence on the part of the Sydney elite speaks to a broader confusion as to who were the victims, and who the instigators, of the violence spiralling out of control across the various out-settlements.

This is in part explained by the tacit acceptance of jurisdictionary pluralism. But outside the principle of retaliation, at no stage does it appear that this took shape in terms of an administrative consensus which allowed a thorough reflection upon the correlation between violence and dispossession. Despite the obvious consequences of settling on Aboriginal land, as settlement expanded to the north Aboriginal resistance only intensified.\(^43\) This was despite the severe toll that introduced diseases such as smallpox were beginning to take upon local communities, suggesting that Aboriginal people were able to maintain a close association with their land in spite of significant demographic trauma.\(^44\) So long as such resilience prompted the use of force by colonial administrators, the pretence of colonial chivalry only became clearer.

In December 1795, three months after Governor Hunter’s arrival in the colony, four Dharug men and one woman were killed, one child badly wounded and four men taken prisoner as an armed party countered further Aboriginal attacks on settlers in the Hawkesbury

\(^{43}\) Karskens, *The Colony*, p. 466.

region.\textsuperscript{45} That such measures persisted well beyond Paterson’s raid of terror in May speaks to the futility of such an approach. In recognising this Collins offered the explanation that Aboriginal people couldn’t help but allow passion to override reason, a trope which would eventually gain currency in the pages of the \textit{Gazette}. Following the punitive expedition in December 1795 he remarked, “[i]t might have been supposed, that these punishments…would have taught the natives to keep of a greater distance; but nothing seemed to deter them from prosecuting the revenge which they had vowed against the settlers for the injuries that they had received at their hands.”\textsuperscript{46} In March 1796 further reports of Aboriginal hostility were reported from Portland Head at the main branch of the Hawkesbury River and at the beginning of 1797 an area along the river had to be evacuated owing to Aboriginal attacks.\textsuperscript{47} Unrest also spread closer to Sydney. In March 1797, resistance orchestrated by Aboriginal leaders such as Pemulwuy upon the settlers around Lane Cove sparked armed retaliation, albeit only as a means to disperse and not kill assailants.\textsuperscript{48} By escaping confinement in Parramatta in the same month, Pemulwuy was elemental in further disrupting the settlement of areas under increasing levels of cultivation by way of raids on cornfields, fires and assaults. By 1798 this activity had expanded into Pemulwuy’s own country on the George’s River.\textsuperscript{49}

The attribution of violence and general disruption throughout Sydney’s settlements to key Aboriginal figures, Pemulwuy in particular, eventually led to an alternative administrative approach. However, in the initial period defined by Pemulwuy’s instigation of unrest the use of terror remained a key strategy. In a testimony given at the trial of five settlers alleged to have murdered two Aboriginal boys held on 14 October 1799,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{45} Collins, \textit{Account}, p. 261.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Collins, \textit{Account}, p. 261.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Collins, \textit{Account}, p. 274.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Collins, \textit{Account}, pp. 345 – 346.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Collins, \textit{Account}, p. 374; Karskens, \textit{The Colony}, p. 477.
\end{itemize}
Commanding Officer of the Hawkesbury Lieutenant Thomas Hobby indicated that Governor Hunter essentially gave him permission to act in accordance with his own judgement when responding to attacks by Aboriginal groups. According to Hobby, he had elicited this permission after already signifying to the Governor his intention “to send out a party of the military to kill five or six of them wherever they were to be found”. At his own discretion Hunter also asserted that he would resort to previous methods of punishment and intimidation in the face of growing hostilities, namely the gibbeting of offenders in the event of their capture.

It was not until Phillip Gidley King came to be Governor from September 1800 that a new approach emerged which sought to undermine Aboriginal resistance by alienating key figures such as Pemulwuy rather than use what was in essence indiscriminate force. Initially, however, King’s attempt to address attacks upon settlers in May 1801 actually strayed little from those of his predecessors. In fact, by extending the legitimate use of force against Aboriginal people to settlers King made further pretence of the policy of amity and kindness. On 1 May 1801 he issued the order that all Aboriginal people in the specific areas where their “hostile menaces” were being felt the most, at that point the districts of Parramatta, George’s river and Prospect Hill, “be driven back from the settler’s habitations by firing at them.” Whether this expansion of the franchise in terror resulted in more deaths of Aboriginal people is not easy to infer. What can be deduced is that it was ineffective in undermining the activity of perceived instigators, such as Pemulwuy, and that King adjusted his strategy accordingly by outlawing such individuals and offering a reward for their capture.

50 Trial for Murder of Two Natives, HRA, series 1, vol. 2, p. 404
Curiously, King’s issuing of a public order along these lines on 17 November 1801 did not mention Pemulwuy but rather identified three British men, William Knight, Thomas Thrush and someone listed as TB “known to associate and commit violent acts of depredation in conjunction with the natives, whom they excite to the most diabolical and outrageous offences on the public.”\(^{53}\) It was only a week later that King issued a second public order which listed Pemulwuy as among those wanted dead or alive as “promoters of the outrageous acts that have been lately committed by the natives”.\(^{54}\)

The perception that the agency that drove Aboriginal resistance to British settlement equally belonged to certain non-Aboriginal belligerents adds an interesting aspect to the expression of elite ambivalence around the issue of frontier violence. In lamenting the threats posed to the lives of settlers, as well as the security of crops and livestock, throughout the colony to the colonial secretary in September 1798, Governor Hunter identified his concern as emerging from a coalition of “idle” convicts and certain Aboriginal groups. According to Hunter, in joining “large bodys [sic] of natives” such miscreants “taught them how to annoy and distress the settlers.”\(^{55}\) In essence this attitude was the inverse of earlier elite perceptions that the initiation of frontier violence was a matter of certain Aboriginal groups retaliating to the aggression of convict ‘stragglers’ as they teased the edges of the settlement. As Hunter and King’s respective concerns demonstrate, by the beginning of the nineteenth-century elite sentiment had, at least temporarily, shifted to focus less upon the conflict between convicts and Aboriginal people as their alliance.

This was a task which not only required spreading terror amongst Aboriginal people, but also punishing “lawless” convicts and ex-convicts that alternated their violent disposition


\(^{54}\) Government and Public Orders, 22 Nov 1801, *HRA*, series 1, vol. 3, p. 466

either against or in alliance with Aboriginal people. This coincided with colonial administrators turning their attention away from instances of violence perpetrated by specific individuals, despite the success of this approach. In October 1802 King could write to Lord Hobart and report that Pemulwuy had been shot, his severed head carried into Sydney as proof of him being killed.\(^{56}\) The key point regarding the way King handled this particular moment is how he framed it as the basis of friendly relations with Aboriginal people, in essence to maintain order throughout the colonies and perhaps further British sovereignty over Aboriginal people. According to King, Pemulwuy’s head accompanied those responsible for his death into Sydney to inform the Governor at the behest of certain Aboriginal parties who had become disillusioned with the warrior’s ongoing quest of resistance and wished to exist alongside the British on friendlier terms. As King wrote to Lord Hobart, “as [Pemulwuy] was the cause of all that had happened, and all anger being dropped on their part, they hoped I would allow them to return to Parramatta.”\(^{57}\) King granted this request by repealing his public order of 1 May 1801 which forbade any Aboriginal presence within the zones of settlement subject to Pemulwuy’s campaign.

What is more, in the proclamation of 30 June 1802 through which King made this announcement, he also strictly forbade any further ill-treatment of Aboriginal people. In a further departure from the status quo of jurisdictional pluralism, King proclaimed that any mistreatment of the “Natives” was forbidden “on pain of being dealt with in the same manner as if such act of Injustice or wanton Cruelty should be committed against the Persons and Estates of any of His Majesty’s Subjects”.\(^{58}\) In what appears to be an attempt to reinstate the policy of amity and kindness, King also made the qualification that settlers should also not be subject to attacks from Aboriginal people and urged them “to use effectual, but at the same

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time the most humane, means of resisting such attacks.”\textsuperscript{59} As King saw it this approach was the best way “to continue the present good Understanding that exists”, and as he would later explain to Lord Hobart, on hearing that they were no longer so limited in their movements across various settlements “the natives expressed much joy and are now on more friendly terms than ever.”\textsuperscript{60}

In the same spirit, King came some way in acknowledging the basic consequences of dispossession for Aboriginal people and the reservations they subsequently developed toward further European settlement. In correspondence with Lord Hobart, King offered the following insight gleaned from three Dharug men in 1803:

On questioning the cause of their disagreement with the new settlers they very ingenuously answered that they did not like to be driven from the few places that were left on the banks of the [Nepean?]river, where alone they could procure food; that they had gone down the river as the white men took possession of the banks; if they went across men’s grounds the settlers fired upon them and were angry; that if they could retain some places on the lower part of the river they should be satisfied and would not trouble the white men.\textsuperscript{61}

All of this followed from King’s wish to discover why a Hawkesbury settler found it necessary to fabricate a memorial requesting that he and other settlers be allowed to shoot “the natives frequenting their grounds”.\textsuperscript{62} Its shaky credibility aside, this petition marked the first of many such documents addressed to colonial administrators in the first fifty years of Australian settlement, emblems of the burning sense of victimhood growing among settlers

\textsuperscript{59} Proclamation, 30 June 1802, \textit{HRA}, series 1, vol. 3, p. 582 – 583.
\textsuperscript{61} Governor King to Lord Hobart, 20 December 1803, \textit{HRA}, Series 1, vol. 4, pp. 166 - 167. See also, Goodall, \textit{Invasion to Embassy}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{62} Governor King to Lord Hobart, 20 December 1803, \textit{HRA}, Series 1, vol. 4, pp. 166 - 167.
and their right to official protection. In forging the signatures of a number of other settlers
this man sought to conflate their feelings toward Aboriginal people with his own with a
particular political end in mind. On account of this “imposition” the bogus memorialist was
sentenced to a month in jail but served only a few days given the likelihood of his property to
suffer in his absence. Where the more genuine appeal of the Aboriginal men was concerned,
finding their request “so just and so equitable”, King assured them that “no more settlements
should be made lower down the river”, bringing some reconciliation to the long period of
corn raids.  

In a further reflection upon the impact of colonisation, King described the New
South Wales frontier’s progress in 1804, with some melancholy, as a “line of blood”.

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When the Gazette was established in March 1803 it did not seem share to the optimism
that accompanied the seemingly more constructive approach to frontier policy at the
beginning of the nineteenth century. Despite King’s hopes of convincing London otherwise,
the pages of the colony’s first paper reflected far more volatile frontier feelings. As with its
coverage of events at the Cowpastures in 1814, from its early days the Gazette largely
represented Aboriginal people in terms of their belligerence towards settlers, emphasising
their “unfeeling” natures. Quite categorically it was Aboriginal people who committed
“outrages” and “depredations” upon settlers. Not only did this circulate an expectation that
Aboriginal people should be feared and that settlers were the essential victims of the frontier,
it ultimately spoke to the notion of an emotional dichotomy along racial lines. As suggested
earlier by remarks made by certain colonial elites, the inferiority of Aboriginal people as

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63 Governor King to Lord Hobart, 20 December 1803, *HRA*, Series 1, vol. 4, pp. 166 – 167; Connor, ‘The
Frontier War that Never Was’, p. 18.
human beings in this sense was a matter of their emotional insensibility, a belief that further cloaked the real outrage of Europeans violently taking possessing of their land.

However, this political tone is not reflected in the paper’s pragmatic initial objectives. Rather than heralding the emergence of an independent public voice in the colony, the establishment of the Gazette under the editorship of the ex-convict Howe spoke more of career opportunism than any motivation to address political grievance or free speech. Sentenced to transportation for life in 1799, subsequent to the commuting of his death penalty for robbery, Howe took to his role as editor of the Gazette under no pretence respecting the paper’s political goals.65 As he put it in the Gazette’s first issue on 5 March 1803, “[w]e open no channel to Political Discussion. Information is our only purpose”, while this and every subsequent issue read under the banner ‘Published by Authority’.66 Underlining the utility of the colony’s first newspaper in terms of a government mouthpiece, Governor King wrote to Lord Hobart in May 1803 that while he had given Howe permission to collect material to be published, all proofs of which were “being inspected by an officer”.67 This level of government license often extended to the direct involvement of the governor himself.68 In King’s case this is an interesting point in and of itself given that this amounted to him authorising views which did not wholly accord with the more nuanced understanding he was beginning to develop with respect to frontier relations. Following the death of George Howe in 1821, in October 1824 this government mandate was rescinded by Governor Brisbane following the request of Robert Howe, partly in response to the emergence of the Australian

66 Sydney Gazette, 5 March 1803.
67 Governor King to Lord Hobart, 9 May 1803, HRA, series 1, vol. 3, p. 85.
68 Goff, ‘Convicts and Clerics’, p. 103.
as the first colonial free press. But for its first twenty years at least, the Gazette was for all intents and purposes a government publication.

In this capacity the Gazette played an important role in communicating ‘government and general orders’. As frontier violence escalated at various points in the early part of the nineteenth century, this provided the government front-page space to proclaim the official actions it intended to take, or had already taken, against particular acts of Aboriginal aggression. As Victoria Goff points out the paper was equally well known, and on occasion ridiculed, for its broad “coverage of fires, boating accidents, murders, robberies, rapes, convict escapes, trials, and executions”. As it fell into several of these categories, the Gazette keenly provided a running commentary of frontier violence as it occurred across the various settlements of the colony. What is more, it offered what it thought to be key insights regarding the nature of Aboriginal society and culture through observations and stories about groups and individuals in and around Sydney as well as further afield. Given that New South Wales began as strongly “literate culture”, with about one half of men being able to read, the Gazette thus spoke directly to an already anxious settler community increasingly convinced of the threat posed by Aboriginal people.

Sparked by an eruption of violence between settlers and Aboriginal people around Sydney beginning in 1804, the Gazette immediately began to consolidate such a narrative. Even before this spike in hostility it held Aboriginal people under a particularly dim light. Little sympathy could be extended towards a people whose sorry fate was attributable to “barbarous customs” and an overall lack of “human feeling”. In what was a frequent

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69 Goff, ‘Convicts and Clerics’, p. 106. In making this point Goff also alludes to the fact that despite this move by Brisbane at no stage did the Gazette take a critical line towards the government until it ceased publication in 1842.

70 Goff, ‘Convicts and Clerics’, p. 103.

occurrence in and around Sydney, the paper reported on a moment of tribal justice which saw one Aboriginal man speared through the calf in punishment for having murdered two other men. Commenting on this event the Gazette proclaimed, perhaps with some unease with respect to the prevalence of jurisdictional pluralism, that “the exercise of merciless barbarity on this and similar occasions strongly characterises this wretched race of men, who but for the barbarous and irreconcilable usages in cases of homicide, would wholly extirpate their already thin and scattered handfuls.”

While such an observation places some awareness of how such practice equated with justice, it paid little attention to how such “thin and scattered handfuls” may have come about owing to settler violence and introduced diseases as opposed to the innate barbarity of Aboriginal people. Concern regarding this normative violent and “unfeeling” disposition of Aboriginal people could also be expressed in what could only ever be considered thinly linked circumstances. In reporting on the execution of a convict named James Bevan for murder on 27 May 1804, the Gazette attributed the criminal’s evident lack of anxiety to a “long reference to the society and extraordinary habit of intimacy with the natives”, via which, “he seemed to have imbibed their natural depravity of inclination and total want of human feeling.”

This is a stark reminder of long-running colonial elite concerns regarding the prospect of civilisation failing to prevail in new territories populated by ‘savages’, an anxiety that Europeans could be just as depraved in their behaviour as Aboriginal people. As Penny Russell has argued, the early experience of British settlement in Australia led colonists to confirm preconceived qualities and habits attributable to the idea of the ‘savage’, attaching itself to the hardening classification of race. But just as Aboriginal people provided a foil

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72 Sydney Gazette, 16 October 1803.
73 Sydney Gazette, 27 May 1804.
74 Penny Russell, *Savage or Civilised? Manners in Colonial Australia* (Sydney: New South, 2010), p. 34.
for civilisation, as suggested above by the Gazette, this assurance was accompanied by the notion that “the ‘savage’ was latent in every civilized being”.75

Feelings had long played a role in this hovering spectre of savagery in the thinking of colonial elites such as David Collins, who developed deep reservations about Aboriginal people and their emotions. In March 1796 Collins related the story of a young Aboriginal girl who had been punished in revenge for her perceived involvement in the murder of an Aboriginal man, a punishment for which there was no physical evidence to justify. “Savage indeed must be the custom and the feelings” wrote Collins, “which could arm the hand against the unoffending child’s life.”76 In a similar circumstance later in the same year, Collins wrote of the complementing factor to this hardness of Aboriginal feeling:

It was observed with regret, that the savage inhabitants of the country, instead of losing any part of their native ferocity of manners by an intercourse with the Europeans among whom they dwelt, seemed rather to delight in exhibiting themselves as monsters of the greatest cruelty, devoid of reason, and guided solely by the impulse of the worst passions.77

Tragic as it was, and however Collins wished to reconcile it, this particular triumph of savage passion over civilised feeling, which resulted in the young girl’s death, spiralled from a moment of gubernatorial terror. On account of her parents being involved in “so many depredations upon the settlers at the Hawkesbury”, they were among those who fell under the fire of an armed party sent out in pursuit.78 Surviving this encounter, the young girl accompanied the armed party back to Parramatta where “she soon became a great favourite at

75 Russell, Savage or Civilised?, p. 43.
76 Collins, Account, p. 321.
78 Collins, Account, pp. 341 – 342
Government-House”. But the moment of “the worst of passions” was yet to come. According to Collins, the girl’s favoured status at Government House in addition to her being from a different Aboriginal territory, “excited the jealousy of some natives who lived at and about Sydney, which manifested itself in their putting her to death in the most cruel manner. The body was found in the woods, speared in several places, and with arms cut off”.79

Convicts also came under the scrutiny of Collins’ measure of human feeling. In 1798 a group of convicts stole away on a boat from Port Jackson with the hope of claiming booty from the wreck of the “Sydney Cove”, one half of whom were left marooned on an Island by the other. Collins’ concern regarding this escapade revolved less around its initial motive but rather the moment of desertion. “One ray of manly feeling,” according to Collins, “would have forbid the dooming of the wretched companions of their guilt to perish by the hands of savages, or by the more lingering pangs of hunger.”80 In the same year Collins similarly condemned the emotional comportment of the convicts responsible for burning down the public jail, proclaiming that “[f]eeling for each other was never imputed to these miscreants.”81 While this language of failures in feeling is a reminder of the joint concern Aboriginal people and convicts posed to the civility of the colony in the minds of colonial elites, at least in Collins’ case, it was by and large an understanding brought to mind with respect to the former. This is particularly evident in the case of the murder of the young girl. It was not the fact that she became an orphan as a result of her parents being killed by the armed party which drew Collins’ label of “unfeeling”, but rather her subsequent murder by Aboriginal people, irrevocably subject to the “worst of passions”. Outside of the odd atrocity committed by convicts, it was as if the expression of such passion was beyond colonists.

79 Collins, Account, pp. 341 – 342
81 Collins, Account, p. 408.
It was this “unfeeling” nature of Aboriginal people which featured in the *Gazette*’s coverage of frontier conflict which began to escalate in 1804. Towards the end of May that year, “acts of abominable outrage” were localised around Portland Head on the Hawkesbury River resulting in the spearing of the settlers Matthew Everingham and John Howe. Although neither man died from their injuries, this particular act and other related instances of Aboriginal people stealing clothing, stock and grain prompted Governor King to order the magistrate at Hawkesbury, T. Arndell, “to adopt such measures as the exigency required”. Arndell subsequently dispatched fourteen settlers to Portland Head where they came upon a party of “forty or fifty of the hostile savages” whom they pursued until they were among a group of around 300.

According to the *Gazette*, acting on instruction the party of settlers then attempted to establish the motive behind the recent acts of violence and robbery, a line of interrogation which led to an “ironical declaration” from those being questioned “that they wanted and would have corn, wearing apparel and whatever the settlers had”. It was as clear an answer as could have been expected; yet the subsequent flurry of spears was met with gunfire. Although no fatalities were recorded on this occasion, in concluding this particular report the *Gazette* noted that more recent violence at the Green Hills district resulted in the deaths of two Aboriginal men after they were shot by a military detachment, whose names later reports suggest were ‘Major White’ and ‘Nabbin’. As was the case with Portland Head such a military presence was granted for “the relief of the settlers, whose self preservation requires

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82 *Sydney Gazette*, 3 June 1803.
83 *Sydney Gazette*, 17 June 1803.
84 *Sydney Gazette*, 17 June 1803.
85 *Sydney Gazette*, 15 July 1804.
that they should ever be on the alert to counteract the mischievous designs of the savage and unfeeling enemy."  

Time and time again the words ‘unfeeling’, ‘savage’ and ‘wretch’ appeared in the same sentence as the Gazette evolved a narrative that juxtaposed the unstable emotions of Aboriginal people with the passive victimhood and justified self-preservation of British settlers. Nor was such language localised to central regions of conflict like the Hawkesbury. On 10 June the Gazette reported the return of James Field on the ‘Resonance’, a convict who along with some companions had earlier stolen a boat from Port Jackson in the hope of being taken on board an American vessel leaving Port Stephens. Despite making it to their destination the group failed to realise their grander design, and “after a series of unspeakable hardships they were assaulted by a body of natives, who showered spears upon them with a barbarity only to be conceived by those that have witnessed the brutal ferocity of these unfeeling savages.” Conversely, Field’s safe return from Port Stephens upon the ‘Resonance’, the sole survivor of this ordeal, reflected “honour to the feelings of the Gentlemen in Command.”

It was by way of such encounters that the Gazette could contribute to an understanding that certain Aboriginal groups along the eastern coast of Australia were particularly hostile, particularly the ‘natives’ of Jervis Bay, Port Stephens and Twofold Bay. The belief that a group of people from Jervis Bay posed a threat to settlers at the Cowpastures in 1814 was built upon years of negative maritime accounts. On 27 October 1805, the Gazette noted the return of a whale boat which passed by Jervis Bay under the command of Joseph Murrel with the remark that the “account given by these people is as follows: That everywhere along the coast the natives wore a menacing appearance, and manifested a wish

86 Sydney Gazette, 17 June 1803.
87 Sydney Gazette, 10 June 1804.
to attack them.”  

Similarly, news of an Aboriginal attack at Port Stephens on 3 November was accompanied with a description “of the fury of the natives” and on 6 April 1806 the Gazette reported that “[d]isagreeable accounts were last week received by the Venus private colonial vessel of the inimical disposition of the natives at Twofold Bay.”

Mark McKenna’s account of those who survived the wreck of the Sydney Cove, as they marched from Preservation Island to just south of Sydney in 1797 led by William Clark, sheds much needed light on the history that led to such negative representations of Aboriginal people beyond the limits of settlement. Despite the many amicable encounters that punctuated this epic journey, McKenna writes that by “the early 1800s, some of the first settler oral histories of cross-cultural encounters outside Sydney were laced with…bizarre tales of ‘native savagery’ and cannibalism, stories of lost white men wandering half-starved through Aboriginal coastal lands seeking redemption.”

By the time the Gazette began printing there was thus an already well-established understanding that Aboriginal people of the New South Wales were particularly inimical to Europeans. Initially spread by word of mouth, with the Gazette this belief gained a far more potent imaginative currency.

In the Sydney region itself the Gazette’s frequent coverage of frontier encounters also shaped negative impressions of Aboriginal people with a certain geographical specificity. On 1 July 1804, it was “happy to state that the Natives in and about Hawkesbury have relinquished their mischievous behaviour, and that a good understanding is happily restored between them and the settlers”. In the immediate months which followed, the activity of the “unfeeling wretches” was reported in the vicinity of George’s River and Lane Cove. In a

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88 Sydney Gazette, 27 October, 1805.
89 Sydney Gazette, 3 November, 1805; Sydney Gazette, 6 April 1806.
91 Sydney Gazette, 19 August 1804; Sydney Gazette, 2 September.
92 Sydney Gazette, 2 September.
rare moment of praise an elderly Aboriginal man named ‘Grewin’ of Mullet Island (now known as Dangar Island) on the Hawkesbury River was lauded for warning a passing boat of the risk posed by local “banditti”, thus distinguishing his conduct against “the manners of a race so strongly characterised by the want of common feeling, and the brutal indulgence of a sanguinary disposition.”

But with the resumption of violence around Portland Head and the Green Hills in April 1805, the Hawkesbury once again became the key site of settler anxieties. This new bout of aggression was attributed to a Dharug group which became known as the ‘Branch Natives’ on account of their territory lying near the Colo, or Branch, River adjoining the Hawkesbury River from the north near Portland Head. On 21 April the Gazette lamented “a series of barbarities lately practiced by a banditti” on a farm in this region owned by John Llewlyn, purportedly led by a Dharug man named ‘Branch Jack’.

Owing to this and other attacks upon settlers in regions around Prospect Hill and the Cowpastures, King once again sought recourse to the military. In a similar vein to previous announcements which justified military force against Aboriginal people, a General Order was published in the Gazette on 28 April proclaiming that “the Governor has judged it necessary, for the preservation of lives and Properties of the Out Settlers and Stockmen, to distribute Detachments from the New South Wales Corp among the Out-settlements, for their protection against the uncivilised Insurgents.” In addition, King ordered settlers “to assist

93 Sydney Gazette, 21 October 1804.
94 Karskens, The Colony, p. 481. There is some debate as to the designation of this group in the frame of current understandings of Aboriginal territories. As mapped by Jim Kohen the ‘Branch Natives’ would have in fact been active within Darkiñung territory. See Jim Kohen, The Darug and Their Neighbours: The Traditional Owners of the Sydney Region (Sydney: Darug Link in association with Blacktown & District Historical Society, 1993), pp. 20-21.
95 Sydney Gazette, 21 April 1805.
96 Sydney Gazette, 28 April 1805.
each other in repelling” Aboriginal raids and once again resorted to the principle of exclusion by disallowing the presence of any Aboriginal person upon settled lands.97

A day prior to this announcement even being made a large group of settlers led by Andrew Thompson, with the assistance of an Aboriginal man named Yaragowby, had already successfully located and forced at least seven of the ‘Branch Natives’ at Richmond Hill, including a principal target named ‘Charley’, off a precipice to their deaths.98 On 12 May the Gazette was outraged to mention the “treachery” of Yaragowby, who in going ahead to warn his people of the approaching armed party found himself among those killed. What may have been a “decisive” assault was thus merely deemed a success owing to this lost opportunity of surprise.

The Gazette was at ease to report that subsequent to this event “little molestation has since been felt about the Hawkesbury.” 99 But this hope was short-lived with King re-instating his order of 28 April in the Gazette on 9 June, in particular targeting an Eora man named ‘Mosquito’. His eventual capture was particularly remarkable given whom it set free.100 On 4 August the Gazette wrote, “Young Tedbury was set at liberty yesterday se’nnight, at the intretay [sic] of the friendly natives who assisted in the capture of Mosquito”.101 Almost two months prior Tedbury, the son of Pemulwuy, had been captured at Pennant Hills following a joint effort by settlers from Baulkham Hills and some constables from Parramatta to “disperse” Aboriginal people living in the area. According to later reports in the Gazette,

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97 Sydney Gazette, 28 April 1805.
98 Sydney Gazette, 5 May 1805.
99 Sydney Gazette, 12 May 1805.
100 Sydney Gazette, 9 June 1805.
101 Sydney Gazette, 4 August 1805.
Tedbury remained a concern for settlers throughout Sydney, particularly around Georges River in the period immediately prior to his death in 1810.102

The *Gazette* was equally convinced that certain members of the ‘Branch Natives’, ‘Branch Jack’ in particular, were responsible for settler anxieties in the period following King’s General Order at the end of April 1805. Even despite the reported deaths of ‘Branch Jack’ and another man named ‘Wogionigh’ following a botched raid on a boat travelling along the Hawkesbury at the beginning of September, the ‘Branch Natives’ were portrayed by the *Gazette* as a particularly potent source of settler dread.103 A week following ‘Branch Jack’s’ death the *Gazette* darkly observed,

[that] the death of one of the most noxious and rancorous pests of that part of the river Hawkesbury…may open a prospect of security is much to be hoped, but the survivors of their impetuous and daring tribe [are] equally to be dreaded. To be vigilantly prepared and well guarded must therefore constitute the hope of future safety.104

Adding to this sense of insecurity and menace, at the beginning of harvest in December that the “implacable spirit of the Branch natives suffers no opportunity of mischief to escape” seemed a sad reality.105

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102 *Sydney Gazette*, 17 March 1810. According to the *Gazette*, a settler named Edward Lutrill was arrested and subsequently acquitted for Tedbury’s murder; See also Karskens, *The Colony*, p. 490.
103 *Sydney Gazette*, 8 September 1805.
104 *Sydney Gazette*, 15 September 1805.
105 *Sydney Gazette*, 22 December 1805.
As much as it was becoming a forum for settler discontent, it is also important to recognise the significant column space the *Gazette* dedicated to the expression of more pacific thoughts and feelings towards Aboriginal people. For certain settlers the matter of securing a more peaceful understanding across the frontier became a pressing concern given the unease that pervaded the beginning of the nineteenth century. In October 1808 the *Gazette* was still inclined to loathingly observe the Aboriginal inclination towards “mischief”, warning that “[f]rom their friendship we can gain nothing; but from their enmity we have much to apprehend.”\(^{106}\) It even appeared that Aboriginal people had infiltrated the emotions of livestock, their very appearance purportedly “immediately operating on the terrors” of a bullock passing through the Hawkesbury in December of the same year.\(^{107}\) Although livestock were indeed targets, what more bizarre anecdote could be conveyed to the *Gazette’s* readers to associate fear with Aboriginal people? Otherwise, during 1808 and the years immediately prior the *Gazette* provided minimal coverage of Aboriginal resistance. Between 30 August 1807 and 15 May 1808 it was in fact impossible for the paper to cover any news at all, having ceased operations owing to the Rum Rebellion.\(^{108}\)

It was shortly after the *Gazette* resumed publication following this tumultuous period that it conducted a conversation among settlers as to how Aboriginal people could benefit from civilisation. Seeking to assess the needs of Aboriginal people, this series of letters are more than anything telling for what they reveal about settler anxieties regarding the progress of civilisation in the midst of “heathens”. On the 21 August 1808 the *Gazette* published a letter addressed to Howe from a settler named A. Woodman outlining the apparent incorrigibility of Aboriginal people in the midst of ‘civilisation’. As Woodman saw it,

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106 *Sydney Gazette*, 30 October 1808.
107 *Sydney Gazette*, 4 December 1808.
The civilised adventurer and the uncultivated barbarian discover in each other perhaps a universal difference, save only in the human shape…The natives of this country appear to have benefitted as little as could possibly have been expected from their acquaintance with European customs…Truly they may be said to have inherited an unconquerable attachment to a state of nature, an insurmountable aversion to innovation, notwithstanding the flattering possibility of advantage from the change.\textsuperscript{109}

By 1810 correspondence to the \textit{Gazette} held out a more optimistic, though perhaps no less cynical, prospect for the place of Aboriginal people in New South Wales society. A letter which appeared in the \textit{Gazette} on 7 July 1810 from ‘Philanthropus’ asked the following question: “What plan can be adapted, what means used, or what steps taken, whereby we may most speedily or effectively civilise and evangelise the natives of New South Wales?” In stark contrast to Woodman’s resignation, ‘Philanthropus’ prefaced his query with the belief that on account of the “great Creator having made One Blood all nations of the Earth” it could be taken “for granted that the Natives of New South Wales are capable of instruction and civilisation”.\textsuperscript{110} Underlining Russell’s argument, the answers to the question posed by ‘Philanthropus’ were couched in anxious terms reflecting the long running elite concern that it wasn’t so much that Aboriginal people were incapable of being civilised, but rather the inverse propensity of Europeans to turn to ‘savagery’.

‘A FRIEND TO CIVILISATION’ replied to ‘Philanthropus’ with the initial observation that Aboriginal people “appear to possess every quality that can tend to discourage their ever becoming civilised beings after they reach an adult state.” It followed that as many children as possible should be taken from their parents. At the same time, this

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 21 August 1808.  
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 7 July 1810.
writer was aware that Aboriginal people had every reason to reconsider whatever “good opinion” they had of Europeans on account of the ill-treatment they had many times received. Europeans, too, deserved the pejorative ‘uncivilised’: “there are numbers in our own Community, who affect to despise the character of a heathen, and are yet too faulty in themselves to attend to the duties that characterise the Christian.” 111 A similar concern about Christian bad faith within settler society was expressed by ‘AMICUS’, who in response to both ‘Philanthropus’ and ‘A FRIEND TO CIVILISATION’ was wary of any success that could be expected from bringing Aboriginal children directly into settlement. “I consider”, Amicus wrote, “that by keeping them in a small society formed of their own body, be it great or small, they would avoid a great evil which it would be difficult to amend than in the first instance to provide against.” 112 Put simply, the key to success was placing Aboriginal children in dedicated institutions—a prefiguring of the stolen generation of the twentieth century, and of Governor Lachlan Macquarie’s actions in 1813.

From 1813 it was indeed this approach of institutionalising children which characterised Governor Macquarie’s policy regarding Aboriginal people in New South Wales. Like this clutch of worldly settlers, Macquarie filled with humanitarian zeal when he arrived in Sydney as the third Governor of New South Wales at the end of 1809. A spirit of amicability toward Aboriginal people was a central theme of his very first speech to the colony on 30 December 1809, when he proclaimed,

I need not, I hope, express my wish that the Natives of this Country, when they have come in the Way in a peaceable Manner, may not be molested in their Persons or Property by anyone; but that on the contrary, they may always be

111 Sydney Gazette, 28 July 1810.
112 Sydney Gazette, 8 September 1810.
treated with Kindness and attention, so as to conciliate them as much as possible to our Government and Manners.\textsuperscript{113}

However, as was the case for his predecessors, the eruption of violence across the out-settlements from 1813 proved difficult to reconcile through a humane agenda.

As with the years immediately prior to his arrival, the Gazette spoke little of frontier violence being a marked feature of Macquarie’s initial period as governor. In July 1811 the paper made a passing mention of the ‘Branch Natives’ attacking livestock at the Hawkesbury and the same group was blamed for the murder of a settler at Portland Head in the beginning of 1813.\textsuperscript{114} It was not until May 1814, providing some context to the watchful night of the full moon on the Cowpastures, that violence in the out-settlements again erupted. “Our public duty once more lays us under the painful necessity,” wrote a mournful Gazette on 14 May 1814, “of reporting violence between the natives and ourselves, which for the tranquillity and good understanding that for the last five or six years has subsisted we had entertained the flattering expectation were not again likely to occur.” Having expanded well beyond Dharug territory, the Dharawal and Gandangara people now equally posed themselves as threats.\textsuperscript{115} The chain of events which so shattered the Gazette’s hopes eventuated when three army privates shot at a group of Dharawal people as they conducted a corn raid at Appin. This was followed by the deaths of an Aboriginal boy and a settler named Isaac Eustace in retaliation. In the trading of vengeance that followed, an Aboriginal woman and two children were killed by an armed party of settlers which set out in pursuit, which in turn led to the murder of two settlers working at a stock-keepers hut owned by Elizabeth McArthur.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 7 January 1810. \\
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 20 July 1811; \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 9 January 1813. \\
\textsuperscript{115} Connor, ‘The Frontier War that Never Was’, p. 18. \\
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 14 May 1814.
The *Gazette’s* commentary of this particular sequence of events provides some indication that it intended to accord with the more peaceful and impartial rhetoric inherent to Macquarie’s first speech. The paper stuck with its obligation not to offer an “opinion to which side the first act of aggression may justly be attributed”, instead leaving it to the colonial administration to uncover the facts. But this did not stop the paper from hoping that whatever measures were to be taken would put a “speedy termination to the evils to which the lonely settler is exposed from the predatory incursion of an enemy whose hearts are inaccessible, distant, and unknown, and who by surprise or stratagem accomplish every project they devise in a wild temperament of fury natural to the savage state of Man.”

The *Gazette’s* continuous line of negativity regarding Aboriginal people was in stark contrast to a General Order issued by Macquarie on 18 June, in which he admonished “the Settlers from taking the Law into their own Hands for the future, and to beware wanton Acts of Oppression and Cruelty against the Natives, who are, in like Manner with themselves under, and entitled to the Protection of the British Laws.” Both settlers and Aboriginal people would therefore be subject to punishment in the event of transgressing these laws. At the same time Macquarie provided a justification as to why neither of these two parties would be prone to breach such an agreement claiming that “it must be evident that no deep rooted Prejudice exists in their Minds against British subjects or White Man”. He then proceeded to claim that a “free and kindly Intercourse [had] subsisted between them from the Foundation of the Colony to the present Time, with the Exception of a few slight Interruptions”, of which the present circumstance was an example. In such a circumstance it was “highly becoming [of] British Settlers to exercise their Patience and Forbearance, and therein to show the Superiority they possess over those unenlightened natives by adopting a conciliatory Line of

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117 *Sydney Gazette*, 14 May 1814.
118 *Sydney Gazette*, 18 June 1814.
Conduct Towards them.” Where Aboriginal people themselves were concerned, Macquarie also remarked that he had been given “Assurances” from groups at the Cowpastures and elsewhere that they would not retaliate in the event that they were attacked by settlers.  

Such a rhetorical deviation from the negativity of the Gazette may seem welcome if it was not simply an attempt to clothe the violence of the frontier in the language of diplomacy. In conjunction with this conciliatory platform, in December 1814 Macquarie announced his determination to establish a “School for the Education of the Native Children” at Parramatta with the “Hope of producing such an improvement in their condition as may eventually contribute to render them not only more happy in themselves, but also in some degree useful to the Community”. The humanitarian optimism inherent to this policy seemed to quickly disperse with the continuation of conflict at the out-settlements. On 5 August 1815 the Gazette reported the murder of a settler at Bringelly, whose labourers were kept in a “constant state of terror” as a number of items were stolen. Several settlers were also murdered in the same district in March 1816, purportedly in association with a crop raid. The Gazette also reported in the same month that stock keeper at the Cowpastures was speared by at least three Aboriginal men similarly concentrated on acquiring the ripening corn and a woman was decapitated on a farm at Nepean, “the furious wretches afterwards plundered the house, and wantonly speared a number of pigs.”

Convinced of Macquarie’s inherent “liberality”, in a letter of 29 December 1815 John Blaxland brought to the governor’s attention the plight of three of his servants left “in a most dilapidated state” as a result of their huts being raided by a “considerable body of Natives

119 Sydney Gazette, 18 June 1814.
120 Sydney Gazette, 10 December 1814.
121 Sydney Gazette, 5 August 1815.
122 Sydney Gazette, 9 March 1816.
123 Sydney Gazette, 16 March 1816; Sydney Gazette, 30 March 1816.
amounting to about 150” in an attack upon his property at Stony Range. This coincided with violence already reported in the Gazette in the vicinity of Bringelly. Only with great difficulty did Blaxland’s servants escape. In response to learning of this “outrageous attack”, Macquarie’s immediate response to Blaxland was that “the unfortunate sufferers” would each be issued a “Suit of Slops and a Colonial Blanket”.

This magnanimity was eventually followed with far more aggressive measures, Blaxland’s property being the first port of call for a contingent of the 46th regiment led by Sergeant Robert Broadfoot with orders to reign in the “hostile natives” on 10 April 1816. Captain James Wallis was likewise sent to the Cowpastures with instructions from Macquarie to take prisoner those purported to be involved in violence and theft, firing upon those who resisted. “Such adult males that may be killed”, Macquarie grimly ordered, “you are to cause to be hanged on trees in conspicuous parts of the country they fall in.” Women and children, although hopefully spared from violence, were to be “interned where they may happen to fall.”

Three weeks later Macquarie issued a proclamation which explained these “coercive and strong Measures”. While aware of the danger posed to innocent members of the various Aboriginal communities targeted by this use of military force, Macquarie expressed an earnest hope “that this unavoidable Result, and the Severity which has attended it, will eventually strike Terror amongst the surviving tribes, and deter them from the further Commission of such sanguinary Outrages and Barbarities”. The lasting impact of this manoeuvre was undoubtedly felt by the Dharawal people whom it targeted, with a group of

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127 Sydney Gazette, 11 May 1816.
14 including two women and three children plunging to their deaths at Cataract Gorge near Appin on 17 April when Wallis’ party routed them.\textsuperscript{128} In his report of this event Wallis indicated his accordance with Macquarie’s most grisly order, noting that he had “detached Lieut Parker with the bodies of Durelle and Kumnabaygal to be hanged on a conspicuous part of a range of hills.” Wallis otherwise expressed regret at overseeing the death of so many women and children.\textsuperscript{129} In noting the death of “one of the most hostile of the natives” in Durelle, with its inimitable eye for the suffering settler, the \textit{Gazette} was hopeful that the government’s actions would abate the “recurrence of [the] barbarities which the natives have of late so frequently committed on the unprotected settlers and their Families.”\textsuperscript{130}

Without dismissing its significance in New South Wales frontier history, Karskens underlines the importance of not inflating the strategic significance of this mass killing. Ultimately, it failed to remove a majority of the main instigators of Aboriginal resistance. The Cumberland Plain War as she calls it did not end in autumn of 1816 but rather as a result of Macquarie’s proclamation of 4 May which banished Aboriginal people from gathering near settlement in numbers of six or more and completely forbid any one individual from approaching within one mile of any farm while armed. Perhaps even more effective was the

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 11 May 1816.
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 11 May 1816. This particular massacre and Macquarie’s frontier policy in 1816 more broadly have been given particular attention by historians, drawing interesting discussion around memory, historical recuperation and the negotiation of sovereignty. Geoff Ford has made a convincing connection between this early massacre and similar events later in the nineteenth century, essentially proposing the Cataract Gorge massacre as the progenitor myth or “template” for subsequent speculation regarding the fate of Aboriginal people in later areas of settlement, such as the Bell’s Falls massacre speculated to have taken place at Sofala in 1853. Less with respect to the massacre’s mythic quality, Grace Karskens notes that it has been commemorated on 17 April since 2000, an act of remembrance which has brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of the Appin community. See Geoff Ford, \textit{Darniiring Recognition an analysis of the historiography for the Aborigines from the Hawkesbury-Hunter Ranges to the Northwest of Sydney}, PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 2010, p. 373 and Karskens, \textit{The Colony}, p. 548.
proclamation of 20 July which sought to outlaw key Aboriginal offenders, who in this case numbered 10 men: Murrah, Myles, Wallahalias Warren, Carbone Jack (alias Kaningy), Narrang Jack, Bunduck, Kongate, Woottan, Rachel and Yallaman. In so condemning these men to a “State of Outlawry”, Macquarie compelled all “His Majesty’s Subjects…to deliver them up to the nearest Magistrate to be dealt with according to Justice.” Failing this official course of justice, settlers were authorised “to kill and utterly destroy them as Outlaws and Murderers.”

Recognising its continuity with previous attempts on the part of colonial administrators to sanction violence as a means of subduing Aboriginal resistance in early New South Wales, Lisa Ford stresses the difference of Macquarie’s proclamation to the extent that it was the first time the issue of how to deal with Aboriginal violence was at least clothed in “the language of law”. But Ford is once again clear on the ephemerality of any shift away from jurisdictional pluralism, explaining that at this stage of New South Wales history “the colonial executive of New South Wales rarely defined indigenous violence as a crime”. Overall Macquarie’s 1816 proclamation was a “feeble” deployment of territoriality, the corollary of which was the ongoing juridical independence of Indigenous people in New South Wales, at least until 1824 when they were fully included by legal discourse in the courts.

For Ford the banishment of an Aboriginal man named Duall from the colony in July 1816 was nonetheless a significant event in terms of the extension of British sovereignty in New South Wales. As with previous military attempts to control the frontier, Macquarie’s proclamation in 1816 thus need to be evaluated in view of the broad ranging anxiety

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132 Ford, Settler Sovereignty, pp. 30 – 54, 82.
133 A man named Dewall or Dual was banished to Port Dalrymple by Macquarie upon his capture by settlers in July 1816. This presents a potential discrepancy with the previous fact of a man named Durelle being shot and hanged by Wallis in April 1816. See SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Government and General Orders, 30 July 1816 [SZ759], Reel 6038, pp. 232 – 3; Ford, Settler Sovereignty, p. 82.
expressed by early colonial administrators regarding the integrity of law and order through British sovereignty, which went hand in hand with a more general concern regarding the challenges “savagery” posed to “civilisation”.

With a number of other outlaws captured by 3 August the Gazette felt assured that “there can be little doubt that the hostile tribes must shortly retire, and that such as prefer a friendly intercourse with us will find a peaceable deportment the most conducive to their comfort.”\(^{134}\) Despite this hope, on 19 October Macquarie received a letter from a group of settlers on the Hawkesbury River requesting his assistance to assuage their collective “dread of the natives”. This fear of Aboriginal hostility was such that these particular settlers were “Compelled to reside and work alternately on each other’s Farm having no Men for [their] protection and assistance.”\(^{135}\) At all events Macquarie issued a further proclamation at the beginning of the following month ordering “all hostile Operations, military or other, against the said Native tribes [to] cease and determine” while offering an amnesty to any Aboriginal instigators still at large, thus repealing the proclamation of 20 July.\(^{136}\) In the same General Order, appearing in the Gazette on 2 November, Macquarie outlined his open invitation to Aboriginal people throughout the colony to meet at Parramatta on 28 December at which he intended to “confer and advise with them on the Plan of Life they may be inclined to adopt for their own comfort and happiness.”\(^{137}\)

If the inauguration of his Meeting of the Natives at Parramatta in 1816 was an attempt to reinstate his otherwise diplomatic stance towards Aboriginal people following the tragedy at Appin, it stands in stark contrast to the actions and rhetoric leading to this event, which,

\(^{134}\) Sydney Gazette, 3 August 1816; See also SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Government and General Orders, 30 July 1816 [SZ759], Reel 6038, p. 232 – 3.

\(^{135}\) SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Settlers unable to live on farms in Hawkesbury district owing to hostility of natives, Oct 19 1816 [SZ1044], Reel 6046, p. 232 – 4.

\(^{136}\) Sydney Gazette, 2 November 1816.

\(^{137}\) Sydney Gazette, 2 November 1816.
along with the *Gazette*, aided in projecting them as “savage and unfeeling enemies”.

According to the *Gazette* a total of 179 Aboriginal people attended this friendly event, at which time 15 children were now also in attendance at the Native Institution.\(^{138}\) Whether attributable to the apparent good-will of this occasion or the spate of terror to which the various Aboriginal groups of the out-settlements were subjected, by March 1817 the only instance of frontier violence around Sydney the *Gazette* could report needed to be qualified by the fact that it “had its origin in the DREAM of a Sydney native, who narrated his vision so critically with regard to circumstance as to impose belief that he was recounting truth instead of fable.”\(^{139}\) As much as the rumour of an Aboriginal attack on the Cowpastures emanating from Jervis Bay on the full moon of May 1814, and despite the apparent subsidence of aggression it suggests, such a spectral incarnation of frontier violence is a stark demonstration of the *Gazette*’s facilitation of the growing fears within the settler imaginary. Fear of Aboriginal aggression was a reality on the frontier, but it was given imaginative currency through the trope of white victimhood in the pages of the *Gazette* and rhetorical validity by a succession of early colonial administrators. Caught within this emotional dialectic, New South Wales would embark upon an astonishing pastoral expansion throughout the 1820s.

\(^{138}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 4 Jan 1817.

\(^{139}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 1 March 1817.
Chapter 2: ‘only solicit to obtain’: Martial Law and the Mounted Police, Bathurst and the Hunter 1815 – 1827.

Foul weather, a fluctuating sick list, hard rock, rugged terrain, injured horses and doubts over the next source of supply. These concerns dogged Lieutenant William Cox as he supervised the construction of the first road across the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, tracing the Aboriginal path “discovered” by William Lawson, Gregory Blaxland and William Charles Wentworth two years prior. The road was completed in January 1815, and in May of the same year the plains which lay beyond this interminable barrier became the site of lonely Bathurst. Along with the European push to open up the Australian landscape, to transform seemingly inhospitable wilderness into prosperous pastures, there was a fear of who might be at the edge of the trees. Cox regularly recorded his concern about the threat of “parties of natives” to the road builders, requesting that his blacksmith make pikes for “self defence”.¹

Almost a decade later, now a substantial land owner in the plains around Bathurst, Cox would reiterate this fear more strongly, albeit vicariously, in adding his signature to a memorial to Governor Thomas Brisbane in June 1824. With other prominent settlers of the Bathurst district, including Reverend Samuel Marsden, the memorial declared the “feelings of horror and consternation” which followed from learning that “no fewer than seven” servants had been “barbarously murdered” by Wiradjuri warriors.² In conveying both the fears of the shepherds and stockmen who survived these attacks as well as the more economic concerns of landholders, the memorial informed Brisbane that “as a natural consequence” the properties concerned had been abandoned.

² SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Cox et al. to Governor Brisbane, 3 June 1824, Reel 6065, pp. 31 – 32.
Suggesting an understanding of the force deployed by previous governors to neutralise Aboriginal resistance, Cox and his fellow memorialists felt confident they had “only to solicit to attain” such assistance. Mapping a moment in the rapid expansion of British settlement, this particular document is at once a clear expression of the emotional dialectic that had come to exist between settlers and colonial administrators. As will be shown, in both the Bathurst and Hunter regions throughout the 1820s governors and their fellow officials validated settler fears in consistently resorting to military force against Aboriginal resistance. In conjunction with a largely hostile, albeit diversifying press, this tacit recognition of settler emotional suffering led to the consolidation of white victimhood as the dispossession of Aboriginal people was gaining pace with the expansion of pastoralism across New South Wales.

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While fear was a central feature of colonial emotional life as the New South Wales frontier expanded, it did not entirely undermine the more optimistic outlook seemingly unoccupied landscapes could evoke. Leading the first official party to travel Cox’s Road in April 1815, the sublime potential of the Bathurst Plains rather than fear preoccupied Governor Lachlan Macquarie:

It is impossible to behold this grand scene without a feeling of admiration and surprise, whilst the silence and solitude which reign in a space of such extent and beauty as seems designed by Nature for the occupancy and comfort of Man,
create a degree of melancholy in the mind which may be more easily imagined
than described.³

This was a clear expression of the European desire to occupy the colonial landscape.
On 7 May the site for the town of Bathurst was fixed and “year zero” dawned for the
Wiradjuri. A quick survey of the local wildlife was remarkable for the variety it revealed
from Kangaroos and emus to pigeons and platypus, or “paradox”. But Aboriginal people
received no mention in the proclamation that established the first town outside the bounds of
Sydney settlement. While absent in Macquarie’s account of the journey, three days prior, one
of his travelling partners, Major Henry Colden Antill, observed that during an encounter with
“several natives of this new country” fear was “cast off” following an initial period of alarm
at the European reception. Antill remarked further “they appeared to be a harmless and
inoffensive race, with nothing forbidding or ferocious in their countenances” and “one
degree more advanced toward civilisation than our old [Sydney] friends” on account of their
use of garments.⁴

Before leaving the site of the intended township Macquarie instructed those who
remained behind to “keep the friendly intercourse”, a degree of friendliness elsewhere
strongly apparent to Antill’s understanding of this initial encounter.⁵ A sad consensus was
nonetheless struck among the party the day after their departure from Bathurst on 12 May
following the discovery that one of their number was missing and not to be found,

³ Lachlan Macquarie, ‘Tour over the Western or Blue Mountains, 1815’ in George Mackaness eds., Fourteen
70.
⁴ Henry Colden Antill, ‘Journal of an Excursion over the Blue or Western Mountains of New South Wales to
Visit a Tract of New Discovered Country, in Company with His Excellency Governor and Mrs. Macquarie and a
Party of Gentlemen', in George Mackaness eds., Fourteen Journeys Over the Blue Mountains of New South
⁵ Antill, 'Journal of an Excursion over the Blue or Western Mountains of New South Wales to Visit a Tract of
New Discovered Country, in Company with His Excellency Governor and Mrs. Macquarie and a Party of
Gentlemen', p. 86.
presumably fallen “sacrifice” to the “natives” with whom he was last seen, and, by all accounts, taken with the idea of becoming the first settler in the “new country”.  

The fragility that could exist between any perceptions of friendship on the part of Europeans toward Aboriginal people is here on full display. Notwithstanding the level of agreeable interaction that took place at the founding of Bathurst, the fact that no sign of the would-be-settler could be found was easily accounted for by an almost reflexive belief that he had fallen victim to the local inhabitants. There is no direct evidence to suggest this had been his fate. But with settler beliefs in the inherent savagery of Aboriginal people consolidating as they were, that the man may have fallen foul of the Wiradjuri would have been a compelling explanation.

William Lawson expressed a similar anxiety of Aboriginal aggression when travelling to Bathurst in 1819 in the company of three members of Louis de Freycinet’s south sea expedition. In their joint account Jene Rene Quoy, Charles Gaudichaud and Alphonse Pellion write that

Sometimes, when hunting, the natives rove in these lonely mountains, and more than one traveller has been victim of their murderous spears. We even happened to arouse Mr Lawson’s anxiety in this respect when, enticed by the beauty of the situation or desire to pursue some curious animal, we dismounted, leaving the main road to hunt or to botanise.  

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6 Antill, ‘Journal of an Excursion over the Blue or Western Mountains of New South Wales to Visit a Tract of New Discovered Country, in Company with His Excellency Governor and Mrs. Macquarie and a Party of Gentlemen’, p. 87.
The preponderance of fear in the settler imaginary asks important questions of how settlement continued at all. As Macquarie’s sentiment illustrates, working alongside the racial animus which had come to characterise the British occupation of Aboriginal land was a sense of entitlement to this very landscape, the expression of which could at times take on a certain emotional quality itself. As with Macquarie’s melancholic reflection upon his first vision of the Bathurst plains, the colonial landscape inspired the passions of British arrivals; less fear than pleasure at the prospect of a land gradually filling with the prime signifiers of civilisation: flocks and herds. Revisiting Bathurst in 1817 during the early stages of his western explorations following his initial travels with Macquarie in 1815, Surveyor General John Oxley remarked that “[t]he mind dwelt with pleasure on the idea that at no very distant period these secluded plains would be covered with flocks bearing the richest fleeces, and contribute in no small degree to the prosperity of the eastern settlements.”

Julia Horne’s observation that Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* accompanied Oxley as he surveyed the New South Wales landscape helps explains the excited anticipation of such prose.

As Penny Russell has made so clear, the violence that followed the realisation of these daydreams of dispossession was increasingly justified on moral grounds by the European conviction that “civilisation” rightly supplanted “savagery” no matter the cost. More suggestive of Richard Waterhouse’s description of the European “acquisitive impulse”, Oxley’s sentiment is a clear expression of the economic imperatives which directed the

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8 John Oxley, *Journals of Two Expeditions into the Interior of New South Wales, Undertaken by Order of the British Government in the years 1817 – 18* (London: John Murray, 1820), p. 2
10 Russell, *Savage or Civilised?*, p. 28.
British dispossession of Aboriginal land. At the same time it cuts to the heart of the feelings which the Australian landscape could evoke during the early phase of settlement. It is in such expressions that we find fear contending with desire in the settler imaginary.

To be sure, such passions were at times confounded by the barrenness of the Australian landscape. As Oxley ventured further west of Bathurst (in the vicinity of present day Parkes) on the same journey, he lamented, “[i]t is impossible to imagine a more desolate region; and the uncertainty we are in, whilst traversing it, of finding water, adds to the melancholy feelings which the silence and the solitude of such wastes is calculated to inspire.” Similarly, in country further west around present day Condobolin, Oxley would complain that “[n]othing can be more melancholy and irksome than travelling over wilds, which nature seems to have condemned to perpetual loneliness and desolation...The naming of things was often the only pleasure within our reach” But up and above the dreariness evoked by the desolated landscape further west, the European “acquisitive impulse” ultimately reigned on the Bathurst Plains.

However, this expansion of the frontier did not take place immediately. Macquarie’s consolidation of land grants in the Cumberland Plain meant that by the final year of his tenure in 1821 the large extent of British occupation in New South Wales was kept in the close vicinity of Sydney. In line with this policy, access to land around the Bathurst Plains was heavily proscribed. As noted by Waterhouse, outside of Judge Barron Field’s description of the Bathurst Plains as “the promised land of Australia”, few free settlers entertained with

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12 Oxley, Journals of Two Expeditions into the Interior of New South Wales, p. 41.
13 Oxley, Journals of Two Expeditions into the Interior of New South Wales, p. 91.
much excitement the long term pastoral and agricultural prospects of the new territory.\textsuperscript{15} This all began to change following the release of the Bigge report in 1822-23, which advocated a more large-scale and wide ranging approach to agriculture and pastoralism, incorporating the redistribution of convict labour from towns to the countryside.\textsuperscript{16} For the time being the appetite for land needed to be matched by the requisite legal means of acquiring it.

As they were enacted under the stewardship of Thomas Brisbane in the course of the 1820s, Bigge’s recommendations allowed pastoralists to expand the limits of settlement into more remote locations within the colony. While a reasonably well-contained policy in more fertile regions such as the Hunter Valley, Tickets of Occupation proved much harder to administer on the Bathurst Plains. To overcome issues of arability and access in the region pastoralists sought more fertile land beyond Brisbane’s anticipated new boundaries of settlement, adapting the new system of land grants and primarily establishing Bathurst as a sheep-grazing district.\textsuperscript{17} Much the same circumstances also led “squatters” to illegally expand beyond the Hunter Valley into the Liverpool Plains and as far as the Darling Downs as the 1820s were drawing to a close.\textsuperscript{18} Testing the patience of colonial administrators, by 1836 squatters could establish stations under licenses “to depasture Crown Lands beyond the Limits of Location”. “Squatting”, writes Eric Rolls, “had become respectable.”\textsuperscript{19}

Given the mythology that had come to develop around Aboriginal people, the remoteness of sparse settlement in regions such as Bathurst took an emotional toll on servants and stock keepers as they pushed further into potentially hostile Aboriginal country. But this unease only gained real dimensions once frontier violence erupted once again. As early as

\textsuperscript{15} Waterhouse, \textit{The Vision Splendid}, p. 166.
\textsuperscript{16} Ford and Roberts, ‘Expansion’, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{17} Ford and Roberts, ‘Expansion’, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{18} Ford and Roberts, ‘Expansion’, p. 122.
April 1816 the government provision depot along with the stock and servants of private settlers located upon Cox’s River were considered in grave enough danger from “hostile natives” to merit military protection. In command of the 46th regiment Sergeant Murphy was charged with the protection of this location and given Macquarie’s permission to fire upon any armed natives who approached within sixty yards. As with similar military expeditions under Macquarie’s governance, failing this use of force, Murphy’s orders were to take as many prisoners as possible. 20

But it was not until the close of 1823 that settlers and their servants brought the scale of violence to government attention with any urgency. On 2 September the commandant at Bathurst Major James Morisset wrote to Brisbane informing him of an inquest into the murder of a servant of Mr. Lee at Clear Creek Station 15 kilometres from town. The evidence before the jury in this case, which included a statement from an Aboriginal man and evidence from an examination report left “no doubt that of the deed having been committed by four native blacks who have lately done much mischief”. “I think it my duty”, concluded Morisset, “to state to you that the circumstances of this man’s death appears to have excited in the minds of the settlers at Bathurst a strong hostile feeling against the Native Blacks.”21

Galvanising settler feelings as Morisset suggests, such incidents also played into the growing sense of vulnerability felt by lonely stockkeepers. This anxiety may have been ironically enhanced by the intimacy that existed between stockmen and the Wiradjuri. According to Rolls, “when a shepherd in a lonely hut was speared, if he saw the man who threw it, he knew him by name. And, when stockmen rode out to shoot Aborigines in retaliation, they counted the dead by name.”22 The principle of retaliation did not, however,

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20 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Governor Macquarie to Sergeant Murphy, 22 April 1816, Reel 6065, pp. 34 – 37.
21 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Major Morisset to Governor Brisbane, Reel 6065, pp. 261 - 262.
22 Rolls, A Million Wild Acres, p. 55.
prevent calls for government protection. Writing to Brisbane on 26 November of the abandonment of the government station at Swallow Creek just outside Bathurst, superintendent of government stock John Maxwell warned “stockmen are so intimidated since the murder of two stockmen at [Samuel] Marsden’s Station last week that they dare not stop at their stations without protection.” Given the scarcity of such protection it was Maxwell’s serious “hope that immediate assistance will be given to enable me to maintain the Swallow Creek and take up the Malelong Stations.”

Referring to the same incident, Judge Advocate John Wylde (also a settler in the Bathurst district) alerted Brisbane to the two stockmen who had “fallen victim to the furious present feelings of the natives.” On the behalf of Marsden and other fellow stockholders at King’s Plains, Wylde warned of the “very serious destruction of life [and] private property” if such hostile feelings and “unhappy differences” were not “immediately extinguished.” In one of what would become many suggestions aimed at achieving this aim Wylde wrote to Brisbane once again to canvass whether it would not be admissible to offer some such reward for the apprehension of the particular native…known by the name…of Saturday [Windradyne] as would induce some of the natives of a different tribe to seek the same, as the Instances have not been infrequent here of the natives very readily lending themselves to such a purpose against others not of their own immediate tribe.

As Peter Read remarks, Windradyne “towers over the events” which rocked the Bathurst community between 1823 and 1824. Perhaps following Wylde’s suggestion, in September 1824 the Gazette published this government notice: “FIVE HUNDRED ACRES OF LAND

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will be given to any Individual, who will apprehend or give over to any of the Civil Authorities, SATURDAY, a Black Native, and who is supposed to have been a principal Actor in the late Murders committed on the White People, at Bathurst.”

Swallow Creek station was not without servants long, as on 20 March 1824 two Wiradjuri men were killed and three detained by the military in the act of robbing the station. Correspondence between Morisset and Brisbane indicates that two of the men detained were sent to “His Majesty’s Gaol” in Sydney while one managed to escape. In a statement regarding the incident a government stockmen named Peter Ryan indicated that those either captured or killed were part of a much larger group of “about one hundred and fifty” who had dispersed his cattle, stripped him naked and chased him to a servants hut on the evening of Friday 19 March. Ryan’s fellow stockmen, Michael McKenna and John Anderson then managed to raise the alarm with the military by running to the Wylde’s nearby station. According to a statement provided by two of the privates arriving at the scene at 2am the following day, John Softly and John Epstein, the two deaths occurred out of self-defence when they attempted to enter the besieged hut, and those that were not arrested managed to escape.

In another more urgent appeal to Brisbane, Wylde conveyed his concern regarding the welfare of his cattle after receiving reports from his overseer Andrew Dunn they had come under attack. The integrity of the colony’s economic prosperity was clearly at stake. He asked

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26 *Sydney Gazette*, 2 September 1824.
27 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Morisset to Brisbane, 2 April 1824, Reel 6065, p. 29. Part of the mythology that has come to surround Windradyne suggests that he was arrested during an attack on a station in 1823 and was released. It is possible he was in fact the prisoner who on this occasion who was not released but later escaped. See Peter Read, *A Hundred Years War: The Wiradjuri People and the State* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1988), p. 8.
28 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Patrick Ryan deposing before Major Morisset, 22 March 1824, Reel 6065, p. 31 – 32.
29 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, John Softly and John Epstein deposing before Major Morisset, 22 March 1824, Reel 6065. See also SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, John Anderson and Michael McKenna deposing before Major Morisset, 22 March 1824, Reel 6065.
“whether it is fitting, upon any principle of humanity, that large herds of stock in that district should remain exposed to savages of such a nature”. Suggesting his awareness of previous frontier polices, as with his earlier idea of outlawing key Aboriginal warriors, Wylde vaguely referred to information he had received asserting that military intervention was the only way to ensure that Aboriginal people would “abstain from acts of violence”.\(^\text{30}\) In making this suggestion Wylde went out of his way to emphasise that only the military’s “appearance” was requisite to his demands, allowing him to spuriously ground his claim for assistance on the principle of humanity. Dispossessing people of land held for millennia then enforcing it through might of arms was one thing, but destroying a cow brought by the invaders was another thing entirely.

In June of the same year Wylde further put his case for military intervention arguing that efforts to do so by way of conciliation had proved insufficient.\(^\text{31}\) This followed reports he had received from Samuel Marsden, regarding more attacks on cattle at Kings Plains. Aware of claims that Wiradjuri aggression amounted to revenge or retaliation for offences against them, Wylde counterpointed with “the certain facts that the natives dress and eat the animal they have succeeded in killing.”\(^\text{32}\)

European animals obviously offered an easily attainable source of food for communities whose traditional sources of sustenance were becoming compromised due to changes in the local ecosystem, one beast potentially serving the needs of many. The certainty with which Wylde sought to establish the motives of the Wiradjuri was likely drawn from the information his overseer Andrew Dunn provided to an investigation conducted by

\(^{30}\) SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Wylde to Brisbane, 12 February 1824, Reel 6065.
\(^{32}\) SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Wylde to Brisbane, 22 June 1824, Reel 6065.
William Lawson as justice of the peace in October 1823. Specifying the details of attacks upon Wylde’s stock and that of George Palmer in September, Dunn and two other servants named Charles Booth and Henry Allsop provided evidence suggesting that such attacks were motivated by a desire for meat. Furthermore, Dunn supposed “that the Judge Advocate and Mr. George Palmer [would] suffer materially by the natives driving the cattle about, from a great loss of calves, and a most serious injury done on the stock.”

At a meeting on 16 July 1824 overseen by Attorney-General Saxe Bannister, this rationale gained another airing as Brisbane sought the advice of Bathurst magistrates, including Wylde and Lawson, as to measures to “repress those disturbances, which have lately occurred in the neighbourhood of Bathurst”. Among the submissions this gathering made to the governor was an understanding that rather than being justified by an “ascertainable” cause the purpose of the attacks made by the Wiradjuri was “to kill sheep and cattle for provision of meat supply.”

As indicated by the earliest attacks carried out by the Wiradjuri at the Swallow Creek and Clear Creek stations respectively, the violence with which they were carried out provides little to suggest that theft was the sole aim. Such opportunism would hardly be surprising given that their traditional hunting grounds had been so severely compromised by European occupation. As with earlier corn-raids at government farms at Toongabbie and settlements on the Hawkesbury River, such moments could provide the central contingency from which cycles of violence spiralled. And it was the willingness to desert a conciliatory approach such

33 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Charles Booth, Henry Allsop and Andrew Dunn deposing before William Lawson, 9 October 1823, Reel 6065. Following this inquiry Dunn received the following instructions from Lawson: “You will proceed with four soldiers and a party of prisoners in pursuit of the hostile black natives and in the event of your falling in with Jingler’s tribe, you are not to fire upon them, only in case of actual necessity in self defence, but to secure as many of them as possible and to bring them before me to be dealt with according to law, and you are to be very particular not to offer any violence to the Native Women, or destroy them or their children.” SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, William Lawson’s instructions to Andrew Dunn, overseer to John Wylde, 12 October 1823, Reel 6065.

34 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, William Lawson et.al. to Brisbane, 16 July 1824, Reel 6065.
as that proposed by Wylde that could exacerbate cultural misunderstandings. However, the categorical assertion that Aboriginal resistance was solely motivated by the need to acquire food in the absence of any retaliatory drive, however it may have preoccupied settler’s concern with property, obscures the broader contingency around which conflict took place.\textsuperscript{35} Yet the gathering on 16 July considered the broader “unhappy cause” upon which the Wiradjuri mounted their depredations to be “unascertainable”.

Other evidence suggests a far less nebulous catalyst for violence. In a concise explanation of the commencement of violence around Bathurst published in 1887, William Suttor, son of early Bathurst settler George Suttor, wrote that in 1824

a foreigner named Antonio had cultivated a patch of land on the Macquarie, opposite the town of Bathurst. Among other things he grew some potatoes. One day, as a large number of the black tribe of the place came by, Antonio, moved by a spirit of good nature, gave some of his tubers to these people. Next day, they having appreciated the gift, appeared at the potato patch and commenced to help themselves. This was not to Antonio’s liking, who roused the people of the settlement in [sic] his behalf. They rushed down and attacked the blacks, some of whom were killed and others maimed. After this, the blacks commenced general depredations, killing solitary shepherds, destroying large numbers of sheep, and they actually got possession of seven stand of arms and ammunition. In the course

\textsuperscript{35} As Henry Reynolds has shown in the broader spread of pastoralism across Australia throughout the nineteenth century, Aboriginal people were driven by subsistence as well as more strategic motives in targeting European livestock. This involved either employing methods that emulated pastoral methods of containing and “cutting-out” sheep to attacks on properties and livestock with the sole aim of devastation, although Reynolds is less clear on what circumstances distinguished the development of either practice. See Henry Reynolds, \textit{The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia} (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006[1981]), pp 159 – 175.
of a short time, hostile contests having taken place, several aborigines, as well as
Europeans were killed.\textsuperscript{36}

With added clarity, situating this event at Kelso, involving Windradyne and resulting in the
death of three Wiradjuri, Peter Read likewise characterises it as a salient representation of the
misunderstandings and overreactions which escalated violence between Europeans and the
Wiradjuri. Arguing that events “came to a head” in May 1824 with the deaths of three white
men and similar numbers of stock, Read provides clear evidence that these acts of violence
owed significantly to provocation.\textsuperscript{37} Far from being “counteracted” by the certain awareness
that the Wiradjuri “dress and eat the animals they have succeeded in killing”, however
inconvenient it may have been for settlers, revenge and retaliation were easily attainable
explanations for the escalation of violence.

As the details of May’s violent events contained in a large collection of depositions
sworn before Bathurst commandant James Morisset towards the end of May indicate, the
Wiradjuri were driven by much more than a need to acquire meat. Particularly suggestive of
the ferocity of these attacks, taking place on the properties Samuel Terry, John Tindall and
Richard Lewis respectively, are the remarks of surgeon Stephen Wilks. In his examination of
Terry’s servants John Donnelly, Joseph Rose and David Brown, Wilks found “a spectacle
from which nature revolts [their] eyes picked out from the orbits, and the soft parts from the
orbits; the entrails, belly and all the flesh of the lower extremities devoured, the bones
remained a shocking skeleton.” These injuries were partly attributable to scavenging birds
and dogs, but Wilks quickly established “murderous violence” as the cause of each man’s

\textsuperscript{36} William Suttor, \textit{Australian Stories Retold, and, Sketches of Country Life} (Bathurst: Glyndwr Whalan, 1887),
pp. 44 – 45.
\textsuperscript{37} Read, \textit{A Hundred Years War}, p. 9.
death. Wilks was in “no doubt” that the various skull fractures, chest and throat punctures on each victim “were made by the spears peculiar to the Black Natives”.  

Wilks reached a similar conclusion in his examination of Lewis’ servant Richard Taylor, deducing that a weapon “such as a tomahawk or an axe”, most likely a waddy, was “the sole cause of the death of the deceased.” Regarding the attack upon John Tindall’s ‘Wattle Flat’ station, approximately 40 kilometres from Bathurst, Wilks wrote that “two of the corpses, [John Dowder and James Floid] presented a spectacle at which humanity shudders [being] so incinerated, that their form and their features were shockingly disfigured.” The third victim in this case, James Buckley, on the other hand escaped the fiery fate of his fellow servants who perished inside their hut only to be run down roughly 50 metres away. Wearing “the marks of murderous violence”, Wilks surmised Buckley’s cause of death as resulting from “several distinct [head] wounds by some blunt cutting instruments, precisely such as those some of the well know weapons of the aboriginal natives might inflict.” Other depositions suggest that the very “burnsticks” used to inflame the servants’ hut were then used to kill Buckley, “broken and besmeared with blood and hair” as they were when found near his body.

This is sufficient evidence to suggest that the Wiradjuri were driven in their attacks upon settlers by far more than their need for sustenance. The ferocity with which they were conducted in particular suggests that Wiradjuri warriors were acting in retaliation to some

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38 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Acting surgeon Stephen Wilks deposing before Major Morisset, 31 May 1824, Reel 6065.
39 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Acting surgeon Stephen Wilks deposing before Major Morisset, 27 May 1824, Reel 6065.
40 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Acting surgeon Stephen Wilks deposing before Major Morisset, 29 May 1824, Reel 6065.
41 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, John Softly and John Epstein deposing before Major Morisset, 22 May 1824, Reel 6065. See also SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Richard Lewis deposing before Major Morisset, 29 May 1824, Reel 6065 and SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, John Tindall deposing before Major Morisset, 29 May 1824, Reel 6065.
form of provocation. In the case of the attacks upon Samuel Terry’s ‘Milla Murra’ station near Sofala, Read points out its position “on a bora-ground [burial ground] from which the Wiradjuri had been debarred” and speculates that poisoned bread had been laid in the area. At once the scale of the servants’ injuries suggest a hope of making a distinct emotional impression upon the settler community. Just as much as the gibbeting of warriors from trees hoped to strike terror in the hearts of the Dharug, Aboriginal resistance equally had a performative aim in contesting colonial space.

But such tactics did little to slow the scale of frontier reprisal. May also saw a group of servants take matters into their own hands, killing at least three Wiradjuri women in reprisal for the spearing of one of their fellow servants at O’Connell plains. The five assailants, John Johnston, William Clark, John Nicholson, Henry Castles and John Crear were arraigned before the Supreme Court on the charge of manslaughter for one of these women, who Castles purportedly gave “a prick with his sword” after they fell in with a party of 30 Wiradjuri warriors. As John Connor has highlighted, Saxe Bannister revealed his humanitarian concerns in speculating whether the men were under attack at all given that their victim were women. Such reservations were evidently lost on the jury, which found the men not guilty. That vigilantism of this kind was becoming a reality is supported by Read, who cites the shooting of three Wiradjuri men and one boy near Milla-Murra. All of this is to suggest that in their attacks upon settlers the Wiradjuri were driven by far more than their need for sustenance. By the same token, for lonely stockmen and hutkeepers acting in turn was the most direct means of calming their own fears.

42 Read, A Hundred Years War, p. 8.
44 Sydney Gazette, 12 August 1824.
45 Read, A Hundred Years War, p. 8.
Underlining the paradox of white victimhood, self-preservation was likewise the rationale which prompted Cox and other settlers at the beginning of June to rally their “feelings of horror and consternation” in calling upon Brisbane for official protection. Proclaiming martial law a week later in all settled districts to the west of Mount York, Brisbane gave drastic recognition to these anxieties, along with the fears of stock keepers. Reflecting the path which previous colonial administrators had taken in similar circumstances, the need for such summary justice was premised on long experience that “Bloodshed may be stopped by the Use of Arms against the Natives”. This was the best way to stop the “lawless Objects of Terror” which threatened “tranquility” across the Bathurst districts.

Brisbane did not make this decision alone. In illuminating Brisbane’s declaration as a moment in the expansion of British territorial sovereignty and jurisdiction over Aboriginal people of New South Wales, Lisa Ford emphasises the recently arrived attorney-general Saxe Bannister’s influence upon the governor. Whereas similar proclamations in the past had been tantamount to declarations of war against sovereign enemies, Bannister problematised ongoing jurisdictional pluralism by convincing Brisbane that “British territorial sovereignty in New South Wales required state retaliation against Aborigines to be grounded in an act of law.” Implicit in the declaration of 12 August was the argument that the powers possessed by local magistrates had been insufficient in the protection of settlers in their property. But, according to Ford, insofar as martial law asserted a more singular governmental jurisdiction over Aboriginal people as British subjects it did not reflect the broader consensus on this state of affairs throughout the colony nor the metropole but rather Bannister’s “particular bent”.

46 Ford, Settler Sovereignty, p. 173.
47 Ford, Settler Sovereignty, p. 173. Ford traces the conception of “perfect settler sovereignty”, the development of more a controlled British jurisdiction over Aboriginal people in New South Wales into the 1830s.
This “particular bent” went much further than influencing the situation at Bathurst. Bannister took his concern for the legal status of Aboriginal people all the way to the metropole, placing their mistreatment directly at the feet of the colonial office. Although his elevation of Aboriginal legal status was not to last, he thus sits squarely amongst those increasingly concerned with the violent consequences of colonisation. As Andrew Fitzmaurice points out Bannister “argued consistently against the dispossession of Indigenous people.” The tragic irony of this resolve was that outside of making representations to the colonial office, as will shortly be discussed, Bannister’s humanitarianism ultimately placed Aboriginal people in as much danger as they had been at the hands of pastoral servants.

Present at a meeting held at Government House on 16 July 1824 at which Brisbane sought advice from various Bathurst magistrates as to how to “most effectually repress” the Wiradjuri and bring them to a “a state of due Subjection”, Bannister was well aware of settler anxieties and the measures they proposed to quieten Aboriginal aggression. He must of suspected how these intentions would play out with the suspension of civil law.

Whatever the legal language in which it was couched, Brisbane’s retaliatory measures once again demonstrated the pliability of colonial administrators to settler demands. Cox and his fellow memorialists were right to think that they needed “only to solicit to obtain” the protection of the government, an expectation built around the expression of their emotional suffering. By asserting the “indiscriminate” nature of the Wiradjuri’s attacks on stock stations, “putting some of the Keepers to cruel Deaths, wounding Others; and dispersing and plundering the Flocks and Herds”, Brisbane spoke directly to a settler community already gathering under the banner of white victimhood. Frontier violence was increasingly being

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49 SR NSW: CSP, 1788-1825, Meeting of Bathurst magistrates at Government House, 16 July 1824, Reel 6065.
understood for its purely racial animus. Explaining this hostility by way of class was diminishing as a factor of the growing number of absentee landholders with a vested interest in the consolidation of Aboriginal dispossession. But as Bannister’s position suggests, this did not mean a complete relaxation of concern for Aboriginal welfare.

This ambivalence was once again reflected in the *Sydney Gazette*. First and foremost, its representation of suffering frontiersmen provided a forum to contemplate the best way to ensure the protection of whites against a savage enemy, amplifying the “clamour” for some form of military assistance against the Wiradjuri. In its opening reflections upon reports from Bathurst in 1824, the *Gazette* explained “that the natives have been very troublesome in that country” on account of their hunting grounds being so compromised, purporting the Wiradjuri as saying that they “must now have beef!” While open to the circumstances under which the Wiradjuri would kill cattle, the *Gazette* nonetheless professed the understanding that they would elide guilt on such occasions by affecting “a hole in the front of the skull with a spear, about the size of a musket-ball” so as to suggest that they had been killed by white men. Such observation of Wiradjuri cunning were accompanied with amazement at their physical strength, particularly well exhibited in the arrest of Windradyne which purportedly required the efforts of six men. With the declaration of martial law, the *Gazette* was hopeful that the “degree of traceableness” otherwise exhibited by some Wiradjuri “will no doubt become diffused throughout the various surrounding tribes, in the same proportion as that which now manifests itself around the settlements on the sea-shore.”

Hope “mingled” with fear, also guided a letter from ‘Philanthropus’ who was concerned that his query of 7 July 1810 had not “yet been satisfactorily answered.” Urged to once again draw attention to the sufferings of “our sable bretheren”, despite “this period of Missionary

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50 *Sydney Gazette*, 8 January 1824.
zeal”, ‘Philanthropus’ lamented that “no individual has been found sufficient…to accomplish the great work of evangelizing all the scattered tribes of New Holland.” Outlining the importance of this task, as well as the constitution of any likely candidate – their willingness to suffer for the sake of “our needy and helpless fellow-creatures” – ‘Philanthropus’ asked settlers to observe their own religious and emotional obligations:

What heart now, endued with sympathy so as to “feel another's woe,” will not piously reflect and seriously resolve – these poor, destitute, and wretched Aborigines, are the people whose land I have taken, and whom I, with others, have deprived of natural subsistence; I will, therefore, no longer see these, my brethren, having need, and shut up my bowels of compassion from them; but henceforth, according to the land by me possessed, I will, every year, for their melioration and spiritual benefit, voluntarily give, not less than one farthing per acre?51

More so than ever Philanthropus’ evangelical tracts suited the Gazette’s new religious and moral preoccupation under the editorship of Robert Howe, following the death of his father in May 1821.52 Despite the increasing inclusion of of such sentiment, however, the paper ultimately did little to unsettle the foundations of white victimhood.53

In reporting upon the attacks which occurred around Bathurst in May 1824, the Gazette drew upon a letter it received from the overseer at Samuel Terry’s property ‘Milla Mulla’. Along with detailing the outcome of these attacks, including the Wiradjuri’s seizure

51 Sydney Gazette, 8 January 1824.
53 By the end of 1824 the Gazette would find itself no longer beholden to official censorship, but for the duration of hostility in the vicinity of Bathurst this authority remained in place. As with previous eras of frontier conflict, the political and religious leanings of its editor notwithstanding, what appeared in the Gazette as the Wiradjuri mounted their resistance did so under the eye of colonial administrators.
of “7 stand of arms”, the letter writer purportedly warned that “unless timely succor is afforded, many more lives are likely to be sacrificed”. It was “presumptuous for anyone to deny” the government’s imminent suppression of such attacks, followed the report, anxious as it was “to afford and ensure all the protection and security in its power, so loudly called for as in the present instance.” With much the same eye to the suffering of frontiersmen it had applied across the Cumberland Plain and the Hawkesbury, the Gazette assured “the affrighted settler, and unprotected stockmen” of measures in train to relieve their anxiety. What was different in this case was its more balanced suggestion that no vigilantism take place in the absence of an official response. It condemned such activity, known to have already taken place resulting in the deaths of three Aboriginal women. Reminding its readers of its newfound evangelism, the paper decried, “Heaven will not readily absterge so foul a stain, how then is it to be expected that man should justify such blood-stained guilt?” Believing rather in the “wisdom and energy of the Executive Authority”, the paper looked ahead to the “no distant day” which would see the “civilisation and evangelisation of those present hostile myriads.”

Belying its longstanding proximity to said authority, such speculation under the auspices of newly found Christian hope also obscured the means by which such “wisdom and energy” had previously been exercised. Not so a Bathurst settler whose sentiment was printed in the Gazette on 5 August 1824 in an extract of a letter forwarded to the Gazette by a subscriber: “Dread of our arms seems the only access nature affords to their understandings; and by any other means it will not be possible to reconcile such jarring interests as theirs and ours.” More accurately depicting the course of previous official intervention on the frontier,

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54 Sydney Gazette, 10 June 1824.
for this settler the imperative of self-preservation was clear. Although wanton violence against Aboriginal people was to be detested he was:

equally certain that the security dictated by the first law of our existence, as well as the retention of any out stations, makes absolutely necessary the infliction of a very summary and severe chastisement; such as will not only impress them with a terror of our power, but keep them in such fear as will drive them to a distance from the establishments of the whites.\(^5\)

According to such a rationale, settlers were only able to overcome their own fear by inspiring it in the hearts of their frontier counterparts. This marks a clear continuity of the emotional performativity of violence established in the context of earlier area of settlement. Expressing an awareness of official measures which had been taken earlier on the other side of the Blue Mountains, this particular settler in fact drew upon a broader principle, one that clearly prefigured the thrust of settler colonialism:

The Government of the United States have experienced this evil to a great degree, even up to the present day; and after exhausting their ingenuity, both in measures of vengeance and mildness (and of late years they have not been accused of unnecessary acts of the former), have declared that it is impossible to give security to their back-wood settlements, but by terror; and it seems an axiom, confirmed by the history of all intrusions of civilized man upon his savage brethren, that they must give way and retire further back into their proper domains. I can easily conceive the reluctance which must be felt in the quarter from whence it must emanate, at giving instructions to drive these unfortunate beings from the country they have hitherto enjoyed; but, if it is meant that we

\(^5\) *Sydney Gazette*, 5 August 1824.
should occupy it, it is a necessity which, if not yet, must ultimately be had recourse to. The savages seem naturally brave, and instead of now dreading us, seem to hold us cheaper than ever, and appear also to be combining together and moving in larger numbers than formerly. 56

Broadening the understanding of “Aboriginal barbarity” across Anglophone frontiers, the Gazette claimed that the Wiradjuri “are not unacquainted with the horrible art of scalping, for the skins of those poor men were completely torn over the face, and the bodies otherwise exhibited a most frightful sight.” 57 While the murders of stockmen and shepherds to which this claim referred were indeed horrific, as attested to in Wilkes’ examinations, there is little actual evidence to suggest that scalping took place around Bathurst at this time. Apparent artifice aside, there was much with which the Gazette agreed in the anonymous settler’s letter, indicating that it now saw the imperative lying before government with greater urgency than the previous month. The “wisdom and energy” of the government now seemed best concentrated on the path of self-preservation. Providing clear verification of the settler’s plight, mixed with a humanitarian’s conscience, the Gazette maintained the need for the preservation of life, even the life of the savage! But compassion, for those murderous tribes, must be in a very low ebb after such horrible assurances of hostility. Reason has scarcely yet shed one beam across their benighted minds, and till that faculty can be brought to operate upon the savage disposition, it cannot be expected that their hearts will be melted by the "law of kindness." On so important a question we abstain from venturing the publicity of our thoughts, human blood being at stake; but we do surmise, that there can be almost but one opinion upon the subject. We

56 Sydney Gazette, 5 August 1824.
57 Sydney Gazette, 5 August 1824.
are not to argue any longer, it would appear, who was primarily the aggressor; but here the point becomes concentrated. Are we (the Europeans) to kill them, in our own defense? Or, are they (the natives) to butcher us, with impunity?\textsuperscript{58}

Such a clear delineation of the government’s prerogative could only consolidate settler anxieties and bolster their calls for military assistance. At once the humanitarian sentiment embodied in Philanthropus’ letter seemed to have dissolved. In a letter published on 12 August, Honestus, other than inflating the number of Wiradjuri warriors to “six or seven hundred”, underlined the pretentions of philanthropy:

About 20 Englishmen have already fallen miserably before those pitiless savages; and, still a Philanthropist obtrudes himself upon the Public, recommending the "law of kindness." Would not the wisest of men say, "this also is vanity and vexation of spirit? He that spareth the rod hateth his child." Every, true friend of the Aborigines must desire that they should be made to learn, by terror, those lessons which they have refused to acquire under a milder discipline. We are now to oppose strength to strength, that an end may be put to the effusion of human blood.\textsuperscript{59}

As the vigilantism of some stockmen at the end of May demonstrated, even before martial law had been declared such “discipline” was already being metered out.

Other than suggesting an interest in Aboriginal legal status, what the declaration of martial law did achieve was a clear alignment of these subjective tendencies with the overarching aims of colonialism. Brisbane’s declaration is thus a stark demonstration of the “radicalisation process” Moses assigns to the realisation of settler colonialism’s

\textsuperscript{58} Sydney Gazette, 5 August 1824.  
\textsuperscript{59} Sydney Gazette, 12 August 1824
“eliminationist logic”. For Wiradjuri historian Mary Coe, martial law amounted to nothing less than “conscious and deliberate” genocide. Arguing that it afforded settlers “the means to lawfully try to annihilate the rightful owners of the land”, Coe paints a harrowing picture of the Bathurst Plains:

No mercy was extended to any [Wiradjuri] person who came within the range of the Redcoat’s guns. Pregnant women became special objects for torture and amusement. Rumour has it that white men would run them through with their swords, cut their breasts off and use them as purses to carry their money. Children were brutally slaughtered, usually hit or kicked in the head. Large groups of Koorie men were caught and supposedly taken into Bathurst to stand trial. The Koorie men never made it that far, the white men executed them and to justify their deaths, said they were killed trying to escape. The white men killed [Wiradjuri] people and hung their bodies from trees or on fence posts as a warning to others.  

Describing an ambush at Billiwillinga whereby food was placed to attract large groups before they were killed en masse, Coe also adds a dimension to the otherwise diffuse myth of the Bells Falls gorge massacre. She argues that “redcoats” had managed to isolate a group of women and children from a handful of warriors before herding them off the gorge to their deaths. Another massacre at Clear Creek claimed 40 Wiradjuri lives. Even before the period of martial law Coe reasserts the Gazette’s estimate of 60 to 70 Wiradjuri deaths after it downgraded the number back to as little as eight or nine. Offering insight to the extent of

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settler vigilantism, she claims “squatters” often conducted raiding parties and laced dampers with arsenic intended for Wiradjuri consumption.\(^{62}\)

Despite the assertiveness of these claims, the overall death toll and scale of violence on the Bathurst frontier remains contentious.\(^{63}\) Connor cites at least one case during the period of martial law in which 16 Wiradjuri were killed by a group of servants led by Cox’s overseer near Mudgee, including a leader of the Wiradjuri resistance named ‘Blucher’.\(^{64}\) Various estimates place the overall settler death toll during hostilities between five and twenty.\(^{65}\) There is otherwise some speculation regarding how many Wiradjuri fell to the official expedition led by Major Morisset comprising both mounted settlers and soldiers of the 40\(^{th}\) regiment which scoured Wiradjuri territory from north of Mudgee to present day Lithgow in the east. The official parties reported no casualties indicating that they had only seen two Wiradjuri, an operational deficit that emphasised Morisset’s request for a mounted unit to be deployed on the frontier.\(^{66}\)

Siding with Keith Windschuttle, Connor also emphasises the weakness of evidence for the Bells Falls massacre, suggesting that belief in its occurrence has come to rely upon a mythology developed in line with the views of writers sympathetic to the Wiradjuri.\(^{67}\) In seeking to understand the collapse of the Wiradjuri, Connor prefers to highlight the confluence of alarm caused by known massacres, such as that conducted by Cox’s overseer,

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\(^{63}\) Connor, \textit{The Australian Frontier Wars}, p. 61.


and the overall disruption of their livelihood caused by Morisset’s expedition. But this need not relegate the validity of Coe’s assertions.

As Bain Attwood has argued there is a need to allow a multiplicity of narratives to contend with one another in providing a more meaningful understanding of Australian history and Aboriginal peoples’ place within it, particularly oral history in instances of trauma. In any event there is clear evidence that settlers on the New South Wales frontier deployed tactics such as the ones Coe suggests. Her reference to swords being used against women also aligns directly with the Supreme Court case in which one assailant admitted to giving a Wiradjuri woman a “prick” as he passed on his horse. And as this thesis has already shown, the gibbeting of Aboriginal warriors was a deliberate strategy to intimidate Aboriginal communities across the out-settlements of Sydney, lending credence to her claim that Wiradjuri were hung from trees.

There is little debate regarding the Wiradjuri’s eventual willingness to negotiate peace. Coe is categorical that the sheer numbers and force before them made the Wiradjuri resistance impossible, a fact recognised by Windradyne when he ordered his people to retreat into the “back country” upon learning the substantial price that had been put on his head. By October and November Groups of “peaceable” Wiradjuri had made their impression upon colonial administrators and the public. By 11 December Brisbane felt comfortable to proclaim that “the judicious and humane Measures pursued by the Magistrates assembled at Bathurst have restored Tranquillity without Bloodshed”. As with its inauguration in 1816, the annual “Meeting of the Natives” at the end of 1824 marked what the end of what Connor

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68 Connor, The Australian Frontier Wars, p. 61.
69 Attwood, Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History, pp. 155 – 196.
70 Connor, The Australian Frontier Wars, p. 61.
71 Coe, Windradyne, p. 56; Sydney Gazette, 2 September 1824.
72 Sydney Gazette, 21 October 1824; Sydney Gazette, 28 October 1824; Connor, “The Frontier War that Never Was”, p. 22.
73 Sydney Gazette, 24 December 1824.
refers to as a “peace process”. According to the Gazette, the Wiradjuri had been “induced to break through all fear, and behold those wonders, with the mere relation of which they had been astonished”. Also attended by Aboriginal people from Jervis Bay, Shoalhaven and the Hawkesbury, giving “peculiar interest” to this occasion was the presence of Windradyne wearing a straw hat adorned with the word “PEACE” alongside “a little branch representing the olive”. His countenance was otherwise marked by the trials he had most recently faced, having diminished significantly in size and grandeur from the “most manly” stature he had come to embody in the settler imaginary. “He is supposed to have suffered severely from unusual agitation,” wrote the Gazette, “in consequence of the efforts that were resorted to for his apprehension”.

Peace had of course not been as bloodlessly realised as Brisbane related to London in December 1824. The “coming in” of the Bathurst Wiradjuri can only be understood in the frame of what martial law allowed: the coordination of military action and settler initiative on a scale sufficient to send “a wave of terror through the Wiradjuri” and convince them of the necessity to negotiate peace. No more is this intent captured then in George Cox’s advice to a party sent in search of Wiradjuri believed to have stolen cattle: “Shoot them all and manure the ground with them.” Martial Law was but the third and final strategy Brisbane deployed to counteract violence in the Bathurst region having previously raised the Bathurst garrison to 75 and requesting permission from Earl Bathurst to organise “A Troop of Colonial

75 Sydney Gazette, 30 December 1824.
76 Sydney Gazette, 30 December 1824.
78 George Cox quoted in Rolls, A Million Wild Acres, p. 57.
Cavalry.” Martial law afforded Bathurst settlers and the military a level of legal protection on the frontier, but the advantage of mounted officers was not realised until settlement had expanded into the Hunter Valley in 1827.

More fertile than the Bathurst Plains, the settlement of the Hunter Valley developed under a more contained implementation of the system of land tenure advocated in the Bigge report of 1822-23. This may have lessened the sense of remoteness and alienation that had affected the lonely hut-keepers on the Hawkesbury and Bathurst Plains, but it did not remedy the violent consequences of dispossession. Increasingly colonial administrators faced a familiar dilemma: how to impress peripheral contingencies upon the metropole, while at once paying heed to growing calls for a more humanitarian approach to colonisation. Brisbane’s request for mounted cavalry, which was made in June 1824, was initially rebuffed by Lord Bathurst on the grounds of expenditure. Bathurst was otherwise “unable to appreciate the urgency” for any reinforcements, particularly cavalry, given the situation at Bathurst without a detailed report from the commandant Major Morisset. It was not until June 1826 that Bathurst agreed to Brisbane’s subsequent request for the provisioning of forty mounted horseman, largely as a means of “checking the system of Bushranging” in New South Wales. This instruction, not officially acknowledged until February 1827 by Brisbane’s successor Governor Ralph Darling, also took into account Lieutenant Governor George Arthur’s requests for assistance with the same threat in Van Diemen’s Land.

The Colonial Office’s retrospective approval for such a unit aside there was something fait accompli about Brisbane’s request for its formation in November 1825,
“strongly impressed with its absolute necessity” as he was despite Bathurst’s initial reservations.\(^8^4\) One month later, acting governor William Stewart wrote to Bathurst with the information that the “Mounted Police” had been formed “for the express purpose of pursuing and capturing Bushrangers”.\(^8^5\) Yet by June 1826 the New South Wales Mounted Police unit was being deployed to combat both bushranging at Bathurst and Aboriginal resistance in the Hunter Valley where, under the command of Nathaniel Lowe of the 40th regiment, a party of soldiers was stationed at Wallis Plains.\(^8^6\)

Whatever trepidation Bathurst felt regarding the need for a mounted police force, and given such a force’s ostensible role in arresting bushranging, it is unsurprising that they were deployed against Aboriginal resistance. In a schism that demonstrated the deeper paradox of colonisation under the banner of “amity and kindness” since 1788, Governor Darling had to reconcile a role which emphasised a protective prerogative towards Aboriginal people as it at once advocated the use of force. In the same despatch which contained official instructions which stressed the need “to especially take care to protect” the “Native Inhabitants” of New South Wales, in view of recent events Bathurst wrote to Darling regarding his duty “to oppose force with force” and to treat Aboriginal “Aggressions…as if they proceeded from subjects of any accredited state.”\(^8^7\) Such was the aberration of Bannister’s “particular bent”.

With Bathurst’s recommendation Darling could respond to the escalation of violence in the Hunter without entangling himself in martial law.\(^8^8\) The extension of British legal status was short-lived. So too the legal protections which came with the suspension of civil law for settlers and the military.

\(^8^4\) Brisbane to Bathurst, \textit{HRA}, series 1, vol. 11, p.897 – 898.
\(^8^5\) Stewart to Bathurst, \textit{HRA}, series 1, vol. 12, pp. 85 – 86.
\(^8^6\) Connor, ‘The Frontier War that Never Was’, p. 23. Even when Bathurst’s eventual approval is taken into account there is no reference to the crisis at hand being one which involved Aboriginal resistance. See Bathurst to Darling, \textit{HRA}, series 1, vol. 12, pp. 341 – 343.
\(^8^7\) \textit{HRA}, series 1, vol. 12, p. 21, 125.
\(^8^8\) Connor, \textit{The Australian Frontier Wars}, p. 65. Remember Connors earlier point about Hawkesbury and how magistrates were present to protect soldiers
This deviation in administrative responsibility, however, did not alter the contingency of violence as settlers pushed further into the Hunter region. Following the establishment of a penal colony at the mouth of the Hunter River in 1804, by 1820 settlement at Wallis Plains and Paterson Plains (present day Maitland) corresponded largely with the government’s interest in acquiring cedar.\textsuperscript{89} Allan Wood notes that this small community of settlers also grew corn along with their obligation to supply cedar, once again setting the foundations for frontier tensions.\textsuperscript{90} From his interrogation of Bigge’s 1820 report, Wood mentions that four soldiers were located at each settlement “to protect the settlers against the blacks.”\textsuperscript{91} Prior to this, reflecting his reverence for the Wonnarua and Kamilaroi people of the Hunter region, Wood remarks that “the finest Australian Aborigines, the native people of the Upper Hunter Valley and their kindred on the great plains over the range, lived in their ancient ways without awe of any other men.”\textsuperscript{92}

But as with the British “acquisitive impulse”, which sparked settlement across Wiradjuri country, it was not long before the colonists sought to inspire awe among the Wonnarua and Kamilaroi. In opening up a passage from the Hawkesbury to the upper reaches of the Hunter River in 1819, John Howe described parts of the fertile country between the Wollombi River near present Singleton and the mouth of the Goulburn River as “the finest sheep land” he had seen since leaving England.\textsuperscript{93} Following the granting of land to settlers already established on the Hawkesbury, from the early 1820s settlement increased with many settlers both new and old to the colony petitioning Brisbane for land promised either by

\textsuperscript{90} Wood, \textit{Dawn in the Valley}, p. 2
\textsuperscript{91} Wood, \textit{Dawn in the Valley}, p. 3
\textsuperscript{92} Wood, \textit{Dawn in the Valley}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{93} Wood, \textit{Dawn in the Valley}, p. 11.
Macquarie or Earl Bathurst if migrating from England.\textsuperscript{94} Further explorations into the upper Hunter by Henry Dangar, in combination with Brisbane’s growing enthusiasm for settlement in the region, led to widespread occupation from 1825, a year after the calming of relations at Bathurst.\textsuperscript{95} By 1826 much of the region was overstocked, forcing settlers to run their stock beyond the Limits of Location. In Eric Rolls reckoning, by settling their cattle near Yarramanbah Creek, discounting “the unknown cattle thieves always in advance of settlement”, Benjamin Singleton and Henry Baldwin became “Australia’s first squatters” following a subsequent government order which ruled them out of bounds.\textsuperscript{96}

In the district of Merton, Lieutenant William Ogilvie and his family managed to establish friendship with the Wonnarua and Kamilaroi and become familiar with various cultural practices.\textsuperscript{97} But this was an exception rather than a rule. The breakdown in relations between the Wiradjuri and Dharug respectively with settlers was over crop raids and the killing of stock. In the Hunter it was settlers preventing the Wonnarua and Kamilaroi from accessing their land at all provided the salient impetus for attacks. The prospect of violence was thus more proximate than ever, the Wonnarua and Kamilaroi were responding more directly to the brute consequences of dispossession rather than in reprisal against settlers anxious to secure their property. The clearest case of this took place on the farm of James Grieg whose property was located near the Goulburn River.\textsuperscript{98} In their report at the end of October 1826 to Colonial Secretary Alexander McLeay which aimed to explain the genesis of

\textsuperscript{95} Wood, \textit{Dawn in the Valley}, p. 46. During his explorations in 1824, Dangar was as amazed as Howe with the plains he discovered. Nor was this wonder diminished after an attack by a group of 150 Aboriginal warriors near present day Scone which required his party to abandon the party’s stock horses. See Rolls, \textit{A Million Wild Acres}, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{96} A further government order in 1829 extended the boundaries of settlement within 19 counties, pushing north into the Liverpool Plains, west beyond Bathurst and south pass the Moruya River. Rolls, \textit{A Million Wild Acres}, pp. 72, 85.
\textsuperscript{98} Wood, \textit{The Story of Settlement in the Hunter River Valley to 1833}, p. 113; Connor, \textit{The Australian Frontier Wars}, p. 64.
Kamilaroi hostility, magistrates Robert Scott and Alex Macleod in fact drew attention to the collusion of the Wiradjuri ‘Mudgee Blacks’ before listing “Mr. Greig’s known aversion to having the Natives about him” as exciting their “hatred”99

This “aversion” places settlers such as Greig squarely within a New South Wales settler community wary of the threat posed by Aboriginal people, long bolstered by a sympathetic press. From the end of 1824, the now independent Gazette was contending with The Australian under the editorship of W.C. Wentworth, and Edward Smith Hall’s Monitor from May 1826, as influences upon the thoughts and feelings of settlers. In and of itself this diversification of public opinion is significant. But particularly regarding events in the Hunter, it allows for a broader analysis of the spectrum of colonial emotional life in early New South Wales. This pluralisation of the public sphere also had important consequences for how emotions coordinated relationships between the settler public and colonial administrators.

As Connor has observed, when the coalition of Wiradjuri, Wonnarua and Kamilaroi warriors began to threaten farms in the upper Hunter in June 1826 the Australian was forthright in its response: “to strike these with terror, by the discriminating application of fire-arms, which will ultimately prove a saving of human life, and leave the people in the quiet enjoyment of their farms.”100 Such rhetoric tapped a long-standing sentiment within the settler community. In the context of this particular geographical arena of violence, the Australian merely became the most likely newspaper to advocate terror and give voice to combative settler feelings. In the case of this particular article of 28 June 1826, the Australian drew its suspicion across recent conciliatory measures adopted by the colonial government:

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99 HRA, series 1, vol. 12, p. 610.
100 Connor, ‘The Frontier War that Never Was’, p. 23; Australian, 28 June 1826.
It is related of them that they have acquired the notion that blankets, &c. have only been given to them by the Governor to ensure their good will and render them inoffensive, and that they have expressed their determination not to be bribed to preserve peace with the white people. If this be true, the remedy against them has been much mistaken, and acts of kindness entirely thrown away upon a race of beings who give very strong proofs that they can only be marshalled into obedience at point of the bayonet. It is vain to temporize with savages, who have only cunning enough to comprehend that their enemies—enemies only in their own imagination—desire to conciliate them, and who have no capacity to understand that it will promote their own welfare to live on friendly terms with their co-occupants of the territory. With such foes—if foes they can be called—with such tribes, there is but one course to be adopted. If they be insensible to that mode of treatment, which humanity and not fear—as they may imagine—dictates, they must be taught to feel that force of which they seem ignorant.101

Prior to this the paper reported they had reason to suspect that the commencement of hostilities in the Hunter “did not originate in the misconduct of Overseers or Stockmen, but solely in the bad disposition of the Blacks” and recommended despatching the mounted police to “convince those sable depredators that they cannot attack the peaceable Settlers with impunity.”102 This was a sentiment reflected even earlier by its readership. In the wake of martial law in the vicinity of Bathurst, a settler from Windsor writing under the pseudonym ADÆLOS drew attention to the “negligent” attempts of “zealots” interested in the “deplorable state of the Aboriginal blacks”. ADÆLOS argued that a “truly erroneous opinion prevails amongst some individuals on the subject of [Aboriginal] innocence, who apply the

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101 Australian, 28 June 1826. At least into the 1940s, provision of blankets was seen as a central means of extending sympathy towards Aboriginal people. See SR NSW: CSP, 1825 – 1838, Reel 3706.
102 Australian, 17 June 1826.
primary aggravation to have been by the whites”, and suggested a “system of amelioration” based upon enforced labour with the hope of preventing further “unhappy disputes” on the frontier.103

With Darling’s eventual decision to send the mounted police under Lieutenant Lowe to the Upper Hunter, Connor recognises the entry of a figure sharing the rationale of the Australian whose “campaign of terror” involved the execution of a prisoner named “Jackey Jackey”.104 Three other Aboriginal men purportedly trying to escape the custody of the mounted police were also shot under Lowe’s watch.105 In reporting “Jackey Jackey’s” death, the arrest of whom was made on the grounds of his involvement in the murder of a servant at the Dr. James Bowman’s station, the Australian registered its anxiety over “the particulars of this business”. But it assured its readers that in “open warfare, and at a time when the Aborigines are committing outrages which cannot be prevented, except by shooting, or in some way or other by taking the life of the depredators at the very instant, we should not let any squeamishness about the mode of disposing the assailants.”106 It later justified the shooting of the other three prisoners by affirming that the mounted police had “no means of securing the prisoners alive, they deemed it advisable to secure them dead; and so they fired upon them, and shot them, and shot them dead too.”107

The Gazette continued to offer its mixture of philanthropic pragmatism to the unfolding frontier drama. In light of the establishment of a Wesleyan mission at Wellington Valley, hopes were high for the “aboriginal tribes” to one day “feel as we feel, to live as we live” and make a contribution to settler society.108 And while broadly in favour of the

103 Australian, 30 December 1824.
104 Connor, The Australian Frontier Wars, p. 64.
105 Connor, ‘The Frontier War that Never Was’, p. 23
106 Australian, 5 August 1826.
107 Australian, 23 August 1826.
108 Sydney Gazette, 11 February 1826.
decision to send Lowe to the Hunter as means of bringing “Offenders to Justice”, the Gazette asserted that “no Man of common Reflection, who is acquainted with the Character of the Natives, would consider them, as a Body, deserving of Punishment.”

Providing another challenge to settler hearts and minds was Hall’s Monitor. From the start the Australian reflected Wentworth’s agitation for a free New South Wales press and endorsement of the interests of emancipists and the prospect of representative government. Hall likewise espoused the virtue of representative assembly, but in drawing upon his Benevolent Society roots was more than anything concerned with the plight of the poor and the undue subjection of convicts to the law. Overall, they often diverged significantly in their sentiment towards Aboriginal people. At the beginning of June 1826 the Monitor received a letter from a “Correspondent” concerned with the “unfriendly state of the Aborigines” at Lake George in the County of Argyle, who took the view “that to effect a permanent friendship with the Aborigines of this colony, cold steel must be called into operation, and the nature of peace thus obtained, will be proportionate to the example made.” Calling this “experiential knowledge” this particular correspondent was obviously well aware of the previous measures administrators had taken to subdue Aboriginal resistance. Including this letter on account of its “intelligence”, the Monitor was unable to agree with the “very summary argument of cold steel”, which Hall “disliked extremely”. Savouring “too much of irresistible power”, the Monitor was more for moderation and magnanimity and forbearance, - in exact proportion as our power exceeds that of these poor blacks - a people, generally innocent, good-natured,
and simple - a people whose territory we have occupied without even taking the trouble to say to them "by your leave;" and who have personally helped us to explore the finest portions of their soil, being contented in return to call at our newly-made huts two or three times a year, and receiving with good-humoured smiles as the price of their choicest estates, a few gallons of boiled bran, omminy, and cabbage; an ounce of tobacco for the chief, and a little sugar for his Jinne.¹¹²

Hall also pointed to the tendency of stockman to take “too great liberties” with Aboriginal women. Engendering the imaginative coherence of white victimhood, Hall’s correspondent was sorry to be counter-posed with such “imbecile refutable arguments” on account of their historical implausibility and their “most unfeeling spirit” towards suffering settlers:

Among the number of merciful suggestions to ensure peace, the extreme of folly has been conspicuous, and the consequences of such mistaken lenity, has been experienced in the most barbarous and horrid sacrifice of many of our fellow subjects; on the contrary, where determined severity has been carried into action, the Aborigines have been finally less sufferers, though intimidated by it, and a series of security has thus been offered to the hapless stockmen, who, from the nature of their unfortunate circumstances…are compelled to await their doom, in the lonely sequestered country, whether their destiny depend on the fickleness of power or mere chance. The instances laid down in the chronology of the colony, the particulars of which can be recited by living witnesses of the most respectable authority, during the administration of governor King, down to that of governor Macquarie in 1810, succeeded by the awful yet recent consequences of

¹¹² Monitor, 2 June 1826.
Aboriginal barbarity, in that of Sir Thomas Brisbane, all afford direct incontrovertible support to my argument. The land then you say is defiled with blood, yes! and with the blood of the innocent - of innocent fellow subjects, whose blood still calls from the earth for retributive justice.\footnote{Monitor, 7 July 1826.}

“If our readers are convinced by such arguments as are used above”, Hall retorted, “they are soon convinced; and consequently, their opinion in our eyes, would be of very small importance on any subject.”\footnote{Monitor, 7 July 1826.} As much as Hall so relegated the views of stockmen, he also made sure the paper addressed the broader point of legal equality. The lack of punishment for the known murderers of a hutkeeper near Lake George named Thomas Taylor, for instance, risked creating “a neighbourhood of whites thirsting for revenge, and withheld from assassinating every black that comes in their way, from the fear of the law.”\footnote{Monitor, 29 December 1826.}

Conversely,

At Upper Hunter's River…we hear of retaliation without mercy. But as the law does not authorise retaliation, it becomes nothing less in the eye of the law but murder. Yet the government remains dormant. The murderers of the whites of Argyle are not brought to trial. The murderers of the blacks at Hunter's River are not brought to trial.\footnote{Monitor, 29 December 1826.}

This obscured the fact that Darling had indeed already recalled Lowe to inquire into the death of ‘Jacky Jacky’, a measure the \textit{Australian} viewed as being “deplored by a great many, who considered that he kept the blacks in due awe, and thus protected the property of the settlers.”\footnote{Australian, 23 August 1826.} The merit of such protection was obvious with an estimated force of “Aboriginal
natives” around Newcastle “nearly one thousand strong”. Highlighting the need for the mounted police the *Australian* warned that such a concerted force “would be rather awkward customers to deal with.”

Given that frontier warfare had been reframed as an activity between separate “accredited states” which condoned the use of force, Darling was not so concerned that the Lieutenant had killed Aboriginal people. His case was rather couched in terms of what is today considered “war crime”, the fact that Lowe’s interpretation of force against force compelled him to shoot prisoners. As Darling wrote to Bathurst in October 1826,

There can be no doubt of the criminality of the Natives, who have been concerned in the recent outrages; but, though prompt measures in dealing with such people may be the most efficacious, still it is impossible to subscribe to the massacre of prisoners in cold blood as a measure of justifiable policy.

This reservation makes it difficult to place Darling among the lineage of New South Wales who so clearly articulated terror as the means of arresting frontier violence, no matter how clearly he framed Aboriginal people as open enemies. It is also clear is that his pursuit of Lowe was on the wrong end of public opinion, a fact spelled out in the pages of the *Australian*.

Wentworth and his co-publisher, Robert Wardell, were otherwise involved in this matter as Lowe’s counsel when the case of “Jacky Jacky’s” murder went to trial the following year. The central argument they devised in Lowe’s defence was that Aboriginal

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118 *Australian*, 30 September 1826.
119 *Australian*, 30 September 1826.
120 Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars*, p. 65.
people were ignorant of the British law, *ere go* no one could be found guilty of their murder.\(^{122}\) In addition to chief justice Forbe’s refutation of this argument on legal grounds, Connor notes that Lowe’s defence was factually incorrect given that four Aboriginal men had themselves been hanged for murder over the last two years.\(^ {123}\) In view of the evidence presented against Lowe, not contradicted by those in his defence, Forbe’s recommended a guilty verdict to the jury of military offices. Like Bannister before him, Forbes thus challenged the status quo of jurisdictional pluralism in the administration of law on the New South Wales frontier. As much as it resisted this challenge, the not guilty verdict eventually delivered revealed the overarching emotional sentiment of the settler community, channelled through the protectionist zeal of the military. The *Australian* proclaimed, “Loud and general applause accompanied this announcement of the verdict. The numerous friends of Lieutenant Lowe crowded round to congratulate him on the happy termination of the trial. A second burst of applause was given as he triumphantly left the Court.”\(^ {124}\)

The emotional commitment between those responsible for keeping Aboriginal people in a state of awe and its role in denying them the protection of the law is also explored by Penny Russell in her analysis of the contemporary prosecution of four cedar-cutters at Port Stephens for the murder of a Worrimi boy named Tommy. Adding nuance to Ford’s argument regarding jurisdictional pluralism, Russell asks that we look beyond historical insights which have viewed the denial of legal protection towards Aboriginal people as “embodying the paradoxes of British sovereignty”, and focus more on how the “formal administration of justice was everywhere entangled with the perplexities of a colonising

\(^{122}\) *Australian*, 23 May 1827; Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars*, p. 67.

\(^ {123}\) *Australian*, 23 May 1827; Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars*, p. 67.

\(^ {124}\) *Australian*, 23 May 1827.
society.” Drawing attention to the “community-based and spatially defined” styling of emotion suggested by Benno Gammerl, Russell portrays the complexity of a penal settlement in which competing expressions of emotion and motivations for human action resulted in only one of the four men responsible for Tommy’s murder being hanged, and that for a different crime.

In Russell’s reading, contending with the notions of honour and self-preservation inherent to the act of violence itself was the myth of humane and “honourable” colonisation which motivated settlers such as Robert Dawson to bring the guilty sawyers to justice. Being found guilty of the murder in the Supreme Court under the adjudication of chief justice Forbes, only two defendants, Thomas Stanley and Samuel Chipp, came to face the death penalty following a decision by the Executive Council. Rather than Stanley’s subsequent claim to innocence and allusion to the crime being committed out of honour, a need to inculcate fear among the Worrimi, it was such jurisdictional delays as the decision of the Executive Council which found the two men reprieved. The decision to hang the men at Port Stephens, “intended to lend a spectacular display of central authority”, instead became embroiled in more localised imperatives of maintaining legal parity on the frontier when Dawson set off in pursuit of a Worrimi offender alleged to have speared a shepherd, thus delaying the execution further. This delay, a factor of the expediency of attending to local interests of fairness, ironically enough coalesced with the same humanitarian impetus which drove Dawson’s prosecution in the first place. A sentiment supported by the Australian, by

April 1827 Forbes became convinced that justice could not be served given the lengthy time the two prisoners had faced the death penalty.  

Russell’s key point is to demonstrate the complex confluence of fear and honour in a penal settlement whereby morality was complicated by a “frankly brutal” environment. But it also draws close attention to how the need to address local contingencies gave credence to an “emotional community” which gave preference to white victimhood over that of Aboriginal people. A similar insight is offered by Lisa Ford, who frames the overwhelming support for Lowe’s acquittal as the settler community closing ranks against an “imperial hierarchy” endeavouring to apply a more holistic and territorially defined jurisdiction over Aboriginal people. In her words, the settler community was not defending “lawlessness but its own version of plural, imperial law.” This emphasis upon the legal solidarity of settlers on the grounds of self-interest against those of an imperial hierarchy holding to a humanitarian agenda meshes well with the growing dominance of an “emotional community” characterised by settler victimhood over any hopes for a humane colonial agenda explained throughout this thesis.

Most conspicuous in the case of Lowe’s acquittal, the *Australian’s* discursive framing of an “emotional community” built upon settler victimhood and protectionism continued into 1827. When details came to hand of settlers using poison in the Hunter region to combat the ever “troublesome” Wonnarua and Kamilaroi, the paper was hard-pushed to believe such reports. Yet while “deprecat[ing] the thought of using poison”, paper maintained the right of settlers to defend themselves if protection was otherwise not forthcoming:

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If the government will not, or cannot give assistance to restrain them in their depredations, the settlers must keep themselves well armed, and open force applied in an open conflict, with whatever result it may be attended, cannot attach blame to those who defend themselves, their property, and their families. Humanising and conciliating the savage tribes sounds very well; but the isolated settler, with a rick of corn, finds that the only mode of conciliating, is to give away the whole of it. This is the only act of conciliation which finds its way to the breast of the savage.\textsuperscript{131}

The \textit{Australian} also drew out the misguidedness of conciliation with respect to the comparative treatment of white prisoners at Newcastle, observing the “general distribution of blankets and slop clothing to the black natives of the neighbourhood, their comforts being of course considered paramount to those of the miserable shivering creatures shut up at night in barracks without a blanket to cover them”.\textsuperscript{132}

However forcefully the \textit{Australian} sustained such rhetoric it is difficult to reconcile its claims of Darling’s overbearing conciliatory program given that the use of the mounted police on the Hunter frontier only increased in Lowe’s absence, with reinforcements being sent from Sydney under Archibald Robertson camped at the station of James Glennie.\textsuperscript{133} Following a series of botched arrests at the property of James Ogilvie at Merton in August 1826, the destructive potential of the mounted police became all too apparent.

The misidentification of two Aboriginal men, Tolou and Mirroul, as being involved in earlier attacks upon Grieg’s station led to their arrest despite pleas for their innocence from

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Australian}, 20 June 1827
\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Australian}, 22 June 1827
\textsuperscript{133} Connor, \textit{The Australian Frontier Wars}, p. 66 – 67
Mary Ogilvie. After a second episode of mistaken identity, this time involving a man named ‘Jerry’, it was only the “most friendly terms” which existed between the Wonnarua and the Ogilvies which prevented any eruption of violence. Whether an act of retaliation or not, the Wonnarua did attack the farm of Robert Lethbridge, the proximity of which to Glennie’s station drew the quick attention of the mounted police. The Australian reported upon this series of events in late September with its patented alarmist language, claiming the cry “Kill white man” went up amongst the Wonnarua as they met the mounted police led by Robert Scott, the local justice of the peace. Connor attributes the two equally plausible Wonnarua death tolls of two and sixteen to the skirmish that followed. Neither figure is mentioned by the Australian but it did indicate that sixteen of the mounted party had muskets. The paper was hopeful that the loss of life would bring the Woonarua resistance to an end: “The blacks have had the glory of dying in battle, and that is enough, for men, whose wanton attacks have been far too numerous, and have gone far too long unpunished.”

A request for greater military protection from the Hunter on 2 September indicates that this action was neither successful in stopping the Woonarua nor quelling the anxieties of the settler community. In it eleven settlers, including the otherwise humanitarian Ogilvie, warned Darling that “in the event of our losing the protection of the troops, our property will be exposed to the revenge and depredations of these infuriated and savage people.” The urgency of this request reflected concern over Lowe’s withdrawal and asked for the suspension of the order for replacement troops to be sent to the Hunter. Given he had already taken measures to ensure the protection of Hunter settlers in despatching the mounted police

134 Connor, The Australian Frontier Wars, p. 65.  
135 Peter Cunningham, Two years in New South Wales (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1966[1827]), p. 199; Connor, The Australian Frontier Wars, p. 67  
136 Connor, The Australian Frontier Wars, p. 66.  
137 Australian, 23 September 1826; Connor, The Australian Frontier Wars, p. 66.  
138 Australian, 23 September 1826  
139 Settlers to Darling, 2 September 1826, HRA, series 1, vol. 12, p. 576.
in the first, Darling’s response to this petition evinces a curious lack of empathy for the settlers’ fears. Reminding them of their number in the region relative to their frontier enemies, he wistfully declared that “Every one knows that, from the natives as a Body, at the utmost but few in Numbers, nothing is to be feared.” It was thus beholden upon the settlers to take their own measures against self-defence and establish an “ascendancy” on the frontier. Too much of a reliance on the military, Darling argued, would only lead the “Natives” to “no longer fear the Settlers” and “renew their depredations.” Nor was Darling willing to ignore the fact that the majority of the settlers he addressed were in fact absentee landholders, meaning “that not one of the Number was on the spot when the outrages alluded to took place.” The vicarious performance of emotion was likewise a factor in Bathurst two years earlier, but there is no indication that Brisbane questioned whether settlers were directly subject to the “outrages” of the Wiradjuri or not.

The difference is of little overarching consequence. What this comparison of the Bathurst and Hunter frontiers ultimately affirms is the “logic of elimination” at the heart of settler colonialism and the intermittent roles of fear, suffering and terror in activating its “genocidal potential”. As Connor notes, however Darling responded to this particular call for assistance, the intensity of violence in the month of September eventually led him to send troop reinforcements to the Hunter. And while the Wonnarua and Kamilaroi maintained their resistance into 1827, perhaps adding a certain impetus to the trial of Nathaniel Lowe, the presence of more troops spelt the end of unrest. Either way, troops or no, Darling’s response to the anxious settlers is perhaps one of the more unsettling realities of the New South Wales frontier. As we have seen time and again, only fear begat fear. Given the

140 Darling to Settlers \textit{HRA}, series 1, vol. 12, p. 577.
143 Connor, \textit{The Australian Frontier Wars}, p. 67.
imperatives that drive any settler colonial agenda, this could mean only one thing for the Wonnarua and Kamilaroi as much as it had for the Wiradjuri. Despite the growing clutch of voices reminding settlers of whose land they were cultivating, New South Wales remained a community greatly unsettled by the fear of Aboriginal violence.
Chapter 3 ‘a wanton and savage spirit’: the Unsettled Districts of Van Diemen’s Land, 1824 – 1831

Unsettled feelings on the Bathurst and Hunter frontiers, and the corresponding difficulties they posed the New South Wales government, coincided with heightened frontier unrest in the “Settled Districts” of Van Diemen’s Land. Reading excerpts from Hobart papers in the Sydney press, New South Wales settlers could gain insight and relate to the plight of their Van Diemonien counterparts. As a report from the Colonial Times appearing in the Sydney Gazette read on 6 December 1826, “To be again compelled, after a interval of no more than one week, to record some of the atrocious acts of the Native Aboriginal Blacks, is truly painful to our feelings.” The Hobart paper’s lament starkly mirrored rhetoric from the New South Wales frontier of the preceding two decades, outlining the same contours of Aboriginal savagery, settler victimhood and the urgency of official protection.

Observing reports of raids upon shepherds’ huts near Campbelltown orchestrated by Kickerterpoller, also known as ‘Black Tom’, an Oyster Bay man brought up within a white household, the paper asked whether these attacks were “not enough to steel any bosom against every feeling of humanity towards these black tribes? Is it not dreadful that our inland settlers should be thus exposed to the fury of this now savage people? and is it not astonishing that some steps are not taken for their protection?” It suggested “that a reward be offered for the apprehension of Black Tom; that he be immediately gibbeted on the very spot, which has been the scene of his atrocities; and then, perhaps, some little degree of terror may be struck to the hearts of his associates, which will deter them from a continuance of these horrid outrages.” Eager to protect settlers and ensure the prosperity of the colony, the
paper issued a vague concern for the Island’s Indigenous inhabitants, alluding to comparable frontier scenarios which “darken the history of the Cape of Good Hope.”

It was through such reports that New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land settlers could co-imagine their frontier experience. The emotional and imaginative purchase of colonial newspapers allowed for a much deeper and broader expression of the horrors that could be inflicted by “Aboriginal savagery” then was proscribed by geographical, although administratively porous, boundaries. Alongside excerpts from Van Diemen’s Land papers, the Gazette also offered its own direct observations of events in the sister colony. In July 1818 it observed that the “natives of Van Diemen's Land are unquestionably the most perverse known anywhere.”

“The Sister-Colony is in a state of war!”, the Gazette exclaimed, as emotions ran high in Van Diemen’s Land during the Spring of 1830:

Emboldened by success, the Blacks have become a universal terror to the country; their prejudices against the Whites have ripened into deadly hate; and instead of those occasional annoyances of which the settler had formerly to complain, he is surrounded by savage hordes thirsting for his blood. War upon the English is now their sole business.

With copies of Sydney papers arriving regularly in Hobart, Van Diemen’s Land settlers could likewise gain insight to the emotional lives of settlers in New South Wales. On 7 October 1826 the Hobart Town Gazette reported that it was “sorry to learn that the black natives in New South Wales have become more outrageous than ever. In the neighbourhood of Hunter’s River, in particular, their attacks have been attended with disastrous effects, and several lives

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1 Sydney Gazette, 6 December 1826.
2 Sydney Gazette, 18 July 1818.
3 Sydney Gazette, 28 September 1830.
of the settlers have fallen a sacrifice.”⁴ This flow of information provided ample measure for
a degree of emotional reciprocity between the two colonies. It forged an “emotional
community” not just along geographical lines but couched in terms of the threat Aboriginal
violence posed to the white community more broadly. With this continuity we gain a glimpse
of what became known as the ‘Black War’, which rocked Van Diemen’s Land between 1824
and 1831.

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As Nicholas Clements writes, Van Diemen’s Land never experienced “a golden era of
frontier relations”, with the Island’s Indigenous inhabitants consistently dealing “reluctantly
and uneasily with the whites, if they dealt with them at all.”⁵ Suggesting a contrast with the
idea of a “golden age” between settlers and the Eora, Clements’ observations of Van
Diemen’s Land ultimately reflects the contingency of cross-cultural amicability during the
early years of British settlement in New South Wales pointed. As will be discussed later in
this chapter, the unfortunate events of Risdon Cove in 1804 have often been applied
misleadingly to explain the intense racial animus which fuelled the Indigenous resistance to
settlers in the 1820s. In the intervening years, despite being a relatively peaceful period in the
colony’s history, as convict hunters spread throughout the Van Diemen’s Land interior in the
hope of finding game they were frequently attacked by Aboriginal warriors.⁶

A key argument developed by James Boyce in his landmark study of Van Diemen’s
Land draws upon this prelude to the explosion of white settlement across the region which
became known as the Settled Districts, ranging between Hobart and Launceston. Uncovering

⁴ Hobart Town Gazette, 7 October 1826.
⁵ Nicholas Clements, The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania (St. Lucia: University of
the ingenuity of the island’s early “convict settlers”, obscured by the emergence of a settler elite in the 1820s, Boyce emphasises the “economic and cultural background, combined with the experience of servitude in a penal colony” which allowed convicts to adapt to their new isolated location. This adaptability to a new and challenging environment demands that convicts be seen as more than just victims of a repressive colonial regime, but rather as early colonial agents with a culture and enterprise all of their own. What Lyndall Ryan refers to as the existence of a “creole” society is arguably one of the key differences between the early European settlement of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land before the “pastoral invasion” of the 1820s. This difference owed greatly to the environmental conditions respective to each colony, New South Wales being notorious for the initial difficulties it posed early colonists in terms of subsistence, whereas Van Diemen’s Land geography and ecology allowed those with enough resourcefulness to adapt more easily. Central to this adaptation were so-called kangaroo dogs, utilised in the hunting of their eponymous prey to meet not only the immediate needs of their masters but also feed the entire colony.

As Boyce recognises in view of the drastic Indigenous demographic decline from 1824, it was these same characteristics which made convict pioneers such a threat to Aboriginal people. Clements similarly remarks that the “hardening effects of squalor and violence” go hand in hand with understanding how “the colony’s demographic and socioeconomic characteristics helped incubate the war” which raged in the late 1820s. With

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7 James Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land* (Collingwood: Black Inc., 2010), p. 256
8 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 256.
10 James Boyce, ‘Return to Eden: Van Diemen’s Land and the Early British Settlement of Australia’, *Environment and History*, vol. 14 No.2 (2008), pp. 289-307. This underlines Boyce’s argument of taking into account the variety of social backgrounds which determined how different colonial actors experienced the environment. It was not a simple matter of a single people arriving with the same technological, economic and social capacity. This presents a specific challenge to all Britons possession Waterhouse’s “acquisitive impulse”.
less emphasis upon convict initiative, Clements draws close attention to the lack of agency they, along with soldiers, possessed in their new surrounds which drastically narrowed their interests towards Aboriginal people. Bereft of most rights, exposed to attack and sex-deprived as they were, this interest “rarely went beyond killing them, having sex with them or avoiding them.”

Emphasising the scarcity of “acceptable” sexual outlets available to convicts as an explanation for the exploitation of Aboriginal is far too biologically deterministic. However, this does not necessarily lessen the insight of Clements’ designation of sexual violence, along with “the desire to evict the invaders, the desire to avenge a variety of insults, and the difficulty of hunting in hostile territory”, as one of the more “proximate causes” of Aboriginal aggression.

Affording Aboriginal people with as much agency as depraved convicts, Clements also writes that “[m]uch of the war’s initial violence probably stemmed from broken or misunderstood prostitution agreements.”

It was this “suite” of causes combined with the “rising torrent of white men that swept the interior during the 1820s” which amounted to Aboriginal people responding to pastoral settlement much as they had in New South Wales. The sheer scale of this land grab was vast: 132,550 acres being granted between 1804 and 1822 compared to the 1,899,332 between 1823 and 1831 when free land grants ended. As with New South Wales this extensive alienation of land can only be understood in the context of the economic and social revolution instigated by the Bigge report. As far as the emotional lives of settlers and their servants is concerned a further similarity between these two colonies is the extent to which fear became a common denominator. Not only in terms of the discursive potential of

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17 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 146.
newspaper rhetoric, which flowed between the two colonies, but in the way that settlers mobilised fear and victimhood in appeals for assistance to colonial administrators.

Drawing upon the broader environmental framework of his thesis, Boyce accredits the “otherwise exaggerated settler fear that the Aborigines could ultimately triumph [with] dread of that defining feature of the Van Diemonian environment – fire”. “Given the vulnerability of crops and houses to almost instant combustion”, he writes, “the Aborigines’ fire sticks and war cries seemed to mock the property and pretensions of the invaders.” 18 Despite Boyce’s evidence of increasing incidences of arson in 1828-29, generating “hysteria among the settlers”, Clements argues that its potential during the Black War was never fully realised, but there was nonetheless a reasonable fear that it would be.19

Being the first study of Van Diemen’s Land to take emotion as its central object, Clements is far less inclined to dismiss the fears settlers held towards their frontier enemy. Acknowledging the emphasis newspapers gave to settler fears as a means of drawing government assistance, in drawing upon the broader written record including private correspondence and diaries Clements provides a clear case for the legitimacy rather than the exaggeration of settler fears during periods of heightened frontier conflict.20 “Emotions like grief and rage”, he writes, “only affected some people, some of the time, whereas virtually everybody on the frontier was afraid, all the time.”21 In arguing for this ubiquity of fear, Clements affords Aboriginal people substantial emotional agency, a capacity to frighten settlers which he attributes to their “deadly guerrilla tactics and uncanny elusiveness”.22

18 Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, p. 196.
19 Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, p. 196; Clements, The Black War, p. 98.
20 Clements, The Black War, p. 95.
21 Clements, The Black War, p. 95.
22 Clements, The Black War, p. 96.
This observation draws a further comparison between New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, otherwise supported by Clements’ breakdown of the specific fears individual settlers faced. Describing soldiers and convicts as “the engines of colonisation”, agents of a process in which they nonetheless exercised very little choice outside of responding to the broader contingencies of British colonial movements, Clements draws a distinction between the experience of fear relative to social standing.23 “Initially motivated by the desire for sex and the thrill of killing,” he argues, colonial violence later drew its animus from “revenge and self-preservation.”24 Given their relative exposure to frontier violence, as with factors such as remoteness on the New South Wales frontier, self-preservation could mean starkly different things for settlers and their servants. As with the New South Wales frontier this could create a vicarious emotional relationship across social divides. In a telling statistic Clements notes that 87 per cent of all white casualties in the course of violence in the Settled Districts comprised rural labourers.25

Beyond this sacrifice settlers were more than anything anxious about what harm they and their loved ones could suffer on top of the growing probability of damage and loss of property. A preoccupation with economic prosperity and the prospect of financial loss, in the face of the growing ascendency of Aboriginal resistance tactics, were the most salient causes of settlers’ fear.26 And while some settlers expressed concern for Aboriginal welfare, more pragmatic concerns gained emotional leverage over time. Whatever direct economic toll the loss of property created translated into a more psychological and emotional burden as to what the ultimate result of such attacks might be. Yet, as Clements makes clear, fear for one’s own life and that of loved ones cannot go understated given that settlers did make up a proportion.

23 Clements, The Black War, p. 17.
25 Clements, The Black War, p. 100.
26 Clements, The Black War, pp. 17, 97.
however small, of those exposed to violence. This direct exposure to violence only exacerbated an existential crisis settlers otherwise understood on more economic grounds. Time and time again, alarm grew into hysteria as violence intensified throughout the war.

Many chose to assuage this anxiety “proactively”, which only tended to engender more Aboriginal aggression. Drawing on the diaries of Adam Amos, Boyce writes that by 1824 “east-coast settlers were forcibly evicting Aborigines from the Oyster Bay district wherever they were seen, despite it being one of the most important regional food sources and seasonal gathering places.” Amos recorded that following the death of a stockman in June, his neighbour George Meredith distributed arms among his men, a clear sign of his willingness to kill Aborigines in the absence of more official protection. Such anecdotes place substantially more responsibility with settlers rather than their sexually depraved servants in explaining how the cycle of violence evolved in the Settled Districts. However, both explanations need to be considered. In highlighting the frequency of the ‘gin’ raid as an “established tactic” throughout the Black War, whereby frontiersmen ambushed Aboriginal camps to acquire women for sex, Clements also points out that many settlers encouraged vigilantism among their servants, if they were not directly involved themselves.

That settlers in time appealed to Arthur for military assistance, much as had long been the case in New South Wales, reveals the futility of their vigilantism. Charles Rowcroft, a prominent settler from Norwood wrote to Arthur in June 1824 of “Natives infesting” the district of the Clyde River under the leadership of Musquito, the man exiled from Sydney by Macquarie many years earlier. Reluctant to ask for help as he was, Rowcroft warned that “unless some forceful steps are taken by Government for the purpose of apprehending the

27 Clements, *The Black War*, p. 100
28 Clements, *The Black War*, p. 106
29 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 189.
leaders of this marauding party of natives, and of conciliating their followers, this winter will add still more instances to the melancholy consequences of their depredations and murders.” As things stood the military presence across the whole island was “totally inadequate”.31

It would initially take more than expressions of “melancholy” to shake Arthur from his hope of progressing a more conciliatory frontier policy. On 24 June 1824 he issued a proclamation prompted by the information that “several Settlers and others are in the Habits of maliciously and wantonly firing at, injuring, and destroying the defenceless NATIVES and ABORIGINES of this Island.” Observing the command issued by both the British government and Brisbane as Governor-in-Chief “that the Natives of this Colony and its Dependencies shall be considered as under British Government Protection”, Arthur saw his duty “to support and encourage all Measures which may tend to conciliate and civilize the Natives of this Island; and to forbid and prevent, and when perpetrated to punish, any Ill-treatment towards them.” While this order was also extended to Aboriginal people, indicating an awareness of who was ultimately responsible for escalating violence, Arthur largely targeted the behaviour of convict servants:

All Magistrates and Peace Officers, and others His Majesty's Subjects in this Colony are to observe and enforce the Provisions of this proclamation, and to make them known more especially to Stock-keepers in their several Districts, enjoining them not only to avoid all Aggression but to exercise utmost Forbearance towards the Aborigines, treating them on all Occasions with the utmost Kindness and Compassion.32

31 Rowcroft to Arthur, 6 June 1824, TAHO CSO 1/316/7578/1, pp. 6 – 7.
32 Hobart Town Gazette, 24 June 1824.
Roughly coinciding with the declaration of martial law in Bathurst, this proclamation likewise demonstrates a departure from jurisdictional pluralism. It was a measure seeking to ameliorate any legal discrepancies between local magistrates while at once asserting legal equality between settlers and Aboriginal people. Yet, no settler was ever prosecuted for killing an Aboriginal person in Van Diemen’s Land. “In spite of their stern rhetoric”, Clements writes, “the colonial authorities were loath to indict anyone for killing blacks for fear of inciting public outrage.” On top of this public pressure was the fact that the frontier was poorly policed; evidence could be easily concealed even if a charge was brought against a colonist. And as Clements remarks, the sociocultural forces that governed general behaviour were severely diluted in the colony:

Even settlers, while they sought to establish a good standing in the colony, experienced dislocation from the family and community networks that had once patrolled the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Isolated as they were at the edge of settlement that was itself at the edge of the known world, colonists experienced few barriers to killing blacks beyond the difficulty of surprising them.34

However such cultural disorientation clashed with Arthur’s “Kindness and Compassion” mattered little as settlers became increasingly forceful in their calls for protection. As Bronwyn Desailly writes, Arthur was far from “immune to the peaks of hysteria that prevailed in the colony periodically”.35 As with a succession of New South Wales governors before him Arthur quickly found himself confined to the task of protecting settlers and securing the economic interests of the colony, a shift made all the easier by the

33 Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, p. 190
34 Clements, The Black War, p. 55.
more relaxed instructions Darling received from London regarding Aboriginal legal status in 1826. But this shift in priorities must also take into account the more immediate contingency of settler grievance, a sense of victimhood given as much thrust by the Van Diemen’s Land press as it had been in New South Wales. Local newspapers certainly provided an imaginative bridge to the mainland when it came to the horrors of the frontier, but as the Black War lengthened Hobart pressman articulated their narrative of white victimhood most clearly with respect to the population of the Settled Districts.

In 1819, well before Arthur’s arrival in the colony, the Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter, under the proprietorship of government printer Andrew Bent, in fact condemned the ‘outrages’ committed against the island’s ‘Native Tribes’ as “repugnant to Humanity and disgraceful to the British Character”. The paper also condemned the lack of effort to “to conciliate the Native People, or to make them sensible that Peace and Forbearance are the Objects desired.”36 Arthur’s language of “Kindness and Compassion” would have therefore come as a welcome approach to some. As Clements observes, with hostilities increasing by the mid-1820s, this meant “a growing tension between pragmatic frontiersmen and humanitarian townsfolk”, with the government, the urban middle-class and certain pressmen maintaining the hope of some form of peaceful coexistence.37 Such optimism was couched in terms which tacitly recognised the injustices of colonisation and

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36 Hobart Town Gazette, 13 March 1819. Like the early Sydney Gazette, up until Bent was officially censured for libel in 1825, the Hobart Town Gazette was ‘Published by Authority’ and could thus be read as a reflection of government sentiment. Arthur’s 1824 Proclamation, as with previous cautions regarding frontier conduct issued by Lieutenant Governor William Sorrel, also appeared in the government paper. But given Bent’s particular criticism of Arthur’s enthusiasm for controlling the press, his thoughts and feelings were arguably as much part of the paper as those of the government.


37 Clements, The Black War, pp. 43, 49.
sort to excuse the actions of Aboriginal people on the grounds of their natural racial
inferiority and ‘childishness’. 38

Maintaining its reservations regarding “British Character”, by the inception of the
Black War, the tone of Bent’s was also beginning to resonate with frontier anxieties. In
August 1824 it reported an attack by 200 warriors on a cattle farm at Eastern Marshes from
information received by two stockmen who managed to escape. Registering the alarm caused
by the attack the paper wrote that “[t]he men are still in town, and such is the fear they
entertain, that nothing can persuade them to return to their abandoned occupation.” An
indication of the fear that was brewing in the Settled Districts, on this occasion the paper
reserved any rhetorical flushes to condemn “stock-keepers and others” whose long
“unprovoked aggressions” were the reason for the “mischievous disposition” of the
“Natives”: “The many recent unfortunate deaths of stockmen afford the sad example of the
imprudence of molesting the Natives, who have always been considered the most harmless
race of people in the world; and have consequently never been known to show their revenge
until within these last few months.” Far from attributing any inititaive for violence to the
Island’s native inhabitants, the paper also vaguely alluded to the nefarious influence of
“Musquito and other blacks”. 39 At this particular stage of the war, writes Boyce,

[i]t was convenient for the settlers to blame Mosquito for the increase in
hostilities. Not only did the explanation deflect concerns about the consequences
of the free settlers’ land grab, but, as a New South Wales Aborigine who had
spent much time with the British, his actions could be characterised as those of an

38 Clements, The Black War, p. 49.
39 Hobart Town Gazette, 6 August 1824.
individual criminal – a far less threatening prospect then an uprising by the Indigenous people.\textsuperscript{40}

Such convenience, however, lost its explanatory power with the escalation of violence following Mosquito’s death.\textsuperscript{41}

In April 1825, renewing its early conciliatory tone and approving of Arthur’s measures to ensure Aboriginal protection, the \textit{Hobart Town Gazette} warned:

However verging on brutality, or destitute of energies to render them respectable, the sable natives of Van Diemen's Land may be absurdly considered by those who do not know the real impress on their character, and the ruling passion which they lack but ability to exhibit; we boldly venture without fear of encountering a refutation to describe them as comprising a very superior mental grade and as calculated, to prove either an eminent blessing or a fatal scourge to their fair complexioned fellow-creatures.\textsuperscript{42}

Whether the “wild and gothic minded savage” became an “eminent blessing” or “fatal scourge” would be decided not by their own conduct but that of settlers. “If instead of conciliation, aggressive measures be adopted”, settlers could only expect “death and ruin throughout every district in the colony.”\textsuperscript{43}

Any idea that the white community had anything to gain by adopting a conciliatory stance, however, very quickly lost appeal as frontier violence grew in intensity. A more and more febrile press provided not only a means for settlers to imagine one another’s suffering but also gave a public voice to such expressions of emotion, adding pressure to a government

\textsuperscript{40} Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, pp. 190 – 191.
\textsuperscript{41} Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, pp. 190 – 191.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen’s Land Advertiser}, 8 April 1825.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen’s Land Advertiser}, 8 April 1825.
whose apparent inaction did little to alleviate frustration settlers felt at not being able to adequately defend themselves.\(^{44}\) The prospect of abandoning the colony was even entertained by the editor of the *Hobart Town Courier* James Ross in November 1830.\(^ {45}\) However such an idea may have appealed to Ross’ readers at the time, his own personal reflections suggest a far more amicable cross-cultural engagement. In 1836 he would write glowingly of the otherwise “most savage blacks” he encountered near his property on the Shannon River. “They never once committed the smallest trespass or annoyance on my farm”, he wrote assuredly, “while the most dreadful outrages were committed by them all round, they never once attacked my farm nor any one belonging to it.”\(^ {46}\) Confounding a growing public consensus Ross described a people in whom he “not only found no want of sense or judgment…but on the contrary much to admire in them as thinking men – as endued not only with much ingenuity and penetration, but with the tenderest sympathies of the heart, and all the nobler passions that elevate man in the scale of being.”\(^ {47}\)

But such reflections were unknown to Ross’ readers in 1830, for whom the prospect of abandoning the colony could be easily entertained with the increasing intensity of Aboriginal resistance from the mid-1820s.\(^ {48}\) As Clements points out, “some of the attacks that colonists lived through were truly terrifying”, and if they didn’t experience such violence directly they could rely upon “a vibrant network of formal and informal communications channels” from private correspondence to word of mouth and the press.\(^ {49}\) The psychological

\(^{44}\) Clements, *The Black War*, p. 95

\(^{45}\) Clements, *The Black War*, p. 98.


\(^{47}\) Ross, *The Settler in Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 64.

\(^{48}\) Clements, *The Black War*, p. 103.

and imaginative power of stories could be “unnerving in the extreme”, everyday horrors
which newspapers could consolidate “with the violence and gore exaggerated by rumour.”  

Just as such stories were gaining traction, settler anxieties were in fact focussed more
around bushranging. Incidentally, Ross was far more discouraged by the losses he suffered
from this menace than any Aboriginal threat, a circumstance which led to him becoming one
of the more prominent pressmen in Hobart. 

From June 1825, following Bent’s falling out with the government, he was appointed government printer alongside George Howe with
whom he published a new Hobart Town Gazette. In September Ross and Howe drew a clear
relationship between the unsettled feelings caused by bushranging and the ardour with which
settlers met this challenge: “The dreadful and unspeakable enormities committed by the
bushrangers have affected every one throughout the Island with abhorrence, but not dismay.
A rallying spirit is stirred up in the community, which throws in oblivion all little petty
animosities.” Such rhetoric encouraged a level of practical and emotional coherence among
settlers towards a common threat to life and prosperity, just as Aborigines were looming as
the same. With clear relief the paper proclaimed 26 March 1826 “a memorable day in the
annals of bushranging in this Colony”, as it marked the date that several key bushrangers
were brought in to Hobart from the district of New Norfolk.

But this relief would be shortlived. “In contrast to the Bushrangers before them”,
writes Clements, “the blacks took on an aura of dread all their own. As the reports grew more

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50 Clements, The Black War, p. 104.
51 ‘Ross, James (1790–1851)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography
Bent continued to publish the Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen’s Land Advertiser until August 1825 when
he changed its title to the Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser
52 ‘Ross, James (1790–1851)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography
53 Hobart Town Gazette, 24 September 1825
54 Hobart Town Gazette, 1 April 1826
horrifying, colonists evolved a new way of conceptualising the once ‘pitiable savage’.”55 The “guerrilla tactics” and “elusiveness” of the Aborigines combined to evoke a much greater sense of self-preservation and fear among settlers than bushrangers ever could.56 With stark similarity to the language used to ‘conceptualise’ Aborigines in New South Wales, Clements describes how

the natives’ sudden and brutal attacks, combined with their ability to ‘vanish like spectres’, had generated an image of them as magical, even demonic. To colonists, the blacks were a mysterious race that seemed to lurk almost ghost-like in the wilderness. Their intimidating ‘war paint’ and chilling ‘war-whoop’ only added to the effect.57

This aptly put “mystique”, similar in conception to Silver’s “anti-Indian sublime” in pre-revolutionary Pennsylvania, is central to understanding how newspapers provided the imaginative currency through which the already fraught emotional lives of individual Van Diemen’s Land settlers came to commune around fear of Aboriginal violence. A demonstration of this thematic appeared in the Launceston Advertiser when it described how Aborigines “daily exhibit such demonic delight in the successful accomplishment of their diabolical purposes, and develop such a skill and watchfulness in following up their purposes, that most…fill the breasts of all the out-settlers and stock-keepers with fear and dread”. 58

On 12 May 1826, Bent’s new paper the Colonial Times reported the murder of a settler named Browning in the Macquarie district after his property was attacked by a group

56 Clements, The Black War, p. 96.
57 Clements, The Black War, p. 105.
of 30 warriors. “After neatly severing Mr. B.'s head from the body with a tomahawk,” it gruesomely related, “they most barbarously cut the servant man in various parts of the head, with a similar instrument.” Indicating the familiarity that could exist between settlers, their servants, and Aboriginal groups, this particular report noted that the “poor old servant man, who, we are happy to state, is likely to recover, says, that he could recognise several of those who were present.” On the behalf of settlers, the paper was pleased to note that the military had “been since in pursuit of them.  

This use of the military notwithstanding, in the Hobart Town Gazette Ross and Howe wrote in a far more moderate tone that

[w]ere it not that we are aware that the hands of Government are fully occupied with numerous and important matters, we should press, with more than ordinary force the necessity of speedily organising to its full extent the Field Police, and military stations which are to be established throughout the Colony. Besides bushranging and sheep-stealing, which would be prevented by this measure, the depredations of the natives would also be checked.  

Other than functioning as imaginative engines in their representations of Aboriginal violence, the importance of newspapers in consolidating a sense of settler victimhood was therefore the influence they could exert upon colonial administrators. As 1826 drew to a close a spate of violent episodes found the same paper expressing its “pain” in learning

that a skirmish has taken place between a numerous tribe of the black native and some stock-keepers on the other side of the Island, in which many of the former were severely wounded, if not slain. They had made…an outrageous attack on the

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59 Colonial Times, 12 May 1826.
60 Hobart Town Gazette, 29 July 1826.
cattle and persons of the stockmen, and provoked them to fire in self-defence. We grievously lament these occurrences, and hope they may speedily be put a stop to.\textsuperscript{61}

Once again trying to balance its sympathy for both settlers and Aborigines, the paper reported that it was “sorry to learn that a black native, half civilized, who had been some time at the settlement at Macquarie Harbour has joined a tribe of about 100 of his countrymen, and leads them to commit various and atrocious acts of aggression on the sequestered huts in the neighbourhood of the Shannon and the Lakes.” Maintaining their belief that the Island’s Aborigines were “harmless” unless encouraged to be otherwise, Ross and Howe evinced some hope in the parties that had been sent out to bring in this “corrupting” character.\textsuperscript{62}

But it was the \textit{Colonial Times} during that time which contributed most to the Aboriginal “mystique”. And perhaps owing in part to Bent’s earlier difficulties with the Government, and in a reversal to his previous sympathies, the paper was far more forceful in calling for something to be done about their “evil” behaviour. In the same article of 17 November 1826 which appeared in the \textit{Sydney Gazette} at the beginning of this chapter, reporting the “Dreadful Murders” so “painful to our feelings”, the \textit{Colonial Times} wrote with equal alarm that “SEVEN MORE PERSONS HAVE BEEN INHUMANELY MURDERED!!!”. If the emphasis of this headline was insufficient, the paper proclaimed “If some effectual measures are not instantly resorted to, by the Government, the consequences must be seriously alarming.”\textsuperscript{63} The following week Bent had to write that this report had been based upon “misinformation”, suggesting the power of rumour at the time in and of itself, but was “sorry to be compelled to lay before the Public, a statement of a most horrid and

\textsuperscript{61}\textit{Hobart Town Gazette}, 23 September 1826.
\textsuperscript{62}\textit{Hobart Town Gazette}, 7 October 1826.
\textsuperscript{63}\textit{Colonial Times}, 17 November 1826. [Capitals in original]
treacherous occurrence, which has since taken place.” At least one sawyer working at a mill in the Cockatto Valley had been killed, and several others injured. It was becoming evident that something needed to be done to arrest the growing unrest, lest “we shall have our inland Settlers, particularly those at the Shannon, or such remote districts, sharing the same fate with the unfortunate inhabitants of the back-woods of America.” Evidence once again of the shared trope of white victimhood in regions of Angolphone settlement, Bent promised in the forthcoming issue his thoughts on the best approach “to remedy this serious, alarming, and rapidly increasing evil”, knowing as he did that the issue was being considered by Arthur and the Executive Council.64

In a stark demonstration of the relationship between the press and settler emotions, Bent went about this task with the understanding that it was beholden upon a “journal” on certain occasions “to express the general sentiments and wishes of the people, and in some instances, to regulate and lead them”, whatever the “painful results” maybe. It was this “feeling” with which the paper turned its attention “to the present situation of those poor, wretched, but infatuated savages, the Aborigines of this Island” and the dangers they posed to settlers. It was becoming all too clear that “the natives are no longer afraid of a white man — that they know, once a gun is fired off, it is useless.” Inefficiencies in technology aside, it was just as clear that the cross cultural encounter “has produced only hatred, and revenge, and nothing, but a removal, can protect us from incursions, similar to the Caffrees in Africa, or the back-woodsmen, in North America.”

Deploring the physical and economic dangers that settlers found themselves after emerging from similar threats posed by bushrangers, in a complete reversal of his earlier views Bent sought to make “no pompous display of Philanthropy” in declaring that “SELF

64 Colonial Times, 24 November 1826. [Capitals in original]
DEFENCE IS THE FIRST LAW OF NATURE. THE GOVERNMENT MUST REMOVE THE NATIVES — IF NOT, THEY WILL BE HUNTED DOWN LIKE WILD BEASTS, AND DESTROYED!”. Proposing at once the “security” of the settlers and the “protection” of the Aborigines, Bent suggested the latter be removed to King Island in Bass Strait. There they would be “compelled to grow potatoes, wheat, &c. catch seals and fish, and by degrees…lose their roving disposition, and acquire some slight habits of industry, which is the first step of civilization”.65 Arthur was becoming aware of settler frustration with the frontier situation by more direct means, but the language of the press added a certain urgency for him to act.

In fact leaving the Colonial Secretary’s office several days before Bent’s exhortation, on 2 December the Hobart Town Gazette published a proclamation in which Arthur expressed the “greatest pain” he felt from the Aborigines’ “wanton Barbarity in which they have indulged by the commission of Murder, in return for the kindness, in numerous instances shewn to them by the Settlers and their Servants”.66 Evincing his sympathy for suffering settlers to Lord Bathurst, Arthur acknowledge that “the fears of the settlers have been much, and certainly justly excited by the late unusual hostile proceedings of the natives, who have committed several murders.”67 Suggesting a sense of settler benevolance which he lacked earlier, Arthur otherwise knew all too well the cause of Aboriginal violence. Convinced that “these Savages are stimulated to acts of Atrocity by one or more Leaders who, from their previous Intercourse with Europeans, may have acquired sufficient Intelligence to draw them into Crime and Danger”, Arthur was also aware that his aim of instilling a sense of “forbearance” among settlers and their servants towards the Aborigines was failing. It was only with “extreme regret” that he began to direct his frontier policies

65 Colonial Times, 1 December
66 Hobart Town Gazette, 2 December 1826. The original date of the proclamation is 29 November 1826.
67 Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, p. 190.
away from conciliation, ultimately in the hope of capturing those he understood to be
instigating Aboriginal resistance.

The proclamation consisted in six recommendations, each order essentially
legitimating the use of force against Aboriginal people who either appeared “Determined” to
committ violence against the “White Inhabitants” or were known to have already committed
a felony. Arthur placed particular emphasis upon the issuing of warrants for the apprehension
of particular “Principals” known to have instigated violence and other offences such as theft.
But the overall significance of the proclamation is its framing of Aborigines as “open
Enemies”. This permitted civilians to use open force far more than was the case on the
Hunter: “[w]hen a Felony has been committed, any Person who witnessed it may
immediately raise his Neighbours and pursue the Felons, and the Pursuers may justify the
Use of all such Means as a Constable might use.”68 Implicit in this language is an obvious
hope to bring about a quick surrender.

The response from the press to this proclamation was divided. The *Hobart Town
Gazette* declared the government’s sentiments “highly satisfactory”, reminding settlers as it
did so of their duty and privilege to government protection and self-preservation that the
“common law of nature” conferred upon them. Tempering the appeal of Arthur’s
proclamation to the rising tide of public ardour to confront Aboriginal aggression, Howe and
Ross exhorted that “no one be led away by a needless cry or feeling of alarm for his personal
safety to commit an irremediable act, which on future and calm reflection he could not justify
to himself. Common prudence and caution will preserve any man from danger, which at the
very worst is temporary.” The paper also reiterated Arthur’s earlier belief that the current
level of aggravation among certain Aboriginal tribes owed to the influence of their “half-

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68 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 2 December 1826.
civilised” leader Kickerterpoller. But the paper was adamant that should such “inflamed and vindictive feelings” persist for another year than it was beholden upon magistrates “to call in every civil and military aid within his reach to apprehend them.” Echoing the Colonial Times’ call for the relocation of the Island’s native inhabitants, Howe and Ross wrote of the natural virtue of King Island as an Aboriginal refuge abounding “with every sort of animal and natural production on which these people usually subsist”. This refuge was the best way that “the personal safety of the blacks would be secured, their chance of civilization established the seeds of religion sown and cherished.”

The Colonial Times was much more critical of Arthur’s measures. Noting that government communications “should be expressed in the clearest manner so that they, may be at once understood by the meanest subject”, instead of being informed as to what measures to take in their own protection settlers had been issued a government order “without sense or meaning”, “a mass of contradiction and confusion”. Taking each order upon its merits, Bents’ central concern was that settlers may expose themselves to criminal prosecution for actions which they otherwise thought justified. This reaction speaks to the broader lack of clarity Clements identifies as to the “legality of killing blacks” compounded by bewilderment at the number of Arthur’s proclamations. In view of the complicated history of Aboriginal legal status in New South Wales, it is clear in Van Diemen’s Land that Arthur had a similar difficulty in establishing British sovereignty in an era defined by jurisdictional pluralism. The Colonial Times was certain that the proclamation had little hope of achieving its object, lenient as it was in hoping “to spare the lives of this benighted, savage people.”

Appealing directly to the base of white victimhood, Bent asked dramatically, “does not the blood of the numerous murdered settlers and servants cry from the earth where it has been

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69 Hobart Town Gazette, 2 December 1826.
70 Clements, The Black War, pp. 53 – 54.
so barbarously spilled, for redress for retributive justice on those whose hands are embrued in it?” Such “redress” could take two forms:

To spare them now is only to reserve them for a greater slaughter, as it is certain that an additional murder will kindle an additional hatred towards them, and once in pursuit, with the murder of a Colonist fresh in their memory, the people will kill, destroy, and if possible exterminate every black in the Island, at least so many as they fall in with.\textsuperscript{71}

It would be “far better for the Local Government to have raised a party of volunteers among the prisoners to go in pursuit of them, under the command of some person who could be depended on for coolness, and to take them, if possible without bloodshed, and have them sent to King's Island”, not as means of enslavement but rather in the hope of sowing “the seeds of civilisation”.\textsuperscript{72} Deriding the inadequacy of Arthur’s measures a week later, Bent again favoured transportation ot King Island rather than “empowering a class of people, so notoriously ignorant and uneducated as the generality of stock-keepers are, to hunt down and destroy their fellow…by an Act which it is extremely difficult to understand.”\textsuperscript{73} News from Launceston of the murder of a servant near Piper’s Lagoon provided a further opportunity to drive home the neccesity of relocation:

A more shocking spectacle was never seen. His body, especially his head, was literally beat to a mummy! His throat cut, and his lower extremities cut off!!! Indeed he was cut to atoms. His body was dragged a few yards from the place where he was thus so cruelly butchered, then thrown in a large hole and covered

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Colonial Times}, 8 December 1826.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Colonial Times}, 8 December 1826.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Colonial Times}, 15 December 1826.
over with two large logs of wood... The outrages of these people are now as great as ever, and have only been for a time diverted from their objects.\textsuperscript{74}

The \textit{Hobart Town Gazette} on the other hand was content in claiming that the “late enormities committed by the natives, as we predicted have ceased”, suggesting the successful implementation of Arthur’s measures.\textsuperscript{75} Unable to conceive how the “Government Gazette” could arrive at such a conclusion and feeling a duty “to point out the legitimate alarm” native unrest continued to cause, the \textit{Colonial Times} began 1827 with an ominous warning: “The Settler, recollecting the recent murders of his fellow Colonists and servants will, in our opinion, omit no step whereby he may destroy the black tribes even to utter extermination. The stock-keepers act upon the same principle, and carnage must inevitably follow on both sides.”\textsuperscript{76}

Time and again in the early months of 1827 the \textit{Colonial Times} proffered “the removal of the blacks to King’s or some other Island adjacent” each time it spoke of the “poignant feelings”, the pages “stained by a recital of the outrages committed by the savage Aborigines.”\textsuperscript{77} In February a hut was attacked at St. Pauls Plains. In April Kickerterpoller was identified at the head of a party which attacked a hut near Jericho. The level of deception involved in this attack, peaceful offerings having been made before violence took place, was an added warning to stockkeepers: “the cunning and wiles of the blacks are like those of Satan himself”. “Horror” and “distress” were the only feelings that could attend the paper’s “opinion on the conduct of the Aboriginal natives”, even when it reported hopefully, and in the end mistakenly, of Kickerterpoller’s death.\textsuperscript{78} Until October 1827, when Bent refused to

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\item[74] \textit{Colonial Times}, 29 December 1826.
\item[75] \textit{Hobart Town Gazette}, 30 December 1826.
\item[76] \textit{Colonial Times}, 5 January 1827.
\item[77] \textit{Colonial Times}, 9 February 1827; \textit{Colonial Times}, 20 April 1827.
\item[78] \textit{Colonial Times}, 11 May 1827. ‘Black Tom’ in fact remained a presence throughout the Black War and did not die until 1832, and only then from an illness he contracted while acting as one of Robinson’s Friendly Mission
\end{itemize}
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apply for a license under the Licensing Act introduced that year, the Colonial Times reverted to its mantra of removal to a Bass Strait Island as the only means of securing settler lives and livelihoods while ensuring against the prospect of Aboriginal extermination, complaining that “no week passes without a record of their violence.” With Arthur yet to make a genuine commitment to their protection, the Colonial Times was the clearest public voice which recognised the urgency of settler suffering.

From the beginning of 1827 the Hobart Town Gazette became a paper dedicated to the publication of government notices solely presided over by Ross, Howe moving on to publish the Tasmanian. From October, Ross regained a level of editorial autonomy, albeit largely in support of the government, when he established the Hobart Town Courier. As 1827 was drawing to a close, it was always a “painful” and “sorry” duty for the paper to report upon the continuation of Aboriginal attacks, but it did so with far less settler-directed empathy and extravagance than the Colonial Times, merely arguing that “surely something must be quickly done with these people.”

By this stage settlers were feeling in far more urgent need of protection, evincing a sense of alarm more in line with Bent’s commentary, drawing on the growing cache of Aboriginal “mystique”. In July a settler named William Bryan wrote to deputy judge advocate Edward Abott that unless protection was afforded the splitters and shepherds in his district they would be unable to attend to their tasks. “The system and fury of these black guides. Anna Haebich, Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000), p. 93.


81 Hobart Town Courier, 1 December 1827
monsters”, he later wrote, “exceed[s] anything I have yet encountered.” Relaying this concern to the colonial secretary, Abott wrote that the “savages have got bolder…and spread great alarm among those servants residing at distant places.” Mirroring heightened emotions of New South Wales settlers, a coalition of landholders from the district of Cornwell broached Arthur for military assistance. Citing a confluence of remoteness and unprotectedness, the settlers felt “at all times liable to surprise.” The alarm caused by the “atrocious murders” committed “under circumstances of the most horrid barbarity” in the neighbourhood of Launceston and Norfolk Plains was so severe that it threatened “to terminate in the abandonment of such property, as is not in the immediate vacinity of an armed force”. Fear had come to operate “so strongly on the minds of their stockkeepers, as to induce many to refuse to remain in charge of their flocks, and others, to keep them so closely at Home, as to render the greater part of their lands perfectly useless”. The intesection of emotion and the economic imperatives of settler colonialism’s “eliminationist logic” could not be more clearly drawn. Settler attempts to “conciliate and civilise these savages”, far from being productive, “only tended to render them more daring and systematic in their attacks, as well as desirous of plunder.” In far more tepid language a similar memorial from some settlers near the Elizabeth and Macqaurie Rivers complained that “the outrages committed by the Aborignes are daily assuming a more dangerous character.”

Arthur’s response to the settlers from Cornwall was the appointment of 26 additional field police and a party of military. Yet it was clear that there were issues with such deployments on logistical grounds throughout the Settled Districts. Captain Clark wrote to Arthur from the Clyde district in March 1828 suggesting that if the movement of military

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82 Bryan to Abbot, 1 July 1827, CSO 1/316, pp. 42 – 43.
83 Abbot to Burnett, 2 July 1827, CSO 1/316, p. 46.
84 Settlers to Arthur, 24 Nov 1827, CSO 1/316, pp. 72 – 75.
85 Settlers to Arthur, 26 Nov 1827, CSO 1/316, pp. 90 – 92.
86 Settlers to Arthur, 24 Nov 1827, CSO 1/316, pp. 72 – 75.
parties were directed by an officer or sergeant in person “the happiest result might be expected”. Adding to the aura of an already elusive frontier enemy, the magistrate of Campbell Town district James Simpson attributed the difficulty his parties faced in tracing “these creatures” to the “secrecy” of their movements and suggested that the military be placed in a series of huts throughout the neighbourhood to allow for a better chain of communication.\footnote{Simpson to Arthur, 18 Mar 1823, CSO 1/316, pp. 122 – 124.}

Meanwhile, settlers continued to complain of attacks. J.B. Hart from Swan Park wrote to Arthur explaining that “stock-keepers are frequently obliged to abandon their charges”, noting “how much more awful” the situation would become if Aborigines began to conduct their attacks at night. As Clements explains, a unique feature of Aboriginal guerilla warfare was indeed the “dependable nocturnal relief” it afforded settlers.\footnote{Clements, \textit{The Black War}, p. 100.} However “painful” it was for Clark to again communicate such “unpleasant intelligence”, at the end of March he reiterated to Arthur “the continued outrages committed on the frontier by the aborigines.” All in all, 1827 witnessed a marked jump in the intensity of Aboriginal violence from 1826, with the number of documented incidents of Aboriginal attack rising from 29 to 72 and the number of settler deaths rising from 20 to 52 respectively.\footnote{Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, 191 – 192.}

Recognising the inadequacy of previous frontier policies and the growing anxiety across the Settled Districts, in April 1828 Arthur issued a proclamation which essentially sought to partition the Island along racial lines. Holding out hope that negotiations with “certain Chiefs of Aboriginal tribes” might help bring about an arrangement that would ensure tranquility throughout the island, it had “become indispensably necessary to bring about a temporary separation of the Coloured from the British population of this Territory”.

\footnote{87 Simpson to Arthur, 18 Mar 1823, CSO 1/316, pp. 122 – 124.\newline\footnote{88 Clements, \textit{The Black War}, p. 100.\newline\footnote{89 Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, 191 – 192.}}
Given the “growing spirit of hatred, outrage, and enmity against the subjects of His Majesty resident in this Colony” evinced by the Aborigines, Arthur ordered that they “be induced by peaceful means to depart, or should otherwise be expelled by force from all the settled Districts therein.” Towards this end Arthur deployed 300 troops across “a line of Military Posts…along the confines of the settled districts” from which all Aborigines were excluded, with some provisions made to maintain the integrity of seasonal paths of migration in the form of a passport.\(^9^0\) Unlike the proclamation of November 1826 which essentially sanctioned settler violence, in this case Arthur forbade all colonists from using force unless sanctioned by a magistrate or military officer.\(^9^1\)

Muddying the legality of killing Aborigines even further – Bent would surely have had much to say if he was in print at the time – it is unclear whether or not settlers and their servants took to these obligations. Suggesting a loophole in the proclamation, a correspondent for the *Hobart Town Courier* from Macquarie River reported that the local magistrate had in fact appointed settlers as constables so that they could “act with their own men if occasion presents”. “When the blacks commit an outrage,” wrote the correspondent, “the whole neighbourhood must rise and capture the whole tribe, every individual of which is guilty in the eye of the law either as principals or accessories.”\(^9^2\) Becoming increasingly clear was the equally strong determination of Aborigines to exclude settlers from their territory, evinced by the escalation of violence in the Spring of 1828. The attack upon Patrick Gough’s property at Oatlands on 9 October stands alone as an incident which marked a new height of settler desperation, filling “the country with alarm and consternation.”\(^9^3\)

\(^{90}\) Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines*, p. 104  
\(^{91}\) *Hobart Town Courier*, 19 April 1828.  
\(^{92}\) *Hobart Town Courier*, 27 September 1828.  
Such incidents forced even those otherwise sympathetic towards Aborigines to push for more action to be taken to alleviate the suffering of settlers.\textsuperscript{94} The particular circumstances of the attack at Gough’s property, ending the lives of Gough’s wife, his four year old daughter and another woman named Anne Geary, compelled the \textit{Hobart Town Courier} to observe that it could “no longer be doubted that the natives have formed a systematic organised plan for carrying on a war of extermination against the white inhabitants of the colony.” Mrs Gough was reported to have pleaded with the Oyster Bay tribesmen to spare her ‘Picanninies’ only to be told “no you white Bitch we’ll kill you all”, before suffering repeated blows to her head.\textsuperscript{95} Many settlers were no doubt already convinced of the existential crisis they faced. To have the usually moderate \textit{Hobart Town Courier} espouse the prospect of extermination so explicitly only inflamed a community already defined by its fear and hatred of Aborigines.

With the Executive Council recommending to Arthur the declaration of martial law, an end to settler suffering seemed in sight. In doing so on 1 November Arthur highlighted the Aborigines’ “evident disposition systematically to kill and destroy the white inhabitants indiscriminately whenever an opportunity of doing so is presented”, citing the failure of his April proclamation to stem the progress “made by the Natives into the…settled Districts”. As was the case in Bathurst this step provided soldiers legal protection in the actions they took against Aborigines, and likewise for settlers in the case that they acted in self-defence. Arthur qualified this allowance, ordering “that bloodshed be checked, as much as possible…and that defenceless women and children be invariably spared. “But in reality”, writes Lyndall Ryan, “martial law was further legitimation of the slaughter of the Aborigines that had began on 26

\textsuperscript{94} Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{95} Deposition to Thomas Anstey, 11 Oct 1828, CSO 1/316, p. 166; \textit{Hobart Town Courier}, 18 October 1828.
November 1826”, suggesting a measure which merely formalised a frontier rationale already in operation.96

The most immediate consequence of the November proclamation was the establishment of civilian ‘roving parties’ under the command of Gilbert Robertson, suggested to Arthur by Oatlands police magistrate Thomas Anstey.97 Military ‘pursuing parties’ were subsequently also deployed. By March 1829 close to 200 soldiers were spread throughout the Settled Districts in 23 separate parties, which when including smaller detachments of troops meant a combined military presence of 400 men.98 In May 1829 a mounted police force was also introduced and Robertson’s party was divided into six smaller and wider ranging groups.99 This development has led Ryan to suggest that “from the declaration of martial law, in November 1828, to February 1830 the purpose of the very strong military presence in the Settled Districts was largely directed at killing rather than capturing Aborigines”, describing the “days of terror” encapsulated by this fifteen month period.100 The ‘success’ of this arrangement in the eyes of authorities is evinced by the fact that roving parties, such as the one led by John Danvers on 26 November 1828, who had been effective in tracking down and killing Aborigines were often redeployed.101 According to Clements, “roving parties were the colony’s primary defence against the blacks, and Arthur was unwilling to compromise their authority. Indeed, he went so far as to reassure rovers that their rewards would be safe, even if they were ‘unavoidably compelled to use violence, and loss of life ensued.’”102 Called to action immediately after an Aboriginal attack, whatever their actual impact, they “at least gave colonists a sense of agency at a time when many felt

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96 Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines*, p. 107
98 Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines*, p. 107
101 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 199.
102 Clements, *The Black War*, p. 75
powerless.”

In one of his reports as head of a roving party, Jorgen Jorgensen mentioned to Oatlands magistrate Thomas Anstey that a “favourable feeling” towards him and his men travelled throughout the area. Arthur was nevertheless made aware of concerns that convict-led parties were insufficient when compared to the military. Captain Vicary of the Bothwell Police office held reservations that “the district can be effectually protected by less force than 100 men”, expressing his lack of “confidence in the parties of prisoners employed on this duty.”

Suggesting a reversion to at least a tacit recognition of Aboriginal legal status, in enacting martial law Arthur sought to promote legal equality in the circulation of proclamation boards which depicted the fair distribution of justice for frontier offences. But as Ryan argues, this was “an imagined future rather than the reality of martial law”. Nor did the determination of Aboriginal resistance lessen, becoming particularly localised in the Clyde, Oatlands and Richmond police districts subject to the attacks of the Big River and Oyster Bay tribes. This coalition killed nineteen colonists between August and December 1829, bringing that year’s settler death toll to 33. Between the declaration of martial law in November 1828 and March 1830 the overall settler death toll was approximately 50, with 60 wounded, while at least 200 Aborigines lost their lives. Not only was the war “beginning to take its toll on both sides” through sheer loss of life, the actual nature of the violence was “becoming more dreadful and inexplicable”. Compelling Arthur to explain to colonial

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103 Clements, The Black War, p. 46.
104 Jorgensen to Anstey, 24 Mar 1829, CSO 1/320, p. 293.
105 Vicary to Arthur, 29 Nov. 1829, CSO 1/316, p. 338.
106 Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, p. 115
107 Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, p. 117.
108 Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, pp. 118 – 119, 121.
Secretary Lord Murray that the frontier had become “the most [anxious] subject of my Government”, it also made for an increasingly unsettled settler community.\footnote{Ryan, \textit{Tasmanian Aborigines}, pp. 118 – 119.}

A day after the declaration of martial law, Captain Clark wrote to Arthur from the Clyde district that his “servants will not go about their ordinary occupation... Time was when the aborigines would fly from the presence of an armed man but now they will face even the soldiers.”\footnote{Clark to Arthur, 2 Nov. 1829, CSO 1/316, pp. 346 – 348.} Henry Torlesse of Montecute near Bothwell wrote “of the very precarious state” of the countryside and “the general dread that pervades the minds of the settlers”.\footnote{Torlesse to Arthur, 16 July 1830, CSO 1/316, pp. 394 – 395, 420.} So afraid had settlers become that they were “never without a gun”, their fear of Aborigines “quite paralysing”.\footnote{Torlesse to Arthur, 16 July 1830, CSO 1/316, pp. 422 – 423; See also Ryan, \textit{Tasmanian Aborigines}, pp. 118 – 119.} Nor were settlers harbouring any real hopes of any chance of conciliation. Writing towards the end of February, Clarke feared that “the mutual distrust which has so long subsisted between the natives and the settler will for some time make any chance to communicate abortive.”\footnote{Clark to Arthur 22 February 1830, CSO 1/316, pp. 426 – 428.} A settler from Latour near Launceston, while acknowledging the “barbarities of the stockkeepers”, had similarly “become less sanguine in [his] hopes of conciliating so treacherous a people”.\footnote{Settler to Arthur, 29 Mar 1830, CSO 1/316, pp. 480 – 483.}

A despatch from Sir John Murray towards the end of 1828 brought to the \textit{Licensing Act}, which since introduced regulated the press in the hope of preventing “seditious libels”. Arthur’s proclamation of this order on 24 December 1828 led to Bent re-establishing the \textit{Colonial Times} in the new year, declaring a free press as “essential to the well-being and happiness of a nation”. In doing so Bent praised the existence of newspapers in lessening the inconvenience of slow communication which went hand in hand with a community as remotely scattered and thin as Van Diemen’s Land, demonstrating his awareness of the social
cohesion the press provided. Taking off from where it left, the paper emphasised how far Aboriginal violence had come to fill “the minds of the people with horror and consternation.” Given the measures Arthur had taken, rather than avidly calling for increased official protection of settlers the paper could now comment upon the “utmost activity” taking place to arrest the Aborigines efforts to defend their territory. Reporting on Danvers’ guidance of a party in pursuit of hostile Aborigines, the paper recorded with some satisfaction how the military discovered some huts and “burnt the whole of them to the ground.”  

Meanwhile, aware of the difficulty of making such a suggestion when the “spirit of some of the hordes of natives is so strong”, the Hobart Town Courier saw its “duty as well as the peculiar interest of every inhabitant of the island to forward as far as possible the truly philanthropic views of His Excellency on this subject.” Ross was referring to the newly established settlement on Bruny Island, initially established as a ration station but then developing in line with Arthur’s latent hope that “a civilized colony of these blacks might shortly be raised”, being brought to some fruition following the employment of George Augustus Robinson in 1829. “What more noble monument could be erected to the glory of the colony?”, asked the pro-government paper.

By June, keen to highlight the “gratifying accounts of the Aboriginal Establishment at Bruny island”, the Courier was becoming critical of the impact had by Gilbert Robertson’s roving parties. Referring to the “bond of society” which should prevent those living in towns from remaining aloof from those “in imminent danger of their lives”, it was clear that more action was needed:

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115 Colonial Times, 2 January 1829.  
116 Hobart Town Courier, 21 March 1829
We do not by any means wish to sound the tocsin of alarm, we are only anxious, consistent with our duty as a public journalist, to pre-admonish and forewarn. And we therefore, do give it as our candid opinion, that some bold and energetic step must speedily be taken to quell, the daily increasing confidence and murderous habits of the black. We do not pretend to point out the mode which should be adopted, that must rest with, the collective wisdom of the colony, and be detered by it. But as far as we can see, the common duties of life must be abandoned for a while by the strength of the people, who must form themselves in to a line as extensive as possible, and so advance and sweep along the country, driving the blacks into a corner or surrounding them. Such a measure as this as we conceive, must be adopted, or else a stationary line must be fixed, with posts at such near stations as will completely present the passage to and fro of the natives, without discovery or apprehension.¹¹⁷

With uncanny synchronicity, Jorgen Jorgensen suggested to Thomas Anstey in a letter dated 18 June 1829 that to avoid “indiscriminate slaughter…the enemy must be driven from the wide and extended parts of the country into the more narrow straits.”¹¹⁸ More so than ever, ardour seemed be to contending with fear in the minds of settlers, with some writing to Arthur offering their services in such pursuits.¹¹⁹ In the case of one settler near the River Isis at least, such offers came with the hope of securing a grant of land.¹²⁰

By February 1830, less inclined to call for the relocation of Aborigines to Bass Strait as explicitly as before, the Colonial Times urged that new measures “be acted upon, and that quickly, otherwise, the evil will increase, and each year will bring fresh cause of regret that

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¹¹⁷ Hobart Town Courier, 20 June 1829; See also Hobart Town Courier, 18 July 1829.
¹¹⁸ Jørgensen to Anstey 18 June 1829, TAHO CSO 1/320/7578/5, p. 275
¹²⁰ York to Arthur, 6 May 1830, CSO 1/321, p. 177.
the present state of things should have so long continued”: “pacific measures, and the
exercise of that humanity, which doubtless all the European and Native-born classes would
prefer cannot be long entertained.”121 In the subsequent week, demonstrating the destructive
power of fire as a frontier weapon, John Sherwin lost his house near the Clyde River
following an attack upon his property.122 Presenting the details of these “outrageous” the
Colonial Times wrote favourably of Arthur’s “humane feeling” in coming to the private
assistance of Sherwin and his family.123 But by this stage, as Ryan puts it, “the settlers on the
Clyde had had enough” and addressed a memorial to Arthur asking him for more protection
and that he bring an end to the policy of conciliation. Yet, in spite of his obvious willingness
to act upon settler anxieties in the past, Arthur was not prepared to wholly entertain any of the
demands made by settlers nor the final solutions suggested by the press.124

Instead, he issued a government order through which he hoped to “animate the settlers
to a hearty cooperation with the government in the adoption of measures tending either to
conciliate these people or to expel them from the settled districts.” In response to this “earnest
desire” to conciliate, John Batman, who led a roving party near Launceston, wrote to Anstey
of his opinion “that there is very little chance of…opening a reconciliation whilst such a
deadly hatred exists on the part of many of the tribes towards the Whites.”125 Along with
bolstering the mounted police Arthur introduced a bounty of five pounds for every Aboriginal
adult and two pounds for every Aboriginal child brought to a police office alive.126 These
measures were taken in conjunction with Arthur’s appointment of Archdeacon William Grant

121 Colonial Times, 19 February 1830.
122 Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, pp. 119 – 120.
123 Colonial Times, 26 Feb 1820.
124 Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, p. 120.
125 Batman to Anstey, 22 Feb 1830, CSO1/320, pp. 172 – 175.
126 Hobart Town Courier, 27 Feb 1830.
Broughton to the head of the Aborigines Committee, established in November 1829. In its report released on 19 March the committee provided its explanation of the causes of Aboriginal hostility and offered measures that might check “the destruction of property and lives occasioned by the state of warfare which has so extensively prevailed”. Meanwhile, the *Colonial Times* recorded “fresh instances of outrage by some of the aboriginal tribes.”

The Committee’s report drew liberally upon a cache of elite chivalric discourse, strongly suggesting the type of society Van Diemen’s Land was becoming. Taking aim at the initial violence Aborigines suffered “on the part of miscreants” who were “a disgrace to our name, and nation, and even human nature”, the committee felt “bound to consider that the Natives are now visiting the injuries they have received, not on the actual offenders, but on a totally different and innocent class.” A clearer official expression of settler victimhood is hard to find in the history Van Diemen’s Land. The closest the committee could come to recognising dispossession as the most profound act of violence on the part of the colonists was to declare the debt of “taking possession of the country” as paying Aborigines forbearance in their continued attacks and afford them “the path of civilisation.” Grandly hoping to provide a future point of reference for colonisation across the world, Broughton and his committee emphasised the “strict obligation [which] exists to ensure mercy and justice towards the unprotected savage, and how severe a retaliation the neglect of these duties…may ultimately entail upon an entire and unoffending community.”

As Ryan observes, in hearing multiple cases of mass killings at the hands of settlers and their servants, the Committee chose to only include “the colony’s founding massacre at

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127 Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines*, p. 120.
129 *Colonial Times*, 12 Mar, 16 and 23 April 1820.
Risdon Cove on 3 May 1804” in its report.133 “In discounting the evidence of recent massacres”, as she rightly points out, the committee also failed “to understand the real meaning of the ‘measures of forebearance’ that Arthur had implemented since November 1826, [absolving] the government of responsibility for the war’s escalation.”134 The committee was at pains to recognise the “observance of these principles” in the government’s actions during this period, leaving it to identify the recent “systematic plan of attack” on the part of Aborigines, along with their lost “sense of the superiority of white men, and the dread of the effects of fire arms” as the prime cause of escalating violence.135 This tendency, the committee was persuaded, “is generally to be regarded, not as retaliatory for any wrongs which they conceived themselves collectively or individually to have endured, but as proceeding from a wanton and savage spirit in them”.136 This conclusion, in conjunction with the evidence it had received from settlers, left the committee with no hesitation in expressing their persuasion that a sentiment of alarm pervades the mind of the settlers throughout the Island, and that the total ruin of every establishment is but too certainly to be apprehended, unless immediate means can be devised for suppressing the system of aggression under which so many are at this time suffering, and of which all are in dread that they themselves become the victims.137

Clearly demonstrating the relationship between settler emotion and the operation of colonial power, the committee made a suite of recommendations to alleviate white suffering, desirous “not to occasion, but to prevent the effusion of blood.” Among these were the

general recommendations that settlers be armed and alert, that they warn their servants of the consequences of “barbarous conduct”, that kangaroo hunting be prohibited, the centralisation of frontier operations with police magistrates, the placement of mounted police at each pastoral station, and an increase in the number of field police and the aid they receive from the military. Arthur was particularly favourable towards the recommendation that settlers take more precaution against Aboriginal attacks, having been disappointed by the tendency of settlers not to take “ordinary measures of precaution” after visiting the Clyde police district before the release of the report. Governor Darling expressed a similar frustration towards settlers in the Hunter region in 1827. Arthur was less inclined to agree with the deployment of mounted police, on fiscal grounds, despite their apparent success on the New South Wales frontier. As Ryan puts it, Arthur “was still unwilling to provide the settlers with the complete police protection that they expected.”

In opposition to the growing pressure from the press to adopt measures that went beyond the committee’s recommendations, secretary of state for the colonies Sir George Murray’s memorable refrain that “the adoption of any line of conduct having for its avowed or for its secret object, the extinction of the Native-race, could not fail to leave an indelible stain upon the Character of the British Government” caused Arthur more concern, particular in the case that Murray should receive the report. Once again, how did one balance the respective interests of metropole and colony when they seemed so discrepant? By this stage under the editorship of Henry Melville, on the grounds of the “law of nature” and the imperative of self-preservation, the Colonial Times was deeply preoccupied with the question of

139 Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, p. 126.
140 Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, p. 126.
141 Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, p. 127.
what right we have taken possession of this country, and having established that right, to discuss the question how far we stand justified, not only in repelling the aggressions of the Aborigines, but even pursuing them to death, in case they should not desist from invading the settled habitations of the white Colonists.\footnote{142 Colonial Times, 23 April 1830; Melville, Henry, (1799–1873), Australian Dictionary of Biography <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/melville-henry-2445>, accessed online 20 January 2016.}

This right became evident through an explanation of the “law of necessity” as the ownership of land and what it availed in accordance with sheer numbers, an argument essentially undermining sole Aboriginal enjoyment of Van Diemen’s Land. This reasoning precluded any explanation of native aggression as pertaining to the act of dispossession, but rather the “restless and ambitious spirit” of men such as Musquito. Nor could the instigation of violence be explained by the mistreatment of Aboriginal women, who in fact “yielded willingly to the lawless desires of white men.” This torrid trail of scapegoating led to the conclusion that indeed “the British have a most unquestionable right to take possession of the soil of Van Diemen's Land for all the legitimate purposes of cultivation and industry…and are justly entitled to repel the aggression of the Aborigines, without in any way considering the causes that may have led to those disastrous scenes which we every day observe passing around us.”\footnote{143 Colonial Times, 30 April 1830.}  

Preferring to leave “the measures most likely to establish a permanent peace, and afford protection to all” in the hands of the government at this stage, by July the Colonial Times was calling for the militarily to be fully deployed to “teach them a lesson”.\footnote{144 Colonial Times, 30 April 1830; Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, p. 127.} In the same month captain Vicary warned from Bothwell that “unless a speedy check is put to their atrocities many of the settlers must temporarily abandon their properties .”\footnote{145 Vicary to Arthur, 23 July 1830, CSO 1/316, pp. 434 – 435.} Settlers in the
Cylde police district claimed that the Big River and Oyster Bay tribes had made 22 attacks between April and August, that they “threatened the ‘extinction of the Colony itself by firing our crops and dwellings’”.¹⁴⁶ Thomas Anstey wrote to Arthur on 24 August “that the natives have evinced towards the white inhabitants…a spirit of the most determinance and rancorous animosity” and warned “that the coming Spring will be the most bloody that we have yet experienced” without sufficient military protection.¹⁴⁷ Five days prior Arthur had in fact released a government notice announcing the “less hostile disposition” evinced by the natives contacted by Robinson, on the basis of which he urged settlers and their servants to “abstain from acts of aggression against these benighted beings” and “to conciliaite them wherever it may be practicable.”¹⁴⁸

In doing so, he only made the job of managing the frontier even harder, enticing settler consternation to new heights. This frustration was clear in a memorial from a group of settlers from Jericho, who contemplated “with inexpressible alarm” such an order “when the Aborigines are becoming daily more and more systematic and serious”. Rather than the “spirit of zeal and enthusiasm” engendered by Arthur’s previous promise of grants of land to settlers who captured Aborigines, “gloom and misery and apprehension” had overcome the community. Arthur must have been “deceived” by Robinson’s reports regarding the success of conciliation and Aboriginal character:

> The bringing in of a few inimical blacks – a distinct people from those in the interior who have not had any intercourse with the European settlers is no criterion to judge of the character of Aborigines generally as a people, and the events of the last week in this district must convince Your Excellency of the

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necessity of the most energetic measures for the protection of settlers…As Your Excellency will be informed from other sources of the proceedings of the Savages in this quarter it is unnecessary to detail them. But we respectfully entreat YE to adopt some measures to relieve the Colonists from their present perilous condition.\(^{149}\)

At once Arthur had received a dispatch from Murray ordering that settlers be prosecuted for killing Aborigines, an instruction the Executive Council essentially overrode in view of the threat posed to the colony’s economy if settlers were reluctant to act in “self-defence” for fear of punishment.\(^{150}\) Showing complete disdain for the prospects of conciliation, the council essentially declared war on the Aborigines of Van Diemen’s Land.\(^{151}\)

Contrary to London’s demands the Executive Council threw its support behind what became known as the Black Line, which it justified on the grounds of preventing both the declining prosperity of the colony and the protection of Aborigines.\(^{152}\) As Ryan writes, “Arthur bowed to the inevitable”. This hoped to be decisive manoeuvre asked settlers to congregate at seven designated locations in an attempt to drive Aboriginal people from the Settled Districts, to “come forward and zealously unite their best energies with those of the Government in making such a general and simultaneous effort as the occasion demands.”\(^{153}\)


\(^{150}\) Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 60. James Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, p. 272.

\(^{151}\) Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, p. 273.

\(^{152}\) Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, p. 130.

\(^{153}\) Cited in Clements, The Black War, p. 125; In Boyce’s reading the Line was a conscious gamble on Arthur’s part, knowing as he did that it would have been a reasonable expectation that Murray’s dispatch detailing the prosecution of settlers who killed Aborigines would have taken longer to arrive than it in fact did. Exploiting this discrepancy, Arthur did not seek official approval for the Line, waiting until November to inform London of the Council’s decision. But such an egregious elision was in the end of little consequence. Following the death of King George IV and the election of a new British government just as the Line was coming to its end in November, Lord Goderich was appointed as Colonial secretary, a man far less concerned with the Arthur’s breach of policy. According to Boyce, in an extraordinary set of circumstances, evidence of this contradiction was censored when Arthur’s dispatch was included in an 1831 House of Commons parliamentary paper purporting to provide all correspondence regarding military action against the Aborigines of Van Diemen’s
This operation shared stark continuity with ideas previously suggested in the press and in passing by Jorgen Jorgensen.\(^{154}\) Ryan has also demonstrated the similarity between the deployments of such “human cordons” as offensive strategies against Indigenous people in other Anglophone colonies, including Macquarie’s deployment of the 46\(^{th}\) regiment in New South Wales during April 1816.\(^{155}\) She also compares the Line to a similar movement of men in Georgia during the 1830s which targeted the Cherokee people.\(^{156}\) The idea was therefore not just part of the discursive and intellectual fabric of the colony. It was entangled in a much broader imperial network of military strategy. But this does not discount the fact that Arthur’s path of such decisive action was a factor of the emotional volatility of the settler community and the colony’s darkening economic prospects. The fact that Arthur, after many years of settler frustration, applied the “sledgehammer”\(^{157}\), to borrow Ryan’s description of the Line, that he did suggests that settlers in Van Diemen’s Land were almost completely absorbed in the fear Aborigines could evoke. In Clements words, “Tasmania’s Aborigines succeeded in providing a kind of hysteria among many of their invaders.”\(^{158}\)

This emotional communion was clearly spelled out in the *Hobart Town Courier*, which shortly after Arthur’s government order observed “with pleasure the zeal which the approaching movement against the Blacks is entered into by all classes of the community.”\(^{159}\) On behalf of settlers the *Colonial Times* likewise welcomed the idea “that all should…rise in

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\(^{154}\) Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines*, p. 130.


\(^{157}\) Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines*, p. 130.

\(^{158}\) Clements, *The Black War*, p. 205

\(^{159}\) *Hobart Town Courier*, 18 September 1830.
a body to protect the general tranquility of the Interior”. The Line can thus be framed as the pinnacle of colonists’ collective anxiety, a means through which ardour could overcome years of accumulated fears and helplessness. On 22 September “one of the most numerorous meetings” ever to be held in the colony to discuss provisions for the “approaching movement against the Blacks” allowed all of these feelings to coalesce. Those present gathered around “the imperiousness of the present call on every inhabitant of the colony”, relieved at last to receive a government order that demonstrated strong and decisive leadership to counter the aggravation caused by the Aborigines.

However, the enthusiasm which typified the response to the Line deteriorated along with its decreasing chances of success as a result of insufficient planning, poor weather, sickness and challenging terrain, not to mention the fact that many of those involved were convicts and not there by choice. Ultimately, the line was a failure, managing to capture only two Aborigines, and was abandoned at the end of November. This failure, writes Clements, “cast a dark cloud over the frontier community”, which when accompanied by the continuing albeit fluctuating level of violence throughout 1831 meant that settler fears and anxieties remained constant, leading to a renewed desperation for drastic measures. On 13 June 1831 the Launceston Advertiser asked:

Are our columns never to be free from the details of murders and atrocities by the natives? Shall we never live to see the extinction of that vindictive feeling, which actuates these benighted savages?, Is there nothing which can be done

160 Colonial Times, 17 September 1830.
162 Hobart Town Courier, 25 September 1830; See also Colonial Times, 1 October 1830.
163 Hobart Town Courier, 25 September 1830.
either to pacify, quiet, exterminate, or capture the blacks? Is a colony of 20,000

Englishmen, to be kept continually in terror by a handful of naked savages?  

The previous month the same paper had already entertained various means of “exterminating the blacks”. At the end of August, the murder of Captain Thomas Bartholomew and his overseer in particular drew a fount of settler emotion. In general the continuation of violence bred a strong exterminationist sentiment among the public and the press, providing impetus to a growing consensus around the long-running idea that all Aborigines should be removed to an Island in Bass Strait. For all they knew, settlers thought they still faced a large and ferocious enemy.

But by this stage the drastically reduced numbers of the Oyster Bay and Big River played heavily into their decision to surrender to Robinson on 31 December 1831. Boyce goes as far to argue that whatever fears kept the white community captive, they were in reality fighting “a defeated enemy” by 1828, noting the 26 Aborigines Robinson met with in the New Year of 1832. This has led him to question the overall advantage that Aboriginal people possessed in frontier conflict, which he argues was only relevant during the well documented “guerrilla” stage of conflict between 1828 - 1831 Relying on evidence which suggests that most Aboriginal groups possessed a “full demographic” in 1824, and as late as 1827, along with a lack of any observable wide scale impact of disease, Boyce argues that “other explanations must be sought for the speed of the Aborigines’ demise”. Re-evaluating the number of Aborigines likely to have been massacred “when whole communities had been in the firing line”, otherwise discounted by twentieth century

166 Launceston Advertiser, 13 June 1831. See also Launceston Advertiser, 11 April 1831; Colonial Times, 1 June 1831; Colonial Times, 8 June 1831; Launceston Advertiser, 30 May 1831
167 Clements, The Black War, p. 165.
168 Clements, The Black War, p. 166.
169 Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, p. 141.
170 Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, pp. 196 – 197.
historiography, he ultimately attributes the sharp deterioration of Aboriginal demographic integrity to the guile and knowledge of Aboriginal movements possessed by the bushmen who led roving parties. This advantage combined with the increased vulnerability of Aboriginal communities with a full demographic, complemented by the young and the elderly. “Far from being an ineffectual force in the pursuit of Aborigines, as the roving parties have usually described,” he writes, “they soon killed, or broke up through sustained pursuit, the few remaining large groups of Aborigines still to be found in the settled districts.”\(^1^7^2\) In a sad twist of irony the difficulty that these parties faced in the latter phase of guerrilla warfare, dominated by Aboriginal groups unencumbered by the young and the elderly, was therefore mainly a factor of their earlier successes.\(^1^7^3\)

Ryan provides clear insight to the toll that both sides of the frontier suffered between 1828 and 1832, citing the 90 colonists killed during this phase of the war alongside 350 of the 500 remaining Aborigines of the tribes inhabiting the Settled Districts, 100 of whom being victims of mass killing of six or more, which included members of the Oyster Bay and Big River tribes.\(^1^7^4\) But with Boyce’s research in mind she is likewise convinced that the period before the declaration of martial law in 1828 requires more attention in order to understand the extent of demographic trauma suffered by Aboriginal people. Arguing that more Aborigines were killed between 1826 and 1828, Ryan speculates that Arthur “may have considered massacre, even though it failed, a necessary strategy to force a quick surrender” during this period.\(^1^7^5\)

Its evocation in the press notwithstanding, an official policy of “terror” is far less explicit during the Black War than similar conflicts in New South Wales where it was

\(^{172}\) Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, pp. 198 – 199.
\(^{174}\) Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines*, p. 141.
\(^{175}\) Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines*, pp. 143 – 144.
officially endorsed by a number of colonial administrators. This is perhaps surprising given Arthur’s willingness to resort to the public display of hanged men. Citing the 260 hangings he ordered during his term in office, Boyce writes that “Arthur knew that it was not dying, but the desecration of the body after death, that was the most dreaded punishment in the popular mind.” Yet there is no evidence that Arthur ordered the public display of Aborigines killed during the Black War as a means of evoking terror, and even killing as such was deemed appropriate only when necessary. As chapter 4 will demonstrate, there is much complexity in untangling Arthur’s actions and his humanitarianism. As Clements notes, he had little control over the more proximate triggers to the escalation of violence caused by the “behaviour of brutalised and sex-deprived convicts”, men ultimately “victims of their circumstances, assumptions, hatred, frustrations, fears and sadnesses.” The “appalling tragedy” of Van Diemen’s Land was a scenario in which the “traditional dichotomies of strong and weak, cowardly and courageous, victim and victimised simply do not stand up to scrutiny.” Van Diemen’s Land had become a place where “[p]ractically everyone saw themselves as the victims.”

This corresponds with Clements’ argument regarding the question of genocide. Citing a lack of clear “ideological impetus to exterminate” Aborigines, he argues that the claim of genocide obscures the intensity of the conflict which existed across the Van Diemen’s Land frontier. Evoking the Indigenous potential to commit genocide upon British settlers while at once labeling the prospect absurd, he argues that it was a mutual sense of self-preservation that drove frontier violence, not any perceived desire to exterminate on the grounds of race.

Similarly highlighting the anxieties which drove many settlers to acts of violence, Henry

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176 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 184.  
Reynolds is scathing of international genocide scholars for not recognizing the state of war that existed on the island between Europeans and Indigenous peoples, risking “the patronizing view” of passive Aboriginal victimhood.  

But as in the case of New South Wales, conclusions which attach such diffuse agency to the violent consequences of settler colonialism tend to obscure crucial frontier realities. With the consensus of Boyce and Ryan in mind, it seems far more pressing to search for a more concrete association between emotion and human agency given that decisions were made which ultimately led to the mass killing and dispossession of Van Diemen’s Land Aborigines. The connection between fear, white victimhood and the activation of settler colonialism’s “genocidal potential” is particularly pertinent to the settlement of Van Diemen’s Land.

At a pragmatic level, Ann Curthoys arrives at the conclusion that genocide did occur within this particular colony insofar as practices were perpetuated in knowledge of their destructive impact upon Aboriginal life and culture. On similar grounds, in a project seeking more to emphasise the genocidal culpability of successive British governments rather than their humanitarian rhetoric, Tom Lawson underlines that metropolitan and colonial actors did not explicitly evoke the elimination of Tasmania’s Indigenous population. But however benign the policies they adopted were, they “ultimately envisaged no future whatsoever for the original peoples of the island.”

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On top of these arguments is the crucial role that fear played in activating the destructive power of the settler state. It is one thing to say that the settlers of Van Diemen’s Land faced an existential crisis – they and many New South Wales settlers were convinced they did – but it is another thing entirely to overlook the emotional dialectic through which this sense of self-preservation became manifest in official policy. As shown in the case of New South Wales, it is this very tendency of settler societies to fall back upon fear and victimhood that leads to the subjective alignment of exterminatory sentiment with the objective genocidal trajectory of settler colonialism. This case for genocide in Van Diemen’s Land will ultimately become clearer in view of the actions of the central figure who is in fact best known for his kindness towards Aboriginal people. It is to George Augustus Robinson’s story that we now turn.

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Chapter 4: ‘An irresistible feeling of sympathy’: George Augustus Robinson and his
Friendly Mission, Van Diemen’s Land 1824 – 1831

By November 1831, George Augustus Robinson was nearing the completion of his task to conciliate the “hostile natives” unsettling the midlands of Van Diemen’s Land. As he so often did, Robinson turned to his diary: “No man can enter into my feelings. No man can know the intense anxiety of him whom providence has called upon to experience except he [who] personally undergoes the same, but then all men have not the same anxious feelings, are not all prompted by the same principles.”¹ Before making this entry Robinson’s “just indignation” had just been raised by the reluctance of his “sable companions” to proceed in their pursuit of the Big River and Oyster Bay people following a brief moment of respite on the trail. “I could no longer suppress my feelings at the careless and utter indifference manifested by these people”, he complained, furious with the “savage grin of satisfaction that sat on their countenances.”

Robinson’s extensive journals, which detail the course of his various conciliating expeditions across Van Diemen’s Land, are replete with similar expressions of feeling. As this chapter will demonstrate, it is by way of such sentiment that Robinson contested the emotional register typical of the colonial press and the settler community at the time, characterized by fear and white victimhood, in Van Diemen’s Land and New South Wales. Robinson was a participant in an elite colonial discourse which sought to reconcile the injustices and brutality of settler colonialism, ever-present in both colonies, but gaining more and more political purchase across the British imperial world at the beginning of the 1830s. As both a contributor and a beneficiary of this discursive rupture, through emotion Robinson

self-consciously posed a subjectivity which clashed with the growing sense of white victimhood. This insight allows a response to recent calls to re-evaluate Robinson’s place within Australian colonial history. By interrogating the emotional turmoil that accompanied his controversial role in the administrative response to frontier violence in Van Diemen’s Land, it will be shown that Robinson was motivated by far more than the wealth and fame that nonetheless still drove him throughout his Friendly Missions. Both he and Lieutenant Governor George Arthur were incipient agents in a humanitarian movement that sought to change the trajectory and practice of settler colonialism. It is with no little tragic irony, however, that this shift in colonial policy only makes the case for genocide in Van Diemen’s Land more compelling.

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At the beginning of his new role as conciliator in May 1829, Robinson observed that “in point of intellectual advancement the aborigines of this colony rank very low in the savage creation”. At once he drew attention to the “many amicable points which glitter like sunbeams through the shroud of darkness by which they are enveloped”. It was this potential which “operated most powerfully in calling forth from the discriminating and philanthropic observer an irresistible feeling of sympathy on their behalf and an urgent desire to employ those means which the God of all has vested in him for the cause of humanity, the mollifying of their condition and the subservience of their general interest welfare.”

In applying for what was essentially a stock keeper’s role on Bruny Island, a job which in the end entailed trekking across much of Van Diemen’s Land, Robinson was responding to Lieutenant Governor George Arthur’s own “anxious desire to ameliorate the

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Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 80.
condition of the aboriginal inhabitants”. As shown in chapter 3, reconciling Arthur’s humanitarianism is difficult in view of the polices he authorized which explicitly targeted Aboriginal people as open enemies, a response to the growing settler unease. Nor was the security of the white community absent in Robinson’s understanding of the role he made his own. In a later reflection upon what drove him to apply for this position, Robinson clearly evinced an awareness of the role as not just protecting Aboriginal people but also settlers.

Critical of the more coercive measures to quiet the frontier, Robinson decried the terror that spread throughout the colony, regretting the abandonment of farms: “the reports were of the most painful and heartrending description, and yet nothing apparently could be done to stay these sanguinary proceedings.” With the benefit of hindsight Robinson could justify his application for the job on Bruny Island on the grounds that “justice was to be dealt out equally between two races and a kindly feeling cultivated and friendly relations established.”

Like many of his contemporaries in both New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, Robinson’s hope of racial harmony fit squarely within the bounds of a discourse which attributed the shortcomings of colonisation to the portions of British society sadly lacking in human feeling. In understanding the “bloodthirsty temper amongst the aborigines” one had to consider “that this colony had imported the joint depravity of the three united kingdoms, men in whom common feelings of humanity are deadened and the voice of reason suppressed by the machinations of sin”. Robinson explained Aboriginal violence in view of circumstances “too well known to be adverted to”, a vague expression referring to the events of Risdon Cove in 1803: “it is very certain that the natives to this very hour foster in their minds a remembrance of this wanton massacre of their fellow beings, and are anxious to atone for this

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3 Hobart Town Gazette, 7 march 1829.
4 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 52.
5 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 53.
aggression by the blood of their enemies.’” In the autumn of 1830 he was nonetheless compelled to intone an impassioned plea for understanding:

O God, what has filled these poor unoffending people with such dire apprehensions! Can I imagine for a moment that the white man, my fellow man, has murdered their countrymen, their kindred and their friends, has violated their daughters…Yes, it is only too true. Regardless of all laws, human or divine, they have imbued their hands in the blood of these poor unoffending people.  

Robinson was later confounded by the anxiety he felt in the apparent lack of appreciation extended by his new charges. To be begin with, ameliorating the Indigenous “thirst for revenge” was a matter of emotional management:

It will be necessary not only to eradicate these rancorous and malignant impressions and that fell inveteracy which they fasten against their Christian fellow beings, but to substitute in their place feelings of sorrow and remorse for their past barbarities, and a new appreciation of those blessings conferred upon them through the medium of their persecuted Christian deliverers.  

And it was the very same righteous energy which allowed him to elide any fear of Aboriginal people. As we have seen, fear and alarm had come to pervade the settled districts of Van Diemen’s Land, spreading to the colonial center with the help of the Hobart press.

Robinson was also aware of the fear that could generate between specific Aboriginal groups across the island. Of the fewer than twenty Aboriginal people on Bruny Island were members of the Port Davey tribe, one of whom shared with Robinson her knowledge that this

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7 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 87.  
8 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 155.  
9 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 81.
group had played a central role in the attacks upon settlers and their property. With this information at hand, and on account of the high death rate on Bruny Island rate the settlement was abandoned at the end of 1829. Following several months in Hobart, by April 1830 the Friendly Mission was in pursuit of the Port Davey tribe on the mainland in April 1830. Robinson observed:

my natives had become much alarmed, having as they thought saw where the natives had sharpened their spears. In fact they [were] more frightened of the natives then any of the white men. Certainly, from the reports which had been circulated respecting the natives upon this coast, much might be feared.

But Robinson paid little to attention to such “flying reports” as far as his own personal safety was concerned.

Combining his passion for the task at hand and his belief in its divine providence, on 17 October Robinson wrote, “[m]y heart’s desire is to get to the natives, and that they may ultimately be saved. Situated as I now am, away from all assistance, how easy would it be for any number of natives to annihilate me and my little band of Aborigines. In God is all my trust and I know no fear.” Robinson’s companions were again alarmed when contact was made with an Aboriginal group on the north east coast in November 1830, fearing they would all be speared. Robinson reflected that “a larger body of natives might be at hand and come down upon us, but fear was not an occupant of my breast. I knew God would deliver me from

11 Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 33.
12 Rae Ellis emphasises Robinson’s reliance upon his Aboriginal captives as emissaries, including Trucanninni, making site of campfires and initiating contact with groups targeted for conciliation. See Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 33.
13 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 150. See also Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 37: Robinson was the first European to travel overland to Port Davey on the west coast of VDL.
14 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 262.
danger and he who had hitherto crowned my labours with such abundant success would not suffer me to perish if my trust was wholly placed in him.”15

Without discounting the depth of Robinson’s hope in God’s will, on a more pragmatic level his lack of fear can also be explained by the fact that by the stage the Friendly Mission had embarked upon its expedition to the north-east of Van Diemen’s Land no genuine threat had presented itself. Following his encounter with the Port Davey tribe Robinson led the Friendly Mission to the north-west, covering the territory of the Van Diemen’s Land Company and arriving in George Town on 1 October 1830. As Vivienne Rae-Ellis remarks, for the duration of a nine-month journey which skirted the western coast of the Island for 1000 kilometres, “not a shot had been fired in anger, and not one of the party had been injured”.16

Robinson’s ability to disarm any fear for those he pursued did not, however, extend to the white community. In attempting to convince a group on the expedition to the north-east to accompany him he in fact posed the threat of soldiers quite explicitly: “I had told them previously such a story of the soldiers killing the blacks that they would not stop on any account and all said they would accompany me.”17 A form of emotional blackmail to be sure but a genuine and not unfounded concern, one that Robinson felt for himself as well. Eagerly making way to a boat which would take the mission to what would become the new native settlement on Swan Island, Robinson heard what he thought to be the sound of a fallen trees, which “the natives said was a musket”. Complementing his companion’s anxiety Robinson took alarm, envisioning that he “should be shot…and anxious to get back before the soldiers

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15 Plomley, Friendly Mission, p. 262.
16 Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 59.
had killed all the natives.” 18 Of the 23 Aboriginal people residing on the island at the end of 1830 was Mannalargenna, a key figure throughout Robinson’s expeditions.19

Robinson’s anxiety in securing his new captives on the boat to this new location suggest how far he had come to identify with the growing number of Friendly Mission Aborigines. Often this identification with the Aboriginal imaginary occurred quite explicitly by way of emotion. Returning to Swan Island from Cape Barren Island on 15 November 1830, Robinson writes,

Bullrub was informed that one of her brothers had been killed, and that one of the natives shot to the southward of Georges River was her brother. This information was the occasion of general lamentation and there was not one aborigine but wept bitterly. My feelings [were] overcome. I could not suppress them: the involuntary lachryma burst forth and I sorrowed for them. Poor unbefriended and hopeless people. I imagined myself an aborigine.20

For those who accompanied Robinson on a further voyage between Hobart and Swan Island on 14 March 1831, being reunited with their companions was a “truly affecting” moment. “The scene was too much for me”, wrote Robinson, “and I turned away to suppress the involuntary lachryma. I saw I entered into the feelings of these poor people in a way that those unacquainted with their character could not possibly imagine.”21

Considering the recent consensus regarding the cultural relativity of emotional expression, here Robinson is making quite a remarkable claim. He is suggesting that the intimacy he shared with those he gathered on Swan Island rendered a form of emotional

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18 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 263.
19 Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 64
21 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 323.
literacy quite specific to his own experience. There is no doubting the sincerity of Robinson’s feelings toward his captives, and perhaps the Aboriginal population of Van Diemen’s Land more broadly. His experience was certainly unique among the island’s white population, and we should not presume that the apparent incongruence of emotional norms formed in specific cultural contexts will always preclude the genuine sharing of feeling. Such stricture renders particularly shallow expectations for the possibility of critically engaging emotions across cultures, of negotiating emotion as a broader human phenomenon.22

It is another thing entirely to conflate one’s feelings across the frontier as Robinson does when he so closely identifies with his captives. In doing so he risked blurring the imbalance of agency inherent to colonial encounters, particularly a scenario in which one man is so self-consciously taking complete responsibility for the survival of an entire people. In any event there is no direct empirical evidence available to us today by which such a claim could be upheld. We will never know exactly how Robinson, or any other historical figure for that matter, actually felt. What is more available to our interrogation is the discursive quality of emotion through text, and how its expression is involved in the negotiation of identity in various scenarios and disparate social spaces.

Just as emotion was a central vector by which settlers were negotiating their subjectivity, so it was for Robinson. Just as those who had previously decried the mistreatment of Aboriginal people, Robinson could not of course remove himself from the process of dispossession. Like those who perpetuated an ostensibly humanitarian narrative regarding the colonisation of Australia, on this particular occasion Robinson’s critique of colonisation was strictly qualified, gliding over elite culpability in the violence caused by dispossession and placing it at the feet of the certain colonial agents. Reiterating chivalric

discourse Robinson once again complained, “We have imported into this land, which as some people have said flows with milk and honey, the wickedness of three kingdoms. These miscreants have committed dire atrocities upon these poor hopeless creatures and have maligned their character to the greatest extent.”\textsuperscript{23} But however Robinson may have scapegoated convicts, through such discourse he became a participant in the antipodal expression of emotion which ultimately contested the feelings held by many settlers towards Aboriginal people.

This challenge went hand in hand with the unique insights he offered regarding the emotional state of the Friendly Mission Aborigines. On 17 November 1830 their concern again radiated from a story told by an Aboriginal woman recently arrived to the Swan Island settlement that a “boat had gone to Launceston to bring soldiers to shoot them”, an impression given by the sealers with whom she had contact. On 30 December a woman named Walyer threw “the whole of the natives into a state of alarm by telling them the white people intended shooting them, women and all.” That Robinson sought to keep this woman apart is curious given his own use of such stories as encouragement to join his party. But more than anything it speaks to the valence that emotion had in negotiating frontier encounters. It suited Robinson to exploit the emotions of those he wished to recruit by raising the specter of soldiers marching to kill them, but such stories were of little value once he had them gathered in one place. Little group cohesion could be gained by the perpetuation of alarm.

Robinson was engaged in a task that made a necessity of emotional manipulation. Just as many of his contemporaries had done, Robinson mobilised fear as a strategy to negotiate the difficulties emerging from frontier spaces. Whereas many New South Wales governors

\textsuperscript{23} Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, p. 276.
were quite explicit in their hope “striking terror” in the hearts of Aboriginal people, however, Robinson hoped more to exploit the white propensity for violence already active in the minds of his captives. Nevertheless, the fact that fear featured at all in the course of Robinson’s conciliation of Van Diemen’s Land Aborigines only consolidates the argument that it played a crucial role in allowing the progress of white settlement. We must also consider Robinson’s mobilization of fear as a mark of the urgency he felt was required to render the safety of his captives. At this particular moment this undoubtedly sprang from a genuine regard for the general and emotional welfare of those now gathered on Swan Island. Overarching all of these factors was Robinson’s clear attempt to shape an identity which opposed the dominant emotional sensibility characteristic of the settler community.

What this meant for his standing among other colonists varied. On 26 August 1830 the *Hobart Town Courier* was all praise for Robinson’s expedition from Port Davey to the north-west, emphasizing the “most friendly” intercourse he had with many tribes. This coincided with Arthur’s ongoing favor for conciliation, urging settlers to take a “friendly approach” to the Aborigines in a government notice on 21 August. Heightened frontier violence eventually convinced the Executive Council to qualify the need for conciliation in favor of settlers so long as they didn’t attack any inoffensive tribes. Settlers were indeed remiss with any rhetoric which encouraged less severe methods of frontier conduct, a sentiment acutely demonstrated by the group of settlers from Jericho who penned a memorial on 24 August citing their “inexpressible alarm” at Arthur’s government order, a document

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24 *Hobart Town Courier*, 26 August 1830.
25 Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson*, p. 60.
26 Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson*, p. 60.
considered by the Executive Council before it agreed to full-scale military action in the form of the Black Line.27

Robinson held strong doubts of the Line’s potential for success. On 23 November, drawing on his extensive knowledge of Van Diemen’s Land, he asked the question in his diary: “if the lines are to be so close that a native can’t get out, what way will they get rid of the lagoons, the rivers, the tea-tree swamps, the impervious forest through which a native will pass, the fallen timber, the craggy [precipice] along which the natives can crawl, the deep gullies and ravines?”28 More so than Arthur at this stage Robinson also registered the Line’s moral illegitimacy, which only reinforced the urgency that accompanied his task and goes some way in explaining his play upon Aboriginal emotion. The danger they faced from settlers was after all real, even more so in the context of the Black Line. Robinson’s anxiety was further excited when the Friendly Mission arrived in Launceston from George Town on 2 October. As he wrote to his wife in Hobart, the town was thoroughly enamored of the idea of “extirpating the original inhabitants”, and he found it difficult insulating his captives from this aggression.29

A further example of the sincerity of Robinson’s emotional commitment to Aboriginal protection, examining what otherwise motivated his enthusiasm for the Friendly Mission is a key site of historiographical debate. Well after the failure of the Line, Robinson arrived in Hobart on 17 January 1831 and met with Arthur two days later who spoke of rewarding him with “pecuniary compensation”, being so pleased with the Friendly Mission’s progress.30 For his success in securing the Aborigines then on Swan Island, numbering thirty-three, Robinson was awarded “the largest possible grant of land, 1035 hectares, plus an

27 Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, p. 130.
29 Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 61.
30 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 316.
increase in salary to 250 pounds (backdated to his appointment in 1829) and a gratuity of 100 pounds.”\textsuperscript{31} He was also able to leverage his success as a means of increasing his credibility as an authority on Aboriginal affairs, as demonstrated by his negotiations with the Aborigines Committee to ensure the relocation of the Aboriginal establishment to Gun Carriage Island and remove the roving parties, which he saw as “exceedingly expensive and useless.”\textsuperscript{32}

The Executive Council supported these two recommendations but had difficulty agreeing upon the Aborigines Committee’s suggested method of relocating those already recruited by the Friendly Mission, which amounted to forced and permanent deportation. Chief Justice Pedder in particular recognised the injustice of this recommendation, notwithstanding Robinson’s assurance that the people concerned would abandon their territory voluntarily.\textsuperscript{33} Robinson’s assurance in itself involved a high degree of deceit. In James Boyce’s reckoning, there was a reason that Robinson travelled alone to Hobart and not with Mannalargenna, despite the Oyster Bay chief’s request to accompany him: “Robinson knew Mannalargenna to be an articulate and charismatic leader whose evidence would both contradict his own account of the circumstances of the Swan Island removal” along with any assurance that there would be no general objection to being removed to an Island in the Bass strait.\textsuperscript{34} There is thus much to rue from the missed opportunity for Pedder and Mannalargenna to meet. The policy, which was decided in March 1831, in essence announced Arthur’s support for the removal of hostile Aborigines and abandonment of any hope for a treaty.\textsuperscript{35}

The presentation of this decision to London was made with the assertion that Robinson had offered the option of taking the food and protection of the government or maintain peaceful

\textsuperscript{31} Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{32} Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, p. 317; Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{33} Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, p. 281 – 282
\textsuperscript{34} Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, p. 284.
\textsuperscript{35} Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, p. 284.
relations with settlers, even though Robinson indicated he had never made such an offer. This involved both men in a “web of deceit”.  

In August 1831, much to Mannalargenna’s delight, Robinson explained to the Mission Aborigines that he had been

commissioned by the Governor to inform them that, if the natives would desist from their wonted outrages upon the whites, they would be allowed to remain in their respective districts and would have flour, tea and sugar, clothes etc given them; that a good white man would dwell with them who would take care of them and would not allow any bad white man to shoot them, and he would go with them about the bush like myself and they could hunt.

Following this declaration Arthur was immediately informed that such a deal had been struck. As Boyce points out, “Robinson must have been well aware that the agreement he had reached with Mannalargenna contradicted his own undertakings to the Aborigines Committee and the executive council”. Nor could Arthur have been under any illusion “that an agreement had been reached for the Aborigines to leave the main island of Van Diemen’s Land voluntarily.” As Rae-Ellis similarly speculates, “Robinson knew that the nomads would have to be contained geographically before they could be controlled”. As such he must have been convinced that deportation was the only real option that would ensure the safety of the Aborigines.

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36 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 285
37 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 287.
40 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 287.
41 Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson*, p. 70.
On top of his deceitful involvement as an authority on Aboriginal affairs, it is ultimately the substantial material benefits Robinson accrued from his work which leave him open to the interpretation that the creation of wealth and social mobility were what ultimately drove him. Although Robinson’s concern over the Line was moral, he may have also seen the maneuver as a threat to his role as conciliator, its potential success undermining a project for which he saw himself uniquely suited. Moreover, Robinson used the presence of the Line to coax his new captives to Swan Island, an exercise that was otherwise conducted with their potential value in reward money in mind.\textsuperscript{42} When Arthur announced the so called ‘bounty five’ in February 1830, Robinson thought himself best suited to take advantage of this arrangement but was unsuccessful in doing so during his expedition in the northwest shortly after the policy was announced.\textsuperscript{43} He had in fact sent four prisoners to Launceston only for them to be released, leaving him with no grounds for reward.

This remunerative potential of the Friendly Mission is the basis of Rae-Ellis’ stinging critique of Robinson’s character. Rather than a man genuinely invested in the welfare of the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land, what emerges from this representation is an opportunist, perhaps even a fraud. Alongside his belief that he was the one person who could gain the confidence of the Island’s Aboriginal people, something that led him to frequent rivalry with other conciliators such as Gilbert Robinson and John Batman, Rae-Ellis quite remarkably attributes Robinson’s success to his “latent skill as a mesmerist”.\textsuperscript{44} This claim rests awkwardly upon Robinson’s later interest in this mystic practice which developed from his attendance at a public lecture in 1850.\textsuperscript{45} More plausibly, beyond “drawing on any occult powers he might have possessed”, Rae-Ellis cites his uncommon acceptance of and

\textsuperscript{42} Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{43} Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{44} Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{45} Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 27.
participation in Aboriginal customs along with a cheerful and affable aspect. ⁴⁶ To gain the confidence of his intended captives Robinson quite openly “went to work on their feelings”, to use his own words. ⁴⁷ This conscious admission of emotional manipulation accords with Robinson’s mobilization of fear to ensure the protection of the Friendly Mission recruits. But it also indicates how feelings operated between himself and the Aborigines of the colony, demonstrating the relationship between his personal investment in their safety and how he positioned his emotions practically and discursively in opposition to the majority of settlers.

The coercive strategies Robinson deployed to settle Aborigines on Swan Island and his conduct during the Friendly Mission more broadly should never go unremarked, but this must always be balanced with the depth of feeling he demonstrated towards Aborigines. Disembarking his captive Aborigines at Swan Island on 14 March 1831 from Hobart, by way of Maria Island, Robinson reported a “truly affecting” reunion:

A mother meeting with her son to others with their acquaintance and members of their own tribe. The scene was too much for me and I turned away to suppress the involuntary lachryma. I saw and entered into the feelings of these poor people in a way that those unacquainted with their character could not possibly imagine. ⁴⁸

Following the Executive Council’s approval of the Aborigines Committee’s recommendations in February, Swan Island remained the site of such reunion for but a few days before the Aboriginal settlement was temporarily moved to Preservation Island before

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⁴⁶ Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 28.
⁴⁷ Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 28.
⁴⁸ Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 323.
being more permanently established on Gun Carriage Island. The settlement was moved a final time to Flinders Island (Great Island) in June 1831 at Robinson’s recommendation.

Beginning to show signs of disaffection for the work of the Friendly Mission during 1831, demonstrated by his frustration with his followers’ intransigence while in pursuit of the Big River tribe towards the end of the year, Robinson embarked upon an expedition across the north of the Island in June and August. This resulted in the capture of more Aborigines around Anderson’s Bay. But it was the pursuit of the Big River tribe beginning on 21 October that seemed to create the most anxiety for Robinson. His agitation by this stage may have also stemmed from the need to negotiate between Arthur and other conciliators at a meeting at the beginning of October, particularly Batman, regarding the best way to conduct affairs. According to Rae-Ellis, “by deft maneuvers throughout 1831 Robinson had overthrown all potential competitors and his position as supreme authority on Aboriginal affairs was secure.” Robinson could take some heart from Arthur’s obvious favor, just as he could in September when the success of the Friendly Mission so far generated astonishment among the people of Georgetown.

As had been the case on previous expeditions, Robinson’s main concern at this stage was the threat posed by the white inhabitants to the Friendly Mission Aborigines. Time and again during the expedition in search of the Big River tribe around the Ouse district, Robinson expressed his anxiety over the proximity of so many settlers: “were the white people to see us the whole country would be in alarm and parties would be sent out and we

50 Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson*, p. 74.
51 Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson*, p. 75.
52 Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson*, p. 77.
53 Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson*, p. 77.
should be in danger of being shot.” 55 As with previous occasions Robinson was particularly wary of stockkeepers, “as the practice of this class of individuals is to come upon [Aborigines] and to fire at them – a similar practice to the blacks in their attacks upon the whites”. 56 The presence of this menace allowed Robinson to maintain the expedition’s momentum, cautioning his natives on 23 October that “if the whites saw them they would be shot.” 57 On this particular occasion his Aboriginal companions met Robinson’s concern with a laconic rejoinder, “that they could see the whites first and that they could not always shoot straight.” 58

The pursuit of the Big River tribe in particular indeed seemed to blanket whatever fears settlers evoked in the minds of his companions. As Robinson recorded on 27 October Mannalargenna told him “that the Big River tribe and Oyster Bay tribe together would spear us, blacks and whites together, and that I ought not to have sent away the guns”. Once again Robinson drew upon the providence of the Mission, consoling Mannalargenna by saying that there was enough of us and that I did not care how they come so long as they would come, that I was not frightened of them, that God had hither to protected me and would continue to do so, that since the commencement of my labours there had been no sickness amongst any of my people nor had had there been any accident. 59

Not entirely removed from the “great danger… to be apprehend from the hostile natives”, travelling through the settled districts meant largely one thing for Robinson,

58 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 490.
the danger to be apprehended was from the white people, as their usual practice
of attacking the natives was heretofore at night and firing upon them at their
encampment…if they were to hear or see my natives and not observe me or my
son [George Jnr.] and the other white men…they might attack us at our
encampment and surrounding us fire upon us and destroy us all.60

It is through such expressions that Robinson drew his emotions further and further
from those of the general white community, while of course maintaining his complicity in the
process of dispossession. Yet however Robinson may have imagined his emotions as aligning
with those of the Friendly Mission Aborigines in particular, it is unsurprising that their
expression of emotion remained distinct. As Nicholas Clements remarks of the emotional
climate of Van Diemen’s Land at this time, while fear was a clear common denominator
among settlers “for the Aborigines, emotions such as anger, despair and sadness were equally
salient.”61 There is an “abundance of evidence attesting to the Tasmanians’ emotionality”, he
writes.62 Often drawing upon Robinson’s diaries, juxtaposing the emotions of settlers and
Aborigines is one of many contributions Clements has made to the more nuanced
understanding of Australian frontier relations in the post-History War world. And other than
calibrating Robinson’s emotions relative to those of settlers, this is indeed an insight Friendly
Mission provides. As John Connor has noted, Robinson’s observations are of particular value
to military historians, vital for constructing “the face of the battle.”63 There is little reason to
doubt that fear played a significant role in the lives of Van Diemen’s Land Aborigines, both
towards settlers and other Aboriginal tribes, given the violence that had come to characterize

60 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 501. George Jnr’s first direct involvement in the Friendly Mission began in
1831.
63 John Connor, ‘Recording the Human Face of War: Robinson and Frontier Conflict’, in Anna Johnson and
Mitchell Rolls eds., Reading Robinson: Companion Essays to the Friendly Mission (Hobart: Quinto Publishing,
the colony during the 1820s. But a sense of grief and sadness on the part of the Friendly Mission Aborigines become the most vivid expressions of emotion in Robinson’s diaries over time. On arriving at a camp on 25 October 1831, writes Robinson,

the female guide pointed out the embers of a fire and where she said her and her tribe has enjoyed a little hilarity by dancing…On beholding this spot again the woman evinced much feeling and all the circumstances connected with burst on her mind and with which she agreeably entertained her sable friends.\textsuperscript{64}

On 6 November 1831, after hearing of the murder of a Bruny Island Aborigine named ‘Boomer Jack’ from Captain Clark, Robinson writes that the Aborigines accompanying the Mission of the same tribe “were much affected whilst the melancholy tale was told.”\textsuperscript{65} On the same day Robinson recorded the story of a woman from the Big River tribe travelling with the Mission which purported a rare piece of evidence suggesting that dead Aborigines were being hung from trees, but it is unclear whether this resulted from settler violence. Either way, the circulation of such stories can only have added to the dread being felt by the Friendly Mission.\textsuperscript{66} In recognizing the tracks of her brother, one of the Mission women was brought to tears. “They have strong natural affections”, observed Robinson, “especially for those who are related to them by ties of consanguinity.”\textsuperscript{67} Moments of such poignant grief and longing must have been shared on many occasions as the Friendly Mission journeyed across Van Diemen’s Land, perhaps countless times beyond Robinson’s observation. But this doesn’t render accounts such as the ones above any less valuable to our understanding of the emotional experience of the Friendly Mission Aborigines.

\textsuperscript{64} Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, p. 492.  
\textsuperscript{65} Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, pp. 504, 506. While staying with Clark at his property near Oatlands, Robinson was also acquainted by the Captain with the existence of a hut built for “the purpose of entrapping the natives. It was so constructed that when the natives got in, a large door let down in a groove and fastened by a spring, so that the natives could not get out. Bags of flour was paled around, fastened with chains, to allure the natives.”  
\textsuperscript{66} Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, p. 506.  
\textsuperscript{67} Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, p. 517.
Just as enlightening are Robinson’s general beliefs as to the emotions which drove Aboriginal violence, what hopes they held of defeating their frontier enemies:

They do not suppose they can extirpate the white inhabitants. They entertain no such idea. No! they are actuated solely by revenge, revenge to the whites for the dire enormities that had been perpetrated upon their progenitors. They bear a deadly animosity to the white inhabitants on this account, and there is scarcely one among them but what has some monstrous cruelty to relate which had been committed upon some of their kindred or nation or people.68

Settlers, servants and soldiers alike appear in tandem as perpetrators in the various accounts Robinson provides in support of this explanation. Otherwise perhaps drawing too closely upon the myth that frontier violence in Van Diemen’s Land was a direct consequence of events at Risdon Cove in 1803, what nonetheless emanates from Robinson’s diaries is an easily conceived impression of a collection of communities at once driven and paralyzed by the grief and anger generated by years of suffering.

Two days before sight was made of smoke emanating from a Big River tribe camp fire, Robinson again recorded his anxiety, eliciting a sense of the burden the Mission had become:

None but those engaged knows the difficulty and great anxiety at the conducting of this enterprise and I pray God I may be enabled soon to succeed in meeting these people, so that I may retire to my family and remain in quiet, for I am now spending not only my strength and constitution but also domestic comfort and

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68 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 553.
peace of mind; and many of the settlers are people not deserving of any more exposing and perhaps sacrificing my life.69

This of course only partially framed the Mission’s motive, and more than anything reiterated his disdain for much of the white population. “Tonight my heart is intent on meeting the natives. God grant it may be soon”, he anguished.70 On the night of 10 November smoke was at last sighted of the Big River tribe’s camp, yet the pleasure Robinson felt on such occasion was mingled with hope and fear, “hoping that I might get to see them and fearful lest I should not.”71 Coming so close to his target only seemed to exacerbate Robinson’s frayed nerves, building the expectation that if he failed no one could bring tranquility to the colony:

No reward can recompense for the great anxiety and privations of every kind that I am called to endure. All my exertions, all my anxieties, hardships and dangers will be estimated as nothing if I succeed not. If we succeed we raise envy, and if we raise envy we are sure to incur censure. I may sow the seed and there are not a few who would readily and greedily gather in the harvest.72

It was not until 31 December that contact was eventually made with the group at Bashan plains, north of Lake Echo, consisting in members of both the Big River and Oyster Bay tribes. The joint party numbered 16 men, nine women and one child and were led by Montpelliat and Tongerlongter.73

As Brian Plomley notes, this encounter is not recorded in Robinson’s journal but only in his official report of 25 January 1832 in which he emphasised the considerable fear his Aboriginal companions evinced towards a people “whom they deemed the most savage of all

69 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 509.
70 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 509.
72 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 519.
73 Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 79 – 80.
the [A]boriginal tribes and by whom they said they would be surely murdered.” So alarmed was Mannalargenna that he defected from the Mission, promising not to return until they were under Robinson’s control. Reliant upon his Aboriginal conciliators as he was, this almost defeated Robinson’s “hope that the time would soon arrive when this arduous and harassing undertaking would be terminated.” Yet so it was, with the chiefs explaining to Robinson the genesis of their attacks upon settlers, “that they and their forefathers had been cruelly abused, that their country had been taken away from them, their wives and daughters had been violated and taken away, and that they had experienced a multitude of wrongs from a variety of sources.” In spite of this animosity, Robinson records their willingness to “accept the offers of the government” placing themselves under the protection of the Friendly Mission. “Tranquility is therefore (through the blessing of the Almighty) restored to the colony”, declared Robinson, “and the people are treated as human beings ought to be treated. No restraint in any way has been placed upon them since they have been with me.”

The arrival of Robinson’s party in Hobart Town on 7 January was indeed well met, his name spreading across town. A government notice praising his achievement, emphasizing faith in his belief “that there are no hostile natives remaining in the settled districts”.

As the Hobart Town Courier reported,

On Saturday Mr Robinson…made his triumphant entry into town with his party of blacks, amounting in all to 40, including 14 of his former domesticated companions, with the 26 of which the Oyster Bay and Big River Mobs were composed. They walked very leisurely along the road, followed by a pack of

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74 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 570 – 571.
75 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 570 – 571.
76 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 570 – 571.
77 Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 572.
78 Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 79 – 80; Robinson, Friendly Mission, p. 573.
dogs, and were received by the inhabitants on their entry with curiosity and
delight.\textsuperscript{79}

As Clements remarks, on top of “curiosity and delight”, many settlers were astonished
that such an “unimpressive remnant could have generated so much fear.”\textsuperscript{80} In his report
Robinson wrote that he had promised the Big River and Oyster Bay people “a conference
with the Lieutenant Governor…that the Governor will be sure to redress all their grievances”,
insisting “they cannot and ought not to be treated as captives.”\textsuperscript{81} After this meeting, the
\textit{Hobart Town Courier} reported that the newly conciliated Aborigines were delighted at the
idea of proceeding to Great island, where they will enjoy peace and plenty uninterrupted.”\textsuperscript{82}
More importantly,

The removal of these blacks will be of essential benefit both to themselves and
the colony. The large tracts of pasture that have so long been deserted owing to
their murderous attacks on the shepherds and the stockhuts, will now be available,
and a very sensible relief will be afforded to the flocks of sheep that had been
withdrawn from them and pent up on inadequate ranges of pasture – a
circumstance which indeed had tended to materially impoverish the flocks, and
keep up the price of butcher’s meat.\textsuperscript{83}

This expression of hope more or less captures Robinson’s achievement, given the economic
growth and sense of ease that accompanied the knowledge that by October 1833 only one
Aboriginal tribe remained to be brought in by the Friendly Mission, and their territory was in

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Hobart Town Courier}, 14 January 1832 in Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, p. 573.
\textsuperscript{80} Clements, \textit{The Black War}, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{81} Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, p. 572.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Hobart Town Courier}, 14 January 1832 in Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, p. 573.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Hobart Town Courier}, 14 January 1832 in Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, p. 573.
the relatively remote north-west.\textsuperscript{84} The Aboriginal menace immediately ceased to preoccupy both the press and private correspondence.\textsuperscript{85}

Despite the public regard building around him, there were nonetheless tensions emerging from apparent discrepancies in accounts of Robinson’s seizure of the Big River and Oyster Bay tribes. Plomley raises his concern that the location Robinson provides in his report dealing with the matter is “too vague and inaccurate”.\textsuperscript{86} Other than Arthur’s puzzlement at how Robinson actually succeeded, Rae-Ellis points to the incongruence between the heroism that the conciliator attached to his achievement, particularly in the absence of Mannalargenna, and the peaceful manner in which he purported to bring in the two tribes.\textsuperscript{87} Nor is there any evidence that Arthur honestly took on board any of their grievances when he met them in front of Government House, merely reporting to London their agreement to travel to Flinders Island.\textsuperscript{88} As Tom Lawson writes, “there is no evidence to suggest that the Aborigines agreed to the extraordinary, and surely almost inexplicable, notion of a permanent exile to a Bass Strait Island.”\textsuperscript{89}

This point is mirrored in Boyce’s analysis, which also suggests a similar lack of transparency involved in the meeting Robinson facilitated between Arthur and Mannalargenna in October 1830 at Launceston.\textsuperscript{90} No minutes at the October meeting were taken, but as Boyce writes, following it “the Aborigines clearly believed that Mannalargenna’s original agreement with Robinson had been endorsed, and that its terms would be fulfilled once the most feared enemy of all…had been conciliated.”\textsuperscript{91} At all events,

\textsuperscript{84} Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{85} Clements, \textit{The Black War}, p. 169
\textsuperscript{86} Robinson, \textit{Friendly Mission}, p. 572.
\textsuperscript{87} Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{88} Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{89} Tom Lawson, \textit{The Last Man}, p. 293 [emphasis in original]
\textsuperscript{90} Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, pp. 288 – 293.
\textsuperscript{91} Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, p. 290.
it is unlikely that Arthur would have approached this meeting with anything like good faith as far as the basis of voluntary removal were concerned. With a peak in violence in August 1831, particularly the death of Captain Bartholomew Thomas near Port Sorell, the government and the press were reconciled as to the impossibility of settlers and Aborigines co-existing on the mainland. In spite of the relatively low settler death toll during 1831, and the quiet spring which followed Thomas’ death, by the time Arthur met with Mannalargenna and others at Launceston he was committed to the forced and permanent removal of the Aborigines of Van Diemen’s Land. This ossification was in spite of the continuous impression given to the colonial office that voluntary removal was being offered to the conciliated Aborigines. As Boyce puts it, “voluntary removal had become a charade maintained for the sake of imperial sensitivities.”

Despite the minimal danger posed by the western tribes, bringing them in became Arthur’s next priority. And as Plomley writes, “Robinson was in a good bargaining position and could demand any terms within reason.” Initially being offered only 100 pounds to continue the Mission, the terms eventually agreed to were an immediate gratuity of 400 pounds and 700 pounds upon the capture of the remaining Aboriginal population. Plomley marks this point as the beginning of Robinson’s “moral decline”: “the original selfless spirit which had prompted him to devote his energies to the amelioration of the aborigines was to become more and more obscured by thoughts of benefits to himself.”

Placing this as the source of Robinson’s inspiration much earlier, Rae-Ellis argues that the seven hundred pounds resting on the heads of the remaining Aboriginal population

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93 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 290.
95 Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson*, pp. 5 – 86.
only made him more systematic in his approach, more willing to use the force of arms as a method of persuasion. In an expedition to the north-west in 1832 lasting nine months, the only one in which Robinson’s life was seriously threatened, 30 Aborigines were transported to Flinders Island.\(^{97}\) In 1833, the Aborigines captured on the west coast were kept at Macquarie Island, an establishment which exposed them to the mistreatment of convicts and overall greatly increased their rate of attrition.\(^ {98}\) As with all other previous sites of detention, it was not until the casualty rate was more than 75 per cent that the decision was made to remove them to Flinders Island, eventually taking place in November 1833.\(^ {99}\) While Robinson recognised the imperative of this move as a means of saving their lives, he also knew that he was running out of time to gain complete British possession of western Van Diemen’s Land.\(^ {100}\) This contingency of course held substantial bearing upon the material rewards he stood to gain.

The remaining Aborigines were taken between March and April 1834, and with some reluctance Robinson followed the Sandy Cape tribe to Flinders Island in September 1835 as magistrate.\(^ {101}\) It is owing to this reluctance to reside at Flinders Island, Arthur had to order him in the end, that Rae-Ellis again emphasises the “at best ideological” concern that ultimately drove Robinson’s concern for the Aboriginal people of Van Diemen’s Land: “as previously, he was incapable of putting the welfare of any person, let alone a whole race, before his own personal interests and desires.”\(^ {102}\) In spite of the obvious feeling Robinson expressed towards Aboriginal people, a level of empathy for their welfare that elevated his

\(^{97}\) Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, pp. 89 – 93.
\(^{98}\) Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, pp. 96 – 98; Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, pp. 300 – 304.
\(^{100}\) Boyce, \textit{Van Diemen’s Land}, p. 306.
\(^{101}\) Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 104.
\(^{102}\) Rae-Ellis, \textit{Black Robinson}, p. 104.
concerns beyond those of most settlers, in Rae-Ellis’ depiction Robinson seems essentially driven by his own desire for wealth and the trappings of public acclaim.

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What, then, can be ultimately said of Robinson in view of his conspicuous display of emotion towards Aboriginal people? The value of interrogating Friendly Mission from an emotional perspective speaks to Anna Johnston and Mitchell Rolls’ call to “excavate” Plomley’s transcription of Robinson’s journals so as to more productively evaluate Robinson’s place in Australian colonial history following the “rancorous and painful debates” of the History Wars. To this end, focusing upon Robinson’s emotional experience allows us to portray a character who was not a simple opportunist, manipulating Aborigines in the pursuit of wealth and power so strongly argued by Rae-Ellis. Though he certainly played this role, nor was he a one dimensional colonial agent hell-bent upon dispossessing Aboriginal people and consolidating the colonial enterprise. He was an individual whose feelings propelled what he saw as an urgent and necessary task, the protection of Aboriginal people from a settler community that held little regard for their lives and attachment to country. A genuine task in and of itself, it was this negotiation of feeling which allowed Robinson to delineate a subjectivity distant from the emotional register of most settlers. In this way Robinson embodied an “emotional community” which contested the normativity of emotional life in Van Diemen’s Land, and New South Wales as well.

This register of emotional expression also drew upon much broader cultural contingencies impacting the British imperial world at the time. Close attention has already been drawn to the discourse of chivalry through which colonial elites positioned themselves.

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as being more sympathetic towards Aboriginal people, unlike the convicts and stock keepers whose depravity led them to violence and depredation. Time and again, colonial administrators grew this discourse in ways which obscured their roles in directly or indirectly spreading terror among Aboriginal communities. This of course had its roots in an overarching sense of responsibility towards colonial subjects which was shaped and evolved by specific local circumstances.

Robinson can thus be considered a participant in a long running challenge to the emotional and physical relationship that dominated between Aborigines and British settlers. But the contingencies of the specific point in time which witnessed the rising prominence of the Friendly Mission draws Robinson into the orbit of a much larger shift in imperial attitudes towards Aboriginal people, namely the rise of the evangelical humanitarian lobby during the 1830s which crystalized in the formation of the Aborigines protection Society in 1836. In conjunction with Johnson and Rolls’ insistence upon exploring Friendly Mission in more constructive ways, Lester uses trans-imperial networks to explain Robinson’s writings. Constituting “unique narratives”, writes Lester,

if we are properly to contextualize Robinson and his work, we have to position them in relation to an extensive ‘propaganda war’ waged between humanitarian and settler lobbies in and between the West Indies, Australia, the Cape Colony, New Zealand, British North America and India among other places. This propaganda war was fought over the legitimacy of prevailing and prospective relations between Britons and indigenous people…Robinson’s own career was fundamentally bound up with it.  

This insight will be explored further in the following chapter, but what it shares with the
discussion directly at hand is that in his views towards Aborigines not only was Robinson
drawing upon a broader imperial discourse but that his “career and writings constitute an
important thread through this trans-imperial context between humanitarian and settler
discourses and politics.”105 In time, he was able to “deploy” this discourse as much as
“shape” it once he gained a credible reputation across the British empire as an expert on
Aboriginal affairs, a reputation for which he owed a significant debt to the reports circulated
by Arthur and James Backhouse who traveled to Van Diemen’s Land in the 1830s.106
Furthermore, Robinson’s feelings, while contingent upon his own experiences elsewhere but
particularly in Van Diemen’s Land, were expressive of a collective sentiment gaining
momentum across the British imperial world at the time.

Lester’s study of Robinson provides the starkest counterpoint to the argument that he
was simply motivated by personal gain in his work with the Friendly Mission. “There is
plenty of ammunition in Robinson’s own writings to condemn him for his insecurities, his
vanities, his churlishness and his pettiness”, Lester writes, “but there is no doubt that he was
sincere when he later wrote of his attempts to try to secure ‘a just and general restitution to
the Aboriginal inhabitants of the settlement for the injuries and privations they had suffered
through the medium of the white population.’”107 Recognizing the same sincerity in
Robinson’s concern for Aboriginal people, as we have already seen Rae-Ellis provides a
more qualified and ultimately scathing judgment of Robinson’s character and his emotional
commitment to the Friendly Mission:

106 Lester, ‘George Augustus Robinson and Imperial Networks’, pp. 32, 35.
107 Lester, ‘George Augustus Robinson and Imperial Networks’, p. 39.
he was incapable of caring deeply for any individual, black or white. The shallowness of his friendship with individual Aborigines was demonstrated time and time again when he ignored their need for his loving care and personal attention. Easily moved by tears, Robinson’s heart was never assailed.\textsuperscript{108}

Taking her cue from Manning Clark, who saw in Robinson someone who recognised “Aborigines as human beings with feelings as deep and profound as any of the settlers”, Lyndall Ryan explicitly refers to Rae-Ellis’ “shallow reading” of Robinson’s journals.\textsuperscript{109} Ryan targets the view that Robinson was motivated by fame and wealth, hoping for a renewed historical assessment which would allow him “to be recognised as a man ahead of his time, a champion of the Aborigines and one of the most significant figures in nineteenth century colonial history” on account of him risking his life to protect Aboriginal people.\textsuperscript{110} Such assessments find Robinson standing “condemned for saving the Aborigines from extermination by settlers.”\textsuperscript{111} Ryan recognises that Robinson was misguided in his belief that it was his God-given duty to protect the Aboriginal people of Van Diemen’s Land, and to do this in the hope of bringing them to Christianity and civilization.\textsuperscript{112} But she is particularly critical of any appraisal which refuses to see him as anything but a flagrant and dishonest opportunist who relied upon mesmerism to achieve his personal ends, and, moreover, was willing to compromise the Friendly Mission by forming sexual relationships with his companions.\textsuperscript{113} Ryan draws upon Cassandra Pybus’ critique of Robinson in making the latter point and is otherwise critical of her broader assessment of Robinson as someone whose

\textsuperscript{108} Rae-Ellis, Black Robinson, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{110} Ryan, ‘Historians, Friendly Mission and the Contest for Robinson and Trukanini’, pp. 155, 158, 159.
\textsuperscript{111} Ryan, ‘Historians, Friendly Mission and the Contest for Robinson and Trukanini’, p. 157.
\textsuperscript{112} Ryan, ‘Historians, Friendly Mission and the Contest for Robinson and Trukanini’, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{113} Ryan, ‘Historians, Friendly Mission and the Contest for Robinson and Trukanini’, pp. 152, 154, 157 – 158.
humane impulses were overridden by “personal and economic gratification”, a criticism she also draws towards Keith Windschuttle.114

Like Ryan, Pybus emphasises the agency that the Friendly Mission Aborigines exercised, their attachment to Robinson being an act of volition in their hope for “independence and survival.”115 Likewise disputing the possibility that Robinson was a mesmerist, Pybus nonetheless argues that his interest and appreciation of Aboriginal culture were “a calculated ploy” to secure the trust of those he encountered upon his various expeditions.116 She also sees a clear connection between Robinson’s diaries and “the unmistakable sense that [he] saw Aborigines as the key to the upward mobility he so craved.”117 Speculating as to what may have occurred if Gilbert Robertson had been favored as conciliator instead of Robinson, ultimately leaving this scenario a moot point, Pybus argues,

there is little to suggest such an alternative narrative might have been less catastrophic. In this tragic saga there are few elements more disturbing than the spectacle of these two colonial misfits scrapping over the paltry financial benefit and dubious social advantage to be got in taking credit for the almost complete destruction of a whole people.118

Ryan’s point is that such an understanding creates the unreasonable expectation “that people like Robinson should have behaved like a saint and thus suffered in some way, either from lack of money or by dying for his cause.” In reality “he was a public servant who earned a salary commensurate with skills and qualifications in order to carry out his highly

114 Ryan, ‘Historians, Friendly Mission and the Contest for Robinson and Trukanini’, p. 156.
dangerous task”, a man whose religious drive aligned him with other colonial figures, most notably Arthur.\textsuperscript{119} On the grounds of such humanitarian evangelical discourse Henry Reynolds similarly asks historians not to rush to Robinson’s judgment, but to “place him in his cultural milieu, to see him as a man of his time.”\textsuperscript{120} Agreeing with this chapter’s broader argument, Reynolds cites Robinson’s uncharacteristic compassion towards Aboriginal people compared with the rest of settler society, a feeling that emanated from a missionary zeal maintained upon “claims of human equality” which led him to begin the Friendly Mission.\textsuperscript{121} As Reynolds quips, although Robinson possessed an “abiding insecurity” as far as his finances were concerned, a relic of his working class background, embarking upon this journey was “scarcely a promising career move.”\textsuperscript{122}

As it is with historical understanding more broadly, it is beyond our capacities as historians to form a singular representation of any historical figure, let alone one whose reputation is so strongly contested. Through these historiographical tensions it is of course possible to construct a pluralistic representation of Robinson, a man who was at once driven by material needs and wants as much as by feelings that compelled him to protect the Aboriginal people of Van Diemen’s Land. It was this emotional register, aligned as it was with the evangelical discourse gaining momentum at the time, which distinguished Robinson from the majority of settlers. Inga Clendinnen puts it well in view of the many contradictions which emerge when reading Robinson’s Victorian journals. “These plains must ultimately be made use of for sheep grazing”, writes Robinson. “How to explain that casual, shocking comment”, asks Clendinnen, “what is wrong with this man? Is he a fool, a hypocrite, a moral

\textsuperscript{119} Ryan, ‘Historians, Friendly Mission and the Contest for Robinson and Trukanini’, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{121} Reynolds, ‘George August Robinson in Van Diemen’s Land: Race, Status and Religion’, pp. 162, 163, 167
\textsuperscript{122} Reynolds, ‘George August Robinson in Van Diemen’s Land: Race, Status and Religion’, p. 167.
imbecile; another thick-skinned imperialist playing bumpo with a wincing world?”

For Clendinnen, Robinson is none of these things but rather one of many who “contrived ways to live with the appalling, immutable fact of Aboriginal death.” Robinson is thus best read for his “‘cognitive dissonance’: an uncomfortable condition in which a mind veers and twists as it strives to navigate between essential but mutually incompatible beliefs.”

Overarching these realities of biographical conciliation, of constructing the narrativity of one’s past, there remains a nagging question to be addressed, a question which draws us back to genocide and its coincidence with settler colonialism. To what extent was Robinson in fact a participant in the colonial logic which he fought so hard against? Once the settled districts of Van Diemen’s Land had been made pacific, why did Robinson, with Arthur’s consent, involve himself in the task of rounding up the remainder of the island’s Aborigines? What sense does it then make to establish the ‘immutability’ of Aboriginal death, particularly as their ‘extinction’ so easily became their accepted fate upon Flinders Island in the minds of colonial administrators?

Far from the dishonored treaty which resulted in the removal of the remaining Van Diemen’s Land Aborigines from 1832, as Boyce rightly points out, “most were removed by either force or trickery from lands of no interest to the British, after they had already given up the fight.”

For Boyce this makes for more than enough room for comparison with other tragedies faced by other Indigenous people across the world, such as the “trail of tears” in the United State. ‘Immutable’ and ‘inevitable’ thus become redundant, even dishonest terms to describe the fate of the Aboriginal people of Van Diemen’s Land. Such language, Boyce asserts

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125 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 296.
126 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 295.
127 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 295.
128 Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 296. This could also be said of the broader myth of the ‘dying race’ which gained currency throughout the nineteenth century, a convenient means of forgetting in the settler imaginary.
Disguises the fact that the colonial government made a policy choice. The decision to remove all Tasmanian Aborigines after 1832 and to pursue this relentlessly to its tragic end was, even by the standards of its own time, an extraordinary and extreme policy decision. Robinson’s public lies and absurd journal self-justifications, along with Arthur’s carefully worded dispatches, have disguised the truth for too long. The colonial government from 1832 to 1838 ethnically cleansed the western half of Van Diemen’s Land and then callously left the exiled people to their fate.129

Why then was a demographically diverse population who posed no threat to white settlers made subject to such a policy choice? Boyce draws our attention back to the rewards and fame sought by Robinson, but ultimately places responsibility for the forced deportations between 1832 and 1835 with Arthur.130 But the Lieutenant Governor’s motivations remain unclear. Boyce alludes to Arthur’s dual belief that the inherent savagery of the Aborigines of Van Diemen’s Land meant that they would always pose a threat, and that they would themselves only benefit from being removed to Flinders Island.131 An alternative and more alarming impetus to consider on the part of Robinson, Arthur and the settler community more generally is the “pervasive psychological appeal…of a ‘native-free’ Van Diemen’s Land”, that the “removal of all Aborigines came to be seen as a good in itself.”132

“Nothing highlights the terror of the war years more”, Clements explains, “than the sanity that returned once it was over.”133 As this thesis has continued to demonstrate, the

129 Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, p. 296. [emphasis in original]
130 Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, pp. 306 – 308.
131 Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, p. 308. See also Lawson, The Last Man, pp. 306 – 308. The main difference between Boyce and Lawson is the latter’s argument that the British government did in fact approve Arthur’s various Aboriginal policies in time. Whereas Boyce saw forced removal in particular as a local crime, Lawson establishes a clear thread of responsibility back to the metropole, hence his argument for a “British” genocide in Van Diemen’s Land.
132 Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land, p. 308.
133 Clements, The Black War, p. 108
settler imaginary in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land had grown more and more hostile towards an Aboriginal menace both perceived and imagined, fixated upon the fear and victimhood generated by frontier violence. The circulation and performance of these emotions were in Van Diemen’s Land just as effective in driving the destructive course of settler colonialism as they were in New South Wales. There can be no denying Robinson and Arthur’s complicity in this logic. Yet as the 1830s unfolded more and more colonial agents across the British Imperial world nonetheless drew upon the Friendly Missions as they sort to recalibrate settler colonialism according to a more humanitarian agenda.
Chapter 5 – ‘the song of malevolence as well as benevolence’: The Myall Creek Massacre and the Unravelling of the Sydney Humanitarian Movement, 1835 – 1838.

For a man who grasped so firmly the hand of providence, the end of winter 1838 was an auspicious time for George Augustus Robinson to arrive in Sydney. “Newspapers full of malicious attacks on the aboriginal natives”, read his diary entry of 13 September.¹ Such was the outrage surrounding the impending trial of the 11 men in custody for the murder of 28 Wererai people at Myall Creek in June. A month to the day prior to his arrival in Sydney Robinson had left Flinders Island for Hobart after reading in the Hobart Town Gazette that he was to be appointed Chief Protector of Aborigines in New South Wales. For those Van Diemen’s Land Aborigines who managed to survive the ravaging pulmonary complaints of the settlement at Wybalenna, the relatively new mainland settlement of Port Phillip was to become home.² This measure ultimately proved too much to ask of an anxious settler community, all too aware of the years of terror experienced by their counterparts in the sister-colony.³ Nor was Robinson’s shift to the mainland a fait accompli, a level of trepidation otherwise caught up in the evaluation of his worth to the empire by colonial administrators in Hobart, Sydney and London.

His appointment to the role of Chief Protector of Port Phillip following his trip to Sydney meant that Robinson could feel vindicated for his efforts. This journey also allowed him to commune with those who shared similar feelings regarding the protection of Aboriginal people. More so than ever Sydney was afire with contrasting emotions over the management of the frontier, an antagonism which came to coalesce around the Sydney Auxiliary branch of the Aborigines Protection Society and the so-called ‘Black Association’

³ Sydney Gazette, 14 August 1838.
respectively. The former humanitarian group was essentially an offshoot of the London-based society of the same name, which had not long published extracts from the recently released Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes led by Thomas Fowell Buxton. The ‘Black Association’ was a press euphemism for the Committee on the Disturbed State of the North Western Districts which formed in the wake of the Myall Creek massacre, its principal leader the Hunter settler Robert Scott.

In tracing the emergence of these two organisations, and, in particular, how they were each mediated via the colonial press, this chapter will outline the competing emotional styles, long present within the colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, but brought into stark relief by events such as the Myall Creek massacre in June 1838. Moderating these two emotional communities was the recently arrived Governor George Gipps, a man of genuine humanitarian principle in line with those increasingly been held in London. How these principles could be upheld in the face of the political contingences of the frontier was another thing entirely. This analysis will provide a touchstone for the ways in which fear and compassion functioned as vectors for the expression of vastly different colonial subjectivities and in turn, how this was facilitated by public discourse and the agency of colonial administrators across both local and transnational channels.

* Robinso

Robinson arrived on Flinders Island towards the end of 1835 accompanied by Mannalargenna and 16 other Van Diemen’s Land Aborigines to join those already at Wybalenna. Shortly afterwards, his companion of so many long journeys across Van Diemen’s Land was dead. His illness aside it is difficult to comprehend the torment Mannalargenna must have otherwise suffered, perhaps reflecting the feelings of all those removed from their country. “The chief gave evident signs of strong emotion”, observed
Robinson as their ship from Hobart drew opposite Mannalargenna’s country on the mainland as they neared Swan Island:

He paced the deck, looked on all the surrounding objects, fresh recollections came to his mind. He paced to and fro like a man of consequence, like an emperor. Round his head he had tied a slip of kangaroo skin, which added greatly to his imperial dignity. At one time he took the map in his hand and looked upon it intently, took the spyglass and looked through it. It was amusing enough to see him. He allowed that I was equally great with himself, that I had travelled in all directions.  

This was Robinson at his ambivalent best. A sentiment just as apparent to his nonchalance of 2 December in hearing that Mannalargenna was expected to die, news of which he accompanied in his dairy with the matter of fact addition that he was “busy with native men employed in fencing in a large paddock front of my quarters.” This lends credence to the shift Plomley observes in Robinson’s character from the “remarkable man” of the Friendly Mission to the “pompous and rather ridiculous man and one very much concerned with his dignity” of Flinders Island. In this view Robinson was found wanting in his ability to adequately cater for the inevitable “culture clash” of removing a people from their home and introduce them to “civilisation”. There is some room to dispute such a claim in view of circumstances essentially outside Robinson’s control on account of him being, for all intents and purposes, a government agent. And he certainly maintained a belief in his

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destiny to secure the safety of his “sable friends”, a father figure in whom they could “have the most implicit confidence.”

But Plomley is right to suggest that Robinson was unsure how to provide a meaningful existence for the exiled Van Diemoniens, however he sought to institute the gainful habits of modernity and bestowed upon them names lifted straight from the western canon: Cleopatra, King William, King George, Romeo and Queen Elizabeth to name just a few. Shortly after arriving on Flinders Island, in re-evaluating what he could ultimately hope to achieve, Robinson revealed the vacancy of his agenda:

When I reflected that but a few years since these men were the cause of so much terror in the settled districts and were now so peaceably employed, I see great cause for thankfulness that I have been the honoured instrument in removing them from the main territory. The sad mortality which has happened among them since their removal is a cause for regret, but after all it is the will of providence, and better they died here when they are kindly treated then shot at and inhumanly destroyed by the depraved portion of the white community.

Such reflections continued to place Robinson squarely as a participant in the ostensibly humanitarian discourse characteristic of earlier colonial administrators. At once it was becoming clear that Robinson was enacting a form of paternalism so characteristic of what would become the Protectorate system. Functioning as God and the colonial elite’s “honoured instrument” was as much a factor in his humanitarian agenda as the reality of material gain.

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Sparing those on Wybalenna from disease threatened either prospect. Robinson was astute enough to attribute the incidence of pulmonary disorders to inadequate provisions and the exposure of huts to the cold. But with this “havoc death” sweeping the settlement, Robinson’s feelings remained ever exposed as he described the “melancholy results”, “painful in the extreme”, of each illness and death.⁹ Notwithstanding his almost dismissive reference to Mannalargenna’s illness, as ever it is difficult to doubt Robinson’s emotional investment in those under his care, many of whom had been companions for years. When asked to see the corpse of his old friend, Robinson wrote that he was “too overpowered to go.”¹⁰ Perhaps his earlier ambivalence was a sign of the difficulty he had in digesting the prospect that “the Chief” was soon to die.

Speculating that the “home government” would remove the Flinders Island Aboriginal population to the mainland was an anxious prospect all round.¹¹ It seemed the most likely topic to lift Robinson’s spirits as much as the hopes of those under his care. Travelling to Hobart in March 1836 Robinson was heartened by talks with Arthur regarding the position of “protector general of the aborigines of New Holland”.¹² Further consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in September revealed Secretary of State Glenelg’s wish to have Robinson take up a similar position in South Australia, a prospect in which he hardly revelled.¹³ Once again Robinson’s diary witnessed the depth of his despair: “Philanthropy is nothing, the security of life and property is nothing…The beneficial results arising from all this in the civilisation and Christianisation of the natives is all nothing.”¹⁴ Indicating the strength of his desire to land a mainland position, this outburst can be qualified later in view

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¹⁰ Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p. 313
¹³ Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, pp. 382, 384
of Glenelg’s “basest ingratitude” in not recommending Robinson receive a pension and land for his son. Glenelg quipped that it was enough that he was employed at all.\textsuperscript{15}

How could Robinson digest such an ungrateful suggestion:

after near nine years service in one of the greatest enterprises ever achieved of its kind, after the most signal advantages gained by the successful endeavours in the security of life and property, in the increased value of land consequent upon the removal of the aborigines by my exertions and that of my family, after being the instrument of resorting peace and tranquillity to the colony…in being the means of saving the lives of black and white.\textsuperscript{16}

Indeed, how could the settlement of Van Diemen’s Land have proceeded at all, settler emotions be salved, if not for Robinson’s efforts? The Black Line had manifestly failed in rounding up all but a few Aborigines. The roving parties, no matter what demographic trauma they inflicted, were often strategically outmaneuvered.

Disillusioned with the task at hand, with the long entertained prospect of moving to the mainland in mind, arriving in Sydney at a time when there was such public antagonism around the management of frontier hostility may have been just what Robinson needed to excite his humanitarian passion. Indeed, there was much similarity between the emotional landscape of Van Diemen’s Land of the late 1820s and early 1830s and that of New South Wales in 1838, particularly at the level of public discourse.

The “malicious attacks upon the natives” Robinson noted in his diary shortly after arriving in Sydney were largely contained within the \textit{Sydney Herald}, established in 1831 under the principal editorship of Ward Stephens. In the diversifying world of the Sydney

\textsuperscript{15} Plomley, \textit{Weep in Silence}, p. 386.
press, the paper had become a key advocate of the squatting cause, plying Governor George Gipps with pressure to enact more punitive measures to ward off Aboriginal hostility and thus vitiate the plight of suffering settlers. Particularly in the case of the Myall Creek Trials, the Herald’s invective provided settlers with a rolling catchcry to lament what appeared to be inconsistencies in the management of frontier justice. It was all well and good to recognise the legal equality of Aborigines, but what of bringing to trial those “ferocious savages” responsible for the murder of “unprotected” whites?

As this thesis has shown, this narrative was hardly a novel feature of New South Wales as settlers pushed across the Upper Hunter and Liverpool Plains. With some newspapers shifting in their attitude to Aboriginal people, at no stage since 1803 had the settlers of the colony, or Van Diemen’s Land for that matter, been without a discursive means of imagining themselves as members of a suffering community. With some papers opting for a more humanitarian tone, there was always an editor who maintained a fearful representation of Aboriginal people in the settler imaginary, tracing the not so subtle contours of white victimhood.

The long presence of this narrative in the Sydney press suggests a tension in Rebecca Wood’s argument which emphasises the Myall Creek trials as “a discernible moment in the development of a distinct myth of white Australia, which began with a burgeoning and distinctive colonial identity, one that moved beyond a British identity but was not yet Australian.”17 Wood convincingly places the Sydney Herald as the key arbiter of this crucible of colonial identity as it “not only succeeded in portraying the colonists as isolated and threatened but also reworked and redefined notions of what it meant to be a settler.”18 But

18 Wood, Frontier Violence and the Bush Legend’.
rather than contradicting Wood’s analysis this thesis has in fact been a validation of her argument, underwriting the important role newspapers played in the negotiation and expression of settler identity. Wood recognises that “the Herald came to act as the interface between one of many competing ‘narratives’ of colonisation and an imagined community of settlers.”

In terms of the framework of this thesis, the Herald therefore emerges as the key “interface” contesting what it meant to be a settler in colonial Australia. In doing so it led a long-standing discourse of fear and white victimhood developed by the press in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land.

Woods’ salient insight regarding the Herald is its harnessing of this discourse with respect to the specific circumstances of settler society at the time of the Myall Creek massacre. The significance of this flashpoint is the opportunity it offered the ‘squattocracy’ to fashion and deploy a sense of imagined community in a bid to contest political power, or at least have a significant influence upon the shape of colonial society. Unlike previous moments in the lurching progress of the New South Wales frontier, which more or less relied upon the valence of whiteness, the context of the Myall Creek massacre can thus be seen as a clear moment which allowed for the emergence of a “distinct myth of white Australia” with the potential to move “beyond a British identity”.

To underline the importance of Wood’s insight we first of all need to understand the relationship between the spread of the frontier into the Liverpool Plains beyond the Upper Hunter in the 1830s and the official response it drew from colonial administrators in terms of the occupation of Crown Lands by squatters. Just as it became the new field of expansion for settlers principally from the Hawkesbury in 1824, as the Hunter began to reach its stocking capacity in 1826 settlers began to stake their interests in the Liverpool Plains earlier unlocked

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19 Wood, Frontier Violence and the Bush Legend’.
20 Wood, Frontier Violence and the Bush Legend’.
by Henry Dangar. The clutch of squatters who established themselves beyond the “limits of settlement” designated by Governor Darling in 1826 – the boundaries of which being formalised for the “convenience” of settlers making their selections as the Nineteen Counties in 1829 – are thus familiar characters. Dangar looms large over events of 1838 on account of his station being the site of the Myall Creek Massacre. Robert Scott, already familiar with frontier instability through his role in preparing a report for McLeay as magistrate for the Hunter explaining the origins of Kamilaroi hostility, is of even larger note owing to his important role in the formation of the “Black Association”. William Ogilvie and James Glennie also expanded their land holdings into the Liverpool Plains.

In areas such as the Liverpool Plains, being just beyond the counties of Brisbane and Bligh, squatting created an administrative headache eventually culminating in the Australian Lands Act of 1846, an intervention from the Colonial Office which granted squatters tenure of their runs in the form of 8 and 14 year leases. Despite natural official reservation to mitigate the unregulated “dispersion” of settlers, the boundaries of the Nineteen Counties proved largely porous to land hungry squatters no longer able to consolidate their holdings within them. The most valuable runs being taken up, enterprise and the “acquisitive impulse” drove settlers into the fertile Liverpool Plains. Once again demonstrating the economic imperatives driving settler colonialism, the correlation between the growth of pastoralism and a prosperous New South Wales found Darling’s successor Richard Bourke legitimating squatting by introducing a yearly licence on runs held by squatters at 10 pounds in 1836.

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22 *Sydney Gazette*, 17 October 1829.
23 Scott and Macleod to Darling *HRA*, series 1, vol. 12, p. 610.
This measure built upon Bourke’s previous introduction of Commissioner’s of Crown Lands in 1833 as a means of limiting squatting with the limits of location.\footnote{Millis, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 112.}

The Liverpool Plains shared with previous frontiers in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land a close correlation between the presence of Europeans and conflict with Aboriginal people.\footnote{Importantly, a key difference between New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land was that the latter was not configured along the lines of separate counties.} By the end of 1837 as squatters sent their stockmen emissaries to stake out runs along the Gwydir River and its tributaries, of which Myall Creek was one, to borrow Roger Milliss’ phrase the Liverpool Plains quickly became the new “flashpoint” of frontier hostility.\footnote{Millis, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p.102.} As this chapter will soon discuss, with the arrival of the Governor George Gipps in 1838 this would create a policy intersection whereby squatters’ calls for the protection of their property from both European and Aboriginal threats would create grounds for the negotiation of Aboriginal protection, albeit not their rights to land, through increased powers to Commissioners of Crown Lands.

The key factors in this negotiation were shifting attitudes towards Aboriginal people and their rights across the British imperial world. Bourke, and to an even greater extent Gipps, were the first Governors for whom this social and political movement would require particularly urgent attention. Bourke appears to have exhibited a similar reluctance to respond to settler calls for protection as Darling following the Lowe affair. Rather than attributing the “archival silence” with respect to frontier conflict until 1836 to an actual lull in hostilities, Milliss refers to an article in the \textit{Sydney Herald} in 1839 which suggests that Bourke told settlers seeking protection in the face of Aboriginal ‘depredations’ to do so of their own accord.\footnote{Millis, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 114.} Indicating the tacit acceptance of jurisdictional pluralism with respect to the New

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  \item \footnote{Millis, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 112.}
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  \item \footnote{Millis, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p.102.}
  \item \footnote{Millis, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 114.}
\end{itemize}
South Wales frontier despite longstanding humane directives, such a mode of governance was soon relegated by shifts in the global administration of empire brought about by the sharp focus of British humanitarianism towards the rights of Aboriginal people.

Notwithstanding the release of the Select Committee’s Report in 1837, Bourke’s prevarication when it came to frontier instability was not shared by Colonel William Snodgrass who proceeded him in the role of Acting Governor from 5 December 1837 until Gipps’s arrival the following February. Bourke had been informed by late October 1837 of a report regarding the murder of two servants by some of the local Wererai people on the Terry Hie Hie property of William Waterford. On 27 October the Gazette, trusted that “the government will lose no time in dispatching some of the military to aid the residents in that vicinity in reducing the savages to order.”

Falling short of that, Bourke ordered Major James Nunn of the Mounted Police to hold an enquiry into the matter. Nunn’s apparent failure to do so was followed by similar correspondence from Commissioner of Crown Lands Alexander Patterson as well as Robert Scott, which reported the general state of hostility in the vicinity of the Gwydir River.

Scott’s letter to Colonial Secretary Edward Thomson rings a familiar note of settler anxiety and victimhood: “The inhabitants are much alarmed and I have thought it my duty to bring the disturbed state of the Country under His Excellency’s consideration that he may adopt such measures as in his wisdom he may deem necessary for the protection of the persons interested.”

\[\text{Sydney Gazette, 28 October 1837.}\]

\[\text{Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p.152.}\]

\[\text{Scott to Thomson, cited in Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 161. Suggesting an act of discretion of Scott’s part, Milliss indicates that the original wording of Scott’s letter in fact alluded to the prospect of vigilante frontier justice: “The inhabitants are much alarmed and I would respectfully urge upon His Excellency the necessity of affording them protection lest by being drawn to desperation they take up arms in their own defence, and under excited feelings, these undisciplined men proceed to lengths that would probably be found unnecessary, and avoided by responsible and unprejudiced persons.”}\]
state of hostility is alluded to in a letter from James Glennie to Scott which suggests that the white victims had previously abducted local Aboriginal women. Upon receiving further intelligence communicated to Nunn by Lieutenant George Cobban stationed at Jerry’s Plains that two more servants had been murdered on the property of John Cobb, Snodgrass ordered Nunn to the Gwydir at the end of December “for the purpose of enquiring into, and repressing as far as possible the aggressions complained of.” Under Snodgrass at least, the relationship between settler anxieties and the eliminationist logic of settler colonialism would once again become clear.

Managing to escape proper sanction for the massacre of perhaps as many as 300 Wererai people at Snodgrass Lagoon on 26 January 1838 following his initial investigation at Cobb’s station, Nunn looms large throughout Roger Milliss’s comprehensive analysis of the history of violence on the Liverpool Plains. On account of his resemblance to the Duke of Wellington, the mythology surrounding Nunn and his involvement in this event was assured by the renaming of the locations as Waterloo Creek. Unlike his predecessor Lowe, however, he would never face a proper inquiry let alone a criminal trial. Rather in the face of political expediency and what Attorney General Plunkett labelled the ‘great excitement’ of the public mind, the Executive Council decided “that no object either of justice or Humanity could be attained by making the transaction in question the subject of further Judicial inquiry.” According to Milliss’s account it was in fact the very events engendered by Nunn’s presence

33 Glennie to Scott cited in Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 160.
34 Thomson to Nunn cited in Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 164.
35 Indicating that there is “no reliable or coherent account” of Nunn’s expedition, Milliss covers a range of 40 – 50 victims on the basis of some testimony, while Threlkeld suggested that the numbers killed may have been as many as 200 – 300.
36 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 197.
37 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 666.
on the Gwydir that created the political contingencies which Gipps would subsequently cite as preventing him from conducting the necessary inquiry.\textsuperscript{38}

The circumstances of the Myall Creek massacre in particular can only really be understood in view of Nunn’s expedition. In light of there being “no reliable or coherent account” of this particular journey of the Mounted Police, Milliss draws upon the “folklore of the Bingara area” which suggests the possibility of the Mounted Police’s association with other massacres, such as the one which gave Slaughterhouse Creek its name. Just as startling is Milliss’s use of this “tradition” to detail Nunn’s parting orders to the stockmen of the Gwydir “to fend for themselves, as he could not be expected to come up from Sydney every time they had trouble with the blacks.”\textsuperscript{39} Even more so is the claim that after developing some “military finesse” in the company of the Mounted Police, in the absence of Nunn the already hostile stockmen mounted what became known as ‘The Bushwhack’. This violent drive across the countryside, purportedly instigated by the murder of a white woman at Terry Hie Hie, tells the story of a five-week scouring of the Gwydir region beginning in May and ending with the massacre of 300 people at Slaughterhouse Creek.\textsuperscript{40} According to the tradition it was the survivors of this massacre that ventured east towards present-day Inverell in search of refuge, which they found at Henry Dangar’s station Myall Creek, only to fall victim to the seven “toughest” whites most willing to continue to the ‘pogrom’ to its end at the beginning of June.\textsuperscript{41}

There are clear idiosyncrasies in Milliss’s broader telling of this stage of New South Wales history in which his often literary style presumes too much from the scant detail upon

\textsuperscript{38} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 666.
\textsuperscript{39} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 200.
\textsuperscript{40} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, pp. 201 – 202.
\textsuperscript{41} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p.202
which he necessarily draws. But his reliance upon folklore is a key strength, couched as it is with a wariness of its authenticity and awareness that “history will most likely...part company with the Bingara legend” as he frames the circumstances culminating in the massacre at Myall Creek. As this thesis has repeatedly demonstrated, the violent animus behind such tragic events was a clear and present reality of the New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land frontiers, whether at the behest of official or vigilante forms of justice. In Millis’s words, “It had been one long Bushwhack since the whites first occupied the Gwydir country two years earlier. The blacks at Myall Creek were merely next on the list.”

The vigilantism of the Myall Creek massacre can therefore only be understood in relation to the prior involvement of an official armed force at the behest of an unsettled white community and government, an action in itself resulting in a significant though difficult to specify Aboriginal death toll.

The enhanced humanitarian dimension that Gipps brought to New South Wales, bolstered by a Colonial Office attempting to incorporate the insight of the Select Committee on Aborigines, meant that some form of accountability was far more likely to be sought for the victims of Myall Creek than in the time of Snodgrass. The difficulty that Gipps faced in achieving this indicates the strength of public feeling against any measures aimed at protecting Aborigines. Framing the reaction to Myall Creek was on the one hand a metropolitan-based, yet trans-imperially derived, humanitarian discourse of which Gipps was ostensibly a part. On the other hand were the cries for protection of a select settler community who were now more than ever bolstered by a sense of the crucial role the pastoral industry

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42 As Tom Griffiths has recently noted, Waterloo Creek disappointed many within the historical community on account of what was at the time considered a “narrow obsession with violence and white guilt” suggesting a “purely oppositional frontier”, leading Peter Read to comment that it was “dated in conception and analysis.” Tom Griffiths, The Art of Time Travel: Historians and their Craft (Carlton: Black Inc., 2016), p.

43 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 203
played in securing the colony’s prosperity, a sense of entitlement intensified at a time of financial difficulty and drought.44

Nor were commercial interests absent from the conclusions of the Select Committee on Aborigines but rather explicit to its hopes for a humane and prosperous British imperial world. Whether or not its authors were aware of any alarm that it might create, not only did the Report claim that “a line of policy, more friendly and just towards the natives, would materially contribute to promote the civil and commercial interests of Great Britain.”45 It also proposed that rather than end the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples’ land and the economic activity derived from it, on top of the “national necessity of finding some outlet for the superabundant population of Great Britain and Ireland”, Indigenous people should be made “profitable workmen” and “good neighbours”.46 Underlining the consolidation of chivalric discourse in the humanitarian imaginary, the problem was not so much the exposure of the New World to modernity per se as it was “the desolating effects of the association of unprincipled Europeans with natives in a ruder state.”47 However strongly they challenged racial prejudice, humanitarians were far from free of the class prejudice of the time.48 Evincing its evangelical roots, the Report declared that “there is but one effectual means of staying the evils we have occasioned, and of imputing the blessings of civilisation, and that

44 Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance: Protecting Aborigines Across the Nineteenth-century British Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 109 – 110. As Lester and Dussart point out, these factors were also a key reason why squatters moved into new territories.
46 Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes, p. 105.
47 Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes, p. 59.
is, the propagation of Christianity, together with the preservation...of the civil rights of the natives.”

This fundamental ambivalence at the heart of the Select Committee Report has been recently underlined in Alan Lester and Fae Dussart’s insightful analysis of the origins of humanitarian governance. The main explanation they provide to suggest that this ambivalence should come “as less of a surprise” is that while humane governance was articulated at the “heart of empire”, it was “worked out through encounters and relations with diverse actors in a range of richly complex settings and configurations across the globe.”

George Arthur, and by association Robinson, figure as among the key “diverse actors” facilitating this network of communication. The rise in concern for “distant strangers” in the later eighteenth-century characteristic of humanitarianism can be explained by way of broader social phenomena such as dampening the class antagonisms of the industrial revolution and the Christian obligation to address new forms of economic exploitation.

Lester and Dussart argue that during this same period British people

were made aware of being a part of, and of feeling a part of a new global assemblage of empire. New patterns of responsibility and new objects of compassion were potential consequences of these new novel relations. The geographical and temporal specificity of humanitarian interaction reflects the fact that specific components have to be brought into alignment in specific ways across space at a planetary scale for humanitarian feelings to take place.

49 Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes, pp. 59 – 60
50 Lester and Dussart, Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance, p. 275.
51 Lester and Dussart, Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance, p. 8.
52 Lester and Dussart, Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance, pp. 12 – 13. [emphasis in original]
Pointing to the primacy of emotion as a factor in the negotiation of colonial policy, this argument helps explain the fact that some form of humanitarian feeling had featured in the British settlement of Australia since its inception. Yet this is but one layer of Lester and Dussart’s explanation of the origins of humane governance. In the case of the proliferation of humanitarian discourse in the 1830s, they deploy both higher order and more historically specific contingencies. In the first instance, drawing upon the ideas of governmentality developed by Michel Foucault, “a modern state’s imperative to control, regulate and as far as possible monopolise the violence of colonisation”, emerges as a far more fundamental and almost arbitrary impetus behind the need to preserve threatened societies than the desire to differentiate Britain from other empires and individual needs to do “good rather than evil”. At the heart of this imperative is the need to be seen as having control of settler communities and actually being in control. Either way colonial administrators were wary of ceding authority to individual colonists, a potentially anarchic reality which reflects Ford’s point about the prominence of jurisdictional pluralism in early colonial New South Wales and Robin’s Hobbesian analysis of modernity’s aversion to a ‘state of nature’. In pointing to governmentality’s prerogative of controlling “decisions concerning life and death”, Lester and Dussart explain that if

emigrant settlers were allowed to determine these things at will, there would be no state-sanctioned governmentality in colonial space (which was indeed sometimes the case). Humanitarian regulation as a function of government – a way of being governmental – was thus as intrinsic to the project of Britain’s

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colonisation of other lands as it was to the coeval emergence of a modern state system in Europe.\textsuperscript{54}

As this chapter will demonstrate, this imperative presented a paradox insofar as it also demanded the protection of settlers despite official knowledge that they often instigated frontier violence.

What shape humanitarian governmentality took brings Lester and Dussart to Arthur’s crucial role in developing and adapting strategies to protect non-European imperial subjects as a consequence of his life being “bound up in many of the most significant transitions reshaping the British Empire”.\textsuperscript{55} Of particular note was his implementation of amelioration policies to cater for the social and economic integration former slaves in the Caribbean during the 1820s following the abolition of slavery.\textsuperscript{56} Arthur’s role in developing and implementing humanitarian governance was further conferred by his movement through “British imperial space”, whereby he helped adapt amelioration in the Caribbean context to conciliation and protection during his governance of Van Diemen’s Land.\textsuperscript{57} The greater challenge this second imperial space which was not, after all, entirely ‘imperial’, was a matter of it consisting in “resilient sovereign peoples that British invaders had to fight for the land” at a point in time when humanitarian ideals were being negotiated in the very act of governance.\textsuperscript{58} In initially attempting to adapt amelioration into a form of conciliation towards both Aboriginal people and convicts, what amounted from Arthur’s efforts was the idea of protectionism that would subsequently be deployed elsewhere.\textsuperscript{59}

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\textsuperscript{54} Lester and Dussart, \textit{Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance}, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{55} Lester and Dussart, \textit{Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance}, p. 29.


\textsuperscript{59} Lester and Dussart, \textit{Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance}, p. 60.
In recognising the difficult role that he faced in the context of Van Diemen’s Land, Lester and Dussart also deploy Arthur to demonstrate that humanitarianism is “more than an abstracted set of ideals derived from European Enlightenment thought”.  

In an assertion relevant to Arthur and Robinson as much as the history of emotions more broadly, they argue that humanitarianism needs to be seen “as expressive of the deeply felt, emotive desire, to ‘do the right thing’ that motivates many people in positions of governmental authority”.  

This in many ways explains the importance of honour in understanding the prominence of chivalric discourse. The nexus of these sentiments and the pragmatic commercialism which humanitarianism continued to allow, not to mention the eventual failure of the protectorate system, of course asks important questions of the culpability of its practitioners for the resulting violence of settler colonialism. But this does not amount to a straightforward condemnation of humanitarianism. Drawing on the work of Ann Stoler, Lester and Dussart warn against the assumption that historical actors possess the same “two-dimensional interior spaces” that we hope to possess ourselves despite “our own fractious subjectivities.”

However we might hope to act in accordance with ideological purity in the present, historical actors likewise faced the difficulty of negotiating a combination of potentially conflicting thoughts and feelings in the pursuit of certain goals.

Just as Lester’s work on the role of newspapers in shaping settler subjectivity has provided a useful means of understanding the discursive flow of emotion in settler communities, so too does his collaboration with Dussart indicate the need to respect the emotional impulses of colonial agents as they sought to negotiate themselves as “components within social, and specifically governmental, assemblages and discourses.”

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emotional dialectic whereby colonists could posit themselves as white victims, colonial administrators such as Arthur and Robinson were engaged in a similar process of articulating their status as white saviours. Fear and compassion were the lodestars which respectively coordinated participation within these two oppositional emotional communities. In either case it is important to understand that while expressive of one’s inner-state, emotions must be understood in view of the dynamic cultural context that determines how historical actors negotiate individual and collective subjectivities.

This blurs the line between what can be seen as constituting the self externally and what contribution the self makes to the cultural context surrounding it, an unresolved question in the field of biography. Rather than positing historical agents merely as “ghost-like ciphers for social processes”, Lester and Dussart propose the idea of “life geographies” as “a way of analysing the relationship between individuals’ continually reconstituted subjectivities, the places in which they dwell and the spaces through which they move.”64 The strength of this approach is how it takes into account the different challenges thrown up by specific locations and the characteristics of the people inhabiting them. Someone such as Arthur in the position of power that he was can thus be understood as an agent both influenced by, and with an increasing capacity to exert an influence upon, colonial governance and humanitarian discourse as he moved across British imperial space.65 As he incorporated humanitarian ideas and feelings into his own practice of governance at various points of colonial space, that very practice assisted the emotional and functional malleability of humanitarian governance.

It was his experience of the Black War and relationships with Robinson and Buxton which aided the particular movement of humanitarian discourse away from amelioration and

64 Lester and Dussart, Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance, p. 28.
65 Lester and Dussart, Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance, p. 29.
towards protectionism. Arriving in London in 1836 as the Select Committee met, Arthur appeased his crisis of conscience not by lamenting the results of ‘protecting’ Van Diemen’s Land Aborigines from “aberrant settlers” by exiling them to Flinders Island but by proposing a similar policy in other areas of settlement. This fitted well with the Select Committee’s overall goal of establishing a form of humane settlement which allowed for a trade-off between the bounty of Aboriginal land and the grace of European civilisation. This alignment of opinion in the metropole culminated in Glenelg accepting Arthur’s recommendation that Robinson be appointed Chief Protector based in Port Phillip alongside four assistants.

That the humanitarian movement was by no means suggesting an end to colonisation might suggest that when Robinson arrived in Sydney there would be far less animosity towards the idea of Aboriginal protection. In June 1838, however, the *Gazette* could “not apprehend any great benefit” that could be derived from the decision to appoint protectors in accordance with the Select Committee’s recommendations. The paper was particularly concerned with the “appointment of gentlemen in Britain, ignorant alike of the language and the habits of the Blacks”, “drones” whose “good fat salaries” could only be burden upon a colony already suffering from a revenue shortfall.

Fiscal concerns aside, as James Boyce has argued in his landmark study of the settlement of Port Phillip, what brought settlers into direct conflict with the humanitarian movement was its recognition that Aboriginal people had rights to land regardless of the practical utility they drew from it according to the “dominant settler discourse” which

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66 Lester and Dussart, *Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance*, pp. 39 – 43. Lester and Dussart otherwise point to Arthu’s experiences during the Napoleonic Wars which helped centre his adult persona around concerns for major shifts in global order and his increasing evangelicalism as a result of being exposed to slavery.


69 Sydney Gazette, 30 June 1838; Sydney Gazette, 10 July 1838.
necessitated farming.70 Even before the Select Committee released its report in 1837, settlers became aware of this political shift in following the first report of the Colonisation Commission of South Australia which indicated the new Whig government’s eagerness to take into account the rights of Aboriginal people.71 As well as guarding them “against personal outrage”, in aiming to protect their “undisturbed enjoyment of the propriety right to the soil” the report recommended that should such a right be ceded away that it be done so by way of “bargains and treaties” that would ensure their subsequent subsistence.72 It was with this understanding that Aboriginal interests would have to be taken into account for colonisation to be approved by the government that John Batman conducted a treaty between the Port Phillip Association and the Kulin people in June 1835.73 Although little about the treaty is accurately known, Boyce points out it is highly unlikely that the Kulin “consented to the incomprehensible concept of selling their land by signing a written treaty.”74 How the government reacted to this unique situation was perhaps as confusing to settlers as it is now to any evaluation of the premises of humanitarian governance, its apparent blindness to the cause it sought to advocate.

Lester and Dussart point to the broader paradox of the historical intersection whereby an emergent humanitarianism coalesced with an unprecedented occupation of Aboriginal land such that a “British governmental responsibility to protect seems to have emerged at the same time and in the same spaces as that government assured the right to colonise.”75 Boyce is more specific in asking one of the more pressing questions of Australian history: “why at the apex of imperial concern for the rights of Indigenous people, an evangelical secretary of State

72 Sydney Gazette, 6 April 1837.
73 Boyce, 1835, pp. 44 – 57.
74 Boyce, 1835, p. 57.
75 Lester and Dussart, Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance, p. 1
for the Colonies, Lord Glenelg, responded as he did to the challenge posed by the ambitious property speculators of Van Diemen’s Land?” An answer to Boyce’s question can be found in the way that the Select Committee eventually defined the specifics of humanitarian governance in their 1837 Report; colonisation could only be condemned when it was not accompanied by an adequate urgency to adapt Aboriginal people to western civilisation. But this specific dilemma relates back to Bourke’s eventual legitimation of squatting by the introduction of licences for runs in 1836 beyond the limits of location following instructions from the metropole, a measure which precluded anyone who couldn’t front the 10 pound fee. Regulating trespass beyond the limits of location thus became a function of class.

Rather than being a surprise such a measure in fact fits well with the principles of humane governance, which as much as anything was concerned with regulating colonial space, a matter of maintaining law and order in the interests of private enterprise. The same can be said of Bourke’s despatch to Glenelg of 10 October 1835, which Boyce notes as being remarkable for its complete lack of reference to the impacts of colonising Port Phillip upon Aboriginal people. In concluding his justification for what amounted to an encouragement of this expansion beyond the limits of location, Bourke wrote, “The dispersion will go on, notwithstanding the discouragement, but accompanied by much evil that might be prevented by the guidance and control of authority opportunely introduced.” Boyce suggests that any tension between Glenelg’s enthusiastic approval of this policy the following April and the

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76 Boyce, 1835, p. xii. Boyce puts this contradiction more specifically in relation to the intended method of colonising South Australia on p. 128.
77 However, Boyce’s answer as to why this question has been for so long avoided is far more complex. Go into this 192 -
78 Boyce, 1835, p. 123.
79 Boyce, 1835, p. 119.
80 Bourke to Glenelg, HRA, series 1, vol. 18, p. 158.
rhetoric surrounding the settlement of South Australia in January can be reconciled in view of his belief in Bourke’s humanitarian credentials.  

More pragmatically, what were the consequences of recognising the legitimacy of such a treaty for British sovereignty? Glenelg was “anxious that the Aborigines should be placed under a zealous and effective protection”, but fell short of advising a policy that would recognise the capacity of Aboriginal people to cede land to other parties as such a “concession would subvert the foundation on which all Proprietary rights in New South Wales at present rest”. Colonisation could thus proceed humanely so long as it did so under the auspices of colonial officialdom, instructed by a distant and humane overseer in the colonial office. To do otherwise risked exposing the lie of settlement at a time when much was being done to retrieve the lost honour attributed to the actions of the depraved element of settler society. As Boyce rightly points out this reflected the “prism of class” through which London viewed Aboriginal rights, which allowed the Select Committee to see Port Phillip as an opportunity to bring “civilisation, Christianity and law to the frontier.” Whatever this rhetoric hoped to achieve, between 1837 and 1842 the Aborigines in the vicinity of Port Phillip “were largely dispossessed of a territory bigger than England”.

The clashes which occurred between settlers and Aborigines in Port Phillip meant that by the time Gipps arrived in Sydney in 1838 his attention to violence radiated south as much as North. Far from being separate, how Gipps responded to both the Port Phillip and Liverpool Plains frontiers would jointly flow into the reception he received from settlers and the press. Despite things going their way even at a time of heightened humanitarian concern,  

81 Boyce, 1835, p. 129.  
82 Glenelg to Bourke HRA, series 1, vol. 18, p. 379. See also Boyce, 1835, p. 132 and Sydney Gazette, 11 March 1837.  
83 Boyce, 1835, p. 137.  
84 Boyce, 1835, p. 151
time and again settlers would complain of the apparent inability of extant administrative structures to protect the lives of their servants and the integrity of their property from Aborigines.

Along with the controversy surrounding Nunn, and before he was prompted to assist settlers in the district of Port Phillip, there was another frontier matter Gipps had to address. He had to decide what action needed to be taken in relation to the ongoing saga following Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell’s fatal encounter with the Barkindji people at Lake Benanne near present-day Euston close to the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers on 26 May 1836, emerging from a similar encounter a year prior.

In mentioning the impending release of the Select Committee’s Report and the overall need to consider Aborigines as “Subjects of the Queen”, Glenelg responded to the inquiry Bourke had already held into this incident by requesting that he further consult his legal advisers as to whether they had “any cause to doubt the lawfulness of Major Mitchell’s proceedings”. This ran counter to Bourke’s hopeful speculation in forwarding the matter to Glenelg in January that “no further explanation” on his part was required on account of the Executive Council ultimately finding no fault in Mitchell’s actions. Received by Snodgrass

85 Glenelg to Bourke, HRA, series 1, vol. 19, pp. 48 – 49.
86 Bourke to Glenelg, HRA, series 1, vol. 18, p. 656. So as to avoid “prejudicing” the conduct of the initial inquiry before the Executive Council and avoid “shocking the public here and in England by announcing the slaughter of so many human beings”, Bourke excluded the portion of Mitchell’s letter sent in October 1836 explaining the violence of the previous May from the Government Gazette. Indeed, even in recommending a further inquiry Glenelg also showed some sensitivity to Mitchell’s status and his contribution to the empire. The excerpt, which eventually appeared in the Government Gazette on 24 January 1837 along with the minutes of the inquiry, was couched very much in terms of self-preservation. Having sought to avoid the “treacherous savages” as much as possible in his journey along the Darling, Mitchell was disappointed in finding so many at Lake Benanne.

Convinced of a “system of warfare” that would entail his party being followed and attacked from the rear, Mitchell led his party out and devised a flanking manoeuvre which eventuated in a simultaneous attack upon his pursuers. His men “shot as many as they could” before the outmanoeuvred Aborigines sought refuge in the Murray, only for their “Chief” to be among those shot and killed in the water. “Thus”, Mitchell rounded off, “in a very short time, the usual silence of the desert prevailed on the banks of the Murray, and we pursued our journey unmolested.” His only disappointment was that news of the “dispersion” had not travelled further down the river after finding a “strong tribe” at the junction of the Darling and the Murray Rivers, a sure sign that intimidation informed his strategy. In his subsequent evidence to the inquiry, Mitchell in fact alluded to earlier

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just before Gipps arrived in February 1838, the new Governor was already well versed in
Glenelg’s renewed instructions and forwarded the case to Attorney General Thomas Plunkett
in March.\(^\text{87}\) As he would similarly advise later with respect to the case surrounding Nunn, in
addition to pointing to the difficulty of conducting an investigation with Mitchell being in
England and the lack of certainty with each witness could indicate that lives had been lost,
Plunkett drew upon the potential “Public excitement” that a second inquiry might cause.\(^\text{88}\)
Other than indicating that he had done as instructed and attached Plunkett’s report, Gipps’s
despatch to Glenelg reveals very little of the Governor’s humanitarian resolve. It neither
explained the gist of the Attorney General’s findings nor suggested what feelings he may
have held regarding the matter.\(^\text{89}\) In any event, in having a line so firmly drawn underneath
whatever culpability he may have had, Milliss is apt in comparing Mitchell’s fate to that of
Nathaniel Lowe on the Hunter more than a decade prior.\(^\text{90}\) Justice would be done for neither
man’s victims.

Whatever it may have lacked in political resolve, Plunkett’s assessment was correct
when it came to the matter of public feeling. Unsatisfied by Mitchell’s justification of his
actions on the grounds of self-preservation the \textit{Gazette} was in fact in favour of some recourse

\textit{“instances of necessary chastisement” conducted by “benevolent, and sensible men” such as Governor
Macquarie.”}

Not necessarily convinced that Mitchell had conducted himself according to the instructions he
received before mounting his expedition which emphasised conciliation, and unable to agree as to whether
Mitchell had in fact deliberately conceived a plan to lure the Aborigines at Lake Benanee into an attack, the
Executive Council decided that no further action needed to be taken. Evidence which emerged during the
inquiry suggested that the plan had in fact been aborted by the premature firing of a gun from the out-flanking
party which amounted in “only” seven of the fleeing Aborigines being killed. Overall, in spite of the speculation
that much more bloodshed would have taken place had Mitchell’s plan been fully enacted and evidence that as
many as seventy shots were fired over a period of 15 minutes, the Council agreed that the Major acted out of
sufficient alarm and the obligation of protecting his party. Indeed, as Mitchell’s own testimony proclaimed, how
could he do otherwise in view of the earlier deaths of Captain Logan at Moreton Bay and Alan Gunningham, a
member of his own party, on the Bogan River. \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 28 January 1837.

For a full account of this incident and the inquiry before the Executive Council see Millis, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, pp.
129 – 136.

\(^\text{87}\) Millis, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 221.
\(^\text{88}\) Millis, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 236
\(^\text{90}\) Millis, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 237.
to justice: “we plainly tell Major Mitchell, that for this wholesale slaughter of so many souls, nothing short of the most public and full examination will satisfy us. This too is requisite to appease the public mind, as hundreds are exactly of our opinion.” \(^91\) Changing its tone from previous frontier skirmishes, the *Australian* likewise supported some form of inquiry, arguing that Mitchell’s actions were “unnecessary”, that his victims had been “harmless and well-disposed.” \(^92\) Suggestive of the settler community’s active engagement of humanitarian sentiment, in contrast the *Herald* threw its whole weight behind Mitchell. In a taste of the paper’s reification of white victimhood during the Myall Creek saga, the *Herald* homed in on the hypocrisy of humanitarian “canters”. Targeting the *Australian* in particular, the *Herald* asked

> what are we to think of the tender-heartedness of those philanthropists who weep over the, perhaps, necessary shooting of a black, and yet remember the tragical [sic] fate of the unfortunate Mr. Cunningham, who was butchered by savages, when accompanying Major Mitchell on his previous expedition? \(^93\)

It had “become a fashion with a certain class of persons (some of them, no doubt, well-meaning men) – theorists, and others desirous of acquiring a reputation for humanity”, the paper went on, “to sympathize with the aboriginal natives of all Colonies; and to lament over a slain savage, while they disregard the safety of the lives and property of the white inhabitants!” \(^94\) Emphasising the right of settlers to use a “strong hand” in the absence of such protection, the *Herald* drew upon a global frame of reference when it asked: “Did the

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\(^91\) Sydney Gazette, 14 January 1837.

\(^92\) Australian, 30 December 1836.

\(^93\) Sydney Herald, 26 December 1836. Lieutenant Zouch of the Mounted Police stationed at Bathurst on an expedition to the Bogan was in fact successful in acquiring three men alleged to have been responsible for Cunningham’s murder – Wongaagegery, Boreeboomalley and Bureemall. However, he was only able to bring Burremell in on charges as the other two suspects had escaped while he was visiting the site of Gunnigham’s remains. Zouch to Bourke, HRA, series 1, vol. 18, p. 236 – 237.

\(^94\) Sydney Herald, 26 December 1836.
Americans trifle with their savage neighbours? – were they influenced by the denunciations of a set of canting hypocrites and imposters, to submit to savage aggression?” No, the “Americans” had not, and nor should they have disobeyed “the law of nature that civilized man shall drive the savage before him”. Yet, despite the apparent providential strength of the “civilized man”, the Herald couldn’t help but point to many other occasions of white victimhood; Cunningham again, Captain Logan at Moreton Bay, not to mention “the treatment of the savages of New Zealand.” Here was ressentiment clear as day. Somehow the right of “civilised man” to conquer could only be couched in terms which emphasised his suffering at the hands of “savages”, a phenomenon that continued well beyond the scope of this thesis into the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The only way the Herald could reconcile the existence of “humbunging maniacs and hypocrites” was on the grounds of political expediency, that the “display of humanity in favour of the natives is nothing less than an attempt to injure Major Mitchell with the Home Government, who cannot do without the votes of the political "Saints."”

The Monitor also tended to side with Mitchell, although with less invective, publishing his letter on 27 January through which he similarly justified his actions according to his own experience of the “hostile intentions” of Aborigines as well as the deaths of Cunningham and Logan. Fear of falling to such a fate indeed seems to have loomed large for Mitchell. “The fact is”, the Gazette proclaimed, “that Major Mitchell is, and always was, dreadfully frightened of the blacks. This is sufficiently manifested by his having shot them just in the same indiscriminate manner, on each of his former expeditions.” In comparison, explorers such as Charles Sturt and Hume had different experiences on account of their preference for

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95 Sydney Herald, 26 December 1836.  
96 Monitor, 27 January 1837
conciliation.\textsuperscript{97} In the journals of his expeditions, the publication of which in part explains his presence in London when Plunkett was deliberating, there are enough instances to suggest that, while he had many amicable encounters, fear of Aboriginal people was a factor in Mitchell’s movement through the bush. Shortly after Cunningham’s misfortune in April 1835, Mitchell’s belief that the various Aboriginal groups along the Darling were of a peaceable disposition was shaken by an encounter with a group he called the “Spitting Tribe”, the Barkindji people, whose hostile reaction to a gun being fired led him to contemplate further “the painful necessity of making them acquainted with the superiority of our arms.”\textsuperscript{98} He likewise valued livestock for “the dread with which these animals inspired in the natives.”\textsuperscript{99}

The genesis of the drama that came to surround Mitchell was also presented in his journal in much the same language of imminent threat that would be heard by the inquiry.\textsuperscript{100} Potentially contradicting the claims of the \textit{Gazette}, Mitchell in fact framed his anticipation of being attacked around information that the Barkindji men he fell in with were in fact the same group who had previously threatened to kill Captain Sturt.\textsuperscript{101} But Mitchell would ultimately explain in his published account of the incident in May, at what he came to name triumphantly name Mount Dispersion, as resulting from an incident a year prior where his men had fired upon an Aboriginal group after being attacked.\textsuperscript{102} In reflection Mitchell

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 14 January 1837.


\textsuperscript{99} Mitchell, \textit{Three expeditions into the interior of Eastern Australia}, vol. 1 p. 256.

\textsuperscript{100} Thomas Mitchell, \textit{Three expeditions into the interior of Eastern Australia, with descriptions of the recently explored region of Australian felix, and the present Colony of New South Wales, 2nd edition, vol. 2} (London: T & W Boone, 1839), pp. 101 – 104

\textsuperscript{101} Mitchell, \textit{Three expeditions into the interior of Eastern Australia, vol. 2} p. 99

\textsuperscript{102} Witness testimony provided by Alexander Burnett to the Executive Council likewise indicated the presence of individuals recognisable from previous expeditions on the Darling. \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 28 January 1837
referred to this incident as sufficient justification for his subsequent decision to mount an attack.\textsuperscript{103}

With the case around Mitchell put to rest, Gipps’s attention was urgently drawn to the state of unrest brought about by the movement of large numbers of stock to Port Phillip. In June 1838 a letter from a settler on “The Route to Port Phillip” published in the \textit{Gazette} indicated that 100 000 sheep had been settled in the new district since February, with 16 000 more en route. The same letter reported the lack of success had by a party of mounted police sent out from Goulburn under Lieutenant Richard Waddy in search of “the Blacks who murdered Mr. Faithfull’s men.”\textsuperscript{104} This referred to an incident in April at Winding Swamp near the Ovens River, which became symbolic of the growing alarm of settlers. Not entirely convinced that this attack was unprovoked as reported by the \textit{Herald}, acknowledging that at least seven of the 15 man party had been killed the \textit{Gazette} observed “it has now become a matter of absolute necessity, that stockades, manned by an adequate military force, should be stationed at regular distances along the route; until that is done there can be no safety for the traveller”.\textsuperscript{105} Highlighting the awareness that these particular travellers probably had of Bourke’s earlier warning regarding the treatment of Aboriginal women, Milliss is doubtful that this edict would have been properly observed given the history of frontier relations.\textsuperscript{106}

This was not the only instance of violence on the Port Phillip frontier that excited settler feeling. In April 1837 the \textit{Australian} was “grieved to hear a confirmation of the fears entertained for the safety of Messrs. GELLIBRAND and HESSE” following the discovery of their bodies covered in “wounds from the weapons of the Aborigines.”\textsuperscript{107} The \textit{Gazette} was

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\item \textsuperscript{103} Mitchell, Three expeditions into the interior of Eastern Australia, vol. 2 pp. 103.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Sydney Gazette, 14 June 1838.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Sydney Herald, 21 May 1838; Sydney Gazette, 22 May 1838.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 252. Faithful wrote a letter to Sydney Gazette, 18 August 1838 explaining that it was unprovoked.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Australian, 21 April 1837.
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more equivocal about the details of the death of the two men from Van Diemen’s Land, travelling near Barrabull Hills just north of Port Phillip, but was resigned to them having been “Murdered by the natives”, speculating that those responsible had also committed the murder of a settler named Franks.\footnote{Sydney Gazette, 22 April 1837; Sydney Gazette, 25 April 1837.} The paper made a connection between these two separate events and the killing of an Aboriginal man by a settler named Whitehead, who was tried but “unaccountably acquitted”\footnote{Sydney Gazette, 22 April 1837. See also Sydney Gazette, 27 April 1837.}. Indicating a similar awareness of how such incidents tended to originate, the \textit{Australian} at first excused “extermination” as a reasonable “measure of self-protection”, but then asked: “Have not they also injuries to avenge and atrocities to retaliate?”\footnote{Australian, 21 April 1837.} Extending its ambivalence without suggesting any direct intervention the paper made a tentative gesture towards what official steps could be taken when it also asked, “are our countrymen to be slaughtered without help, and without any attempt to correct by terror or by severity the evil disposition towards them, of the Aborigines in that quarter?”\footnote{Australian, 21 April 1837.} A letter from M.D. published in the \textit{Colonist} lamenting “the maudling[sic] humanity of The \textit{Australian}” and “the empty mouthing verbosity of The Gazette”, asked “would not reasoned humanity urge that the most rational mode of preventing future slaughter and extermination, is a timely and salutary demonstration of our superiority?”\footnote{Colonist, 27 April 1837.} In July 1837 A Settler wrote to the same paper suggesting a similar strategy of exile as had been deployed in Van Diemen’s Land.\footnote{Colonist, 6 July 1837.}

But it was only after the murder of Faithfull’s men in 1838 that “terror” would be firmly suggested as a means of once more dealing with the unsettled frontier. Beyond Waddy’s unsuccessful expedition to the Ovens River, how Gipps was to respond to the
growing clamour from settlers for protection was complicated by the fact that he had been
presiding over a government notice that sought to emphasise the legal rights of Aborigines, to
resolve the long running existence of jurisdictional pluralism. Milliss follows minutely the
progress of this document through its various iterations and makes the important observation
that in order not “to exasperate the public mind against the Blacks” Gipps postponed its
publication for two weeks from the 2 May and then for 12 months. However, there is a
tension in Milliss’ argument that as a result of this measure “the colonists were to remain in
happy ignorance of their obligations” to Aborigines on account of its main thrust being
reported in the Gazette on 1 May. In what was indeed an important development in the
history of New South Wales, settlers were ordered, in light of increasing “outrages committed
by the natives,”

to abstain from any hostile measures whatever against the aborigines; and
especially not to use or threaten to use fire-arms; but to remember at all times
that, the native population are under equal protection of the laws, and are to be
regarded and treated, and are liable to the same punishment in all respects, as her
Majesty's other subjects.

However much notice was payed to this publication, settlers were in no mood to abide by any
protective measures for the benefit of anyone but themselves.

In a memorial to Gipps dated 8 June, 82 settlers, including two members of the
Legislative Council, expressed their “regret and alarm” at the growing “hostile attitude” of
several tribes in the neighbourhood of Port Phillip. Once again properties sitting unprotected
threatened to derail the colonial economy as many attendants had been “obliged to abandon

114 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, pp. 246 – 247. When prepared the notice was still despatched to Gleneleg.
115 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 247.
116 Sydney Gazette, 1 May 1838.
their stations, leaving in some cases their flocks and herds at the mercy of the hostile tribes.”

Contrary to expectations that such hostility was in retaliation for wrongs against them, in carrying out their many “outrages” the Aborigines had been “stimulated by their own cupidity and ferocity”. While this language could have been lifted from previous documents of the same ilk penned in both New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, particularly striking is the petitioners’ acknowledgment of the measures previously deployed to manage frontier emotions, being of the opinion

that these untutored savages, not comprehending or appreciating the motives which actuate us, attribute forbearance on our part solely to impotence or fear, and are thus rendered only more bold and sanguinary. This opinion, founded on past experience, will receive ample confirmation on reference to the history of this Colony, and the Acts of former Governments. It is undeniable that no district of the Colony has been settled without in the first instance suffering from the outrages of the Natives, and that these outrages continued, until put an end to by coercive measures. Conciliation was generally tried in the first instance, but invariably failed in producing any good effect, and coercion was ultimately found unavoidably necessary, which, if earlier adopted, would have saved much bloodshed on both sides. It is only when they have become experimentally acquainted with our power and determination to punish their aggressions, that they have become orderly, peaceable, and been brought within the reach of civilization.

Whatever “energetic and effectual steps” Gipps would take to ameliorate this situation, in the euphemistic language of “power and determination” it was clear settlers’ hopes were that terror would once again be struck in the hearts of their frontier enemies. Perhaps indicating a
sensitivity to Gipps’s humanitarian stance, and that growing across the empire more broadly, the memorialists urged that only such a course would prove “humane and merciful.”

Unlike his back down over the Government Notice in May, Gipps’s response to the memorial was a strong indication of his resolve to establish a firmer footing for humanitarian governance, setting a platform for the eventual prosecution of the men arrested for the Myall Creek Massacre. The Gazette’s publication of this response on 30 June was hardly a ringing endorsement, observing that “Sir George seems to have imbibed some queer notions touching the Blacks.” The paper was nonetheless pleased to note that “more certain means are about to be adopted to reduce the savages to order than the mere sending of Messrs. Stewart and Waddy to frighten them with dumb show.” Rather than acquiesce with settler demands, Gipps highlighted the measures he had already taken in response to the attack upon Faithfull’s party, that following Waddy’s deployment to the area 28 mounted police were operating in the district of Port Phillip. This was in addition to the 44 military personnel now in the area, who at the discretion of the local police magistrate could be ordered to “advance, if necessary, into the interior.” Gipps also advised that posts would be established along the route between Port Phillip and Yass, adding more numbers to the mounted Police.

The show of force requested by the memorialists could not be justified given the recent development of the British public being “awakened to a knowledge of what is owing to these ignorant barbarians”. With reference to the establishment of the Select Committee in particular, Gipps remarked that “a deep feeling” now existed on the part of the Government and the public to incorporate this knowledge in a more conciliatory mode of frontier policy. Whatever logical obligation Gipps had in protecting settlers, and however successful previous

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117 Sydney Gazette, 19 June 1838; Colonist 23 June 1838. Make a point about Milliss’s speculation about Gipps’s response in person… Also printed in the Colonist, 23 June 1838.

118 Sydney Gazette, 30 June 1838.
measures alluded to by the memorialists had been, these factors could not contradict recent
instructions “to treat the aboriginal natives as subjects of Her Majesty”.\textsuperscript{119} Glenelg approved
this approach once Gipps’s comprehensive despatch of July reached London in December.
Gipps professed an understanding in the despatch that among the memorialists were men
whose previous dissatisfaction with his response to calls for protection led them to address
their petition to the “Governor and Executive Council instead of the Governor alone.”\textsuperscript{120}

Suggestive of the broader contempt held towards Gipps, it was “not without a feeling
of indignation” that ANTI-HUMBUG wrote to the \textit{Colonist} upon learning the Governor had
refused “to suppress the daily outrages of the Aborigines, and to protect the settlers from their
violence” as law would not allow it. Allowing Gipps’s “need of praise for his unwillingness
to proceed to extremities with these rapacious savages”, ANTI-HUMBUG argued that
“humanity should keep even pace with justice, for it is only justice that the settlers should
receive a share of the protection afforded by that government which awards it to the
Aboriginal natives.” The alternative was to allow the “dusky ‘lords of the soil’” to drive the
“pale faces from their territories” and bring about the equivalent of the Black War.\textsuperscript{121} This
letter did not represent the position the \textit{Colonist} would ultimately take in the increasingly
divergent battleground of frontier politics, but it provides a clear reference to public feeling in
response to Gipps’s stance.

The \textit{Herald’s} response on the other hand was typical of the campaign of white
victimhood it would continue to mount as the government evinced more and more sympathy
towards Aborigines. Warning that the “calamity” of vigilantism was becoming an increasing
reality, the paper projected that “the enterprising settlers who have braved the dangers of the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 30 June 1838. Also printed in \textit{Australian}, 29 June 1838, \textit{Sydney Herald}, 2 July 1838 and
\textit{Colonist}, 30 June 1838.
\item \textit{Colonist}, 20 June 1838.
\end{enumerate}
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Australian wilds, will appeal to posterity, that they were driven to extremities by the supineness or impotence of ‘liberal’ governments, whose sympathies and charities were exclusively excited by the possessors of an Ethiopian visage.”¹²² In a letter written before Gipps even received the memorial but published on 28 June, H.H. similarly warned that “settlers are now wound up to a pitch of exasperation, and it requires but little provocation to make them discharge their vengeance on the devoted heads of culprits.”¹²³ The use of present tense in this instance of course suggesting that such “vengeance” was already taking place.

And of course it already had. News of events at Myall Creek on 10 June did not feature in the press until mid-July. When it did, the already stark emotional battle-lines of New South Wales came into glaring relief. On 17 July the Australian shared information regarding a “most barbarous murder, which has been committed in the north-west district; twenty-two aboriginal natives inhumanly shot by several stockmen, and their bodies were afterwards burnt.” The paper also reported that the Police magistrate at Muswellbrook, Edward Day, had been sent to the Liverpool Plains to investigate the murders.¹²⁴ This information was also contained in Gipps’s despatch of 21 July along with his response to the Port Phillip memorial.¹²⁵ That Gipps had responded so quickly to ascertain the circumstances of the report about Myall Creek, which he received in the form of a letter from Frederick Foot in the first week of July, indicates his enthusiasm for enacting the sentiment implicit in his response to the settlers of Port Phillip. Rather than jump at an opportunity to protect settlers, he instead sought to address the cause of what appeared to be unprovoked attack on at least 22 Aborigines. A more accurate death toll of 28 would subsequently emerge.

¹²² Sydney Herald, 21 June 1838.
¹²³ Sydney Herald, 28 June 1838.
¹²⁴ Australian, 17 July 1838.
¹²⁵ Gipps to Glenelg, HRA, series 1, vol. 19, p. 511
It is unclear how Foot, a settler from the Liverpool Plains, became the individual who would personally report news of the massacre to Gipps at the beginning of July. 126 His letter relied entirely upon the testimony of Foster, an overseer at a station nearby Dangar’s property at Myall Creek. It seems Foot’s motivation in travelling so far to convey this news was a simple matter of him holding residence in the neighbourhood of where such a “flagrant violation of the law took place” and his interest in “peace and safety of All Her Majesty’s subjects in that part of the Colony.” Milliss is right in claiming that Gipps’s response to the memorial amounted to the most “emphatic stand in defence of the blacks”, of attempting to enforce the legal equality so strongly sought by London. But the fact that someone such as Foot had acted upon the same desire to see “All His Majesty’s subjects” treated fairly either suggests his quick exposure to Gipps’s orders or his own feelings towards Aborigines. Perhaps it was both.

At all events, as Milliss’ has noted, one of the curiosities of Foot’s letter is the information that the eventual victims of the massacre at Myall Creek arrived at Dangar’s property “on the premise that they would be protected.”127 It was thus clear that not only Foot, but potentially some of those responsible for the massacre itself, had made some level of emotional investment on the other side of the frontier. But more importantly, why was protection being sought by the Wererai? If the Bingara tradition holds some truth, how is that some frontiersmen could feel inspired to lead a “pogrom”, to borrow Milliss’s heavy phrase, while others felt it their duty to protect Aborigines from such violence?128

These questions strike to the complexity of emotion on the frontier, not just on the Liverpool Plains, but as suggested earlier by Russell on the Hunter, and elsewhere across

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126 Millis, Waterloo Creek, p. 314.
127 Foot to Thomson, cited in Milliss, Waterloo Creek, pp. 316 – 317.
128 Milliss in fact uses the word pogrom on many occasions, and one occasion describes the situation on the Liverpool Plains in terms of a Holocaust. Millis, Waterloo Creek, pp. 279 – 280
New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. It wasn’t always as simple as a strict emotional dichotomy between colonial centre and colonial periphery, between compassion and fear. Indeed, it appears to be partly at the initiative of Charles Kilmeister, one of the seven men eventually hanged for the massacre, that prompted its victims to seek asylum where they did. While there is enough evidence to suggest that divisions between attitudes towards Aboriginal people were hardening at this time, telling the story of the Myall Creek massacre from Kilmeister’s perspective emphasises the difficulty some had in negotiating the emotional turmoil of the frontier.

In an observation that could just as well apply to other areas of out-settlement across New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, Milliss explains that fear, “real or imagined”, was a fact of life for stockkeepers at Myall Creek. Dangar’s overseer, William Hobbs, made a point of travelling with “a pair of pistols” and made the same allowance for servants such as Kilmeister. Yet when the Wererai at first sought protection on a neighbouring property, concerned for their ongoing safety its overseer Andrew Eaton felt comfortable enough to negotiate their sanctuary at Myall Creek with Kilmeister. Not discounting the likelihood that this arrangement was motivated by the possibility of sexual favours it offered, in Milliss’s estimate “something approaching real friendship” developed between the group of 40 to 50 Wererai and the stockkeepers. Suggesting that a young servant named George Anderson may have fallen in love with a woman of the group named ‘Ipeta’, Milliss speculates that “perhaps even the buck-toothed, pock faced Bristol ropemaker Kilmeister got a faint glimmer of the same emotion as well before some poison deep in his system surfaced in its stead and he turned viciously against he people he had so warmly befriended.”

This turn refers to Kilmeister’s eventual complicity in the murder of 28 Wererai, mostly women and Children, when 11 men arrived at Myall Creek during the afternoon of 10 June led by a squatter named James Henry Fleming. 131 The party had learned that Dangar’s was providing refuge to Aborigines when it congregated at Bell’s station a few days prior, where they may have also been able to glean that Hobbs was about to leave Myall Creek on a trip to a nearby station. 132 Whatever “friendship” that may have been cultivated between Kilmeister and his unlikely companions vanished the moment he joined the party as it led the hand-tied Aborigines over a ridge away from the huts under the pre-tense of giving them a ‘fright’. 133 That a massacre occurred is beyond doubt, but how it transpired is difficult to infer in any detail on account of their being no eyewitness accounts. Milliss nonetheless speculates that the 28 victims were “hacked and slashed to death”, a blade being a “more efficient and emotionally satisfying implement.” 134

However emotionally driven their actions may have been, fear and victimhood certainly provided the central narrative around which settlers and certain elements of the press explained the actions of the 11 men responsible for the Myall Creek massacre. In September the Gazette used the massacre as a vindication of its previous stream of warnings that given the government’s “strong disinclination to extend that protection to the settlers it is their bounden duty to afford”, settlers were bound “to take up arms in self-defence.” Not wishing to prejudice the fate of the 10 “unhappy men” Day had managed to bring into custody in the course of his inquiry, it was suffice to say “that reprisals of the kind” the Gazette anticipated had occurred and “twenty-eight individuals of the tribe domiciled on the banks of the Gwydir River, have been inhumanly massacred.” Only the squatter and party

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131 The absence of men at the station at the time was on account of many of them being out cutting bark with a servant named Foster. Milliss, Waterloo Creek, pp. 291 – 292
132 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, pp. 287- 288.
133 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, pp. 293 – 295.
134 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, pp. 295 – 296.
leader James Henry Fleming remained at large. Showing a flicker of its humanitarian hand, the paper quickly pulled it away in explaining “the feeling on the subject” on the part of settlers as being reflected by the subscription of 200 guineas for the prisoners’ defence.  

In the same issue the Gazette published a memorial recently delivered to Gipps following a meeting of settlers at Patricks Plains led by Robert Scott, potentially associated with the “Committee of the Disturbed state of the North Western Districts”, soon known as the “Black Association” through the press. The memorial is remarkable for two reasons. First and foremost is its familiar delineation of the correlation between fear and the absolute necessity of self-defence in the absence of sufficient government protection. The memorialists lamented “the extent to which the hostility between the Aboriginal Natives and the Europeans has arrived in the North Western district”, but urged Gipps to “be aware of the fearful consequences likely to result from men acting under exasperated feelings and subject to no control, but their hatred heightened by their fear, leading (even ourselves) to habits that must make every lover of good Government shudder.” An obscure reference to the potential of settlers to act in a similar violent capacity as their servants, this qualified concern as to what could result if aboriginal aggression was not appropriately checked speaks to the otherwise humane timbre the memorial hoped to achieve. The need for Gipps to check “this dreadful state of things” was particularly urgent given the settlers’ belief that following the removal of Day’s party of Mounted Police stationed in the district the “Blacks”, already “actuated by the most revengeful feelings”, would “renew their aggressions with increased fury.” Evoking as much providential righteousness on the part of the pastoral community as Robinson had in conjunction with his role in saving the Aborigines, the memorialists held “no fear of the ultimate result (even if left to our own unaided exertions)” but still looked

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135 Sydney Gazette, 20 September 1838.  
136 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 371
“with horror to the individual suffering, through which our deliverance must be accomplished – unless Your Excellency will humanely interpose and with your wisdom and aid, avert the necessity of our again having recourse to our own strength and courage.” It is hard not to read “deliverance” in this context as activating the eliminationist logic of settler colonialism.

This mix of will-to-power and political sensitivity to humanitarian discourse furnishes the second remarkable aspect of the memorial. The first of two appendices accompanying the petition was essentially a chronology of the various incidents leading to white deaths on the Liverpool Plains, beginning with the murder of two men in Mitchell’s service in 1832 on the Gwydir and ending in April 1836 reporting the death of a hutkeeper on the same river. Far more striking was “Appendix B” consisting in “a plan by which to pay an Interior Police”. In essence this was a proposal that squatters pay an annual sum for every section of land they occupied on top of the existing 10-pound licence fee. This extra revenue would provide the combined means of maintaining an “efficient Police” and the Commissioners of Crown Lands. However, the corollary of this apparent benevolence was that not only would squatters now be safer from Aboriginal incursion but also “be protected from the intrusion of each other.” In a bid to secure more permanent tenure for squatters, the paying of an annual sum was to ensure that each parcel of land “remain in undisturbed possession until put up for sale and purchase.” Milliss infers from Gipps’s promise “to give the idea his earnest consideration”, when Scott presented the memorial on September 18 that the Governor may have shared information regarding his plan to amend the Crown Lands Occupation Act.

That the new Bill which passed through the Legislative Council on 28 September by no means reassured squatter concerns regarding security of tenure helps explain Scott’s

137 Sydney Gazette, 20 September 1838.
138 Sydney Gazette, 20 September 1838.
139 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 403.
subsequent act of sending Gipps a document titled ‘Proposed heads of an Enactment for protecting all persons lawfully being, or depasturing Stock, Beyond the limits of location, in their persons and properties, and in their just rights and privileges’. This recalibrated Scott’s representation of squatter concerns squarely around the issue of permanence of tenure. It was becoming clearer and clearer how closely entwined the issues of white victimhood and ownership of land were becoming. On the other hand the negotiation of the Crown Lands Occupation Act revealed Gipps’s prioritisation of a more humane frontier policy, in accordance with Glenelg’s instructions, following his appointment in early October of Edward Mayne as the new Commissioner of Crown Lands with the de facto responsibility of Protector of Aborigines. This appointment of responsibilities tacitly acquiesced in Scott’s call for the protection of squatters and their property while ensuring that this obligation extended just as much towards Aboriginal people. In any event, owing to objections being lodged principally by Justice Burton on constitutional grounds, Gipps pushed discussion of the Crown Lands Act into the next year. Thus when Scott had the even greater temerity to send Gipps the complete draft of a proposed Bill along the lines of his previous suggestions, this time under the explicit auspices of the ‘Committee on the disturbed state of the North Western District’, the governor could advise that its contents would be considered during the next sitting of the Legislature.

Gipps was far less understanding when it came to the discovery that Scott had visited the Myall Creek prisoners in jail shortly after he had delivered the memorial to Gipps in September. As Gipps would later write to Glenelg, “In the presence of a Gaoler”, most likely

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141 Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, pp. 430, 407. In an earlier conversation, Gipps assured Robinson that the new powers he hoped to bestow upon Commissioners of Crown Lands would not interfere with his official appointment as Protector of Aborigines.
142 Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, p. 430.
Henry Keck, Scott purportedly advised the 11 men “not to split among themselves,….that there was no direct evidence against them, and that, if they were only true to each other, they could not be convicted.” Yet it was not Scott’s acknowledgment that he had indeed provided this advice and expression of regret that he had, after reading the depositions against them, that earned him a reprimand. It was the fact that he continued to be so closely involved once the trial was taking place. By sitting next to their attorney even, “thus making himself a party in their defence”, on top of his visit to the prison, Gipps was of the opinion that Scott “did materially interfere with, and have in part prevented the due administration of justice.” Gipps chose not to renew Scott’s commission as Justice of the Peace in the new year.

This point in time was not just an important in terms of the hopeful political manoeuvrings of the ‘Black Association’ but also the Sydney humanitarian movement. Just as the Herald became more and more of an advocate for the squatting cause in the context of the Myall Creek massacre trial, so too were elements of the press consolidating their support behind a burgeoning humanitarian sentiment. Although with less certainty than the Herald, the Monitor reported on the memorial with an ear to the plight of settlers. It was clear that “the aggression of the Blacks have exasperated the whites, to that degree, that they do not hesitate to hint pretty broadly their intentions of sanguinary reprisal upon the whole race, unless protection be afforded to their lives and properties.” Meanwhile, the Herald’s readership proved broad enough to challenge a letter from ANTI-HYPOCRITE which asserted that any attempt to civilise Aborigines was “futile and vain”.

Directly quoting his fellow correspondent, AN AUSTRALIAN was aghast that a fellow countrymen such as ANTI-HYPOCRITE could so heartily endorse calls to “suppress

145 Gipps to Glenelg, HRA, series 1, vol. 19, p. 705 – 707; Milliss, Waterloo Creek, pp. 452 – 453.
147 Monitor, 21 September 1838.
148 Sydney Herald, 19 September 1838.
the violence, rapine, and bloodshed, perpetrated by these hordes of aboriginal cannibals, to whom the veriest reptile that crawls the earth holds out matter for emulation; and who are far, very far, below the meanest brute in rationality, and every feeling pertaining thereto". W.L. likewise wrote to the Herald in opposition to the “erroneous and dangerous opinions” of ANTI-HYPOCRITE, calculated, as they were “to excuse, or extenuate, certain deeds of brutal violence, which have been committed by some white savages in the interior, on defenceless blacks.”

While “very creditable to the feelings of the writer”, the Herald ultimately viewed AN AUSTRALIAN’S reply to ANTI-HYPOCRITE unfavourably. Preference for Europeans would always be a priority over “savage barbarians in whatever quarter of the globe the latter may be found.” “We have no patience with vagrant sympathy”, the paper exclaimed, “when we learn that our cattle and our servants have been speared by the unsophisticated blacks. No, we; the settlers must be protected - or we know what the result will be.” As it drew itself closer to the settler plight, the Herald dismissed the proposal of sending the Flinders Island Aborigines to the mainland. Ridiculing one of Robinson’s hopeful philanthropic measures, the paper cried,

Let the Vandemonians keep their Alexanders, Napoleons, Achilleses, Ajaxes, Alfreds, Hannibals, Leonidases, Eugenes, King Georges, Tippoo Saibs, Washingtons, and Peter Pindars! - their Lallah Rookhs, Semiraurses, Sabinas, Matildas, Amelias, and Claras! – all to themselves. We want neither the classic

149 Sydney Herald, 5 October 1838.
150 Sydney Herald, 5 October 1838.
151 Sydney Herald, 5 October 1838.
nor the romantic savages here. We have too many of the murderous wretches about us already.152

Meanwhile, although his chance to speak was postponed to a subsequent meeting, Robinson took part in the inauguration of the Sydney branch of the Aborigines Protection Society on 16 October, at which a resolution was passed to endorse the benevolent feeling contained within the Select Committee’s Report. According directly with the hopes of the Report, the editor of the *Colonist* Rev. John Dunmore Lang spoke to the essential philanthropy of colonisation “as one of the noblest works in which man was employed” and extolled the virtue of the new protectionist imperative necessitated by revelations of mistreatment of Aboriginal people. Similarly, George Windeyer, who was in fact soon to represent the Myall Creek men, disputed Aboriginal sovereignty outright considering the tyrannical character it imposed upon Europeans who occupied their land and the truism that “he who performed labour on the land, and brought it from a state of nature into productiveness, had the best title to it”. But this “did not mean to say that the Aborigines were not entitled to some care and protection at the hands of the whites.”153 Hiding the actual state of affairs on the frontier, this obligation was owing to the fact that they were unable to protect themselves.154

Typically less ambivalent was Lancelot Threlkeld, a figure long involved in the controversies of colonial politics principally on account of his troubled relationship with the London Missionary Society while responsible for the Lake Macquarie mission established in 1824.155 Perhaps more than any other humanitarian public figure, Threlkeld chose to unequivocally advocate for Aboriginal people against settler interests. In doing so he

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152 *Sydney Herald*, 5 October 1838.
153 *Australian*, 18 October 1838
154 *Sydney Gazette*, 18 October 1838.

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alienated himself within the white community, even from other religious figures including Lang who held pastoral interests.\textsuperscript{156} Despite this antagonism Threlkeld still joined in the general spirit of the inaugural gathering, avidly proclaiming that the Editors of newspapers stood charged with criminality in the sight of God, by having in their writings inflamed the minds of the Europeans and induced them to exterminate the Aborigines. It might be very well to shelter themselves now under the omnipotent 'We', but that would avail little when they were individually called on to answer for blood on their hands before the Judge of all.\textsuperscript{157}

The honesty of this evaluation was not appreciated by the \textit{Gazette}, which either through ignorance or dishonesty, claimed that it had ever “advocated the cause of the Aborigines”, and explained that Threlkeld was likewise aware that the paper’s editor, George Cavanagh, was in fact a member of the group then being addressed.\textsuperscript{158} Be that as it may, the \textit{Gazette} had not always been the advocate for Aboriginal people that its present editor was now claiming.

It was the indictment of the press by Baptist minister John Saunders at the adjourned meeting of the Aborigines Protection Society on 18 October which was to cause the biggest public stir. Robinson reflected in his journal upon observations in the press that he had spoken for three hours on this occasion. In seconding the resolution of the previous meeting, Robinson’s speech was more than anything a pitch for the prospects of his coming role as Chief Protector; an opportunity beyond his diaries to represent himself as the anxious

\textsuperscript{156}As Anna Johnston points out, Threlkeld played a key role in the circulation of humanitarian ideas and negotiation of British identity during the 1820s and 1830s across the British imperial world. Even more so than Robinson, he allowed his compassion for Aboriginal people to overwhelm whatever obligations he owed to the consolidation of settler society and channel his own identity and authority within imperial structures of religious governance. Johnston, \textit{The Paper War}, pp. 5, 16, 23, 25

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Australian}, 18 October 1838

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 20 October 1838.
guardian of all Aborigines. In summarising his experiences during the Friendly Mission he took the opportunity to offer evidence for the advancement of the Flinders island Aborigines towards civilisation.\textsuperscript{159} But it was left to Saunders to truly capture the zeal of the gathering. “The exhibition of the feeling of the Meeting was so great”, reported the \textit{Gazette}, “that it would be impossible to insert the notice of cheers at the points at which they occurred; in fact almost every word of the reverend gentleman's speech called forth plaudits.”

Saunders achieved this emotional response through his targeting of Ward Stephens and the \textit{Herald}, specifically a recent article which essentially proposed martial law and called out the growing benevolent attitude towards Aborigines for its “cant and hypocrisy”.\textsuperscript{160} How else could such suggestions be understood other than as an encouragement “to slaughter human beings”?\textsuperscript{161} How else could one read the \textit{Herald} and not believe that there was not “a murderous spirit abroad” as it so hoped to demonstrate? Saunders was confounded owing to his belief that opposition to the Society was largely attributable “to a few of the lowest and most degraded characters.” While every bit rhetorical, in identifying this discrepancy Saunders in fact mounts a compelling analysis of the imaginative dialectic between the public and the press. If the “slander” expressed in the \textit{Herald} in reality only reflected the sentiment of “degraded characters” there was a stark contradiction for any one who thought otherwise to continue its purchase. Aware that newspaper editors tended “to pander to a taste already formed”, Saunders labelled Ward a mercenary “seeking to please the vitiated tastes of a petty faction” which otherwise did not reflect those of “colonists at large”. Saunders’ insinuation that the \textit{Herald} was siding expressly with the interests of squatters was not unmerited. By the same token it was becoming clearer that under the editorship of Lang, the paper through

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 23 October 1838. \\
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Sydney Herald}, 15 October 1838. \\
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Colonist}, 31 October 1838.
which Saunders was conveying his opinions, the _Colonist_, was becoming more and more committed to the humanitarian cause.\textsuperscript{162}

Saunders then went on to reverse the allegation of “cant and hypocrisy” directed at the humanitarian principles embodied in the Aborigines Protection Society. “There was the song of malevolence as well as the song of benevolence”, he declared, referring to “cant” in terms of “the usual strain of a party”.\textsuperscript{163} Accepting that canters existed among religious communities, although not genuine philanthropists, Saunders explained that “cant and hypocrisy were found everywhere, and more especially with those demons in human shape who would urge the extermination of a whole race if opposed to them.”\textsuperscript{164} More directly Saunders loaded the _Herald_ with the baggage of slavery so recently cast off by the same people now so concerned with Aboriginal rights, the paper being “of a complexion with the song which has been for too long chanted in the West Indies.”\textsuperscript{165} Notwithstanding the height of this rhetoric, and although he would not perhaps accept being placed within it himself, Saunders in fact offers a particularly useful construction for describing the competing feelings towards Aboriginal people which had prefigured frontier politics across New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land for many years. It is apt that such an allegory should emerge at a point where the discursive opposition between humanitarian “canters” and those who appeared as “demons in human shape” was at its height.

The latter group reacted in predictable fashion. “Mr. Saunders and the ranting crew who applauded him, shall not come off scot-free”, promised the _Herald_.\textsuperscript{166} “Had the editor of this

\textsuperscript{162} Milliss, _Waterloo Creek_, p. 440.
\textsuperscript{163} Gazette, 23 October 1838; _Colonist_, 31 October 1838. This is a combined reading of the different language used in the _Gazette_ and the _Colonist_ to describe Saunders speech. The _Colonist_ in fact transcribed “the song of malevolence as well as the song of benevolence” as the “cant of malevolence as well as of benevolence”. As Saunders’ own definition implies, the terms are essentially interchangeable.
\textsuperscript{164} _Colonist_, 31 October 1838
\textsuperscript{165} _Colonist_, 31 October 1838.
\textsuperscript{166} _Sydney Herald_, 22 October 1838
journal, in whose absence Mr. Saunders had the good taste and gentlemanly feeling to
denounce as a hireling, been present, the Reverend gentleman would, most assuredly, have
been taught better manners”, the paper menacingly observed.167 As it mocked the “furious
partisan zeal” of the Aborigines Protection Society, AN AUSTRALIAN meanwhile wrote to
the Colonist expressing “feelings of the liveliest interest” in the object of the recent meetings.
Of his experiences with Aboriginal people AN AUSTRALIAN wrote,

that their kindness and attention, and their feeling for you in any trouble has often
struck me as being more sincere and more from the heart, than that often
professed by the called Christian, the white man; as for honesty, I would trust
most of them equally as soon as the white, and I have always, although
sometimes roaming with two or three blacks in the woods until almost midnight,
felt myself as safe as when a babe in the arms of my mother.168

Once again disrupting the negative tenor of the frontier narrative, PHILANTHROPUS
similarly challenged the Herald on the grounds of the potential amicability of frontier
relations. “How is it”, PHILANTHROPUS addressed Ward Stephens,

that while some persons complain of the robberies and murders committed by the
blacks, the courageous, prudent, firm, patient, and conciliatory manners and
conduct of Messrs Sturt, Imlay, Ryue, Robinson, Eyre, Hawdon, and others, have
secured to these gentlemen uninjured and uninterrupted residence on journeys,
and perfect safety among the Aborigines, for months or weeks together?169

Mitchell being the obvious exclusion, this was a reasonable question to ask, and it spoke
well of the Herald’s objectivity to publish it. But it did nothing to prompt any genuine

167 Sydney Herald, 22 October 1838.
168 Colonist, 24 October 1838.
169 Sydney Herald, 29 October 1838.
reflection on the part of the paper, nor its broader readership, on the eve of the Myall Creek murder trial. OBSERVER was particularly critical of a letter in the *Colonist* from Justitia, which in representing the interests of one side of the coming trial, failed to mention “the many, and even recent inhuman murders committed by the native tribes on defenceless shepherds and others – men, too, placed, AND NOT FROM CHOICE, at their mercy, and far, far in the lonely forests.” How were Robinson and his “band of Protectors” attempting to reconcile the “hostile parties” on the frontier other than spending their time idly and “speechifying” at public meetings?170 In taking the same “set of visionaries” to task, and in particular Saunders as a “clerical libeller”, the *Herald* attempted to square the ledger regarding the alleged “murderous spirit” driving settlers to atrocities.

Most importantly the paper argued, it had never encouraged settlers to act in such a spirit.171 Yet in repudiating this allegation, in the same lengthy article the paper asserted that “in the name of the settlers… they WILL NOT allow the blacks to plunder the whites of their property or to murder them with impunity.” This was a clear evaluation of the relative worth of white and black lives. Given that “no exertions are made by the government, or by the canters, to bring the maurauders to justice-to hang them, as whites would be hanged,” the paper also asserted, “the law is unequal, and not one of the whining crew who infest the Colony…can prove the reverse.” Denying it ever inculcated a “murderous spirit” it was more than willing to now, in proclaiming:

> protect the whites as well as the blacks. Protect the white settler, his wife, and children, in remote places, from the filthy, brutal cannibals of New Holland. We say to the Colonists, since the Government makes no adequate exertion to protect you, protect yourselves; and if the ferocious savages endeavour to plunder or

170 *Sydney Herald*, 12 November 1838.
171 *Sydney Herald*, 14 November 1838.
destroy your property, or to murder yourselves, your families, or your servants, do to them as you would do to any white robbers or murderers-SHOOT THEM DEAD, if you can. 172

The Herald could not allow Aborigines to be “magnified into martyrs, at the settlers expense”, to let “the free Colonists to be assailed by a gang of clerical traducers – the spouters of venomous libels” 173

The following day, 15 November, the 11 men accused of the Myall Creek Murder were acquitted in the Supreme Court. 174 In reporting this news, the Colonist also published a letter from Saunders addressing the Herald’s denial of its inculcation of a “murderous spirit” among settlers. To the contrary, and in a similar vein to Threlkeld, Saunders argued that Ward “had mistaken the tone of popular feeling”. It was only the editor of the Herald to whom Saunders attributed the sentiments printed in his paper and no other “respectable man”. This created a tension in Saunders’ overall argument to the extent that he previously insinuated that Ward published what he did for the “sake of hire”, essentially that he was pandering to the interests of settlers. It was never the case that settlers lacked any emotional agency other than that which they generated from a discourse of fear and white victimhood in the press. At best newspapers such as the Herald provided the scaffold of language and technology around which settler emotions could cohere, although clearly not without contest. While this was essentially Saunders’ point, his argument with Ward had since the beginning retained a personal aspect which ultimately guided his rhetorical purpose. 175 To this extent both men can be respectively framed as the key agents contesting the expression of emotion

172 Sydney Herald, 14 November 1838.
173 Sydney Herald, 14 November 1838.
174 Colonist, 17 November 1838
175 Colonist, 17 November 1838. Once again singling out Ward’s call for martial law, Saunders also took the opportunity to argue that such a measure would dangerously provide a legal thrust to the representation of Aboriginal people as animals, throwing “them open as a kind of fera naturae to become the common game of the world.”
in terms of frontier victimhood, and how it informed representations of settler subjectivity, in the context of one of the more tumultuous periods of New South Wales history.\textsuperscript{176}

Saunders may or may not have been aware of Scott’s particular involvement in the lead up to the trial through the body of the Black Association, a factor that would broaden his conception of which other “respectable” men harbouring a murderous spirit. In his prosecution of the Myall Creek men Attorney General John Hubert Plunkett made his concerns clear that the “three talented gentlemen” defending the Myall Creek men could only do so thanks at the behest of “many Gentlemen high in rank”. The shame that these men should have felt was not diminished by many of them being unaware of the ‘Black Association’s “real intent… which was virtually to protect the stockkeepers and shepherds in the extermination of the blacks.”\textsuperscript{177} Plunkett also took aim at the Herald, telling the jury that he hoped the paper did not reflect “public feeling”\textsuperscript{178}. That the court was so jubilant at the verdicts of not guilty for each prisoner foiled Plunkett’s hopes. As the Monitor reported the “aristocracy of the Colony, for once, joined heart and hand with the prison-population, in expressions of joy at the acquittal of these men.”\textsuperscript{179} The outrage following Plunkett’s request that the prisoners be kept in custody for the hearing of further indictments equally demonstrates how far frontier emotion had come to obscure class boundaries – however often

\textsuperscript{176} While Robinson undoubtedly provides the most comprehensive insight to the anxiety which drove some members of the humanitarian movement on account of his extensive diaries, the Herald was rather more inclined to pay attention to what he said with more respect than they did Saunders, however critical they were of Protectors in general. This perhaps more than anything owed to the fact that whatever reservations he had regarding the paper’s observations of Aboriginal people, he made them less clear in public. See Sydney Herald 14 November 1838.
\textsuperscript{177} Australian, 17 November 1838. Sydney Gazette, 17 November 1838
\textsuperscript{178} Australian, 17 November 1838.
\textsuperscript{179} Monitor, 19 November 1838.
“lower orders” could be previously blamed for instigating violence – instilling the trope of white victimhood as a particularly cohesive social factor in colonial New South Wales.\(^{180}\)

Fuelled by the government’s intent on pursuing the Myall Creek men, the \textit{Herald} continued its attack upon Saunders, responding particularly strongly to the idea that they “were the hirelings of a despicable faction”. Picking up more on the “fanatic Priest’s” initial outburst at the Aborigines Protection Society, the paper did not deny the existence of such a faction but rather threatened that they were the “very men who will put down him and his canting crew.” Eliciting the power that came with holding the reigns to the colony’s prosperity the paper reified the emergent squattocracy. “They are the holders of the soil and of the wealth of the country”, it bellowed. “They are the holders of the public purse; who will have the expenditure of the public money, the making of the laws, and who will form the juries of the Colony.”

Yet paradoxically it was all too clear that these same men, or at least their servants, were clearly the victims of not just black depredations but the intransigence of the government. \textit{Ressentiment} in this case owed not to a “murderous spirit” but a “black fever abroad - a nasty epidemic black disease.” Alluding to the influence of humanitarian discourse, the \textit{Herald} took Gipps to task for offering only 10 pounds for a “desperate villain” terrorising the district of Merton who had escaped from an “ironed gang” at Newcastle while it had previously offered 50 pounds for the apprehension of Fleming, the alleged ringleader of the Myall Creek Massacre. “Is the plunder of the lonely settlers' property - the possible deprivation of their lives - by a convict robber, to be estimated at just one-fifth part of the

\(^{180}\) \textit{Monitor}, 19 November 1838; Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 519. It does not suit the purposes of this chapter to go into the details of the massacre as it was heard in court, accounts of which can be found in \textit{Australian}, 17 November 1838 and \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 20 November, 1838.
value which is set upon the life of a black, who is merely supposed to have been murdered,” the paper asked.\(^{181}\) Perhaps “28 blacks” as opposed to “a black” was what the paper meant.

The case for victimhood was more balanced in the *Monitor’s* reckoning. Not only had the 28 victims of the massacre not “rushed” any cattle in the area – an act often referred to throughout the trials in justifying the contempt with which stock keepers came to hold the Werera – but “had become domesticated” in the company of one of the men who eventually led them to their slaughter under the guise of friendship. Yet the *Monitor* believed that this “deed of darkness” for which it could not find a “parallel for cold-blooded ferocity, even in the history of Cortez and the Mexicans, or of Pizarro and the Peruvians” had ultimately been the design of others. The paper was particularly scathing of the hiring of the three counsellors in the men’s defence leading to the “highly popular” verdict of not guilty. “We tremble to remain in a country where such feelings and principles prevail”, wrote the *Monitor*. Having “always dreaded an oligarchy” the paper saw the virtue of returning to “Old England” should a “new Act of Parliament take the government of this Colony out of the hands of the Queen, and place it in the hands of the illiterate Dutch money making aristocracy of this Colony”. Paying sufficient awareness to the rights of Aborigines, the paper forewarned that the recent verdict heralded a time whereby should a person “be sufficiently unpopular with the aristocracy” their murder would go unheeded. “Money, lucre, profit these are the guide. O Australia!” Yet, in backing up its previous call for the protection of settlers in Port Phillip, the *Monitor* attributed Gipps’s failure to do so rather than the *Herald’s* rhetoric for creating the “murderous spirit and wicked malignity generally prevalent among our graziers and settlers”\(^{182}\)

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\(^{181}\) *Sydney Herald*, 19 November 1838  
\(^{182}\) *Monitor*, 19 November 1838.
While it had definitely become an advocate for the humanitarian cause by the stage, in the lead up to the second trial the *Colonist* chose not to prejudice the guilt or otherwise of the Myall Creek men by not publishing the results of the first. However, like the *Monitor* it was particularly concerned that the association of squatters formed to fund the defence of the accused men may have had the more insidious “object to encourage a systematic slaughter of the blacks.” But given the “respectability” of the men involved in the association the *Colonist* was sure that once the “hideous deformity” of the massacre was revealed they would be “the first to wish the diabolical ruffians concerned in the massacre subjected to the well-merited behests of justice.”\(^{183}\) In a further demonstration of where its sympathies were coming to lie, the paper published a letter from M who purported to be insulted by the *Herald* “ascribing all the sympathy towards the blacks exclusively to the Rev. Mr. Saunders.” The *Colonist* added a comment which consolidated this point of view in denying “‘the colony is deaf to the cry’ of our long neglected Aborigines” but had by and large responded to it in a “philanthropic manner”. A letter to the *Monitor* from A.N.C. showed great appreciation for the overall objectivity offered by both it and the *Colonist*, reading the reports of the trial with “a feeling of horror” and a suspicion that the excitement produced by the verdict alluded to the possibility that “others besides the actual murderers are implicated.”\(^{184}\)

But, as Milliss has observed, only the *Australian* was truly “unequivocal” in its response to the trial, urging that the “secret ‘brotherhood’” formed in protection of the stockkeepers be prosecuted and not the men facing their second trial.\(^{185}\) Wishing that its contemporaries had done the same, only after the seven men who stood trial for the second time, Charles Kilmeister, John Russell, Edward Foley, John Johnstone, James Parry, James Oates and William Hawkins, were found guilty of five of the charges of murder brought

\(^{183}\) *Colonist*, 21 November 1838.

\(^{184}\) *Monitor*, 26 November 1838.

\(^{185}\) Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, p. 520.
before the court was the *Gazette* comfortable in revealing its “feelings on the subject”, sensitive to the whole incident’s potential to make “an impression detrimental to the interests of our community on the minds of the British public.”  

A similar concern for the “excitement” the massacre might cause “among the moral and Religious classes” was addressed by AN ENGLISH JURYMAN to the *Australian*. To answer the question as to what the “feelings of the people of New South Wales on the subject” were, the writer shared an excerpt from a juryman of the first trial, which indicated that he “knew well they were guilty of the murder, but… would never see a white man suffer for shooting a black.”

Not feeling obliged to remark upon the fate of the “unfortunate men”, the *Gazette* was forthright in arguing that “the original cause of all these atrocities is traceable to the neglect of the Executive in not making due provision for the equal administration of justice between the black and white man.” “While the black man escapes with impunity from the law of the land, for the crime he has committed on the white man,” the paper warned, “so long will a feeling prevail, and very justly, that justice is not equally administered.”  

The following day Judge Burton, reportedly moved to tears in doing so, condemned the seven guilty men to death for the massacre at Myall Creek. “What man, whose heart is not dead to every feeling of humanity,” asked Burton, “can attempt to palliate the conduct of its diabolical perpetrators?”

Having made its point about legal equality, the *Gazette* raised a concern similar to that made by the *Monitor*, following the initial non-guilty verdict, regarding the reliability of the legal system. It now seemed possible that juries could come to different decisions on the one

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186 *Sydney Gazette*, 4 December 1838.
187 *Australian*, 8 December 1838.
188 *Sydney Gazette*, 4 December 1838.
189 *Sydney Gazette*, 6 December 1838.
190 *Colonist*, 12 December 1838.
matter “whenever political feelings or political interests are involved.” Perhaps on account of it being the arbiter of such interests, the Herald’s reaction to the death sentences was more squarely on the grounds of legal equality, not so much to dispute that the men were in fact guilty, but rather to ask the question: “Are blacks to be hanged for murder as well as whites?” The paper then went on to list the various white victims of Aboriginal violence since 1832 recently given as evidence to the 'the Committee of the Legislative Council, on the Aborigines' Question’ led by Broughton. Once again even Captain Logan, murdered at Moreton Bay in 1831, was dredged up to emphasise the scale of white victimhood which would go unavenged. Rather than spending precious public money on the Protectors, Gipps should create a police force whose obligation it was to protect both black and white. Cementing the martyrdom of the Myall Creek seven in the mythology of white victimhood, the argument of legal equality also provided the thrust of at least five memorials that Gipps received pleading that he grant the men clemency, two of which were signed by many of the jurors who sat both trials. Gipps and the Council did not see the need to uphold any of these reservations, and the guilty men were hanged on 18 December 1838.

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The press response to the hangings was relatively muted. The Gazette took the opportunity to remind readers that whether or not the men acted under orders, their actions were subsequently validated as being in accordance with the interests of their masters.

191 Sydney Gazette, 11 December 1838.
192 An excerpt from the Committee’s report was published in both the Colonist and Gazette, making public the decision not to recommend the relocation of the Flinder’s Island Aborigines. The report otherwise postponed any other considerations by recommending “the appointment of a similar Committee at an early period during the next Session of Council, to whom the enquiry into the condition of the Aborigines may be referred for more complete investigation. The colonist would subsequently condemn the Report for being “positively destitute, not only of sense, but of a solitary idea.” Sydney Gazette, 4 December 1838; Colonist, 5 December 1838; Colonist, 8 December 1838.
193 Sydney Herald, 10 December 1838
194 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 555.
Vaguely pointing to the culpability of squatters in the whole mess, the paper asked, “what must now be the feelings of the men whose conduct, however unintentionally on their part, has led to the perpetration of such an atrocious crime, and the consequent death of the murderers?“ The urgency of this question was sharpened by an anecdote divulged in the wake of the hangings that settlers had resorted to poisoning Aborigines, and another suggesting that “black shooting has become almost as much a matter of course there as kangaroo hunting.”

The previous day the Colonist’s only response to the hangings was to continue its publication of extracts from the evidence given by Scott and Threlkeld to Broughton’s Committee in October. Far from recommending any measure of protection towards them, Scott reinforced the opinion that Aboriginal violence would only subside “as they become better acquainted with our power to punish”. “Personal fear” was their “only control” he argued. Threlkeld on the other hand, while convinced that the role was too much for one man, commended the office of Protector “fully employed in investigating cases, which are so numerous and shocking to humanity”. One such case to Threlkeld’s recollection described a situation “in which some blacks were decoyed into a hut, and then permitted (one at a time) to come out, when they were butchered instantly, until all were destroyed.” He offered another harrowing example: “a party of blacks were cutting bark at a station, on, or near the Gwyder River; the overseer told them to go away, as a party were out after the blacks, and they might be killed”. When they failed to do so “a party of stockmen came upon them, and killed the whole of them, men, women, and children, reserving only two little girls”. This formed part of the grim picture Threlkeld had already given in The Annual Report of the Mission to the Aborigines, Lake Macquarie of 1837, in which he speculated:

195 Sydney Gazette, 20 December 1838.
196 Colonist, 19 December 1838.
If Government were to institute an enquiry into the conduct of some of the Europeans in the interior towards the blacks, A War of extirpation would be found to have long existed, in which the ripping out of bellies of the Blacks alive; the roasting them in that state in triangularly made log fires, made for the very purpose; the dashing of infants upon the stones…together with many other atrocious acts of cruelty, which are but the sports of monsters boasting of superior to that possessed by the wretched Blacks!197

But it was clear from the beginning of 1839 that it would not be marked by the same humanitarian resolve to confront such alleged atrocities as the previous year. The role of Protector had become the prerogative of the new Commissioner of Crown Lands Edward Mayne as much as it directed Robinson’s posting to Port Phillip. After his meeting with Gipps at the end of October 1838, and in learning that the Flinders Island Aborigines were not to be moved, Robinson prepared immediately for his departure from the colony, leaving for Port Phillip by way of Hobart just before the first Myall Creek trial on 11 November.198 Aside from a meeting on 7 November to discuss the decision regarding the Flinders Island Aborigines, Robinson’s involvement with the Sydney Aborigines Protection Society had ended.199 Nor had the Society itself conducted any public activities beyond its enthusiastic birth in October.200

Early in the new year a letter from James Glennie prompted the press to report “the retaliatory war of the Aborigines in the north-western districts” raging since December.201

200 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, pp. 474 – 475.
201 Sydney Gazette, 1 January 1839; Monitor, 2 January 1839; Colonist, 2 January 1839.
Many of Mr. Cobb’s sheep and cattle, plus two of his men had been killed reported the letter. Indicating the decreasing valence of humanitarian discourse in the colony, the *Colonist* maintained its belief that such events were the “natural consequences of the ill treatment which the Aborigines have met with at the hands of Englishmen” but could not “contemplate without horror and alarm their probable repetition in more aggravated forms.”

So strong was this feeling, that the *Colonist* now joined with its “contemporaries in calling upon the Government, in the most emphatic terms of warning and entreaty, to adopt firm, decided, and prompt measures for their suppression.” In a stark turn around the paper claimed that it could not “look on with indifference while the property and lives of our country men are placed in such imminent jeopardy. No! the Aborigines must be made to understand, that whilst they are under the protection of English law, they are also amenable to that law.” Lamenting the fact that Robinson was not present on the north-western frontier, and fully re-calibrating his role as Protector, the paper looked to the government to “bestir themselves in the most resolute manner for the protection of whites from blacks, as well as of blacks from whites.”

Either way, by the time Robinson arrived in Port Phillip at the beginning of March the same pressures to protect settlers as much as Aborigines were also in play. As the *Port Phillip Gazette* reported on 15 December 1838, “The greatest fear has taken possession of all the shepherds…who have announced their determination of giving themselves up to Government rather than attend sheep under the present circumstances.”

There was always a tension between Lang’s apparent enthusiasm for colonisation and concern for Aboriginal people, much like that inherent to the Aborigines Protection Society more broadly. Perhaps this played into the *Colonist* advocating a less sympathetic stance.

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202 *Colonist*, 2 January 1839.
203 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 15 December 1838.
204 Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, p. 490.
towards Aboriginal people at the beginning of the New Year. A more likely explanation is the fact of his imminent departure from New South Wales on 12 January, from which time the Colonist came to lack the humanitarian drive it possessed at the end of 1838. With Robinson and Lang now absent, in spite of his fiery invective towards the Herald, Saunders also lapsed in his humanitarian interest.\textsuperscript{205} There was always the staunchness of Threlkeld, but without these three key figures there was very little to coordinate the sympathy of the Sydney humanitarian movement.

Mayne at least seems to have taken to his task on the Gwydir with a certain eye for the suffering of Aboriginal people. There was much of this for him to discover. In February some of his troopers came across evidence of a massacre similar in method if not magnitude to the Myall Creek massacre on the property of a Gwydir settler named Crawford. An investigation of the partially burnt remains on the property suggested nine victims.\textsuperscript{206} Mayne’s direct response was to issue an order that firearms would be confiscated in the event that they were used against Aborigines, which appears to have had some effect.\textsuperscript{207} The extent of his achievement was otherwise demonstrated by his arrest of not only two of the three Europeans responsible for the massacre but also five of the seven Aboriginal men involved in the murders at Cobb’s station. According to his reports he was also successful in gaining the confidence of many Wererai, convincing them of the need to cease their attacks.\textsuperscript{208} As far as the exact circumstances of the massacre are concerned, these are not well known on account of the accused men not finding their way to court. What evidence does exist suggests that it

\textsuperscript{205} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 602.
\textsuperscript{206} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 580.
\textsuperscript{207} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 581.
\textsuperscript{208} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 597.
may have motivated the murder of Cobb’s men.\textsuperscript{209} For this offence the five Aboriginal men were eventually sentenced to 10 years on Cockatoo Island.\textsuperscript{210}

Despite what amounted to a lopsided management of justice, in the course of Mayne’s investigations there was a broad disenchantment with his activity in the press. Instead of rendering himself and his mounted force a protection to the settlers from the “outrages of the blacks,” complained the \textit{Monitor}; “he seems rather to have assumed the office of a spy upon their actions, and by his injudicious promises of protection to the ignorant Aborigines, he has encouraged rather than checked them in their aggressions upon the property of the settlers.”\textsuperscript{211} Given the difficulty of catching the perpetrators of such aggressions and bringing them to court, STAT UMBRA cited the difficulties experienced during the Black Line in a letter to the same paper to suggest that Mayne be given “discretionary power to shoot every black man or woman who many be detected in the net of spearing either men, cattle, or sheep.”\textsuperscript{212} Evincing a remnant of its humanitarian agenda, the \textit{Colonist} described the suggestion of such summary justice as “revolting to every humane and Christian feeling”.\textsuperscript{213} The paper also managed to continue to evoke the ire of the \textit{Herald} once again in claiming that “sordid interest is the root of all anti-aborigine feeling.”\textsuperscript{214} A letter from ANTICIPATION in the \textit{Gazette} also expressed disgust with a “professedly Christian Colony deluged with the gore of murdered victims, and a newspaper (savage and bloody as the murderers themselves) actually upholding the white savages in their hellish work! Oh,

\textsuperscript{209} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 586.
\textsuperscript{210} Milliss, \textit{Waterloo Creek}, p. 678.
\textsuperscript{211} \textit{Monitor}, 25 February 1839.
\textsuperscript{212} \textit{Monitor}, 25 February 1839.
\textsuperscript{213} \textit{Colonist}, 13 February 1839.
\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Colonist}, 16 January 1839; \textit{Sydney Herald}, 23 January 1839
horrible! most horrible!!” What more could a nation responsible for such “sanguinary past times” anticipate than God’s “consuming fire.” 

But it was becoming clearer that humanitarianism was unravelling, particularly in light of the situation on the Liverpool Plains and how Gipps responded to it. The running theme of Milliss’ history of the Liverpool Plains is that Nunn’s involvement in the Waterloo Creek massacre was obscured by the frontier contingencies of Port Phillip and Myall Creek. Moreover, the latter of these two events could not be explained without reference to Nunn’s previous campaign. Ironically, it was the final, and what proved to be ultimately misguided Nunn inquiry coming to a head in April 1839 which seems to have distracted Gipps from taking the same action regarding the massacre at Crawford’s as he had with respect to Myall Creek. This set of circumstances helps explain Gipps’s disappointment in Mayne’s unheralded arrival back in Sydney as much as the fact that the Commissioner had left his post. But in a broader sense it was clear that Gipps’s enthusiasm for enacting the principles that carried the humanitarian movement throughout 1838 was wavering.

Gipps’s capitulation during the Nunn affair, leaving potentially hundreds of deaths unanswered, was one thing. The fact that the governor knew from June 1839 that he no longer had to accord with the principles of a colonial secretary so closely connected with the humanitarian movement also lessened his humanitarian obligations. But there were nevertheless moments throughout 1839 and beyond where Gipps maintained the interests of Aboriginal people in his policy and legislative agenda. As always, a restless settler community made this difficult. In the passing of the Crown Lands Occupation Act in March for instance, Gipps made it clear “that the Aborigines are entitled to protection as much as

215 Gazette, 28 February 1839.
216 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, pp. 584, 585, 597.
217 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 598.
any other class of persons”. Gipps made his frustration equally clear with the accusation that he had shown “a greater concern for the lives of the Blacks than for those of the Whites.”

The depth of Gipps’s former resolve was also shown in his reinstatement of Mayne’s instructions in May through which he reinforced the Commissioner’s role under the banner of legal equality and instructed that an inquest be held into every Aboriginal death. Milliss in fact frames this measure as making up for the Crown Lands Act’s failure to truly challenge settler behaviour on the frontier, harking back to a governor “with all his ardour and resolve”

A measure of this resolve was also demonstrated by Gipps’s refusal to act upon the petition of Heneage Finch who, exposed to the “ferocity and rapacity of the natives” during his service with the Surveyors Department under Mitchell, underlined the favourability of the law towards Aborigines. And while the governor initially only issued a warrant for the arrest of one of the perpetrators of the massacre at Crawford’s property still at large, Charles Eyles, he eventually offered the reward of 25 pounds to any free person and a conditional pardon to any convict for his capture. Although this amount was less than the amount he offered for the capture of Fleming.

With Mayne being recalled back to the Gwydir in the middle of the year due to increasing violence in that district as well as around New England, Gipps could point to the soundness of his frontier policy on account of both districts eventually returning to a state of relative tranquility. With Port Phillip subject to the same policy, Gipps could point to Mayne’s success when petitioned by settlers from the west of the district for assistance given recent Aboriginal “outrages”. Whatever Gipps’s hopes were, the Herald was able to lift

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218 Sydney Gazette, 23 March 1839. See also Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 622.
219 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 652
220 Sydney Herald, 19 August 1839.
221 Sydney Gazette, 16 July 1839.
222 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 688.
extracts from the Port Phillip papers complaining that “the whites are indubitably greater objects of pity and commiseration; the settlers evidently require protection rather than the natives.”223 That the Herald could publish letters from settlers disparaging “the ravings of pseudo-philanthropists” and complain on its own part of the “canting nonsense” to which settlers were subject at the end of 1839 suggests that there was an ongoing sense that the colony was still being hamstrung by a humane agenda.224

From this stage onwards, Milliss provides a thorough account of the oscillations in Gipps’s frontier approach, leading to the dismantling of his “three-tiered system of missionaries, Protectors and Border Police.”225 Going as far as September 1841, Gipps willingness to come down on settler violence was evinced by his cancellation of the licence of William Lee of Bathurst as a result of his superintendent’s leading role in killing nine Aborigines in an act of retaliation on the Bogan River. But Gipps’s failure to act upon a similar incident two months later defined his sanction of Lee as a final act in the service of Aboriginal interests. This was emphatically demonstrated by his reluctance to act upon reports of the Aboriginal death toll mounting on the Gippsland and Moreton Bay frontiers from 1842 other than report them to Lord Stanley. That the British Government took no action in this case was symptomatic of the decreasing concern Millis demonstrates on the part of the Colonial Office since Stanley’s predecessor Lord Russell took the role of Colonial Secretary from Glenelg in 1839. But while there was a distinct sense that Russell was distancing the home government from frontier issues, Milliss makes a lot of Gipps’s failure to make public Russell’s concern over the handling of the Nunn inquiry.226 Insofar that Gipps later demonstrated a clear sense of his humanitarian responsibilities in 1841, his back down

223 Sydney Herald, 4 September 1839.
224 Sydney Herald, 11 December 1839; Sydney Herald, 27 December 1839.
225 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 712.
226 Milliss, Waterloo Creek, p. 702.
over Nunn was perhaps a matter of the direct pressures he faced at the time from his “alarmed advisors”.227

Either way Millis argues that from 1842 there was a complete restructure of frontier policy. From March 1844 no missionaries received funding and the protectorate system was rolled back in favour of more support for Land Commissioners and the border police as the means of regulating the frontier. By June 1846 this responsibility began to be transferred entirely to the mounted police.228 Yet with Gipps’s departure a month later, and his death the following year, his rollback of a more humanitarian policy to the frontier diminished in significance when the door he hoped to keep closed to settlers was opened in the form of the Australian Lands Act. Achieving permanence of tenure had long run parallel to settler anxiety over the need for legal equality and protection on the frontier. For squatters like Robert Scott, openness to negotiating a policy that would tranquilize the unsettled frontier was as much as anything a fulcrum by which to leverage land title. This strategy did not so much contest the possibility of Aboriginal land rights as intimate that such rights no longer existed, if they had ever existed at all. That the new Act disregarded Aboriginal people can be taken as a sign of the dominance of squatter interests on the eve of self-governance, at the heart of which was the maturation of a settler subjectivity guided by a sense of injustice engendered by the humanitarian priorities of frontier policy. In the words of Ann Curthoys and Jessie Mitchell, “Aboriginal issues had thus largely been resolved in favour of the pastoralists by the time responsible government became a serious possibility.”229

227 Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, p. 702.
The period of Gipps’s governorship can thus be taken as a key point in New South Wales colonial history at which the strength of white victimhood in the negotiation of settler subjectivity was at its height. While this strength had been building for a long period, this analysis corresponds with Wood’s argument regarding the emergence of a distinct colonial identity during this era. As this chapter has shown, through figures such as Robinson, Threlkeld and Saunders, 1838 in particular can be equally understood in terms of the consolidation of an emotional community defined by an expression of compassion and sympathy towards Aboriginal people that deliberately challenged the unsettled feelings coordinating frontier conduct and policy. But as this sentiment gained administrative coherence in the shape of humanitarian governance, its guiding principles ultimately failed to disrupt the trajectory of settler colonialism. This should perhaps come as no surprise. The emotional investment of the humanitarian movement in the safety and rights of Aboriginal people did not amount to nothing, as attested by Robinson’s long involvement in shaping a less violent frontier. But by simply asserting the obligation of imposing religion and western civilisation upon Indigenous peoples, humanitarian governance did little more than offer further pretext for dispossession in the service of elite colonial emotional needs.

Conclusion

The limit of what could be achieved by the Aborigines Protection Society is captured well in what Michael Barnett calls the “intrinsic ambiguity of the humanitarian act”: the “ever-present possibility” that our needs can motivate actions intended to serve the needs of others.¹ Since the late eighteenth century, humanitarianism has been driven by “the need to demonstrate remorse for the past and repair our relations with the world around us”, particularly at moments when humanity is at its “most suspect.”² Atonement drove the humanitarian agenda as much as protection.

The advent of British humane governance, which reached its peak in 1838, was also more arbitrary, a factor of consolidating the purchase of British sovereignty in colonies taking shape according to jurisdictional pluralism. The settler vigilantism this often comprised meant that, in the wake of the anti-slavery movement’s success, no more was the absence of humanity apparent than in colonies such as New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. The Aborigines Protection Society’s goals of “freeing”, “protecting” and “civilising” all imperial subjects was an inheritance, “the essence of Britishness projected on to the wider world” in opposition to the activity of “aberrant Britons”.³

It is within this “rupture between bourgeois metropolitan Britishness and colonial Britishness”, as Alan Lester describes it, that this thesis has sought to make a contribution.⁴ It has brought the negotiation of colonial subjectivities into the realm of emotional life. How settlers and other colonial agents came to imagine their roles in the imperial enterprise was a result of how well individual emotional experience correlated with guiding discourses of

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² Barnett, Empire of Humanity, p. 15.
³ Lester, ‘British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire’, pp. 26, 30, 44.
⁴ Lester, ‘British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire’, pp. 44.
chivalry and victimhood. Aided by colonial newspapers, settler society could take shape in terms of “imagined communities” along such emotional lines. More than just allowing the negotiation of respective settler subjectivities through an overarching discourse of fear, the colonial press also facilitated the delineation of humanity itself. The emotive representation of Aboriginal people, which emphasised the plight of suffering settlers, was often couched in terms that denied their capacity for “human feeling”.

This discursive valence of emotion allowed settlers from New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land to cohere across geographical boundaries. It also had the potential to penetrate divisions of class, with the everyday fears of Aboriginal violence experienced by servants coalescing with the growing economic anxiety of absentee landholders. Although they prioritised the dire prospects frontier violence posed to colonial prosperity over the physical safety of servants, memorials pleading for official protection reached the desks of colonial administrators in the language of whiteness. The validity of these expressions of white victimhood would be quickly realised by colonial administrators despite potentially conflicting instructions from the Colonial Office.

But this did not mean that class ceased to be a factor in how settler society was constituted with respect to frontier politics. An abiding sentiment of colonial elites during the first fifty years of Australian settlement was that frontier violence could be attributed to the depravity of convicts and servants. Want of “human feeling” among Europeans was at times as much a concern as it was with respect to Aboriginal people. Overriding any deeper reflection as to why Aboriginal people resisted the growing British presence, this sentiment embodied a chivalric discourse which made the violent consequences of colonisation and dispossession more “palatable”. The policy of “amity and kindness” to which early governors were to abide could thus be maintained. But as this thesis has shown, this mythology loses a
great deal of credibility in view of the harsh measures resorted to by successive governors as a means of arresting Aboriginal resistance.

It must be remembered that the language of terror in which settlers requested assistance from various governors was first used by Arthur Phillip in 1789. The expectation that fear could only be overcome by fear came from above. This framework for the politics of recognition at the heart of white victimhood was a feature of settler cultural memory well before landholders penned their first memorial. By 1838, such was the strength of this sense of entitlement that no matter how sincerely Gipps sought to construct legal equality on the frontier, to uphold the rights of Aboriginal people, he was met with waves of settler resentment. To be sure he had the support of some members of the press and was part of the burgeoning British imperial humanitarian movement, but this only exacerbated the growing disparity which existed between metropolitan and peripheral priorities. The colonial elite had their consciences to appease, but settlers knew all too well that prosperity rested upon the security of their property. With the tragic irony of ressentiment, it was settlers’ ability to deploy their growing sense of victimhood at the hands of a bloodthirsty frontier enemy, during an era otherwise defined by the imperative of Aboriginal protection, which gave them strength. It was this priority of colonialism which ultimately prevailed.

The reason this consolidation of settler subjectivity triumphed as it did was its essential compatibility with the qualified humanitarian reservations of the colonial elite. In its most precise iteration in the Aborigines Protection Society’s report, the possibility of humane colonisation was still predicated upon dispossessing Aboriginal people of their land, so long as it fulfilled the obligation of spreading civilisation and Christianity. Through this obligation atonement could be achieved. The conceit of this dream was its failure to arrest the European “acquisitive impulse”, the very root of Aboriginal resistance. Ultimately it took very little for
the “genocidal potential” inherent to settler demands to overcome subjectively held humanitarian beliefs given that they aligned much more clearly with the structure of settler colonialism. Underlining the political utility of white victimhood, along with stark domestic and international economic imperatives, it was fear which helped execute settler colonialism’s “eliminationist logic”.

The integrity of the humanitarian emotional community was also complicated by the complicity of certain key members in accelerating the demise of Aboriginal society, highlighting the paradox of humane colonisation. As James Heartfield remarks, in striving to protect Aboriginal people humanitarians only “added to their demoralisation as a people”, a framework of good intentions he attributes to 20th century outcomes such as the Stolen Generations. A lack of foresight was thus a central flaw in the character of men like Robinson, in whom can nonetheless be detected an active effort to fashion a subjectivity in opposition to a hostile broader community. There can be little doubting the sincerity of the feelings which bound Robinson’s investment in the task of the Friendly Mission. At the same time it is impossible to decouple this task from the urge to create a “native-free” Van Diemen’s Land, the “success” of which led to his eventual custodianship of the protectorate system as Port Phillip’s Chief Protector of Aborigines from 1839.

With alarm spreading across this district into the 1840s, settler interests would continue to calibrate Robinson’s duties. Reports of servants deserting their huts rather than face the increasing threat of Aboriginal “depredations”, along with the overall “troublesome state of the natives”, reached the desks of colonial administrators much as they had in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. When Lieutenant Governor La Trobe circulated a

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6 W. H. Pettit: requesting aid due to trouble with Aborigines in the area, 2 September 1840, PROV VPRS 10 1840/903.
letter in 1853 asking after the early experience of settlement, settlers could recollect “great
difficulties from the determined ferocity of the natives” and the “great loss of life” that
ensued.⁷ John Robertson of Wando Valley described a massacre of 51 Aboriginal warriors by
the Whyte Brothers soon after they arrived in the district in 1841: “the bones of the men and
sheep lay mingled together bleaching in the sun at the Fighting Hills.”⁸ Such was the
response to the theft of 50 sheep, a disturbing consequence whether or not it occurred at the
height of the protectionist era.

With the declining influence of humanitarianism from the 1840s, signified by the
decision to abandon the Protectorate system, by the 1860s settlers had been able to displace
sentimentalism as the dominant British political discourse with a representation of Britishness
that grounded the right to civilise more around the notion of racial superiority.⁹ This
development provides some insight to the notorious brutality of the Queensland frontier.¹⁰ It
also helps us to understand the purchase of the “dying race myth” upon the settler imaginary,
already germinating in the first half of the nineteenth century. That settler Australians were
able to reconcile the ongoing demise of Aboriginal people on racial grounds well into the
twentieth-century speaks to the durability of this myth. “There is no hope”, argued Daisy
Bates in 1938, “of protecting the Stone Age from the twentieth century.”¹¹ Even when settler
Australians began to show some receptivity to Aboriginal culture from the mid-twentieth
century on the grounds that it offered a more “authentic” national myth, this did not

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⁷ J.H. Patterson to C.J. La Trobe, 15 August 1853, Letters from Victorian Pioneers: Being a Series of Papers on
the Early Occupation of the Colony, the Aborigines etc., Thomas Francis Bride eds. (Melbourne: Robt. S. Brain,
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⁸ John G. Robertson to C.J. La Trobe, 26 September 1853, Letters from Victorian Pioneers, p. 31.
⁹ Lester, ‘British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire’, p. 44.
¹⁰ See Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin, Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination: Race
Relations in Colonial Queensland (Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Co., 1975); Alison Palmer,
Colonial Genocide (Bathurst: Crawford House Publishing, 2000); Timothy Bottoms, The Conspiracy of Silence:
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¹¹ Daisy Bates, The Passing of the Aborigines: A Lifetime Spent Among the Natives of Australia (London:
necessarily equate to increased acceptance of Aboriginal people. This is another great irony of Australian history. The very “savagery” which made Aboriginal people so fearsome in one century, the foil for a young colony yearning for civilisation, offered the perfect critique for a society struggling to come to terms with itself in the next.

A belief in the inherent incompatibility of Aboriginal people, if not elements of their culture, with modernity went hand in hand with what W.E.H Stanner referred to in 1968 as “a cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale”. There is an obvious attraction to obscuring such a past on account of the questions of legitimacy it asks of Australia’s founding myths. The appeal of white victimhood likewise consists in the way that it displaces any responsibility for past injustices emanating from the frontier while at once allowing reverence for the trials of suffering settlers. The triumph of Australian settlement can only be understood from a position of weakness. With the response to Mabo and “The Adam Goodes Fire” in such recent historical memory, the political purchase of white victimhood remains just as pressing today as it did at the height of Australia’s frontier wars.

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