The Lives of Stories

Making histories of Aboriginal-settler friendship

by

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Synopsis

This thesis explores the dynamics of popular, public, local and family history making around Aboriginal-settler friendship, adoption, mediation and alliance. Narrating the lives of four stories, it examines the ways in which they have grown and changed in the telling. The adventures of James Morrill's story as shipwreck survivor, Birri-gubba adoptee and 'first white resident' of North Queensland are charted, followed by an examination of the 'tragic' story of Eora diplomat and traveller Bennelong. The story of friendship between Wiradjuri warrior and peacemaker Windradyne and the Suttor family of 'Brucedale' is traced from its birth in the 1820s up to the shared management of Windradyne's grave in the present, and finally, the friendship between activists, poets and public intellectuals Kath Walker and Judith Wright is explored through the poetics of their public performance of sisterhood. All four stories live on through their relevance to storytellers as a social currency, rich in historical, literary and affective meanings. The thesis focuses on the act of telling, with each retelling considered as a historical event in its own right, as well as a 'use' of history.

Across the past four decades each of these stories has been interwoven with the broader narratives of breaking the 'great Australian silence', Aboriginal survival and regeneration, reconciliation and the history wars. But at the same time, the interactions around these stories continue to take place within the more intimate spaces of local and family history. The points of cross-cultural connection that are embodied in stories of friendship represent a complex terrain for the sharing of history by Aboriginal people and those who identify as descendants of 'settlers'. The thesis navigates the moral and ethical landscape of post-reconciliation scholarship and social thinking. It provides an appraisal of the sharing (and not-sharing) that takes place in the telling of these stories. The relationships between the evolving social valency of the stories and their formal qualities – story elements, symbols, appeals to genre and the like – are often unexpected.

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[*] One of these opportunities culminated in the publication of part of 'The Many Truths of Bennelong's Tragedy', which forms the second section of this thesis, as 'The Many Truths of Bennelong's Tragedy', *Aboriginal History* 33, (2010), pp. 53-75. Thanks is due to the two anonymous referees, whose reviews of the article also improved my thesis.

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Introduction: The lives of stories

The card catalogue at the Mitchell Library introduces the historian to four editions of James Morrill's *Sketch of a Residence among the Aboriginals of Northern Queensland for Seventeen Years*, published between 1863 and 1964. I read the first edition with great interest – Morrill was washed up on the coast of North Queensland in 1846 near today's Townsville, adopted by the Birri-gubba people, and 'returned to civilisation' seventeen years later as conflict between newly arriving pastoralists and the Birri-gubba escalated. *Sketch of a Residence* is brief, and rather taciturn. How did he experience these cultural crossings? How had he explained his experiences to his adoptive and re-adoptive communities? I reached for the second edition: 1866. Morrill had died the previous year and, as well as correcting his name as he remembered it to 'Murrells', the new edition omitted his closing plea on behalf of the Birri-gubba that they be allowed '*some* of their *own* land to live on'. I gasped – how could the editor do this? The title of the third edition (1896) told another story altogether: *Seventeen Years' Exile among the Wild Blacks of North Queensland* &c. I was bitten. It seemed the story itself 'continued, and [was] continuous with, the original work of dispossession'.[1] I found my questions about cross-cultural exchange becoming entangled with the unfolding biography of the story. Each telling of the story was a fresh statement of 'first contact' and the naturalisation of its aftermath via James Morrill as 'first white resident' of North Queensland. Yet always the story attests to the Birri-gubba presence and history in that place. The 'birth of [each] new version' begs the question: why tell this story now?[2]

This thesis narrates the lives of four stories in which cross-cultural understanding and misunderstanding are deeply embedded, and in which the act of storytelling itself has always been an engagement in cross-cultural relations. Along with James Morrill's story, I explore the 'tragic' story of Eora diplomat and traveller Bennelong; the story of friendship between Wiradjuri warrior and peacemaker Windradyne and the Suttor family of *Brucedale*; and the story of friendship between activists, poets and public intellectuals Kath Walker and Judith Wright. This thesis explores the interactions around these four stories, rather than offering a history of Aboriginal-settler relations *per se*. The interest in each case is in the ways in which storytellers weave the historical, social, affective, and literary together to make meaning about the broader history of settlement or invasion, racial and cultural difference, Aboriginal resistance and regeneration, and the kinds of relationships they embody in story (and make real) thereby.

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[1] Bain Attwood with Helen Doyle, *Possession: Batman's Treaty and the Matter of History* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), p. 105.

[2] Linda Dégh, *Narratives in Society: A Performer-Centred Study of Narration* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1995), p. 21.

This thesis aims to bring various ways of understanding the past into conversation around these four stories. The terms stories, storytelling, and history-making are used to loosen the expectations that might be set up by the more formal 'historiography' with its parameters drawn by scholarly endeavour. My intention is to create a catholic space in which the common ground of memory, history, mythmaking, heritage, family history and so on can be recognised, as under Judith Binney's broad characterisation of storytelling and its significance:

> Storytelling is an art deep within human nature. Good narratives not only tell us about ourselves; they tell us about the beliefs of others. Stories are the essential way by which we expand our empathy and our imaginations; stories are the means by which we communicate across time and across cultures. The art of oral story telling is one of the oldest communicative skills that we possess. It follows that the art of transmitting the 'histories that matter' to successive generations is as old as human existence.[3]

The historian finds herself immersed in this shared human endeavour. As Maria Nugent explains in her recent book *Captain Cook Was Here*, 'the story about what Cook did when he was actually here cannot ... simply stand separate from the story about the ways in which his presence in this place ... [has] been interpreted by historians and other story tellers'.[4] She wants her reader to understand the events and their interpretation (including by herself) as tangled together, saying:

> This is a story still in the process of being told ... By plaiting a narrative about the interactions between the local people and the Endeavour's men that took place ... in 1770 with stories about Captain Cook told by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians over two centuries or more, my intention is to show something of that open-ended quality, to reflect upon the lively and constant interplay between past and present, and to propose yet more possibilities for interpreting this particular past and its many and changing meanings.'[5]

Story is a truly entangled knowledge in which scholarship partakes of narrative and performative traditions which overlap with those of other storytellers, and communicates

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[3] Judith Binney, *Stories without end: essays 1975-2010* (Wellington, N.Z.: Bridget Williams Books, 2010), p. 21.

[4] Maria Nugent, *Captain Cook Was Here* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009), p. x.

[5] Nugent, *Captain Cook Was Here*, p. xi.

via appeals to shared cultural knowledge.[6] This thesis too is thoroughly immersed in story. In writing these four story 'biographies', I have been drawn in by the power of these stories as much as any other teller.

In a study of the history making that happens 'at the dinner table, over the back fence, in parliament, in the streets', as Tom Griffiths puts it,[7] the historian finds herself in a challenging position. Though she is an 'expert' on the past, she can't take her authority for granted, partly because popular, public, local and family history results in 'social knowledge' as much as historical knowledge,[8] and partly because, particularly as the historian nears the present, the pool of available sources broadens out into an embarrassment of riches ordered by no clear genealogy, a field of sources that until recently has been considered more appropriately the realm of sociology or cultural studies.[9] As Chris Healy observes, in one sense history has been democratised to the extent that 'we are all historians', at the same time as much of this meaning-making proceeds without reference to *history* as such.[10] The historian has to work at taking seriously the explanations of the past that are offered by local, popular, family and public history, because they are often based in knowledge forms (such as the supernatural, or personal memory), that are not easily subject to the thorough, secular logic that characterises the discipline of history.[11] Such 'amateur' history, of course, is not awaiting the historian's attention. Rather, it is commanding public respect, time on the airwaves and space on the shelves of Australian readers. As Ruth Balint observes, historians

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[6] Curthoys and Docker provide an extensive discussion of the role of genre and narrative convention in shaping historical knowledge. They ask, 'are histories shaped by narrative conventions, so that their meaning derives from their form rather than the past itself?', and to what extent does history need to reflect contemporary understandings of the past even to be understood by its readers? Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006), pp. 2, 27-8, 86-104. Mark Mckenna discusses the importance of Henry Reynolds' bearing as a national historian with conservative moral ideas, an empirical basis and a measured way of speaking, a performance of the role of 'public historian' which tapped into the social knowledge of his audiences and managed to convert a number of politically conservative thinkers to his version of Australian history, Mark McKenna, '"The Language of Ordinary Men", Henry Reynolds, History and the Pursuit of Justice' in Bain Attwood and Tom Griffiths eds., *Frontier, Race, Nation: Henry Reynolds and Australian History* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009), pp. 71-94.

[7] Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 1.

[8] Paula Hamilton, 'Memory studies and cultural history' in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White eds., *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003), p. 83; Chris Healy, 'History, culture and media magic', *Australian Historical Studies* 33, Special issue no.118 (2002), p. 124.

[9] Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton observe that when they set out at the turn of the millennium on their 'Australians and the Past' project, they thought of it as a 'defiant intellectual project on "an impossible to categorise" area (sociology, history, anthropology)' which was nevertheless 'essential to understanding the great interest and passion for history ... within the broader population'. Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton, *History at the crossroads: Australians and the past* (Ultimo, NSW: Halstead Press, 2010), p. 5. Jerome de Groot finds it too late for historians to stop history from becoming part of the everyday or from entering the mass market. These areas that have often seemed distasteful or even dangerous to historians, are now dynamic and important phenomena that require the urgent attention of historians. Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and heritage in contemporary popular culture* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 2-5.

[10] Healy, 'History, culture and media magic', p. 124.

[11] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The politics and possibility of historical knowledge: continuing the conversation', *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 2 (2011), pp. 247-8; Ashton and Hamilton, *History at the crossroads*, pp. 9-10.

are increasingly interested in the power of history in the public sphere, and our approach to popular history grows increasingly sophisticated, leaving far behind a simple preoccupation with 'inaccuracies' in popular historiography. But there remains a strong sense that scholarly historians are responsible for 'writing against' popular myth – not on the attack, but on the defence, as we struggle to justify funding of our work and involvement in film and television history, and other public history projects.[12] Dipesh Chakrabarty challenges the historian to keep up a conversation with herself about how she places others' explanations about the past in relation to her own.[13] A group of interrelated conversations of this kind run throughout this thesis, about the relationship of story to the 'events themselves' on an epistemological plane as well as an empirical one; about the different kinds of relationships the historian might have to Aboriginal and non-Indigenous storytelling; and about how the historian might best involve herself in dialogue with public and popular, local and family history about the moral and ethical dimensions of making meaning about the past.

Bain Attwood, in his recent book *Possession*, presents a detailed study of the repetition of the story of John Batman's foundation of Melbourne and his treaty-making with the Kulin peoples through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He finds the story a 'powerful' one across this unfolding present, kept alive by the commemorative acts of particular Victorians who he animates in the act of remembering.[14] In many ways my approach is similar to Attwood's, focused as much as possible on the storytellers and their understandings of history, as a way of exploring the building up of story traditions around historical events and the changes in story as those historical events recede in time. Attwood adopts 'myth' (and then 'legend') to describe the processes and products of the repeated re-rendering of Batman's story,[15] and this is one important place where my approach diverges. When he asks 'why did settlers remember the treaty and its maker over the course of several generations',[16] his answers lie within the realm of a myth-making that serves to explain origins and to reconcile contradictions in a people's history. The central contradiction lies with the claims of the descendants of European settlers 'to be the rightful possessors of this land even though it is obvious that the land belonged to its indigenous inhabitants and had done for a long time'.[17] 'Reality' remains with the events of the 1830s (and Attwood's own

[12] Ruth Balint, 'Soft Histories: making history on Australian television', *History Australia* 8, no. 1 (2011), pp. 176, 184.

[13] Chakrabarty, 'The politics and possibility of historical knowledge', pp. 248-50.

[14] For example, educationist Charles Long, the supporters of the Old Pioneers Memorial Fund and members of the Historical Society of Victoria, and Aboriginal leaders and activists William Cooper, Doug Nicholls and Gary Foley, Attwood *Possession*, pp. 186-8, 178-93, 243-48, 270, 291.

[15] Concerned that the term 'myth' may imply a complete disjunct with reality, Attwood exchanges it for 'legend', though he does not elaborate on its meaning for his work. Attwood, *Possession*, p. 6.

[16] Attwood, *Possession*, p. 5.

[17] Attwood, *Possession*, p. 6.

interpretation of the events) offered in the first part of the book. He finds overall that the ongoing mythmaking constitutes a failure (or a refusal) to face up to this reality. The 'storied community' he brings before the reader is thus living within an illusion, haunted like Bernard Smith's psychoanalysed Australia by a truth which cannot be completely or finally silenced, the dispossession of Victoria's Aboriginal peoples by the settlers.[18]

Though this thesis certainly finds such mythic qualities in its stories, I have found it necessary to leave them more room to move. The 'fictive' relationship of myth to past and present realities that forms the framework for Attwood's analysis perhaps belies the lived realities of storytellers. Gillian Cowlishaw finds what she calls the 'national parable' of Aboriginal dispossession, as established by historians over the past few decades, does not relate simply to the ways in which people understand their own lives in a place.[19] In Bourke she finds that Aboriginal dispossession is unrecognisable both to an older generation of Aboriginal people proud of their life stories on the reserve, and to white people whose family stories of good relationships with Aboriginal people are difficult to reconcile with the notion that their near ancestors were implicated in racial violence.[20] This 'national parable' does not resolve inequalities and injustices for Aboriginal people in Bourke, but creates new tensions as different generations respond to it in different ways.[21] The use of 'story' rather than 'myth' in this thesis is intended to emphasise the multiplicity of the tellings and retellings examined here. Perhaps the lives of these stories can be made sense of by a narrative of national origins on one level, but also, for the storytellers themselves, more intimate horizons, and more pressing realities, are often in view.

In seeking a way to be attentive to lived experience, as well as being alive to the developing story tradition and its relationship to the historical events it purports to represent, I have found inspiration in folklorist Linda Dégh's focus on the 'birth of a new version' as the storyteller performs a tale that matters to him for an audience, reinterpreting traditional material as he does so.[22] As well as being representations of reality and participating in 'traditions' or 'discourses', stories are part of reality itself, nodes in a web of social, economic and cultural relationships.[23] Rather than an ever fainter echo in a game of 'Chinese

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[18] Attwood, *Possession*, pp. 2-6, 106, 130, 160, 164, 177, 182-3; Bernard Smith in his Boyer Lectures of 1980, as discussed in Lorenzo Veracini, 'A Prehistory of Australia's History Wars: The Evolution of Aboriginal History during the 1970s and 1980s', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 52, no. 3 (2006), p. 444.

[19] Gillian Cowlishaw, 'On "getting it wrong": collateral damage in the history wars', *Australian Historical Studies* 37, no. 127 (April 2006), pp. 181-3.

[20] Cowlishaw, 'On "getting it wrong"', pp. 187-92, 195-6.

[21] Cowlishaw, 'On "getting it wrong"', pp. 187-92.

[22] Dégh, *Narratives in Society*, p. 21.

[23] As Gilles Deleuze finds that cinema is, Kara Keeling, *The Witches' Flight: the cinematic, the black femme and the image of common sense* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 5; Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of*

whispers', each telling is a fresh historical event, leaving behind its own 'primary sources'. My story biographies are the result of reading these layers of storytelling detritus using an approach akin to Foucault's 'archaeology'. The 'sources' are not understood to provide a cumulative store of historical information, but are instead like 'monuments' encountered as one sifts back through the soil of time. They are traces left behind by human activity (unceasing meaning-making about the past) that can be examined to see how they were made, what uses they might have had, and through whose hands they might have passed.[24]

At the outset of her exploration of the story of Eliza Fraser, Kay Schaffer threw to the wind the convention of giving the 'original events' precedence, announcing: 'what is known of the woman and the event ... is less significant than the representations and the fantasies which this minor colonial episode set into circulation, fantasies situated at the borders of Western self and its others.'[25] Her declaration perhaps invokes a dizzying simultaneity of symbols and allegories, cast onto a map of discourse, but cut adrift from the sense-making framework of narrative history and empirical reality in 'an abstract zone of retrospective judgment'.[26] In fact, Schaffer actively resisted the urge to search for the historical or 'real' Fraser beyond the factual inconsistencies of the surviving stories about her. Instead Schaffer's Eliza Fraser (along with Schaffer's commitment to understanding the 'distinct and varied realities of the past'[27]) emerges as she tells her story, vulnerable and unsatisfying in the face of contemporary expectations.[28] Likewise, throughout this thesis, the historical nature of these four stories about the past is acutely important and provides a central tool for analysis, but the 'first order' and 'second order' narratives about these events have an equal epistemological status.[29] Story is not subordinate to the 'events themselves', indeed story is often part of those events: like Fraser, Morrill could not 'return to civilisation' without telling a story, and Kath Walker and Judith Wright's friendship blossomed partly through their public performance of sisterhood. Subsequent storytelling continues to lay down strata of

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Knowledge and the Discourse on Knowledge, tr. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), pp. 25-28. Foucault proposes to ask of each 'event' making up the field of utterances to be defined by a research project (discourse), 'how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?' (p. 27).

[24] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 6-7.

[25] Kay Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact: the Eliza Fraser stories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 2.

[26] Graeme Turner, 'Why does cultural studies want history?', *Australian Historical Studies* 33, Special issue no.118 (2002), pp. 114-5; David Hansen, 'Seeing Truganini', *Australian Book Review* 321 (May 2010), p. 48.

[27] What Alan Atkinson feels that the work of cultural studies scholarship he is reviewing lacks from the perspective of a historian, Alan Atkinson, 'Review of "Bluff Rock: autobiography of a massacre" by Katrina M. Schlunke', *Aboriginal History* 30 (2006), p. 232.

[28] Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, pp. 2, 34-43.

[29] These are Martin Jay's terms for illustrating the almost unavoidable involvement of narrative in investigating past events – we might accord 'primary' sources a special status in relation to 'secondary' ones, but more often than not, they too 'have their own linguistic mediation or figural significance', Martin Jay, 'Of Plots, Witnesses, and Judgements' (1992) cited in Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?*, p. 212.

meaning about the changing 'shape of power' associated with past events and ancient places.[30] The significance of Windradyne's burial at *Brucedale* thus continues to evolve as he is commemorated there by the Suttor family and local Wiradjuri people – his story has gained meaning in the telling.

The story space that this thesis creates is deliberately inclusive, but not necessarily comfortable. For Aboriginal people, 'history' remains a difficult space. History is an integral part of the highly divisive process of native title; researchers continue to build up archives that are not accessible to Aboriginal people to whom those histories belong; and much of the new 'Aboriginal history' has sidelined the experiences and priorities of Aboriginal people. The recognition and justice that many had hoped would flow from the acknowledgement that 'white Australia has a Black history' have been partial at best.[31] Part of the problem is with history itself, as a slippery way of thinking about the past. Gordon Briscoe observes that 'history' is a word used 'with gay abandon' by Europeans, at once a discipline, a force for progress, a void for forgetting – 'it seems that as soon as Indigenous people gain some appreciation of their own past, Whites shift the goal posts.'[32] Bain Attwood recently made a distinction between 'history' and 'Aboriginal histories', finding that 'Aboriginal pasts occur in forms and forums that refuse to conform ... to the discipline of history's conventional protocols and procedures for determining whether an account of the past is factual and thus true or not'.[33] 'Aboriginal histories', that is, leave the historian without a clear basis for adjudicating between competing accounts of the past. The notion that historians might have to loosen expectations about verity to address Aboriginal history is inimical to the truth imperatives of Aboriginal history-makers, for whom history remains close to the matter of survival. John Maynard sees history as central to the well-being of Aboriginal people. He argues that a Rankean, document based approach may aspire to global hegemony, but in fact it is only one way of making history. For Maynard, story is the 'core and soul of history' and can reclaim the past from the deconstructive dead-end of academic history-making.[34]

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[30] Robert Paton, 'Trading Places: Changing Social Values of the Mt William Aboriginal stone quarry' in Ingereth Macfarlane with Mary-Jane Mountain and Robert Paton eds., *Many exchanges: archaeology, history, community and the work of Isabel McBryde* (Canberra: Aboriginal History, 2005), pp. 271-286.

[31] See, for example, Henrietta Fourmile, 'Who owns the past? Aborigines as captives of the archives' in Valerie Chapman and Peter Read eds., *Terrible Hard Biscuits: A Reader in Aboriginal History* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin and Journal of Aboriginal History, 1996), pp. 16-27; Frances Peters-Little, 'The Community Game: Aboriginal self-definition at the local level', AIATSIS Research Discussion Paper, No. 10 (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2000); Vicki Grieves, 'Windschuttle's fabrication of history: a view from the "other" side', *Labour History* 85 (November 2003), pp. 194–9.

[32] Gordon Briscoe, 'Review of Bain Attwood's "Telling the Truth about Australian History"', *History Australia* 3, no. 1 (2006), p. 25.3.

[33] Bain Attwood, 'Aboriginal history, minority histories and historical wounds: the postcolonial condition, historical knowledge and the public life of history in Australia', *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no 2 (2011), p. 177.

[34] John Maynard, 'Circles in the sand: an Indigenous framework of historical practice', *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* 36S (2007), pp. 117-20.

Mudrooroo elaborates on the tension between recognising and championing distinctive Indigenous ways of making history (so that they are not subsumed into a standardised Western narrative) and ensuring that these are recognised as *history* – because history has come to mean the 'true' past, and such a 'true' past is vital to the cultural identity of Aboriginal people.[35]

This is the first time I have made a concerted effort to understand and articulate the value of history to Aboriginal people and their connections to story and place. The four story biographies I present are not definitive by any measure, partly because meanings continue to change and multiply, but I have barely scratched the surface of their meanings to Aboriginal people and communities. In some ways this is a symptom of my starting point, in the Mitchell Library card catalogue. My road to seeking, finding, hearing, understanding and contextualising Aboriginal history-making has been a long one, but through this thesis I have begun a learning journey about the invaluable cultural work that so many Aboriginal people undertake, working on connecting pasts, presents and futures for family and community. When I invite Aboriginal history-makers into the story space of this thesis, it is with a great respect for their commitment to truth – the use of the terms 'story' and 'storytelling' here is not intended to trivialise their history-making.[36] Considering Aboriginal perspectives and the 'popular' history of hobbyists and columnists side by side does create tension. 'Popular' history-making can afford to proliferate, often merrily, for the sake of entertainment, sometimes unreflectively, or even malignantly, spreading un-truths across the landscape with a rapidity that historians can scarce hope to counter. At the same time, Aboriginal people continue to fight for the recognition of their living heritage. Michael Dodson, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner in 1994, found it necessary to argue that a people's right to self-definition 'must include the right to inherit the collective identity of one's people, and to transform that identity creatively according to the self-defined aspirations of one's people and one's own generation.'[37] The 'gap' is perhaps akin to the socio-economic gap which continues to reproduce affluence for non-Indigenous Australians at the expense of Aboriginal people and their access to country. In taking all storytellers 'seriously', this thesis assumes that 'history is never bloodless'.[38] None of the four stories explored is trivial and whether a storyteller acknowledges it or not, by telling

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[35] Mudrooroo, *Us Mob: History, Culture, Struggle: An Introduction to Indigenous Australia* (Angus and Robertson Sydney, 1995), p. 178.

[36] Tony Birch has found the term 'stories' being used as a dismissive appellation for the Bringing Them Home testimonies, Tony Birch, '"History is never bloodless": getting it wrong after one hundred years of Federation,' *Australian Historical Studies* 33, Special issue no.118 (2002), p. 48.

[37] Michael Dodson, 'The end in the beginning: Re(de)finding Aboriginality', *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (1994), p. 5.

[38] The title of Tony Birch's 2002 article in *Australian Historical Studies* 33, Special issue no. 118, adopted from John Birmingham, *Leviathan: The unauthorised biography of Sydney* (Sydney: Random House, 1999), p. 509.

one of these stories, he addresses issues of life and death, land, wealth, government and social and cultural power and survival. These stories are thus in dialogue with the present, even if they attempt to demur, and are in direct dialogue with the stories of other parties who make history about the same places.

Quite another question is how (or whether) the historian might evaluate a story's fidelity to the present. American scholar of public memory Vivian Bradford proposed a path of relativism through the maze of public historiography; historical expression is diverse and no one version has a monopoly on transcendent truth. But he reserved the right to measure public memories 'by the quality of the social relationships established or sustained through their expression'.[39] While Australian historians are deeply engaged with the moral and ethical dimensions of history, the possibility of being as candid as Bradford is about their role in adjudicating these has been much debated. Graham Davison, in his *Use and Abuse of Australian History*, though he stopped short of providing a definition of the 'abuse' of history, was firm in his view that history's abuse was as much in 'bad faith as bad method', and that it was potentially more serious when a matter of the former.[40] 'Bad faith' was increasingly imputed in public historical debates from the 1980s, as history became a 'barometer of patriotism', and as Davison's book was published, Keith Windschuttle launched his campaign against deception and bias in Australian history.[41] As in other nations grappling with post-colonial or post-war injustice, history 'moved to centre stage in the ethico-political management of the collective past'.[42] Remembering and forgetting became morally charged. Henry Reynolds and others who had shouldered the duty of a history that might recognise the truth about Aboriginal dispossession and facilitate the maturation of Australia as a reconciled nation, identified forgetting with a silence on Aboriginal history and denial of the truth, and remembering with confronting that truth in the interests of justice.[43] This thesis is partly a response to the legacy of the combative historiography of the 'history wars', and also of the scarred, but not bowed, hope that history might be a force for a fairer

[39] Vivian Bradford, '"A Timeless Now": Memory and Repetition' in Kendall R. Phillips ed., *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), p. 205.

[40] Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), pp. 10, 18-19.

[41] Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: the life of Manning Clark* (Carlton, Vic.: Miegunyah Press, 2011), p. 595-600; Anna Clark, 'History in black and white: A critical analysis of the black armband debate', *Journal of Australian Studies* 75 (2002), p. 2.

[42] Berber Bevernage, 'Writing the Past Out of the Present: History and the Politics of Time in Transitional Justice', *History Workshop Journal* 69 (Spring 2010), p. 111.

[43] The introduction of Reynolds' *Settlers and Aborigines* (1972) concluded 'if, as so often in the past, we exclude the Aborigines from our history, we may retain a flattering self-image but we will scarcely develop a mature awareness of ourselves and our heritage', cited in Bain Attwood and Tom Griffiths, *Frontier, Race, Nation: Henry Reynolds and Australian History* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing 2009), p. 11. See also Alan Atkinson, 'Henry Reynolds, Self and Audience' and Mark McKenna, 'The Language of Ordinary Men' in the same volume.

future, for justice and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. These story biographies are part of a return to small histories in the wake of the 'history wars', which discouraged historical experimentation as they threatened to draw all into a polarised debate.[44] At the same time, these story biographies have been an opportunity to consider explicitly the effects of these conflicts on public, popular and local history-making and for reflecting on the possibilities for their interpretation by historians.

This thesis presents four case studies, or story 'biographies'.

The first, 'The Life and Adventures of James Morrill's story', explores Morrill's own storytelling as he was re-adopted by frontier settler society, a storytelling shaped by the bloody land-war taking place between the Birri-gubba and surrounding peoples and the invading pastoralists and colonial government, and also by adventure and castaway literature with which British minds were thoroughly infused. Morrill's life after death as a 'first white resident' of North Queensland is traced through the early responses to his re-appearance in 1863 into histories of white supremacy in the tropics that proliferated in the early twentieth century and into the present via the efforts of the Bowen Historical Society. A journey to the Burdekin in 2010 reflects on the relevance of reconciliation frameworks to the story's present and future.

The second is a biography of the story of Bennelong, a young Wangal-Eora man kidnapped by Governor Phillip in 1790 with the hope he might be able to serve the nascent colony at Sydney Cove as a go-between, and who then took on the role of ambassador under his own steam. Over the past forty years Bennelong's story has often been understood as a 'tragic' one, in which the protagonist is destroyed by his contact with British culture. I offer a short history of Bennelong's tragic story since his death in Eleanor Dark's 1941 novel, *The Timeless Land,* and examine the reasons why this understanding of Bennelong's story has remained plausible and appealing for storytellers to the present. The moral and ethical imperatives and implications involved in the telling of Bennelong's life as a story of failure are then explored.

The third part presents a biography of the friendship between Wiradjuri leader Windradyne and the Suttor family of *Brucedale,* near Bathurst, in the 1820s, as the conflicts known as the Wiradjuri Wars flared between the settlers and the local Wiradjuri people. I first look at the way in which this story of friendship in conflict has been passed down the generations of the Suttor family and shared with the wider public by each generation. I then trace the transformation of the story from a commemorative story of friendship to a dialogue

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[44] Clark, 'History in black and white', pp. 1-11; Peter Read, 'Clio or Janus?: historians and the stolen generations,' *Australian Historical Studies* 33, Special issue no.118 (2002), pp. 54-60.

between the story traditions of the Suttor family and of Windradyne's descendants, before considering the significance of Windradyne's story for Wiradjuri people today as a family story, a model of integrity and part of Wiradjuri country. Windradyne's grave, on *Brucedale*, is explored as a collaborative landscape of commemoration.

The final story is a modern one, exploring the friendship between Kath Walker and Judith Wright from the late 1960s. As a friendship performed for the public, it played an important part in developing a new ethic of relations that has helped to shape history-making, scholarly and otherwise, to the present, particularly the dynamics of guilt and healing that have become so integral to post-reconciliation historical thinking, and infuse my understandings of the other three stories. I show that it was also a friendship that offered support for the struggles of both women with history, place and the present. The models for speaking-out (Aboriginal) and listening deeply (white) that were acted out by the two women are considered in the light of their ongoing life in the post-reconciliation era.

Davison asks whether the historian is responsible for policing the past, for looking for 'offences against the truth', and answers in the negative. Instead, the historian's obligation is to understand the significance of others' interpretations of the past, as a thoughtful observer and commentator. In doing so, and in honouring the profession's 'overriding obligation to understand the past, as far as possible, in its own terms', Davison's historian (outnumbered) stands 'against the self-interested uses of the past' by the forces of 'heritage, genealogy, museology, tourism, civics education [and] managerialism' (even as he or she sometimes works together with these others).[45] Encouraged partly by Davison, this thesis takes up the challenge of withholding moral judgment for long enough to understand the significance of others' uses of the past, looking 'bad representations' of Aboriginal people in the eye,[46] and allowing the not-simply-literal meanings of stories to unfold and multiply rather than closing them down with an arbitration on good or bad history.[47] The 'self-interestedness' Davison refers to is very much a part of my subject of study, but there is no 'abuse' of history for the purposes of this thesis. History-making to bind some people together as a community while excluding others, to assert a claim to a place, or a right to belong, all these and many other interests appear in this thesis, but their 'legitimacy' is not

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[45] Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, pp. 18, 275.

[46] Chris Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines* (Sydney, NSW: University of New South Wales Press, 2008), p. 4.

[47] In the same way that Fay Zwicky, Marcia Langton and Tony Birch responded to Germain Greer's proposal that white Australians embrace their 'ineradicable and inherent Aboriginality' as a solution to national belonging and maturity, that is, with patience, goodwill and latitude, when a simple rejection of the idea as 'bad' cultural and social thinking may have been easy. Fay Zwicky, Marcia Langton, and Tony Birch, 'Whitefella jump up correspondence', *Quarterly Essay* 12 (2003), pp. 75-87. Gillian Cowlishaw cautions historians to be wary of our own claims to the power to decide what the truth is. 'To close down the past by telling the truth once and for all is a seriously alarming prospect', she writes. Gillian Cowlishaw, 'Arbiters of the Past', *Meanjin* 65, no. 1 (2006), p. 212.

in question. Instead, social, moral and political factors are assumed to be at stake in the making of meaning about the past. Davison's observer historian is a-moral, in resisting the temptation to enter the arena of self-interest, and at the same time intensely moral; in this very resistance she is a kind of bulwark against self-interest (via which, we presume, lies the path to 'bad faith'). As David Hansen contends, though, the position of observer is not necessarily a particularly honourable or disinterested one, especially when refusing to 'stand for' anything is a decision that might help advance one's career.[48] But for the purposes of this thesis, that is predominantly where I attempt to stand, not disengaged but engaged in conversation with all these storytellers and history-makers who are my moral and political equals, a participant-observer in a historical conversation in which there will be no last word.

[48] Hansen, 'Seeing Truganini', p. 52.

The Life and Adventures of James Morrill's story

Karckynjib Wombil Moony[1] approached the hut with caution. A friend's wife had come with him (perhaps to help convey that the approach was friendly), but fled at her first sight of sheep. He washed himself as white as possible in a waterhole, and avoiding the keen teeth of the station dogs by climbing onto the hut's enclosing fence, took a deep breath and called out: 'What cheer, shipmates'. A man emerged and, surprised, withdrew again. His hearing sharp with anxiety, Moony heard the man say, 'come out Bill here is a red or yellow man standing on the rails, naked, he is not a black man, and bring the gun.'[2] Moony knew there would be a gun. A friend of his had been shot dead a few months earlier approaching white men who had landed under the peak of *Bibbiringda*. Just a few days ago, a message had arrived from the clan on *Mal Mal* (now the Burdekin River): both white and black men on horseback had shot a number of their kin.[3] These weren't the cumbersome single-shot arms that Moony remembered; report had it they could fire over and over again.[4] The two stockmen came back out of the hut aiming the gun at Moony's chest. At least now he knew they spoke English.[5] 'Do not shoot me. I am a British object – a shipwrecked sailor'. The gun was lowered (but not put away).

James Morrill[6] had been wrecked as an able seaman on a trading vessel, the *Peruvian*, in 1846, at about twenty-two years of age. He was one of only four to survive the wreck, a long drift to shore on an improvised raft, and a fortnight scavenging shellfish from the rocks. These four were taken in and nursed back to health by two of the Birri-gubba clans, based around Mount Elliott and Cape Cleveland near today's Townsville. The other survivors died

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[1] A correspondent to *The Courier*, giving that newspaper its first substantial story on Morrill's appearance, stated that Morrill had given this as his Aboriginal name, 'after one of their chiefs', *The Courier*, 11th March 1863, p. 2, and reprinted 18th March 1863, p. 3.

[2] James Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence among the Aboriginals of Northern Queensland for Seventeen Years; being a narrative of my life, shipwreck, landing on the coast, residence among the Aboriginals, with an account of their manners and customs and mode of living; together with notices of many of the natural productions, and of the nature of the country, by James Morrill* (Brisbane: Courier General Printing Office, 1863), pp. 15-16.

[3] Bibbiringda is the name given for the peak inland of the north bay of Cape Cleveland, Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 14-15, 21.

[4] Morrill told Thomas Lodge Murray-Prior that he had had difficulty understanding reports of firearms that could produce multiple shots, an innovation, like the sea-going steamship, that had entered general use since Morrill had departed the industrialising world in 1846, Thomas Lodge Murray-Prior, Private Letter Book (headed 'Journal of Tour of Inspection'), ML MS 3117, CY Reel 495, p. 18.

[5] Morrill had worried that the white intruders might have been Spanish or Portuguese, C. S. Rowe, 'Rowe's Memoranda' in W.J. Doherty, *The Townsville Book* (Brisbane: Edwards, Dunlop and Company Limited, 1921), p. 113.

[6] My subject's name is variously transliterated Morrill, Morrell, Murrells, Murrell and Murrel. I have chosen Morrill as that was his name as he remembered it on his 'return to civilisation', and is how the Bowen Historical Society refers to our mutual subject.

after two or three years, but Morrill lived, worked, and loved as an adopted Birri-gubba man.[7]

Queensland was declared a separate colony in 1859, and settlers began to stream into North Queensland, both by sea and overland, driving flocks of sheep up from the south.[8] Like hundreds of others, C. S. Rowe travelled north from Melbourne to take up land in the Kennedy District (encompassing the Burdekin River). He later recalled the veritable armoury with which he and his companions set out, saying:

> ... we looked on the North of Queensland, as a terra incognita inhabited by fierce tribes of Cannibals and all sorts – so that thorough preparations were made for our defence. The arms procured were, six Tranter revolver rifles, six revolvers of the same make, two shot guns, one Ferry's rifle, six cutlasses and no end of ammunition.[9]

It was men not unlike Rowe who had killed, and would go on to kill, Morrill's Aboriginal kin, attempting to expel them from pastoral leases which, on paper, allowed them to stay.[10] Rowe himself later claimed not to have had any trouble from the 'blacks', attributing the calm to the activities of the Native Police, the war machine of this invasion of the north.[11] As Morrill travelled towards the fledgling town of Bowen, under escort, he encountered Rowe, who noted that Morrill carried rather than wore his trousers, and that although:

> ...there was no mistaking him for any but a white man ... He had the manner of an aboriginal. From some feeling of uncertainty about his new friends, he had a wild stare about him, and his eyes constantly shifted from place to place.[12]

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[7] I follow the advice of Eddie Smallwood, Chairman of the Gudjuda Corporation, in referring to Morrill's adoptive people by their language-group name. Others have attempted to chart his association with Birri-gubba clan groups, particularly the Bindal and Juru people, but this is not necessary for the story I wish to tell.

[8] Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 82-3.

[9] Rowe, 'Rowe's Memoranda', pp. 104-5. Noel Loos found that the Aborigines of North Queensland had gained a formidable reputation for ferocity by the 1860s, and the first settlers set out for Port Denison from Rockhampton to meet a 'strong party of Queensland Native Police' who it was intended would keep the peace and protect their interests, Noel Loos, MA Thesis: 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District, 1861-1874' (James Cook University, Townsville, 1970), pp. 113-117.

[10] The Land Act of 1860 allowed for Aboriginal access to pastoral leases, but they were denied access to food and water by pastoralists. Bruce Breslin, *Exterminate with pride: Aboriginal-European relations in the Townsville-Bowen region 1843 to 1869* (Townsville, Qld: James Cook University, Dept. of History and Politics, 1992), pp. 82-3. See also Loos, 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District', pp. 142-4, 171.

[11] Rowe, 'Rowe's Memoranda', p. 105; Breslin, *Exterminate with pride,* p. 82; Evans, *A History of Queensland*, pp. 96-7.

[12] Rowe, 'Rowe's Memoranda', p. 115.

Morrill travelled south, telling his story as he went. The first half of this study examines his repeated storytelling across the early months of 1863, with particular attention to the birth of his published narrative. This pamphlet, that I had found marching across the centuries in the Mitchell Library card catalogue, purports to tell Morrill's story of life with his Birri-gubba adoptees, yet it conveys very little in this regard. For this reason, the narrative has at times been understood as inadequate, but I hope to show that its form and content were overdetermined by the demands Morrill faced in telling his story and the possibilities for understanding it in Queensland and elsewhere at this time. In turn, the character of his published narrative has shaped the possibilities for local and regional history-making ever since.

When Morrill died in Bowen just two years and nine months after his appearance to the two stockmen, North Queensland was still being drawn into the influence of the colony. Ambitious commercial ventures prepared to set out for Cape York and the Gulf country, men and their stock ready to claim what they could. Locally, the sporadic, diffuse war between the settlers and the Birri-gubba and their neighbours wore on. Morrill's story continued on a life of its own. Having been colonised as it were, and having lived his last years as a colonist, he was adopted as a 'founding father'. The latter part of this biography considers the place of Morrill's story in histories of white North Queensland across the twentieth century, and particularly his adoption by the Bowen Historical Society. The Society has proudly carried Morrill into the present as a 'first white resident', at the same time as local Birri-gubba people have taken up his published narrative as a testimony which points to their presence and history in the region.

Crossing there and back, living to tell a tale

After forty-two days drifting at sea, catching rain in sail canvas, and baiting sharks with the limbs of dead companions, James Morrill and three other survivors were discovered washed up on the beach by a small party of Birri-gubba men.[13] The men established that these bedraggled strangers were human beings, male and female, and extended an invitation to their camp and the comforts it could offer. When the strangers signalled their assent, the men proposed a 'corroboree'. The survivors felt they could not participate, perhaps through exhaustion, and instead sang a hymn in a spirit of reciprocity, 'God moves in a mysterious

[13] Three other men had also survived the raft journey, but they strayed from the group and were found dead or dying by Birri-gubba people after the intervening two weeks on shore, Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence,* pp. 8-10.

way/his wonders to perform'.[14] Another small group was soon encountered, and the 'corroboree' was repeated. When the main camp was reached:

> The first thing that they did was to lay us down and cover us over with dried grass, to prevent our being seen til the appointed time. They then collected together to the number of about 50 or 60 – men, women and children – and sat down in a circle; then those who discovered us went into the middle, dressed up in the things that they had taken from us ... and danced a corroboree, in which they explained ... what they had discovered, from whence they had brought us, and all they knew about us ... That being over, we were led into the middle in triumph.[15]

This process was repeated for the 'near tribes' the following evening, and on subsequent nights for a seemingly endless stream of visitors. When the castaways expressed their disinclination to participate one evening, it was gently but firmly indicated that participation was compulsory.[16] It would seem that this process of identification and explanation was essential to the survival and prosperity of Morrill and his companions in their new community.

1.1 Birri-gubba country, the flank of Mt Elliott from the south.

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[14] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence,* p. 10.

[15] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence,* pp. 10-12.

[16] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 11.

Seventeen years later, another process of storytelling began. Morrill's plea to the two stockmen: 'do not shoot me. I am a British object', was his initial passport. What was Morrill doing on the wrong side of the frontier? As soon as he opened his mouth, he was expected to add to geographic, ethnographic and botanical knowledge about the region. He was expected to entertain, as audiences crowded around him to hear his story of survival, already fascinated by the growing body of literature about shipwreck victims, escaped convicts, renegades and captives who had experienced wild climes and non-European society. He needed to negotiate a new place in the world; perhaps wanting nothing more than to ameliorate the impact of this sudden colonisation, he found he might be despised by association with his adoptive people. Morrill was 'cross-questioned' by the stockmen Hatch and Wilson about his wreck and survival, and his life hung on his story as he spent one more night with his Birri-gubba kin, returning to the stockyard in the morning.[17] After a fortnight at this outpost of Mr Anthill's Inkerman station, Morrill was washed, clad and passed along a line of settlers to the Commissioner's orderly, who escorted him into Bowen (also known as Port Denison), a journey of over one hundred kilometres.[18] He made a statement at the Bowen Court House on the 23rd February 1863 in which he testified to the wreck of the *Peruvian* and the course of events which had led to his being the sole survivor after seventeen years. He also testified to his desire to make contact, 'which I had always been trying to do, from the time I heard there were white men settled near me'. Though he had heard of the killing of a white man by the Aborigines, and although he acknowledged that the town of Bowen had been in existence for some time, he professed not to have laid eyes on a white person between his last contact with fellow castaways Captain and Mrs Pitkethly and his deliberate encounter with Mr Anthill's stockmen.[19]

He was interviewed in a less formal manner too as a 'white-blackfellow' whose incredible story of hardships and 'exile ... amongst the blacks', attested to by impressive holes in his forehead, arms and body, would put the town of Bowen on the map. 'Advance Australia's' report to the newspapers gave a terse but dramatic version of the same narrative reported at the Court House, complete with sufferings 'impossible to describe' and furnished with the virile frontier-dialogue exchanged by Morrill and Hatch and Wilson as they had faced each

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[17] Hatch and Wilson had apparently told him 'that if I did not come back in the morning they should conclude that I had told them a lie, and that they would put the black trackers on our track and shoot us,' Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence* pp. 15-6.

[18] *The Courier*, 11th March 1863, p. 2.

[19] Copy of a statement made by James (Jimmy) Morrell before one of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for Queensland in the Court House, Bowen, 23rd February 1863, State Library of Queensland, Heritage Collections, James Morrell Papers, Box 8923, Reference Code OM74-92, typescript viewed courtesy Phillip Murray.

other across the outstation yard a month earlier.[20] This account narrated Morrill's adoption by the Birri-gubba, their merciful response to the castaways' supplicating gestures, their assistance to the cabin boy who could not walk for exhaustion, and emphasised their kindness over the years. Yet it concluded with a confirmation of their cannibalism, and the strange statement that Morrill would 'not trust them generally'.[21]

Morrill boarded the *Murray* steamer for Rockhampton, where his arrival was awaited with 'considerable excitement', his story having preceded him.[22] Here, he was interviewed by Mr John Jardine, Police Magistrate, and a select audience of gentlemen who anticipated that 'much valuable information could be extracted from this man'.[23] The questions put to him ranged from the curious (had he heard report of the camels accompanying exploring parties?) to the downright hazardous (how much did he know of the numerous murders that had occurred in the district?).[24] At least some of those in attendance were frustrated that despite Jardine's 'unwearied patience and ... exemplary desire to confine his examination to matters of public interest', Morrill had furnished 'monosyllabic replies ... [which] augmented rather than satisfied the thirst of his audience for information'.[25] All along this journey south Morrill was 'besieged' by the curious:[26] as Marcus Clark later put it, 'snatched from barbarism, he ran the usual round of tea parties. People were eager to hear this newly caught lion roar.'[27]

A second steamship conveyed Morrill to Brisbane, where he met with Governor George Bowen and the Mayor, George Edmonstone Esq, and told his story to journalist Edmund Gregory at *The Courier* office, published as: *Sketch of a Residence among the Aboriginals of Northern Queensland for Seventeen Years; being a narrative of my life, shipwreck, landing on the coast, residence among the Aboriginals, with an account of their manners and customs*

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[20] 'Advance Australia's' report, dated 25th February 1863, appeared in *The Courier*, 11th March 1863, p. 2; *The Queensland Guardian*, 12th March 1863.

[21] *The Courier*, 11th March 1863, p. 2.

[22] *The Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863. A crowd also awaited his arrival on the wharf at Brisbane, *The Courier*, 16th March 1863, p. 2.

[23] *The Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863.

[24] *The Argus*, 18th March 1863, p. 6 (quoting correspondence from the *Rockhampton Bulletin*).

[25] *The Argus*, 18th March 1863, p. 6 (quoting correspondence from the *Rockhampton Bulletin*).

[26] Edmund Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill among the Aboriginals of Northern Queensland for Seventeen Years; being a narrative of his life, shipwreck, landing on the coast, and residence among the Aboriginals: also an account of the of the natural productions of Northern Queensland, and manners, customs language, and superstitions of its inhabitants, by Edmund Gregory* (Brisbane: Courier General Printing Office, 1866), pp. 16-7; Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence,* p. 2. Several correspondents to *The Courier* anticipated that Morrill must be lacking funds, and offered to help ensure a generous subscription for him if only he would appear in public in Brisbane as he had in Bowen and Rockhampton, *The Courier*, 21st March 1863, p. 2; 13th April 1863, p. 2; and 29th April 1863, p. 3.

[27] Marcus Clarke, *Old Tales of a Young Country* (Melbourne: Mason, Firth and McCutcheon, 1871), p. 194.

and mode of living; together with notices of many of the natural productions, and of the nature of the country, by James Morrill.[28] This slim pamphlet was advertised in *The Courier* classifieds from mid-April 1863 (with a second thousand in print within a month), promptly reached readers in other colonies, and had apparently travelled as far afield as Boston by 1864.[29] Morrill might have hoped that the booklet, as well as bringing in a small income, would alleviate the pressure to 'wait on persons for the purpose of narrating my past sufferings ... day after day'.[30] Indeed, although the curious continued to seek Morrill out in Bowen over the following two years, storytellers, from the 1860s to the present, have placed this pamphlet at the centre of his story.[31] Those who conversed with him had read *Sketch of a Residence*, and recorded their impressions with reference to the pamphlet.[32] Those who waited decades before committing their recollections to print offered *Sketch of a Residence* as the authoritative source, and tendered their own impressions as supplementary to it.[33]

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[28] In 1964, the Hon. P. R. Delamothe, a founding member of the Bowen Historical Society, stated that Morrill 'dictated' his story to journalist R. E. Johns at the *Brisbane Courier* office, *The Bowen Independent*, 31 January 1964. Noel Loos followed this attribution, 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District', pp. 15-16. The source of his information is not clear. Edmund Gregory arrived in Moreton Bay in 1858 to edit the *Ipswich Herald*, and subsequently joined *The Courier* as shipping and commercial reporter. He became overseer of the Government Printing Office at Brisbane, and then Government Printer (1893-1902). Gregory claimed authorship of Morrill's story in revised editions of the pamphlet (1865/6 and 1896), and Archibald Meston stated that Morrill had been 'interviewed by Edmund Gregory'. This, of course, is no guarantee that Gregory was not later taking credit for the work of another Brisbane journalist whose subsequent career had not been as illustrious as his own. H. J. Gibbney and Ann G. Smith, *A Biographical Register: Notes from the Name Index of the Australian Dictionary of Biography 1788-1939* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1987), pp. 283-4; *The Brisbane Courier*, 18th September 1896, p. 5; 1st December 1913, p. 9; 13th September 1929, p. 22; Archibald Meston, 'Wild White Men: Australian Instances', *The World's News*, 27th October 1923.

[29] *The Courier*, 18th April 1863 p. 8 and 16th May 1863, p. 6; James Bonwick's account of Morrill's story, published in Melbourne the same year, as a 'sequel' to that of William Buckley, seems to have drawn on *Sketch of a Residence* as well as other sources. The *South Australian Advertiser* printed excerpts of Morrill's published story as received from the paper's 'telegraphic reporter in Victoria', and a 2006 edition proclaims its source for the narrative as an 1864 Boston edition, James Bonwick, *The Wild White Man and the Blacks of Victoria* (Melbourne: Fergusson & Moore, 1863), pp. 16-17; *The South Australian Advertiser*, 6th October 1863; David M. Welch, *17 Years Wandering Among the Aboriginals: James Morrill 1864 and Eric Mjoberg 1918* (Virginia, N.T.: D. Welch, 2006).

[30] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 2.

[31] One E.J. Byrne was working with Morrill towards a more extensive account of his experiences when he passed away in 1865, *Port Denison Times*, 1st November 1865, p. 2. But, as Morrill's death intervened, it would seem that no such account was published, *Port Denison Times*, 3rd September 1902.

[32] Thomas Lodge Murray-Prior visited Bowen in the closing months of 1863 and questioned Morrill on, among other things, his marital status as a Birri-gubba man, not believing that he had had nothing to do with women as was stated in 'the Pamphlet which was written at Brisbane'. Murray-Prior, Private Letter Book, p. 19; George Carrington, who also spoke with Morrill, regretted that he was unable to obtain *Sketch of a Residence*, and thus could only offer his own recollections of the story, where he would have liked to include extracts from the published version. George Carrington, *Colonial Adventures and Experiences by a University Man* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1871), p. 165.

[33] E.B. Kennedy states that although he heard parts of his story from Morrill's own lips, Morrill gave him a copy of the story printed at the Brisbane Courier office. He provides an abridged version of it, adding only a few details from his own recollection, E.B. Kennedy, 'Seventeen Years Amongst Queensland Blacks', *Chambers Journal, Seventh Series* (W.R. Chambers Ltd: London and Edinburgh) Part 42, Volume IV, no. 180 (May 9th 1914), pp. 353-358; and No 181 (May 16th 1914), pp. 382-4; William Robertson, speaking on 2BL radio in the 1920s, claimed to have talked to several men of the 'Mal Mal' clan who had adopted Morrill, at Cleveland Bay in the 1880s, but he described the version 'taken down' by Gregory as 'the real history', and proceeded to paraphrase it, William Robertson, *Coo-ee Talks: a collection of lecturettes upon early experiences among the*

The Bowen Historical Society, re-publishing the pamphlet in 1964 and 2002, presented this collaborative text as the 'full' story of James Morrill, lent authenticity by virtue of it being in Morrill's 'own words', and authority by Gregory's ascent to the position of Government Printer in later life.[34]

Despite its primacy in the title, *Sketch of a Residence* says little about Morrill's 'residency' in Birri-gubba society. Rather, the narrative proceeds according to a three-part structure that had begun to emerge in the press reports of his interviews at Bowen and Rockhampton. The first chapter provides a vivid account of the *Peruvian* disaster, the adoption of the castaways by Birri-gubba people, and the deaths of the cabin boy, Captain and Mrs Pitkethly. The second furnishes a rather more reserved account of Morrill's experience of the rapid entry of settlers and their flocks into Birri-gubba country and his 'return to civilisation'. The third and final chapter presents information about Aboriginal life and local natural resources, in response to the interests of his anticipated audience. Morrill's Birri-gubba life is implied, by his adoption, and by the knowledge of words, foodstuffs, country and customs with which he returned, but is very little 'lived' in this pamphlet. In the late twentieth century, informed by decades of anthropology aspiring to profound insight based in cultural immersion, scholars were apologetic about how little *Sketch of a Residence* has to offer by way of illuminating ethnography, and suggested that Morrill was simply not very intelligent, or that his interviewer lacked sensitivity or curiosity.[35] But as Morrill told his story, this time with the help of the colonists, there was a superfluity of reasons for it to focus on his crossing, and crossing back, and to be reticent about his life as a Birri-gubba man. As Linda Colley demonstrates, for captives, renegades, and others absent-without-leave from European

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Aborigines of Australia delivered from a wireless broadcasting station (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1928), p. 143; 'A Survivor' dedicated one of his historical columns to Morrill in 1916, closely paraphrasing the 1863 pamphlet, and adding his recollections on the impact of Morrill's story on the settlers at the time, Anon, 'The Sad, Bad, Mad but sometimes Glad old days by A Survivor', *Brisbane Truth*, 21st May 1916; C. S. Rowe, although he does not mention the pamphlet, paraphrases it very closely in his version of Morrill's story, Rowe, 'Rowe's Memoranda', pp. 110-114.

[34] Bowen Historical Society, *James Morrill: his life and adventures* (Bowen: The Bowen Independent, 2002), preface.

[35] Local researcher Phillip Murray observes that for many years Morrill was not popular at James Cook University, with scholars there considering his testimony 'anthropologically crude', Conversation with Phillip Murray, 3rd December 2010. Helen Brayshaw, in her ethnographic and archaeological study of the Aborigines of the Herbert Burdekin district wished that Morrill's co-author had had more time and expertise to elicit information from Morrill, Helen Brayshaw, *Well beaten paths: Aborigines of the Herbert Burdekin district, north Queensland* (Townsville, Qld.: Department of History, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1990), p. 20; Bruce Breslin evaluated Morrill's knowledge of Birri-gubba lifeways alongside the settler Dalrymple's saying 'Neither Murrells nor Dalrymple was a keen observer of Aboriginal behavior,' Breslin, *Exterminate with pride,* p. 47; See also Henry Reynolds *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006), p. 24; David Moore, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York. An ethnographic reconstruction based on the 1848-1850 'Rattlesnake' Journals of O.W. Brierly and information he obtained from Barbara Thompson* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1979), p. 10.

civilisation, a published first-person account of experiences played a significant role in their re-admission into the fold of civilisation and Empire as moral, social and intellectual beings. An account of the events of 'capture' and 'escape' were particularly vital and had become part of a lively literary tradition.[36] Amid the ongoing war-like situation in the region, the interest in Morrill's journey out of and back to civilisation was further heightened. Also, as I will discuss later on, the day to day life of Morrill as a Birri-gubba man was perhaps not a story that could be told in Queensland in 1863, both because of the cultural and literary expectations of listeners, and because the ongoing conflict was not conducive to the trust required for such cross-cultural communication.

Morrill needed to explain himself. From the perspective of the colony, he was a man of fighting age living with the Aborigines at a time when Native Police and settlers themselves aimed to clear away the Aboriginal presence to facilitate British exploitation of the land.[37] He might have been a renegade or criminal, who had joined the natives as a bushranger – several escapees from Moreton Bay had set precedents for such a career.[38] As an escaped convict who had joined the Aborigines for survival's sake, he would still have had cause to make account of himself, as William Buckley had, anxious that his sentence not be resumed.[39] Even known shipwreck victim Eliza Fraser had struggled to provide an account of the wreck of the *Stirling Castle* that met with the satisfaction of the Crown and the public.[40] *Sketch of a Residence* first establishes Morrill's Britishness and his class.[41] The reader is

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[36] Colley explores the narratives and experiences of British captives and renegades in Morocco, southern India and Canada, from the sixteenth century. Linda Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales: Captivity, Collaborations and Empire', *Past and Present* 168 (August 2000), pp. 170-4.

[37] The *Port Denison Times* provided candid reportage of conflicts from its first issue in March 1864, and a thorough local assessment of the policies pursued up to 1869, as the 'letting in' of the Aborigines was debated. The 1861 Select Committee enquiring into the Native Police force included open debate on the effectiveness of the force employed in the region to that point. The Native Police 'dispersed', i.e. shot at any large group of Aborigines encountered, but this alone could not ensure the protection of the settlers and their interests – settlers also needed armed stockmen to patrol their own runs, Loos, 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District', pp. 120-138, 157-168.

[38] C.S. Rowe accounted for the nervousness of Hatch and Wilson when they encountered Morrill saying 'they suspected he might be a bushranger', Rowe, 'Rowe's Memoranda', p. 114. The more famous examples included that of John Graham, known as 'Moilow' to his adoptive people, who escaped from Moreton Bay in 1827, took part in the rescue of Eliza Fraser and then disappeared from the colony again in 1837; James Davis (Duramboi) and David Bracefield (Wandi). D.J. Mulvaney, 'John Graham: the convict as Aboriginal' in Bob Reece ed., *Irish convict lives* (Sydney; Crossing Press, 1993), pp. 109-145.

[39] John Morgan, *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley, Thirty-Two years a wanderer amongst the Aborigines of the then unexplored country around Port Phillip, now the Province of Victoria* [1852] (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1967), pp. 86, 89-90.

[40] Kay Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact: the Eliza Fraser stories* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 34-9.

[41] Corroboration of Morrill's identity and story was to come later; the account of his family, situation of birth, childhood and career as a sailor that was printed in 1863 was reliant on his own recall and the trust of his readers. The 1865/6 edition of the pamphlet corrected the spelling of Morrill's remembered name; apparently his real name had been Murrells. Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 3.

presented with a sympathetic portrait of Morrill as a young man in Maldon, Essex, a young man with a 'restless disposition' who found his father's engineering workshop 'too confining'. The Blackwater River, passing close by his home, offered continual temptation to 'get amongst the shipping'. Short voyages around the British Isles did not sate his appetite, and he sought employ on the open ocean.[42] Morrill's adventuresome thoughts as he breathed the salt air may have been fanned by the burgeoning genre of seagoing adventure, inspired and typified by Daniel Defoe's story of Robinson Crusoe, as a truly popular literature began to take off in the mid-nineteenth century.[43] Certainly, contemporaries saw in Morrill something of a Crusoe, whose 'head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts'.[44] By the time Morrill was telling his story in the mid-nineteenth century, De Foe's was both a 'charming book of [one's] childhood' as well as the story of a wanderer whose moral fibre would be put to the test.[45]

The possibility of mutiny and selfish, dishonourable acts hung about shipwreck stories like a cloud of blow-flies over a carcase. *Sketch of a Residence* gives a powerful account of the shipwreck and the long soul-destroying voyage on the raft, provoking sympathy, but also attesting to the durability of the survivors' morality. The dead are accounted for as far as Morrill's memory can stretch, and the text describes good government on the raft via the democratic division of provisions and the respectful sea burials of the perished.[46] This was still of acute interest to families of the other crew and passengers – the story quickly reached Perthshire, Scotland, where Captain and Mrs Pitkethly had left family behind, and also the friends and family of the distinguished Mr and Mrs Wilmot and Mr Quarry who had departed Melbourne for India never to be heard from again.[47] On adoption by the Birri-gubba clan, the narrating voice is equally concerned to vouch for the courage and dignity of the Captain and his wife, and the kindness and generosity of their Aboriginal rescuers.

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[42] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence,* p. 3.

[43] Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 10-12, 23-8.

[44] *South Australian Advertiser,* 6th October 1863; and at least one northern newspaper story was headed 'The New Robinson Crusoe', *Queensland Guardian,* 17th March 1863; Daniel De Foe, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, to which is appended Howell's Life of Alexander Selkirk* (Edinburgh: Fraser & Co., 1837), pp. 2-5. Like Morrill, Crusoe was of the 'middle state' of life, with prospects for a comfortable existence if willing to apply himself, as Crusoe's father prudently counselled. Like Morrill, though, he would be 'satisfied with nothing but going to sea' and signed up to a sea-going vessel on the spur of the moment without informing his mother or father. Colley has noted that British narratives of captivity and return became 'coloured' by the novels of Defoe, Swift and others, Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales', p. 174.

[45] *South Australian Advertiser,* 6th October 1863; Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire,* pp. 25-6; Martin Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story* (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), p. 22.

[46] Minus their severed limbs to be used as shark bait, of course, Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence,* p. 7. Kay Schaffer understands Eliza Fraser's initial testimonies as centring on her role as Captain's wife, defending the integrity of her husband's good government, Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact,* pp. 34-9.

[47] *The Queensland Guardian,* 17th March 1863.

Speaking to the particular concerns of a British and colonial readership about the fate of white women amongst savages (Eugene Fitzalan, botanist and early resident of Bowen, versified about the 'bitter feelings' in Mrs Pitkethly's breast as she was forced to 'herd with human beings/Little raised above the beast'[48]), the narrator assures the reader that his Aboriginal rescuers respected the privacy, after establishing her gender, and married status of this sole white woman survivor.[49]

After several months, just as the four survivors had begun to pick up the language, a large event was hosted by the survivors' adoptive clans, and when visitors from the south returned home, the four slunk away with them, apparently hoping that they might make contact with ships or settlement of some kind. It was here that the cabin boy and Captain and Mrs Pitkethly died. Morrill stated that he had ensured a Christian-style burial for the couple (the usual Birri-gubba practice was to cremate the dead).[50] Feeling 'lonely', he then decided to return to his original adoptive clan on Mt Elliot, 'thinking they would take more care of me'. He did not expect to face retributive justice – in the eyes of the clans who had adopted the other three castaways, he was responsible for their deaths. His own adoptive clan protected him from the 'crack on the head' which the Captain's clan in particular felt he deserved.[51] It is now, with the strongly Christian gaze of Captain and Mrs Pitkethly extinguished, that *Sketch of a Residence* leaves off its conscientious account of Morrill's movements and the reader loses sight of him for more than a decade.[52] Morrill had acquitted his responsibilities to the dead, in British terms, as best he was able. More broadly, in the moral courtroom of the British Empire of the mid-nineteenth century, the narrative had established that Morrill's defection from civilisation was not deliberate, but was the result of catastrophe.[53]

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[48] Eugene Fitzalan, 'Lines', as reproduced in Bowen Historical Society, *James Morrill: his life and adventures*, pp. 1-3. Fitzalan wrote this verse some time before his death in 1911. See also *Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863, where Morrill seems to have been asked about the preservation of Mrs Pitkethly's dignity.

[49] Kate Darian-Smith, '"Rescuing" Barbara Thompson and other White Women: Captivity Narratives on Australian Fronteirs' in Kate Darian-Smith, Liz Gunner, and Sarah Nuttall eds., *Text, Theory, Space: Land, literature and history in South Africa and Australia* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 99-114; The reader is assured that Mrs Pitkethly died uncorrupted, very soon after her husband, Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence,* pp. 10, 12-3.

[50] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 12-13.

[51] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 13.

[52] Earlier on, a period of six months is lost to the reader because it was not related to the movements of the four survivors - merely six months in which they had begun to settle in and 'to pick up their [adoptive] language', Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 12.

[53] Kay Schaffer finds John Curtis constructing a courtroom-like narrative in his *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle* (1837-8), in which the narrator is the counsel and judge and the reader part of the jury, sitting in judgment on Eliza Fraser's character and on her negotiation of the civilised and the savage in particular, Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, pp. 66-7.

When the account resumes, a fresh project is at hand. Surveys of the coast around Cape Cleveland had begun in the late 1850s, and settlers and Native Police detachments had begun to venture into the hinterland soon after the establishment of Bowen in 1861. Why was it that Morrill had not 'given himself up' until more than a year later? In the interview at Bowen, he insisted that he had known of white men in the region for only one month before his appearance.[54] Under cross-examination at Rockhampton, he was more vocal about the dangers involved in his position. He was highly cautious about approaching white men as he expected to be recognised as an Aborigine and shot summarily, for 'that is the ordinary salutation an Aboriginal gets from a white man'. Openly seeking information from the Birri-gubba about the settlers in this war-like situation also had its dangers, and Morrill felt it necessary to maintain a semblance of indifference.[55] *Sketch of a Residence* gives a careful account of Morrill's near-misses with reconnaissance and settlement parties, his attempts to catch up with them, and his explanations to Aboriginal associates of his desire to meet with the newcomers.[56] Most significantly, an encounter between the Government schooner the *Spitfire*, and the Birri-gubba had been officially reported as an attack repulsed, followed by a sub-human cacophony on shore as the boat retreated.[57] Morrill provides the other side of the story: the Birri-gubba approached the *Spitfire* party trying to tell them about Morrill, as he had asked them to do whenever they encountered white men. The testimony reveals:

> Nothing is said in the report about shooting the natives, but one ... stout, able-bodied blackfellow, a friend of mine, was shot dead by some one in the boat, and another was wounded; and the hideous yelling was the noise they usually make over their dead.[58]

On the one hand, this counter-reportage is subversive, suggesting that even Government parties were not honest about their dealings with the Aborigines, and that they might shoot rather too readily. At the same time, it vouches for the gentleness and goodwill of the Aboriginal men involved. But also, it forms part of the narrative's defence against the potential accusation that Morrill had himself participated in attacks on British parties, or simply that he could have made himself known sooner than he did. This did not stop

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[54] *The Courier*, 11th March 1863, p. 2.

[55] *The Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863.

[56] For example, on one occasion Morrill spied a ship, but 'she was too far out for me to attract her attention'. On another occasion his people came in contact with a party that landed near Cape Cleveland, which made them a present of some shirts, but Morrill himself was 'on Mount Elliot, looking for honey and breadfruit', Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 13-14.

[57] *Sketch of a Residence* includes an extract from the Spitfire's official report, 15th - 16th September 1860, presumably located and copied by the journalist or his assistants, Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 13-14.

[58] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 14.

contemporaries from speculating, as C.S. Rowe did, that 'Morrill knew more about some affrays between blacks and whites than ever he cared to relate'.[59] This, in Ross Gibson's view, was the key to the discomfort that Morrill's appearance caused the colonists; he was knowing, and in touching on Aboriginal meetings, movements and trade-in-knowledge in his story, he attested to 'a cogent confederacy of Aboriginal intelligence' occupying the spaces beyond settlement.[60] In ascribing humane, yet non-partisan motives to Morrill and giving account of the uses to which he put his knowledge of the colonists, *Sketch of a Residence* perhaps performed vital work in forming a solid basis for his respectable married life in Bowen after 1863.

Morrill had already answered to representatives of the Crown at Bowen, Rockhampton and Brisbane. The concern to identify him in *Sketch of a Residence*, to demonstrate his integrity and innocence, held only a residue of the urgency it had in these earlier interviews, but was perhaps significant at another level. While in Brisbane, Morrill gave a public profession of his faith in Christ and was re-baptised.[61] Perhaps no less important was a re-birth into the republic of letters, the rational and commercial world of the press, the reconstitution of his British self under the gaze of the reading public. Certainly, he 'became something of a celebrity', as the Bowen Historical Society observed in 2002. But his repeated storytelling was not simply a matter of responding to the invitations of the interested – it was no less vital to Morrill's survival and prosperity than the assimilative 'corroborees' had been seventeen years earlier.

Desire and disentanglement

The middle years of Morrill's life as a Birri-gubba man are summed up in a single, pregnant sentence: 'I lived on year after year in the tribe as one of themselves – nothing particularly happening.'[62] Day to day life is not the stuff of adventure, no matter where it is carried out. J. M. Coetzee's fictional protagonist, a female companion to Crusoe and Friday, realised the narrative failure of their story while the trio were still marooned on the island, 'let it not ... come to pass that Cruso (sic) is saved ... for the world expects stories from its adventurers'. The problem was a lack of will resulting from a contentment of sorts – 'there was too little desire in Cruso and Friday: too little desire to escape, too little desire for a new life. Without

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[59] Rowe, 'Rowe's Memoranda', p. 115.

[60] Ross Gibson, *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 2002), p. 88.

[61] Rev. B. G. Wilson, a Baptist Minister, apparently performed the service, Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 17.

[62] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 13.

desire, how is it possible to make a story?' she lamented as she tried to write a publishable account once back in England.[63] Constant Merland, presenting shipwreck survivor and Uutaalnganu adoptee Narcisse Pelletier's story to the French public in 1876,wrote 'although their tribe is constantly on the move, the life of the savages is generally uniform and monotonous'.[64] He attempted to solve this literary problem by moving quickly from castaway narrative to ethnography. Once his subject's clothes had rotted away, he relinquished the singularity of his story and allowed it to merge with the textures of Uutaalnganu life:

> It is no longer the cabin boy Narcisse Pelletier who will be the subject of our discussion but Amglo, citizen of the tribe of Ohantaala. His personality will often recede into the background as we turn to the description of the customs, habits and beliefs of tribes among whom civilisation has not yet penetrated.[65]

Merland's translator, Stéphanie Anderson, finds that he was not, however, able to embrace Amglo as a protagonist with his own desires and bonds, 'it is as if Pelletier is in suspended animation as his years of residence with the Sandbeach people pass'.[66]

The series of there-and-back stories recorded on Morrill's return are tightly reined in to the desire to survive. His seventeen years with the 'natives' is transformed into a mere 'sojourn' in a British life, and his shipwreck is tied closely to a grateful and wholehearted 'return to civilisation'.[67] As he prepared to return to Inkerman station on the 26th January 1863, his Birri-gubba family wept and would not believe they would ever see him again. *Sketch of a Residence* recounts a 'short struggle between the feeling of love I had for my old friends and companions and the desire once more to live a civilized life'.[68] The outcome of this struggle is, in Linda Colley's parlance, the 'imperially correct' one: he returns to Hatch and Wilson and embarks on his momentous journey into Bowen.[69] His contemporaries had difficulty conceptualising how his desire for civilisation had been suspended for so long. A

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[63] J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (Maryborough, Vic.: Penguin, 2010), pp. 34, 88. Part of Coetzee's irony is perhaps that most versions of Robinson Crusoe's story are replete with utterly tedious detail about day to day survival.

[64] Stéphanie Anderson, *Pelletier: the forgotten castaway of Cape York* (Melbourne: Melbourne Books, 2009), p. 182.

[65] Anderson, *Pelletier*, p. 156.

[66] Anderson, *Pelletier*, p. 41.

[67] Bonwick, *The Wild White Man and the Blacks of Victoria*, p. 17. The preface of *Sketch of a Residence* refers to Morrill's story as his 'forced banishment from civilized life' and the narrative evinces hope and joy when the prospect of his being 'restored to civilisation' arises, Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence,* pp. 14, 16.

[68] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence,* p. 16.

[69] Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales', p. 176.

correspondent to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, though he acknowledged the likely impossibility of Morrill reaching the southern colonies, marvelled that 'he does not seem to have been ever inspired with a desire to force his way on foot down to the settled districts'. As his companions died from 'sickness of the heart, and hope deferred', Morrill inexplicably survived.[70] While responding to the question of whether the country round about might be gold bearing country, Morrill recalled that 'once when out, looking for coloured earths to paint myself with' he found an interesting, heavy piece of rock. While summarizing the knowledge he had had of white settlement in the area he explained: 'four stray cattle were seen in our district, but I was on the coast with ... my brother-in-law, making a possum skin rug.'[71] Like Morrill's earlier brush with Birri-gubba justice, these asides give a fleeting glimpse of his immersion in kin relationships and the economic and ceremonial life of his adoptive people, a life no doubt full of 'desires' capable of driving other stories, stories that find no place in *Sketch of a Residence*.

1.2 View from Castle Hill, looking down at Townsville and across to Magnetic Island. Storytellers have imagined that Morrill climbed to this vantage point, and others in the region, searching the horizon for ships.

The physical and social processes of his passage out of 'civilisation' are reversed as *Sketch of a Residence* sees Morrill re-adopted. The Birri-gubba men had transcended mutual

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[70] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21st March 1863, p. 6.

[71] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 14, 24.

fearfulness, and begun to assimilate Morrill by making him naked, sleeping alongside him, and providing him with food. The first impulses of Hatch and Wilson after they lowered their guns were to offer him bread, tea and clothing. In both cases Morrill then began the hard work of overcoming a language barrier, and integrating himself into the communities' economy.[72] He was not yet financially independent as he prepared *Sketch of a Residence*, hoping this published account 'may yield me what I much need – the means of living'.[73] Any temptation to think that our protagonist is back at 'square one', as an uncomplicated English sailor, might be dispelled by Alan Garner whose fictional exploration of William Buckley's story, *Strandloper*, calls us to remember how culturally complicated an English sailor might be, how he might find many resonances in Aboriginal ways of thinking, and how particular the culture and language of the colonists was.[74]

In the most literal sense, Morrill was 'restored' to a frontier town that was not even dreamed of when he crawled onto the beach in 1846, a town full of strangers. But as Morrill himself prefigured by announcing himself a 'British object', *Sketch of a Residence* presumes that readers near and far would understand that Bowen, Rockhampton, Brisbane, represented the bosom of Empire, and it was this, rather than his family in Essex, or the familiar ship-board life, to which this narrative orchestrates a return.[75] Its civilising power is crystallised in the opening salvo of the third chapter, in which Morrill proclaims:

> The aboriginals among whom I have been living are a fine race of people, as to strength, size and general appearance; but like those of other parts of this colony, they are treacherous, jealous and cunning.[76]

Morrill is no longer a savage, but a civilised man looking down on savages. As much as his journey into Bowen, this statement signifies that he has returned to civilisation, disentangled from Birri-gubba relationships. This third chapter presents a retrospective, generalised account of Birri-gubba life governed by ethnographic categories – familial structures, language, diet etcetera – and providing the kind of information that pastoralists and miners

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[72] Morrill was at first dependent on his Birri-gubba adopters to feed and care for him, but once he recovered, he began to pull his weight by working, finding the snaring of waterfowl particularly satisfying, Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 12.

[73] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 2.

[74] Alan Garner, *Strandloper* (London: Harvill Press, 1996).

[75] His experiences with the Birri-gubba, who apparently also saw him as making a return to them as a 'jumped up white-fellow', may have helped equip him for this second re-adoption, Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 10. Morrill's family in Essex were amazed to hear that he was alive and expressed a desire to see him, *The Courier*, 19th August 1863, p. 2.

[76] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 17.

might be interested in.[77] A story of involvement is converted into information: Morrill is largely dis-placed from his experiences as the narrating voice explains how fire is made or how the dead are honoured.[78] History-makers of the late twentieth century have continued to disentangle Morrill's information from his experiences. A local history observed, 'as is understandable in one who lived off the land for such a long time, Morrill's knowledge of the vegetation and indeed the fauna, was, by the layman's standards, prolific.'[79] The author reproduces the observation of botanist M. Thozet, who Morrill took on a tour of local food and medicinal plants in March 1863, that 'had explorers Burke and Wills had the benefit of Morrill's knowledge of indigenous foods, their own safe return would have been more than a probability'.[80] It is well known that Burke rejected Aboriginal assistance when it may well have saved his life,[81] while Morrill, of course, learnt from Birri-gubba teachers within adoptive relationships. That this can be overlooked is partly a reflection of Morrill's transformation in *Sketch of a Residence* into a Crusoe-like survivor who can be understood to have invented this 'knowledge' in isolation.

The appeal of this third chapter to an ethnographic audience has also continued to shape the twentieth century response to Morrill's story. In his Masters thesis, Noel Loos was heavily reliant on *Sketch of a Residence* for his account of the Aboriginal people of the Burdekin region, along with the accounts of coastal surveyor Jukes, and Curr, a sympathetic pastoralist. He assessed the value and nature of this third chapter against an envisaged complete ethnography, which would meet the standards of authorities on Aboriginal life like Ronald and Catherine Berndt.[82] In this light, he found Morrill 'exasperatingly reticent' on the

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[77] The chapter includes the botanical essay published by M. Thozet in the *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 14th March, 1863, bringing together Morrill's knowledge of the plants of the region and their Aboriginal uses with the Latin names bestowed on them by men of science, Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 18-20.

[78] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 22, 23.

[79] Peter London, *The Burdekin and the Burdekin Cultural Complex: a short history commemorating the centenary of the Shire of Burdekin* (Ayr, Qld.: Cane Toad Promotions, 1988), pp. 72-3.

[80] London, *The Burdekin and the Burdekin Cultural Complex*, pp. 72-3. See also John Kerr, *Black Snow and Liquid Gold: a history of the Burdekin Shire from first contact of Europeans with the Aborigines, analysing the development of the pastoral, agricultural, secondary and service industries including sugar cane growing and milling from Inkerman to Giru on the Haughton River, rice, tobacco, mango and horticultural production, irrigation schemes leading to construction of the Burdekin Dam, the establishment of the twin towns of Ayr and Home Hill, sea, road, rail and air transport, local government, health services, social, religious and sporting activities, and the impact of Melanesian, Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Spanish and other immigrants* (Ayr, Qld.: Burdekin Shire Council, 1994), p. 15. Newspaper reports of Morrill's day trip with Thozet incorporate the comment about Burke and Wills as an observation of the writer rather than of Thozet himself, see for example, *The Courier*, 21st March 1863, p. 3. The Melbourne *Argus* concluded that Morrill 'seemed to experience many a pleasant emotion in recognising many of the vegetable friends of his Robinson Crusoe life', *The Argus*, 6th April 1863, p. 6.

[81] Kathleen Fitzpatrick, 'Burke, Robert O'Hara (1821–1861) [1969], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/burke-robert-ohara-3116/text4633>, accessed 28 April 2012.

[82] Loos, 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District', pp. 16-17.

matter of initiation, for instance, and noted that he entirely neglected the governing structures of the Birri-gubba.[83] But the brief 'ethnography' concluding *Sketch of a Residence* was an addendum to Morrill's story of crossing and crossing back, attesting both to his journey out of civilisation and his return to it. Unlike Jukes and Curr, Morrill's participation in ethnography signalled the re-contextualisation of his Birri-gubba knowledge as it became commodified by science.

Morrill told his story as conflict continued around him and as he became further embroiled in it. In his interview at Rockhampton, he had offered to act as an interpreter and to share his knowledge of the country with the settlers.[84] He apparently set off for Brisbane intent on dialogue with the government about the best way in which he could act both to 'protect the aboriginal blacks' and 'make the white settler feel secure'.[85] Indeed, Morrill's very survival and his testimony to Aboriginal kindness did raise hope in some breasts that conciliation might be possible in the north, a hope that had seemed vain for many after the killing of settlers who had shown friendliness and compassion towards Aborigines at Hornet Bank and Cullin-la-ringo in 1857 and 1861 respectively.[86] In some readers, his story raised a sense of obligation to prevent unnecessary violence – these same people had succoured a white man for so many years.[87] Others cautioned against being lulled into a false sense of security by Morrill's testimonies while Aborigines continued to perpetrate outrages on an almost daily basis, or condemned his conciliatory efforts. One pastoralist promised to shoot Morrill if he attempted friendly intercourse with the Aborigines anywhere near his property.[88] In the event, Morrill's potential as a go-between appears to have been little utilised. The *Rockhampton Bulletin* implied that the authorities deliberately hobbled Morrill by putting him in 'charge of colonial candles and dispensation of official soap' in the customs service – the journalist hoped that he would be able to exceed those responsibilities.[89] Noel Loos, having given careful consideration to the economics of the region's settlement, suggests

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[83] Loos, 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District', pp. 23-4, 37.

[84] *The Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863.

[85] *The Argus*, 18th March 1863, p. 6, printing correspondence from the *Rockhampton Bulletin* office.

[86] Loos, 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District', pp. 78, 80.

[87] See for example, *The Empire*, 19th March 1863, p. 2; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21st March 1863, p. 2; *The Courier*, 23rd March 1863, p. 3, 31st March 1863, p. 3 and 15th July 1863, p. 2; *Port Denison Times*, 4th October 1865, p. 2. Several of these correspondents were writing from Sydney. One of the southern Members, Dr Challinor, put to the Queensland Legislative Assembly (in the midst of an extended discussion of the Native Police) that Morrill might do much good employed as an interpreter explaining British law to Aborigines in the north. The discussion quickly returned to the remuneration of the Native Police and the most effective way of 'dispersing' Aborigines on pastoral runs, *The Courier*, 7th August 1863, pp. 2-3.

[88] *The Courier*, 20th March 1863, p. 3 and 19th June 1863, p. 2.

[89] *The Courier*, 15th May 1863, p. 3, quoting from the *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 6th May.

rather that the government's lack of interest in Morrill's potential as a negotiator reflected an unwillingness to make a change in policy that would incur any additional costs.[90] Morrill did, however, act as a guide on at least one exploratory mission, which resulted in the founding of Cardwell and marking out of plots for sale. His own diary of that expedition records a conference just prior to the return of the exploring party to Bowen, in which a petition to the Governor was mooted, asking that 'the land occupied by the present inhabitants', that is the Aboriginal inhabitants, be withdrawn from the first land sale.[91]

Morrill's contemporaries were not all convinced that the struggle over his loyalties had been quite so short, or so readily resolved as it was in *Sketch of a Residence*. Indeed even within that narrative his desire to return to civilisation was tepid. Morrill's palate betrays him – the roots he was offered on first meeting the Birri-gubba are described as enjoyable and nutty, whereas the bread he is given by Hatch and Wilson stuck in his throat and the tea was too sweet. The bread and tea were also redundant: Morrill and his group 'had caught 20 small grey wallabies' that day.[92] Gregory, preparing a new edition in 1896, apparently felt that Morrill's joy needed to be accentuated. His revised first meal with the stockmen is attended with the jubilant ejaculation, 'Oh, for that supreme moment of my life, with knife and fork in hand once more, and that salt and pepper, can I ever forget it!'[93] The report of Morrill's interview at Rockhampton described Morrill's life with the Birri-gubba as a state of 'captivity', and had regarded his meeting with Hatch and Wilson as an escape 'by strategem'.[94] But some of those who met and conversed with Morrill at Bowen were convinced neither that he had 'come in' of his own accord, nor that he wished to stay. Thomas Lodge Murray-Prior speculated:

> My own impression is that Morrill knew about the whites being in the neighbourhood long before he came in and was either detained forcibly or

[90] Loos, 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District', pp. 154-5.

[91] James Morrill's diary, Monday, 14th January 1864, cited in Bowen Historical Society, *The Story of James Morrill* (Bowen: The Bowen Independent, 1964).

[92] Similarly, the account of his feelings when informed that stray cattle had been sighted is thus: 'That made me uneasy, I began to think that civilized life was not far off, and it considerably raised my hopes of being restored to civilization'. His hopes notwithstanding, his 'unease' creates an atmosphere of ambivalence. Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence,* pp. 10, 14, 16.

[93] Edmund Gregory, *Narrative of James Murrell's ("Jemmy Morrill") Seventeen Years' Exile among the Wild Blacks of North Queensland, and his life and shipwreck and terrible adventures among savage tribes; their manners, customs, languages, and superstitions; also Murrells' rescue and return to civilisation, by Edmund Gregory* (Brisbane: Printed by Edmund Gregory, 1896), p. 31.

[94] *The Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863.

> had become reconciled to his savage life and attachments and only came in when he was afraid of being shot by his own countrymen.[95]

Had he 'returned' not (or not only) because he wished to leave his Birri-gubba clan and live once more a British life, but because he meant to intercede on their behalf, or because he was sent by a council of elders? A correspondent to the *Port Denison Times* considered Morrill a 'deputation to the whites' sent by the Aborigines of the Kennedy District to offer an agreement about a division of land.[96] On his way back north, he certainly left the *Rockhampton Bulletin* office with the impression that he was *en route* to see his Birri-gubba clan, not only to deliver presents from the government, but to report back to them more generally.[97] His obituary in the *Port Denison Times* suggested that he may not have been entirely trusted by the authorities, purporting that Morrill would have liked to join the Native Police to try to moderate their violence but that 'the Government appear to have been afraid he might again join the natives and act, perhaps, in unison with them'.[98]

Morrill was about twenty years old when he began his life with the Birri-gubba, and despite occasional sightings of ships, he must have for much of the time resigned himself to living out his life in his adoptive community. It is hard to imagine that he would not have taken a wife. At Rockhampton he explained the polygamous practices of his adoptive people, and the early age at which girls were often married (as young as nine or ten years). He professed, apparently on account of the 'jealousy' incurred by these arrangements, to have 'fought shy of the seductions of female blandishments.'[99] In *Sketch of a Residence* Morrill told his adoptive people 'from the first that I had a wife and two children, knowing they would not think it so strange at my wanting to get away.' Later editions of the account add, '...and because I could the better excuse myself from being too closely linked in with them by taking a wife, which I knew would be dangerous in many ways'.[100] This danger may well have been a real one. Morrill stated elsewhere that the 'wars fights and feuds' of his adoptive people were typically waged over wives.[101] It is equally possible that the 'danger' referred to was projected backwards from the story-telling process. One of Colley's subjects, Thomas Pellow, claimed in his memoirs that when allocated a wife from the Moroccan sultan's

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[95] Murray-Prior, Private Letter Book, p. 21. See also Carrington, *Colonial Adventures*, pp. 165-6.

[96] *Port Denison Times*, 4th October 1865, p. 2.

[97] *The Courier*, 15th May 1863, p. 3, with a report taken from the *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 6th May.

[98] *Port Denison Times*, 1st November 1865, p. 2.

[99] *Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863.

[100] Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 14.

[101] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 18.

harem, he rejected seven black women, and seven mullattos before being offered the white-skinned woman he took as his wife. Colley sees this as 'a concession to opinion in England, where Pellow was by then desperately trying to reintegrate himself'.[102] Murray-Prior pressed Morrill on this point, 'telling him that it was all humbug to try and make me think that a man would be 17 years with the natives without a lady love'. Morrill replied that he had meant he had no wife. He had, however, frequently been loaned the wives of others, a convention which caused no ill feeling between men. Murray-Prior posited that he had been 'a greater favourite than was good for his constitution'.[103] Attestations to the presence of Morrill's Aboriginal descendants in the region today are sometimes accompanied by similar slightly louche suggestions that his sexual involvement in Birri-gubba life was notable. Henry Young, a self-designated 'self-made' local historian residing in Bowen, told me that he knows about eight people locally who are probably descended from offspring of Morrill's relationships or liaisons with Birri-gubba women; he 'wasn't a bad old bull' apparently.[104]

Speculations about Morrill's allegiances were not unconnected with the settlers' own feelings about their part in the violence of the frontier. George Carrington wrote about his experiences in North Queensland in the mid-1860s on his return to London, and was frank about the violence involved in staking claim to this country. He let his reader in on the true meaning of the colonising verb 'to disperse (i.e. to shoot) the blacks'. With a heavy sense of irony, he discussed the virtues of the Native Police who their superiors know will not be 'wanting in zeal, and are not likely to err on the side of injudicious mercy'. He implied that Aboriginal women were killed as the surest way of eliminating the race.[105] Carrington was tramping along the coast looking for shepherding work. At one station he was offered a job, but soon found out he was to replace a shepherd killed only days before by the 'blacks'. No one had even gone out to look for his body yet.[106] He took a similar job at the next station.

One day, out alone with the sheep, his horse and his gun, Carrington spied movement in a nearby patch of grass, and without thinking twice he shot into it. He had shot a man. He approached and the man was still alive but seemed fatally wounded, so he shot him a second time, in the head. He asks the reader what else he could have done – was this not

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[102] Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales', p. 170.

[103] Murray-Prior, Private Letter Book, p. 19. Their conversation appears to have been a cordial one. It is not known whether Morrill would have been aware of Murray-Prior's involvement in the retaliatory action that followed the killing of the Fraser family by Aboriginal people at Hornet Bank in 1857. Belinda McKay, 'Writing From the Contact Zone: Fiction by early Queensland women', *Hecate* 30, no. 2 (2004), pp. 57-8.

[104] Conversation with Henry Young, 23rd November 2010.

[105] Carrington, *Colonial Adventures*, pp. 151-3.

[106] Carrington, *Colonial Adventures*, pp. 156-7.

the kindest, the only course of action?[107] Carrington turned almost immediately to Morrill's story. He recalled from talking to Morrill that: 'He had several wives, and, I suppose, would have spent the rest of his life with them had it not been for an accident'. This 'accident' was his meeting with the stockmen Hatch and Wilson. 'After talking a while he wished to rejoin his companions, but his new friends prevented him, and he was sent down to Port Denison'.[108] Carrington's Morrill 'did not live long, and would much have preferred going back to his wild life with the blacks, but one of his wives came to inform him that, should he return, the blacks would kill him.'[109] Morrill's story seems to speak to Carrington as he recalled his own part in the larger 'accident' that was the beginnings of pastoralism in North Queensland. This Morrill is caught up in a personal tragedy, its push and pull at once meshed with the tensions of a war-like situation, but also much more strongly hitched to a universal humanity, as Carrington felt he was.[110]

This visit to Morrill by his wife, which closed his relations with the Birri-gubba, certainly had a melancholic resonance for Carrington as he remembered his own experiences, though that does not mean that Morrill himself did not receive such a message of renouncement. For Bruce Breslin, writing in 1992, Morrill's story formed a window onto the dangers and uncertainties of the North Queensland frontier. He believes that news of Morrill's involvement in the colonising activities of the settlers, including the founding of Cardwell (an event not untainted by bloody conflict), would have travelled fast among the Aboriginal peoples of the Herbert-Burdekin region. Breslin understands Carrington's story of the final spousal visit as reflecting Morrill's own anguish, the open 'psychological wounds' which would lead to his early death in 1865.[111] Morrill's story, even as he told it, became an

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[107] Carrington, *Colonial Adventures*, p. 163.

[108] Carrington, *Colonial Adventures*, p. 165.

[109] Carrington, *Colonial Adventures*, p. 165.

[110] With some similarity, W. Robertson, in his 'Coo-ee' talks of the 1920s, concluded Morrill's story with the account of the fate of a friend with whom he had once visited 'the remnants of Murrell's tribe', and who was always on good terms with the aborigines'. The friend's unrelated family tragedy evokes feelings similar to those Robertson and his listeners might have felt towards Morrill's tribe. Robertson, *Coo-ee Talks*, p. 147. Frank Reid reported in 1929 that some of the old-timers in Bowen remembered how Morrill 'used to relate some very touching incidents concerning that race, which often brought tears to their eyes', *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 2nd October 1929, p. 9.

[111] Bruce Breslin, *Exterminate with Pride*, pp. 81-2. Though it is not clear whether the wife's visit is held by Breslin to be an occurrence in fact which *caused* Morrill's anguish, or a story told by him to Carrington which *expressed* his feelings. In *Sketch of a Residence* the Birri-gubba and their southern neighbours seem keep to a close eye on Morrill once they realise the extent of his intimacy with the ways of the newcomers, and on his departure some apparently tell him to 'go and get drowned with the other white men', in the context of their belief that a great flood was approaching, Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 14-15. Today, although several Birri-gubba clans tell positive stories about Morrill, the Wulgurukaba are apparently hostile to his memory, Conversation with Russell McGregor, Associate Professor in History, JCU (information from Dorothy Savage), 29th November 2010.

entanglement of history and feeling, allegory and aspiration, laid over with shifting patterns of the said, the unsaid and the unsayable.

Authors and Traitors

Naturalist and gentleman Oswald Brierly was part of a party making a survey of the Torres Strait in 1849 when he encountered Barbara Thompson, who had lived with the Kaurareg people for five years as the sole survivor of a wreck.[112] Over several weeks of conversation, he recorded her words as far as he was able, whether he understood her bilingual utterances or not. Sometimes clarification came from Thompson's Kaurareg kin, with whom Brierly interacted amicably. Some members of the two parties had met when the surveying party on the *Rattlesnake* visited the previous year (Thompson was ill on this occasion and did not meet the visitors).[113] The Kaurareg wanted Thompson to stay, but she decided to return to Sydney with the *Rattlesnake*. 'I am a Christian', she apparently explained her decision.[114]

Brierly made an intimate record of this prolonged leave-taking. He noted where each conversation took place, the parties present, what the atmosphere was like, and often wrote down his own questions as well as Thompson's answers. Although it is not possible to separate Brierly's commentary from Thompson's speech at all times, they often emerge or outcrop from each other, and her voice is heard more and less directly.[115] On 23rd October 1849, Thompson told Brierly: 'Since I left them, one of the gins has taken my *pota* out of my *lie* and wears it round her neck and at night they have a cry for me in the camp as if I were dead.'[116] About a month later, a group of women came by canoe to visit Thompson, whose Kaurareg name was Giom. One of them took hold of her hand and showed her a shell which had belonged to her, and which the woman now wore around her neck as a memento, saying '"Giom, ye noosa eena" – "Giom this is yours"'.[117] The situation of mutual friendship and trust created an island between the shores of Thompson's two lives. She wasn't abruptly

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[112] Barbara Thompson migrated to Sydney from Scotland with her parents. At sixteen, she ran away with a sailor, and they married at Moreton Bay. The pair set sail, with a few others, to the Torres Strait where they aimed to salvage material from a wrecked ship. The boat was driven onto rocks. Thompson's husband and the other surviving man were drowned. Thompson was rescued by a Kaurareg party from Morolug or Prince of Wales Island (just to the west of the tip of Cape York) who were catching turtle nearby and had also been caught in the storm, David Moore, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York*, pp. 7-8.

[113] Moore, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York*, p. 160. She had also attempted to make contact with another ship, but hesitated, thinking that her adoptive family might try to stop her, and then had failed in leaving her attempt too late.

[114] Moore, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York*, p. 80.

[115] Moore, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York*, pp. 178, 197, for example.

[116] Moore, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York*, p. 169.

[117] Moore, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York*, p. 121.

thrust into someone else's chafing clothes, as Morrill was, but made her own dress out of the *Rattlesnake* party's spare handkerchiefs.[118]

Sketch of a Residence is written in the first person, commencing: 'I, James Morrill, was born on the 20th May, 1824 ... near Maldon ... where my mother and father were also brought up from childhood before me'. But this narrating voice did not emanate directly from Morrill himself – it was the product of a collaborative effort. Compared with Brierly's journals, it is an opaque text; the processes of recollection, communication, misunderstanding and revision are smoothed over within the closely-woven published narrative. Morrill was literate, but at this stage he may still have found it difficult to make himself understood.[119] Without expressly referring to their interviews, Gregory recalled that when he arrived in Brisbane Morrill was 'shy, especially at first, and was not communicative ... the knowledge of his own language came back to him very slowly'.[120] Pelletier, after putting his French at the back of his mind for the same interval, conversed with the French consul in Sydney with the greatest difficulty, 'putting his hands to his ear like a horn when trying to understand, and when trying to respond "he put one hand above his eyes and looked into the distance, as if he would have liked to discover the person to whom he had to reply."'[121] Such a gulf of understanding, linguistic and cultural, is perhaps glimpsed in the third chapter of *Sketch of a Residence* where a sense of frustration is almost palpable in the characterisation of Birri-gubba language:

> [The language] is very guttural in sound and extremely limited in power of expression. Of course they have no means of teaching [it] but by imitation and memory, assisted by their wants ... The language is very irregular, and seems to me totally impossible to systematise ... in any way.[122]

A vocabulary of about seventy-five words is offered. After naming the elements, parts of the body and a number of animals, the vocabulary ends with 'Enugedy – enough, that will do'.[123] Speaking in Rockhampton, Morrill had apparently named his clan or tribe, 'Baeaberuggedy' and claimed 'every peak or mountain has its own particular name ... I could give the names

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[118] Moore, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York*, p. 90.

[119] Morrill's diary or journal remains in the private collection of the Jack family, Morrill's descendants via his marriage with Eliza Ann Ross, and was reproduced in the Bowen Historical Society's 1964 publication.

[120] Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 17.

[121] Anderson, *Pelletier*, p. 62.

[122] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 20.

[123] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 22.

of many places which I learn have been recently discovered by the whites'.[124] But *Sketch of a Residence* includes very few place names, and in his Cardwell journal of the following year Morrill referred very generally to 'natives' and 'blacks' in the parlance of his re-adoptive community. Morrill's interviews with Gregory perhaps helped to confirm that the much more specific local vocabulary that he had used during his Birri-gubba adoption was no longer useful or useable for a re-adopted colonist.

Morrill's apparent directness of speech in *Sketch of a Residence* is seductive. Breslin, while he brought to life the precariousness and complexity of Morrill's situation, did not seem to perceive its effects on Morrill's 'voice' in 1992. He heard Morrill speaking more or less freely to the modern listener through *Sketch of a Residence* and other sources.[125] Breslin cited the 'short struggle between the feeling of love I had for my old friends and companions and the desire once more to live a civilized life', as if it represents Morrill's feelings on taking leave of his Aboriginal friends.[126] But we must ask: how did this 'struggle' find expression in such an elegant sentence? We might imagine that Morrill told Gregory of this farewell in a much more awkward way, perhaps attempting to translate the impassioned dialogue that had taken place on that hillside, or perhaps guardedly, with a stoicism behind which Gregory glimpsed a deep sadness.

When Morrill's narrative voice describes 'the aboriginals among whom I have been living' as 'a fine race of people, as to strength, size and general appearance; but like those of other parts of this colony, treacherous, jealous and cunning',[127] there are a number of possible relationships between these words, Morrill, and the editor, Gregory, all of which are deeply involved with Morrill's loyalties and allegiances as he told his story. Did Gregory contribute these unflattering adjectives to fit in with his anticipated readers' prejudices? Morrill himself knew little about Aboriginal people in other parts of the colony – he had spent only a few days at Sydney in 1846, and had no experience of southern Queensland before his recent

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[124] *Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863. He also claimed to have been able to speak eight dialects of the local language. Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 14, 24.

[125] Breslin, *Exterminate with Pride*, pp. 73, 76. Breslin discusses Morrill's adoption into Birri-gubba society alongside the narrative of Jukes' *Narrative of the Fly* (1847), a leisurely exploratory drift up the coast on which the officers interacted closely and mostly on friendly terms with Aboriginal people of the Burdekin region. Breslin does not distinguish between the different manner in which the two men arrived on that coast, and the significance of Jukes' ability to depart at will. Loos also understood Morrill to be speaking through *Sketch of a Residence* with 'naïve candour', Loos, 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District', pp. 16-17.

[126] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 16.

[127] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 17. In the second edition, Gregory altered this statement to one that more plausibly reflected Morrill's experience in southern Queensland: 'The aboriginals among whom James Murrells had been living so long, he describes as a vastly superior race of people to any he had seen in the southern part of the colony, physically, and as to general appearance. Nevertheless, they are treacherous, jealous and exceedingly cunning', Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 18.

arrival in Brisbane. Perhaps Gregory extracted these words or sentiments from him by asking whether he had always understood Birri-gubba politics, or whether he had not felt safe to take a Birri-gubba wife. Or perhaps Morrill himself was attempting to increase his status in the regained white world. If he had been reviving his reading skills on back-issues of *The Courier*, he might have encountered discussion inspired by Darwin's *The Origin of Species* that could easily have inspired a disavowal of his own Aboriginality. A jocular piece proposed an experiment in which certain Sydney gentlemen might be stripped of the 'advantages of the tailor and hatter' and left in the wilds of Africa for ten or fifteen years – what would a naturalist say 'as to their exultation above the inferior races of mankind, or even above the gorilla'?[128] The newspaper report of the interview at Rockhampton, cited Morrill describing the Aborigines as 'cunning, thievish, and treacherous'. This time the claim was connected with Morrill's offers to mediate, guide and interpret, and he may have uttered these words in an effort to make himself indispensable, carving a niche for employment and bargaining power by claiming that the Aborigines of the region would be incomprehensible to anyone but himself.[129]

Barry Hill found William Buckley, living in the new settlement at Port Phillip in circumstances similar to Morrill's, a 'desperate defender of [his] indigenous affiliations ... as a go-between on the frontier of the sheep run that would destroy his clan ... What happened next? Buckley, faced with the tragedy of white invasion, fled to Hobart, to live a quiet life as a white man.'[130] The fullest account of Buckley's experiences living with Wathaurong people in the Port Phillip area across thirty-two years was produced in Hobart in 1852, twenty years after his 'return to civilisation', in collaboration with a long-time friend, John Morgan. While it is shaped partly by Morgan's concerns,[131] he did assist Buckley in weaving a rich tapestry of memory around the relationships, imperatives, satisfactions and fears of his time with (and at times avoiding) his adoptive people as they moved across their country around Port Phillip – his day to day life as an adopted Wathaurong man.[132] Buckley had been much less

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[128] *The Courier*, 28th January 1863 and 5th January 1863. For an account of these debates see Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 22-5, 39-46.

[129] *The Courier*, 11th March 1863, p. 2; *The Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863.

[130] Barry Hill, 'Crossing Cultures', *Meanjin* 62, no. 4 (2003), pp. 116-120.

[131] December Films, *The Extraordinary Tale of William Buckley*, written by Malcolm McDonald, presented by Michael Cathcart and David Tournier, broadcast ABC television, 11th April 2010.

[132] Buckley many times separated from and reunited with the Aboriginal people who adopted him, living a lonely existence for many weeks or months before once again being thoroughly bound up in the affairs of the community. At one stage, he made his escape with a heavy heart, as many of his closest friends and 'protectors' were killed by another group. Alone, he moved to a place on the Karaaf River where he had previously built a small hut, and without means to hunt for kangaroo on his own, started to make a weir to catch fish as the tides turned, and continued to harvest roots as his adoptive people had taught him. After an

forthcoming in earlier interviews. The Reverend Langhorn described him as 'difficult' and did not bother to publish the results, and several others decided he was simply a dunce with nothing worthwhile to say.[133]

Likewise, as Morrill conversed with Gregory, they were establishing a level of trust. Surprise attacks and brutal reprisals continued in and around his country, and the Birri-gubba crowded into 'safe' areas away from the settlements, all movements rendered strategic.[134] From his first appearance, Morrill was expected to participate in the cultural thrust (if not the pragmatic one) of colonisation by divulging information. One of the earliest reports of his appearance stated:

> This happily reclaimed savage should, if possessed of ordinary intelligence, and not brutalised by protracted association with the blacks, be an invaluable assistant to parties opening up the *terra incognita* of the north to the ... historian of the customs and manners, and to the scientific world in general ... to learn the secrets of native unhallowed rites and procure an all-authentic memorial of a race rapidly disappearing from the face of the world.[135]

E. B. Kennedy later recalled that Morrill seemed shy and unable to express himself clearly when the two men first met in 1864. But Kennedy was serving in the Native Police force at the time, and had just returned from a patrol of Morrill's country. His eagerness to learn more about the region may well have seemed predatory.[136] We can hardly imagine that Morrill spoke entirely freely in any of his interviews, amid the clamour of questions: are they cannibals? Do they practice polygamy? Have they any permanent residences at all? Do they have any beliefs or superstitions? These are some of the questions that can almost be heard in the background. Each is interested in measuring the *difference* of the Birri-gubba, their savagery, in a way that was not far divorced from the colonists' lust for their land. Noel Loos observes that the question of Aboriginal religion emerged strongly in the 1861 Select Committee enquiry into the Native Police force; the apparent lack of 'religious

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interval, some people approached who he soon found 'belonged to the tribe of my old friend: my tribe, I may say', who congratulated him on his fish traps, and with whom he camped and travelled again until the killing of a young man by another group who had joined them. Buckley was sent as a messenger to inform the kin of the deceased and remained with them until he found their mourning practices too alienating, at which point he returned to the Karaaf River. Morgan, *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley*, pp. 60-70.

[133] C.E. Sayers, 'Introduction', in Morgan, *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley*, pp. ix-xi.

[134] Breslin, *Exterminate with Pride*, pp. 71-2.

[135] *The Courier*, 27th February 1863.

[136] E.B. Kennedy, 'Seventeen Years Amongst Queensland Blacks' (May 9th 1914), p. 353.

susceptibilities' among Aborigines justifying the suspension of 'normal European standards of behaviour' in dealing with them.[137]

On a question of religion, Morrill was quoted responding at Rockhampton, somewhat contradictorily, 'they observe no religious ceremonies. When their children arrive at puberty, or perhaps before, they mark them with the symbols of their tribe'.[138] Away from the clamour of the courtroom or public hall this was still a question that was perhaps not-quite-answerable. *Sketch of a Residence* creates a similar contradiction, stating 'they have no written language whatever, and very little tradition,' before going on to relate the Birri-gubba understanding of the moon as a human being, sometimes encountered on fishing expeditions, who the tribes save from harm by catching and throwing across the sky again.[139] If Morrill self-edited his account of Birri-gubba life-ways according to concerns about his own and his adoptive people's safety, he perhaps also did so according to Birri-gubba obligations surrounding knowledge. With an eye to the secret and sacred dimensions of Indigenous knowledge, Stéphanie Andersen asked whether Barbara Thompson's very frankness with Brierly indicated a lack of appreciation of the authority structures surrounding Kaurareg teachings.[140] Morrill's apparently selective rendition of Birri-gubba traditions and beliefs may be interpreted, conversely, as a commitment to maintaining significant knowledge conventions.[141]

The newspaper report of Morrill's interview at Rockhampton claims to be 'nearly verbatim ... indeed, our readers will have here the *ipsissima verba* of the narrator', that is his precise words, but in the form of a narrative rather than the free-flowing conversation in which they were uttered.[142] Gregory may have taken a similar line of liberty with, and fidelity to, the spoken word in presenting *Sketch of a Residence*. Certainly hesitation and ambivalence were erased, and suggestion and interpolation were kneaded in to create a coherent whole. Yet

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[137] Loos, 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District', pp. 84-6.

[138] *Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863.

[139] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 20.

[140] Anderson, *Pelletier*, pp. 54-5.

[141] Martin Nakata, for example, discusses the tensions involved in contemporary efforts to integrate Indigenous knowledge into scientific practice. Scientific-capitalism remains in some respects predatory, with Indigenous knowledge 'merely another resource for potential profit'. Even the most sincere efforts can result in separating Indigenous knowledge from its context in collective ownership, regulated by oral conventions, and in some cases laws of sacred and secret knowledge, and in the detachment of this knowledge from holistic concepts, instead separating it into components delineated by the categories of Western science. Martin Nakata, *Savaging the Disciplines: Disciplining the Savages* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007), pp. 182-88.

[142] *The Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863. Similarly, John Morgan noted in his preface to William Buckley's story: 'In giving the history of a life in the first person ... I have endeavoured to express the thoughts of a humble, unlearned man, in that language of simplicity and truth which, in my mind, is best suited to the subject,' Morgan, *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley*, p. xx.

the pamphlet was perhaps largely a coagulation of what Morrill did want Gregory, and the world, to know. It would be easy to understand Gregory's involvement in the production of the narrative as a barrier to more intimate insights into Morrill's Aboriginal life or his feelings on leaving it. But it was arguably a 'tactical' collaboration in which Gregory helped Morrill say what it was possible to say about his experiences.[143] Perhaps most importantly, it helped Morrill to create a dignified, civilised persona through which he could make a plea on behalf of the Aboriginal people of the region that might be heard by readers. *Sketch of a Residence* closes:

> It will perhaps be pardonable in me if I refer to a suggestion thrown out by a correspondent in the *Courier* newspaper, to the effect that the natives who were so kind to me should be dealt with in a similar manner, as those who succoured Burke, Wills and King ... almost their last wish to me was with tears in their eyes that I would ask the white men to let them have *some* of their *own* ground to live on. They agreed to give up all on the south of the Burdekin River, but asked that they might be *allowed* to retain that on the other, at all events that which was no good to anybody but them, the low swampy grounds near the sea coast'.[144]

Morrill died in October 1865 at the age of forty-one. Gregory wasted no time in releasing a second edition of *Sketch of a Residence*, in which he bumped Morrill aside as author in favour of himself: *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill among the Aboriginals of Northern Queensland for Seventeen Years; being a narrative of his life, shipwreck, landing on the coast, and residence among the Aboriginals: also an account of the natural productions of Northern Queensland, and manners, customs, language, and superstitions of its inhabitants, by Edmund Gregory*, seems to have come off the press barely a month later.[145]

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[143] Penny van Toorn identifies 'tactical' advantages for contemporary Indigenous storytellers in collaborating with sympathetic non-Indigenous writers, advantages in control and in getting their messages across to an audience, advantages that must be acknowledged alongside any concerns about the 'authenticity' of the results of collaborative endeavour, Penny van Toorn, 'Indigenous Australian life writing: tactics and transformations' in Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan eds., *Telling Stories: Indigenous history and memory in Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2001), p. 17.

[144] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 24. The letter to *The Courier* he refers to may have been the one by a 'Reader', published 12th March 1863, p. 2. It may have been Gregory's idea to appeal to it as a way of linking Morrill's proposal with respectable public opinion. It is notable, though, that 'Reader' seemed to be suggesting that the Birri-gubba people be compensated with a consignment of useful items, rather than with an agreement about land.

[145] Advertisements for a new volume on 'the life and experience of James Morrill', that could be purchased direct from the Courier General Printing office appeared under the heading 'Published This Day' in the classifieds pages of *The Brisbane Courier*, 27th-29th November 1865. My references to this second version are to the 1866 edition. Ferguson's Bibliography of Australia indicates that the 1865 and 1866 editions were very similar, the 1866 edition was most likely a reprinting (perhaps indicating a high level of demand), John Alexander Ferguson, *Bibliography of Australia* Vol. 6 (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1977), pp. 779-81.

In his new preface, Gregory claimed that the story had 'long' been out of print, and that it had been 'necessary to re-write it' to some extent. His re-writing was slight but not without significance. The text begins with the correction of Morrill's name: 'James Murrells, not Morrill, was born on the 20th May 1824 ... Seventeen years' isolation in the bush, had taken from him the power to re-call his own name with accuracy'.[146] Communications from Essex, or from the customs officials in Sydney, had evidently provided corroboration, with correction, of Morrill's identity too late for inclusion in the first edition. Perhaps reclaiming a text he felt he had written in the first place, Gregory rewrote the brief first chapter in the third person, before resuming the original narrative, saying, 'the rest ... will be read with greater interest in [Morrill's] own words'.[147] The boundary between first and third person was perhaps most closely related to marketability – a yarn such as this owed much of its verisimilitude to the 'I'. Gregory's 'authority' resurfaces at the end of the second chapter, where he provides an account of the final years of Morrill's life, concluding with the obituary that had appeared in the *Port Denison Times*.[148] The man Morrill was dead, and now so was the author.

Castaway stories have been understood as a genre providing the 'mythic fuel' of the 'expansive imperialist thrust of the white race', reflecting, inspiring and legitimising the possession and control of new lands.[149] Morrill himself may only have participated in one exploratory expedition, and helped the townsfolk of Bowen feel at home in their new environment by making its features seem familiar.[150] His story, however, has had a long life after the death of its subject. Gregory's most significant revision in this second edition was perhaps the omission of the closing plea for reciprocal good treatment and for a division of land. The new text concludes with the formerly penultimate paragraph narrating the 'extinction' of the Aborigines through 'destruction by the settlers and black police' and 'natural deterioration'.[151] In the first edition, this narrative of decline was tempered by an image of Mount Elliott as a place of 'safe asylum' for Aboriginal people, with an abundance of fresh water and food. This foothold in futurity must have had ambivalent import for readers of the first edition – some may have found it rather arcadian, others might have

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[146] Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 3.

[147] Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 5.

[148] Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, pp. 16-18.

[149] Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story*, pp. 1-3.

[150] His obituary anticipates that the people of Bowen would feel the loss of him as one 'who was always ready to explain the use of a blackfellow's mysterious weapon, or the qualities ... of the various roots and plants found in the neighbourhood.' Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 18.

[151] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 24; Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 23.

lobbied for an intensified Native Police patrol of those nurturing slopes. In the second edition, Mount Elliott is no longer a refuge, and the descriptors 'thick scrub' and 'low and swampy' have been removed, leaving the mount simply 'well grassed and watered' like an inviting sheep-run. The first edition's tentative references to gold are replaced by the statement 'he thinks it a gold bearing country'.[152]

In producing a new edition, Gregory may have been responding to local readers who wanted a volume to remember Morrill by, enquiries from overseas, and interest from the other colonies. In his preface, Gregory stated the importance of the story for posterity: 'the narrative of the sufferings and strange incidents here recorded will be read with interest as long as Queensland is in existence'.[153] At this stage, though, the future of North Queensland was perhaps not so assured. In 1865 Governor Bowen compared the combat against Aboriginal forces in North Queensland to the Maori War in which ten thousand imperial troops were just then engaged.[154] Loos and Breslin have shown how relentless Aboriginal attacks on stock, outlying stations and station workers drove pastoralism to its knees in the mid to late 1860s, necessitating a radical (if uneven) change in policy – the 'letting in' of Aborigines to stations and towns to hunt, fish and camp from about 1868.[155] The colony's government saw massive British and European immigration as the key to success, but after a few sharp cycles of boom and bust, things seemed to be going backwards; as the decade rolled on, colonists fled drought and economic depression in the tens of thousands.[156] E. B. Kennedy, who himself departed the north after crossing paths with Morrill, implored readers of his London-published *Four Years in Queensland* to see a future for this colony:

> Queensland is *bound* to advance, *cannot* be held back ... She will become a land not only flowing with milk and honey, but with wine also, and all the fruits of the earth. She has passed through a period of severe distress, but

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[152] Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, p. 24; Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 23. The references to gold may indeed have sparked a minor gold rush, 'The Sad, Bad, Mad but sometimes Glad old days by A Survivor', *Brisbane Truth*, 21st May 1916.

[153] Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 2.

[154] Evans, *A History of Queensland*, pp. 94-5.

[155] Breslin, *Exterminate with Pride*, pp. 82-4, 88-90. The Native Police detachments were moved to more newly settled areas, leaving the Burdekin settlers alone to defend their properties, families and employees. From a thorough perusal of the *Port Denison Times* from March 1864- December 1874, Loos concluded that conflict in the region peaked between 1864 and 1868, Loos, 'Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District', pp. 157-164.

[156] Evans, *A History of Queensland*, pp. 83-90.

> her present prospects point to a more prosperous state resting on a more secure basis.[157]

If Morrill had been cautious about sharing his knowledge of the Birri-gubba with Kennedy and others for fear that his knowledge might be used against them, his reservations were well founded. Kennedy's representation of the Aborigines of North Queensland in this volume was damning: 'there is not a redeeming point in their whole character ... there is no savage in the world so thoroughly low and degraded'. He supported this thesis by citing *Sketch of a Residence* at length.[158]

As Gregory published his second edition, compromise with the Aborigines may have begun to look like a rational as well as humane option in Bowen, but it would perhaps not have inspired among local or international readers the migration, labour and investment that would ensure the progress of the colony. From his comfortable position in Brisbane, Gregory may have had the leisure to assume the 'imperially correct' outcome for the settlement of North Queensland, that is, that it would grow and prosper. But perhaps his second edition, like Kennedy's book, was to function as a weapon in this war, attracting more investors, and more fortune-seekers, as it helped them to imagine this new and wild land under their possession.[159]

As the nineteenth century wore on, the age of steam reduced the travel time between London and Brisbane to forty-five days, and took explorers to what was widely perceived as the last frontier, Antarctica. People started to wonder whether the age of adventure had passed – maps of the world's continents had been filled up with names, and Australia, like Africa and Canada had 'ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery'.[160] Was there anywhere in the world where one could still be truly lost? While Jules Verne turned to the fantastic in search of new *terra incognita*, the demand for true stories of adventure boiled over. In 1888 Ernest Favenc wrote a history of exploration in which the Australian interior was a known, mapped space, but less than a decade later penned a boys' adventure story in which the same space was shrouded in mystery and populated only by cannibals.[161]

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[157] Along with unsuitable land laws and unsuitable men, part of the problem was depredations on stock by the Aborigines. He goes on to call on men of 'moderate capital and moderate tastes' to try their hand at agriculture in this land of promise, E. B. Kennedy, *Four Years in Queensland* (London: Edwards Stanford, 6 & 7, Charing Cross., 1870), pp. 1-2, 6, 70-1.

[158] Kennedy, *Four Years in Queensland*, pp. 67, 82-87.

[159] Richard Phillips understands the writing activities of Ernest Favenc to have been, while not directly involved in conquest of the interior, certainly bound up in the colonising process. Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, p. 68.

[160] Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp. 3-7, and citing Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899).

[161] Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp. 6-7, 71, 77-9.

Impostor Louis de Rougemont appeared in London in 1898, claiming to have lived as a savage chief for over thirty years in the north western corner of Queensland, and found a British public insatiable for his story, stealing the limelight from *bone fide* explorers who wished to jump on the same bandwagon, a popular tour combining geographical, ethnographic and zoological revelation with sensationalism.[162] Sir George Bowen wrote to *The Chronicle* in support of the plausibility of de Rougemont's claims on the grounds that he had met James Morrill, who had lived with Aborigines for seventeen years in his very own colony of Queensland.[163] Sir John Henniker Heaton, who was to set de Rougemont on the path to fame, had included Morrill's story in his *Australian Dictionary of Dates and Men of the Time*, published in 1879, and Marcus Clark had abridged Gregory's 1865 edition, and added a few touches of humour in his *Old Tales of a Young Country* (1871), where Morrill's story appears back to back with a similarly commodified version of William Buckley's story.[164] Although in life Morrill had barely entered this imperial circus ring as a 'wild white man', his story joined the ranks of adventurers, castaways and the strange and remarkable.

Edmund Gregory, now sixty-four years of age, and overseer of the Government Printing Office at Brisbane, offered Morrill's story once more in 1896.[165] At one level he was perhaps reasserting his ownership of the story. He reminded his readers that he himself had been involved in Morrill's 'return to civilisation' in no small way, having raised a 'considerable sum' through the sale of the first edition of the pamphlet and having assisted Morrill in finding employment by drawing public attention to his 'helpless position'.[166] The new title bristled with peril and adventure: *Narrative of James Murrell's ("Jemmy Morrill") Seventeen Years' Exile among the Wild Blacks of North Queensland, and his life and shipwreck and terrible adventures among savage tribes; their manners, customs, languages, and superstitions; also Murrells' rescue and return to civilisation, by Edmund Gregory.* This has all the appearance of a shameless marketing strategy (though Gregory demurred that the new

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[162] The dizzying career of de Rougemont and its propulsion by popular print media and scientific and entertainment tours is brought to life by Rod Howard in *The Fabulist: The Incredible Story of Louis de Rougemont* (Sydney: Random House Australia, 2006); Robert Dixon, 'What was Travel Writing? Frank Hurley and the Media Contexts of Early Twentieth—Century Australian Travel Writing', *Studies in Travel Writing* 11, no. 1 (March 2007), p. 60. Dixon finds Hurley and his multi-media travel circus entering (in the 1920s) a well-established arena of educational entertainment, in which maximum exposure via print media was combined with 'self-promotion and opportunistic contrivance'.

[163] Howard, *The Fabulist*, p. 95.

[164] John Henniker Heaton, *Australian Dictionary of Dates and Men of the Time: containing a history of Australasia from 1542* (Sydney: George Robertson, 1879) Part 2, p. 7; Clarke, *Old Tales of a Young Country*, pp. 185-95.

[165] Gibbney and Smith, *A Biographical Register*, pp. 283-4.

[166] Gregory, *James Murrells' Seventeen Years' Exile*, p. iii. He was perhaps also prompted by the reflections of *The Brisbane Courier*, with which he continued to have an intimate connection, on historical matters in its jubilee year, *The Brisbane Courier*, 20th June 1896, pp. 7-8.

pamphlet was intended for 'private circulation').[167] Most significantly, it suggested that Morrill had been captured by the 'Wild Blacks' and then rescued from them.

Europeans had been writing and reading captivity narratives for centuries. Linda Colley estimates that thousands of men and women from Great Britain and Ireland alone had been captured on the shores of North Africa, on the Canadian frontier by the French or their American Indian auxiliaries, or in 'Black Holes' in Bengal, Mysore and elsewhere in India from the late seventeenth century. Those who returned, some after willingly converting to the captors' religion and marrying-in, produced a yet unknown number of narratives: captivity had become a convention.[168] Even as Morrill made his first appearances to the colonial public, this metanarrative had informed its understanding of his experiences, and the language of captivity readily mingled with acknowledgements of the kindness of his 'captors'.[169] It was almost as if the state of savagery itself had taken him captive – cruelty was no pre-condition. The notion of captivity absolved the captive of charges of willing collaboration with the enemy and willing cultural assimilation, while at the same time projecting violence and barbarism onto the native captors – a narrative that could help justify their extirpation.[170] Gregory addressed a 'new generation ... born and grown to manhood and womanhood' since Queensland was first 'excited' by this story.[171] This reading public was much less the insecure settler population grappling daily with the realities of their war on the Aborigines that Morrill's story had first appealed to. But, as Henry Reynolds has observed, there was an ongoing need to 'keep down' the Aborigines, even as their labour and knowledge of the country became essential to many pastoral operations, and as settlers,

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[167] Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp. 3-10; *The Brisbane Courier*, 18th September 1896, p. 5. He had sent copies to George Bowen, former governor, among others, *The Brisbane Courier*, 8th December 1896, p. 4. Public circulation was certainly achieved through the printing of the new edition in serial form in the 'Queenslander' columns of *The Brisbane Courier* between October and December 1896, *The Brisbane Courier*, 16th October 1896, p. 4.

[168] Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales', pp. 71-4.

[169] See, for example, *The Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863; *The Courier*, 29th April 1863, p. 3; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21st March 1863, p. 6. Similarly, Oswald Brierly and his companions, though they knew Barbara Thompson had been rescued by the Kaurareg and had seen first-hand how she had been adopted as part of the community, had difficulty avoiding the vocabulary of savage capture and civilised rescue when writing about her experiences, Darian-Smith, '"Rescuing" Barbara Thompson and other White Women', pp. 102-5.

[170] Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, pp. 78-80, Eliza Fraser's story had quickly become a 'captivity narrative in which she was subjected to torture and bondage at the hands of savage barbarians', a familiar story with widespread appeal across 'the high-minded Tory press and the sensational stories of the chap-books, ballads and fly-sheets' Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, p. 22; Jeanette Hoorn, 'Julie Dowling's Melbin and the captivity narrative in Australia', *Australian Cultural History* 23 (2004), pp. 201-212.

[171] Gregory, *James Murrells' Seventeen Years' Exile*, p. iii.

Aborigines and Pacific Islander 'kanakas' effectively worked side by side, fishing, hunting, herding and farming in North Queensland for better or for worse.[172]

Gregory thanked Archibald Meston for his assistance in preparing this new edition, observing that 'any work on the aborigines of this Colony would ... be wanting' without his stamp of approval.[173] Meston was in Gregory's office at the time because his *Report on the Aboriginals of Queensland* was in print there. The report, based on four months' travel mostly in far north Queensland, provided a patchy account of the state of Aboriginal contact with white settlers, the Native Police, and the largely Indonesian operators of the bêche de mer and pearl shell industries.[174] His recommendations fed directly into the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897)*, which established a protectorate over the Aboriginal population of Queensland, and endowed the government with extraordinary power over Aboriginal lives. Gregory's preface to *James Murrells' Seventeen Years' Exile* represented Aborigines as at once extinct and dangerous, historicising Morrill's immersive, adoptive relationship with the Birri-gubba with the following caveat:

> There is now no possibility of such an experience being repeated. The Burdekin blacks have been civilised out of existence, and on no other part of the Queensland coast could a wrecked person remain among any native tribe without being killed, or speedily restored to his own people.[175]

Indeed, under the terms of the 1897 Act, a repetition of Morrill's experience would have been impossible. White-Aboriginal relationships were to be closely supervised by a new bureaucracy. The legitimate relation was to be one of employer with indentured labourer, with the State as the controlling third party. Aboriginal people other than compliant, able-bodied workers would be relocated to a reserve. No unauthorised person classified as non-

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[172] Reynolds, *Frontier*, pp. 63-71. Carl Lumholtz, on a zoological expedition courtesy University of Christiana, Norway, in 1880, became interested in Aboriginal people partly through a visit to the farm of a Mr. Gardiner on the Herbert River. He understood Gardiner to be one of the 'protectors of the blacks' in a context of continued bad relations in the 'uncivilised districts', and a benefactor in the exchange of Aboriginal labour for foodstuffs, utensils and the like. He depicted Gardiner as generally permissive, allowing Aboriginal people into the kitchen and allowing them to leave and enter his land at will, but also as maintaining a necessary level of control, drawing the line at them entering the living room, shooting over their heads to 'maintain discipline' at times, and instructing them in the rights and wrongs of civilised life. Carl Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals: An account of four years' travels in Australia and of camp life with the Aborigines of Queensland* [1889] (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980), pp. 76-8.

[173] Gregory, *Narrative of James Murrell's Seventeen Years' Exile*, p. iii.

[174] Archibald Meston, *Report on the Aboriginals of Queensland* (Brisbane: Edmund Gregory, Govt. Printer, 1896). Gregory had also printed Meston's *Geographic History of Queensland*, and his *Queensland Aboriginals: proposed system for their improvement and preservation* the previous year.

[175] Gregory, *Narrative of James Murrell's Seventeen Years' Exile*, p. iii.

Aboriginal under the Act was permitted to enter those reserves.[176] Although Meston emphasised the protection of Aboriginal people from exploitation and abuse, both by whites and unscrupulous men of the various 'coloured' races, and the Act itself exempted Aboriginal women lawfully married to non-Aboriginal men from its provisions, the Act was administered in the spirit of keeping the races 'clean', keeping Aboriginal people away from whites and preventing miscegenation.[177] Gregory, in his return to North Queensland's moment of 'first contact' as the 1897 Act was drafted, provided a diverting story of entanglement and disentanglement, as the Act itself attempted to separate the lives of Indigenous and white Queenslanders.[178] Of course the aspirations of the Act were never fully achieved. Near the Burdekin River's mouth, many Aboriginal people lived around Airdale and Clare, supplementing traditional foods with payments for seasonal agricultural and domestic work and collecting blankets at the annual distributions at Ayr and Cape Bowling Green through the 1880s and 1890s. Though there was change around the turn of the century, partly because of the Act, many of these people continued to live on the flats by Plantation Creek and at the local Rifle Range for many more decades, often together with members of the Melanesian community.[179]

Meston documented the sad state of Aboriginal workers being paid in opium for their efforts, rendered 'a mere semblance of humanity' by the drug. But contact with civilisation itself was no less deleterious to the Aboriginal constitution. He admired the strength and purity of Aboriginal men who had 'held no intercourse whatever with white men' and recommended they be left alone (pending the discovery of mineral resources on their land). But those in the 'settled districts' seemed to have lost both integrity and resolve and seemed to be collectively wasting away – they needed to be 'collected' onto reserves and treated 'kindly'.[180] The Act was driven by the same strongly paternalist, fundamentally racist humanism that gave nineteenth century middle class readers, where the frontier was remote or blunted by time, an appetite for captivity stories.[181] Indeed, *James Murrell's*

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[176] Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897), s11, 13-16, viewed at AIATSIS Library, <http://asset0.aiatsis.gov.au:1801/webclient/StreamGate?folder_id=0&dvs=1295149377056~363>; Raymond Evans, 'Steal away': The fundamentals of aboriginal removal in Queensland, *Journal of Australian Studies* 23, no. 61 (June 1999), pp. 83-95; Thom Blake, 'Deported ... at the Sweet Will of the Government: The Removal of Aborigines to Reserves in Queensland 1897-1939', *Aboriginal History* 22 (1998), pp. 52-3.

[177] Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897), s10; Blake, 'Deported ... at the Sweet Will of the Government', p. 53.

[178] I borrow the terms 'entanglement' and 'disentanglement' from Denis Byrne, 'The Ethos of Return: Erasure and Reinstatement of Aboriginal Visibility in the Australian Historical Landscape', *Historical Archaeology* 37, no. 1 (2003), pp. 82-3.

[179] Kerr, *Black Snow and Liquid Gold*, pp. 185-7.

[180] Meston, *Report on the Aboriginals of Queensland*, pp. 2, 5.

[181] *A Mother's Offering to Her Children* (1841), cited in Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, p. 23-4.

Seventeen Years' Exile is tinted by a new admixture of racism and regret. An expression of triumphant regret has been grafted onto the first editions' account of the *Spitfire* incident, in which two Aboriginal men were shot while apparently trying to tell the surveying party about Morrill:

> Alas how much mischief may have been occasioned by similar attempts of our dusky friends trying to make themselves understood for the good of those to whom they wished to communicate![182]

The rationalisation of Morrill's experiences into a scenario of captivity would have required a major re-write of his account, which Gregory did not attempt. In the body of the new edition the narrator continued to express his gratitude to Aboriginal people for rescuing himself and his fellow castaways from exposure and starvation, as he had in 1863.[183] Indeed, readers did not easily accept captivity as a framework for the story. Matthew Fox, in his 1921 history of Queensland, protested that the relationship 'between [Morrill] and his sable hosts was not that of captor and captive but was friendly to affection'.[184] It was this very friendliness that compelled Fox, Meston and others to continue to grapple with the question of Morrill's integrity as a white man – was it possible for him to make a full return to civilisation after such a long association with a savage people and landscape?

First White Resident, pioneer and patriarch

According to Martin Green, Robinson Crusoe is put to a test, with which his readers identify: 'Can he survive without the protections of his homeland culture... And how can he imagine living with [savages], doing both them and himself good?'[185] Washed up on a deserted island, Crusoe furnished and fortified a cave for his dwelling. He kept a journal, domesticated wild goats and, when he finally encountered a savage, rescued him and taught him English and Christian virtues.[186] Morrill did not have a chance to become a 'castaway colonist' as so many fictional nineteenth century castaways did in Crusoe's wake, for he was washed up on a populous continent.[187] Before he could take possession of the land, he was already being

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[182] Gregory, *Narrative of James Murrell's Seventeen Years' Exile*, p. 24.

[183] Gregory, *Narrative of James Murrell's Seventeen Years' Exile*, p. v.

[184] Matthew J. Fox, *The History of Queensland: Its People and Industries*, Vol. 2 (Brisbane: Hussey and Gillingham for the States Publishing Co., 1923), p. 70.

[185] Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story*, p. 22.

[186] De Foe, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, pp. 47-8, 56-62, 119-22, 167-181; Despite the endless variations in versions of the Crusoe story, Richard Phillips finds Christian self-discipline and exertion in rational labour constant elements in the story, Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp. 31-3.

[187] Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands: castaways, cannibals, and fantasies of conquest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. xviii.

assimilated himself.[188] Crusoe, that restless adventurer, was reborn a sedentary *petit bourgeois* yeoman after his near-death experience.[189] Morrill was reborn a Birri-gubba man. His failure to civilise or 'elevate' the natives was not lost on his contemporaries. Murray-Prior wrote disapprovingly, 'many a white man in his position would have gained more influence over the savage, he would at least have manufactured the Bow and arrow'.[190] Yet Morrill's obituary referred to its subject as 'the pioneer white man in the North', and Carrington had described him as the 'first resident in the district'.[191] The adjectives 'white' and 'civilised' are clearly implied – Carrington had encountered many Aboriginal people, but they did not qualify as 'residents'. As Lorenzo Veracini demonstrates, settler historiography begins when industrious explorers, pastoralists and capitalists arrive and begin to possess the land through struggle. If the settler departs, or 'goes native', history ceases and the land plunges back into the 'Stone Age'.[192] The ongoing historical paradox of Morrill's 'residency' was that he lived as an adopted Aboriginal man for far the greater part of his life in the region.

Contemporaries thought they could detect a 'very faint taint which hangs about him, after so long a solitary association with savages', and this preoccupation was still to the fore at the end of the century.[193] In his second edition, Gregory provided a post-mortem description of Morrill: 'exposure to a tropical sun and climate had made his skin dark', but also 'his eyes were sunken and he had a very wide mouth'. This description echoes the account's physical characterisation of the Mount Elliott Aborigines,[194] and was in a sense an act of verbal craniology in which Gregory invited the reader to examine Morrill's head as a gauge of his

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[188] Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands*, p. xxi.

[189] Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp. 31-3.

[190] Murray-Prior also feared that, despite consistent denial, Morrill had in fact tasted true barbarity during his time with the natives, having participated in the ritual cannibalism that he could describe so vividly. Murray-Prior, Private Letter Book, pp. 19-20. James Bonwick judged William Buckley harshly on these grounds. Searching for Buckley's 'elevating influence' on the Wathaurong in the form of permanent housing, clothing and the like that he believes could have been fashioned from local resources, he exclaimed: 'alas! we see nothing of the kind ... the bricklayer sunk rapidly into the savage', Bonwick, *The Wild White Man and the Blacks of Victoria*, p. 3.

[191] Carrington, *Colonial Adventures*, p. 165.

[192] Lorenzo Veracini, 'Historylessness: Australia as a settler colonial collective', *Postcolonial Studies* 10, no. 3 (September 2007), pp. 173-5.

[193] *The Argus*, 18th May 1863, p. 6. Morrill's appearance was the subject of some scrutiny. A Rockhampton journalist gave a mixed impression of this 'black-white man': 'The man's face is not blacker than those of many men whose lives are spent in the bush under ordinary circumstances; but his body is very dark and much disfigured', *The Courier*, 11th March 1863, p. 3. The *Townsville Evening Star* reproduced concerns of the 1860s as well as copy when it imagined in 1893 that Morrill had been 'buried alive, as it were, among these savages', but it was hard to see nevertheless how he could have escaped that 'faint taint' of his association with them even after re-establishing himself in civilised society, *Townsville Evening Star*, 9th February 1893.

[194] Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 17, and see p. 18 for the 'sunken eyes' and 'broad mouths' of the Mount Elliott people.

assimilation to Birri-gubba society, and of his ability to recover from it.[195] In his third edition, Gregory added a scattering of interjections pointing out Morrill's loss of 'likeness to a civilised being' as he survived to live as an adopted Aboriginal man.[196] A contemporary theory about Australia's Aboriginal peoples posited that they themselves were castaways – who either, in finding little in the way of arable lands and useful tools on this continent, had *become* primitive hunters and nomads, or who, finding nothing here that would encourage their advance out of the state of savagery, had simply remained that way while other races progressed to agriculture and industry.[197] How could their company do a lone white man any good?

Writing for an international audience in 1923, informed by the frightening prospect of racial 'degeneration' (and the very incomplete results of his *1897 Aboriginals Protection Act* after twenty-five years), Archibald Meston felt Morrill's story provided 'sure proof that the primeval savage wild man in all of us is terribly near the surface'.[198] Combining social Darwinism with snobbery, he declared William Buckley and four escaped convicts who had lived with Aboriginal people in southern Queensland of the 'lowest type' – their failure was to avoid being *improved* by the Aborigines. Morrill, on the other hand, was an 'honest English yeoman', made of the sort of dependable stuff that might be hoped to endure immutably – yet it had not. The rather muted good news was that, along with these lesser men, he appeared able to 'resume' the 'veneer of civilization'.[199] Indeed, if civilisation depended on whiteness, then its veneer remained thin in North Queensland, maintained through the inter-war years via strenuous lobbying of the labour movement for an end to Aboriginal pastoral labour, and unremitting legal discrimination against the non-white population. Ray Evans finds that by the 1930s as much as a third of the state's Aboriginal population was confined on reserves and missions in a kind of 'eugenic quarantine'. Many

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[195] It is as if Morrill had been subject to a process of regression and evolution within his own lifetime. Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, pp. 39-45.

[196] Gregory, *Narrative of James Murrell's Seventeen Years' Exile*, pp. 1, 27.

[197] A columnist for *The Courier* suggested that *Sketch of a Residence*, in providing details of the local language and customs, might support the belief that 'their forefathers had attained to a high state of civilisation and enlightenment when our own were steeped in ignorance and barbarism', *The Courier*, 21st April 1863, p. 2. Edward Palmer, one of North Queensland's honoured pioneers, canvassed this possibility as he deliberated the question of the origins of the Aborigines in the 1890s, Edward Palmer, *Early Days in North Queensland* [1903] (Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1983), pp. 215-6.

[198] Archibald Meston, 'Wild White Men'. Stern traces the development of these notions into the inter-war years, Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: faults and frontiers of better breeding in modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 14.

[199] Meston, 'Wild White Men'.

Birri-gubba families were moved away from Bowen and Ayr at this time, including some people who were probably Morrill's descendants.[200]

Morrill had a pivotal place in the modern agricultural and industrial landscape that the Burdekin region aspired to be, even if some historiographical chicanery was required to make sense of it. M. J. Fox in his 1921 *History of Queensland* found it intriguing that Morrill had camped with an Aboriginal tribe on the land that was later to be developed into the town of Bowen. Fox's Morrill, 'hopeless of regaining civilization', had given himself over to the rhythms of Aboriginal life. But little did he know, 'progress' was 'bringing the advancing tide of pastoral settlement' and the 'reign of a superior race' nearer. News of stray cattle and men on horses raised 'the white man in Murrells, and caused him to take command of the primeval being he had been for so long'. Fox's circle is closed when Morrill arrives at Bowen to find 'a town where he had many years before pitched the gunyah he had shared'.[201] Morrill's whiteness in Fox's account, like Meston's, slumbered during his life with the Birri-gubba, a slumber akin to the dormancy of a seed before germination. His presence lent a naturalness and inevitability to the advance of the pastoralists, and in return, his story was able to bask in the retrospective glory of progress.[202] As Ann Curthoys observes, in the Australian context, narratives based in the biblical tropes of Exile, Exodus and the promised-land can be strangely entangled: Morrill's exile from civilisation occurs in the very same place that he and his white descendants would later experience as a land of plenty.[203]

In an address to the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, on the occasion of Queensland's centenary, Sir Raphael Cilento and Clem Lack again conferred on Morrill the title of 'first white resident'. They did not reserve this epithet for Morrill alone, however, but handed it out willy-nilly. They proclaimed: '"Boraltchou" Baker ... the first white man to see the Darling Downs; "Moilow" Graham the first white man to live in the Tewantin area', and the list continued.[204] One of Cilento's lifelong projects as a doctor was to establish the supremacy of white men in the tropics, against a lingering doubt that the white races could remain

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[200] The recruitment of Melanesian labour for the sugar industry had ceased in 1904, and many Melanesians had been deported. Evans, *A History of Queensland*, pp. 145, 170-1. Conversation with Eddie Smallwood, 1st December 2010.

[201] Fox, *The History of Queensland*, pp. 69-70.

[202] Weaver-Hightower finds that castaway stories assist 'imperial expansion and control' by making it 'seem unproblematic and natural, like the innate processes of the human body', Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands*, pp. ix-xi. See also Doherty, *The Townsville Book*; and W.J. Doherty, *The Bowen Book* (Townsville: T. Willmett and sons Ltd., 1920).

[203] Ann Curthoys, 'Expulsion, exodus and exile in white Australian historical mythology', *Journal of Australian Studies* 23, no. 61 (1999), p. 5.

[204] Raphael Cilento and Clem Lack, *Wild White Men of Queensland* (Brisbane: W.R. Smith & Paterson for the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, 1959), p. 25.

physically, mentally and morally vigorous in the latitudes nearing the equator, a project on which the White Australia Policy depended.[205] That these forbears of white settlement had lived as adoptees of Aboriginal groups did not seem to bother Cilento and Lack, perhaps because they had strengthened the fragile line between savage and civilised with biological determinism.[206] They indulged a rather steamy fascination with the ins and outs of going native, picturing Morrill as 'hardly distinguishable from his tribesmen' with his 'brawny torso burnt black by ... the hot northern sun'. At the same time, they fantasised about his supremacy over his companions; not only did he endure initiation to become a 'full member of the tribe', he also surpassed them, 'having the virtual authority ... of a chief'.[207] They imagined that Morrill continued to participate in corroborees on the 'outskirts' of town, after his supposed 'return to civilisation', and that he died 'amid the grief-stricken wailing of a mob of blacks'.[208] Cilento and Lack's Morrill, however, never relaxed his will to return to civilisation. In an act of mastery over the landscape that forms a typical feature in the castaway genre, he repeatedly climbed a mountain near Townsville in the hope of signalling a passing ship.[209] In a popular history of Townsville published in 1952, Morrill also maintained a mountain-top 'vigil' on Townsville's bluff Castle Hill.[210] As locals point out today, Castle Hill would be an awkward place from which to spot a ship, unless it was to sail

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[205] His 1959 history of Queensland was 'the story of the triumph of the white man over a tropical and sub-tropical environment, which until recently was considered "fatal to the white man"', Raphael Cilento and Clem Lack, *Triumph in the Tropics: An Historical Sketch of Queensland* (Brisbane: Smith and Paterson, 1959), p. xiii.

[206] They argued that a comparison between Aboriginal society and culture and 'primitive civilisation' would be completely erroneous, understanding Aboriginal people to have more in common with the 'local animals' than with other human beings, Cilento and Lack, *Triumph in the Tropics*, pp. 178-9.

[207] Cilento and Lack, *Wild White Men of Queensland*, p. 25. Frank Reid, writing a highly sensationalised account of North Queensland a few years earlier found Morrill a fully integrated part of the 'tribe', but did not suggest any form of 'chiefdom'. Writing about Wini of Badu, however (a 'wild white man' of the Torres Strait who Barbara Thompson came in contact with), he developed a full-blown fantasy of malevolent overlordship, with Wini dominating the politics of the region until slain by the (in this account) heroic Frank Jardine, Frank Reid, *The Romance of the Great Barrier Reef* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1954), pp. 54-9, 63-6.

[208] Cilento and Lack, *Wild White Men of Queensland*, p. 25. Morrill's obituary in the *Port Denison Times* had speculated: 'could the Mount Elliot blacks learn that their pale-faced brother was dead, what howling and woe there would be', *Port Denison Times*, 1st November 1865, p. 2. A number of other mid-twentieth century renditions of his story also suggest an Aboriginal presence at Morrill's death bed, including his Australian Dictionary of Biography entry, in which Geoffrey Bolton imagines that 'Aboriginals for many miles around came into town for a memorable mourning ceremony', G. C. Bolton, 'Morrill, James (1824–1865)' [1967], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/morrill-james-2484/text3339>, accessed 28 April 2012. The 'keeping out' policy that prevailed at this time would presumably have prevented such a gathering of Aboriginal mourners in Bowen in 1865.

[209] Cilento and Lack, *Wild White Men of Queensland*, p. 25; Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands*, pp. xviii-xix. Morrill did not claim to have done so in *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 12-13, and nor do his interviews at Bowen and Rockhampton suggest that he frequently climbed a mountain to look out for ships. In fact he suggested in his Rockhampton interview that his adoptive people often kept a close watch over him, preventing such individual investigative travel, *The Queensland Guardian*, 17th March 1863, *The Courier*, 11th March 1863, p. 2.

[210] L.A. Rapier, Nellie and Leslene Watson, *The Townsville Story: they fashioned a city beam by beam* (Townsville: Willmetts Print, 1952), p. 6.

on the landward side of Magnetic Island.[211] A local yarn instead (or nevertheless) connects a nearby feature known as Jimmy's Lookout to Morrill for the same purpose.[212]

It is hard to judge how firmly Marcus Clark's tongue was planted in his cheek when he titled his rather humorous account of Morrill's story 'The First Queensland Explorer' (1871). Its protagonist had not set out to know a territory or a route, had not mapped, measured, or claimed any new lands for the Crown.[213] Morrill's status as first resident was perhaps tinged with irony, suspicion, or even contempt in the eyes of his contemporaries and posthumous biographers as they put his story to the test. But this repeated interlocution also offered him an opportunity to become an explorer in retrospect. He had, after all, returned to civilisation and reported on his discoveries, as the purposeful explorer Leichhardt failed to do, having disappeared never to complete his second mission beyond the Darling Downs.[214] Regardless of whether his civilised attributes had been dormant or dulled during his seventeen years with the Birri-gubba, Morrill was the 'first white resident' because he could 'see' the country in a way that the Birri-gubba could not. The *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, marking the death of Morrill's only son in 1907, observed that the wreck of the *Peruvian* had brought white eyes to this coastline for the first time since Cook had named Cape Upstart from the deck of the passing *Endeavour*, after an interval of precisely seventy-six years.[215] Even if he did not satisfy the expectations of those who interviewed him at Rockhampton and elsewhere, Morrill could to some extent (under cross-examination) translate the country and its people into the language of science, and thereby bring it into the realm of progress and the legal language of possession.[216]

In the local commemorative landscape today, Morrill is accorded a place alongside the official explorers and discoverers of the region. Sinclair Place and Dalrymple Plaza occupy the central part of the foreshore at Bowen, commemorating the 'discovery' of Port Denison by the former, and the official founding of the town by the latter. At the north-eastern end of

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[211] Conversation with Russell McGregor, 29th November 2010.

[212] Conversation with Phillip Murray, 3rd December 2010.

[213] Clarke, *Old Tales of a Young Country*, pp. 185-195; Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp. 74-5.

[214] Renee Erdos, 'Leichhardt, Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig (1813–1848)' [1967], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/leichhardt-friedrich-wilhelm-ludwig-2347/text3063>, accessed 28 April 2012. Morrill's survival raised hopes that Leichhardt or some of his party may have also survived among the Aborigines, and Morrill himself promoted this view, and offered to accompany a search party, *Port Denison Times*, 10th June 1865, p. 2; Gregory, *Sketch of the Residence of James Morrill*, p. 17.

[215] *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 28th November 1907, p. 2.

[216] Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands*, pp. 2-3. One of the newspaper reports of Monsieur Thozet's botanical tour with Morrill was delighted to connect the documentation of Morrill's knowledge of North Queensland's food and medicinal plants directly with the sort of knowledge that had been fêted at the 1862 International Exposition. *The Courier*, 21st March 1863, p. 3.

this landscaped foreshore sits Morrill Plaza, a small open space alongside the skateboard park. At the Flagstaff Hill interpretive centre, he appears as a seafarer alongside Captains Cook and Sinclair and as one of the 'early European observers' of the Birri-gubba people.[217] Similarly, in John Kerr's recent history of the Burdekin, before his story becomes caught up with the fear and conflict of the frontier, Morrill's 'observations' are interleaved with those of Leichhardt and the surveyor Jukes.[218]

Locally, the bare essentials of the story seem to have circulated, in connection with family stories and landmarks, through the inter-war years and into the sixties. Loftus Dun, who grew up in Ayr, thinks he heard the story for the first time in about 1936, when he was in his teens working at the Kalamia sugar mill. He said, 'all I knew about it was there was a man who had lived with the Aboriginals for some time, and got back with the white people, and that he had some connection with Ayr.' He's not certain, but Dun thinks the context might have been a family one; that one of the more senior workers at the mill married one of Morrill's descendants.[219] In 1937 *The Bowen Independent's* 'Early Bowen Memories' column featured a story by one Alex Miller, who recalled arriving in Ayr in the early 1880s and being shown an 'historical relic' by a local pioneer: the corner post of that stockyard where Morrill had 'made himself known as a white man'.[220] A story circulated too around a block of land that Morrill had purchased in Bowen. Apparently, when Morrill went to bid on this lot, the other bidders stepped back, and they and the auctioneer allowed him to take it for the minimum price.[221] A sense of satisfaction or justice is still palpable when this story is told today – not only was it a block of land in his 'own country', now owned as private property, but it was where Morrill was (chopping a possum out of a tree) when he heard that Captain and Mrs Pitkethly had died.[222] This place of loss was converted by the purchase into a landmark of Morrill's re-socialisation with his own kind.

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[217] The Flagstaff Hill Interpretation Centre was built in about 2008, and the foreshore landscaping dates to 2009 or 2010, Conversation with volunteers at the Bowen Museum, 1st March 2012. The story is certainly seen as a defining story for the town. When part of Baz Luhrman's *Australia* was being filmed nearby, the idea that a film might soon be made about James Morrill began to circulate, Conversation with Henry Young, 23rd November 2010; Conversation with Robert Paul, 19th November 2010.

[218] Kerr, *Black Snow and Liquid Gold*, pp. 15-18, 21-25.

[219] Conversation with Loftus Dun, 16th February 2011.

[220] *The Bowen Independent*, 11th August 1937.

[221] J. E. Lott, 'Recollections', *The Bowen Independent*, 10th September 1937. In July 1863 one J. Morrill purchased a Bowen town lot for just over ten pounds, *The Courier*, 24th July 1863, p. 2. At times the story of the auction is associated with his purchase of a Townsville lot via an auction held in Bowen. In the final chapter of *The Townsville Story* he returns triumphantly to buy a quarter-acre lot in the new settlement huddled under the bulk of Castle Hill where he had kept his look-out, Rapier and Watson, *The Townsville Story*.

[222] Conversation with Dilys Maltby, 2nd December 2010; Conversation with Phillip Murray, 3rd December 2010. The burial place of Captain and Mrs Pitkethly had also begun to command some interest in the thirties in connection with a number of possible graves about which locals were curious, George Turner, 'Is it the Grave of

When the Bowen Historical Society convened for its first meeting in 1963, members faced the problem of where to begin; civic pride inspired its formation rather than an immersion in history.[223] Members knew little about Morrill, but a symbolic significance was firmly attached to his name. As members deliberated about a suitable first project:

> someone mentioned 'James Morrill', a very happy suggestion. No one knew very much more than that he had lived for 17 years with the blacks and said on presenting himself to some white stockmen 'Don't shoot – I'm a British object'. What could be more appropriate than to begin with Queensland's first known white resident?[224]

1.3 Morrill's grave in the Bowen Cemetery marked by the obelisk erected by the Bowen Historical Society in 1963/4.

Captain Pitkethly and Mrs Pitkethly of the Barque "Peruvian"', *Cummings and Campbell's Monthly Magazine*, March 1931, p. 53; 'The Mystery of Bald Hills!: Grave of Captain and Mrs Pitkethly? The Wreck of the "Peruvian"', newspaper cutting dated 1st July 1931 in Phillip Murray's collection.

[223] The Society's first meeting had been called by Victor Jones, long-time Chairman of the Bowen Regional Research and Promotion Bureau. Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 21 (August 1979), pp. 14-15.

[224] Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 1 (August 1964), p. 2.

On Australia Day 1964 the Society unveiled an obelisk atop Morrill's grave in the Bowen Cemetery.[225] In brass, the Society re-inscribed the narrative of white possession that had made the story so salient for previous generations, honouring Morrill as 'Shipwrecked mariner, who lived 17 years with the aborigines and thus is the first known white resident of North Queensland.' Local dignitaries lined up to speak, and the Municipal Band played 'Advance Australia Fair'.[226] The accompanying booklet, *The Story of James Morrill*, in which *Sketch of a Residence* was reproduced, included an account of this ceremony, making the history of the Society part of Morrill's story and vice versa.[227] The Society took ownership, claiming that it had rescued Morrill's story from the wilds of 'obscurity' and honoured him for the first time.[228]

The only account of the story the Society's members possessed when they began their research was Cilento and Lack's rather lively version.[229] Cilento was highly respected within the organisation,[230] yet the Society departed decisively from his and Lack's characterisation of Morrill. At the Australia Day ceremony, he was not remembered as 'wild, unkempt' and indistinguishable from 'a ferocious aboriginal warrior',[231] but as a man of 'courage and character'.[232] Although the Society had an eye to the value of the region's history for tourism, it placed the emphasis squarely on Morrill's worthiness.[233] Morrill's life as a colonist after 1863 was of acute importance. As the inaugural President, the Hon. Delamothe put it, Morrill strove 'for the advancement of his new country once restored to civilisation'. He had assisted in the founding of Cardwell, purchased an allotment at the first land sale at

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[225] The grave was unmarked, but Frederick Raynor, founder of the *Port Denison Times*, had left a record of its location in the cemetery in his papers. *Townsville Daily Bulletin* 2nd October 1929, p. 9.

[226] *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964. The brass plaque records that the obelisk was erected 30th October 1963, but the Society waited for Australia Day to come around before holding the ceremony.

[227] Bowen Historical Society, *The Story of James Morrill*, n/p.

[228] *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964. The article also claimed that the Society had 'brought to light the full story of Morrill's adventures' and taken the first steps in a century to see that it was 'permanently recorded'; Victor Bernard Jones, 'The Saga of James Morrill: the first known white resident of North Queensland', Heatley Memorial Lecture, Townsville, 1979, transcript held by the Bowen Historical Society.

[229] Delamothe soon 'unearthed' the 1863 testimony at the Queensland Parliamentary Library, *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964. Other sources began to flow in too, once the search was begun. The same article records the discovery of accounts of Morrill's story by C. S. Rowe, Alex Vennard (aka Bill Bowyang), and Archibald Meston.

[230] The Society was delighted to receive Cilento (at the time president of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland) as a visitor, Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 1 (August 1964), p. 11.

[231] Cilento and Lack, *Wild White Men of Queensland*, p. 25.

[232] Bowen Historical Society, *The Story of James Morrill*, n/p.

[233] Inaugural President the Hon. Delamothe and founding member Victor Jones offered Morrill's courageousness and 'patience in adversity', his integrity and 'desire to serve' (the legacy of a pioneer) as a virtuous example to their listeners, *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964.

Townsville, and worked as a respected member of the Customs and pilot boat service.[234] Founding member Vic Jones observed in 1979 that 'Morrill created history' by delivering the first bonded goods to Townsville; he had emerged from the shadows of pre-history and made his mark on North Queensland.[235] He had also procreated: he and Eliza Jane Ross, housemaid of the Police Magistrate at Bowen, produced one son, born soon after Morrill's death. The Society had undertaken some genealogical work and gathered Morrill's grand-daughters around the obelisk in 1964.[236] Morrill was remembered as a patriarch in the most intimate sense as well as a pioneer. No known investigations were mooted or made into whether Morrill might also have living descendants in the Birri-gubba community. Morrill's position as 'first white resident', via its strengthened connection with local soil, local blood and local aspirations, would be carried beyond the end of the White Australia Policy, into the present.

There were perhaps other directions the Society's history-making might have taken. Inaugural co-Vice-President Dr. John Lacon, recently arrived from England, questioned the place of Morrill's story as an 'ancient' point of origin. Fellow committee members Delamothe and Jones had compared Morrill's virtues to those of the ancient Greek heroes who had 'held the pass at Macedon',[237] and in the memorial obelisk itself local granite pieces were disciplined into a classical form associated with the heritage of civilisation.[238] Lacon observed, 'although we do not consider the history of the James Morrill period as being modern, we are in one sense mistaken. Men were living in Australia a million years ago'.[239] There was no further discussion of the ancient migrations from Asia that Lacon went on to explain, and he did not appear in the list of office holders again.[240] His transnational horizon and interest in the *longue durée* were not shared by other members. Instead, the Society took a leading role in the maintenance of a local nationalism. It was at the fore of the

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[234] *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964.

[235] Jones, 'The Saga of James Morrill', p. 8.

[236] *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964.

[237] *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964. See also Jones, 'The Saga of James Morrill', p. 1. Jones wished to 'help raise him to his proper niche in Australian History'.

[238] Joanna Besley, 'At the Intersection of History and Memory: Monuments in Queensland, *Limina* 11 (2005), p. 39. Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, pp. 156-7. The granite pieces were donated by a local resident, and transported and constructed in the most part by volunteer labour. *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964.

[239] Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 1 (August 1964), pp. 5-6.

[240] Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 1 (August 1964), p. 6. Despite his excitement about a 'history' of Aboriginal settlement, Lacon articulated his ideas through a language of unchanging primitivism which had long denied that Aboriginal peoples had a history, referring to Australia as an 'anthropological museum'. Lacon had possibly read (or read of) Manning Clark's acclaimed and controversial *History of Australia Volume 1* (1962) which set an entirely new horizon for Australian history in taking in Aboriginal migrations, Asian interest in the southern continent and Dutch exploration of the seventeenth century, Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark* (Carlton, Vic: The Miegunyah Press, 2011), pp. 441-2.

Australia Day activities each year, exhibited at the Bowen Show and brought to Bowen an initiative of the Queensland Women's Historical Society, Pioneer Day.[241] The Society's emphasis on Morrill's whiteness was not peculiar, rather it signalled the contribution of the region to a national history that had increasingly come into focus across the first half of the twentieth century, in which Australia was worthy of historical attention as part of the 'world-wide community of the British race'.[242]

The Bowen Independent (the proprietor was a founding member of the Society) subtitled its coverage of the Australia Day ceremony 'Full Recognition After 101 Years'.[243] This slightly tardy centenary embodied a commemorative gymnastics. One-hundred-and-one years was the interval since Morrill's 'return to civilisation'. If his time with the Birri-gubba is counted, he had arrived in North Queensland one-hundred-and-eighteen years earlier. By 1863, of course, Captain Sinclair had discovered Port Denison and Bowen was coming into its third year – white settlement in North Queensland had begun before Morrill's re-birth into civilisation.[244] If we are to understand Morrill as the first white resident of North Queensland, his residency must backdate white settlement, leapfrogging over Sinclair and the first colonists of Bowen. Yet Sinclair's shoulders were indispensable; again Morrill could only become 'first white resident', a legitimate son of progress, by virtue of subsequent settlement. Likewise, he was perhaps only a fitting first subject for the Society on the proviso that it would go on to chart the region's 'graph of progress', as the Royal Australian Historical Society suggested local historians might.[245] The Society next moved on to a more usual beginning: the 'discovery' of Port Denison by Captain Sinclair.[246] Morrill was admired by the Society as a peacemaker, 'working unceasingly to bring about better relations between the settlers and the aboriginals,' which illustrated the compassionate side of this principled pioneer.[247] The Society found it 'unfortunate' that Morrill's work as a diplomat

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[241] On the same page as Lacon, Vic Jones argued for the Society's role in taking responsibility for 'the history of the Bowen Shire and the existing State of Queensland north of the 23rd parallel', that is, Queensland north of Rockhampton, as Bowen had been the base for 'most of the early explorers and pioneers who did so much to discover and settle' the region. 'Truly the roots of Bowen's history spread afar!' he exclaimed of this rather more constricted horizon. Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 1 (August 1964), p. 5. A perusal of the Bowen Historical Society Bulletin from this first issue into the 1990s shows these events at the fore of the organisation's yearly calendar.

[242] Ann Curthoys, 'Cultural History and the Nation' in Richard White and Hsu-Ming Teo eds., *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003), pp. 24-5.

[243] *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964; Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 1 (August 1964), pp. 1, 11.

[244] Kerr, *Black Snow and Liquid Gold*, pp. 22-3.

[245] Philip Geeves, *Local History in Australia: a guide for beginners* (Sydney: Royal Australian Historical Society, 1967), p. 17.

[246] Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 1 (August 1964), p. 2; Geeves, *Local History in Australia*, pp. 4, 14.

[247] Bowen Historical Society, *The Story of James Morrill*, n/p; *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964.

had not been attended with great success, but did not go any further into the less-than-pacific relations that ensued.[248] As the belated centenary invoked by *The Bowen Independent* suggests, in one sense Morrill's 'return to civilisation' was the point at which his 'residency', as understood by the Society, began. This commemorative arithmetic managed to tell Morrill's story without allowing him, or its own history-making, to tangle too much with the Birri-gubba.

It wasn't all in earnest. As Morrill's obituary had observed, this story was 'stranger than fiction', incredible but also true.[249] As Geoffrey Bolton put it when he thanked the Society for sending him a copy of *The Story of James Morrill,* it was a pleasure to read as a 'true adventure story'.[250] The Society, reflecting on its achievements from the vantage point of its second year, compared the quotient of 'romance and adventure' in Morrill's story with that of their second subject, Captain Sinclair. Both surpassed the adventure stories of popular nineteenth century British children's writers: 'Cooper, Henty or Ballantyne never wrote more exciting stories than these.'[251] Victor Jones closed his Heatley Memorial Lecture of 1979, delivered to young listeners, with a marriage of Morrill's virtues with the writings of one of the British Empire's favourite children's authors, saying:

> may this narrative of the adventurous life of James Morrill, be an inspiration to each of you students here, to strive for excellence in all you do... then, to paraphrase Kipling's "If", you will be a worthy citizen indeed.[252]

Even while Morrill was telling his own story, the readership for adventure was changing. Castaway and captivity stories, and travel fiction from *Gulliver's Travels* to *Moby Dick* had formed challenging and invigorating reading for adults in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but the genre was progressively handed over to children.[253] Phillips shows how Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* beginning life as a controversial marriage of realism and fiction and a pointed political statement about the nature of American colonisation, became naturalised in the nineteenth century (partly due to its own influence on literature),

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[248] Bowen Historical Society, *The Story of James Morrill*, n/p.

[249] *Port Denison Times,* 1st November 1865, p. 2.

[250] Bowen Historical Society Bulletin, No. 2 (January 1965), p. 2. Bolton presumably used this 'true adventure story' as the main source for his entry on Morrill in the 1967 edition of the Australian Dictionary of Biography. The story had also been passed on to Olaf Ruhen, so that it could be included in his forthcoming book of adventure stories, *South Pacific Adventures*, Bowen Historical Society Bulletin, No. 4 (February 1966), p. 2.

[251] Bowen Historical Society Bulletin, No. 2 (January 1965), p. 7; Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp. 72-3.

[252] Jones, 'The Saga of James Morrill', p. 9.

[253] Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp. 3, 10, 81-3.

as a true story with a normative power for boys in particular.[254] As a 'true adventure story', Morrill's life could be read in what Penny van Toorn terms a 'touristic' mode, without confrontation or self-examination.[255]

In 1964 the Society expressed its aims in terms of 'collection and preservation', 'indexing and collating' and the 'identification and marking of places of historical interest'.[256] The Society's work on Morrill's story was a 'project of recording all possible information' for posterity, and of disseminating it so that it could be read in libraries around the country.[257] The Society had found a 'British object' rather than a culturally entangled subject. It was not their task to scrutinise his story; the published narrative (supplemented by a few documents providing details of his life after January 1863) was 'the full story'.[258] Had Morrill meant to return to civilisation and stay? Had his adoption by the Birri-gubba changed him irreversibly? Did he have relationships with Aboriginal people that continued to have a claim on his heart? By the time the Society took up the story, these questions of pressing importance for Morrill's contemporaries had lost their urgency. When the authors of *The Townsville Story* (1952) closed their rendition of Morrill's life with a musing on 'whether his soul was claimed by the aborigines for their celestial happy hunting grounds, or whether he went to white man's heaven', the question was rhetorical. This was chiefly a story of the 'unusual' – it would be best if his ghostly companions were fellow adventurers.[259] Cilento and Lack had closed their story with a similarly sentimental flourish, claiming, 'pathetically enough, the last word he uttered was: "corroboree."'[260] For this generation, it was possible to tell Morrill's story without the urgency or ambivalence with which his contemporaries had approached the tale, and to tell it without engaging in histories of local violence and responsibility.

Of course, there was no guarantee that readers of the Society's *The Story of James Morrill* would continue to understand the story in the same way. When Noel Loos wrote his Masters qualifying thesis at James Cook University in nearby Townsville in 1970, Morrill's story, made

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[254] Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp. 25-6.

[255] van Toorn, 'Indigenous Australian life writing', p. 16.

[256] Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 1 (August 1964), p. 2.

[257] *The Bowen Independent*, 31st January 1964; Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 4 (February 1966), p. 2. The Society has continued to collect material associated with Morrill's story and to disseminate it, indeed helping make this story more fully known again in the region. Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 1 (August 1964), p. 5. The Bulletin records the answering of enquiries about Morrill, Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 2 (January 1965), p. 8; No 4 (February 1966), p. 2; No. 33 (December 1991), p. 13.

[258] Bowen Historical Society, *The Story of James Morrill*, n/p. Interestingly, Eugene Fitzalan's rather sentimental poem, having been inspired by Morrill's story, as heard from his own lips, is included as a 'preface' to the story.

[259] Rapier and Watson, *The Townsville Story*, p. 6.

[260] Cilento and Lack, *Wild White Men of Queensland*, p. 27.

available to him by the Society's booklet, provided him with a valuable window onto Birri-gubba life and frontier conflict in the region. This thesis was one of the first forays into a new history which revisited the primary sources to document the dispossession of Aboriginal people.[261] Teaching at the university over the following decades, Loos 'read Morrill's words to students many times ... to describe the shattering impact of colonisation'.[262] Through his friendship with Eddie Koiki Mabo, their mutual interest in Indigenous education and teacher training, and joint leadership of the Townsville Treaty Committee, Loos developed a deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture and history, as well as an appreciation of just how difficult it could be to foster a similar respect in others.[263] Since his retirement, he has concentrated his energies on bringing about reconciliation through the church community, encouraging his fellow Anglicans to read about Aboriginal history in their own local areas, and to meet and talk with local Aboriginal people.[264] With similar intentions, Loos wrote an article for the *Townsville Bulletin* in 2004, titled 'Spirit of Reconciliation' in which he called attention to the 'treaty' that the Birri-gubba had sought to make through Morrill, acknowledging that the white presence would be ongoing and asking for 'the swamps along the coast north of the Burdekin, the rivers to fish in, and any other land whites did not want.' This, he felt was in the 'spirit of reconciliation'.[265] While the colonists were not prepared to consider this offer of co-existence at the time, in the twenty-first century he felt it might be possible for both Morrill's descendants via his marriage with Eliza Ross, and his Aboriginal descendants, still living in Morrill's 'own country', to 'look back with pride at their ancestor who tried to intervene in this 19th century holocaust to prevent more bloodshed.'[266]

The Bowen Historical Society had already produced a new edition of Morrill's story, *James Morrill: his life and adventures*, in 2002.[267] By way of introduction, an account of the events of Australia Day 1964 was offered, complete with photographs of the monument and

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[261] Loos, 'Frontier conflict in the Bowen district'; Noel Loos, 'The History of North Queensland in Black and White: A Personal Retrospective', Lecture presented at Thuringowa, 7th July 2008, Sir Robert Philp Lecture Series, transcript viewed at Townsville City Council website, <http://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/facilities/libraries/resources/Documents/L2%20Loos%20Transcript.pdf>, viewed 14 April 2012.

[262] Actually, the title features a typographical error, Noel Loos, 'The Spirit of Renconciliation', *Townsville Bulletin*, 31st July 2004, p. 27.

[263] Conversation with Noel Loos, 2nd December 2010; Noel Loos, 'Koiki Mabo: mastering two cultures, a personal perspective' in B.J. Dalton ed., *Lectures on North Queensland History* 5 (Townsville, Qld.: Dept. of History and Politics, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1996), pp. 1-20.

[264] Conversation with Noel Loos, 2nd December 2010.

[265] Loos, 'The Spirit of Renconciliation', p. 27.

[266] Loos, 'The Spirit of Renconciliation', p. 27.

[267] Bowen Historical Society, *James Morrill: his life and adventures* (Bowen: Bowen Independent, 2002).

ceremony.[268] It is as if the event occurred yesterday. The content of the volume is somewhat different from the Society's *The Story of James Morrill*,[269] showing editorial hands at work, but nowhere are the story's parameters or its import reassessed. Not the slightest gesture is made towards the recognition of Morrill's Birri-gubba descendants or to the violence to which this story attests and which formed the context for its telling. The sentiments of the Society's founding generation are reproduced, but of course they appear against a radically different set of historiographical possibilities; it is impossible not to see them in a different light.[270] Was the re-commemoration of Morrill as 'first white resident' in this new century a stubborn or even an aggressive denial of Aboriginal histories in the region?

Spirit of renconciliation

Shipwreck survivor James Morrill, who lived from 1846 to 1863 with the Aborigines of Cape Cleveland, Mount Elliot and the Burdekin Delta, had a plan for black and white to share the land. His descendants can take pride in his desire to prevent bloodshed, writes retired JCU history professor NOEL LOOS

1.4 Noel Loos' article in the *Townsville Bulletin* (2004), showing Loos the historian at work (top right) and Morrill posing for a photograph in 1863 (top left), viewed in the Townsville Museum's, files relating to James Morrill.

To think any further about what this new edition meant in a local context, it was necessary first for me to recognise the outrage that set the blood in my ears beating each time I opened the small volume the Society had so kindly sent me, and to quieten its din. Outrage aimed in a different direction, in resonating with my own, helped to find and still its frequency. David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (1994), inspired by Morrill's story, was received with ambivalence. Discussion centred on the ethics of fiction and its power to

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[268] Bowen Historical Society, *James Morrill: his life and adventures*, frontispiece and p. 4.

[269] Most notably, the version of Morrill's narrative reproduced in the booklet is Gregory's 1896 edition rather than the 1863 edition reproduced in the Society's 1964 publication.

[270] Vivian Bradford, '"A Timeless Now": Memory and Repetition' in Kendall R. Phillips ed., *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), pp. 190, 204-6.

occasion worthwhile self-examination. Malouf infantilised the story: when the scrawny and rather idiotic Gemmy stammers the words 'Don't shoot – I'm a B-b-british object' it is to a child toting a stick, his make-believe rifle.[271] The novel turns away from the violence of the historical frontier and from Aboriginal people and histories. Its focus is on the settlers who re-adopt Gemmy, and find him so disturbing because of his sullied whiteness and his relationship with the wild country in which they have taken up land. Germaine Greer condemned the novel for its 'lack of commitment to historical truth' and felt that this constituted a 'monolithic insensitivity'.[272] Others found the novel a penetrating study of settler shame, fear and the unremitting need to demarcate a clear boundary between whiteness and the unknown, even when the threat is ostensibly childlike.[273] Even then, though, as Victoria Burrows asked, was Malouf's de-politicised, nostalgic *fiction* defensible in 1993, International Year of Indigenous Peoples?[274] In presenting readers with such dilemmas, Malouf holds a mirror up to the life of Morrill's 'true' story and its adoption as part of the currency of a white local and regional history, looking inwards to white local concerns, as well as to the outrage that it would inspire.[275] The venom provoked by Malouf's strangely misplaced picture of colonial innocence points to how highly attuned the minds of historians and other intellectuals have become to the lack of innocence in Australian history. It was clear that the authors of *James Morrill: his life and adventures* did not intend their publication to be a grand gesture of any kind – it was not a triumphant shot fired in the service of white North Queensland. No ceremony seems to have accompanied its birth; it was understood simply as a reprinting project, not an opportunity to tell the story afresh.[276]

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[271] David Malouf, *Remembering Babylon* (Sydney: Random Books, 1993), pp. 1-3. The character Jemmy 'had the half baffled, half expectant look of a mongrel that has been often whipped but still turns to the world, out of some fund of foolish expectancy, as a source of scraps as well as torments.' (p. 8). The telling of his story, with the assistance of the local minister, while the school teacher takes notes, also occurs in front of children (pp. 16-21). Malouf acknowledged the source of the 'seed' of this story – Morrill's plea to the stockmen - in history but made the disclaimer that 'otherwise this novel has no origin in fact' (p. 202).

[272] Germaine Greer, 'Malouf's Objectionable Whitewash', *The Age*, 3rd November 1993, Features, p. 11; Gary Kinnane, '*Remembering Babylon* and the use of history', *Agora 36*, no. 4 (2001), pp. 7-12.

[273] Jacqueline Stockdale, '"I Dreamed of Snow Today": Impediments to Settler Belonging in Northern Queensland as Depicted in a Selection of Recent Fiction,' Proceedings of the Inaugural Tropics of the Imagination Conference, *etropic: electronic journal of studies in the tropics* 9 (2010), pp. 1-10.

[274] Victoria Burrows, 'The ghostly haunting of white shame in David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*', *Westerly* 51 (November 2006), pp. 124-32.

[275] As Jackie Hogan observes of Baz Luhrman's Australia, which has met with criticism similar in some respects, the novel itself is perhaps an exercise in 'wish fulfilment' at the same time as it creates opportunities to view these wishes with a sense of irony. The theatrics of a slightly absurd representation of history invite the audience to respond in a variety of ways, including with outrage, Jackie Hogan, 'Gendered and racialised discourses of national identity in Baz Luhrmann's Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies* 34, no.1 (March 2010), pp. 64, 71, 75.

[276] The Society's Bulletin covered its emergence with the merest comment, voting thanks to the two Society members who gave their time for the 'preparation of the booklet' and hoping that 'we will be able to reprint several other booklets now out of print', Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No. 44 (November 2002), pp. 1, 2.

It perhaps continued the dogged avoidance of recognition that Ross Gibson sees as characteristic in the region, 'this is how the colony was maintained: by sensing but trying not to see, by fearing and knowing but trying not to acknowledge'.[277] Certainly, the Bowen Historical Society's act of publication could be tried in the same contemporary 'moral courtroom' that Malouf invoked, in which no species of denial is innocent. Yet such a trial did not seem to yield a full enough answer to my question: why tell *this* story *now*?

There are perhaps many reasons why the Bowen Historical Society did seek simply to faithfully reproduce Morrill's story as told by the founders of the Society. One that emerges in the Society's *Bulletin* is a reverence for those who established the Society, and a sense of solidarity with previous members.[278] The deaths of long-time members are felt keenly, for 'whilst not blood relatives, we are still all one family here at the museum'.[279] There is perhaps a sense of duty involved in telling this story as it was told as the Society took shape in 1964, indeed as it was inherited from storytellers of previous generations. A new story about Morrill would require re-negotiation of the place of Aboriginal history within the organisation, as well as a process of constructive 'forgetting'.[280] The shaping of history by institutional loyalty is indeed strange to the revisionist impulse that characterises academic history-making, but would seem to be a significant influence here, where Morrill's story is so imbricated in the history of the Society itself.

The repetition of Morrill's story as 'first white resident' honours the founding members' project, the ordering of history into a timeline of inaugural events, which need to be repeated and elaborated on in a continual cycle which maintains the comprehensibility of history as a 'linear pattern ... of development and progress'.[281] In reproducing the founding members' monuments (both narrative and, via image, stone) in 2002, rather than fashioning their own, the Society was engaged in 'preservative' history, as Graeme Davison puts it.[282] 'Preservative' history-making may take place through a conservative historical vocabulary,

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[277] Ross Gibson, *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland*, pp. 90-4.

[278] Addressing the fortieth anniversary Annual General Meeting, the president exclaimed, 'If only we could have Vic Jones, Henry Darwen and Walter Cottrell with us tonight to see that forty years on, the Museum continues to run like clockwork in the hands of volunteers.' Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No 45 (October 2003), pp. 4, 7.

[279] Bowen Historical Society Bulletin No 43 (November 2001), p. 3.

[280] Bradford, '"A Timeless Now"', p. 205. As Humphrey McQueen has observed, it can be difficult to write new stories from within old organisations, amid a comfortable 'tolerance' for the inherited ways in which Aboriginal history has been negotiated. Humphrey McQueen, *Gallipoli to Petrov: arguing with Australian history* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1984), pp. 107-118.

[281] Elizabeth Furniss, 'Timeline history and the Anzac myth: settler narratives of local history in a North Australian town', *Oceania* 71, no. 4 (June 2001), pp. 284-6.

[282] Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. 13.

but it has a more specific socio-political end than the objectives often associated with the term 'conservative'. As Elizabeth Furniss has observed in Mt Isa, and Heather Goodall on the 'black soil plains' of the New South Wales-Queensland border, efforts to 'establish the long tenure of a racialized, "white" rural' or regional society in local contexts in the present can be understood as a response to social and economic pressures that threaten the life patterns and livelihoods of these communities.[283] Part of this perceived pressure does come from the increased visibility of Aboriginal history-making and local native title processes, 'timeline' histories of discovery help to mark out a present and a future in which 'colonial authority is established, unproblematic and unchallenged'.[284] Economic change and changing experiences of the landscape in the ever more highly capitalised rural and mining industries, can also contribute to a sense of incipiency which can make the re-inscription of historical order socially necessary.[285] For much of its existence Bowen been the 'Cinderella of the eastern coast' waiting to be 'roused to her great importance' as a port.[286] Where a local history cum promotional booklet of 1920 predicted that 'in the inside of ten years the population of this place should count up to well over 50,000', the actual population of the Bowen Shire in 2002 was a little over twelve thousand, and was just beginning to rise again after steady population losses each year from the mid-1990s.[287] In this context, repeating founding moments, particularly those which signify Bowen's precedence in the region, may be understood as securing of the past in the face of an uncertain future. As Furniss observes, though, even history that is 'conservative in language' can be 'creative in application', and the meaning of local historical practice can only really be understood in the 'social contexts of their creation, use and reception'.[288] With this in mind, I travelled north in December 2010.

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[283] Heather Goodall, 'Telling country: memory, modernity and narratives in rural Australia', *History Workshop Journal* 47 (Spring 1999), p. 168.

[284] Furniss, 'Timeline history and the Anzac myth', p. 288.

[285] Goodall, 'Telling country', pp. 177-9.

[286] Doherty, *The Bowen Book*, p. 11. This booklet boasted 'we are now about to witness the transition of a quiet, little coastal town into a busy commercial seaport', 'There is not the slightest doubt that Bowen is destined to become the capital and the great commercial centre of North Queensland, pp. 12, 47. The Whitsunday Regional Council now anticipates 'the Bowen and Collinsville communities are well positioned to become an economic powerhouse of the North Queensland region', a development which would both ensure the town's survival, but would also result in a radical change in the life patterns of its residents. Whitsunday Regional Council website, Economic Development pages <http://www.whitsunday.qld.gov.au/web/guest/economic-development>, viewed 23rd March 2012.

[287] Doherty, *The Bowen Book*, p. 47. Many of those leaving Bowen probably did so for nearby mining centres, or for other regional centres like Townsville and Rockhampton with more extensive employment prospects, 'Bowen Shire LGA profile', December 2007, prepared by AEC group for the Mackay-Whitsunday Regional Economic Development Corporation, <www.mwredc.org.au/.../regionalprofile/oldlgas/rp071231bow.pdf>, viewed 23rd March 2012.

[288] Furniss, 'Timeline history and the Anzac myth', pp. 292-4.

A journey to the Burdekin: family, geography and ways of knowing

Bill Murray, engineer, former Mayor of Ayr and keen local historian, points out to me the different homes he and his wife have lived in along Kilrie Road, running along the southern side of Ayr, about half way between Townsville and Bowen. Some of the other houses belong to his children, or are their past or future homes: almost every block has a connection. We're on the way to see a marker commemorating Morrill's return to civilisation, a large, attractive stone sitting in the grounds of Airville Primary School. It was organised by the Burdekin Historical Society and unveiled (from beneath an Australian flag) by Percy Jack, great-great-grandson of Morrill via his marriage with Eliza Ross, in July 1981.[289] The plaque reads:

> This monument commemorates the saga of shipwrecked mariner James Morrill ... Last survivor of the brig 'Peruvian' ... Reunited with Shepherds Hatch and Wilson on Sheepstation Creek near here January 1863. After living 17 years with Aborigines.

It commemorates Morrill's survival of the wreck of the *Peruvian* and his re-emergence into history seventeen years later, via his meeting with two men he had never before laid eyes on (a conceptual 'reunion' that espouses Morrill's presentation of himself to the colonists as a rightful 'return to civilisation'). The memorial's adoption of the term 'saga' to characterise Morrill's story was possibly borrowed from the title of Jones' Heatly Lecture, which members of the family had attended.[290] A 'saga' in the strictest sense is a Norwegian or Icelandic story of heroic achievement or marvellous adventure which embodies the traditional history of a family across several generations.[291] Although the term has weakened usage in English as just a long and complicated series of events, its more precise definition perhaps reflected the Burdekin Historical Society's strong desire to engage Morrill's white family in this local story, as well as the Jack family's pride in claiming the story as the beginning of their history in the region. The family funded the first memorial in an 'avenue of pioneers' at Home Hill, on the south bank of the Burdekin River, part of the Burdekin Shire Council's celebrations of National Family Day.[292]

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[289] *Ayr Advocate*, 24th July 1981.

[290] Jones, 'The Saga of James Morrill'. Jones also spoke at the unveiling of the monument, *Ayr Advocate*, 24th July 1981.

[291] *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, 1989; online version November 2010, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy2.library.usyd.edu.au/Entry/169714>, accessed 18 February 2011.

[292] 'Pioneer Avenue', Eighth Avenue, Home Hill, Queensland; Ian Frazer, 'Home Hill Hero: descendants honour shipwrecked sailor', newscutting in Phillip Murray's collection.

About a year before my meeting with Bill, I came across an article in Brisbane's *The Courier Mail* celebrating the centenary of Federation, the dignified 'path that led to nationhood ... a journey punctuated by debate and deliberation, not the bullets and bloodshed typical of other great democracies.'[293] The story of Morrill and his descendants supported this narrative of peaceful progress. When Morrill and his party of 'starving and exhausted survivors' washed up in North Queensland:

> ... none expected their descendants would live in the same area. They certainly would not have visualised the thousands of hectares of sugar cane farms that now exist inland of Cape Cleveland, and pictured their great-grandsons working one of those farms more than 150 years later. But that is just what has happened and Morrill's cane-farming great-grandsons could not be prouder of their ancestor's role in the history of the north.[294]

Imperialism, settlement and farming in North Queensland is a matter of family and inheritance, founded in suffering[295] and achieved by the ancient and universal process of human increase across generations. This *Genesis*-like narrative has something in common with Bill's story of Kilrie Road. When he made this place his home fifty years ago, there were a number of Aboriginal camps just on the other side of the creek. Some of these Aboriginal people helped on his and his neighbours' properties. Now, Kilrie Road in Bill's mind belongs to his family. 'It's not P. C.' he told me, 'but I call myself a white Murri'.[296] Bill wanted me to meet one of Morrill's descendants, a member of the Jack family, and a few days later we drove over to Brandon together, but unfortunately no one was home. He encouraged me to contact the family when I returned to Sydney, especially to see the Morrill's diary or journal, to which his descendants have added a family chronicle. On the northern side of Plantation Creek, opposite Bill's place, near where the Aboriginal camps had been, is the Gudjuda Centre. When I told him I was going to visit the centre on that first afternoon, Bill was dismissive, telling me I wouldn't learn much from the people there.[297] Yet he was also extremely proud of a local history that he had supported the production of while Mayor of Ayr, and called me back to his home a few days later so he could supply me with further copies of its pages. John Kerr's *Black Snow and Liquid Gold*, describes the small settlement of

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[293] Chris Jones, 'Survivor braved all . . . with a little help from his friends', *The Courier Mail*, 1st August 2001, published as part of a special Centenary of Federation supplement titled 'Birth of Our Nation'.

[294] Chris Jones, 'Survivor braved all'.

[295] Ann Curthoys, 'Mythologies' in Richard Nile ed., *The Australian Legend and its Discontents* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2000), pp. 14-17; Curthoys, 'Expulsion, exodus and exile'.

[296] Conversation with Bill Murray, 1st December 2010.

[297] Conversation with Bill Murray, 1st December 2010.

Aboriginal people and Islanders along Plantation Creek, with huts 'scattered ... amidst banana trees, pawpaws and sweet potato patches', leasing the land from adjacent farmers. He notes with a sense of justice that Birri-gubba ancestral remains were repatriated at Plantation Creek Park in 1987, signifying the official recognition of Aboriginal history at this place.[298]

1.5 The park alongside the Gudjuda Centre, Ayr, North Queensland.

Eddie Smallwood, Chairman of the Gudjuda Corporation, was working the day I passed through Ayr. But he took some time out to meet me in the shady park next to the Gudjuda Centre, where a large sculpture of a python presides over a Dreaming story and the repatriated remains of a number of Birri-gubba ancestors. The next few days were not going to be good for learning about Birri-gubba history and culture, Eddie told me. There was some sorry business taking place at Palm Island, and an important funeral in Bowen. Eddie encouraged me to return in the new year, when I might be able to see the bush foods garden beside the centre (flooded at that time), visit the turtle-tagging project that is part of their cultural and natural resources management program, and talk with some of the Elders. He offered to take me up Mt Elliot sometime and show me the rock carvings there – not because they hold any specific information about Morrill's story, but because they had been part of his country. Eddie told me that Morrill fathered a number of children with a Birri-gubba woman or women: many of their descendants, and other members of the Birri-gubba community were forcibly relocated away from the area in the 1920s and later on, but some of them still live in the area. There is an old story about a young Aboriginal girl with light skin

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[298] The book's title refers to the ash from cane burning and the region's under-ground water supplies, Kerr, *Black Snow and Liquid Gold*, p. 187.

who wandered onto Inkerman Station and was taken in by the Ross family. Yellow Gin Creek, flowing into the sea near Wunjunga is named after her, and it is thought that she might also have been Morrill's daughter.[299]

When I asked Eddie whether Morrill's story is now a story about shared history, he responded that its importance for the Birri-gubba community is in its attestation that Aboriginal people were in this area before colonisation, with their own language and customs. Eddie is an advocate of the identification of the traditional owners of the region with the language group, Birri-gubba, rather than the 'nations' or clan groups under this umbrella (Birri-gubba, Juru, Wulgurukaba, Gia), which are delineated by contested boundaries and cause argument and division in the present.[300] The very basic ethnography and geography, and lack of personal names in Morrill's *Sketch of a Residence*, are perhaps a blessing – the story attests to the Birri-gubba presence generally, without fuelling debate about who belongs to and speaks for which country and who is descended from whom.

Morrill's story holds a similar place in the Townsville Cultural Centre, which presents a many-layered account of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life in North Queensland in its interpretive gallery.[301] The visitor encounters Morrill just inside the entry to the circular gallery space. An account of his discovery by a group of men investigating the cause of persistent shooting stars is followed by a brief summary of his adoption, and the role of his published narrative in attesting to the distinctive life-ways and languages of Aboriginal people in the region.[302] In the process of telling, Morrill's Birri-gubba knowledge had been converted into ethnography, a way of thinking in which the Birri-gubba community has become highly literate. Today, as the community works on Native Title histories, local heritage matters and public history-making, Morrill's story is a valuable reference point. Working backwards from contemporary traditions and links with the land, Eddie Smallwood and others do not expect Morrill to have provided a 'complete' account as historians and anthropologists making first attempts to recover Aboriginal life in North Queensland in the 1970s and 1980s did; what he did say is enough. In a sense, after being used against the Birri-gubba for a century, Morrill's knowledge has been 'repatriated'.

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[299] Conversation with Eddie Smallwood, 1st December 2010.

[300] Conversation with Eddie Smallwood, 1st December 2010.

[301] The centre opened in 2005, and operates under a board of eight directors, four of whom are to be from the Wulgurukabba and Bindal communities (both of the Birri-gubba language group). Two directors must be from Torres Strait Island communities and the remaining two are drawn from any other Aboriginal traditional custodian group, The Cultural Centre, Townsville, Staff and Board of Directors page, <http://www.cctownsville.com.au/commonpage.aspx?pagename=ourstaff>, viewed 14th April 2012.

[302] Interpretive Gallery, The Cultural Centre, 2-68 Flinders Street East, Townsville, North Queensland, opened September 2005, visited December 2010.

The use of Morrill's story as an assertion of Aboriginal history is nowhere more tangible than in the mural located in the Bowen Primary School. Bowen is a town of murals: twenty-four of them decorate the compact town grid, on the walls of public buildings, painted between 1988 and 2001. The first eight depicted the growth of agriculture and industry in the region, white men and their machines. In 1991, as a corrective of sorts, a pioneer women mural was added, sponsored like its predecessors by the Bowen Murals Society. The triptych on the tennis court wall at the school was not funded by the Murals Society, rather by ATSIC, possibly via the Girudala Community Co-operative, and was painted by a local Aboriginal artist, Robert Paul. Paul recalls familiarising himself with Morrill's story by reading one of the editions of *Sketch of a Residence*, supplied to him by the Girudala Co-operative. He painted Morrill and other survivors leaving the stricken *Peruvian* on their raft, Morrill and his Aboriginal rescuers overcoming their initial mutual fear with peaceful gestures, and a central cameo based on the studio portraits of Morrill after he 'connected up back' with his own people. Today, he sees the story as one of 'two cultures of the land' coming together.[303] Paul went on to paint a second mural the following year, which is known in the official guide as the 'Aboriginal and Islander History' mural, depicting elders passing on a Dreamtime story to younger listeners, 'while other members of the tribe depict a good hunting season in their paintings', as well as 'Islanders working on one of the many Chinese farms in the Bell's Gully area' in the early twentieth century.[304]

Paul's Morrill mural claims Bowen's 'first white resident' as part of Aboriginal history in a subtle way. The official murals guide, while it notes this artwork was funded by 'ATSIC' (fewer readers will know what this acronym signifies as time passes), does not identify Paul as an Aboriginal artist, or include any references to his interpretation of the story. Derived from the same version of Morrill's story that white local historians use, and based in the same kind of visual language as the other murals, it does not look distinctively Aboriginal or offer an alternate story of the man. Yet locally, at least for some, it registers strongly in thinking about the meaning of Morrill's story, and divides opinion on its merit. Henry Young, a current member of the Murals Committee, grouped Paul's murals with a third one about blackbirding and use of South Sea Islander labour in the region, as the only ones that acknowledge the contribution of 'dark people' to Bowen's history. Interestingly, he also thinks of the Historical Society's 1964 obelisk as a belated nod to Aboriginal history.[305]

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[303] Conversation with Robert Paul, 19th November 2010.

[304] Whitsunday Regional Council website, 'Bowen Murals' pages, updated 2008, <http://www.bowen.qld.gov.au/Visitor_Information/Attractions_Places/Places_to_Visit/Bowen_Murals.aspx>, viewed 15th November 2010. This publication is also widely available as a hard copy booklet.

[305] Conversation with Henry Young, 23rd November 2010.

Young, endorsing the visibility of Aboriginal history, feels that Paul did a 'damn fine job' on his two murals, whereas Dilys Maltby of the Bowen Historical Society mildly disowned Paul's telling of Morrill's story by commenting that this mural is not as good as some of the other murals in town.[306]

1.6 Mural representing the story of James Morrill, painted by Robert Paul, 1992, Bowen Primary School.

Bill Murray had warned me not to fall prey to the Bowen Historical Society's claims (or anyone else's for that matter) to know everything about Morrill. My meeting with Phill Murray, psychologist and amateur archaeologist (and no relation of Bill's) in Townsville a few days later helped me make sense of Bill's territorialism. Part of the controversy is literally over territory. Phill and Bill are both intensely interested in the burial place of Morrill's fellow castaways Captain and Mrs Pitkethly.[307] The Bowen Historical Society's *The Story of James Morrill* (1964) concluded with a call to mark their grave, and in 1979 members of the Society were in correspondence with an archaeologist who had found skeletal remains, perhaps belonging to Alice Pitkethly, which might have been considered for display in their new museum building had they not been so fragmented.[308] Bill Murray, whose major history project over the past few years has been focussed on locating and researching local graves outside the cemeteries, firmly believes that the couple's grave is located at Wunjunga near Upstart Bay, marked by a cairn of small boulders.[309] Phill Murray is convinced that a site on the adjoining Abbott Bay is more likely. Phill has been involved with a number of university-

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[306] Conversation with Henry Young, 23rd November 2010; Conversation with Dilys Maltby, 2nd December 2010.

[307] Morrill stated that he had asked the group caring for the stricken Captain to bury rather than cremate him. Morrill, *Sketch of a Residence*, pp. 12-13. By the time he had heard of the Captain's death and returned, Mrs Pitkethly had also died. Eugene Fitzalan's poem provided some further clues as to the location of the grave.

[308] Major L. W. Hill to Mrs and Mrs Cottrell, 23rd February 1979; Mr and Mrs Cottrell to Major L.W. Hill, 10th March 1979, Phillip Murray's collection, file on the Pitkethlys' burial place.

[309] Conversation with Bill Murray, 1st and 3rd December 2010; Melissa Ketchell, 'Mystery graves found: couple shipwrecked in 1846', *The Sunday Mail*, 24th November 2002, p. 40.

sponsored excavations associated with the grave and is in correspondence with a representative of the deceaseds' family in Scotland. Phill is also investigating other aspects of the geography of Morrill's story, including the location of the wreck of the *Peruvian* and the site where the raft landed. His files on Morrill's story are replete with carefully annotated maps and plans. In the context of these investigations, Phill has also collaborated with Birri-gubba Elder Jim Gaston. The two men have been on at least one trip to Mt Curlewis together during which Phill may also have engaged with Morrill's country in a qualitatively different way, learning something like what Eddie Smallwood thought I might learn from a visit to Mt Elliott.[310]

Through my conversations with Phill and with others, the perceived limits of disciplines – archaeology, geography, history – emerged as one of the forces at play in the re-telling of Morrill's story. As Denis Byrne has observed of professional heritage workers, a segregated landscape is reproduced as we continue to work within established fields of practice. Archaeology, with its emphasis on the material life of pre-history, struggles to recognise Aboriginal knowledge, even as it attests to an Aboriginal presence in the landscape, while conservation architecture and documentary history can easily erase the Aboriginal presence from post-contact spaces. While this does not necessarily reflect the practitioners' attitudes towards Aboriginal people or their view of race relations, the result is nevertheless a disentangled history that looks a lot like Australia's history of segregation itself.[311] In one of his local lectures Phill brought his psychological interests to bear by imagining a therapeutic session with Mrs Pitkethly during her visit to Sydney (on the eve of her departure on the *Peruvian*) and exploring what her feelings may have been as she encountered the Birri-gubba and was scrutinised by them. But he is more cautious about engaging with Morrill's own experiences. He turned our conversation to a novel, which I had perused a few days earlier. The thesis of Alan J. Morris' book *The Sole Survivor* is that Morrill did survive with the Aborigines because he reached out to them, relinquished his Britishness and accepted their teachings. Unlike the other castaways, he recognised that he must assimilate to survive, and the narrative gives an unsophisticated but sincere exposition of his willing and apt transformation into an Aboriginal man and of some of the dramas of his Aboriginal life.[312] Though he has long known about *The Sole Survivor*, Phill has chosen not to read it. He does not want to confuse his factual historical understanding of Morrill's story with fiction. The

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[310] Conversation with Phillip Murray, 3rd December 2010.

[311] Denis Byrne, 'The Ethos of Return', p. 83.

[312] When Alice Pitkethly's character says to Morrill, 'you're a good man, Jimmy ... but I'm afraid you're going to turn into one of them', he replies, 'yes Alice, if I'm to become a survivor I must become exactly like them'. Alan J. Morris, *The Sole Survivor* (Emu Park, Qld: Alan J. Morris, 1992), p. 83.

novel engages with part of the truth of Morrill's story that we cannot directly access through the documentary sources, that must be imagined by those who are prepared to cast themselves away from the safe vessel of documented fact.[313]

One of my email correspondents, a keen local historian based in Ayr, Glenis Cislowski, furnished the following as part of her response to my query about Morrill's descendants, Aboriginal and white:

> James Ross Morrill married Ellen Flynn in 1889. They had Ellen born 1890/C7184, Gertrude born 1892/C11604, Dorcas Cecilia born 1894/C10951, Jane Isabel Morrill born 1898/C71078, Lorna Clare 1904/C11388, and Edith Ann born 1906/C10931. Dorcas married Robert Jack of Brandon. They had Percy and Dave Jack. Dorcas Cecilia Jack died 12/12/1970 and is buried in the Ayr Cemetery ... The Jack family still farm out past Brandon.
>
> A man with Morrill as his surname came into our workshop some years ago to get my husband to do a job for him. He claimed that he was a descendent (sic) of James Morrill and a native woman. It is openly stated that Morrill had a wife and family from the local tribe. There is no significant evidence to support this information in a thesis.[314]

Her account of the Jack family, who she described elsewhere as Morrill's 'direct' descendants, is fortified with facts: dates of birth and birth certificate numbers, Christian and middle names, and concludes with a strong assertion of continuity. Her account of Morrill's Aboriginal descendants is in the form of a vignette in which one man makes an unverifiable 'claim' of descent, which lacks the formal attributes for admission into the scholarly realm. Glenis kindly offered to follow up references I might need from the local paper or other local records, but did not suggest that there may be more to know about Mr Morrill's claim to descent or any of the other inklings she had that 'some dark skinned people' in the district might be relatives of this Jack family via James Morrill.[315] She was content to leave this knowledge in the realm of the mysterious.

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[313] Alan J. Morris thought of himself as inhabiting a chronologically segregated landscape as he wrote, dedicating his novel to 'the Brindle (sic) Tribal people who are now extinct'. Perhaps some of this freedom to imagine came from a conviction that no one living could answer him. Morris, *The Sole Survivor*, frontispiece.

[314] Correspondence with Glenis Cislowski, care of Loftus Dun, 24th January 2011.

[315] Correspondence with Glenis Cislowski, care of Loftus Dun, 22nd January 2011.

I found the Bowen Historical Society constraining its knowledge about Morrill's story according to similar disciplinary conventions. Dilys Maltby, one of the compilers of *James Morrill: his life and adventures* showed me around the museum. She was at ease with the idea that Morrill most likely fathered children during his time with the Birri-gubba, and might have Aboriginal descendants who still live in the region. I recounted some of the more risqué and romantic detail of *A Sole Survivor* to Dilys – some of the tutelage this fictional Morrill receives is from a young woman, who becomes his wife after desire blossoms during their language sessions, a more explicit rendition of the kind of affection and eroticism Kate Grenville imagined behind the vocabulary Pattyegarang and Lt. Dawes shared[316] – and asked if she had read the novel. She hadn't but she laughed and said it sounded plausible – after all he was a young man who had lived as part of the community for seventeen years. She recalled that in *Sketch of a Residence* Morrill referred to the offer of a wife, but not whether he accepted or not. Dilys then told me that over the past few years a number of enquiries had been made at the museum by Aboriginal people who thought they might be Morrill's descendants, thinking that the Historical Society might hold information that would provide proof of this. The Historical Society researchers had told them that they were sorry, but there was no such proof as far as they knew. Dilys explained to me that this is why the museum's displays and their booklet about Morrill do not include reference to Morrill's Aboriginal descendants, because the Historical Society deals in verifiable facts, and there is no proof in this case.[317]

Although in promotional material Morrill's story is touted as one of the main reasons to visit the museum,[318] he occupies only a small corner in the museum itself, between the geological specimens and a large, typographical-style display of Aboriginal weapons and tools, opposite the explorers' wall. Studio portraits of Morrill and his son, and a copy of the title deed for Morrill's lot on the corner of Brisbane and Poole Streets, join photographs of the 1964 monument, and its dedication ceremony where Morrill's grand-daughters and

[316] 'She pointed to her lips and said sweetly "moolin". It was too much for Jimmy Morrill. He kissed her quickly as he repeated the word moolin and said loudly "kiss".' Morris, *The Sole Survivor*, p. 66. Grenville's pair find mutual enjoyment partly in language and partly in excitement of their developing cross-cultural relationship as they play with words and mime including around body parts and the putting on and taking off of clothes, Kate Grenville, *The Lieutenant*, (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 2009), pp. 158-165. See also Paul Carter, 'Repetitions at night: mimicry, noise and context', *Exchanges: cross-cultural encounters in Australia and the Pacific*, ed Ross Gibson, (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1996), pp. 81-2.

[317] Conversation with Dilys Maltby, 2nd December 2010. The imperative to establish European-style family trees as good evidence for 'traditional ownership' within the native title system and elsewhere has provided the motivating factor for this kind of research within many Aboriginal communities, Goodall 'Telling Country' p. 184

[318] The Society gives their claim to hold original records pertaining to James Morrill a prominent place on their Museum and Gallery Services listing, for example, heading up the entry with 'Did you know... We hold records of the shipwrecked survivor, James Morrill, who lived for 17 years with Aborigines?', Museum and Gallery Services Queensland, Museum and Gallery Profiles, 'Bowen Historical Society and Museum' <http://www.magsq.com.au/01_cms/details.asp?ID=389> viewed 8th August 2011.

step-grand-daughters are pictured clustered around the monument. Although the Society commemorates its own commemoration of Morrill, a 'new' and presentist addition to Morrill's story, there is apparently no room for contemporary Birri-gubba stories touching on Morrill. The assumption that a unidirectional acquisition of 'facts' would be the only fruit borne by those approaches by members of the Birri-gubba community to the Historical Society was perhaps mutual, a barrier to the sharing of other kinds of knowledge, but perhaps also on both parts a defence against having to.

As a historian who began to study Australian history in the reconciliation era, I recognise that I share Loos' aspirations for Morrill's story, that it might become a story through which Aboriginal and settler North Queenslanders might acknowledge their connections and look into the past, at least at times standing side by side. It would be easy to say that Morrill's storytellers are running late for reconciliation, but the landscape of the story is truly current: as a number of Birri-gubba groups pursue native title claims, as the Bowen Historical Society continues to tell a story of white discovery and progress, and as Loos attempts to bring the parties together, Morrill's story plays a part in regional 'matters of history – of possession and dispossession – [that] remain as important as they ever were'.[319] A reconciliation horizon is not the only potential horizon for history here. Local self-determination works towards other futures in which stronger legal and economic positions, from which Birri-gubba people can engage in social and cultural development on their own terms, are sought, rather than a resolution of histories.[320] Gillian Cowlishaw asks of history-making and identity in Bourke, what if the reproduction of difference and segregation is not understood as 'a pathology, a gaping wound that must be healed before normal life can begin again ... What if

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[319] Bain Attwood with Helen Doyle, *Possession: Batman's Treaty and the Matter of History* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), p. 320. Bevernage has made a study of the chronologies inherent in the concept and process of reconciliation – reconciliation becoming the up-to-date, the destination, the desired future, placed in chronological and moral opposition to a past characterised by denial, Berber Bevernage, 'Writing the Past Out of the Present: History and the Politics of Time in Transitional Justice', *History Workshop Journal* 69 (Spring 2010), pp. 122-3. Anna Haebich, visiting Bowen some time before August 2008 found the town full of 'troubled spirits' lingering after a sinister history of 'denialism and violence' linked to notions of white supremacy: 'in some places, a prickly feeling runs across your skin', she wrote. Her discomfort makes an interesting contrast with the claim of Henry Young that Bowen is a 'marvellous' town, home to many Thursday and Murray Islanders, and a small number of Aboriginal people, and a place where everyone mixes well. Kath Walker, reporting to the Federal Council of Aboriginal Advancement on the 'Situation of Aborigines and Islanders in Queensland' in the early 1970s tendered a very similar opinion after her visit to Bowen. The dynamics of history-making in Bowen perhaps exist somewhere in between these two poles, with the town's links with a violent past partially and at times tacitly acknowledged, at the same time as opportunities for a purging or healing history are declined – for everyone already gets on famously. Anna Haebich, 'No Simple Twist of Fate', *Griffith Review* 21 (August 2008), pp. 153-59; Conversation with Henry Young, 23rd November 2010; Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Fryer Library Manuscript Collection, UQFL 84, Box 30, Kath Walker, Report to Federal Council of Aboriginal Advancement, 'Situation of Aborigines and Islanders in Queensland', undated.

[320] Miranda Johnson, 'Reconciliation, indigeneity, and postcolonial nationhood in settler states', *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 2 (2011), pp. 189, 198.

it is the disputation around the division that gives social life its meaning?'[321] Morrill's story, while it remains 'entangled' in Aboriginal and settler pasts and presents and their connections, also provides a platform for the assertion of separate histories, not least through the tripartite narrative consolidated in *Sketch of a Residence* and its firm separation of ethnography from experience. Indeed, the story as it was told in *Sketch of a Residence* remains at the centre of things, unreconstructed but constantly re-contextualised. Perhaps because of its brevity and sobriety it remains capable of holding all manner of meaning.

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[321] Gillian Cowlishaw, 'On "getting it wrong": collateral damage in the history wars', *Australian Historical Studies* 37, no. 127 (April 2006), p. 202.

The Many Truths of Bennelong's Tragedy

You're here again, old friend.
You strut around like a ragtag redcoat
bellhop, glance up for a shooting star
& its woe, & wander in & out the cove
you rendezvoused with Governor Phillip
after Wil-le-me-ring speared him beside a beached
whale. We've known each other for years.
You're unchanged. But me, old scapegoat,
I never knew I was so damn happy
when we first met. Each memory
returns like heartbreak's boomerang.
You didn't tell me you were a scout,
a bone pointer, a spy,
someone to stand between new faces
& gods. I didn't know your other four
ceremonial names, hero in clownish clothes,
till another dead man whispered into my ear.

- Yusef Komunyakaa, 'Bennelong's Blues'[1]

If contemporary Australians know a little about Australian history, it is likely they know Bennelong, not as a wooden 'figure' from the past, but as an 'old friend' who has communicated to them something of the encounter between the invading Europeans and the Australian Aborigines, and something of the truth of its outcomes. Bennelong's was by no means the only Eora face that the colonists recognised, yet he continues to be singled out in public memory as an Aboriginal intermediary between the present and the colonial past.[2] Like Trucanini,

[1] Yusef Komunyakaa, 'Bennelong's Blues', *Callaloo* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1997), p. 35.

[2] As Jack Brook comments, 'Bennelong is arguably the best-known Aborigine in the history of white Australia. Almost every Australian has a little knowledge of him and many will be aware he visited England. But ask who the other Aborigine was to sail with him aboard the Atlantic on 11 December 1792 and few will know the answer.' Jack Brook, 'The forlorn hope: Bennelong and Yemmerrawannie go to England', *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (2001), pp. 36-47. Journalist Tony Stephens, for example, followed Peter Read in thinking of Bennelong as the first of the 'stolen generations' – but Read did not name Bennelong, he was thinking of Arabanoo, Colbee and Bennelong, Phillip's three captives, the other two of whom Stephens did not know about (confirming Brook's suspicions), or did not see as significant enough in the public view to mention. Tony Stephens, 'Bennelong, the first of the stolen,

Bennelong remains 'a resilient figure in debates about the future of Australian Aboriginals today ... [and] a site of struggle for ownership and possession of the colonial past.'[3] Like Trucanini's life, Bennelong's offers considerable dramatic potential to the storyteller: his kidnap by Phillip, his escape, his convincing display of gentlemanly manners, his up-to-the-neck involvement in Aboriginal and European politics, his journey to England and back, and his death in relative obscurity. Like Trucanini, Bennelong was a go-between, a trader, a diplomat, and a builder and crosser of bridges – his life is rich in possible interpretations.

Amateur histories, children's books, songs, poems, plays, and blogs about Bennelong proliferate in what folklorist Linda Dégh calls a 'fast-breaking process', with no clear genealogy of versions through which to trace traditions and influences.[4] But while stories of Bennelong are myriad, they are not 'promiscuous' in form.[5] Most popular and public storytellers adhere to a strong tradition, casting Bennelong in a tragedy of sorts, in which he falls into despair and disrepute on return from his great journey to England, as he does in this 'definition' provided by a 1980 *Dictionary of Australian History*:

> **Bennelong** (?-1813). Aboriginal who accompanied Governor Arthur Phillip to England in 1792. Governor John Hunter brought him back to Sydney in 1795. For a time he continued his association with the Europeans but eventually abandoned his clothes and began to drink heavily, becoming an outcast to both Europeans and Aborigines.[6]

It is this association of Bennelong's story with decline or failure, often understood as 'tragic', that I explore in this chapter, focusing on understandings of the later years of Bennelong's life in particular. Like the biography of Morrill's story, this is a tale of repetition, one in which storytellers have often followed a well-worn pathway in retelling Bennelong's story, though they wish to communicate a range of historical, political and ethical meanings. Over the past

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comes back: Sorry Day', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26th May 1998 [late edition], p. 6, referring to Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999), p. 17.

[3] Lyndall Ryan, 'The Struggle for Trukanini 1830-1997', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings* 44, no. 3 (September 1997), p. 154.

[4] Linda Dégh, *Narratives in Society: A Performer-Centred Study of Narration* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1995), pp. 361-2; and Paula Hamilton, 'Memory studies and cultural history' in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White eds., *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003), p. 83.

[5] 'Promiscuous' is one of Keith Jenkins' designations for a relativist past which is content to associate itself with any historical narrative to suit the requirements of the present, Jenkins (1995), pp. 57-8, quoted and discussed in Ann Curthoys' and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006), p. 6.

[6] John Larkin, *Dictionary of Australian History* (Sydney: Rigby, 1980), pp. 27-8.

few decades there has been a movement to recognise the significance of Bennelong's other four ceremonial names, and to acknowledge that Aboriginal people were not necessarily as they appeared, or as they sounded, to the British colonists.[7] Historians are attempting to step back from Bennelong and to confront him, as the speaker in Komunyakaa's poem does, as a stranger again, as a person in his own elusive story. But I would argue that it is not possible to do so without reflecting on the powerful association that generations of storytellers have made between Bennelong's story and tragedy.

The first section of this chapter illustrates the reproduction of Bennelong's tragedy across significant changes in Australian and Aboriginal historiography despite the innovation of a number of attractive alternatives. The following sections consider the possible meanings of this repeated re-inscription of cross-cultural tragedy via Bennelong's story, the relationship of Bennelong's tragedy with truth, and Bennelong's ongoing role as historiographical go-between linking the present with the origins of today's Australia.

Bennelong's tragedies

Eleanor Dark in her epic novel of 1941, *The Timeless Land*, sought to tell for the first time, 'a story of the white settlement partly from the black man's point of view'.[8] Drafts featured a long prologue depicting Aboriginal life before the arrival of the First Fleet. But the novel was immense, and with war looming, Dark felt the need to focus the story more intensely on a 'clash of values' within white society. On publisher William Collins' suggestion, she funnelled her prologue into a much terser tableau focused throughout on Bennelong, one of her chief Aboriginal protagonists.[9] It is Bennelong who both begins and ends the story, transformed from a sweet child trailing after his fictional father, Wunbula, in the first paragraphs, to the broken adult of the Epilogue. In the novel's final scene, Bennelong revisits the rock platform where Wunbula had made a carving of Cook's ship, and where father and son had looked out to sea together. He is drunk and angry. When he stumbles across the carving, he throws himself down and starts to vandalise it until he collapses, overwhelmed by alcohol and a sense of loss:

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[7] See for example, Jakelin Troy, 'Language Contact in Early Colonial New South Wales 1788-1791', in Michael Walsh and Colin Yallop, eds. *Language and Culture in Aboriginal Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1993), pp. 33-50 and Grace Karskens, 'Red coat, blue jacket, black skin: Aboriginal men and clothing in early New South Wales', *Aboriginal History* 35 (2011), pp. 1-36.

[8] Barbara Brooks with Judith Clark, *Eleanor Dark: A Writer's Life* (Sydney: Macmillan, 1998), p. 350.

[9] Brooks, *Eleanor Dark*, pp. 347–50; Marivic Wyndham, *A World Proof Life: Eleanor Dark, a Writer in Her Times, 1901–1985* (Sydney: UTSePress, 2007), pp. 180–181.

> the ground lurched, and the whole world spun. As he pitched forward across the rock a bit of broken bottle gashed his arm, and blood ran into the defaced grooves of Wunbula's drawing. Bennilong lay still, snoring heavily, while the merciful, swift twilight of his land crept up about him to cover his defeat. The End.[10]

Dark's Bennelong had been drawn into the 'alien world' of the white men by a 'thread of destiny' that would 'hold him there even after death'.[11] Taken captive by Phillip, Bennelong's initial anger subsides as he recalls his destiny, and he finds himself wanting to be like these fascinating strangers, 'proud to wear the clothes they gave him, and walked often in the sunshine so that he might admire his shadow, which was now the same as the shadow of a white man.'[12] But he was destined to fail: Dark's Aborigines, though self-sufficient and creative within their own culture, were nevertheless conceived through a social Darwinism still pervasive in the interwar period, as the 'monkey-like' 'children of the human family', hard-wired to an unchanging existence.[13] All Dark's Aboriginal characters face an intractable cultural dilemma with the arrival of the colonists. They are a 'timeless' people and change brings an end to the sustaining certainty of law-governed tribal life.[14] In the light of this preconception, Bennelong's rush towards cultural exchange was Icarus-like. Dark devoted time to researching Aboriginal life-ways, and has lavished a degree of care on her Aboriginal characters that was daring at the time.[15] When published, Dark's novel was both celebrated and criticised as being almost closer to history than to fiction, providing an unprecedented view of cross-cultural relations in the colony.[16] The trilogy of which it is the first volume has been in print in Australia for most of the sixty years since its publication (without a critical introduction until 1990). In the 1950s it was

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[10] Eleanor Dark, *The Timeless Land* (Melbourne: Fontana Books 1980), pp. 539–544.

[11] Dark, *The Timeless Land*, p. 49.

[12] Dark, *The Timeless Land*, pp. 264-5.

[13] Dark, *The Timeless Land*, p. 151; Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere people* (Camberwell, Vic: Penguin, 2005), pp. 67- 72; Brooks, *Eleanor Dark*, pp. 364–365.

[14] Dark, *The Timeless Land*, p. 177. Bennelong's wife Barrangaroo senses a danger but cannot apprehend it, as 'the passing centuries, going quietly over the heads of her ancestors, had evolved in their brains no machinery for the understanding of Change', p. 406.

[15] Humphrey McQueen reminds us that the novel appeared just after New South Wales had 'celebrated its Sesqui-Centenary with an official story that turned its back on the convicts and ignored the destruction of Aboriginal society,' a context often overlooked by readers comfortable with the book fifty years later. McQueen, 'Introduction' [1990] in Eleanor Dark, *The Timeless Land* (Pymble, NSW: HarperCollins Publishers Australia, 2002), pp. xix and xxii; Dark declares in her preface to the novel that she has 'borrowed shamelessly from other tribes, often far distant' to create a fuller picture of the life of the Port Jackson Aboriginal people. Dark, *The Timeless Land*, p. 7.

[16] Brooks, *Eleanor Dark*, pp. 357–359.

set as a school text, and formed the basis for a television mini-series broadcast by the ABC in 1980.[17]

Dark later wrote Bennelong's entry for the 1966 edition of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Her biographical entry was dry and *sans* pathos. She concluded simply that Bennelong had fallen between two stools in his later years, saying that after his return from England, 'references to him are scanty, though it is clear that he could no longer find contentment or full acceptance either among his countrymen or the white men.'[18] Though different in genre and mood, Dark's biographies of Bennelong both rested on a pair of powerful and interrelated narrative elements that have come to characterise much of the storywork surrounding Bennelong over the past four decades: that Bennelong was irreparably *culturally* changed by his contact with the colony, and that this led him to a lonely and (in the view of many of his biographers) disgraceful end, which heralded an ominous beginning for Aboriginal-white relations in Australia.

Manning Clark claimed that Dark's novels inspired him to write his own *History of Australia*.[19] But Clark was much less interested in Aboriginal protagonists, and in his focus on the great political personalities of British Australia, turned his back on the ethnographically informed insights into Aboriginal society and politics that Dark had woven into her story. Bennelong did not rate a mention in Clark's history until he and Yemmerawannie joined Phillip's voyage back to England in December 1792, three years after his kidnap on Phillip's orders in November 1789. Bennelong, Yemmerawannie, and two convicts who also departed the colony with Phillip, gather around the great man. Their chief purpose in the narrative is to demonstrate Phillip's magnetism, his 'power to attach people to his person'.[20] Clark's Bennelong was returned to New South Wales in 1795 for the purpose of displaying 'to other aborigines the benefits of civilisation'.[21] But only two pages after his return, Bennelong instead demonstrates the awful and ironic reality that Hunter faced in his task of preparing the Aborigines for civilisation, that

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[17] Barbara Brooks, 'Introduction' in Eleanor Dark, *The Timeless Land* (Pymble, NSW: HarperCollins Publishers Australia, 2002), pp. vii-viii; Humphrey McQueen, 'Introduction' [1990] in the same volume, pp. xix and xxii. The novel also took Australian history to an overseas audience, being a bestseller in the USA in 1941, as well as topping the Times Literary Supplement Christmas Fiction List in the UK, and was later translated into German and Swedish.

[18] Eleanor Dark, 'Bennelong (1764–1813)' [1966], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bennelong-1769/text1979>, accessed 28 April 2012.

[19] Brooks, *Eleanor Dark*, p. 427.

[20] Manning Clark, *History of Australia*, Volume 1 (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1962), p. 131.

[21] Clark, *History of Australia*, Volume 1, p. 143.

'the closer his contact with civilisation, the more the aborigine was degraded'.[22] This was the only form of mediation that Clark gave Bennelong credit for; his early intimation of the doom awaiting the Aborigines, demonstrated through the course of his own life. Bennelong took to drinking too much and behaving badly, he 'disgusted his civilisers and became an exile from his own people, and rushed headlong to his dissolution as a man without the eye of pity from the former, or affection from the latter.'[23] The next time we meet Bennelong he is already in his grave.[24]

Clark's narration of a twofold 'exile' for Bennelong on his return from England, following Dark's interpretation of his life, seems a decisive departure from much previous storytelling about Bennelong. Leon Ducharme, a French-Canadian political prisoner who was interned in the colony in the early 1840s, spent part of his term labouring at a penal settlement known as Longbottom overlooking Bennelong's country on the Parramatta River. He concluded his brief and disdainful account of Bennelong: 'he was no sooner ashore on his native land than he stripped himself of all his good clothes, cast them aside, and, rushing into the depths of the bush, went off to re-join his beloved tribe ... he was seen again wandering about just as wild as his brothers, and following all native inclinations.'[25] Ducharme's protagonist makes a far more radical break with the colony than would have been possible for Bennelong in life, but he does so amidst his 'beloved tribe'. Similarly, a Bennelong of the 1940s remains in his fine London clothes until a joyful reunion with his old friend Colbee results in the 'awakening' of his old savage self and old priorities to the great satisfaction of his wife.[26] In many other stories into the 1960s, Bennelong continues to be embraced either by the settlement or his 'tribe'. Even where he appears as a 'quarrelsome' drunk beset by troubles, he is still a social being, unlike the irreparably isolated figure Clark depicted, who would increasingly stand in for Bennelong over the next few decades.[27] Keith Smith, wanting to 'rehabilitate the received image of Bennelong that has for so long been copied from one history to another with no questioning of the

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[22] Clark, *History of Australia*, Volume 1, p. 145.

[23] Clark, *History of Australia*, Volume 1, p. 145.

[24] Clark, *History of Australia*, Volume 1, p. 346.

[25] Longbottom was a small peninsula in the vicinity of today's Exile Bay, Canada Bay and France Bay, named after the French-Canadian prisoners. Leon Ducharme, *Journal of a political Exile in Australia* (*Journal d'un exile politique aux terres australes* (1845)), tr. George Mackaness (Sydney: D S Ford, 1944), pp. 34-5, 46.

[26] James McCarter, 'They began it' in *These People Lived* (Brisbane: 'The Worker' Newspaper Pty. Ltd.,1944), pp. 2-19.

[27] For example, Richard Sadleir, *Aborigines of Australia* (Sydney: Thomas Richards, Government Printer, 1883), p. 25; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29th January 1898, p. 4; Michael Levy, *Wallumetta: a history of Ryde and its district 1792 to 1945* (Sydney: W. E. Smith, 1947), pp. 10-13; Doris Chadwick, 'Governor Phillip and the Natives', *The New South Wales School Magazine of Literature for Our Boys and Girls* 40, no. 9, Part 1 (November 1955), pp. 267-272; P.R. Stephensen, *The History and Description of Sydney Harbour* (Sydney: Rigby Ltd, 1966), p. 321.

secondary sources or interrogation of the primary historical evidence', found it central to his endeavour to counter this de-socialisation of Bennelong by everyone from Clark to Bob Carr.[28]

W.E.H. Stanner, in his Boyer Lectures of 1968, found a slow revolution underway in his contemporary Australia, in which the 'Aboriginal question' was rising to the surface in social and political discussions.[29] A new history, entirely different from what had gone before, would be necessary, acknowledging the Aboriginal side to the story.[30] This new history would not necessarily hold a more sanguine view of Bennelong, however. When Stanner asked his listeners to imagine Aboriginal men and women of 'outstanding ... character and personality', he made a quick qualification: 'I am not thinking of mercurial upstarts like Bennelong'.[31] A decade later, in an article that remains a touchstone for historians, he described Bennelong as a 'volatile egotist, mainly interested in love and war; a tease, a flirt and very soon a wine-bibber; a trickster and eventually a bit of a turncoat'.[32] At a time when Aboriginal people of NSW were feeling the effects of a sharp downturn in employment prospects from the 1950s, Stanner credited the readily-pleased and soon 'mendicant' Bennelong with being at the head of a chain reaction 'which ... forced one tribe after another into some sort of dependency on Europeans', which he felt had broadly set the pattern for relations across the continent.[33] Bennelong had been cited as a precedent by nineteenth century thinkers too, even within his own lifetime, but the import was the opposite: he had been educated in British ways, and had rejected them. A *Sydney Gazette* article of 1834 echoed David Dickinson Mann (who departed the colony in 1809) when it recalled Bennelong's case to temper public expectations about the 'education' of a group of Aboriginal prisoners on Goat Island. Bennelong, of course, while having great capacity for learning, had 'preferred the freedom of his own wild woods'.[34] Stanner's influential reading

[28] Keith Smith, 'Bennelong Among His People', *Aboriginal History* 33 (2009), pp. 8, 21-4.

[29] W.E.H. Stanner, 'After the Dreaming', Boyer Lectures series (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1968), pp. 7, 26.

[30] Bain Attwood, 'The Past as Future: Aborigines, Australia and the (dis)course of History', in Bain Attwood ed., *In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996), p. xiv; Stanner, 'After the Dreaming', pp. 25-6.

[31] Stanner, 'After the Dreaming', p. 45.

[32] W. E. H. Stanner, 'The History of indifference thus begins', *Aboriginal History* 1 (1977), pp. 19–20.

[33] Stanner, 'The History of indifference thus begins', pp. 19-20; Stanner, 'After the Dreaming', pp. 7-11. Heather Goodall gives an account of reduced employment opportunities for Aboriginal people post-war as a number of key agricultural practices were mechanised and centralised, and post-war European migrants began to compete for fruit-picking jobs and similar employment. Heather Goodall, *Invasion to embassy: Land in Aboriginal politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2008), pp. 312-4.

[34] *Sydney Gazette*, 11th July 1835, p. 3; David Dickinson Mann, *The Present Picture of New South Wales* (London: John Booth, 1811) cited in Smith, 'Bennelong Among his People', pp. 19-20. See also George Bond, *A brief account of the colony of Port-Jackson in New South Wales: its native inhabitants, productions, &c.* (Vic.: Edition Renard, 2005), pp. 6-7. Sometimes, Bennelong's case was cited and then dismissed as a failed 'early experiment', with other examples, such as the Aboriginal Institution at Parramatta, providing precedents for success in civilising the

of Bennelong's life clearly reflected contemporary anthropological thinking about the nature of Aboriginal cultures, and the fate of Aboriginal peoples of 'settled' south-eastern Australia, as well as the aspirations of the post-war assimilation project, as will be further explored below.

In the mid-1950s, Bennelong Point was conclusively selected as the site for the Sydney Opera House. This landform was known as Jubgalee by the Eora people, and was the site of the compact brick house built for Bennelong on the order of Governor Phillip. Since Bennelong's lifetime, the point had been home to Fort Macquarie, completed c1819, then a red brick tram depot from 1903, in turn demolished for the laying of the foundations of the Sydney Opera House in 1959.[35] When the Opera House was opened in 1973, Bennelong was accorded a level of interest perhaps unequalled since the 1790s. He appeared in the opening ceremony in the shape of Aboriginal actor Ben Blakeney, who delivered a 'stirring oration' from the topmost peak of the tallest shell, heralded by a Royal Australian Navy fanfare:[36]

> Here my people chanted their stories of the dreamtime – of spirit heroes, and of earth's creation – and our painted bodies flowed in ceremony. On this point my people laughed and they sang while the sticks clacked in the rhythm of the corroborees. I am Bennelong – and my spirit and the spirit of my people lives; and their dance and their music and their drama and their laughter also remain.[37]

This resurrected Bennelong, rehabilitated from the cultural or spiritual crisis which tore him apart at the end of *The Timeless Land*, haunts the Opera House. Where Trucanini has often been imagined haunting modern Australia in a spectral, reproachful way, violated and inconsolable, as she does in David Boyd's series of paintings and sculptures first exhibited in 1959,[38] Bennelong gave his blessing. In celebrating the living Aboriginal 'spirit', Blakeney's script trod a delicate line between the acknowledgement (or perhaps the assertion, as Blakeney spoke) of an Aboriginal presence, and the appropriation of a past Aboriginal culture for this new, distinctively Australian, cultural and architectural landmark.

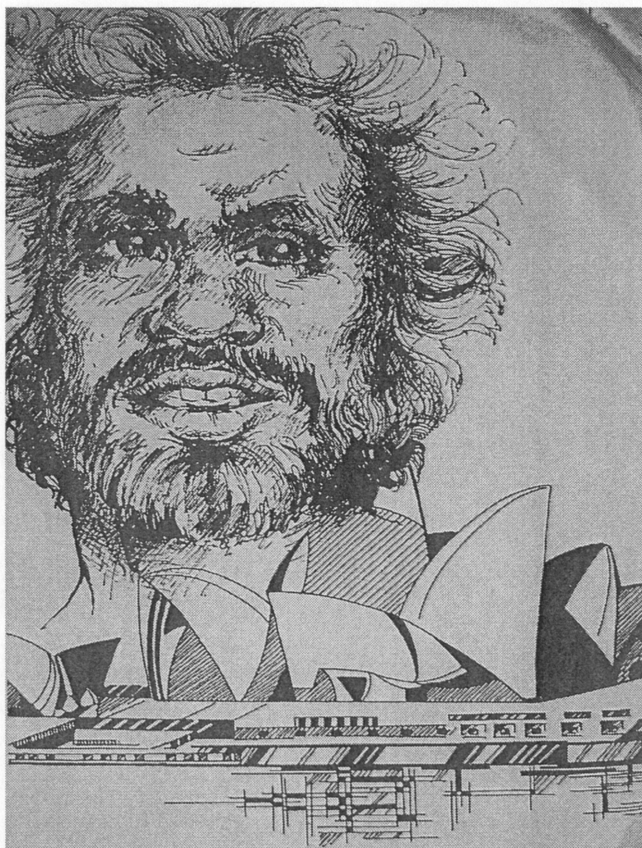
Aborigines, George Howe, 'Chronology of local occurrences', *New South Wales Pocket Almanac*, (1818) cited in Smith, 'Bennelong Among his People', p. 19; *Illustrated Sydney News*, 21st January 1871, p. 3.

[35] John Kenny, *Bennelong: First Notable Aboriginal* (Sydney: Royal Australian Historical Society, 1973), pp. 67-73.

[36] Oswald L. Ziegler, *Sydney Has an Opera House* (Artarmon, NSW: Ambascol Press, 1974), n/p.

[37] Ziegler, *Sydney Has an Opera House*, n/p.

[38] Lyndall Ryan, 'The Struggle for Trukanini', pp. 161-5; See for example Boyd's sculpture 'Truganini – the offering', and paintings 'Dream of childhood', 'Truganini and the sealer', and 'Truganini last of the Tasmanians', as viewed in *David Boyd: retrospective 1957-1982: a series of seven exhibitions presented by the Wagner Art Gallery as a contribution to the Festival of Sydney 1983* (Paddington, NSW: The Gallery, 1983).



2.1 Bennelong and the Opera House [*National Aboriginal Day Magazine*, 1981, p. 29].

The notion that the Sydney Opera House, by virtue of its location, might constitute a memorial to Bennelong has often been invoked in a rhetorical register. The first issue of the Benelong Bugle, a newsletter which circulated among the construction workers on the Opera House site, claimed for Bennelong 'Such a remarkable character ... deserves a place in the annals of his native land, and it is not unfitting that one of the famous buildings of the world should occupy a site which bears his name'.[39] P.R. Stephensen, also writing as the Opera House was in the early stages of construction, however, suggested that 'if the Opera House is not to be considered as Bennelong's monument' (he did not elaborate on why it should not be), then perhaps some sort of memorial could be erected nearby.[40] That this magnificent building should directly pay tribute to Bennelong was apparently not something that Stephensen could take seriously, but

[39] *Benelong Bugle* 1, (1962) (Sydney: J. Parks, Sydney Opera House Site), p. 17. John Kenny declaimed in 1973, 'who, indeed, was Bennelong for in the justice of history no one can be worthier of sharing the historic and contemporary lustre of the Opera House and Sydney Cove.' Kenny, *Bennelong*, p.5. The 1981 National Aboriginal Day magazine declared that the location of Bennelong's exact place of burial is of no consequence as '... Benelong has no need of a second memorial. The name, Benelong Point (sic), will remain as long as Sydney survives'. 'The Governor's Friend', *National Aboriginal Day Magazine*, 1981, p. 31.

[40] Stephensen, *The History and Description of Sydney Harbour*, p. 321.

this demonstration of Australia's immense wealth and global standing as a modern nation did prompt him to think of a modest tribute to this most famous of the colony's Aboriginal people.[41]

An embrace of Aboriginal iconography on the national and international arts scene, as well as in souvenirs and tourist literature, children's fiction and elsewhere, was widespread in the post-war decades, but did not generally reflect opportunities for Aboriginal people to be heard, even as performers of their own cultural inheritance.[42] The Opera House's first season gave little space to Aboriginal performance, with the Marionette Theatre of Australia deriving its children's show 'Tales from Noonameena' from 'Aboriginal legends' and the only Aboriginal performance apparently subsumed into the all singing all dancing spectacle of the 'South Pacific Festival' produced by Victor Carell and Beth Dean, who had taken an 'Aboriginal' dance work to the Cultural Olympics in Mexico in 1968, in which no Aboriginal performers were involved.[43] Bennelong might have lent his patronage to the Opera House, but the Opera House did not reciprocate. Bennelong appeared only fleetingly in the *Sydney Opera House Official Souvenir* in a role with a laughably official title: 'liaison officer between the commander of the First Fleet, Captain (later Governor) Arthur Phillip R.N., and the Aboriginal people'.[44] This celebratory souvenir focussed on architectural detail and construction trivia, for, as the rather hyperbolic World Heritage Nomination of the Opera House claimed in 2006, this building appears to the viewer to be an 'obvious, immediate and evident' part of the landscape 'as though only [Utzon's] typical "shells" could occupy Bennelong Point'.[45]

Stanner had set up a strong link between Bennelong's story and the 'Aboriginal question'. Following the 1967 Referendum, and as the much televised tent embassy was removed from the lawns of Parliament House for the second time, biographers of Bennelong increasingly invested his story with explanatory power. In a biography commissioned by the Royal Australian

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[41] As an ardent nationalist, seeking to break the ties of Australian cultural life with Britain, partly by enriching it with Aboriginal symbols and ideas, P.R. Stephensen perhaps recruited Bennelong to lend the Opera House an even more Australian quality, rather than to direct the fame of the Opera House towards Bennelong. Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, pp. 282-3.

[42] Jan Kociumbas, 'Performances: Indigenisation and Post Colonial Culture' in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White eds., *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003), pp. 134-5.

[43] A. T. Hubble, *Sydney Opera House Official Souvenir* (Sydney: Sydney Opera House Trust, 1973), n/p; Kociumbas, 'Performances: Indigenisation and Post Colonial Culture', p. 134.

[44] Hubble, *Sydney Opera House Official Souvenir*, n/p.

[45] Nomination by the Government of Australia of the Sydney Opera House for Inscription on the World Heritage List 2006, prepared by the Australian Government and the New South Wales Government, p. 35, Sydney Opera House: World Heritage, <http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/uploadedFiles/About_Us/Ad_Hoc_Information_Pages/WorldHeritageNominationDocument.pdf>, viewed 20 February 2009.

Historical Society to mark the Opera House opening, John Kenny found Bennelong instructive as:

> the first of his people to be a well-documented example of their social incompatibility with their conquerors – an incompatibility which has persisted, afflicting the conquerors' conscience and mocking their compassion and ingenuity.[46]

Founding chairman of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs, HC 'Nugget' Coombs, provided the foreword to Kenny's book, and agreed that the relationship between Phillip and Bennelong was 'disturbingly pertinent to our respective positions to-day ... a sombre episode which, with minor variations, has been replayed countless times throughout Australia'.[47] In this account, Bennelong again suffers not so much from loss of land and resources, from upheaval in the political, social and economic world of the Eora, or from loss of family and allies through smallpox; he is above all the victim of 'an ignorant and futile attempt to civilise him which made him a pathetic victim of confusion of his own and the founders' cultures'.[48] If Bennelong was more a pathetic failure than a tragic figure, the notion that his story was predictive of Aboriginal stories across the continent lent the matter a gravity of a magnitude which invited noble sentiments.

A second biography celebrating the Opera House opening, a coffee table book by journalist Isadore Brodsky, also claimed relevance to the 'Aboriginal question', finding 'the discussion of *Bennelong* is timely in the affairs of the Aborigines in 1973, perhaps as a contribution to their emancipation and proper recognition in Australian life.'[49] To this end, he set out to do Bennelong's 'memory some justice' by resurrecting his subject as 'a man within his own rights'.[50] Brodsky's loyalty to the cultural hierarchies of an earlier age, however, defeated his ostensible will to justice in the present. Like Dark, Brodsky understood Bennelong to be a 'Stone Age' man, caught between childhood and manhood on the evolutionary scale. The significance of manhood in Brodsky's assessment of Bennelong is perhaps elucidated by Marylin Lake's analysis of the White Australia Policy, which was finally completely dismantled in 1973, as

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[46] Kenny, *Bennelong,* p. 5.

[47] H. C. Coombs, Foreword to Kenny, *Bennelong,* p. 1.

[48] Kenny, *Bennelong*, p. 5.

[49] Isadore Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile: Dreamtime Reveries of a Native of Sydney Cove* (Sydney: University Co-Operative Bookshop Limited, 1973), pp. 16-17. Note that italics are employed each time 'Bennelong' appears in this volume.

[50] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile,* p. 10. Later he sees Phillip as wanting to 'afford [Bennelong] the appearance of equality' where of course there was none, p. 57.

underpinned by a conception of masculinity. Its proponents argued that to maintain Australia as a 'civilised community' each man must be equal to the last; self-sufficient, supporting his family and taking part in the body politic on an equal footing: Aborigines, and others, had been excluded from full citizenship because they were not man enough.[51] Also in full view for Brodsky was the 1967 Referendum, popularly understood as the admission of the Aboriginal to citizenry, and thus, perhaps in Brodsky's mind, to full Australian manhood.[52] But in the event, Bennelong fails to meet Brodsky man-to-man:

> It was predictable that it would not be possible to treat *Bennelong* both as a man and a child. You can play with [a child] on the floor, and in fun and with mutual enjoyment. But a man wants to know the rules of the game, what losing entails, and the rewards of winning. *Bennelong* alternated between child and man.[53]

In finding Bennelong part child, Brodsky perhaps questions whether the Aborigine may not be ready to become, or even be capable of being, a citizen. His book linked powerful old narratives with the political and social developments of the day, suggesting that social Darwinism had continued relevance notwithstanding enhanced rights for Aboriginal people.[54] Brodsky's biography of Bennelong surely served to legitimise concerns of a sub-set of Australians about the absolute legal and constitutional equality of Aboriginal people with themselves.

In Brodsky's account, a childlike Bennelong's attempt to become a civilised man perhaps constituted *hubris*, an overblown ambition which is punished by fate.[55] He sent Bennelong on a

[51] Marylin Lake, 'On being a white man, Australia, circa 1900', in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White, eds., *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003), pp. 100-105.

[52] Maryrose Casey, 'Referendums and reconciliation marches: What bridges are we crossing?', *Journal of Australian Studies* 30, no. 89 (2006), p. 146.

[53] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, p. 76. Ironically, it is partly the nature of Brodsky's attempt to address Bennelong as a 'man' which leads to this view of a half-man. Brodsky explicitly confines his attention to Bennelong. He sees Bennelong as acting alone, apart from Aboriginal networks, politics or economy. Thus his 'behaviour' appears to be inconsistent, 'oblique and bizarre', and seems to be driven by 'emotional' rather than rational motives. Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, for example pp. 40, 49, 50, 58, 59, 73.

[54] A few years later the Tasmanian Aboriginal community was finally able to secure the release of Trucanini's remains from the Tasmanian Museum, cremate them, and scatter her ashes over the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. A small posse of historians made a reactive grab for Trucanini's memory as the last of the Aboriginal Tasmanians. In the face of the recognition of the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal Community by the Tasmanian Museum, Vivienne Rae Ellis and N.J.B. Plomley published a pair of books arguing strenuously for the extinction of the Tasmanians. Ellis' book depicted Trucanini as 'actually personally responsible for [the] demise' of her people, and gave graphic descriptions of the exhumation of her body (so recently put to rest) for science. Like Brodsky, Ellis and Plomley were reasserting the relevance of powerful old narratives notwithstanding landmark Aboriginal political achievements. *Aboriginal Information Service Newsletter* April-May 1976 (Hobart: Aboriginal Information Service Inc), n/p; N. J. B. Plomley, *The Tasmanian Aborigines* (Launceston, Tas: N.J.B. Plomley in Association with the Adult Education Division, Tasmania, 1977), pp. 29, 39; Ryan, 'The Struggle for Trukanini', p. 167.

[55] Jennifer Wallace, *The Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 3.

value-laden trajectory: a rise towards 'civilisation' and then a fall as he fails to maintain its standards.[56] Despite at times attempting to step back from the attitudes he finds in his late eighteenth century sources, Brodsky finds in Bennelong a savage who was raised towards a civilised state during his captivity in Phillip's house, where steps were taken to 'soften a supposed barbarian, to enlighten and to refine'.[57] Although Bennelong's 'rise' is 'turbulent and zigzagging', the clear pinnacle is his visit to King George. Brodsky refrained from indulging in 'glitter' and 'pomp' describing this meeting because he could find no documentary evidence to support it, but he does not allow this to shake his faith that Bennelong and George III in fact met. Recent scholarship suggests that they did not.[58] Not long after his return from England, however, Brodsky finds that Bennelong's 'newly found standards had slipped'. He first took a 'step backwards in his civilized progress' and then tumbled into 'progressive degradation', 'falling from grace'.[59] Brodsky wholeheartedly sympathised with Judge Advocate David Collins' indignant comments about Bennelong's conduct in 1795-8, including his exasperated summation: 'This man, instead of making himself useful, or showing the least gratitude for the numberless favours that he had received, had become a most insolent and troublesome savage'.[60]

As a writer, Brodsky was perhaps attracted to the literary appeal of Bennelong as a tragic figure. As a historian, he may have been paying a compliment to his famous contemporary Manning Clark, who published the third volume of his immensely popular *History of Australia* the same year. Like Clark, Brodsky employed an old-fashioned and overblown style, propelling a cast of heroes, all of whom have their 'fatal flaws', across the stage of life according to a rather majestic choreography.[61] Indeed Brodsky takes Bennelong's measure as a man very much in the fashion that Manning Clark had taken Phillip's in his history.[62] Whenever Brodsky's Phillip meets

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[56] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, pp. 13, 75.

[57] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, pp. 26-28.

[58] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*. pp. 20, 65, and plate opposite. Brodsky, apparently an ardent royalist, elsewhere reassures the reader that if the ethics of capturing Bennelong seem questionable, at least it is certain that it was carried out with the authority of 'the reigning king of England, George III,' p. 18; Kate Fullagar, in a detailed examination of New World visitors to England, finds no evidence to suggest that Bennelong and Yemmerawannie actually met the King, Kate Fullagar, doctoral thesis: 'Savages and moderns: The New World in Britain, 1710-c.1800', (University of California, Berkeley, 2004).

[59] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, pp. 67, 69, 70.

[60] David Collins, *An account of the English colony in New South Wales* Vol. 2 (1798) cited in Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, p. 71.

[61] Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St. Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. 25; John Hirst *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History* (Melbourne: Black Ink, 2006), p. 59; Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: the life of Manning Clark* (Carlton, Vic.: Miegunyah Press, 2011), pp. 458-462.

[62] Clark, *History of Australia*, Volume 1, p. 74.

Bennelong, he and the other officers make an effort to 'afford [Bennelong] the appearance of equality...'.[63] Brodsky's condescension was certainly aimed chiefly at Bennelong, but at the same time, as he added his own modest historical work to the growing library of histories of Australia, he might also have been aiming some of it at himself, deferring rather obsequiously to Clark's greater reputation, as his own Bennelong set out to meet Clark's Phillip 'man to man' in an intertextual theatre. A children's book, published just two years after Brodsky's biography, portrayed Bennelong as a thinking man grappling with momentous change. No grand trajectory of civilisation is invoked, no final judgement of Bennelong's success or failure is handed down, and as a result it perhaps achieved Brodsky's stated aim of showing Bennelong as a 'man within his own rights'.[64]

Though quite different in spirit, both Kenny's and Brodsky's biographies enact variations on the 'cultural' tragedy in which Dark had cast Bennelong. It is 'cultural confusion', or the impact of British culture on his un-ready, primitive psyche that ruins and 'degrades' him, as Clark put it. Prior to the late 1960s, Bennelong's inner state was rarely invoked. Most renditions of his story remained on a matter-of-fact plane. Whereas in the nineteenth century his behaviour at times furnished a salutary lesson, then and subsequently Bennelong could be depicted simply as an interesting character of early Sydney.[65] The journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, for example, included the following characterisation in 1901:

> He called Phillip 'Beuga' or father, while Phillip called him 'Dorroow' or son. He went to England with Phillip, was introduced to George III., was lionised, taught to box, to smoke, and drink, and swagger. On his return to Sydney with Governor Hunter he became an intemperate hero, jealous and quarrelsome, eventually ending his days in a brawl among blacks.[66]

Bennelong is an action-figure whose life and deeds can be marvelled at without entering into any consideration of the changes that shaped his life. This disjunction seems disingenuous today, but operated on many levels in the early twentieth century as a form of historiographical hygiene, separating past Aboriginality from present, and 'authentic' Aboriginality from the

[63] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, p. 57.

[64] Joan Phipson, *Bennelong* (Sydney: Collins, 1975).

[65] See for example, John Henniker Heaton, *Australian Dictionary of Dates and Men of the Time* (Sydney: Robertson, 1879), part 2, p. 6; and H.M. Suttor, *Australian milestones and stories of the past, 1770-1914* (Sydney: John Andrew & Co., 1925), p. 63, in which Bennelong's loses 'his good character' after his return from London, but with no sense that his life was 'tragic' or that it might be seen as setting a precedent.

[66] John McGuanne, 'Bennelong Point and Fort Macquarie', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal Proceedings* 1, part 2 (1901) Second Edition 1911, p. 9.

'Aboriginal problem'.[67] From the 1960s some storytellers continued to appeal to McGuanne's carefree 'once upon a time' mode,[68] but increasingly, they sought to characterise the cross-cultural exchanges in which Bennelong participated, and to both derive and propound an understanding of Australian race-relations thereby. Joy Damousi finds that it is precisely because emotion, especially grief, was so effectively suppressed in Australian public life across much of the twentieth century that more prominent expressions of an emotional connection to history across the past few decades have at times struck Australians as excessive, unsavoury and rather 'un-Australian'.[69] She turns this view on its head, observing that late nineteenth century public life was also characterised by a public airing of emotion – rather than being suspicious of the public display of emotion, we should rather be wary of the contention that history can be a 'neutral place where we can take refuge from the present'.[70]

Richard Sadleir, writing in the 1880s, was convinced that only religion could hope to improve the Aborigines and felt that the British were culpable for arriving in New South Wales with precious little religious supervision. Bennelong's story illustrated the inevitable results of this secular approach; he perished 'a drunken savage, after all the advantages he had had of visiting England, and living at the Governor's house ... We have here the failure of mere civilisation which produces only outward effects. Religion alone can reach the heart'.[71] The problem was that Bennelong's inner self had *not* been transformed through his contact with the British. Sadleir declared that the 'reckless and degraded class of men' that first colonised New South Wales were not destined to 'elevate or raise' the natives, but rather to 'depress and vitiate, and ultimately to destroy them'.[72] He stopped short of finding Bennelong's own heart corrupted (perhaps to keep open the possibility of redeeming Aboriginal people on the whole via conversion). But in using the verb 'vitiate' – to corrupt, to spoil, to make impure – he gestured towards the diagnosis that would become most prominent in stories of Bennelong's fall over the past four decades; a division or sickness in his own soul. Bennelong's tragedy emerges as

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[67] See Sianan Healey, '"Years ago some lived here": Aboriginal Australians and the production of popular culture, history and identity in 1930s Victoria', *Australian Historical Studies* 37, no. 128 (October 2006), pp. 18-34.

[68] In the *Benelong Bugle* of 1962, the story is all action: Bennelong dashes in and out of the settlement threatening to kill a young woman; rescuing men after their boat capsizes; he goes to England and is 'lionised and introduced to the King' and returns to become 'a drunken quarrelsome swaggerer, eventually went bush, and in 1831 (sic) was killed in a tribal fight.' What a career! *Benelong Bugle* 1 (1962), pp. 16-17. See also Marjorie Barnard, *A History of Australia* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1962), p. 651.

[69] Joy Damousi, 'History matters: the politics of grief and injury in Australian history', *Australian Historical Studies* 33, Special issue no.118 (2002), pp. 101-3.

[70] Damousi, 'History matters', p. 100.

[71] Richard Sadleir, *Aborigines of Australia*, pp. 22-5. Sadleir did also recognise that the settlement of the Sydney region had deprived Aboriginal people of their food resources.

[72] Sadleir, *Aborigines of Australia*, p. 22.

storytellers engage with the sticky soft-tissue of cross-cultural contact and attempt to make sense of Bennelong's inner life, seeking understanding, or sometimes justification. As Bennedetto Croce might have put it, the story of Bennelong re-awoke from its slumber in Australian chronicle, becoming history once more as Aboriginal and white Australian relations again seemed pressingly important in the present.[73]

In a lecture celebrating the discovery of the First Government House Site in 1984, archaeologist John Mulvaney agreed with Stanner's assessment of Bennelong's dubious legacy: 'a behavioural pattern which has been termed "intelligent parasitism", but which simply adapted to the whims of European patrons'.[74] Inspired by a 'resistance' historiography that invoked the power and drama of the Vietnamese anti-colonial struggles, and an Aboriginal activism characterised by violent confrontations with the police and 'the belligerent rhetoric of the Black Power movement',[75] Mulvaney turned his listeners' attention to Pemulwuy as a man who would be 'most celebrated by his people around 1988'. He doubted that Bennelong 'is much honoured today by his people'.[76] Indeed, Gavin Andrews recalls that many of Sydney's Aboriginal people had come to see Bennelong and Pemulwuy in this light, what he sees as a 'politicised' way of thinking that fails to recognise what Bennelong experienced with the arrival of the British, and what he survived.[77] When Sydney Botanic Gardens Aboriginal Education Officer John Lennis was establishing the Cadi Jam Ora garden some time before 2002,[78] he showed Andrews a picture of Bennelong and was surprised when he described Bennelong as a hero – other people Lennis had consulted with felt that Bennelong had 'sold out' to the British. It is Andrews' assessment of Bennelong as a man who 'wanted to know the white man's world so he could explain it to his people' that still stands as Bennelong's epithet in the gardens.[79]

[73] Bennedetto Croce, 'History and Chronicle' (1921, as reprinted 1959) cited in Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?*, pp. 92-3.

[74] Derek John Mulvaney, *A Good Foundation: reflections on the heritage of the First Government House* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1985), p. 14.

[75] Bob Reece, 'Inventing Aborigines', *Aboriginal History* 11, no. 1 (1987), pp. 16-17.

[76] Mulvaney, *A Good Foundation*, p. 14.

[77] Conversation with Gavin Andrews, 2nd September 2011. Geoffrey Moorhouse was also left with this impression after speaking to some people at The Block, Redfern, in the late 1990s, Geoffrey Moorhouse, *Sydney* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin 1999), p. 50.

[78] Melinda Hinkson, 'Exploring Aboriginal Sites in Sydney: A Shifting Politics of Place?', *Aboriginal History* 26 (2002), p. 65.

[79] Conversation with Gavin Andrews, 2nd September 2011.

2.2 Part of the 'Cadi Jam Ora' installation, Sydney Botanic Gardens.

A number of other Aboriginal thinkers and writers, grappling with how to represent the establishment of the Sydney colony and understand its ongoing impact, were, like Andrews, unwilling to dismiss Bennelong as Mulvaney anticipated. Eric Willmot, in his novel *Pemulwuy: The Rainbow Warrior*, first published in 1987, certainly depicted Bennelong as a 'loser'. But all his characters were losers (except, perhaps, the charismatic eponymous hero). Bennelong is simply the most spectacular loser, with Governor Hunter a close second. He is not, however, the pathetic victim of one culture crashing against another, like wave against cliff, as Kenny and others would have us believe. Rather, he plays hard at politics and he falls hard.[80] He's a 'good' loser, the kind of real-man loser one can respect; he gives his all for his cause, to gain and keep the initiative in dealings with the British.[81] He feels frustrated, and 'used', by both the British and the Eora at times, and knows when he has been trumped, but he gets back on the horse as it were.[82] Willmot's Pemulwuy and Bennelong share the same camp fires, and struggle with the

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[80] Eric Willmot, *Pemulwuy: The Rainbow Warrior* (Sydney: Bantam Books, 1987), pp. 30, 54, 173, 219–220, 268–270.

[81] As Ann Curthoys characterises a 'good' loser like the ANZACs, Ann Curthoys, 'Mythologies' in Richard Nile ed., *The Australian Legend and its Discontents* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2000), pp. 23–25.

[82] Willmot, *Pemulwuy*, pp. 173-4, 192, for example.

same dilemma – how much to resist and how much to adapt to ensure the survival of their people.[83]

Charles Perkins, contributing to the bicentennial *Encyclopaedia of the Nation*, contrasted the political 'approaches' of Bennelong and Pemulwuy as a way of introducing a discussion of Aboriginal 'political objectives'.[84] Not surprisingly, as a leader deeply involved in a politics of negotiation as Secretary of the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs at the time, Perkins found Bennelong's diplomatic style of leadership more instructive. He found Bennelong leading 'a school of thought among the Eora people ... that the British arrival was an important event from which both people had much to gain', and admired his 'statesmanship' and 'vision'.[85] He characterised Pemulwuy's brand of violent resistance, along with submission, as a strategy of last resort, only worth considering when diplomatic channels had closed.[86] That the British had favoured Bennelong, and that he had gained considerable experience in the British way of life, was no cause for Aboriginal people to repudiate him in Perkins' view.[87] Perkins, like Bennelong, was one of those 'difficult young men with overseas experience' who influential policy makers like Stanner and Coombs had found it difficult to recognise as Aboriginal, dedicated as they were in the 1960s to improving the lot of Aboriginal people in non-urban northern Australia.[88] Like Bennelong, Perkins was also no stranger to the charge that he had 'sold out'. Kath Walker was quoted in the mid-1980s exclaiming contemptuously, 'public servant, oh yuck! ... They buy you body and soul', citing Perkins as an example *par excellence.*[89] Particularly in the late 1980s following the thick tangle of threats and back-room negotiations surrounding the Brisbane Commonwealth Games, and as Perkins faced charges of mismanagement of the Aboriginal Development Commission,[90] retrospective repudiation of Bennelong perhaps carried a sting for Perkins and other Aboriginal people like him working 'from the inside'. The play *I am Eora*, directed by Wesley Enoch, and premiering at the Sydney Festival in 2012, perhaps charts a rejection and reacceptance of Bennelong the 'interpreter'. Bennelong appears near the

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[83] Willmot, *Pemulwuy*, pp. 180-190; Eric Willmot, 'Beyond Contact' in The Pemulwuy Dilemma: the voice of Koori art in the Sydney Region (exhibition catalogue) (Emu Plains, NSW: Lewers Bequest and Penrith Regional Art Gallery, 1990), pp. 4-5.

[84] Charles Perkins, 'Political Objectives' in James Jupp ed., *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, its people and their origins* (North Ryde, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1988), p. 235.

[85] Perkins, 'Political Objectives', p. 235.

[86] Perkins, 'Political Objectives', p. 235.

[87] Perkins, 'Political Objectives', p. 235.

[88] Peter Read, *Charles Perkins: A Biography* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2001), p. 149.

[89] Susan Mitchell, *The Matriarchs* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1987), p. 207.

[90] Read, *Charles Perkins*, pp. 261-3, 330-37.

beginning of the play as a character thoroughly at odds with his community and its project of cultural revival.[91] But later, (commencing with a rendition of 'tooralai – ooralai – attity/ Bound for Botany Bay') he speaks as a wise old man who can remember the colony, the time before the colony, and all the important stories of his country. He is interpreter, commentator and witness. Slowly, one by one, the other actors sit down to listen to him. When he dies at the conclusion of the play, Pemulwuy (or his returned spirit) is the reverent bearer of his body.[92]

Much loved country singer and song-writer Ted Egan, published an *Aboriginals Songbook* in time for the bicentenary, in which he depicted Bennelong as 'the first political victim' and a lost soul:

> I couldn't help thinking that Benelong
> Never again sang the eagle song
> For he seemed just like a man whose spirit left him.
>
> Doomed was he forever more
> He lost his way as he lost his law
> And the white sea eagle sings its song alone.[93]

At the beginning of the new millennium, Egan's remained very much the dominant verdict on Bennelong. A recent children's book titles the sections narrating Bennelong's return from England: 'A lonely man'; 'Rejecting tribal law'; and 'Drunkenness and death.'[94] In the Sydney Opera House World Heritage Nomination (2006) Bennelong is relegated an extremely brief entry in one of its appendices, concluding: 'Bennelong dies in 1813, alienated from both Aboriginal and European cultures'.[95] The Marrickville Council website found him 'increasingly depressed, drunk, aggressive and vengeful' in the period leading up to his death.[96] In early 2009

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[91] Bennelong is cast as 'interpreter' in the play, Pemulwuy as 'warrior' and Barrangaroo as 'nurturer'. Bennelong first takes the stage in an old suit, railing against a ceremony about to take place and the right of a young business-suited man to strip to his ceremonial painting, Wesley Enoch and Anita Heiss, *I am Eora*, CarriageWorks theatre, Redfern, 8th –14th January 2012.

[92] Enoch, *I am Eora*.

[93] Ted Egan, *The Aboriginals Songbook* (Richmond, Vic: Greenhouse Publications, 1987), pp. 36-37.

[94] Barrie Sheppard, *The life of Bennelong: living in two cultures* (Carlton, Vic.: Echidna Books, 2005), pp. 26-7.

[95] Nomination by the Government of Australia of the Sydney Opera House for Inscription on the World Heritage List 2006, prepared by the Australian Government and the New South Wales Government, Appendix 10D, p. 112, Sydney Opera House: World Heritage, <http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/uploadedFiles/About_Us/Ad_Hoc_Information_Pages/WorldHeritageNominationDocument.pdf>, viewed 20 February 2009.

[96] Marrickville Council, Cadigal Wangal website, 'Bennelong', <http://www.cadigalwangal.org.au/MenulessPages/native_landuse_popup_bennelong.aspx?Id=74>, viewed 27 March 2012.

Bennelong's entry in Wikipedia concluded by stating 'Bennelong quickly became alienated from his own people after [his] return' from England and elsewhere claimed that he was 'marginalised and died in obscurity'.[97] Thomas Keneally in the epilogue to his *Commonwealth of Thieves* wrote that Bennelong 'found himself fully accepted neither by the new administration in Sydney Cove nor by his own people' and cited Bennelong's increasing fondness for alcohol.[98] Increasingly, Bennelong's story is followed by an affirmation of a strong and ongoing Aboriginal presence in Sydney, but this does not necessarily alter the bleak tenor of Bennelong's own story. Lucy Hughes Turnbull, at the beginning of her 1999 biography of Sydney found that Bennelong on his return from England 'moved uneasily between European and Aboriginal cultures, and neither considered him to be part of their group.' He lost the affections of his wife and 'despite (or because of) his new-found "sophistication", he could not persuade any other women of the extent of his charms and so was lonely for the rest of his life'.[99] But she concludes her chapter emphasising Aboriginal survival in Sydney, that 'there are descendants of the Dharruk and Dharrawhal living here today. Many of Sydney's Kooris can trace their ancestors back to the early colonial days'.[100]

Inga Clendinnen, in her recent, close re-examination of social, political and cultural exchange in the first years of the colony, *Dancing with Strangers,* found Bennelong a complex and intelligent mediator. Clendinnen returned to colonial relationships hoping to recover the many-coloured and fragile optimism of first contact, and to see whether there were ever any other possibilities but cross-cultural failure. She found resounding failure there through Bennelong. When Clendinnen's Bennelong returns from England, he is a virtual 'Englishman' who had 'decided to commit himself to the British account of things',[101] yet he finds his influence with the colonists far less potent, he experiences terrible luck with women, and obliterates his disappointment with rum. She concludes:

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[97] 'Bennelong', Wikipedia, updated 26 January 2009, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennelong>, viewed 20 February 2009. On 18th and 19th June 2010 I revised this entry, providing an account of Bennelong's latter years based on Keith Smith's research and removing unreferenced allusions to a 'tragic' end. I have monitored the entry since then, interested to observe whether Bennelong's tragedy might be reasserted by other editors. To 27th September 2011, although many minor changes have been made, this has not been the case.

[98] Thomas Keneally, *Australians: Origins to Eureka* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2009), p. 446.

[99] Lucy Hughes Turnbull, *Sydney: Biography of a City* (Sydney, Random House, 1999), pp. 35-54.

[100] Hughes Turnbull, *Sydney*, p. 54. See also Geoffrey Moorhouse's history, in which Bennelong similarly loses his self-respect and independence, and Moorhouse is then incensed by the injustice of Aboriginal deaths in police custody, partly through his conversations with Aboriginal people at The Block, Redfern, Moorhouse, *Sydney*, p. 47-51.

[101] Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003), p. 265.

> Baneelon, with his anger and his anguish, simply drops from British notice. He did not die until 1813...Over the last years of his life Baneelon abandoned the British in his heart, as they had long abandoned him in the world. At fifty he fumed his way to an outcast's grave. He should have died earlier, in the days of hope.[102]

Clendinnen acknowledges that the last years of Bennelong's life are little known, but she is content to imply that they were characterised by smouldering anger and a lonely exile from both Aboriginal and European society.[103] Her final sentence here is almost hyperbolic, and not far removed from Dark's dramatic curtain fall sixty-five years earlier.

Keith Smith left off his 2001 biography as Bennelong sailed for England. His justification for this at the time was that he saw Bennelong's latter years as discontinuous with the diplomat's life he had traced to that point: 'In this second part of his life, Bennelong was a changed man. He abandoned the white settlement, took to drink and was frequently wounded in payback battles ... That is another story.'[104] Smith didn't want to write a tragedy, but at that time felt that curtailing his narrative was the only way to avoid it. He has since completed more extensive research on Bennelong's place in Eora kinship systems, and has reassessed the evidence for the latter part of Bennelong's life. Smith now refutes the claim that Bennelong lost respect in the eyes of his own people and the Europeans, referring to sources such the letter from Henry Waterhouse to Phillip in 1795 mentioning that Bennelong had 'got his old wife' and the memoirs of Joseph Holt, who wrote of Bennelong as the leader of a large group of Aboriginal people in the Rydalmere area in about 1802.[105] Some of this research has persuaded Thomas Keneally to offer a much more circumspect view of Bennelong in *Australians: Origins to Eureka*, asking readers to consider the truth of Bennelong's posthumous role as 'archetype of his people's tragedy'.[106] The *Sun Herald*, reporting on investigations surrounding the location of Bennelong's grave at Kissing Point on the Parramatta River in March 2011, created a

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[102] Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, p. 272.

[103] Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, p. 266–267.

[104] Keith Vincent Smith, *Bennelong: The Coming in of the Eora, Sydney Cove 1788-1792* (East Roseville, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 2001), p. viii.

[105] Keith Smith, *Wallumedegal. An Aboriginal History of Ryde*, City of Ryde, updated 15 February 2009, <http://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/WEB/SITE/RESOURCES/DOCUMENTS/Information/wallumedegal.pdf>, viewed 15 February 2009, pp. 25-6; See also Keith Smith, 'Bennelong: ambassador of the Eora Part II', *Australian Heritage* (Autumn 2006), p. 79-81; Keith Vincent Smith, 'Bennelong among his people', *Aboriginal History* 33 (2009), pp. 7-30.

[106] Keneally, *Australians: Origins to Eureka*, p. 219.

redemption of sorts by narrating Bennelong's post-voyage 'exile', followed by a relocation to the northern bank of the river, where he became leader of a local clan.[107]

Many of Bennelong's twentieth century biographers have imagined him only loosely moored to Eora ways of being, ready to drift towards the British and their abundance of civilised riches. But it seems clear that if we historians and storytellers are to hazard a re-creation of his thoughts, we must first and foremost imagine him as Gerry Bostock has: as an Eora man, remaining captive in the settlement longer than he needed to so that he could acquit the special responsibilities associated with that place, perhaps, because someone had to, 'to sing back the spirits of [the Gudjigal people] who died outside their country', even if he was not yet fully trained for the task.[108] After his return from England, Bennelong appears to have reintegrated himself into Eora networks and patterns of life as they had adapted to the presence of the colony.[109] As Isabel McBryde began to demonstrate from 1989, Bennelong's was a complex and ambiguous ambassadorship that must be understood in the context of contemporary Eora life and politics. She placed Bennelong's relationship with Phillip amongst other cross-cultural relationships, and posited political motives for many of the puzzling exchanges in which Bennelong was involved.[110] She examined his role as a key trader in the status-enhancing exchange of the curiosities of each culture, engaging in strenuous diplomatic work and at times holding the diplomatic advantage.[111] She found that Bennelong's status remained high into the nineteenth century. Although his semi-official role as mediator had waned, he continued to command attention from 'persons of the first respectability', and continued to play an important role in trade, social and ceremonial life, and in maintaining relationships between his Aboriginal community and the settlements at Sydney and Parramatta.[112] As Kenny had

[107] Eamonn Duff, 'Found: long-lost grave of Bennelong', *The Sun Herald*, 20th March 2011, p. 9.

[108] Gerry Bostock, 'Colebe', *Meanjin* 53, no. 4 (Summer 1994), pp. 613–618.

[109] Smith, 'Bennelong among his people', pp. 25-26. See also Smith, 'Bennelong: ambassador of the Eora Part II', pp. 79–81.

[110] Isabel McBryde, *Guests of the Governor: Aboriginal Residents of the First Government House* (Sydney: Friends of First Government House Site, 1989), pp. 15, 21.

[111] Isabel McBryde, '"Barter ... immediately commenced to the satisfaction of both parties": cross-cultural exchange at Port Jackson 1788-1828', in Robin Torrence and Anne Clarke eds., *The Archaeology of Difference: Negotiating Cross-Cultural Engagements in Oceania* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 255-60.

[112] McBryde recognised 'tragic aspects' in the lives of Bennelong and Bungaree, but did not find this the sum of their lives, McBryde, *Guests of the Governor*, pp. 27–29, 51. See also McBryde '"Barter ... immediately commenced to the satisfaction of both parties"'. Val Attenbrow also depicts him as an active participant in Eora life and also the life of the colony, as one of those Eora people whose frequent and often frank communication with the British allows her to reconstruct the life-ways of Aboriginal Sydney, Val Attenbrow, *Sydney's Aboriginal Past: investigating the archaeological and historical records* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002).

acknowledged in 1973, Bennelong's people continued to remember him with respect in the decades after his death.[113]

Grace Karskens recently asserted that: 'stories of Bennelong as the "first drunken Aborigine", shunned by women of both races, a man hopelessly and helplessly "caught in a void between two cultures" are myths'.[114] So we must ask: why has tragedy remained such an appealing mode for biographers of Bennelong? My answer to this question is that the veracity of Bennelong's tragedy is multi-dimensional. Tragedy has given a comprehensible shape to Bennelong's story, and seems to make sense of the way in which the colonists' opinions of Bennelong changed over the years, the ambiguous clues to his own behaviour found in the primary sources, and the fragmentary records for his later years. Bennelong's cultural crisis and fall into despair and alienation also seems to reflect contemporary reality, and to explain how the present came to be as it is. The tragic narrative maintains a mutually affirming relationship with a nest of notions about Aboriginal history and cross-cultural relations that have held continued claims to plausibility across the period, despite what have been understood as radical changes in the making of Australian history.

Tragedy, History and Literary Fancy

Bennelong's tragedy is based on a particular reading of selected primary sources. The tragedians' insights into his character and his relationships would not be possible without the first-hand accounts of the First Fleet's commissioned diarists and letter writers, chiefly: Tench, Collins, Hunter, White and Phillip. The telling of his story as a tragedy reflects the shape formed when these accounts are combined with the *Sydney Gazette* report of Bennelong's death. Together, the journal writers offer a lively and detailed coverage of Bennelong's relationship with the colony across the period 1789 – 1792; his kidnap and residence at Government House, his behaviour when Phillip is speared at Manly, his aptitude in learning English language and manners, and what they learned from him about the life ways of the Eora. In Hunter's published journal, Bennelong is an almost constant presence between September 1790, when he conversed with Phillip before he was speared at Manly, and September 1791, when he attempted to arrange the birth of his child in Phillip's residence.[115] The excitement of the diarists as they observe the world of the Eora, often through Bennelong, is palpable. For Tench

[113] He noted that a recognised leader of the Kissing Point tribe, Bidgee Bidgee continued to visit Bennelong's grave in the late 1820s, and expressed a desire to be buried alongside Bennelong, for example. Kenny, *Bennelong*, pp. 65–66.

[114] Grace Karskens, *The Colony* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2009), pp. 422–424.

[115] John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea 1787-1792* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson and the Royal Australian Historical Society, 1968), pp. 305-60.

in late 1790, 'our greatest source of entertainment now lay in cultivating the acquaintance of our new friends, the natives.'[116] Twenty-three years later, the *Sydney Gazette* summed up his life:

> Of this veteran champion of the native tribe little favourable can be said ... The principal officers of the government had for many years endeavoured, by the kindest of usage, to wean him from his original habits and draw him into a relish for civilised life; but every effort was in vain exerted and for the last few years he has been but little noticed. His propensity to drunkenness was inordinate; and when in that state he was insolent, menacing and overbearing. In fact, he was a thorough savage, not to be warped from the form and character that nature gave him by all the efforts that mankind could use.[117]

If the diarists' close and often sympathetic reportage gives an illusion of completeness, the sparseness of information for the last two decades of Bennelong's life to 1813 may give the impression that he has fallen into an abyss. Storytellers generally assimilate, rather than reflect upon this pattern.

Bennelong's tragedy also relies on a fairly disingenuous interpretation of these sources. As McBryde has pointed out, European attitudes to the Eora were changing as the settlement became more secure, and the Eora were no longer 'new friends' when Bennelong returned from England.[118] We should surely be more wary than Brodsky is of adopting Collins' frustration as he finds that Bennelong could have enjoyed a legitimate and comfortable place living with the Governor into the nineteenth century but threw this chance away.[119] Yet this bitterness lingers. Keith Willey made a revealing half-circle of historical thinking in his 1979 book *When the Sky Fell Down*. He discussed 'The end of the Noble Savage', by which he meant the demise of Rousseau's ideal in the hearts and minds of the Sydney colonists. He found that Bennelong's 'rapid degeneration' contributed to the demise of the notional noble savage, but he did not come full-circle to ask whether its demise may, or may also, have shaped the way our sources

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[116] Watkin Tench, *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson* [1793] (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2009), p. 160.

[117] *Sydney Gazette*, 9th January 1813, p. 2.

[118] McBryde, *Guests of the Governor*, p. 27.

[119] 'Instead of living peaceably and pleasantly at the governor's house, as he certainly might always have done, Ben-nil-long preferred the rude and dangerous society of his own countrymen...' David Collins, *An account of the English colony in New South Wales: with remarks on the dispositions, customs, manners, &c. of the native inhabitants of that country, to which are added, some particulars of New Zealand* (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1971), p. 134.

perceived or reported on Bennelong's behaviour.[120] Clendinnen similarly forgets to take out her Enlightenment gentleman's eyeglass when she sees Bennelong tragically 'reduced' as he gains a reputation as an 'irreconcilable savage'.[121] She is confusing an assessment of Bennelong's own life prospects (which were no doubt constricted and compromised in some ways) with the much more rapidly shrinking capacity of the British to imagine and relate to the Eora in any way other than to judge them more or less successfully civilised.

The written sources emanating from the colony itself, no matter how sensitive or enlightened we might find some of the diarists, are centred in European thought and articulated from Sydney Cove or Parramatta. When the writers feel that Bennelong is drawing closer to them and their way of thinking he appears to be safe in the bosom of civilisation. When he appears less often, and undressed, the colonists feel he is drifting away from what Tench described as 'the comforts of a civilised system', back to 'a precarious subsistence among wilds and precipices'.[122] As Maria Monypenny has demonstrated in the Tasmanian context, the ongoing use of this pseudo-geographic 'coming in' and 'going out' is thoroughly linked with the maintenance of a Eurocentric perspective.[123] Manning Clark, for example, refers to Bennelong's increasingly frequent 'absences from the Governor's house', on his return from England. These absences necessarily signify 'presences' somewhere else, but they were not presences which Clark was interested in imagining.[124] By contrast, interpreting some of the same sources differently, and with an addition of archaeological and anthropological knowledge, McBryde discerns a pattern in Bennelong's movements in and out of the settlement, which she describes as 'independence'.[125]

Of course many stories of Bennelong have no direct relationship with primary sources and first-hand accounts at all, and are reliant on other 'second order' storytellers for both information and its interpretation. But whether a storyteller has returned to Tench and Collins herself or not, 'the birth of a new version' of Bennelong's story does not occur into a vacuum. As Hayden White and Martin Jay argue, existing versions of stories, and points of consensus within the

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[120] Keith Willey, *When the Sky Fell Down: The Destruction of the Tribes of the Sydney Region 1788-1850s* (Sydney: Collins, 1979), p. 128.

[121] Clendinnen appearing in Louis Nowra and Rachel Perkins, *First Australians* (Special Broadcasting Service: 2008), Episode One, Broadcast Sunday 12th October, 2008.

[122] Tench, *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson*, p. 108.

[123] Maria Monypenny, '"Going out and coming in": cooperation and collaboration between Aborigines and Europeans in early Tasmania', *Tasmanian Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (1995/1996), p. 73.

[124] Clark, *History of Australia*, Volume 1, p. 143.

[125] McBryde, '"Barter ... immediately commenced to the satisfaction of both parties"', pp. 238-277.

writing and reading community, exert considerable influence on the perceived possibilities for telling the story in the future – making some modes and explanations seem purely logical and others outlandish.[126] Bennelong's story told as a tragedy or failure has a strong claim to plausibility. For white Australian storytellers and audiences it is specious, credible, fits into what we know of the world, and in turn seems to help make sense of Australian history. Having gained momentum from the seventeenth century, and consolidated into a 'discourse of the triumph of Saxondom over the whole globe' by the end of the nineteenth, the inexorable narrative of the extinction of primitive races, specifically stories of Aboriginal decline and death, have formed a constant background for the retelling of Bennelong's story across the twentieth century.[127] In the late nineteenth century, tragedy was commonly invoked to express regret about the inevitable process of Aboriginal extinction, evincing ambivalence about the success of the pioneers in the certainty that it was 'too late', or impossible, to make amends.[128] Histories of the early twentieth century expressed less regret, but no less certainty, Spence and Fox claiming in 1910: 'it is possible to calculate with almost certainty a date on which "the last post" will be sounded over the Australian, as it has been over the Tasmanian aboriginal race'.[129] Although it was becoming patently clear in the post-war period that Aboriginal populations were maintaining themselves, or in fact increasing, as Charles Duguid sought to bring to Australians' attention,[130] the narratives of fatal impact continued. In 1962 Manning Clark declaimed:

> When those aboriginal women uttered their horrid howl on first seeing the white man at Botany Bay in April 1770, that howl contained in it a prophecy of doom – For the culture, the way of life of the aborigine was doomed...[131]

As Grace Karskens observes, 'in settler history we seem to be searching constantly for beginnings ... but in Aboriginal history of the colonial period so often the search is for endings'.[132] As Maria Nugent has shown, as the Australian nation was born with Federation in

[126] Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 128.

[127] Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark vanishings: discourse on the extinction of primitive races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 1-10.

[128] Robert Foster, Amanda Nettelbeck and Rick Hosking, *Fatal Collisions: The South Australian Frontier and the Violence of Memory* (Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2001), pp. 26–28.

[129] Percy Spence and Frank Fox, *Australia* (Cheltenham, Victoria: Vantage House, 1982), p. 142.

[130] Charles Duguid, *No Dying Race* (Rigby: Adelaide, 1963).

[131] Clark, *History of Australia*, Volume 1, p. 110.

[132] Karskens, *The Colony*, p. 422.

1901, Cook's first landing on Australian soil at Botany Bay took on an intensified significance, pointing directly to nationhood. The landing on the south shore of Botany Bay became an episode which, at a single stroke, seemed to inaugurate European Australia and conclude Aboriginal life on the continent.[133] Karskens responds in her recent history of Sydney by looking to a much longer Aboriginal story that is not one of failure or 'fatal impact', but of Aboriginal people responding to change. She asks: if the taken-for-granted failure of Bennelong is not true, is it perhaps necessary to rethink 'what happened to Aboriginal people in early Sydney', or even across the continent, as a whole?[134] As the survival of Aboriginal people and cultures in south-eastern Australia has been gradually acknowledged over the past few decades, a number of histories have been written in which an Aboriginal post-invasion 'romance' is charted, deeply infused with pain and loss, but depicting cycles of renewal, survival and transformation as well as defeat, dispossession and death. Heather Goodall's *Invasion to embassy,* a history of Aboriginal people's fight for land over more than two-hundred years could be interpreted this way.

When Bennelong's story re-awoke from mere chronicle to be re-examined as history in the mid-twentieth century, however, it was re-born into a reciprocally affirmative relationship with powerful narratives of fateful Aboriginal decline, death and extinction. Bennelong's tragedy gives this large-scale, impersonal movement of history a human face, and, as a specific instance apparently supported by historical evidence, contributes to the truth quotient of the larger tragedy. Trucanini's death in 1876, and the display of her remains in the Tasmanian Museum from 1904 seemed to contemporary white Tasmanians both to provide proof of the extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines, and the comforting evidence of a good reason for their extinction – their place on the bottom rung of the human evolutionary ladder.[135] In a similar way, Bennelong's tragedy, as I discuss more fully below, is often understood as the opening chapter of the greater Aboriginal tragedy, and has seemed to provide evidence that the decline and death of the Aboriginal race was unavoidable once it had come into contact with European culture, and was at least partly due to the weakness of that race itself. As Miranda Johnson says of these grand narratives, still well-and-truly in currency today, 'to have been Indigenous is always to have been at risk'.[136]

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[133] Maria Nugent, *Captain Cook Was Here* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2009), pp. 26, 35-6.

[134] Karskens, *The Colony*, pp. 422–424.

[135] Ryan, 'The Struggle for Trukanini', pp. 159-161.

[136] Miranda Johnson, 'Reconciliation, indigeneity, and postcolonial nationhood in settler states,' *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 2 (2011), p. 196.

The relationship of history with fiction, and perhaps tragedy in particular, has long preoccupied European historical thinkers, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as 'high modernism' placed tragedy, and its dramatic opposition of irreconcilable elements, at the apex of literary achievement.[137] Tragedy had arrived in New South Wales as part of the cultural baggage of the First Fleet,[138] and the ongoing discussion about its relationship with history had an influence on Australian historians. Manning Clark in particular based his history of Australia around the dramatic opposition of 'barbarism within (Aboriginal culture) and civilisation without', as had the epoch-making Leopold von Ranke.[139] In Hayden White's analysis all narrative histories within the western tradition operate within literary modes, and he identifies tragedy, romance, satire and comedy as indispensable, and also inescapable, for the historian. These narrative modes allow the historian to forge a coherent story from the chaotic and incomplete evidence left behind by the past, resulting in two interwoven levels of truth within any history, that of 'correspondence' to the world, and that of coherence. Both the historian and the reader often remain unaware of the literary truth of a history, believing that its shape is simply the shape of the past itself.[140] An analysis of Bennelong's tragedy against White's explanation of the generic form of tragedy shows how the truth of coherence overlaps with the truth of plausibility, and how the structure of tragedy tends to give particular shape to the available evidence.

The drama of White's tragic mode is based in the revelation of two entities – those irreconcilable opposites, which, just by virtue of their contiguity, lead to an inexorable unfolding of events.[141] Bennelong's tragedy is emphatically a cultural tragedy, played out on the beaches where Manning Clark's 'barbarism' meets 'civilisation'.[142] The momentum of the British Empire, and its history of progress, sets these two cultural continents on a collision course.[143] It is this necessity that Clark's Aboriginal women recognised in their instinctive, howling 'prophecy of

[137] Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?*, p. 180. As Curthoys and Docker note, whether or not Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* could be considered a tragedy, and where this placed history in relation to literature, was a matter of energetic debate in Europe in the early twentieth century, pp. 86-7.

[138] Watkin Tench reached for a line from Joseph Addison's tragedy *Cato* to help express the gravity of the moment as the ships of the First Fleet finally approached Botany Bay. Watkin Tench, *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay* [1789] (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2009), p. 37.

[139] Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History*, pp. 57-8; Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?*, pp. 71-3.

[140] White, *Tropics of Discourse*, pp. 122-3, 128-9.

[141] White, *Tropics of Discourse*, p. 128.

[142] Clark perceived a 'terrible sense of doom and disaster which pervaded the air whenever the European occupied the land of a primitive people. For the culture, the way of life of the aborigine [sic] was doomed' as soon as the British set eyes on their land. Clark, *History of Australia*, Volume 1, pp. 3–4, 110.

[143] Brantlinger observes that for nineteenth century thinkers, 'collision' was one of the favoured metaphors for explaining movements of people around the globe. Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*, pp. 173-219.

doom'. N. J. B. Plomley imagined a 'culture clash' occurring with the colonisation of Tasmania, in which the 'weaker' Indigenous culture inevitably came off worse.[144] Keith Smith followed suit in his 1992 biography of Bungaree, stating, 'when the two races met, a clash of cultures was inevitable'.[145] Bruce Elder, who gives a brief rendition of Bennelong's story as part of a larger Aboriginal tragedy sets up in opposition an Eden-like Aboriginal society in counterpoint to the invading British:

> The fatal moment when Phillip stepped ashore was the moment when the conflict began. There was no spear thrown; no musket fired. But the course of events was set upon its inexorable path. The two cultures were so different ... There was no possibility of compromise. One side respected the land; one side exploited the land. One side was basically peaceful and benign; the other was essentially sadistic and autocratic. One sought harmony; the other was driven by aggression and competitiveness.[146]

Eden was about to collide with civilisation and its power to corrupt. White's tragic mode is characterised by a 'mechanistic' causal explanation for the chain of events,[147] and this powerful but indifferent force, of two cultures colliding like tectonic plates, is indeed one that could easily crush anyone standing near the edge. As it is economically put on the 'Creative Spirits' website, 'Bennelong got caught between the two worlds and he died as a lonely alcoholic with a broken spirit in 1813'.[148] Brodsky's Bennelong was desired to be 'the complete go-between' by the British, 'the bridge between 18th century civilisation and the Stone Age.' But this bridge was badly built 'for the foundations were always shaky, the bridging material human, and the mode and motivation of construction ever suspect.'[149] Here, all that was necessary for Bennelong's

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[144] N. J. B. Plomley, 'Book Review: Vivienne Rae Ellis: Trucanini: Queen or traitor?', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association – Papers and proceedings* 23, no.2 (June 1976), pp. 50-52.

[145] Keith Vincent Smith, *King Bungaree: a Sydney Aborigine meets the great South Pacific explorers, 1799-1830* (Kenthurst, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1992), p. 20.

[146] Bruce Elder, *Blood on the wattle: massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians since 1788* (Frenchs Forest, NSW: Child & Associates, 1988), p. 11.

[147] White, *Tropics of Discourse*, p. 128.

[148] Jens-Uwe Korff, 'Bennelong Point', Creative Spirits website, <http://www.creativespirits.info/oznsw/sydney/sitescbd/operahouse.html> viewed 16 March 2009. Creative Spirits is a web design company that sponsors a number of websites encouraging Australians to learn about Aboriginal history, culture and art.

[149] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, p. 41.

'fall' was gravity, the bridge faltered and he plunged into the void commonly understood to lie between these two cultural islands.[150]

Eleanor Dark had located the destructive force of colonisation within the souls of her Aboriginal characters. They are a 'timeless' people confronting 'change', which comes upon them like a spiritual poison, creating a 'division in their own hearts'. One of her elders, Tirrawuul, dies because he cannot 'endure even the first faint forewarning shadow of change' to a life governed by a 'faith which never had been challenged'.[151] Dark's Bennelong is singled out as a man in particular danger. His fellow captive, Colbee, managed to remain aloof, resolved not to engage with the captors beyond a watchful compliance. Colbee thus remains 'whole' while Bennelong is torn by an internal 'strife', as part of him is drawn towards the white men and the possibility of becoming like them.[152] This is a familiar story: a fascination with self-destructive cultural transgressions has deeply penetrated the western literary and popular imagination. The archetype is perhaps Joseph Conrad's character Kurtz in his 1899 novella *Heart of Darkness*. Kurtz's rule over his African workers has transcended duty and come to dominate his own identity; he is re-shaped in their cultural image. Kurtz has lost his senses, and his colleagues are at once fascinated and appalled.[153] A not dissimilar imaginary drives Peter Goldsworthy's 2003 novel *Three Dog Night* in which grown-up Adelaide private school boy, Felix, goes to the 'Centre' as a doctor, and returns initiated as a Warlpiri man.[154] As one review puts it '...Felix has long moved between mainstream and black society – gone to drink, chain-smoking and now, as we learn, terminal cancer.'[155] It's not that his cultural crossing and illness are explicitly causally related, but the two do travel hand in hand in the book, and the impenetrable and unpredictable 'dark' side of Felix is never dissociated from his involvement with the Warlpiri. Similarly, Victorian poet and historian, Barry Hill penned an essay entitled 'Crossing Cultures' in 2003, in which he found linguist TGH Strehlow an 'exemplary case of successful crossing', as he had an intense and long term immersion in Aboriginal culture, but Strehlow he says: 'in agony over his internal contradictions, as *the* one who possessed the truth about Aranda culture,

[150] Karskens, *The Colony*, pp. 424.

[151] Dark, *The Timeless Land*, pp. 177, 179–180.

[152] Dark, *The Timeless Land*, pp. 264–265. See also Clendinnen, *Dancing With Strangers*, p. 268.

[153] Joseph Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

[154] Peter Goldsworthy, *Three Dog Night* (Camberwell, Victoria: Viking, 2003).

[155] Robin Osbourne, 'Book Review – Three Dog Night and Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time', Northern Rivers General Practice Network website, http://www.nrdgp.org.au/columns/bookreviews/bookreview3491.html+Three+Dog+Night&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=au, viewed 28 January 2008. The book has received considerable interest in medical circles due to Goldworthy's previous medical career and the book's subject.

dropped dead in a seizure of recriminations ... From beginning to end you could say he was doom-laden.'[156]

In mid-twentieth century anthropological thinking about Aboriginal peoples, the notion that Aboriginal culture could not survive the processes of transculturation which had taken place across south-eastern Australia in particular, was pervasive. Where the imagined 'going native' of European individuals had led to madness or death, Aboriginal 'cultural crossing' seemed to lead to the extinction of a people. Stanner, as we have seen, understood Bennelong to be at the head of a chain reaction of dependency on Europeans, which he felt had proceeded with settlement, or even ahead of it.[157] For Stanner, Clark, Mulvaney and others, Bennelong's story showed what would happen to Aboriginal people when exposed to 'civilisation', recycling, with different inflections, the nineteenth century theory of 'degeneration'. Though this theory was well and truly defunct in scientific terms by the mid-twentieth century, it had an ongoing life into the post-war world through eugenics and resonated with archaeological and anthropological scholarship particularly through the 1970s.[158] The theory is based in a neo-Lamarckian notion that acquired characteristics, 'both favourable and unfavourable, could alter human heredity and be transmitted down the family line'. It was up to a species to make itself 'fit', and a race could actually fall downwards on the evolutionary ladder through unhealthy living.[159]

As Clendinnen has shown, Stanner himself, as an anthropologist and policy maker, championed a view of contemporary Aboriginal communities as dynamic entities, engaged in a process of negotiation with western technologies, law and economy within their own metaphysical frameworks. Yet at the same time he had a strong emotional and aesthetic attachment to an 'unstained vision of the physical hardihood, intellectual sophistication, and spiritual exuberance

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[156] Barry Hill, 'Crossing Cultures', *Meanjin* 62, no.4 (December 2003), p. 117.

[157] Stanner, 'The History of indifference thus begins', pp. 19-20.

[158] Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: faults and frontiers of better breeding in modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 15.

[159] Stern, *Eugenic Nation,* p. 14; Marcia Langton finds that traces of eugenicist ideas remain in both popular thought and public policy through the concept of the 'drunken Aborigine', bolstered by a 'once respectable' theory that Aborigines have a genetic trait making them peculiarly susceptible to alcohol, and a converse pride in the superior capacity of white men to hold their drink. Marcia Langton, 'Rum, seduction and death: 'aboriginality' and alcohol', *Oceania* 63, no. 3 (March 1993), pp. 198-9. Archaeologist Josephine Flood, aiming to offer an 'accurate, objective, informative' account of Aboriginal history to an international public in 2006, found that, like Bennelong, the Eora in general 'came to rely on their settlement for survival', and exchange with the British in the context of the rum economy lead to 'inevitable alcoholism and degradation.' While it is not at all certain that the average reader would associate Flood's 'degradation' with proto-eugenic ideas, the enumeration of 'mixed-race babies' as one of the products of interaction in the following sentence might lead them in this direction. Josephine Flood, *The Original Australians: Story of the Aboriginal People* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2006), p. 42.

of the "Traditional Aborigine"'.[160] Conversely, he repudiated the flexibility and ingenuity of the astute political operator, who, like Bennelong, he felt was 'an arch-manipulator, with wit and charm but no principles.'[161] Thus, although Stanner's 'dependency' may often have carried a technical meaning based on empirical findings, his association of the process with the 'turncoat' and 'trickster' Bennelong suggests a kind of moral alarm.[162] Bennelong is responsible for leading Aboriginal people into a servile, imitative state, deliberately dissociated from Stanner's metaphysically independent Aboriginal communities. Bennelong's tragic fall was to be an opening chapter in a story of 'race suicide' or in its new incarnation, the inexorable social process of cultural suicide.[163] While the ironies of Stanner's views were soon pointed out, it has taken several decades of dedicated work to dismantle the valorisation of an 'authentic' and remote Aboriginality – idealised in anthropological circles so as to be remote from almost anywhere the anthropologist might in fact be.[164] The view of Aboriginal people as rigidly 'tradition-bound', and thus inevitably broken by change, has very gradually given way to a recognition that the strength of Aboriginal cultures may be in their very flexibility.[165]

Even now, Bennelong's adaptability seems to offend a deep-seated notion of cultural purity within the western storyteller. His ambiguous flirtation with gentlemen's dress, his ingestion of European fare, and his willing pastiche of manners and languages, seem to infringe cultural 'cleanliness', and thus to invite danger not only to himself, but to Aboriginal people in general. Following Mary Douglas' theorisation of cultural purity and pollution, Bennelong's ingestion of alcohol sees him absorbed into the British cultural and political body, thoroughly infused with the substance, and also signals the contamination of the Aboriginal body via Bennelong's mouth.[166] As Dark had over sixty years earlier, Clendinnen felt that Colbee had negotiated

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[160] Inga Clendinnen, 'The Power to Frustrate Good Intentions: or, the Revenge of the Aborigine', *Common Knowledge* 11, no. 3 (Fall 2005), pp. 419, 429-30.

[161] Stanner, 'Durmugam, a Nangiomeri' (1959), quoted in Clendinnen, 'The Power to Frustrate Good Intentions', p. 424.

[162] As Alexandra Stern notes, degeneration was a concept 'imbued with both scientific and moral meaning'. Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, p. 13.

[163] Alarm about 'race suicide' swept across Theodore Roosevelt's America on the back of the notion of degeneration. Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, p. 13. Interestingly, Clendinnen describes Bennelong's 'performance' of irreconcilable savage as 'suicidal', Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, p. 277.

[164] Diane Barwick noted the preference for fighters over negotiators in revisionist accounts of Aboriginal history in 1980, Lorenzo Veracini, 'A Prehistory of Australia's History Wars: The Evolution of Aboriginal History during the 1970s and 1980s', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 52, no. 3 (2006), pp. 43-7, 451-2.

[165] Gaynor Macdonald, 'Does "culture" have "history"? Thinking about Continuity and Change in Central New South Wales', *Aboriginal History* 25, (2001), p. 185.

[166] Mary Douglas has explored the dyad of purity and pollution, a ubiquitous human preoccupation with physical and social 'cleanliness', which takes quite different forms for different peoples, but universally implies a danger in departing from purity, and associates pollution with weakness. The body of the individual can form a microcosm for

relations with the British with more dignity and less risk than had Bennelong, and his success was at least partly attributable to his maintenance of his 'wholeness' in Dark's parlance. Clendinnen says 'Colbee kept a sure footing in both camps, perhaps because he was never tempted to make any accommodation to British values, but remained always a tribal man.'[167] Clendinnen's comparison may be a valid historical one, but it is interesting that she associates, as she found Stanner had in his unguarded moments, integrity with aloofness and strength with perceived authenticity.

Bennelong has been, and continues to be, imagined as a cultural 'half-caste' in effect, someone embodying the worst of both races, and as Henry Reynolds shows, 'commonly assumed to be morally and physically defective, unpredictable, unstable and degenerate'.[168] Plomley's 1970s account of the social place of the 'hybrid' mirrors Bennelong's imagined exile, belonging 'to neither race (... shunned by both), and lacking a racial background they have no history,'[169] Bernard Smith, in his Boyer Lectures of 1980, characterised Bennelong as a man who had tried to function on both sides of a cultural divide, a 'game' which has 'always been an emotionally difficult one to play; its benefits precarious. Most became alcoholics'.[170] Smith accorded Bennelong a legacy, passed down a line of 'fool kings' and 'clowns', to, among others, Albert Namatjira:

> Life between the two cultures has always been fraught with these terrible tensions. Take the case of Namatjira ... His tragic end is well known. In sharing liquor to which he was legally entitled with others of his tribe who were not, he was caught between the laws and customs of two societies. His trial and death shortly afterwards are now a part of the history of both cultures.[171]

Like Bennelong's, Namatjira's is a life contaminated by that vice of the Europeans, alcohol, and overstretched to breaking point by the embrace of two worlds. Smith felt that unlike the heroic resistance leaders, Pemulwuy, Yagan and their ilk, these 'Quislings' or 'Jacky Jackies' have

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the body politic. Mary Douglas *[1966], Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 4-5, 142.

[167] Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, p. 268.

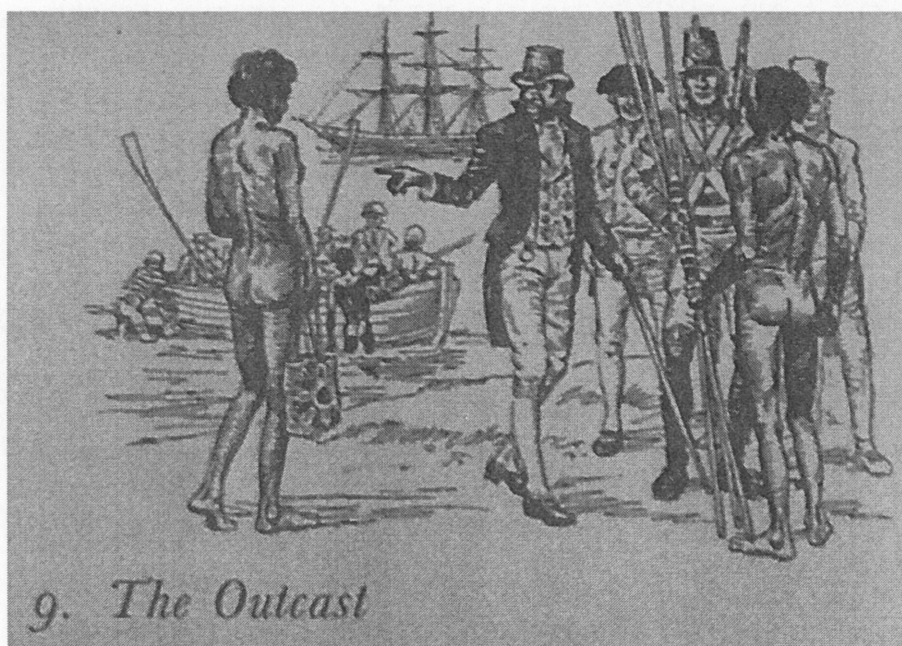
[168] Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, pp. 3-5.

[169] N. J. B. Plomley, cited by Ian Anderson, 'Black bit, white bit' in Michele Grossman ed., *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2003), p. 46.

[170] Bernard Smith, 'The Spectre of Truganini', Boyer Lectures series (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1980), p. 37.

[171] Smith, 'The Spectre of Truganini', p. 38–39.

'always been regarded by Aborigines with suspicion'.[172] Not long after Namatjira's death in 1959 (and perhaps even during his lifetime) an identification with Bennelong was being made, in which the strains placed on each man as a colonised person became super-historical[173] – in Smith's account twenty years on, an insurmountable point of internal division and weakness that has 'always been' (as he insists through repetition). Anthropologist Ian Anderson finds this motif of internal Indigenous division a constant refrain within his own discipline, and replies: 'personhood is had through coherent experience ... The separation of black bit, white bit is a denial of humanity'.[174]



2.3 Bennelong returning to Sydney in his London clothes, in a book for young readers [Joan Phipson, Bennelong (1975), p. 56].

As Douglas suggests, the belief that pollution weakens is closely followed by a suspicion that only those who are weak or careless would fail to resist pollution.[175] J.J. Healy, writing for a popular audience in 1977, employed an excess of reflexive language to illustrate his conviction that Aborigines could be held responsible for their own tumbling descent, finding 'continuity between Bennelong and those Aborigines who would speed the dissolution of their own

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[172] Smith, 'The Spectre of Truganini', p. 37.

[173] In 1962 Bill Beatty suggested 'There are certain aspects in Bennelong's story that seem to find sympathetic echo in the case of ... the late Albert Namatjira, torn between his tribal laws in Central Australia and the existing laws of the white man', Bill Beatty, *Early Australia: with shame remembered* (Melbourne: Cassell & Co., 1962), p. 171.

[174] Anderson, 'Black bit, white bit', p. 51.

[175] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, pp. 4-5, 142.

societies by a self-generated fascination with the artefacts of European society'.[176] Over the past twenty years or so, the use of Bennelong's story to imply that Aboriginal people's 'problems' are self-inflicted has perhaps become less explicit. But in the ongoing narration of Bennelong's story as a cultural and an alcoholic tragedy, the implication that transculturation is analogous to a shameful cultural addiction persists. In the Barani Indigenous History pages of the Sydney City Council website, a disavowal of Bennelong's adoption of 'European dress and ways' is paired with an acknowledgment of his importance: 'While Bennelong suffered from the worst aspects of enculturation, he also represents those who tried to change the behaviour of Europeans on Aboriginal lands.'[177] It is as if a cleansing of his memory is required. The anthropologist's, and now the historian's, ongoing desire to escape the 'rotted frontier' and to find 'the unspotted savage',[178] is of course much more than incidentally related to assimilation policy, which in the immediate post-war decades declared tribal life akin to an addiction that must be given up for a good, clean, modern life.[179]

Alcohol is a key ingredient in the story of Bennelong's failure. As we have seen above, his twentieth century biographers have reached for the bottle without hesitation, finding either that Bennelong drank 'to ease the pain of loneliness and confusion',[180] or that it was alcohol itself that precipitated his alienation – a foreboding musical squall broke out as Bennelong took his first draught in a recent play.[181] But alcohol is by no means a historiographically neutral substance. The first-hand accounts depict Bennelong engaging in both 'good' and 'bad' drinking, with Tench's admiring comment that he could hold his grog like any gentleman[182] contrasting with the vulgar 'propensity to drunkenness' cited by the report of his death in the *Sydney Gazette*.[183] These two comments occur at opposite ends of Bennelong's association with the

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[176] J.J. Healy, 'A most tragic theme', *Hemisphere* 21, no. 5 (1977), p. 32. Gillian Cowlishaw has shown that when the concept of race was no longer ostensibly in currency in the 1960s and 1970s, and the 'blood' of a person could no longer provide a valid indicator of their allegiance, cultural practices and even accoutrements readily became essentialised to provide the same kind of categorising information, cited in Denis Byrne, 'Deep Nation: Australia's Acquisition of an Indigenous Past', *Aboriginal History* 20 (1996), p. 91.

[177] Anita Heiss, 'Barani: Indigenous History of Sydney City' – City of Sydney Online Resource created 2002, 'Significant Aboriginal People in Sydney', <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/theme7.htm>, viewed 8 August 2009.

[178] Clendinnen, 'The Power to Frustrate Good Intentions', p. 415.

[179] Anna Haebich, 'Imagining assimilation', *Australian Historical Studies* 33, Special issue no. 118 (2002), pp. 66-7.

[180] Sheppard, *The life of Bennelong*, p. 27.

[181] Sue Tweg, 'Dream On: A "Reconciliation" Tempest in 2001', *Contemporary Theatre Review* 14, no. 3 (August 2004), p. 50. Brodsky's Bennelong is also explicitly doomed from his first taste of alcohol, Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, p. 27.

[182] Tench, *A complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson*, pp. 117-118.

[183] *Sydney Gazette*, 9th January 1813, p. 2.

British, certainly, but they are also thoroughly bound up with ideas surrounding social class and alcohol at a time when, as Stephen Garton argues, the British began to wrest local Aboriginal peoples' wealth from them and attempt to fit them into colonial society and economy – right at the bottom.[184] Bennelong at first drank in the governor's dining room, where the officers perhaps used wine to 'initiate' him into 'civilised' company and might have felt they were able to bring him into a kind of gentlemen's agreement about his role in the spread of civilisation via this secular communion.[185] Bennelong, for his part, was alive to the ritual significance of the consumption of wine as part of the sharing of elite male goodwill, as he demonstrated when he accepted Governor Phillip's offer of wine at the whale feast at Manly and proceeded to toast 'the King'.[186] When Bennelong ceased to drink exclusively with the officers, their interpretations of his drinking became more closely aligned with attitudes towards the lower classes, which they disparaged for taking 'unruly' pleasure in bloodsports and drinking to excess in public.[187]

The symbolic valency of alcohol does not diminish as we approach the present. Post-war renditions of Bennelong's story coincided with an era of strong temperance activity, and reflect theories of predisposition and approaches to alcohol abuse from medical and scientific perspectives, which had gained momentum from the 1890s.[188] The social understandings surrounding alcohol abuse in contemporary Australian society are so rich and various that there is room in Bennelong's story for everything from pity, as in Melinda Hinkson's 'lonely alcoholic with a broken spirit',[189] to the smutty humour of Keith Willey's comment: 'The nature of [Bennelong's] association with the brewer, James Squire – apart from a notable liking for his product – is not known'.[190] When Mulvaney finds that Bennelong's drinking reflects a lack of steadiness of character, and an inability to discriminate between good and bad parts of British culture, he projects eighteenth century ideas of class-differentiated morality onto an Aboriginal

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[184] Stephen Garton, *Out of Luck: poor Australians and Social Welfare, 1788-1988* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990), pp. 9-12, 15, 19-20, 36. See also Henry Reynolds, 'Aborigines and European Social Hierarchy', *Aboriginal History* 7 (1983), pp. 124-33, where he presents a convincing case that nineteenth century thinkers sought to integrate Aborigines into colonial society as landless labourers.

[185] Julie McIntyre, '"Bannelong sat down to dinner with Governor Phillip, and drank his wine and coffee as usual": Aborigines and wine in early New South Wales', *History Australia* 5, no.2 (2008), pp. 39.6-39.10.

[186] McIntyre, '"Bannelong sat down to dinner with Governor Phillip"', pp. 39.7-39.8.

[187] Karskens, *The Colony*, p. 128.

[188] Stephen Garton, *Medicine and Madness: A Social History of Insanity in New South Wales* (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1988), pp. 56-7; Garton, *Out of Luck,* p. 104. An article about the residential rehabilitation program, tailored to Aboriginal needs, at Benelong's Haven, for example, uses the language of 'habit' and 'addiction' in telling Bennelong's story, Calvin Miller, 'A Haven for alcoholics ditching their addiction', *Journal of the Australian Medical Association* 2, no. 12 (December 1982), pp. 602-5.

[189] Hinkson, 'Exploring "Aboriginal" Sites in Sydney', p. 65.

[190] Willey, *When the Sky Fell Down,* p. 146.

man trying alcohol for the first time, but also finds a readily comprehending audience in the present.[191]

As Marcia Langton has demonstrated, alcohol has long played a part in the popular and official representation of Aboriginal communities. Langton sees Bennelong as the first 'drunken Aborigine', transformed by the alcohol that was pressed on him by the colonists, and then depicted as a 'degenerate native' lacking the restraint and dignity necessary for civilisation. She finds that, from Bennelong's lifetime, the image of the 'drunken Aborigine' has sustained its own momentum.[192] Indeed, I believe that the association of Bennelong's fall with alcohol has helped to sustain this story of tragedy across the latter part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. This story has survived because it seems to be true. We 'know' that alcohol can be addictive and that alcohol abuse can result in the breakdown of a person's relationships as he or she becomes aggressive or morose – so Bennelong's tragedy is plausible. Ideas about alcohol have undoubtedly changed across the past two hundred years, but in application to Bennelong they translate readily. Alcohol abuse has maintained a conceptual association with the disadvantaged, Aboriginal people have remained marginalised in British Australia, and Aboriginal communities have an ambivalent relationship with alcohol today, amidst ongoing political hype about alcohol's role in the 'Aboriginal problem'.[193] An alcoholic tragedy for Bennelong is thus a malleable one, and its truth seems to stand as it is still partly reflected in the existing social order.[194]

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[191] Mulvaney contrasts the way in which Arabanoo, while he savoured bread and tea, 'resisted alcoholic drinks with "disgust and abhorrence", according to the approving Tench, but his successor, Bennelong, succumbed to grog'. Mulvaney makes it clear that he too approves of Arabanoo, finding that during his 'brief career' within the settlement 'his conduct was something which modern Aboriginal people can honour'. It seems Bennelong's willingness to partake of alcohol is evidence of a lack of similar moral fibre and good judgement. Mulvaney, *A Good Foundation*, p. 13. Clendinnen writes: 'In those first encounters on the beach most Australians had shunned the wine or rum pressed on them – except for Baneelon. Restless for glory in this as in so much else, he was soon quaffing wine with all the flourishes with which the white gentlemen surrounded it'. The implication is that Bennelong's drinking was power-hungry and immoderate. Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, p. 275. The *Sydney Gazette* of the first decade of the nineteenth century contains much correspondence on the unfortunate way in which the Aborigines pick up the bad language of rough London from the convicts, and how difficult it is to steer them towards good manners, Garton, *Medicine and Madness*, pp. 56-7.

[192] Langton, 'Rum, seduction and death', pp. 195-206.

[193] Research and legal processes continue to find alcohol a factor in violence occurring in Aboriginal communities at the same time as political grandstanding takes advantage of public opinion on the matter. Tony Abbott proposed a 'crackdown on alcohol abuse in Aboriginal communities' in February 2010 as he sought election as leader of the opposition, for example, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25th February 2010, p. 1. The findings of social scientists and opinions of legal experts were reported by the same newspaper under the headlines 'Alcohol "primary cause" of Aboriginal violence', and 'Call for more alcohol rules to cut Aboriginal violence', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9th April 2010, p. 7 and 25th February 2009, p. 3, respectively.

[194] Lyn Spillman, 'When Do Collective Memories Last? Founding Moments in the United States and Australia,' *Social Science History* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1998), p. 451.

The First Fleet diarists were keenly attentive to the responses of Aboriginal people to English food and drink, clothing and grooming practices. Tench reported with great interest meetings at which Eora men, including Bennelong, submitted to a shave by means of a cut-throat razor, for example.[195] As a longed-for ambassador for the British, Bennelong's receptiveness to the appurtenances of gentlemanly culture, and his aptitude for assimilating British language and etiquette certainly excited the First Fleet diarists. But Tench observed that Bennelong, coming and going from the settlement in late 1790 sometimes wore the clothes that he had been given, and sometimes he carried them in a bag around his neck.[196] It appears Bennelong dressed when it suited him, and this left the colonists with an equivocal understanding of his place in the settlement.[197] Our second-order storytellers are much less willing to be equivocal. Few of Bennelong's modern biographers have been able to imagine him moving between the colony and Aboriginal life in a sustainable way. Uneasy when Bennelong appears to be 'in limbo between two societies',[198] they feel a need to send him one way or the other. A children's book of 1970 finds that Bennelong's period of captivity transformed him. He happily adopts English dress, food and the 'easy' life, and 'liked standing in the sunlight and looking at his shadow. His shadow was no longer that of Bennelong of the Cadigals. It was the shadow of a white man.'[199] 'Swimming Monkey', a contributor to web forum Everything2.com, on the other hand uses Bennelong's state of undress in his later years to evoke his despondency and disgrace, saying:

> As the years went by his drinking became progressively heavier and he ceased to trouble himself with dressing in the gentlemanly finery he had been so fond of earlier, instead becoming contented with slinking about in dishevelled (sic) rags.[200]

As Simon Schama has put it, to honour the 'obligations of tragedy ... we must proceed until all is known; a verdict declared; a sacrifice made ready; an atonement decreed'.[201] Once dressed, the

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[195] Tench, *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson*, pp. 134-8, 142-3.

[196] Tench, *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson*, p. 108.

[197] McBryde notes Hunter's musings about whether Bennelong had perhaps simply lost the clothes that he had been given, McBryde, '"Barter ... immediately commenced to the satisfaction of both parties"', p. 253.

[198] Jill Sykes, 'Bennelong Makes a Point', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8th October 1988, 'Arts', p. 81.

[199] Endeavour Reading Programme, *Bennelong* (Milton, QLD: The Jacaranda Press, 1970), p. 44. Dark had said something only slightly different, but with quite a different meaning: that dressed, Bennelong's shadow was the 'same as the shadow of a white man', Dark, *The Timeless Land*, pp. 264-5.

[200] Swimming Monkey, 'Bennelong', Everything2, 19 December, 2007, Everything2, The Everything Development Company, <http://www.everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=1922328>, viewed 17 March 2009.

[201] Simon Schama, *Dead Certainties (Unwarranted Speculations)* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 262.

tragic Bennelong cannot again be un-dressed without being naked.[202] Having tasted alcohol, he is no longer innocent of the continuum between drunkenness and sobriety. Once he seems to have reached the peak of his career, storytellers are impatient to get rid of him. Clendinnen is not alone in feeling that Bennelong 'should have died earlier'. Manning Clark disposed of him 'headlong', as we have seen, and Brodsky charted a 'downward rush [that] could not be halted'.[203] A twenty-first century biographer makes an arithmetic mistake, writing 'only eight years after [Bennelong's] return, he died an alcoholic',[204] robbing him of ten of the years of his life between 1795 and 1813. This error of subtraction is part of a systematic 'misremembering' of Bennelong's latter years.[205] As Karskens observes, storytellers have wilfully overlooked that 'Bennelong got his life back together' after facing an initial series of reversals on his return from England.[206] One of the ongoing attractions of the tragic mode is surely that it makes the evidence cohere into a compelling story, in which there is only one reversal of fortune for Bennelong – one which leads directly to his death. Significantly, an Aboriginal retelling of Bennelong's story provides a rare exception: a play produced by Koories in Theatre in 1995 put forward a positive metaphor for Bennelong's 'in-between' status: the platypus, an animal with a 'multifaceted nature' that must find a niche for itself in a new world.[207]

The *Bringing Them Home Report* found that many Stolen Generations survivors have experienced feelings of not belonging in either 'world', and a lack of self-worth as a 'half-caste' person. One contributor testified:

> Most of us girls were thinking white in the head but were feeling black inside. We weren't black or white. We were a very lonely, lost and sad displaced group of people. We were taught to think and act like a white person, but we didn't know how to think and act like an Aboriginal. We didn't know anything about our culture.

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[202] As Grace Karskens observes, Europeans have been disconcerted in changing ways across the past two centuries by Aboriginal people in hybrid dress, equating partly European dress with indignity, immodesty and poverty, rather than cultural borrowing, innovation, friendship, trade and rivalry she finds can also be read into the artworks and stories of Aboriginal men's jacket-wearing in particular, Karskens, 'Red coat, blue jacket, black skin', pp. 8-16, 29-31.

[203] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, p. 78.

[204] Flood, *The Original Australians*, p. 42.

[205] Alessandro Portelli, 'The massacre at the Fosse Ardeatine: history, myth, ritual and symbol' in Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone eds., *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 29–41.

[206] Karskens, *The Colony*, p. 422.

[207] Flyer for 'Moobbajia: speak an unknown language: the English language through Koori eyes' staged by Koories in Theatre, (Sydney: Museum of Sydney, 1995), held at the AIATSIS Library.

> We were completely brainwashed to think only like a white person. When they went to mix in white society, they found they were not accepted [because] they were Aboriginal. When they went and mixed with Aborigines, some found they couldn't identify with them either, because they had too much white ways in them. So that they were neither black nor white. They were simply a lost generation of children. I know. I was one of them.[208]

It is clear that the idea of navigating 'two worlds' has relevance to Aboriginal people facing the continuing implications of colonisation. It is possible that some of Bennelong's recent biographers have projected these experiences back onto Bennelong (and integrated them into his tragedy) after having witnessed these feelings of alienation through survivors' testimonies, encouraged by connections drawn in public history making, such as the 1998 exhibition about the stolen generations held at Government House titled 'In the Interest of Bennelong'.[209] The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families found that these self-understandings were nurtured by systems of removal, punishment, education and labour that were 'administered in such a way as would directly cause feelings of alienation'.[210] Interestingly, these experiences are described as 'tragic' only a handful of times in the report, mostly in the submissions of health professionals and legal or government organisations rather than by Aboriginal people talking about their own experiences.[211] Tragedy, while it is an important part of western-European culture in Australia, many aspects of which are part of the cultural vocabulary of Aboriginal people today, does not figure strongly in the way in which Aboriginal people articulate their loss, pain, shame and displacement in the *Bringing Them Home* report. The genre's links with fate and inevitability were apparently not helpful in articulating these experiences.

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[208] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997), p. 152.

[209] Tony Stephens, 'Bennelong, the first of the stolen, comes back': Sorry Day' [late edition], *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26th May 1998, p. 6.

[210] *Bringing Them Home*, p. 204.

[211] The words tragic, tragedy and tragically occur only eleven times in the five-hundred page report. The authors of the report describe cases where reunion is impossible as tragic, *Bringing Them Home*, p. 235, and six times health professionals and legal or government organisations describe the effects of removal on Stolen Generations survivors and their families or the overall system and its intentions as tragic, in the sense of being deeply sad and having caused profound and sustained loss and damage, *Bringing Them Home*, pp. 180, 197, 286, 363, 425, 435. One of the Stolen Generations survivors cited her loving foster father explaining the tragedy that her natural father must have suffered in losing his daughter, and another talked of the holistic healing necessary for recovery of body and spirit from 'all of our past pains, traumas and tragedies,' *Bringing Them Home*, pp. 170, 399.

Instead of leading to a tragic end, Bennelong's negotiation of the cultural tensions of a colonised life can provide a reassuring example for Aboriginal people maintaining connections and cultural integrity. A contributor to the *First Australians* guestbook on the SBS website, introducing herself as a Wardandi Bibbulmun woman, draws a very different relationship between Bennelong's walk and talk and his Aboriginality from that of Stanner and Smith: 'Bennelong was an inspiration, a man who spoke the wadjela ways, but whose heart belonged to his people. We have all learnt to walk the wadjela walk, but remain embedded in our culture'.[212] In replying to the notion that Bennelong lost his culture, this storyteller does not see Bennelong's story as a determining or predictive one for the life patterns of Aboriginal people, but rather an ancestor of Aboriginal people generally, who might provide an example of strength as people today face some of the same challenges. Likewise, Kamilaroi Ngunnawal woman Pamela Young, working on a recent oral history book, looked to Bennelong to connect her writing practice with the 'ancient oral wellspring [that] is the source of wellbeing' for the Aboriginal people telling their oral histories in the book. Bennelong, having written the first Aboriginal letter, had connected these 'two worlds', embodying the strength of Aboriginal tradition in a form recognisable to colonists, saying in effect 'I can play your game mate, I can write'.[213] Young did not require Bennelong to form a permanent and singular crossing between two cultural monoliths, or to stop them from colliding. Instead, she finds that he began a tradition that she could draw on, as she was negotiating dilemmas as a researcher for the NSW government working with Aboriginal communities like her own. Bennelong's significance as a tragic figure within a larger Aboriginal tragedy, which has seemed so pertinent to non-Indigenous Australians, is perhaps just not relevant to Aboriginal people.

Tragedy is a literary and dramatic form with a long history of practice and philosophy, in which some of the most complex and troubling characters of western cultural tradition have been created. Although a few of Bennelong's biographies have approached full scale dramatic treatments, Dark's and Brodsky's among them, most of the 'biographies' considered here are pocket-sized sketches, or cameo appearances in a broader story. An eclectic local production, tracing Aboriginal history from the Dreaming to the present, encapsulates Bennelong's life thus:

> He was befriended and taken to England by Captain Arthur Phillip; treated as a curiosity; learned English quickly; attempted to reconcile the English and the

[212] Trish Hill-Wall, 21 October 2008, SBS First Australians website, Your Comments, <http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/>, viewed 20 March 2009.

[213] Berenice Carrington and Pamela Young, *Aboriginal Heritage and Wellbeing* (Sydney: NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, 2011), p. 35.

> Eora in the early days; became a victim of alcoholism; tragic life story – wafting from the white world to the black. He was from the Cadigal Clan.[214]

This biography is cursory, by no means masterfully written, and probably has no direct relationship with the primary sources. Yet it manages to convey a powerful impression. The adjective 'tragic' functions as a flag; it signals agreement with other accounts of Bennelong's pitiable failure, recruits the reader's prior knowledge of this failure, and gives the tragic wheel another spin as it does so. Even if the reader has no prior knowledge of him, within a western tradition the compact evocations of Bennelong's alcoholism, and his unsuccessful attempt to reconcile 'two worlds' provide ample explanation of an inevitable and partly self-destructive course towards alienation and despair.[215] Eschewing the imperialist rhetoric of Brodsky, the literary drama of Dark, the academic-speak of Clendinnen, the down-to-earth tone of this micro-biography perhaps helps to endow Bennelong's tragedy with a patina of realness that contributes to an intertextual consensus that Bennelong lived a tragic life. Perhaps most importantly, the adjective 'tragic' gives a signal to the reader about how she should feel.

In 1985, Eric Willmot wrote to the 'dragons' of history, white historians who want to keep the past to themselves, with a warning that a generation of Aboriginal scholars was about to emerge and make Australian history its own. Like Mulvaney, he felt that the story of Pemulwuy would be the one that these historians would most want to tell (as he himself did shortly afterwards). For Willmot, though, Bennelong's story was not tainted by his own failure in life, but by the long period it had spent in the keeping of the dragons.[216] The fabric of Bennelong's tragedy is a closely woven web of veracities; historical, allegorical, literary and moral. The threads are not easy to disentangle, but in the light of a body of evidence for the varied fortunes and strong relationships of Bennelong's last eighteen years, it is clear that we must reflect further on his story and on its uses. Tragedy is not life, or history, but a dramatic or literary construction with its own logic and genealogy. If Bennelong's life is 'tragic', then it is storytellers who have made it so.

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[214] Jean A. Ellis, *Aboriginal Australians – their journey* (Penrith, NSW: Kaliarna Productions, 2006), p. 113.

[215] The equally economical fall of Bennelong in the Learmonth *Encyclopaedia of Australia* suggests that this understanding was already well established by the late 1960s: 'One of two Aborigines captured, befriended and trained by Phillip who took them to London ... Bennelong returned with Hunter, living at the Governor's house, almost as an exhibit, but he returned to the bush where he was rejected by his own people. Drink and degradation made him the first of many tragic failures to reconcile Aboriginal with European culture.' Andrew and Nancy Learmonth, *Encyclopaedia of Australia* (London: Frederick Warne and Co, 1968), p. 54.

[216] Eric Willmot, 'The dragon principle' in Isabel McBryde ed., *Who owns the past?: papers from the Annual Symposium of the Australian Academy of the Humanities* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 44-8.

Our consciences' go-between?

Bernard Smith, in his 1980 Boyer Lectures, called on writers to engage with the tragedy in Australian history because tragedy embodies a moral commitment, and has the power to act as the midwife of 'atonement'. He felt that Australians have avoided tragedy because, 'the tragic muse was an old Aboriginal woman, surviving precariously as a fringe dweller in some unknown country town'; white Australians wanted to forget her.[217] He argued that engagement with the tragedy of Aboriginal history would spur the 'concerned conscience' to agitate for the improvement of legal, health and education outcomes for Aboriginal people.[218] But tragedy's potential to play a constructive role in the 'education of democratic citizens' has long been in dispute.[219] Smith himself acknowledged the danger that a tragic history 'could readily fall into sentimentality, making oppressive institutions tolerable, even enjoyable, in the very process of exposing them'.[220]

Paul Muldoon, in an essay examining the limits of justice as a paradigm for reconciliation, notes that:

> When historians refer to the fate of the Aborigines as a 'tragedy' ... the only element that generally remains of the original Greek signification is that of a necessary or unavoidable catastrophe. On this reading, tragedy is more or less akin to misfortune: it represents a category of event to which the concept of responsibility has little or no application.[221]

For tragedy to have the transformative power that the ancient Greeks endowed it with, it must be uncomfortable, it must de-centre or disturb the audience, prompt each audience member to look into his own all-too-human soul and know that he could share the fate of the protagonist. To transform, tragedy must make the assumed foundations of social endeavour quiver beneath the feet of the audience, showing how civilisation itself, far from being a safe refuge, has terror

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[217] Smith, 'The Spectre of Truganini', pp. 16, 23. Smith meditates 'at times it would seem as if all the culture of old Europe were being brought to bear upon our writers and artists in order to blot from their memories the crimes perpetrated on Australia's first inhabitants', p. 22. It does not occur to him to examine the implications of mobilising this cultural armoury in the service of *remembering* these crimes.

[218] Smith, 'The Spectre of Truganini', pp. 31, 34.

[219] Philosophers from Plato to Nietzsche have variously found that tragedy has the potential to morally corrupt, or to undermine genuine moral responsibility. Walter Kaufmann, *Tragedy and Philosophy*, 1968 cited in Paul Muldoon, 'Thinking Responsibility Differently: Reconciliation and the Tragedy of Colonisation', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26, no. 3 (August 2005), p. 246.

[220] Smith, 'The Spectre of Truganini', p. 27.

[221] Muldoon, 'Thinking Responsibility Differently', p. 245.

and confusion on its underside.[222] If a 'tragedy' is simply inevitable, its audience achieves easy absolution via the kind of sentimental masochism that Bernard Smith worried about. W.K. Hancock, charting the nation's great romance with wool in 1930, explained Aboriginal history in terms of social Darwinism, saying, 'the advance of British civilisation made inevitable "the natural progress of the aboriginal race towards extinction"'.[223] Though he did not interrogate this explanation, he was able to offer an acute account of the level of responsibility it might engender: 'Australian democracy is genuinely benevolent, but is preoccupied with its own affairs. From time to time it remembers the primitive people whom it has dispossessed, and sheds over their predestined passing an economical tear.'[224]

A tragic outcome for Bennelong has a bearing on the level of responsibility that storytellers and their audiences might feel for Aboriginal history across the subsequent two centuries. As Mark McKenna says of local historians in south eastern New South Wales, adding Aboriginal history back in over the last few decades:

> Acknowledging that the settlers had poisoned or shot Aboriginal people ... allowed historians to remove them from their historical narrative. Once the unpleasantness was out of the way, history could continue as a non-Aboriginal story.[225]

It has become increasingly relevant, in academic and public spheres, to suspend the doom of 'the fatal moment when Phillip stepped ashore'[226] and to re-examine contact history, the texture of what it was that actually happened, the variety of relations that were entered into, the kinds of co-operation that made European settlement possible, and the agency and strategies of Indigenous peoples in accommodating as well as combating the colonists.[227] Inga Clendinnen returned to colonial relationships in *Dancing with Strangers* in this spirit, hoping to recover the many-coloured and fragile optimism of the 'Springtime' of first contact.[228] But she found resounding failure there through Bennelong and Phillip. For Clendinnen, these men were

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[222] Muldoon, 'Thinking Responsibility Differently', p. 248

[223] W.K. Hancock, *Australia* (London: Earnest Benn Ltd., 1930), p. 32.

[224] Hancock, *Australia*, p. 33.

[225] Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfella's Point* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002), p. 94.

[226] Bruce Elder, *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 11.

[227] Denis Byrne, 'Archaeology in Reverse: The flow of Aboriginal people and their remains through the space of New South Wales' in Nick Merriman ed., *Public Archaeology* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 240-1.

[228] She returned to the history of the Sydney colony in pursuit of 'social justice between Australia's original immigrants, and those of us who came later,' Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, p. 5.

the leaders of two peoples, on whose shoulders the weight of history rested. She finds that 'each failed, to their own and their people's injury, and to ours.'[229] She finds that Phillip and Bennelong had the best chance of setting up enduring good relations between European colonists and Indigenous Australians, and they failed, instead setting a course through uncertainty, conflict and mutual disrespect across the continent. One implication is perhaps that these two men, right back there at the 'beginning', should bear more responsibility than those who came after them for the pain and violence in Australian history.

Tim Rowse finds that history-making almost inevitably involves the making of 'counterfactual' claims as well as factual ones – that is, in maintaining a conviction that the course that history has taken was not inevitable, we imagine other courses that history might have taken. He challenges Australian historians to be reflective about the nature of these claims, because they are closely bound up with the ways in which we imagine our own complicity in the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples.[230] Underlying Clendinnen's analysis of Bennelong's and Phillip's failure is a powerful counterfactual claim that, had goodwill been maintained, British colonisation of Aboriginal lands might have been mutually beneficial. The nature of the failure she perceives, and the character of her counterfactual claim, makes it possible for her to call for a reconciliation based on a renewal of the mutual curiosity and concern that she found in the early British-Aboriginal relations in the Sydney area.[231] Like the claim Rowse found central to 'humanitarian' involvement in the unfolding history wars, that 'the "rule of law" could have limited the extent to which the usurping Britons used physical force to secure their dominion', Clendinnen's implicit claim 'can never lose its pertinence for Australians who wish to ameliorate the impact of a colonisation that they cannot reverse.'[232] Historians have responded to Clendinnen's counterfactual scenario from various directions. Gordon Briscoe, appearing back to back with Clendinnen on the *First Australians* television series stated that he had found no evidence that the British were attempting to establish a future based on mutual understanding; it was clear from the outset that change was to be imposed.[233] John Hirst has dubbed the notion that more goodwill in the beginning may have resulted in a better outcome for Aboriginal Australians a 'liberal fantasy'. The 'concerned conscience' becomes absorbed in the colonial phase of Australia's history at the expense of acknowledging the relentless bureaucratic 'second

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[229] Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, p. 286.

[230] Tim Rowse, 'Historians and the Humanitarian Critique of Australia's Colonisation', *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (2003), pp. 254-6.

[231] Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, p. 287.

[232] Rowse, 'Historians and the Humanitarian Critique of Australia's Colonisation', p. 254.

[233] Nowra and Perkins, *First Australians*, Episode One.

attack' on Australia's Indigenous peoples in the early twentieth century, which he believes today's Australians have more reason to acknowledge responsibility for.[234]

Clendinnen's imagined audience, drawn into a sympathetic circle of readers by her frequent use of the first person plural, is characterised by Alan Atkinson as 'Australians ... probably of British descent, but not British ourselves, well informed, well travelled and with a distinctive moral attitude'.[235] Members of Bennelong and Surrounds Residents for Reconciliation, an active group based in the Federal electorate of Bennelong (centred on the relatively privileged areas of inner north-western Sydney, Gladesville and Epping) might be embraced within this circle. This group backed Maxine McKew's challenge of John Howard in the Bennelong electorate in 2007 and gained inspiration from her ideas about Bennelong. Having recently read *Dancing with Strangers*, McKew, making her maiden speech to Parliament, said:

> It is a complex story, the story of early European settlement ... [It should be known] that there were ... moments when trust and goodwill ruled hearts on both sides of the divide. The universal disaster did not have to happen and it does not have to happen now. For Bennelong there was no happy ending. When he returned to his own land after three years in England, he was scorned by the Europeans and by his own people. He was the first of tens of thousands of Aboriginals who have attempted or been forced to straddle both worlds, only to end up lost between both. A question for us all as we start out on the road to reconciliation is to ask: what was Bennelong trying to do in forging a friendship with the British? At the very least, we can say he was making a connection, attempting to build a bridge. And that is what we need to do...[236]

Neither McKew nor the Residents for Reconciliation believe that they have no responsibility for the present – indeed McKew directly took up Clendinnen's call to a reconciliation inspired by past goodwill. For their part, the Residents for Reconciliation dedicate significant time, energy and resources to actions ranging from participation in the 'Stop the Northern Territory Intervention' campaign, to the promotion of local Aboriginal artists, as well as planning to

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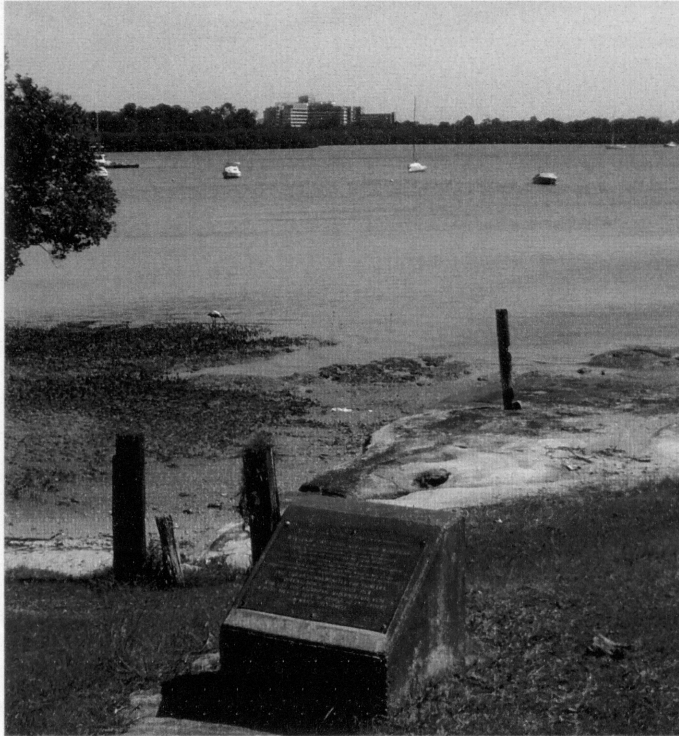
[234] John Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History*, pp. 82, 88-90.

[235] Alan Atkinson, 'The Charmed Circle: Review of "Dancing With Strangers" by Inga Clendinnen', *Australian Book Review* 256 (2003), pp. 9-10.

[236] The Hon Maxine McKew MP, Member for Bennelong (NSW), First Speech To Parliament, 14 February 2008, Maxine McKew website, <http://www.maxinemckew.com.au/2008/02/14/first-speech-to-parliament/> viewed 4 December 2008.

dedicate a memorial to Bennelong.[237] The organisation has also supported and publicised Keith Smith's work, as he has attempted to 'rehabilitate' Bennelong from the myth of his 'pathetic demise'.[238] No reader, of course, is captive to a single interpretation of Bennelong's story. Members of this group might draw inspiration from both Smith's and Clendinnen's work, as well as rethinking the relationship between the two under the tutelage of Keneally's *Australians: Origins to Eureka*.



2.4 Plaque recording the presence of Bennelong's grave nearby, along with other places of interest, at Kissing Point on the Parramatta River, dedicated by E. L. S. Hall, Mayor, Ryde Municipal Council, 1948. Members of the Bennelong and Surrounds Residents for Reconciliation and others reconvened here after hearing Keith Smith talk about Bennelong in 2008.

McKew's history contains a mixture of recognition and insistence which it is not possible to separate. Her impulse to destroy Bennelong even as historical goodwill and mutual understanding are remembered, perhaps points to hostility intermingled with the very goodwill

[237] Personal Communication with Judy MacGregor Smith of Bennelong and Surrounds Residents for Reconciliation, 13th November 2008.

[238] Smith, 'Bennelong Among his People' pp. 8, 24. The Bennelong and Surrounds Residents for Reconciliation hosted a talk by Smith about Bennelong and the Indigenous History of Ryde in conjunction with a visit to Bennelong's grave at Kissing Point in October 2008. A flier promoting the event can be viewed at: <http://www.acwa.asn.au/email/downloads36/Bennelong_Event.pdf>, viewed 26 September 2011.

involved in this remembering.[239] As we have seen already, Bennelong has been remembered by so many storytellers over the past forty years as a friend to the colony, with the obliteration of his health, family life, self-respect and future prospects following close behind. As Andrew Lattas observes, storytellers and their audiences might feel cleansed by Bennelong's comprehensive failure, his 'Christ-like suffering' able to 'restore settler Australians to a lost moral order'.[240] A poem by Sherman Alexie, of the Spokane/Coeur d'Alene people of Washington, 'How to write the American Indian Novel', provides a recipe for popular fiction in which the cultural struggles of the 'half-breed' Indian are similarly appropriated by white characters and readers. The hypothetical novel's dénouement, as well as its imaginary condition for being, is the redemption of white characters and readers accompanied by Indian ghosts:

> All of the Indians must have tragic features: tragic noses, eyes, and arms.
> Their hands and fingers must be tragic when they reach for tragic food.
>
> The hero must be a half-breed, half white and half Indian, preferably
> from a horse culture. He should often weep alone. That is mandatory...
>
> ... White people must carry
> an Indian deep inside themselves. Those interior Indians are half-breed
>
> and obviously from horse cultures...
>
> There must be redemption, of course, and sins must be forgiven.
> For this, we need children. A white child and an Indian child, gender
> not important, should express deep affection in a childlike way.
>
> In the Great American Indian novel, when it is finally written,
> all of the white people will be Indians and all of the Indians will be ghosts.[241]

Andrew McCann links the ubiquitous rendition of the vanished or vanishing Aboriginal race with white Australians' desire to identify with the land. He argues that it is the writing of an Aboriginal tragedy (anticipating an Aboriginal extinction that has not yet arrived but inevitably will) that has allowed settlers to engage in a 'romance' with Australia, in which it is the settlers

[239] Jennifer Rutherford, *The Gauche Intruder: Freud, Lacan and the White Australian Fantasy* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2000), pp. 10-13.

[240] Andrew Lattas 'Aborigines and contemporary Australian nationalism: primordiality and the cultural politics of otherness' (1990), cited in Richard Broome, 'Historians, Aborigines and Australia: writing the national past' in Bain Attwood ed., *In the Age of Mabo* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996), p. 71.

[241] Sherman Alexie, 'How to Write the Great American Indian Novel', *The Summer of Black Widows* (New York: Hanging Loose Press, 1996), pp. 94-5.

who struggle, who sacrifice, who shape and are shaped by this harsh landscape.[242] Bennelong's tragedy, like the overarching tragedy of Aboriginal extinction, may be a 'melancholy footnote' to white history, but it is a footnote on which this history depends. As Frances Peters-Little observes, it is Aboriginal *history* that has been made to disappear by these narratives:

> Bennelong's children survived, as did a lot of Aboriginal people's children ... But they were told they were no longer Aboriginal because they didn't live in a certain way ... That's been the process of genocide. It's being told you're not what you are. They're around, they're everywhere.[243]

Bennelong's contribution to the romance of 'progress' is not always related to his suffering. His friendship with Governor Phillip, and its 'metaphorical clasping of hands, the black and the white',[244] has at times carried a hovering implication that this mateship or paternal-filial bond absolves the white hand for its dispossession of the black,[245] or even constitutes an agreement of some kind. A 1969 children's book created a clasping of hands in which a hand-over is very strongly implied. For a short time, Bennelong hates Phillip and the British for intruding and staying in his country; but he comes to understand that these strangers now own 'the land'. Bennelong broadcasts this to his people and works through the resentment that he feels as a result of this new reality. The book reaches an almost homoerotic pitch when Bennelong makes an (ahistorical) visit to Phillip's bedside as he convalesces after being speared at Manly:

> Phillip was in bed, but he received him, and for a few moments the two men were quite still – each regarding the other. Then both smiled – and Bennelong shot out his hand ... Their paths had crossed before; this time they met – and it was in friendship.[246]

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[242] Andrew McCann, 'Unknown Australia: Rosa Praed's Vanished Race', *Australian Literary Studies* 22, no.1 (May 2005), pp. 37-50; Andrew McCann, 'The Literature of Extinction', *Meanjin* 65, no. 1 (March 2006), pp. 48-54. Brantlinger has coined the term 'proleptic elegy' to show how this 'wished-for lack' has become a central part of nationalist celebration for 'settler' societies to the present. Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*, pp. 3, 189-90.

[243] Personal Communication with Frances Peters Little, cited in Ollie Smith and Diana Plater, *Raging partners: two worlds, one friendship* (Broome, W.A.: Magabala Books, 2000), p. 79.

[244] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, p. 37.

[245] The 1980s television series based on Dark's *The Timeless Land* often confronts us with Phillip's face looking lovingly towards Bennelong like a new father. *The timeless land: The early days of British settlement in Australia* [1980] (Australian Broadcasting Commission: Roadshow Entertainment, c2006), disc one. The notion that the two men exchanged names as 'a sign of their deep affection for each other', continues to circulate unaccompanied by comment on the nature of kin ties and their formal and political meanings for the Eora. See, for example, Melinda Hinkson, *Aboriginal Sydney: a guide to important places of the past and present* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2001), p. 7.

[246] Elizabeth M. Wilton, *The Unknown Land; a story of Captain Phillip and Bennelong* (Adelaide: Rigby Limited, 1969), p. 19.

Relinquishing his dream of seeing the next generation of boys become strong hunters, Bennelong sails to England with the virile Phillip never to return.[247] This narrative of assent and forgiveness implies a mutual understanding between Bennelong and Phillip that the Aboriginal epoch has passed with a peaceful handover to British Australians, in a historical movement which even Bennelong acknowledges as progress.

Like the rhetorical recruitment of the Opera House as a memorial for Bennelong, a number of popular and official stories create a similar sense of 'rightness' by finding that Bennelong, with his enthusiastic appreciation for British culture, is aptly commemorated by the continued growth of the nation. A 2005 children's book, for instance, includes a section dedicated to 'Bennelong today' in which an unproblematic continuity is drawn between Bennelong and the Opera House, and a raft of commercial and political ventures that have appropriated his name. 'On Sydney Harbour today', we are told, 'residents and tourists can enjoy luxury cruises in the motor yacht *MV Bennelong* on the waters once fished by Bennelong and the Wanghal people'. 'Bennelong lives on', apparently, through these various ways in which his name is 'honoured'.[248] The implications of this grafting of the goods of the present onto Bennelong's story are brought into sharp relief by John Birmingham, in his conclusion to *Leviathan: the unauthorised biography of Sydney*, where he imagines that the ghost of Phillip might return to see Sydney as it is now. Birmingham imagines he would 'shout him the most expensive lunch. I'd tell him that, all things considered, he'd done well ... The city he helped raise is one of the finest in the world'. But Birmingham flinches as the ghost asks him what has happened to the descendants of Aboriginal people he knew. Then he realises that if Phillip's apparition were to appear, it might be accompanied by Bennelong's. This Bennelong is not an 'inner-Indian' whose desires can be anticipated. He may not be satisfied by the naming of an electorate after him, or any other gesture of 'tribute' to his memory. Birmingham encounters him with some trepidation, he can't think of anything to say except an inadequate 'sorry' and stops short of trying to imagine what Bennelong's ghost might say in reply.[249] Here, as in Komunyakaa's poem, it is as if a loss of happy innocence in Australian history, sponsored by Bennelong, is being relinquished, 'I never knew I was so damn happy/ when we first met. Each memory/ returns like heartbreak's

[247] Wilton, *The Unknown Land*, p. 20; Similarly, Eleanor Dark, and the children's book which follows her story, create a fictional father for Bennelong who had seen Cook's ship, and who always wished that his son would travel in such a 'magic boat': 'It is the wish of my father, the wish of Wunbula, that I stay here with the white men. For one day Wunbula's wish will come true. Wunbula's son will travel in the magic boats, the magic boats of Wunbula's corroboree...', Endeavour Reading Programme, *Bennelong*, pp. 44-5.

[248] Sheppard, *The life of Bennelong: living in two cultures*, p.29.

[249] John Birmingham professed to want to write a happy, carefree history of the city he loves, but that is not what happened, to his own surprise he ended up producing what he calls a 'black armband biography', John Birmingham, *Leviathan: The unauthorised biography of Sydney* (Sydney: Random House, 1999), pp. 509-10.

boomerang./ You didn't tell me you were a scout,/ a bone pointer, a spy,/ someone to stand between new faces/ & gods.'[250] A contributor to the *First Australians* comments page also recoiled from the saccharine version of Bennelong's friendship with Phillip he had been taught as a child: 'We were never taught of these atrocities at school ... I do remember learning the charming story of the friendship between Philip and Bennelong – not so "charming" now.'[251] It is perhaps this rejection of a 'charming' colonial history that leads to an interpretation like McKew's and Bernard Smith's, in which Bennelong's obliteration must be recognised by the 'concerned conscience'.

Muldoon finds that for tragedy to transform the citizen and engage his sense of responsibility, a level of awareness is required: audience members must enter into a contract of sorts, in which they recognise their own participation in a theatrical or literary process in which they will be re-orientated towards the reality of their own lives.[252] The complex relationship of Bennelong's story with truth makes this self-awareness difficult to gain. As I have argued above, Bennelong's example has become not simply an ordinary truth, tied to evidence, but an allegorical truth of the kind which is perhaps better captured in drama than by historical investigation.[253] The problem is compounded as Bennelong's life is often narrated in the terms of the theatre, partly due to the location of the Opera House on Bennelong Point, and also the temptation to understand the early Sydney colony as a kind of 'stage' of history. In 1977, J.J. Healy undertook to flesh Bennelong out as a fully-fledged 'actor' on history's stage, where he had often been depicted contemptuously as a 'marionette' dressed up in English clothes.[254] He returns from

[250] Komunyakaa, 'Bennelong's Blues'. Henry Reynolds found many people he spoke with turning to examine the inadequacy of their own awareness of Australian history, they often 'believed their education should have provided the knowledge ... and hadn't done so. They felt let down, cheated, sold short', asking 'Why were they never told? Why didn't they know?' In response, he provided an account of his own gradual recognition of frontier conflict, repressive legislation and racist ideology in Australian pasts and presents, reflecting on how his research and his relocation to Townsville in 1965 had shaken his belief that 'Australia was a society that valued equality above all other virtues and was committed to a fair go for all', and forced him to relinquish the common notion, in which he found he had shared, that Australia had been peaceably settled. Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told?: A personal search for the truth about our history* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 2000), pp. 2-9, 135-8.

[251] ross mac from moorooka, 22nd October 2008, SBS First Australians website, Your Comments <http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/>, viewed 20 March 2009.

[252] Muldoon, 'Thinking Responsibility Differently', pp. 245, 248.

[253] Felicity Collins examines the question of what kind of truth can arise from fiction, allegory and film, and whether it can be admitted as 'historical truth'. She concludes that some aspects of the past, perhaps particularly traumatic ones, are examined to advantage via dramatic modes, and that these can create a constructive dialogue with more traditional historical forms of investigation. Felicity Collins, 'Historical fiction and the allegorical truth of colonial violence in The Proposition', *Cultural Studies Review* 14, no.1 (March 2008), pp. 55-71.

[254] Healy, 'A most tragic theme', pp. 30-1. Clendinnen too at times characterises the colony as a kind of tableau (as much as a particular entity bound by time and place) and refers to 'players' on the colonial stage. 'Enter Banleelon' is one of her chapter titles and when she discusses 'roles' available to Aboriginal people it is with a nod to the theatrical. Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, p. 277. A reviewer complemented Clendinnen, 'Watkin Tench, David Collins, and rarely discussed indigenous men such as Colbee and Bennelong take centre stage in a classic

London intoxicated by British culture, like an actor drunk on bright lights and applause, and unable to separate 'role' from reality. Healy wrote as if the historical Bennelong was a prophetic player, *acting out* a story that interpreted the future.[255] Hayden White's call to a circumspect and reflective use of dramatic tropes in history is perhaps even harder to hear than usual, and the distinction between theatre and life is muddied.

In 2001, the Melbourne Theatre Company and Indigenous performance group Jagera Jarjum staged a production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, reinterpreted as an exploration of reconciliation. Shakespeare's character Caliban was re-modelled on Bennelong, played by Indigenous writer, director and actor Glenn Shea. The conclusion of the play is ambiguous for Bennelong, he leaves the stage perhaps unreconciled, perhaps deaf to the cries of the Ancestors.[256] One reviewer made a revealing assessment of this ambitious project:

> ...Bennelong may have seemed like a good idea initially as Caliban's model but it effectively straitjacketed the actor Glenn Shea, preventing him from giving life to the character the play text itself offers and sending him offstage to an uncertain freedom, especially with Bennelong's tragic, alcohol addicted end in mind.[257]

While Shea's performance may or may not have been constrained by his understanding of the historical Bennelong, the reviewer's understanding of the play was certainly constrained by hers. Before she saw the play she knew, presumably from retellings of his story like those we have been examining, that Bennelong died an alienated alcoholic. Thus, even as an experienced theatre-goer perceiving him on a fresh stage, she struggles to accept a different dramatic outcome for Bennelong. Unaware of the 'theatre' already inherent in the story of Bennelong with which she is familiar, the reviewer could not be touched by the cathartic power of Bennelong's appearance in *The Tempest*. In Muldoon's terms, she had become a spectator rather than a citizen.[258]

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drama of human will,' Ani Fox, 'Dancing with Strangers: Europeans and Australians at First Contact, by Inga Clendinnen', *Journal of World History* 17, no. 4 (2006), pp. 456-58.

[255] Healy, 'A most tragic theme', p. 32.

[256] Tweg, 'Dream On', p. 51.

[257] Tweg, 'Dream On', p. 51.

[258] Muldoon, 'Thinking Responsibility Differently', pp. 245, 248. A similar rejection of new dramatic possibilities for Bennelong is apparent in the media response to Enoch's *I Am Eora*. One article cites actor Jack Charles' affinity with his character, Bennelong, and Charles' recovery from addiction and incarceration at the same time as reasserting Bennelong's ongoing alienation (where the play itself seems to suggest otherwise): 'Charles said that as a man who had lived through addiction, jail time and racist abuse, he had a deep understanding of Bennelong. However, while

Bennelong, hero and fallen man

Aristotle felt that the tragic hero needed to be 'highly renowned and prosperous', so that his story would be of some consequence, but also be enough 'like ourselves', the flawed human audience, to make us sympathetic to his plight, partly through fear that the same kind of disaster could strike one of us.[259] In a culture in which non-Indigenous Australians compete with each other to be at the centre of narratives of victimhood and struggle, Aristotle's famous and wealthy hero might elicit anything but sympathy.[260] Indeed Bennelong has been criticised for arrogance and ambition, but much more often he is pushed off the bottom of Aristotle's scale, as a protagonist that we might pity or even despise, as we are frequently told his contemporaries did. Bennelong is by definition not 'like ourselves' if he seems essentially weak, primitive or corruptible, as he does if the audience accepts the racial or cultural determinism we have seen in so many histories above. 'Classical amateurs' in the colony toyed with the notion of sympathising with Aborigines by semi-facetiously identifying Bennelong and his peers with the most ancient of Greek heroes.[261] 'Atticus', writing to the *Sydney Gazette* in 1817, compared Bennelong with a Theseus who lived in a time before history, went naked, and engaged in violence against women and children. Nevertheless, he made Bennelong's hyper-primitive difference clear by reminding the reader more than once of his difference in colour.[262] Isadore Brodsky, apparently missing the sense of absurdity infusing 'Atticus'' comparison, felt it necessary to redeem Theseus from this debasing association, declaring that (while each was superior to his countrymen as 'Atticus' had claimed), 'where Theseus scaled the great heights, Bennelong only plumbed the depths'.[263] Contempt for Bennelong has pervaded his story. Peter Read remembers learning via history materials at primary school in the 1950s that Bennelong was a 'white man's dog'.[264]

Bennelong died a lost soul, Charles said he had "jumped off" his addictions to become an elder and "law man" within his Melbourne community.' Lissa Christopher, 'Black perspective sheds light on early Sydney', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9th January 2012, p. 4.

[259] Aristotle, *Poetics*, quoted in Gordon M. Sayre, *The Indian Chief as Tragic Hero: Native resistance and the Literatures of America, from Moctezuma to Tecumseh* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p. 3.

[260] Ann Curthoys, 'Expulsion, exodus and exile in white Australian historical mythology', *Journal of Australian Studies* 23, no. 61 (1999), pp. 2-3, 6-8.

[261] *Sydney Gazette*, 13th January 1805, p. 2; 14th July 1805, p. 2; 29th March 1817, pp. 1-2.

[262] *Sydney Gazette*, 29th March 1817, pp. 1-2.

[263] That this comparison was made in jest is signalled at the beginning of the article where 'Atticus' makes fun of Napoleon for identifying himself with both Caesar and Alexander. Sydney Gazette, 29th March 1817, pp. 1-2; Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, p. 79.

[264] Personal communication with Peter Read, 19th October 2011.

Australian sympathies may have an egalitarian tenor, but moral fibre, constancy, self-reliance and an anti-servile disposition are perhaps no less important for their engagement than the 'greatness' Aristotle required.[265] Bennelong's self-respect and respect-worthiness are often reflected on in stories about his younger contemporary, Bungaree. With his king plate and cast off fancy dress, as a mimic and performer, and as a drunk, Bungaree was Bernard Smith's archetypal 'fool king'. He perhaps outdid Bennelong both in genius and in self-abasement, but at the same time reflected both these 'achievements' back onto Bennelong.[266] F. D. McCarthy's short 1966 biography of Bungaree was dripping with contempt as it described him as the leader of a 'pathetic remnant' of Aboriginal life that constituted the 'township Aboriginals', a position he held not by virtue of 'tribal authority' but through his adaptability, his talent for 'facile exhibitionism' and the 'completely fictitious' title of king.[267] He is a parody of Aristotle's royal yet accessible tragic hero, losing sympathy both because of his self-aggrandising posturing, and because that posturing has no basis. Phillip O'Neill's exploration of the mixture of humour and seriousness in Bungaree's performances and the presence of power in his impersonations, throws into sharp relief the will of McCarthy and others to despise him, and to disqualify him – in spite of (or because of) his fame – from being a hero whose story might shake the foundations of the colony.[268]

To engage an audience on an ethical level a hero may indeed be a victim of forces beyond his control and lose control of himself, but ultimately, he must take responsibility for the choices he has made.[269] A puppet opera conceived and performed for the bicentenary provided a rare opportunity for Bennelong to do just this. Two singers stood to side stage next to the orchestra, while life-sized puppets with jointed arms and legs and mobile eyes played Bennelong and a range of supporting characters including Phillip, King George, and Gooroobarabooloo, Bennelong's second wife. The Bennelong puppet, pictured in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, appears erect and dignified, as well as somewhat knowing and conspiratorial.[270] An epithet that

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[265] Curthoys, 'Expulsion, exodus and exile', pp. 6-8.

[266] See, for example: Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, p. 273; Smith, 'The Spectre of Truganini', p. 37; Moorhouse, *Sydney*, pp. 47-51.

[267] F. D. McCarthy, 'Bungaree (?–1830)' [1966], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bungaree-1848/text2141>, accessed 28 April 2012.

[268] Phillip O'Neill, 'Putting the English in Drag: Bungaree's Theatre of Mimicry as a Response to Colonialism' in Dieter Riemenschneider and Geoffrey V. Davis eds., *Aratjara: Aboriginal Culture and Literature in Australia* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 69-86.

[269] Muldoon, 'Thinking Responsibility Differently', pp. 249-50.

[270] Jill Sykes, 'Bennelong makes a point', p. 81. The article also, however, provided the usual old version of Bennelong's story, referring to a 'clash between cultures' and describing the protagonist: 'Bennelong was, of course, the Aboriginal introduced to white man's ways by Governor Phillip, whose extraction of this handsome

Brodsky provided, 'the most observed of all observers', is evocative of its facial expression.[271] A reviewer felt that one of the production's main successes was that:

> Bennelong was as much responsible for his fate as the great white father ... Whether this was truly so or not, it helps to put Bennelong out of range of the kind of sentimental condescension that would insist on picturing him simply as a victim. This Bennelong knows how to exploit his own charm, understands how to use his white sponsors for his own purposes and, at the end, refuses the unction of pity.[272]

The reviewer felt it was partly the production's 'humorous exaggeration of very serious matters' that allowed it clarity and incisiveness.[273] It was a satirical or tragi-comedy, akin in some ways to Willmot's *Pemulwuy* in which the occasional indignity is not damning, and the divide between success and failure itself is interrogated. Swept up in the success of the performance, this reviewer whimsically suggested that Bennelong might still act as an ambassador, in this guise bringing contemporary music by Australian composers to the Australian public.[274]

When understood, as he so often is, as a lurching, querulous drunkard at the time of his death, Bennelong fails to regain the respect of the audience as Othello did, for example, when (recovering a sense of perspective at last) he asks of Lodovico 'Speak of me as I am ... of one that loved not wisely but too well'. Respectable readers, it is assumed, indulge only in moderation, and have no connection with a sodden Bennelong of 'diminished responsibility'. There is one place, however, where Bennelong's drinking is intimately associated with personal responsibility. Benelong's Haven is a 'place where Aboriginal people with alcohol and drug problems can come together to undertake treatment.'[275] Staff and residents believe, like many of our storytellers, that Bennelong 'epitomised the fate of other Aboriginals who have succumbed to alcohol since the British landed in 1788'.[276] But here, his story functions as an

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young original Australian from his environment left him in limbo between two societies. He became acceptable to neither, and died a drunkard.'

[271] Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile*, p. 10.

[272] Roger Covell, 'No room for pity in black puppet history', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12th October 1988, 'Arts', p. 22.

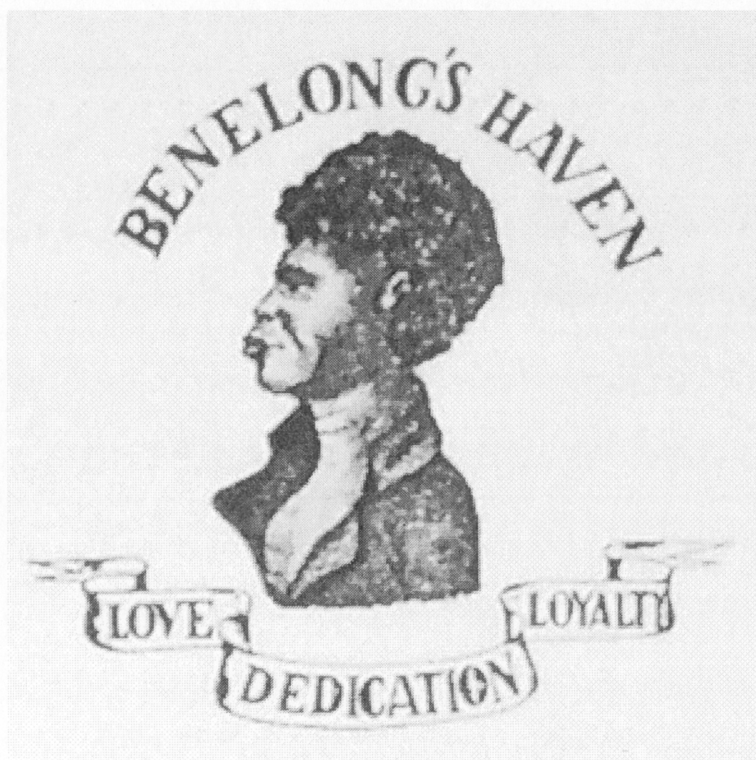
[273] Covell, 'No room for pity in black puppet history', p. 22.

[274] Covell, 'No room for pity in black puppet history', p. 22.

[275] Richard Chenhall, *Benelong's Haven: Recovery from drug and alcohol abuse within an Aboriginal Australian Residential Treatment Centre* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), pp. 1-2. Benelong's Haven was established in 1973 by Val Bryant in Marrickville and now located at Kinchela Creek on the north coast of New South Wales.

[276] Miller, 'A Haven for alcoholics ditching their addiction', pp. 602-5.

'archetypal alcoholic's story', as a starting point for participants' own recovery and regeneration. A 1982 profile of the program features a small portrait of Bennelong, wreathed with the motto 'Love, Dedication, Loyalty', drawn by a former resident and used as a letterhead for the organisation.[277] At Benelong's Haven, Bennelong is part of a community of fellow sufferers taking responsibility for their problems, and working towards a better life. If he is shamed here, it is through a socially re-integrative process where exposure leads to mutual acceptance, and where Bennelong and his storytellers share shame and move forward together.



2.5 Pop Patterson, Letterhead for Benelong's Haven, featuring a portrait of Bennelong based closely on Samuel John Neele's 1795 engraving [Journal of the Australian Medical Association 2, no. 12 (December 1982), p. 605].

In brief biographical narratives, Bennelong's alcoholism often functions as both a cause of early death and an epithet, as in a *Sydney Morning Herald* article which recounts that Tench described Bennelong as 'stoutly made' with a 'defiant' countenance, 'yet he died an alcoholic in 1813 aged 48'.[278] The effect is very different when the order of these two elements is reversed, as in the *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, which employs very similar wording, but

[277] Miller, 'A Haven for alcoholics ditching their addiction', pp. 602-5. The piece also recounts that one of the residents sang a song about Bennelong as part of his contribution.

[278] Stephens, 'Bennelong, the first of the stolen, comes back'.

mentions his alcoholism first and then allows Tench the last word on this 'bold, intrepid' man.[279] Here, as at Benelong's Haven, Bennelong perhaps becomes a 'survivor', a man whose stature is shaped but not reduced by his acknowledged alcoholism and the pain and loss he has experienced.[280] When Bennelong is a survivor, rather than a victim of colonisation, there is perhaps far greater potential for the exposure of his pain and loss to raise a corresponding sense of shame in his storytellers and their audiences. As Rosamund Dalziell finds, shame can lead to sympathetic emotions and social action, where guilt, with its direct link to blame, gives a reader the choice between accepting a burden and rejecting it on the grounds that he was not directly involved in the act at hand.[281]

Apology and atonement

Bennelong's tragedy treads an uncertain course towards atonement. We have seen above some of the effects of various combinations of misfortune, inevitability, or Aboriginal culpability; the understanding of Bennelong's tragedy as one of cultural temptation or incompatibility, to the exclusion of material and political factors; the use of Bennelong as a historiographical go-between who hands over Australia to the British, or simply provides an answer to our questions about what went wrong right back there at Australia's beginning. When all this is viewed from the high moral ground of tragedy, non-Indigenous storytellers do risk making Bennelong's tragedy merely enjoyable, a speech given in their own defence and not a call for justice in the present.[282] As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma recently observed:

> The Australian community had become so accustomed to stories of Indigenous disadvantage that they had become immune to it, and came to expect it. ... the community and government have come to believe that this situation is intractable, ... and for some people, the fault of Indigenous peoples

[279] David Horton (ed), *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994), p.118.

[280] A survivor, as the members of the stolen generations are at times depicted. See for example, Stolen Generations Alliance website, 'Welcome to the Stolen Generations Alliance', Figjam Design 2000-2010 <http://www.sgalliance.org.au/website/index.php> viewed 13th January 2012; The Stolen Generations Testimonies Foundation website, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com/index.php/about_stolen_generations.html>, viewed 17th March 2012.

[281] Rosamund Dalziell, *Shameful autobiographies: shame in contemporary Australian autobiographies and culture* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1999), pp. 1-11.

[282] Casey, 'Referendums and reconciliation marches', pp. 137-148. John Frow discusses the meaning of 'apology' in the context of the stolen generations – acknowledging the suffering of others may involve the taking on of the responsibility of transforming present relationships, or it may simply strengthen the listener, '"forgive me," it says, "I was wrong": the apologist gains honour, and nothing changes', John Frow, 'A Politics of Stolen Time', *Meanjin* 57, no. 2 (1998), pp. 362-3.

> themselves ... So while I firmly believe that these stories of disadvantage and dysfunction should be told, I also believe that they should not be told just for the sake of it.[283]

Re-telling Bennelong's story in the present as an allegory for Indigenous failure is gratuitous. However well intentioned, it can end up simply indulging the 'industrial deafness' of other Australians.[284] The repetition of Bennelong's failure at times becomes a 'repeated act of colonisation' too. When the events associated with British colonisation are reiterated in the present in the guise of misfortune, tragedy becomes farce, as in Marx's famous dictum – a story of someone else's trauma told with indifference.[285]

The 'concerned conscience' has gone on to be a major force in Australian history making and politics since Bernard Smith evoked it in 1980, heavily involved in Reconciliation, and in the replacement of John Howard with a new Prime Minister who would make an apology to the Stolen Generations within a few months of his election. Since the 1970s, the retelling of Bennelong's story as a tragedy has reflected a disaster that continues to unfold for the concerned conscience in the present: a realisation of the continued culpability of non-Aboriginal Australians in the destruction of Aboriginal lives, lifeways, culture and society. But, as Bennelong's tragedy was once used by the ardent monarchist Brodsky to reassure white Australians that Aborigines did not merit equality, it has also held its reassurances for the concerned conscience, along with an uncomfortable continuity with old narratives of Aboriginal death, decline and corruption. Gratuitous lamentations about the long-dead Bennelong's fall into disgrace, and the irreversible rupture in cross-cultural relations that this is held to signify, provide a large target for accusations of 'conspicuous compassion', a cheap expenditure of tears and talk, which obviates 'sensible action'.[286]

The renewed conservative claims on Australian history over the past decade have seen Bennelong adopted by the Bennelong Society, a conservative think-tank on Aboriginal policy

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[283] Tom Calma, Essentials for Social Justice Speeches, 'Reform', delivered 20th February 2008, Australian Human Rights Commission, updated 3 February 2009, <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/speeches/social_justice/2008/essentials_reform20080220.html>, viewed 17th February 2009.

[284] Calma, Essentials for Social Justice Speeches, 'Reform'.

[285] Jace Weaver, *Other Words: American Indian Literature, Law, and Culture* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), p. 142; Maria Tumarkina, 'First as a tragedy, second as a farce: traumascapes, memory and the curse of indifference', *Overland* 175 (Winter 2004), pp. 24-6. Marx cited by Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?*, p. 124.

[286] Brett Mason, 'The tragedy of conspicuous compassion', *Party Room* 1 (Winter 2005), p. 6. *Party Room* is a Liberal Party periodical.

founded in 2001, as a poster boy for assimilation. The Society's Bennelong readily perceived the 'benefits' of the British lifestyle and is deemed to have succeeded in British terms, as the Society would like Aboriginal people to do in the present and future.[287] Bennelong was a 'master of adaptation and improvisation', who, in collaboration with Phillip, 'devised' the 'peaceful coming-in of the Eora' to Sydney in 1790.[288] The Society finds it necessary to dissociate itself from Bennelong's latter years, however. Special care is taken on the Society's website to explain that Bennelong's drinking problem began during his time in England; his drinking while he was engaged in diplomatic work was under control – 'good' social drinking.[289] Eve Vincent attended the Society's 2006 conference, and gave an account of her experience in *Arena Magazine*. She did not find the conference a comfortable place to be. It would have been easy just to label the organisation 'simplistic, nationalist, intensely ideological, and ... racist', but she wanted to witness the 'belonging' that its members feel and to understand their 'commitment, zeal and sense of urgency'.[290] Most difficult for Vincent was the barely submerged implication that the Aboriginal realm when distinctive, or 'segregated' from 'Australian civilisation', is 'depraved, disordered, sick, illiterate, brutal and addicted'. Delegates derided and shouted down 'romantic' notions of self-determination and the sustainability of remote communities, and aligned themselves with an ideology-free pragmatism.[291] Vincent avers that she does not wish to adopt Bennelong, as the Society has, as an 'exemplary or predictive' figure, but feels bound to point out that two respected historians, Langton and Clendinnen, have found that Bennelong lost his standing in both the Aboriginal and British communities on his return from England and died an alcoholic and a 'nuisance' – he was not necessarily the ideal role model the Society holds him up to be. She finds most disturbing 'the relative terms – civilised, savage – that the Society wants to invest anew with power and meaning'.[292] But as we have seen, the evolving interpretation of Bennelong's story as a cultural tragedy over the past seventy years has helped to maintain the relevance of these value-laden poles of civilised and savage. The Society's Bennelong represents a self-conscious response to the down-beat, dead-end of Bennelong's tragedy. It is in the

[287] Gary Johns, 'The Failure of Aboriginal Separatism', presented to the Workshop 2000: 'Aboriginal Policy: Failure, Reappraisal and Reform', The Bennelong Society, <http://www.bennelong.com.au/conferences/pdf/Johns2000.pdf>, viewed 17 February 2009; Dirk van Dissel, 'Woollawarre Bennelong, the Bush Politician (1789 – 1792)', The Bennelong Society, <http://www.bennelong.com.au/articles/bennelongbio.php>, viewed 17 February 2009.

[288] Dirk van Dissel, 'Woollawarre Bennelong'. Bennelong negotiates a rather formal agreement with Phillip 'that the Eora would put an end to active resistance and live on friendly terms, and in return they wouldn't be forcibly captured, manacled or held against their will and could come and go from Sydney Cove as they pleased'.

[289] Dirk van Dissel, 'Woollawarre Bennelong'.

[290] Eve Vincent, 'Who is Bennelong?', *Arena Magazine* 89 (June - July 2007), p. 47.

[291] Vincent, 'Who is Bennelong?', pp. 47-8.

[292] Vincent, 'Who is Bennelong?', p. 48.

interests of the Society and its supporters to hold a monopoly on 'sensible', constructive action, the solution to the 'Aboriginal problem', which those who have promoted self-determination have only further compounded.[293] The Society's no-nonsense go-ahead Bennelong endorses Aboriginal participation in the mainstream capitalist economy, leaving soft questions about culture and history, loss, shame and responsibility behind.

The telling of Bennelong's tragedy in the years following the 'History Wars' might be read as a re-assertion of the relevance of mutual grieving, apology, atonement and the need for reconciliation on a number of levels, not only the 'practical' level offered by the Bennelong Society. The *First Australians* series aired various interpretations of Bennelong's life. Peter Read's Bennelong, for example, 'goes out' of Sydney Cove in his later years because he has seen all that Europeans have to offer, in a situation of relative equality. He ultimately rejects it, choosing his own life like the traveller Gulliver, who sallies forth into the world, encounters difference, difficulty and adventure, but returns to his own society and manages to re-integrate himself – changed by his new experiences, but not broken by them.[294] Inga Clendinnen had the last word on Bennelong, though, saying: 'to see that light-footed man, that man of so much political skill and resilience so reduced is, I think, tragic.'[295] In the book which accompanied the series, Marcia Langton affirmed Clendinnen's interpretation, giving Bennelong a central place in the 'dance' with the colonists. When Bennelong returned from England he was:

> left to survive in the profoundly changed circumstances of his country. He had changed, too, not least because of his alliance with Phillip. At the end of his days, his mood of increasing bitterness and alcoholic decline reduced him from his warrior's countenance to a weak, defeated man.[296]

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[293] See, for example, Gary Johns in conversation with Paul Comrie-Thompson and Warren Mundine, 'Nugget Coombs revisited', Counterpoint, ABC Radio National, broadcast 23rd April 2007, transcript available at, <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/counterpoint/nugget-coombs-revisited/3233406>, accessed 8 April 2012.

[294] We leave Gulliver settled to contented reflection in his 'little garden at Redriff', reconciling himself gradually to life in close quarters with humans once more, Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Part IV, chapter 12 (ebooks@Adelaide, 2007) Adelaide University < http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/swift/jonathan/s97g/>, viewed 4 March 2009.

[295] Nowra and Perkins, *First Australians*, Episode One. At least one viewer, whose thoughts were made more public than most via a review of the series in the *The Age*, found Clendinnen's account the most satisfying, describing Bennelong as: 'the remarkable 18th century Aborigine, an audacious wag who was kidnapped by Governor Arthur Phillip and became his interpreter and mediator. Bennelong learnt to speak English, lodged with the governor, and even sailed to England in 1792 where he charmed London society. But Bennelong died in ignominy, a man caught between cultures,' Gabriella Coslovich, 'Uncovering History in Black and Whitewash', *The Age*, 25th October 2008, Insight, p. 9.

[296] Nowra and Perkins, *First Australians*, Episode One.

In *First Australians*, Bennelong's story appears among many stories, of hope, friendship, massacre and cruel institutions, death and pain, survival and celebration across the continent, and across more than two centuries. In choosing once more to follow the well-worn pathway of Bennelong's political and personal obliteration, did Langton and Clendinnen mean to come together around Bennelong's story to grieve for generations of talented Aboriginal men cut off by war, incarceration, accident and suicide? In implying, as so many have done before them, that Bennelong was at least partly a victim of his own success, what was it that they meant to say to the young men and women who follow?

Friendship Beyond the Grave

The opening episode of the *First Australians* television series concluded with a story of friendship, jointly told by Wiradjuri Elder Bill Allen, and David Suttor, owner of *Brucedale*, a cattle farming property near Bathurst. Suttor introduced his great-great-grandfather William as a seventeen year old, ambitious to succeed in the new world he saw opening up to him as more extensive settlement was permitted beyond the Great Dividing Range in the early 1820s. Allen introduced his ancestor Windradyne as a fiery young warrior, family-orientated and strong in his culture, who met these newcomers with dignity. Wiradjuri people guided William and his father George Suttor to land with good water, and *Brucedale* was established. William was left to manage the property with instructions from his father to respect the Wiradjuri. He took these instructions to heart, learning some of the Wiradjuri language. When violence ignited under the pressure of rapidly increasing settler and stock numbers in Wiradjuri country, the ties between the Suttor family and Windradyne and his people held.

The flashpoint came when a farmer offered Wiradjuri people some of his potatoes, and then the following day, when some of the same people returned to help themselves, he rounded up an armed posse to help him 'defend' his crop. Several of Windradyne's family members were killed. Soon afterwards, he and a group of warriors surrounded William Suttor's hut, suddenly, in the night. William came to the door and spoke with Windradyne in the Wiradjuri language. After extended discussion, the warriors departed. Thirteen other settlers were speared and burned to death in their huts over the following month, and the stock of many farmers scattered, but *Brucedale* was spared. The settlers retaliated, killing Wiradjuri men, women and children. Governor Brisbane declared Martial Law in the Bathurst district on 14th August 1824, and the Wiradjuri faced military force, as well as continued action by landowners and their servants. Eventually, perhaps recognising the toll the conflict was having on his people, Windradyne and one-hundred-and-thirty other warriors walked to Parramatta to attend the governor's annual Aboriginal conference and negotiated peace with Governor Brisbane. Windradyne returned to live on his own land, often at *Brucedale*, and was buried there in the Wiradjuri way. The story closes with Bill Allen calling for recognition of the harm and pain caused on both sides of the conflict, saying that we are still learning how to live together. David Suttor thanked the Wiradjuri for their mercy on that fateful night in 1824, without their goodwill, he said, 'we might not be here today'.[1]

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[1] Louis Nowra and Rachel Perkins, First Australians (Special Broadcasting Service: 2008), Episode One, broadcast Sunday 12th October, 2008.

As the voices of Bill Allen and David Suttor entwine, this story of friendship takes on a redeeming quality and seems to transcend the larger narrative of war of which it is a small part. The viewer is left with a sense of hope – perhaps difference can be overcome through a common humanity. The cross-cultural friendship of the 1820s is mirrored in the contemporary bond between the two storytellers, brought together by a shared history.

Before the reconciliation decade, when William Suttor and Windradyne featured in pioneer stories or histories of the Wiradjuri wars, their friendship was not a necessary or central element of the story. In a *Daily Mirror* special feature of 1956, William starred as a gallant yet earthy giant of history, a quintessential Australian, pursuing bushrangers and becoming wealthy, yet always answering his own front door. He could speak the native language fluently and move through the bush like an Aboriginal man.[2] It is implied that Wiradjuri people looked up to him as much as the reader is encouraged to, but no Aboriginal people are named.[3] Bruce Elder's bloody and shaming anti-bicentennial history, *Blood on the Wattle*, features Windradyne as a 'martyr', a warrior, and finally a 'broken man'. The Wiradjuri war and massacres of the 1820s form a damning episode in the armed conquest of the continent, and the story of Windradyne and his people is complicated neither by friendship nor by the survival of the Wiradjuri.[4] But the Suttor family continued to commemorate the family friendship with Windradyne and his people. Successive generations dedicated monuments in literature, in concrete and in law, adapting the story as the foundations of Australian history shifted beneath it, and as the meaning of friendship itself evolved. Wiradjuri people, remembering their connections to Windradyne as an important ancestor, and cultural and historical figure, have renewed the friendship with the Suttor family. From the 1990s, the particular friendship between William and Windradyne has come into focus as a reconciliation story.

Windradyne's grave is at the centre of the story and the friendship. He is believed to be buried on a rise above Winburndale Rivulet a little over a kilometre from the *Brucedale*

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[2] 'Pioneer who farmed at 16 owned 10,000 acres at 30', *Daily Mirror*, 24th May 1956, p. 27; and substantially reprinted as 'Pastoral Prosperity', *Parade* (August 1957), pp. 20-1.

[3] He earned a place as a 'legend among the tribes for courage and justice', *Daily Mirror*, 24th May 1956, p. 27. See also Archdeacon Oakes, 'Story of the Bathurst Pioneers, No. 2 – the Suttor Centenary', *The Daily Telegraph*, 4th November 1922, in which George Suttor received acclaim as a fine upstanding man: loyal (to Bligh); pious; and principled amid great treachery and upheaval in the colony. A family history published in 1994 follows suit in its focus on the 'character, personality and style' of William Suttor as a 'Pioneer of the West'. Aboriginal people are most often referred to as 'hostile' or dangerous, though Windradyne receives brief coverage as an 'Aboriginal Warrior-Hero', Judith and Horace Norton, *Dear William: The Suttors of Brucedale - Principally the Life and Times of William Henry Suttor Senior* (Sydney: The Suttor Publishing Committee, 1994), pp. x, 29, 31, 33, 37.

[4] Bruce Elder, *Blood on the wattle: massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians since 1788* (Frenchs Forest, NSW: Child & Associates, 1988), pp. 44-53. See also 'The black war: when Aboriginals were hunted, poisoned and shot in order to be taught a lesson', *Living Australia* 40 (Kensington NSW: Bay Books, 1985), pp. 19-21; Al Grassby and Marji Hill, *Six Australian battlefields: the Black resistance to invasion and the White struggle against colonial oppression* (North Ryde, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1988), pp. 134-168.

homestead where two distinct grave mounds or tumuli rest side by side. This form of grave is recognised as particular to the western plains and to Wiradjuri burial practices. Surveyor General John Oxley, leaving the Lachlan River to return to Bathurst on his first expedition into the 'interior' of New South Wales in July 1817, documented a burial tumulus under which a man's body was buried in sitting position, wrapped in a possum-skin cloak, facing east. Two of the nearby trees were stripped of bark on the side facing the tomb, and marked with 'curious characters deeply cut upon them'.[5] Commemorative carved trees, if they did also mark the graves at *Brucedale*, no longer stood there in the 1960s.[6] A ground-penetrating radar survey carried out in 2010 detected signs that the remains of at least three people lie within the two graves. A third burial tumulus rests beside an ancient, and now deceased, yellow-box tree nearby. This area may be an old Wiradjuri burial ground from pre-contact times, or a cemetery in which Wiradjuri people who worked on *Brucedale* were buried.[7] The graves are surrounded by a rich commemorative landscape which continues to evolve, reflecting the developing relationship between the Suttor family, local Wiradjuri people, and the National Parks service, which administers the Voluntary Conservation Agreement signed in 2000 to protect the cultural values of Windradyne's grave.

A Family Heirloom

Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II had visited Bathurst on 12th February 1954. The official souvenir booklet prepared by Bathurst City Council described the establishment of Bathurst as a peaceful affair, and referred to the Macquarie Memorial Cairn (erected 1930), marking the site of that governor's founding of Bathurst, as a 'sacred spot' around which 'Bathurstians' gather annually to tell the story of their city's beginnings.[8] The one official Wiradjuri presence took the form of a painting of Yuranigh (guide to Surveyor Mitchell) on

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[5] The party disturbed the grave out of curiosity, after which 'the whole was carefully re-interred, and restored as near as possible to the station in which it was found', John Oxley, *Journal of the Two Expeditions into the Interior of New South Wales, 1817-1818*, Volume 1 (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1964), pp. 138-141. Jane Piper, whose family lived on a property neighbouring *Brucedale*, also described the burial of Wiradjuri people in a seated position, wrapped in a cloak with their own tools and weapons, under an ant nest shaped tumulus presided over by carved trees, Papers of P. J. Gresser, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies manuscript collection, MS21/2, pp. 1-2. A.W. Howitt noted the Wiradjuri practice of wrapping the body of the deceased in a skin rug, depositing some of the deceased's belongings in the grave, and covering it over with sticks and bark and then earth, as Oxley had described. He did not mention the burial mound or tumulus, but noted the marking of surrounding trees, A.W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1904), p. 466.

[6] Amateur archaeologist and historian Percy Gresser, who played a highly significant role in developing this story and Aboriginal history of the Bathurst area more generally, recorded in 1964 that there was 'not a tree standing' in the vicinity of the graves, reporting that they had all been ringbarked and used for firewood many years earlier, Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/3/a, pp. 119-20.

[7] Percy Gresser canvassed both possibilities, believing that there was more evidence for the latter, Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/3/a, pp. 119-120. Wiradjuri Elder Bill Allen believes that the grave beside the yellow-box tree may be where Windradyne's father is buried, Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011. This grave is outside the conservation area.

[8] Bathurst City Council, *Official souvenir programme of the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II ... to Bathurst* (Bathurst, NSW: Bathurst City Council, 1954).

the decorated roadway which led the Queen's vehicle up to the 'Welcome Gates'.[9] In the Queen's wake came Anzac Day. In town, returned servicemen marched with the Bathurst District Band and wreaths were laid at the War Memorial Carillion. The mayor made a solemn speech, the national anthem was sung, an Anzac day sermon was given in the Cathedral, and two war memorials were unveiled at St Stephens Presbyterian church.[10] On the same day (or perhaps the following one)[11] a bus-load of Bathurst Historical Society members gathered at *Brucedale* around a sturdy rectangular concrete plinth alongside the grave mound on the hill above Winburndale Rivulet where Windradyne is believed to be buried. Following an address recounting the life of Windradyne, Mrs Roy Suttor drew aside the Australian flag to reveal a bronze plaque inscribed:[12]

THE RESTING PLACE OF WINDRADENE, ALIAS SATURDAY
THE LAST CHIEF OF THE ABORIGINALS.
FIRST A TERROR, BUT LATER A FRIEND TO THE SETTLERS
DIED OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN A TRIBAL ENCOUNTER 1835.
'A TRUE PATRIOT'
This Plaque was unveiled by Mrs Roy Suttor of Brucedale
25th April, 1954.
Bathurst District Historical Society

Precisely what moved Roy Suttor, grandson of William Suttor, and his wife to celebrate Windradyne's memory at this time is unknown. They may have felt a responsibility to mark the pair of fragile and slowly sinking earth graves before they ceased to have a physical presence in the landscape. The commemoration may have been partly inspired by the 'pilgrimage' lead by the neighbouring Orange Historical Society in 1950 to the grave of Yuranigh, to mark the centenary of his death.[13] Whatever its immediate inspiration, the

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[9] Bathurst City Council, *Official souvenir programme*.

[10] 'Solemn scenes at local Anzac day celebrations', *The Western Times*, 26th April 1954, pp. 1-2.

[11] Contrary to the memorial's inscription, Percy Gresser states that the ceremony took place on the 26th April, *The Western Times*, 31st August 1962, p. 7.

[12] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/3/a, pp. 117-18.

[13] The party laid a boomerang shaped wreath on Yuranigh's grave, marked by four commemorative carved trees, and a stone engraved to Mitchell's specifications in 1852 (replaced with a replica circa 1900). Percy Gresser wrote about the two commemorations back-to-back, perhaps suggesting that one had been prompted by the other, Percy Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *Western Times*, 31st August 1962, p. 7. The owner of the property on which the grave was located erected a fence around it, and later donated the land to Cabonne Shire Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 'Yuranigh's Aboriginal Grave Historical Site: Plan of Management', July 1999, p. 7. Jock Suttor, who grew up on the family property at Wyagdon, spent much of his adult life travelling and living in Asia. On one of his visits home in the early 1920s, he had attempted to locate the grave of Georgie Suttor, an Aboriginal man who had taken the family name, so that he could erect a memorial. Ruth Teale, 'Suttor, John Bligh (1859–1925)' [1976], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/suttor-john-bligh-4937/text7733>, accessed 28 April 2012; Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/2, pp. 29-30.

commemoration stands out as 'unexpected'.[14] Ken Inglis finds that memorials of any kind to Aboriginal people were sparse in the mid-twentieth century, and he notes: 'On the few monuments to European victims of spears and clubs, the inscriptions were civil, not military, categorising the killing as murder.'[15] The deaths of Aboriginal service men and women remained largely unacknowledged until the 1980s, and it was only at this time that historians and Aboriginal campaigners began publicly to make an explicit connection between the fallen in overseas wars and Aboriginal people who fell in defence of their country against invasion by the British. In 1981, Henry Reynolds asked:

> Do we ... make room for the Aboriginal dead on our memorials, cenotaphs, boards of honour and even in the pantheon of national heroes? If they did not die fighting for Australia as such they fell defending their homelands, their sacred sites, their way of life.[16]

Chilla Bulbeck found in 1991, 'there are no memorials which respond to Henry Reynolds' suggestion'.[17] The meaning of the inscription, dedicated amid the commemorative mood of Anzac Day, is further explored below. First, it is important to look back at the story of friendship that Roy Suttor had inherited, by examining the 'monuments' left to the friendship by previous generations.

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[14] Peter Read, *A Hundred Years War: the Wiradjuri people and the state* (Sydney: Australian National University Press, 1988), p. 11.

[15] Ken Inglis and Jock Phillips, 'War Memorials in Australia and New Zealand' in John Rickard and Peter Spearritt eds., *Packaging the past: public histories* (Carlton South, Vic.; Melbourne University Press, 1991), p. 181.

[16] Henry Reynolds (1981), quoted in Ken Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), p. 423-4.

[17] Chilla Bulbeck, 'Aborigines, memorials and the history of the frontier' in Rickard and Spearritt eds., *Packaging the past*, pp. 173-4.

3.1 Memorial dedicated to Windradyne by Mr and Mrs Roy Suttor and the Bathurst Historical Society in 1954. The timber fence behind the memorial encloses the grave mound, and small trees planted by the Wiradjuri community can be seen sheltered by plastic sheaths in the background.

In 1826 and 1829 two letters appeared in the colonial newspapers under the pseudonym 'Colo', but were addressed 'Brucedale, near Bathurst' and 'B-----e near Bathurst' respectively, which would have made their origin with the Suttor family quite clear.[18] At that time George Suttor and his wife Sarah Maria were resident at *Brucedale*, probably accompanied by most of their ten children.[19] Although the letters possess the authority and diplomacy of a mature gentleman-writer, which might suggest George Suttor's involvement, his son William, who was in his twenties by the time the first letter was written, is perhaps also a candidate.[20] Both letters are rich sources for the nature of the friendship and its

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[18] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, pp. 3-4; *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3. The same letter was printed in the *Sydney Monitor*, 18th April 1829, p. 2, and *The Australian*, 15th April 1829, p. 3. Perusal of the letter columns of the *Sydney Gazette*, *The Monitor*, and *The Australian* for the period 1822-1836 has not yielded any further correspondence by Colo, or from *Brucedale*.

[19] Almost a decade after the establishment of *Brucedale*, George and Sarah Maria moved back to their original grant, *Chelsea Farm* at Baulkham Hills, with their younger children, and then from 1833 spent much of their time in a town house in Sydney, commuting back and forth to *Chelsea Farm* and *Brucedale*. George Suttor, *Memoirs of George Suttor F.L.S. Banksian Collector* (1774-1859), ed. George Mackaness, Australian Historical Monographs 13 [1948] (Sydney: DS Ford Printers, 1977), p. 59.

[20] William managed *Brucedale* from soon after its establishment and formally took it over in 1834. Though he seems not to have been a writer by nature – he is renowned within the Suttor family for having written nothing

articulation in the colonial public sphere. The first offered to share some 'sketches of the manners and customs ... of the Aborigines ... inhabiting the country round Bathurst' with 'fellow admirers of ... the works of God'.[21] 'Colo' painted a harmonious scene at *Brucedale*: Windradyne (referred to as 'Saturday' throughout) and his people sit around small fires singing and laughing. He shares his crop of turnips with them, and they visit the house to borrow pots and pans or at times a comb. In return, the Wiradjuri keep an eye on runaway cattle, a service which would surely be welcome on any property.[22] 'Colo' provides a pattern for co-existence, attributing to his friends the idea that:

> ... all wild animals are theirs – the tame or cultivated ones are ours. Whatever springs spontaneously from the earth, or without labour, is theirs also. Things produced by art and labour are the white fellows (sic), as they call us.[23]

The explosive conflicts in the Bathurst area had passed, but they would still have been fresh in the memories of all those who survived them. Groups of Wiradjuri people had gradually made peace with local authorities in the latter months of 1824, and the outlawed Windradyne had appeared at the Native Feast in Parramatta at the end of the year accompanied by a large group of Wiradjuri people, wearing a straw hat with the word 'peace' stuck in the band.[24] But there were precedents for this sort of gesture, and they did not necessarily indicate that war was over and done with. In 1805, Aboriginal people thronged to Parramatta from the fringes of the Cumberland Plain to reconcile with Governor King after he lifted an injunction aimed at keeping Aboriginal people out of settled and farmed districts. But the people of the lower Hawkesbury and Broken Bay fought on.[25] 'Colo' sought to improve readers' impressions of Aboriginal people, those of the Bathurst district in particular. His tableau of domestic harmony and his praises of the local Aboriginal people,

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at all - certainly by the 1840s he emerged as a man capable of vigorous participation in the public life of the colony. Percy Gresser canvassed the possibility that 'Colo' was George Suttor Jnr, William's eldest brother (b. 1799), who briefly held the post of Superintendent of Agriculture at Bathurst in 1822. Conversation with John Suttor, 20th January 2009; Vivienne Parsons, 'Suttor, George (1774–1859)' [1967], Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/suttor-george-1270/text3813>, accessed 28 April 2012; Norton, *Dear William*, p. x.; Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21c, loose leaf.

[21] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, pp. 3-4. The letter is dated 25th August 1826.

[22] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, pp. 3-4.

[23] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, p. 3.

[24] In October 1824, for example, it was reported that about sixty Aboriginal people had come in to the settled district and re-established their previous 'peaceable footing', *Sydney Gazette*, 28th October 1824, p. 2. Windradyne's appearance at the Native Feast is reported *Sydney Gazette*, 30th December 1824, p. 2.

[25] This was the third 'coming in' of the Hawkesbury people after fifteen years of sporadic conflict intermeshed with friendship, domestic intimacy encompassing men, women and children, and cultural exchange (including mutual education in different forms of justice and retribution, and complex patterns of loyalty), Grace Karskens, *The Colony* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2009), pp. 460-490.

echoing the catalogue of virtues of the 'noble savage' that Rousseau and his followers had cited since the mid-eighteenth century, seem aimed at encouraging his readers to open friendly and trusting relations on a sustainable basis.[26]

As more and more Wiradjuri country became other people's 'property', the Wiradjuri, like other Aboriginal peoples, became dependent on friendly relations with pastoralists to ensure ongoing access to their country. Gundungarra man Werriberrie or William Russell, reflecting on his life around Picton and Burragorang, mapped out a constellation of properties where he camped and worked as a young man in the mid-nineteenth century. The relationships had been established by his mother's and uncles' generation, and Russell himself continued to maintain them.[27] It is likely that *Brucedale* was part of a network of places where local Wiradjuri people could continue to camp, work and meet. Henry Reynolds finds that the 'coming in' of the Aborigines provided a conceptual challenge to many settlers, who had found themselves infused by a hatred born of fear during times of uncertainty and conflict, and now had opportunities to exert power over Aboriginal people who were vulnerable in their midst.[28] 'Colo' presents a model of benevolence for the pastoralist, who accepts the friendship offered by the Aborigines, and takes the position of patron over those Aborigines who had 'come in'. He makes a point of documenting the welcome he extended to large gatherings of Aboriginal people, boasting that he had accommodated at least one-hundred-and-fifty visitors from neighbouring areas on one occasion.[29]

Lively debate had occurred in public meetings and in the Sydney papers across the early 1820s. A number of correspondents advocated the use of 'terror' as a means of teaching the Aborigines around Bathurst how to submit to colonisation, while others sought to remind them that both races were members of the human family, and that they should reflect on the manner in which they have appropriated Aboriginal land before becoming bellicose about the spearing of a few (or even a hundred) sheep.[30] Many of those counselling restraint and compassion did so from an evangelical standpoint, advocating missionary work as a key

[26] Michael Clifford, *Political genealogy after Foucault: savage identities* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1-4.

[27] William Russell (Werriberrie), *My Recollections* (Camden, NSW: The Oaks Historical Society for the Wollondilly Heritage Centre, 1991). Russell was in his mid-eighties when he collaborated on this brief memoir with friend and neighbour A.L. Bennett. It was first published in 1914.

[28] Henry Reynolds, *Frontier* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), pp. 63-72.

[29] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, p. 4.

[30] See for example letters from 'Philanthropus' and 'Honestus', *Sydney Gazette*, 5th August 1824, p. 4; 12th August 1824, p. 4. As Salisbury and Gresser note, the identities of most of these correspondents are unknown, and one or more of them could also have been a member of the Suttor family, T. Salisbury and P. J. Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri; martial law at Bathurst in 1824* (Sydney: Wentworth Books, 1971), p. 52.

way of making the natives peaceful.[31] The God 'Colo' invoked was on a more secular, humanitarian model. Advocating for the Wiradjuri in the aftermath of war, he called on higher values in the reader, the British Empire and the Governor alike: 'Let us hope that while Briton (sic) is making such amazing progress in Knowledge and in science, she will still enlarge her humanity', he wrote.[32]

While on one level 'Colo' welcomed the reader into a circle of friendship with Windradyne and his people, he also set himself apart, saying 'I have always been friendly to them, and have directed my people to avoid giving them offence. We have never suffered the smallest injury from them.'[33] He laid the blame for the recent loss of lives on both sides on 'the imprudent and *cruel* conduct of some of our people', those settlers who had armed their convict servants against the Wiradjuri and had themselves failed to exercise proper restraint. The records of the escalating violence from 1823 and the period of Martial Law in the latter months of 1824 leave the historian with a hazy understanding of the nature and severity of the conflicts. It would seem that about thirteen Europeans were killed, but the scale of loss of life on the Wiradjuri side is much less readily estimated.[34] The complexity of official approaches towards such conflict at the time is partly to blame for this obscurity. As Ann Curthoys finds, 'the Colonial Office never wavered in its refusal to acknowledge that a war of conquest was occurring, or in its insistence that the rule of law could and should prevail and that Indigenous life could be protected'.[35] It was important to assuage the concerns of 'the humanitarians in London' and to leave a 'record of the government's determination to defend Aboriginal rights', but the government was 'satisfied for the squatters to run ahead of government in their rush for wealth', and it was well understood that Aboriginal people and their rights would suffer in the process.[36] Governor Brisbane and Major Morisset

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[31] David Roberts and Hilary Carey, '"Beong! Beong! (more! more!)": John Harper and the Wesleyan Mission to the Australian Aborigines', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2009), n/p. See letters to the *Sydney Gazette* from 'Philanthropus', 5th August 1824, and 'Amicitia', 19th and 26th August 1824, and to *The Australian* from 'Adaelos', 30th December 1824.

[32] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, p. 4. He also invokes the growing threat to good order in the district posed by bushrangers, and contrasts these wrongdoers with the 'innocent' Aborigines, who are united with the settlers against them.

[33] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, p. 4.

[34] Theo Barker, *A History of Bathurst*, Volume 1 (Bathurst, NSW: Crawford House Press, 1992), pp. 67-72. European lives lost were carefully documented in evidence given to Major Morisset following his arrival in Bathurst in May 1824. A series of testimonies were taken down on 29th May 1824 about the discovery of four men killed on John Tindall's station at Wygadon, bloodied Aboriginal weapons apparently discovered nearby, State Records NSW: Colonial Secretary; NRS 897, Main series of letters received, 1788-1825, 4/1799, pp. 31-48.

[35] Ann Curthoys, 'Indigenous Subjects' in Deryck M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward eds., *Australia's Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 89. The evolving logic of government established that a war could not exist with Aboriginal people because they were to be considered 'subjects of the Queen', and it was this status that was supposed to provide them with protection, Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point: an Australian history of place* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002), p. 53.

[36] The 'record' of the government's good intentions that Mark McKenna cites is a series of exchanges between Governor Bourke and Lord Glenelg in response to Batman's Port Phillip treaty and the rapid pastoral

reported that the period of Martial Law had seen virtually no blood shed.[37] Some historians and storytellers have charged them with a 'cover-up', but there is little firm evidence to the contrary.[38] 'Colo' himself was not straightforwardly conciliatory, stating in principle that 'natives' might be justly 'chastised under the authority of a military officer, or some respectable, authorised, accountable person' where defensive measures were necessary. He emphasised that Wiradjuri women and children had been killed in the recent conflicts (something that Brisbane's proclamation of Martial Law explicitly sought to avoid), as if laying a charge of cowardice against the type of settler who had been involved in vigilante action. He did not criticise Morisset or Brisbane for their actions.[39]

The Reverend William Walker, a Methodist minister who had been appointed as missionary to the 'black natives of New South Wales', also lamented that Aboriginal men, women and children had been 'butchered' by settlers in the west, yet in July 1824 he had signed a landholders' petition for military intervention to 'overawe the natives' and bring them to 'a state of due Subjection and Inoffensiveness'.[40] George and William Suttor likewise saw their interests in productive land to the west of the ranges as legitimate, and may have felt that punitive action of some sort against the Wiradjuri had been necessary.[41] As Penny Russell

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colonisation of the NSW south coast. Governor Brisbane's proclamation of martial law was a similar record. McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point*, pp. 52-4.

[37] Governor Brisbane's proclamation ending the period of martial Law in December 1824 credited the Magistrates at Bathurst with having 'restored Tranquillity without Bloodshed'. He wrote to Earl Bathurst reporting that 'only seven Europeans have lost their lives ... and the number of [Natives] ... can only be gathered from conjecture, but in all probability they do not much exceed double the number of Europeans', and on 31st December was 'gratified' to report that 'during four months that Martial Law prevailed, not one outrage was committed under it, neither was a life sacrificed or even blood spilt ...', Thomas Brisbane to Earl Bathurst 31st December 1824 (Proclamation enclosed), Frederick Watson (ed.), *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 1, vol. 11 (Sydney: The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1917), pp. 430-32.

[38] Mary Coe described the action under Martial Law as a 'campaign of genocide' and dubbed Brisbane's claim to have 'restored tranquillity without Bloodshed' the 'official cover-up', Mary Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press 1989), p. 43. See also Elder, *Blood on the Wattle*, pp. 49-51. Peter Read found that some of the stories about massacres were exaggerated, but found plausible 'that between one quarter and one third of the Bathurst region Wiradjuri were killed' in these conflicts, Read, *A Hundred Years War*, p. 10. John Connor, in a military history of Australian frontier conflict finds that the far greater agility of the Wiradjuri outclassed Morriset's military operations, and that his main strategic expedition in September 1824 had difficulty even in coming in contact with Wiradjuri people. The tables were only to turn with the establishment of a mounted cavalry in 1825, which Aboriginal people in the Hunter region felt the first effects of. It was only when settlers or soldiers came upon Aboriginal people by chance that guns could be used to kill in large numbers, as Chamberlane, William Cox's overseer did near Mudgee in late 1824. John Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars, 1788-1838* (Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2002), pp. 52-62.

[39] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, p. 3.

[40] S. G. Claughton, 'Walker, William (1800–1855)' [1967], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/walker-william-2768/text3933>, accessed 28 November 2011; State Records NSW: Colonial Secretary; NRS 897, Main series of letters received, 1788-1825, 4/1799, Bathurst settlers to Brisbane, 16th July 1824, pp. 73-6. The petition was signed by nine other landholders with interests in Bathurst, including William Cox and Samuel Marsden. Several of the same men had made an earlier appeal for government assistance, dated 3rd June 1824, citing the murder of seven men by Aborigines (same location pp. 51-4).

[41] Ann Curthoys sees a repeating pattern across the continent as settlers claimed new land and then attempted to defend their interests there, appealing for government support and sanction of punitive expeditions, Curthoys, 'Indigenous Subjects', pp. 86-90. When George Suttor found that the grant he had occupied on the Macquarie River was to be allocated to another settler, he wrote to Brisbane indignantly, 'granting *my station*

observed of Robert Dawson's account of his work establishing the Australian Agricultural Company operations at Port Stephens in the mid-1820s, 'Colo's' letter depicted 'his encroachments upon Aboriginal land as a story of advances in contact and friendship'. Like Dawson, he seems to have sincerely desired to understand his presence as peaceable. While recognising some of the adverse impacts of encroaching 'civilisation' upon Aboriginal people, both 'regretted only his inability to prevent this – never his instrumentality'.[42]

In exploring the relationships of Victorian philanthropist, Mrs Charles Bon, with William Barak, Thomas Bamfield and others, Liz Reed distinguishes between Bon's advocacy on behalf of Aboriginal people and her personal friendships, but finds these two forms of goodwill are intimately related. Reed finds that Bon's public role as a 'friend to the Aborigines' was sustained and motivated by her relationships 'with individual Aborigines in which Bon appeared to demonstrate an emotional connection and from which she derived personal comfort.'[43] 'Colo's' friendship with Windradyne and his people might be understood in a similar way. While he may have been a humanitarian on principle – George Suttor counted himself a committed pacifist[44] – this act of advocacy appears also to spring from genuine affection towards the Wiradjuri people whose country overlapped with *Brucedale.* What the letter does not do, and I count myself slightly foolish for having hoped it might, is represent any profound friendship between the writer and any Wiradjuri individual. There is no meeting of minds here: no deep conversation, no shared repasts. But if such intimacies did exist between George and William Suttor and Wiradjuri people, 'Colo' may well not have written about them in this rather proselytising letter.[45] While some colonists

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to another will destroy all my hopes of prosperity there' (my italics), State Records NSW: Colonial Secretary; NRS 897, Main series of letters received, 1788-1825, 4/1832, letter 374, George Suttor to Brisbane, 14th June 1822, pp. 1-2. In the late 1820s, George Suttor and his sons, including William, joined other 'Landed Proprietors' in expressing appreciation for the good order maintained by the civil and military police, allowing them to contribute to the colony's prosperity 'pastures clothed with verdure, and cultivated lands teeming with the reasonable prospect of an abundant harvest', *Sydney Gazette*, 17th November 1829, p. 2.

[42] Penny Russell, *Savage or Civilised: Manners in Colonial Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010) pp. 58, 75-7. Dawson's memoir, *The Present State of Australia*, was published in 1830, after he returned to England.

[43] Liz Reed, '"Mrs Bon's verandah full of Aboriginals": race, class, gender and friendship', *History Australia* 2, no. 2 (June 2005), pp. 39.1-39.2.

[44] Suttor, *Memoirs of George Suttor*, p. 17. As a botanist, he probably also shared the respect for (and dependency on) Aboriginal expertise and assistance that his colleague and friend George Caley acknowledged and was forced to assert when Governor King ordered Aboriginal people out of the settled districts in 1801, Karskens, *The Colony*, p. 479.

[45] I have not, however, discovered any more private source in which relations with Aboriginal people at *Brucedale* are discussed. The only family letter I have found in the Mitchell Library collection of Suttor Family Papers which gives an insight into the early years at *Brucedale* is an affectionate missive from George Suttor to his wife Sarah Maria at Baulkham Hills, near the end of 1823 (it is dated simply '30th', and refers to Christmas approaching). George gives a vivid account of the new garden at *Brucedale*, which he and his second son Charles (b. 1804) are tending, as well as organising the construction of a dairy, while William, along with his younger brother John (b. 1809), are expected to return soon from a five or six week journey into the *Brucedale* hinterlands. George evinces some concern about their welfare and wishes for their prompt return, but gives no details of their purpose or likely interactions with Aboriginal people, Suttor Family Papers 1774-1929, Mitchell Library Manuscripts Collection, MSS 2417, item 3, p. 119. George Suttor's brief memoirs do not discuss

disagreed with philanthropic feeling towards Aboriginal people, its expression was much less likely to provoke the vehement opposition that intimate associations with Aboriginal people or targeted advocacy could inspire.[46] Risking the invocation of a threat to colonial order by elaborating on cross-cultural collaboration and communion would have been counterproductive to the letter's aim of normalising general inter-racial harmony on more-or-less British terms.

Virtually nothing is known about the way in which Windradyne and his family understood this friendship. If Wiradjuri people did direct George and William Suttor to the site of *Brucedale*, then in doing so they had placed them in Wiradjuri country.[47] Maria Monypenny, writing in the Tasmanian context, feels that the assimilating impulse and capabilities of Aboriginal groups are often overlooked, observing:

> It would be a mistake ... to assume that, because Aborigines were prepared to accommodate Europeans, they saw themselves becoming part of the European world. It is possible that, initially, they saw Europeans as becoming part of their world, and that it was on that basis that they were willing to co-operate with the newcomers.[48]

Initially at least, the Wiradjuri may have been friendly towards the Suttor family not chiefly because they were benevolent, but because they had been satisfactorily incorporated into the local Wiradjuri world. 'Colo's' education in the structure and language of neighbouring groups appears to have been ongoing. At the time of writing he had been introduced to people belonging to eight distinct local groups and instructed on their place in local networks.[49]

'Colo's' second letter, printed in the *Sydney Gazette* and *Sydney Monitor* in 1829, was a report of Windradyne's death, offering a 'biography' of this famous Aboriginal man to the reading public.[50] It followed a tradition of obituary writing developed to perfection by editor

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relations with Aboriginal people on *Brucedale*, 'after a few years residence at Brucedale with your Mother, we returned to Baulkham Hills ...', he wrote. Suttor, *Memoirs of George Suttor*, p. 59.

[46] Reed notes that Mrs Bon's cross-cultural collaborations and effective co-habitation with Aboriginal people at times lead to her situation 'on the outermost boundary of acceptable European behaviour', which she was also at times accused of crossing, 'betraying her race, [and] behaving in ways unbecoming for a woman of her class.' Reed, '"Mrs Bon's verandah full of Aboriginals"', pp. 39.3, 39.8. See also Reynolds, *Frontier*, pp. 83-88.

[47] Coe suggests the place may have been at a safe distance from sacred sites and their favourite camping and hunting grounds, Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, p. 24.

[48] Maria Monypenny, '"Going out and coming in": cooperation and collaboration between Aborigines and Europeans in early Tasmania', *Tasmanian Historical Studies* 5, no.1 (1995/1996), p. 73.

[49] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, p. 3.

[50] *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3. As Salisbury notes, Windradyne's whereabouts had remained of interest in the columns of the *Sydney Gazette* after 1824. His absence at Darling's first Annual Feast in 1825 was noted,

of London's *The Gentleman's Magazine*, John Nichols, from the 1780s, providing a warm and respectful appraisal of Windradyne's character and person.[51] 'Colo' assessed his subject as a man 'who never suffered an injury with impunity, in his estimation revenge was virtue'. Yet he also 'possessed the healing art' and was caring and compassionate in his ministrations to the sick.[52] Where in his earlier letter, 'Colo' was content to refer to the man as 'Saturday', this time he was very clear that 'his original or aboriginal name was Windrodine'.

The deceased had made a valuable contribution to colonial society by avoiding conflict for the latter part of his life. 'Colo' wished the reader to understand that this signified an exercise of restraint, rather than apathy or ignorance, speculating that Windradyne's 'high and independent spirit felt uneasy at times seeing his country possessed by the white fellows'.[53] In a fashion highly characteristic of his chosen genre, Suttor presented a clear account of the cause of death; used anecdote to illustrate the character of the deceased; and utilised the obituary as a vehicle for more general political comment: a reproach of Europeans for their cruelty to this 'inoffensive race'.[54] His description of Windradyne's 'head, his countenance, indeed his whole person, [as] a fine specimen of the savage warrior of New Holland', perhaps constitutes an assertion of 'difference'. Description of a subject's physical qualities was not unknown in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, but perusal of obituaries from 1829 issues suggests that, where the deceased was considered a gentleman or gentlewoman (for 'persons of interest' also graced Nichols' columns), the emphasis was on a person's discerning taste or intellect, with more oblique references to the physical, such as the form of the subject's handwriting or nature of his or her 'constitution'.[55]

'Colo's' mode of commemoration was not common in the *Sydney Gazette* of the time. The death notices composed by the editor were terse. Where they blossom into compact tributes, the preoccupation seems almost ubiquitous between the 1810s and 1830s that the deceased was 'respected by all who knew him', often with little else approximating an

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for example (though he apparently sent his regards), *The Australian*, 19th January 1826, cited by Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, p. 39.

[51] *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3. The letter is dated 24th March 1829. Nigel Starck, *Life After Death: the art of the obituary* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2006), pp. 5, 20-22, 32. In 1826, Nichols' own obituary appeared in the magazine. If George Suttor did not read the *Gentleman's Magazine* in his youth, or in the colony, then we might imagine him whiling away his hours the court waiting-room in 1810-12 reading the magazine's obituary columns as a witness for Bligh in the court martial of Colonel George Johnston. Parsons, 'Suttor, George (1774 - 1859)'.

[52] *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3.

[53] *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3.

[54] Starck, *Life After Death*, p. 46; *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3.

[55] *The Annual Biography and Obituary for the Year 1829*, Volume 13 (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1829), pp. 444, 446, for example. The use of physical description in the obituary of a celebrated wood engraver draws attention to a difference of class: 'Mr Bewick's personal appearance was rustic; he was tall, and powerfully formed. His manners too, were somewhat rustic; but he was shrewd, and never wished to ape the gentleman. His countenance was open and expressive ...', p. 414.

appraisal of character.[56] The pattern is enlivened by the occasional import from England, or a more extensive home-grown effort, such as the obituary of Mr Isaac Nichols, Postmaster, printed in 1819.[57] Although the deaths of few Aboriginal people were noted in the Sydney press, a handful of well-known identities claimed far more column space than most eminent Europeans. Some of these are presented simply as a matter of curiosity. The 1817 report of the death of 'Mirout' (or Mahroot), for example, focused on the 'fracas' in which this man 'of docile friendly disposition' lost his life.[58] The infamous 'Musquito' died a decade earlier, and the *Sydney Gazette* featured a report on the elaborate funerary ceremony conducted by his friends and relatives rather than an account of the man himself.[59] In contrast, the Aboriginal men known as Andrew Sneap Hammond Douglas White and Thomas Walker Coke, both received lengthy obituary-style tributes which assessed the departed in terms of his adoption of and into 'civilisation'. White's 1821 obituary concludes that 'all proved unavailing – ancestral habits being too indelibly engendered ever to be eradicated', while Coke's, of 1823, celebrates that 'up to the period of his death he gave satisfactory evidence of his acceptance with his Maker'.[60] George or William Suttor, however, had taken it into his own hands to provide Windradyne with a dignified tribute to his place in his own society as well as his fame, or infamy, in European circles. This is the deed of a friend, not necessarily an intimate or confiding friend, but certainly a staunch and admiring one.

'Colo' probably imagined his friendship with Windradyne through the rich and flexible vocabulary of amicable relations, traversing philanthropy and sociability, available to him through the theory, literature and English practice of friendship of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Although he recognised that the status of 'chief' was not one well-recognised amongst the Wiradjuri,[61] in the world depicted in his letters he addressed himself to the most famous of Wiradjuri men, Windradyne, at times as a partner in a rational, pragmatic alliance between men that combined sympathy and loyalty with 'mutual interest' (such as that often forged between partners in commerce), and at others in a less intimate, but no less trusting, political alliance in which he and Windradyne stand as representatives

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[56] See, for example, the death notice of Augustus Alt, *Sydney Gazette*, 14th January 1815, p. 2; death notice of Captain Charles Waldron, *Sydney Gazette*, 6th February 1834, p. 4; death of a young man who fell from a horse, *Sydney Gazette*, 11th February 1834, p. 4.

[57] *Sydney Gazette*, 13th November 1819, p. 3, which provides an account of Nichol's gardening and boat building activities and the great pleasure he took in these, as well as his efficiency as Postmaster. For an imported obituary (the source is not acknowledged) see that of Mrs Hannah Moore, who died in Bristol, providing an account of the literary and charitable achievements of this 'benefactress of her species', *Sydney Gazette*, 1st February 1834, p. 3.

[58] *Sydney Gazette*, 23rd August 1817, p. 3.

[59] *Sydney Gazette*, 19th December 1806, p. 2.

[60] *Sydney Gazette*, 8th September 1821, p. 3; and 6th February 1823, p. 3.

[61] *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3.

of their respective peoples.[62] Although 'Colo' does not indulge in any late eighteenth century sentimentalism in describing his own relationship with Windradyne, his description of the fervently loyal relationships between Wiradjuri men – to the death,[63] might be intended to counter the idea that savages were incapable of friendship due to a lack of moral refinement, and thus to indicate that real friendship is possible between and with Aborigines.[64] On the other hand, 'Colo' directs his philanthropic love of humanity at the Wiradjuri-in-general as fellow human beings (though lower on the scale of humanity) who might be 'uplifted' by his attentions.[65]

An intensely patronising strain had run through 'Colo's' earlier letter to the *Australian*. He referred to the Wiradjuri as 'rude children of nature' and advanced the opinion:

> The laws of nature are their laws. They have not, that I can find, any other code ... If knowledge be progressive in the human mind, in theirs it has hardly yet advanced one step, nor have their ideas began to shoot.[66]

Would a mutually respectful friendship with a Wiradjuri person have been possible for the writer of this letter? This last statement throws doubt on the depth of the writer's cultural exchange with the Wiradjuri, as it evinces ignorance even of a kinship system into which he may himself have been adopted. Penny Russell finds that Robert Dawson negotiated the complex social universe created by the interaction of Aboriginal people with Europeans of upper and lower social classes by setting himself securely atop it as 'master, arbiter and educator'. Dawson certainly experienced a loss of control over this universe at times, but this he was able to rationalise, partly through writing about these experiences.[67] 'Colo' was making a transition as he wrote, between gentlemanly first-contact relationships with leaders Windradyne and 'Sunday', whom he likened to Apollo and Hercules, and the kind of intimacy that he could see as being feasible into a colonial future. He pointed towards the 'improved ... manners' of the Aborigines and noted their 'docility' and potential to be 'useful and faithful servants'.[68]

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[62] David Garrioch, 'From Christian Friendship to Secular Sentimentality: Enlightenment Re-evaluation' in Barbara Caine ed., *Friendship: a history* (Oakville, CT: Equinox Pub., 2008), pp. 185-7, 194-208.

[63] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, p. 4.

[64] Garrioch, 'From Christian Friendship to Secular Sentimentality', pp. 197-200.

[65] Marc Brodie and Barbara Caine, 'Class, Sex and Friendship: The long nineteenth century' in Caine ed., *Friendship: a history* (Oakville, CT: Equinox Pub., 2008), p. 263.

[66] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, pp. 3-4.

[67] Russell, *Savage or Civilised?*, pp. 56-68.

[68] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, pp. 3-4.

The question of whether it was George or William Suttor who wrote these two letters is not insignificant for their interpretation. George was not of the same generation as Windradyne; he was in his mid-fifties in 1829, while 'Colo' estimated that Windradyne was about thirty years of age when he died.[69] If 'Colo' was George Suttor, it is notable that he singled out Windradyne as a leader and did not mention any of the Elders who would have been his own peers.[70] William, on the other hand, would have been slightly younger than Windradyne, which would make the position of 'patron' that 'Colo' adopts even more striking. It is William and Windradyne who form the friendship feted in recent retellings of the story.[71] This may have something to do with the contemporary appetite for fraternal rather than paternal-filial love, discussed further below, and is certainly related to William's part in the dramatic story preserved for posterity by his eldest son, W. H. Suttor, in which William is surrounded by Windradyne and his warriors and talks his way out.

W. H. Suttor left a lasting monument to the friendship in his *Australian Stories Retold and Sketches of Country Life*, published in 1887, compiled from short pieces written for the *Daily Telegraph* over a number of years.[72] His 'stories retold' are 'chiefly gathered from the press records of the day, and from the word of mouth of old colonial friends', whereas the 'sketches' are from his own experience.[73] Among the 'stories retold' is an account titled 'Western Rebellions: Black and White', in which he couples the story of the British–Wiradjuri conflicts of 1823-4 with a famous bushranger story. W. H. Suttor records the exchange around the potato field as the breaking point in Wiradjuri–British relations. The main thrust of his story is the merciless pursuit of Wiradjuri lives under Martial Law, which he notes was a legal construct incomprehensible to the Wiradjuri.[74] The climax of the story is a massacre, where the Wiradjuri are tricked into thinking that the settlers are making peace – as they lay out food in a semblance of generosity, and then shoot indiscriminately while the people are

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[69] *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3.

[70] Dennis Foley, examining the nature of Windradyne's leadership, finds that after witnessing the 'destruction and extermination of his Elder system' and fighting for his people's survival, Windradyne was heralded as a 'chief' by the Europeans. He then 'lived out his days as a token of what he had once been' as 'a warrior without Elders'. Certainly in these letters, and much of the historiography that has followed them, Windradyne does appear as 'a warrior without Elders'. To what extent this was a failure of recognition or representation on 'Colo's' part, or a symptom of his selective socialising with Windradyne's clan it is not possible to say. Dennis Foley, 'Leadership: the quandary of Aboriginal societies in crises, 1788 – 1830, and 1966' in Ingereth Macfarlane and Mark Hannah eds., *Transgressions: critical Australian Indigenous histories* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2007), pp. 180-85.

[71] For example see Nowra and Perkins, *First Australians*, Episode One; Heritage Listing, Grave of Windradyne, State Heritage Register Database, Record Number 5051560, Heritage Branch NSW website, <http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/07_subnav_01_2.cfm?itemid=5051560>, viewed 9 February 2009; Debra Jopson, 'Grave a symbol of 180 years of friendship', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th April 2002, Sydney Morning Herald, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/04/19/1019020709011.html>, viewed 22 December 2008.

[72] W. H. Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold and Sketches of Country Life* (Bathurst, NSW: Glyndwyr Whalan, 1887), preface.

[73] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, preface.

[74] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, p. 44.

eating.[75] For Suttor, this landscape, appearing peaceful, 'secluded and very romantic-looking', is haunted by the 'dastardly massacre' which had taken place there.[76] Here and elsewhere he chastised the settlers for their treachery.[77] W. H. Suttor employed a language of war that was slippery. In pairing the Wiradjuri conflicts with a bushranger story he characterises the conflicts as civil, a 'rebellion' wherein Wiradjuri men were 'offensive' to good order as bushrangers were. At the same time he alluded to a great historical war, concluding:

> When martial law had run its course, extermination is the word that most aptly describes the result. As the old Romans said, 'They made a solitude and called it peace'. The last effort of a doomed race was thus ended.[78]

Roman historian Tacitus had put those words into the mouth of a Caledonian Chief about to take on the Romans.[79] Suttor's reference was perhaps intended to point out to readers that Aboriginal people were in the same position as their own British ancestors had once been, facing aggressive Roman imperialism with heroic resistance. At the same time, though, the classical reference committed this heroism to the distant past. His story arraigns the protagonists and European migrants to Australia more generally for their part in destroying Aboriginal life, but does so in the romantic tradition of the late nineteenth century, in which the Aboriginal 'race' was already extinct, and the suitable sentiment was regret.[80] Indeed there would have been few of the original settlers of Bathurst still alive to have their

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[75] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, p. 45.

[76] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, p. 44.

[77] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, p. 44. This is the theme of at least one of his other stories in the volume: 'Vengeance for Ippitha', in which a massacre is also perpetrated, showing the treachery of white men to be far greater than that of the Aborigines, an ironic rejoinder to his century's assessment of Aboriginal warfare as 'treacherous', because unpredictable and inexplicable in terms of British rules of engagement, see for example, Curthoys, 'Indigenous Subjects', p. 87.

[78] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, pp. 45-6. A similar admixture characterised contemporary responses to the conflicts. Where an editorial in the *Sydney Gazette* referred to the engagement of the Bathurst district in 'an exterminating war' (*Sydney Gazette*, 14th October 1824, p. 2), whimsical allusions to the Battle of Waterloo were also made. One of Windradyne's contemporaries, who was recognised by the British as leading his group in action against them, was admiringly referred to as 'Blucher' after a much celebrated Prussian general who, alongside the Duke of Wellington, defeated Napoleon, only a decade earlier – an identification that could equally dignify or mock. In the same issue of the *Sydney Gazette* in which the death (in combat with settlers) of this Wiradjuri man is reported, an article recounting the Battle of Waterloo also appears. *Sydney Gazette*, 30th September 1824, pp. 2, 4.

[79] Tacitus' Galgacus rallied his fighters with an assessment of the Roman character: 'plunderers of the earth these, who in their universal devastations finding countries to fail them, investigate and rob even the sea ... They are general spoilers such as neither the western world nor the eastern can satiate ... To spoil, to butcher and to commit every kind of violence, they style by a lying name, *Government*; and when they have spread a general desolation, they call it *Peace*' ('Ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant'). Cornelius Tacitus, 'The Life of Agricola' in *The Annals of Tacitus*, ed. Arthur Galton (London: Walter Scott, c1890), p. 284.

[80] Robert Foster, Rick Hosking and Amanda Nettelbeck, *Fatal Collisions: The South Australian frontier and the violence of memory* (Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2001), pp. 26-8.

consciences impugned. But though the sting was taken out, his story nevertheless preserved ambivalence about the success of the pioneers and a vestige of the dilemmas of the 1820s.[81]

In the second part of the book, Suttor narrates his family's migration across the range as part of his story 'A Cattle Muster in the Hills'. It is here that he tells the dramatic story of the surrounding of the hut by Windradyne and his men in the night, 'fully equipped for war'. They were ready to enact a 'reprisal' in response to the hostile acts of the settlers, including the poisoning of dampers left where the Wiradjuri would find and eat them. William Suttor is the hero of the story, meeting the warriors 'fearlessly' and courteously talking them down in their own language.[82] A pre-existing friendship is briefly and enigmatically invoked: 'They never molested man or beast of my father's. He had proved himself their friend on previous occasions.'[83] The meaning of this encounter can not now be recovered. Perhaps, in surrounding the hut, Windradyne's party meant to warn William and scare him into contracting his pastoral operations, or else the Wiradjuri men may have gathered to remind William of ongoing mutual obligation in this rapidly developing conflict.[84]

W. H. Suttor told this story amongst his 'sketches', as a private story made public, though these events were not strictly within his own experience. The story set his own family apart from other Bathurst settlers, and provided insights into Wiradjuri decision making not explicable in British terms. Perhaps for these reasons it could not be fitted into his account of the 'Black Rebellion'. The glimpse of the relationship between William and the Wiradjuri men involved in the encounter is radically different from the kind of friendship cited in the first half of the book. There, a situation of goodwill pertains between Windradyne and the settlers in general after the cease of conflict:

> He is said to have been really a fine specimen of the manly savage. For some time before his death he lived in peace with the whites and stories are told of his goodnatured and affectionate conduct towards the children of his former foes.[85]

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[81] Foster, Hosking and Nettelbeck, *Fatal Collisions*, pp. 26-8.

[82] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, p. 65.

[83] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, p. 65.

[84] Shayne Breen demonstrates this in the central Tasmanian context, where he finds (on close examination of European accounts of similar events) that the Pallittorre people in conflict with scattered outstations in the late 1820s and 1830s often meant to create fear through the threat of violence (surrounding huts, demonstrating that they were armed and dangerous), rather than using violence itself. In a series of events in June 1827 the Pallittorre surrounded and plundered a number of outstations, and killed one man who had repeatedly attacked them, and spared another, who was presumably innocent of such crimes, when he was at their mercy. Shayne Breen, 'Human Agency, Historical Inevitability and Moral Culpability: Rewriting Black-White History in the Wake of Native Title', *Aboriginal History* 20 (1996), pp. 110-23.

[85] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, p. 45.

This brief and formulaic description of Windradyne as a 'manly savage' echoes the press accounts of his visit to the Annual Feast at Parramatta in 1824 (in which he was celebrated as 'without doubt the most manly black native we have ever beheld'), rather than family memories.[86]

W. H. Suttor was born after Windradyne's death, in 1834, so he was not himself one of those children who had felt Windradyne's affection. He did not document any other stories of his father's or grandfather's relationships with Wiradjuri people in the 1820s, but he did write of his own diverse friendships with Aboriginal people in his 'sketches', including his childhood admiration for one Maria and her skills as a swimmer and verbal sparring partner; and his affection for 'Laughing Billy' whom he grew up alongside, and later buried in a way that attempted to pay respect to his culture.[87] W. H. Suttor depicts these people in short anecdotes of friendship, without linking them to place or to family; the identity of these people as Wiradjuri was not significant to him, at least for the purposes of his 'sketches'. As he wrote, W. H. Suttor was in his forties and early fifties, member of the Legislative Council and owner of several sheep stations in the Darling District,[88] and he understood these friendships as essentially belonging to the past. He could not see a future for the Wiradjuri, and made poignant reference to traditional burial practices as the last sign of a Wiradjuri presence in the landscape:

> These people who fill my early memories of the 'Great Plain' with kindest reflections are nearly all gone. A mound of earth here and there slowly and surely sinking to the common level, with adjacent trees scarred over with deep-cut markings ... are all that remain to remind us that they ever were.[89]

As he wrote, extending his friendship towards the Wiradjuri seemed an essentially commemorative act.

It was in this spirit too that Mr and Mrs Roy Suttor honoured Windradyne as the 'Last Chief of the Aboriginals' in 1954. The oral traditions of the Suttor family seem to have merged with and emerged from W.H. Suttor's small volume across the twentieth century. David Suttor told me that he grew up thinking that the stories about Windradyne were all family oral tradition, and was surprised when he found much of it in his great-great-uncle, W. H.

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[86] *Sydney Gazette*, 30th December 1824, p. 2.

[87] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, pp. 81-97, 145-8. Gresser enumerated *Brucedale* as one of the stations where Aboriginal people were successfully employed into the late nineteenth century, Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/3/a, p. 73.

[88] Ruth Teale, 'Suttor, William Henry (1834–1905)', pp. 228-30.

[89] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, pp. 85-6.

Suttor's, book.[90] John Suttor (Roy Suttor's son) was proud to see his son David appear on *First Australians* telling the story as he had taught it to him.[91] When Wiradjuri man and ABC news anchor Stan Grant Jnr. visited *Brucedale* sometime before 2002, John Suttor welcomed him with the family copy of *Australian Stories Retold* in his hand. He took Grant to Windradyne's grave, and also to the hut that Windradyne surrounded on that potentially fateful night in 1823, reading aloud from the book.[92] W.H. Suttor may have written the extinction of the Wiradjuri, but his book was playing a significant part in keeping the story of friendship alive.

At the close of WWII, Anzac Day retained its significance in the definition of the Australian nation that it had gained through the fervently nationalist 1930s, and 'the digger stood for freedom, comradeship, tolerance and the innate worth of man'.[93] As Joy Damousi observes, a complex dual loyalty both to the nation and to the British Empire endured through the 1950s, reinforced by that first visit by a reigning monarch in 1954.[94] Australians continued to identify themselves closely with the empire's new incarnation, the Commonwealth of British nations, along with Menzies, who proclaimed: 'Our nation is British in blood, tradition and sentiment'.[95] Did the Suttor family and the Historical Society recognise Windradyne as a fallen patriot? Did they mean to extend the spirit of Anzac to this long-dead Aboriginal man? W. H. Suttor's reference to a classical war, the Caledonians versus the Romans, perhaps allowed room to move on Anzac Day, room for a war memorial of sorts, but one to a hero of distant and different times. It may have been possible to pay tribute to Windradyne as a great leader no longer partisan in defeat, and embodying universally recognised virtues that could be recruited to local national pride – like the 1948 memorial to the 'first settlement' at Putney on the Parramatta River, which commemorated 'Our pioneers, "Decent, sober, industrious" men who, like our Aboriginal Wallumedagal, were a most bigoted race of people to the ground on which they dwelt.'

As Ashton and Hamilton have observed, post-war memorial culture in general was greatly influenced by war commemoration.[96] Ironically, it was perhaps the very commemorative culture of Anzac, which drew much of its strength from the feeling that the nation was

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[90] Conversation with David Suttor, 20th January 2009.

[91] Conversation with John Suttor, 20th January 2009.

[92] Stan Grant, *The Tears of Strangers: a Memoir* (Pymble, NSW: Harper Collins, 2002), pp. 64-7.

[93] Richard White, *Inventing Australia: images and identity* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 136-7.

[94] Joy Damousi, 'War and Commemoration: "The Responsibility of Empire"' in Deryk M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward eds., *Australia's Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 303-5.

[95] Menzies' speech at the opening (by the Queen) of the Australian-American War Memorial in Canberra in 1954 quoted in Damousi, 'War and Commemoration', p. 304.

[96] Paul Ashton, Paula Hamilton, 'Places of the Heart: Memorials, public history and the State in Australia since 1960', *Public History Review* 15 (2008), p. 1.

forged through bloodshed and sacrifice at Gallipoli and elsewhere (as the conflicts with Aboriginal nations across Australia 'were deemed not to have happened'),[97] which reflected heroic patriotism back onto Windradyne in 1954. Those who landed at Gallipoli had failed spectacularly in a military sense, but had proved that nothing could be found wanting in Australian manhood.[98] It was perhaps a similar integrity and virility that those gathered around Windradyne's grave in 1954 paid tribute to. That the Suttor family and Bathurst Historical Society wished to embrace Windradyne in this way remains 'unexpected', in this era when in so many senses it was impossible for white Australians to be 'mates' with an Aborigine, as Bernard Smith framed it in his 1980 Boyer Lectures.[99] This memorial has aged: its stark claim that Windradyne was the 'Last Chief of the Aboriginals' no longer represents the commemorative ideas of the Suttor family or the Bathurst Historical Society as they engage in continuing dialogue with Wiradjuri people about their history. Yet Windradyne's designation as a 'patriot' and the Anzac-like notion that Wiradjuri manhood and courage remains intact in heroic defeat has had enduring appeal for Wiradjuri history makers, as I shall discuss further below.

It was perhaps a combination of symbolic flexibility, the assumption that the Wiradjuri were no longer a political force, and the erection of the memorial on private land, which rendered this memorial uncontroversial despite its being unusual. When Ken Colbung, chairman of the Aboriginal Lands Trust, proposed a memorial statue to Yagan in the heart of Perth as the 150th anniversary of white settlement approached in 1978, he met with stiff opposition. Sir Paul Hasluck, recently retired from the post of Governor General, strongly opposed the monument. His wife, Dame Alexandra, who had written a biography of Yagan, declared that he had been a thief and certainly no patriot.[100] Despite support from other quarters, the statue did not go ahead until some years later.[101] On private land at *Brucedale*, however, no public justification was necessary.[102] If the Suttor family thought Windradyne worthy of

[97] Damousi, 'War and Commemoration', pp. 290-297; Graham Seal, 'Digger' in Melissa Harper and Richard White eds., *Symbols of Australia: Uncovering the Stories Behind the Myths* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press and National Museum of Australia Press, 2010), pp. 123-4.

[98] Seal, 'Digger', pp. 122-4.

[99] Bernard Smith, 'The Spectre of Truganini', Boyer Lectures series (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1980), pp. 14-5.

[100] Dame Hasluck had been eager to credit Yagan with patriotism when she had not felt there was a risk of Aboriginal people taking ownership of the term, Alexandra Hasluck, 'Yagan the patriot', *Western Australian Historical Society* 5, no. 7 (1961), pp. 33-48.

[101] Bulbeck, 'Aborigines, Memorials and the History of the Frontier', pp. 173-4. A statue was finally set up in 1984. It was beheaded in 1997 when Yagan's own head was repatriated, and then again when repaired, and surrounded by ongoing controversy, many preferring that he be clad rather than naked in this public space. Bronwyn Batten and Paul Batten, 'Memorialising the Past: Is there an "Aboriginal" Way?', *Public History Review* 15 (2008), pp. 99-100.

[102] Peter Read, '"The truth that will set us all free": an uncertain history of memorials to Indigenous Australians,' *Public History Review* 15 (2008), p. 36.

commemoration, that was that. This commemoration obviously did no good for contemporary Wiradjuri people, yet it signified a reaching out on the part of the Suttor family. Windradyne's story was a part of the family's history and this generation was going to make sure that it stayed that way. There is another tradition regarding Windradyne's death and burial: 'Colo's' 1829 letter stated that he had died in the hospital at Bathurst, surrounded by his kin, and had been buried nearby.[103] This memorial represented a decision to claim Windradyne's burial for *Brucedale* in 1954. As this grave mound sunk further into the surrounding earth, the family drew Windradyne to its bosom.

In the mid-1990s, John and David Suttor started to feel that they should do more to protect Windradyne's grave, prompted partly by reflection on the recent Wik and Mabo decisions.[104] Tom Griffiths writes of the wave of hysteria, fanned by the media, that swept across the nation as land owners worried they might be 'Mabo-ed'. One man in Victoria told him 'You'd have to be stark raving mad' to admit that you have special sites on your property.[105] John Suttor was bothered by the fragile state of Windradyne's grave and a second grave mound nearby, sitting in his paddock with cattle wandering over them. Perhaps partly in the light of a local native title claim that made reference to Windradyne's grave, he decided to take the initiative. Encouraged by Wiradjuri elder John Bugg and others, he approached the National Parks and Wildlife Service to negotiate a Voluntary Conservation Agreement which will protect the cultural significance of the grave site into the future. The family's cordial and mutually-respectful relationship with Bill Allen developed through this process; he was the National Parks and Wildlife Cultural Sites Officer with whom they negotiated the agreement.[106]

A 2002 article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* referred to 'a friendship of almost 180 years and six generations' between the local Wiradjuri and the Suttor family, and linked the completed

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[103] *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3.

[104] Dianne Johnson, *Lighting the way: reconciliation stories* (Annandale, NSW: Federation Press, 2002), p. 48. Johnson and others have preferred to tell the story of John Suttor's decision to seek a conservation agreement without mentioning the native title writ filed by the Coe sisters in mid-1993. One of the objectives of the claim was to gain access to important sites, including Windradyne's grave, without asking permission, or at least to draw attention to the fact that, at that time, land owner's permission was needed to visit these important sites (see further discussion of the nature of this writ below). Tony Hewett, 'Wiradjuri People's Writ Immortalises a Warrior', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 7th June 1993, p. 8.

[105] Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 230. David Roberts noted a reluctance of the Sofala community (about twenty kilometres north of *Brucedale* on the Turon River) in the mid-1990s to acknowledge Aboriginal sites identified by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and found an atmosphere of caution amongst landholders about the potential presence of Aboriginal artefacts and evidence pointing to massacre sites on their land: 'you're asking for trouble', said the proprietor of Sofala's museum, if you admit to finding such things on your land. David Roberts, 'Bells Falls massacre and Bathurst's history of violence: Local tradition and Australian historiography', *Australian Historical Studies* 26, no. 105 (October 1995), p. 616.

[106] Johnson, *Lighting the way*, p. 48.

conservation agreement with the friendship displayed by Windradyne toward William on that fateful night in 1823:

> It is an association which saved one Suttor's life and has now saved Wyndradyne's grave from being wrecked by cattle that like to scratch themselves on a cairn which the Bathurst Historical Society erected beside it 47 years ago. [107]

This comment represents the elision of a century and half in a facile journalistic flourish. How do we reconcile it with W. H. Suttor's certainty that the family's association with a living Wiradjuri community closed with the nineteenth century? Contact between the Suttor family and the Wiradjuri community was interrupted. Bill Allen says that two local Wiradjuri clans left the Bathurst area shortly after Windradyne's death – one went to Wellington where they were documented by the missionary Reverend Gunther and the other to Cowra, Peneegrah's people, but some people stayed too.[108] John Suttor said he didn't know of any family relationships with Wiradjuri people after Windradyne's generation until he found an old box containing a photograph of an Aboriginal couple who had taken on the family name.[109] Peter Read finds that the friendships between Wiradjuri people and European farmers during the mid and late nineteenth century could be fragile, as constant change in the white world put pressure on the life ways of the Wiradjuri. The need to move, or marry out, or the death of a Wiradjuri person could result in an absence of Wiradjuri people from a locality for decades, breaking contact with even the most sympathetic Europeans.[110] Compared with the 'bi-cultural community' at Weilmoringle on the NSW-Queensland border, where Muruwari and migrant families have lived alongside each other, worked together, shared land, knowledge and childcare across the decades, the *Brucedale* friendship has been for much of its duration a symbolic rather than an intimate, involved and practical one.[111]

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[107] Debra Jopson, 'Grave a symbol of 180 years of friendship', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th April 2002. Interpretive signage installed by the National Parks Service at Brucedale in 2010 makes a much more circumspect claim to continuity, stating that Windradyne's 'grave has been protected by seven generations of the Suttor family'. Entry sign installed at the gate of *Brucedale*, Peel Road, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (Bathurst), 2010.

[108] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011. The Suttor family's close connection with *Brucedale* was interrupted at this time as well. In the 1840s, as William purchased land and established stations on the Lachlan and Darling Rivers, and as far afield as Moreton Bay, *Brucedale* was let to tenants for a number of years. Teale, 'Suttor, William Henry (1805–1877)', p. 228.

[109] Conversation with John Suttor, 20th January 2009.

[110] Read, *A Hundred Years War*, pp. 25-8.

[111] Merri Gill, *Weilmoringle: A Unique Bicultural Community* (Dubbo, NSW: Development and Advisory Publications of Australia, 1996).

Yet perhaps this notion of continuity contains some truth for the present. In her 2002 book Dianne Johnson gathered up W. H. Suttor's accounts of friendship with 'Laughing Billy' and others as evidence of how the Suttor family's relationship with the Wiradjuri continued after Windradyne's death, into the next generation and beyond.[112] As we saw above, W. H. Suttor himself was not able or willing to represent his family's relations with the Wiradjuri as ongoing. At least one generation of the Suttor family had considered the friendship to be essentially one-sided, believing that no Wiradjuri people survived in the present. But a responsibility not only to preserve the story, but also to actively reaffirm the friendship and share it with a wider public, whether or not it could be reciprocated, had been passed from generation to generation. Perhaps it could be said that the continuity of this friendship has been rediscovered via the reconciliation era, being able to look back from a position where the Wiradjuri have survived and where a two-way relationship has been renewed.

At the confluence of two stories

The Bathurst Historical Society produced two local histories in the early 1960s. One of them does not refer to Wiradjuri people.[113] In the other, the conflicts of the 1820s are a mere flicker of the district's candle. Bathurst began 'as a stronghold ... against a foe who virtually did not exist'.[114] The Society appears to have forgotten its commemoration of Windradyne the patriot. At the same time, Percy Gresser, a shearer who had collected Aboriginal artefacts across New South Wales and Queensland on his days off from the age of sixteen, was writing a very different history. He retired to Bathurst in 1953, began to donate his large collection of carefully documented stone tools to the Australian Museum, and set out to write a history of the local Aboriginal people.[115] He attended the 1954 ceremony at Windradyne's grave, leaving a brief account of the day in one of his fastidiously organised notebooks. Embedded in the concrete memorial at *Brucedale* is a piece of carefully worked stone, which Gresser described as a 'remarkably good specimen of a large Aboriginal axe head', and which he had perhaps donated, having found it in the bed of Clear Creek nearby.[116]

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[112] Johnson, *Lighting the Way*, pp. 57-8.

[113] Bathurst District Historical Society, *A Short History of Bathurst* (Bathurst: Western Advocate, 1965), pp. 1-8.

[114] J. C. Taussig, 'How Bathurst Began' in Bernard Greaves ed., *The Story of Bathurst written by Bathurstians* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1961), p. 15. See also the work of J.P.M. Long, which is held in the Historical Society archives, in which the Aborigines were described as one of the 'most conspicuous discomforts and dangers of life in the district throughout this period'. J.P.M. Long, BA Honours thesis: 'Bathurst 1813-1840, A Study of the Foundation and Development of the First Settlement on the Western Side of the Great Dividing Range' (University of Sydney, 1953), p. 51.

[115] Richard Mulvaney, 'The Papers of P. J. Gresser', *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2 (1985), pp. 86-8; Memoirs of John Percy Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/51/a, p. 28; MS21/51/c, p. 167.

[116] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/3/a, p. 120; Conversation with John Suttor, 20th January 2009.

Gresser's understanding of this memorial was very different from that of some Historical Society members. His intimate engagement with the landscape kept an Aboriginal presence in the forefront of his mind – all over the region, he wrote, 'ploughing or water erosion reveals that practically every low ridge adjacent to a creek or a spring was a former campsite of the Aborigines.'[117] Windradyne was one man among many, a local leader of one generation in a long line of generations.[118] Gresser rightly considered his work to be very different from that of the Historical Society. In the early 1960s, the Society's Secretary and editor of *The Story of Bathurst written by Bathurstians* (1961), Bernard Greaves, attempted to divert part of Gresser's collection from the Australian Museum to the Historical Society's local museum. Gresser rebuffed his approaches by making a distinction between disciplines: the local museum, he pointed out indignantly, was a folk museum with no aspirations to serious anthropological or geological knowledge – a collection of Aboriginal stone tools (especially a good collection) had no place there.[119] Greaves himself had a vision of 'accurate' history, authenticated by a basis in documents and their sincere interpretation by Bathurst's citizenry.[120] For him, Windradyne and his memorial were perhaps a kind of 'exception' to history, best acknowledged in situ in Bathurst's hinterland, marked with an axehead that signalled a pre-historic context – a different place and time entirely to the Historical Society's tidy civic histories.

Gresser's history, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', was published as a daily serial in *The Western Times*, across the latter half of August 1962. It began with the crossing of the range by Europeans and their first observations of Aboriginal people to the west, but also made some suggestions about ways in which those Aboriginal people may have understood the Europeans.[121] Gresser gave an account of good relations between exploratory parties, early settlers and the Aborigines, and the Aboriginal role in guiding Europeans to Mudgee and other areas. Then, via Colonel Mundy's explanation of the possession of the country via 'gradual eviction ... without treaty, bargain or apology', he charted the beginnings of their dispossession.[122] Gresser's Windradyne, 'of strong personality, shrewdness and courage',

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[117] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS 21/6, 'Articles Relating to the Aborigines' (1963), p. 37. Tom Griffiths observes that as the discipline of history became increasingly professionalised, and as historians focused increasingly on the analysis of documents, it was often amateur historians and collectors who remained interested in the connections of their local landscapes with the past and who were constantly reminded of an Aboriginal presence and history in those places. Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 5.

[118] Gresser perceived a history of some 20,000 years in the hand-shaped stones he found on the surface of the land, *The Western Times*, 31st May 1962, pp. 2, 10.

[119] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21b, pp. 16-28.

[120] Greaves, *The Story of Bathurst*, Editor's Preface. This citizenry was presumably comprised of the 'Bathurstians' who had written the chapters of this book and the circles in which they moved.

[121] Percy Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 15th August 1962, p. 9.

[122] Gresser absorbed Mundy's indignantly ironic tone as he pointed out the double standard upheld by the Europeans; that justice was 'deaf, dumb, lame and blind' when it came to protecting Aborigines and 'in full

became an 'implacable enemy to the whites' after the shooting of his companions while gathering potatoes.[123] He noted the role of the district's settlers in advocating for the declaration of Martial Law, and the brutalities he understood to have been committed under it, including the massacre described by W. H. Suttor.[124] He canvassed the official account, that peace had been achieved without bloodshed, and asked the reader to consider whether Governor Brisbane was in ignorance of the reality, or whether he condoned it.[125]

Gresser gave an account of the early missionary activities at Wellington, followed by an in-depth consideration of Aboriginal religious beliefs, according to the spirit of a maxim he drew from Katie Langloh Parker, who translated and published legends told to her by Aboriginal people of central and western New South Wales in the late nineteenth century:[126] 'if we cannot respect the religion of others, we deny our own'. He admonished those who would call Aboriginal languages 'gibberish' for having no knowledge of grammar in any tongue.[127] But overall, Gresser was writing a history of 'Aborigine decimation, decay and death'.[128] His explanation for the decline of the local Aboriginal population was the breaking of their close associations with the landscape, and hunger, disease and demoralisation.[129] But he also presented the explanation that the some of the Bathurst people themselves had given to Langloh Parker, that they were being punished for not abiding by Biami's laws.[130] He catalogued the deaths of the last Aboriginal men, and referred to the absorption of the

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possession of all her faculties' when protecting the whites. Godfrey Charles Mundy, 'Our Antipodes' (1852) cited in Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 22nd August 1962, pp. 7-8, 10. Mundy had apparently visited *Brucedale* on a number of occasions, and documented his interactions with Aboriginal people there, Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/3/a, pp. 122-131.

[123] Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 18th August 1962, p. 3. Theo Barker notes that W.H. Suttor did not say that Windradyne was present at the potato field massacre, and it is Gresser who explicitly involved Windradyne in this part of the narrative. Barker, *A History of Bathurst*, Volume 1, p. 73.

[124] Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 18th August 1962, p. 3; 20th August, p. 3.

[125] Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 20th August 1962, p. 3.

[126] Marcie Muir, 'Stow, Catherine Eliza Somerville (Katie) (1856–1940)' [1990], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stow-catherine-eliza-somerville-katie-8691/text15205>, accessed 8 March 2012.

[127] Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 24th August 1962, p. 9.

[128] Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 17th August 1962, p. 9.

[129] These were the kinds of complex historical explanations for the social and economic position of Aboriginal people in the early 1960s that research such as the Aborigines Project of the Social Sciences Research Council of Australia (1964-7) sought to document. Though his aims were very different, and on a much broader scale to those of Gresser, C. D. Rowley, reporting on this project, had a similar commitment to establish a historical understanding of the dispossession of Aboriginal people, to replace the common understanding underpinning policy and public opinion that Aboriginal society was a static one of inferior character. C.D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* [1970], (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1980), pp. 1-9.

[130] Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 27th August 1962, p. 3.

women into white society, concluding his history at the graves of Yuranigh and Windradyne.[131]

The serial was addressed to a white audience. Frederick McCarthy, archaeologist and curator at the Australian Museum, on hearing that Gresser's history was to be published in the local paper, observed archly, 'it should make most interesting reading to the locals whose ancestors had so much to do with the extermination of the unfortunate Aborigines'.[132] In Gresser's own account, however, it was warmly received. He noted 'tributes of appreciation from various residents of Bathurst', with the Bathurst Naturalist Society complementing him on his thorough research and clear exposition on a 'subject ... of universal interest'.[133] As challenging as Gresser's history was, it was not out of sympathy with the Naturalist Society's interest in the 'customs, legends and languages of the Aborigines' or with their ostensibly regretful refrain that it was 'now too late' to learn any more from the Aborigines themselves.[134] As he reworked his history over the next few years, Gresser became more strongly persuaded that W. H. Suttor had exaggerated when he wrote that the brutalities of the 1820s had 'made a solitude' – certainly there were many and unjust killings, but there were also few Europeans and many places to hide.[135] Instead, Gresser traced the extinction of the Aborigines of the Bathurst district to the 1880s and 1890s. Yet even in the mid-1960s, he conceded, 'a few families of mixed blood are to be found throughout the district' in imminent danger of 'becoming completely absorbed into the white population.'[136] Like W. H. Suttor, he wrote of his own Aboriginal acquaintances in a nostalgic register, which did not seek to connect them to the *longue durée* of their peoples' histories.[137] Just a few years later, Bill Allen's family, having maintained the knowledge of their family connection to Windradyne, moved into Bathurst town under the new 'salt and pepper' philosophy of assimilation policy. The local council notified their neighbours-to-be that an Aboriginal family was moving in, and a petition was raised in objection. The Mayor, who knew Bill's parents well, refused to respond to the petition, but it was years before the Allens were embraced by their neighbours.[138]

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[131] Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 29th August 1962, p. 10; 31st August 1962, p. 7.

[132] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21d, p. 19, McCarthy to Gresser, 18th July 1963.

[133] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21f, p. 38; MS21e, p. 23.

[134] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21h, p. 21.

[135] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21j, pp. 4-5.

[136] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/3/a, pp. 102-3.

[137] See Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/6, 'Aborigines in the Shearing Sheds' and MS21/35, 'Little Part Aborigine Girl I met at Pambula'.

[138] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011.

Across the 1960s, Gresser continued to add to his history[139] and to correspond with a network of other amateurs with a serious interest in Aboriginal archaeology and culture.[140] Tom Salisbury, of the Bankstown Historical Society, had developed an interest in Windradyne and, frustrated by meagre findings in the Mitchell Library, travelled to Bathurst in 1966.[141] The Bathurst Historical Society directed him towards Gresser, who pointed him towards the sources he had found, and to Roy Suttor, who took him to see Windradyne's grave. On his return to Sydney, Salisbury read Gresser's newspaper serial and wrote in amazement that despite his long interest in Australian history, '"The Aborigines of the Bathurst District" was as a completely new world to me.'[142] He felt this history should be published as a book. On the one weekend in four that Salisbury had to himself, he continued his research in the Mitchell Library, updating Gresser on his findings – in March 1967 he uncovered a pair of notices offering a reward for Windradyne's capture, with the proviso 'alive' omitted from the second.[143] Gresser was old and tired, concentrating on 'getting his house in order'.[144] He had no objection to Salisbury compiling a book, but did not wish to take an active part in co-authorship.[145]

The correspondence between the two men, as David Roberts has noted, shows the shifting historiographical 'sympathies' which transformed Gresser's serial into Salisbury's history in-the-making. Salisbury reached towards the activist impulse that would drive historians to expose the terrible violence of the frontier in the early 1970s and '80s,[146] quite distinct from Gresser's restrained (if excoriating) historical moralism. In mid-1967 Salisbury wrote 'I am struck by the similarities which existed in Bathurst in 1824 and the present day situation in Vietnam ... our own dreadful participation today'.[147] Salisbury was alarmed to find that the 1961 history of Bathurst edited by Greaves gave the conflicts of the 1820s such short shrift. Gresser, perhaps attempting to divert him from charging the authors with a conspiracy of

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[139] P. J. Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst district (historical sketch)', 1965, AIATSIS collection.

[140] Gresser had Ted Suttor of *The Rocks*, Bathurst, collecting any stones that looked like they might have been worked by Aboriginal people as he moved around his property on daily business. He corresponded with Brian Fillery of Narromine photographing and analysing commemorative carved trees (or dendroglyphs), and Brian Woolley in Nowra studying the use and distribution of ochres in his area. Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21i, p. 10, and McCarthy to Gresser MS21d, p. 32; MS21g, pp. 14, 30.

[141] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21f, p. 34.

[142] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21f, pp. 36-7.

[143] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21h, pp. 1-4. The proclamations were issued 18th and 25th August 1824 respectively, cited in Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, p. 34.

[144] Gresser to McCarthy, October 1967, Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21h, p. 45.

[145] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21i, pp. 31-2.

[146] Roberts, 'Bells Falls massacre and Bathurst's history of violence', pp. 628-9.

[147] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21h, p. 27.

silence, explained simply that the book had been written before his own serial was published.[148]

Salisbury had fixed on Windradyne, and the power of his biography to convey the Bathurst story. In August 1968, breathless with excitement after giving a presentation before the Wild Colonial Society, he addressed Gresser:

> You who have lived ... in Windradyne's country and have ... been brought up in the knowledge of Windradyne's history and importance, may not realise that there are many people, here in Sydney, who are greatly interested in Australian History, but have only a vague, indefinite knowledge of someone known as 'Saturday' and are amazed ... to hear of Windradyne as he really was.[149]

The result of Salisbury's endeavours was published in 1971 as *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri: Martial Law at Bathurst in 1824*. This small book has been a touchstone for subsequent storytellers, many of whom have relied heavily (or solely) on the extracts from primary sources reproduced therein, and Salisbury's and Gresser's interpretations of them. Foregrounding the primary documentary sources, and adding 'ethnographic' insights into the Wiradjuri perspective when possible,[150] it traces the 'dispossession' of the great Wiradjuri 'Nation'.[151] Windradyne is portrayed as a leader whose strength and daring captured contemporary imaginations. The friendship between Windradyne and the Suttor family is touched upon via the dramatic episode in which William's hut was surrounded in the night, and his life saved by his language skills and prior friendship with the Wiradjuri. Salisbury consulted with Roy Suttor and his family in compiling the short chapter on Windradyne, and a sense of warm regard pervades it.[152] Salisbury's enthusiasm for his project remains palpable in his letters, and his interpretation of Windradyne's story perhaps helped to reshape the Suttor family's engagement with it. In spite of the more urgent politics pervading his history, however, Salisbury did not anticipate a Wiradjuri readership any more than Gresser had: his story of dispossession was also one of extinction. Even as activists Isobel and Paul Coe and their colleagues conceived the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, established

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[148] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21f, pp. 34, 36-7.

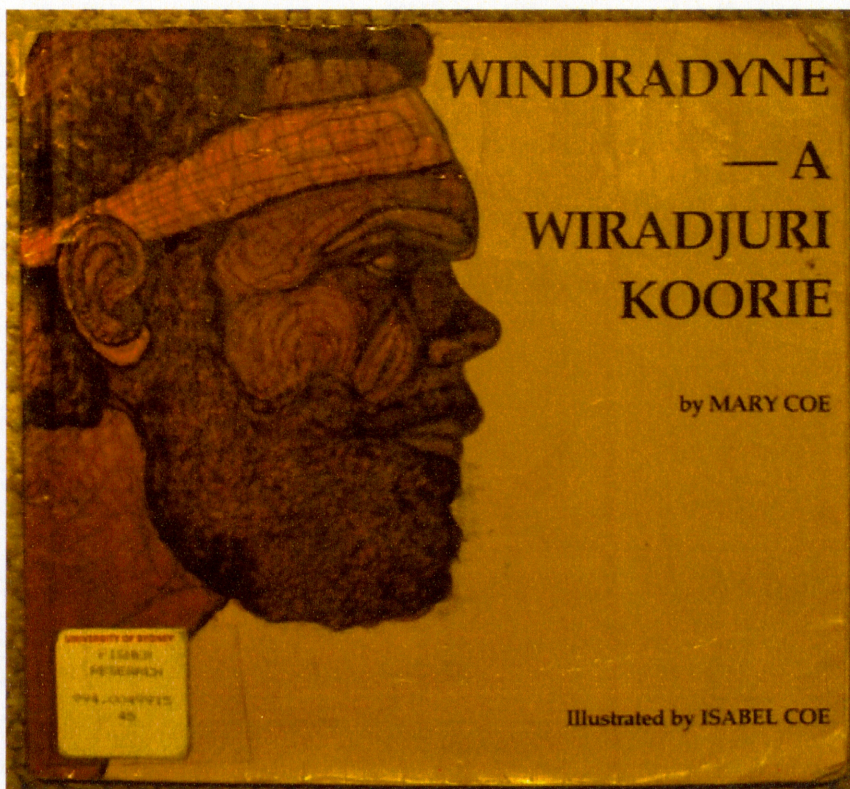
[149] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21i, pp. 31-2.

[150] Salisbury adds to Gresser's explanation of the potato incident, for instance, that for the Wiradjuri, helping themselves to a few potatoes on their own land would not have been considered theft, as the emphasis in Wiradjuri law was on the owner's responsibility to protect their possessions. Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, p. 22.

[151] Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, p. 9.

[152] Gresser referred Salisbury to Roy Suttor, who he said had been most helpful to him in the writing of his history. Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21f, p. 34.

on the lawns of Parliament House in January 1972,[153] Salisbury wrote: 'They had been plundered and despoiled and country taken from them, so what had they to live for ... Wiradjuri people of the Bathurst area gradually disappeared and have finally vanished'.[154]



3.2 The cover of Mary Coe's book, *Windradyne – a Wiradjuri Koorie* (1986), illustration by Isobel Coe.

The Coe siblings grew up on the Erambie mission at Cowra, where Windradyne had sent his surviving son Wirrarai after his other children were killed in the 'potato field massacre', and according to Bill Allen are, like himself, direct descendants of Windradyne.[155] Mary Coe read Salisbury's book while researching a history project at school and saw in the story great potential for connecting the present and the past.[156] In 1986 she published *Windradyne – a Wiradjuri Koorie*, which tells the story of Wiradjuri resistance to invasion led by the 'great

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[153] Irene Watson, 'The Aboriginal Tent Embassy 28 Years After it was Established: Interview with Isobel Coe', *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 5, no. 1.48 (2000), pp. 17-18; Gary Foley, 'Black Power in Redfern 1968 – 1972', The Koori History Website, 5th October 2001, <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/essays/essay_1.html>, viewed 4 July 2011.

[154] Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, p. 44. The main narrative is book-ended by extracts of Dame Mary Gilmore's poem 'Waragery Tribe': '...We are the lost who went,/Like the birds, crying;/ Hunted, lonely and spent, / Broken and dying.' p. 6.

[155] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011.

[156] Mary Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie* (Glebe, NSW: Blackbooks, 1986), back cover.

warrior' Windradyne, a struggle which continued in the fight for land rights in the present.[157] When her sister Isobel Coe lodged a Native Title writ in 1993, effectively claiming Wiradjuri sovereignty over Wiradjuri country as a whole,[158] Coe told the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'we are trying to finish what Windradyne began.'[159] She drew on Salisbury's and Gresser's work to reclaim the story for Wiradjuri readers. She shifts the gaze so that Wiradjuri people see Evans crossing the mountains, though he fails to see them, and *they* interpret *his* behaviour.[160] Windradyne is reclaimed from the descriptions of the *Sydney Gazette* as a manly man, strong, courageous and wise. In Coe's book he becomes a man that all Wiradjuri men can identify with. She dedicated the book to her father, a 'Wiradjuri warrior'.[161] By explicitly linking Windradyne's fight with that of 'Pemulwoy and all the other Koories who resisted the invasion,' Coe's book also offered Windradyne to all Aboriginal people as a hero.[162]

Coe felt that Windradyne's story was a part of her people's history that had been neglected. When she read Salisbury's book, she wrote, 'it was the first time I had ever seen anything about Wiradjuri people fighting a war'.[163] It was, of course, partly Coe's own work, following on from Gresser's and Salisbury's, that reframed Windradyne's story as one of war in terms comprehensible in the late twentieth century. But her claim also invites questions about the nature of Windradyne's story handed down between Wiradjuri generations across the century and a half between Windradyne's death and the 1980s. Peter Read, making enquiries about Windradyne in the early eighties found no traditions within the Wiradjuri community which added distinctive new information to Gresser and Salisbury's story. He asked of Windradyne's mysterious appearance at Parramatta, 'was he ever in real danger or

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[157] Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie* (1986), pp. vi, 19-29, 35-6, and back cover. The second edition of her book concluded with photographs of Aboriginal protesters linking Aboriginal fighting with war and war-commemoration, one group of painted, headbanded men marching behind a banner: 'Veterans of the 200 year War', Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, p. 88.

[158] Garth Nettheim, 'Isabel Coe on Behalf of the Wiradjuri Tribe v Commonwealth of Australia and the State of New South Wales', 23rd December 1993, *Aboriginal Law Bulletin* 9, no. 3(66), p. 14.

[159] Tony Hewett, 'Wiradjuri People's Writ Immortalises a Warrior', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7th June 1993, p. 8.

[160] Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, pp. 4-10, 15.

[161] Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, frontispiece.

[162] Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, p. iv. Windradyne joined a growing pantheon of Aboriginal men recognised inter-regionally as warriors who had brought together forces far more extensive than their clan groups to fight the British, and whose stories became entwined with the radical politics and pan-Aboriginal activism of the 1980s. Pemulwuy and Sandawarra both starred in novels centred on resistance and the rebuilding of history from an Aboriginal point of view. Yagan, as we have seen above, was honoured with a statue in 1984 following a five year campaign by Nyoongar communities in Perth, which continued to lobby for the return of his head from a London museum. Charles Perkins, 'Political Objectives', in James Jupp ed. *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, its people and their origins* (North Ryde, NSW: Angus and Roberston, 1988) p. 235; Colin Johnson, *Long Live Sandawara* [1979] (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1987); Eric Willmot, *Pemulwuy: The Rainbow Warrior* (Sydney: Bantam Books, 1987); Batten and Batten, 'Memorialising the Past', pp. 99-100.

[163] Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie* (1986), back cover.

did he, like Jimmy Governor seventy years later, lead the whites in a mocking and exhausting dance through the recesses of the Hill End Plateau? Nobody knows.'[164] He found that this knowledge, like so much else, did not survive the 'Great Dispersals' set in train by the Aborigines Protection Act of 1909, which regulated Aboriginal life on a minute scale, separating children from their parents, and parents from grandparents, interrupting cycles of teaching and learning.[165] Today, Windradyne is significant as part of local Wiradjuri knowledge, in which he is a figure linking cultural traditions, history, teaching and learning, and the landscape. This tradition indeed adds little detail to a history of Windradyne's campaigns, or his friendship with the Suttor family. But it does point towards his continued importance for his descendants and other Wiradjuri people. Wiradjuri family and oral traditions have been enhanced by the research and writings of Gresser, Salisbury, and others, and have reshaped the meanings of these written traditions in turn.

When I asked local Wiradjuri Elder Dindima Gloria Rogers whether the story of Windradyne was among the stories she had been told as a child, she replied in the positive, saying:

> I had an old Auntie, she used to call us kids together ... you would sit around, close to her, and she would never speak until there was complete silence. And then she'd start in with the stories, and Windradyne's story was one of them, and of course with any story there was always a message ... But as a kid you think it's just a story, it's only when you get older and you have better understanding that you get the message.[166]

Like Rogers, Allen remembers being taught about his connection with Windradyne as a child, and is gradually teaching his grandchildren about this connection. His knowledge of Windradyne as a leader in war, however, is a result of his reading and asking around as an adult.[167]

Allen and Rogers advise on and teach in a learning program at Kelso Public School, known as 'high five', which embodies an ethic of living and learning, and teaches children about connection to country.[168] 'High five' incorporates five symbols, one of which is the message stick, linked with the story of Windradyne, his resting place at *Brucedale*, and an ethic of being proud of Aboriginal culture and identity in a strong but not an aggressive way. As Gloria Rogers puts it, 'finding the strength within to be able to resolve, rather than to, you

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[164] Read, *A Hundred Years War*, p. 11.

[165] Read, *A Hundred Years War*, pp. 54-55.

[166] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[167] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011.

[168] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011; Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

know, knuckle up ... [for both] boys and girls'.[169] Windradyne's story becomes part of a re-mapping of Bathurst and its hinterland in combination with the other four elements: the symbols for the Platypus Dreaming, Wuhloo (Mt Panorama), Wambool (the Macquarie River), and Blackfellows Hand, the symbol for a meeting and learning site near Lithgow that has been recognised as an Aboriginal Place under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*.[170] One of the Aboriginal teachers at the school has created a 'high five' artwork where children can walk between stepping stones, creating conceptual relationships between Dreaming stories and the historical past, and between people, places and stories at the same time.[171]

The landscape of Windradyne's story remains dominated by European land use, boundaries, buildings and business.[172] The streets of Bathurst run in a grand grid pattern. At the centre of town, in view of the massive classical bulk of the courthouse, is a centenary memorial to Evans, whose bronze figure strikes an imperial pose while an Aboriginal man, said by some locals to be Windradyne, crouches at his feet. It is a landscape of past and present dispossession and segregation.[173] The Wiradjuri presence for the most part takes intangible form as journeys and stories, knowledge and memory, lingering amongst this very fabric even as the architecture and the surrounding roads, paddocks and fences visually and physically deny it.[174] John Bugg, Bill Allen's uncle, worked closely with a number of local institutions in an effort to make the Wiradjuri presence more visible, including the local Macquarie Rivercare group which has erected a large interpretive installation in the Macquarie River Bicentennial Park on the northern side of town. The installation sets out the environmental and cultural values of the river, Wambool, casting it as a central feature of Wiradjuri life before 1813. Like the 'high five' program, the panels recognise a Wiradjuri cartography which reaches across the city, past the Macquarie Memorial Cairn on the other side of the park, to connect the river with Wuhloo, Mt Panorama.[175] Here, Windradyne is the key figure in Bugg's story of the coming of the Europeans and the period of Martial Law and its aftermath. His story spans from the time before the European arrival, across the

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[169] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[170] Blackfellows Hand Aboriginal Place was gazetted in 2008, see 'Atlas of Aboriginal Places', Office of Environment and Heritage website, updated 16th March 2012, <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/aboriginalplaces/BlackfellowsHand.htm>, viewed 16 April 2012.

[171] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[172] Gaynor Macdonald, 'Master Narratives and the Dispossession of the Wiradjuri', *Aboriginal History* 22 (1998), pp. 164-6.

[173] Denis Byrne, 'Nervous Landscapes: Race and Space in Australia', *Journal of Social Archaeology* 3, no. 2 (June 2003), p. 177.

[174] Macdonald, 'Master Narratives and the Dispossession of the Wiradjuri', p. 164.

[175] Macquarie Rivercare interpretive panels, Macquarie River Bicentennial Park, Bathurst. These panels were erected sometime in the late 1990s or early 2000s, and have been renewed once during that period after fading in the sun and attracting graffiti (Conversation with Wayne Feebrey, Greening Bathurst, 13th March 2012). Gloria Rogers is engaged in a protracted campaign to have dual naming of these important places recognised by Bathurst City Council, Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

Wiradjuri wars of the Bathurst area, and into the period of accommodation and adaptation that began in the late 1820s, attesting to continuity in the Wiradjuri story.[176]

3.3 and 3.4 The Macquarie River – Wambool as it runs alongside Bathurst; the Macquarie Memorial Cairn (1930), overlooking the river, encircled by a low wall bearing plaques commemorating the achievements of Bathurst's more recent 'pioneers'.

One of the great Wiradjuri educationist Stan Grant Snr's stories for young readers begins as a group of Wiradjuri boys approach an old man asking: 'who created our great Wiradjuri land

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[176] Macquarie Rivercare interpretive panels. Linda Burney, a distinguished member of the Wiradjuri diaspora and former NSW Minister for Community Services, from the Murrumbidgee area, often introduces herself by way of a brief description of the Wiradjuri nation and of the British invasion of Wiradjuri country against which Windradyne led the resistance. See for example: Linda Burney, Speech To Teachers Federation Conference, 1st July 2007, CFMEU Construction and General Division, NSW Branch website, <http://www.cfmeu-construction-nsw.com.au/pdf/spburney.pdf>, viewed 19 January 2009.

and people; why were we no longer being put through the *Burbang* (Initiation)'?[177] After telling the boys a creation story and explaining what the *Burbang* involved, the old man addresses the important matter of why it is no longer practised: a council of Elders resolved 'there would have to be changes if we were to survive'.[178] A vital part of the old man's teaching, focussed on Murrumbidgee Wiradjuri country, is the history of the arrival of Europeans following Sturt's expedition in 1829. The Wiradjuri extended customary hospitality to these guests before declaring 'war on the invaders' once it was clear that they would not leave. 'Fearless fighters from beyond the Murray and Lachlan rivers' came to help, but eventually the Wiradjuri were forced to compromise.[179] The old man concludes:

> We were defeated and humiliated but we could never be made to become white men, which is evidenced here by you young men wanting to know more about your traditions ... It is a different battle we fight today ... for recognition and the rights to our land. This can only be brought about by you young people getting educated in the white man's way. Do not forget your heritage. Be proud of who you are ... Do not be angry and point the finger of blame ... for humility is part of our tradition. Do this and one day we will win.[180]

The narrative connects the listening children to a past before and outside western knowledge and institutions, as well as orientating them in their learning, both within and against the dominant structures; the tensions of this position are made bearable by a sense of integrity and pride.

Windradyne's story performs a similar function, connecting past and present, and providing a proud connection to Wiradjuri history and knowledge.[181] Told in public spaces it suggests the parity of Aboriginal history with European history and all the 'big men' who appear in

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[177] Stan Grant, *Stories Told by my Grandfather and Other Old Men: a collection of short stories* (O'Connor, ACT: Restoration House, 1999), pp. 21-24. Stan Grant Snr received an OAM for his work in collaboration with John Rudder in bringing together the linguistic knowledge held by many different Wiradjuri people, to create the *Wiradjuri Dictionary*, published in 2005, and a number of children's books based around Wiradjuri grammar, songs and stories.

[178] Grant, *Stories Told by my Grandfather*, p. 33.

[179] Grant, *Stories Told by my Grandfather*, pp. 28-32.

[180] Grant, *Stories Told by my Grandfather*, p. 33.

[181] Windradyne appears in educational tools and curriculum materials as an identifiably Wiradjuri figure and a strong male role model. In the *Caring for place, caring for country* kit the song 'Old Man Windradyne' is set to the tune of 'Old Macdonald', and describes Windradyne hunting animals for which Wiradjuri names are supplied 'Caring for Place, caring for country' kit (Darlinghurst, NSW: Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate, NSW Dept. of Education and Training, c2005). See also 'Making a difference: Windradyne', referred to by 'Indigenous Students Connect with Blogs', The Learning Place, *Education Views*, 6th June 2007, p. 17. A scholarship has been named after Windradyne at the Mitchell College of Advanced Education, established in 1987, and a Windradyne Lecture was inaugurated in 2000, *Pemulwy Newsletter* 13 (1987-88), p. 6; Adam Motsokono, 'Social Justice Commissioner to give Windradyne Lecture', *The Western Advocate*, 22nd October 2001.

that story. As Bill Murray observed in a 1993 film, *Windradyne: Wiradjuri resistance, the beginning*, 'I see him as a hero to the Aboriginal people – what he done was equal to any other general or whatever you see in a white society, what kids learn about in their history books and ... he should be honoured as such'.[182] Windradyne embodies a strength that provides a resounding answer both to depictions of Aboriginal weakness and to the weakness experienced by Wiradjuri people as a colonised people. Stan Grant Jr. wished that he had had the example of Windradyne and his warriors before him at school, where he believed as he was taught: that Aboriginal people were 'cowardly and dim witted'. The story of the Wiradjuri wars was integral to his growing pride in his heritage: 'I know now that my people were not passive, we did not drop our weapons and flee. We were warriors and there's pride in that.'[183] A correspondent to the *First Australians* online guestbook similarly identified wholeheartedly with Windradyne's standing as a leader in resistance, introducing himself, 'I'm a strong & powerful wiradjuri black warrior man'.[184]

The figure of the warrior has been critiqued for encouraging a mentality of perpetual combat and sacrifice, endangering any regenerative impetus, leaving room only for a defensive 'survival' and a narrow definition of self and community.[185] Importantly, Windradyne is not merely a figure of resistance who provides a point of opposition to the dominant culture. Like Stan Grant Snr's story, Windradyne's story provides a model of integrity in a state of conflict. It is important to Bill Allen that Windradyne fought in a Wiradjuri way, rejecting the opportunity to use firearms, and killing only those who had harmed the Wiradjuri, not engaging in wholesale slaughter.[186] Allen finds that Windradyne was a leader who was strong in his culture, and who kept his people together in a time of crisis, a leader like Braveheart,[187] who is also understood (particularly in the wake of Mel Gibson's 1995 film) to have been not only a militarist, but also someone with 'a concern for civil rights, equity and

[182] Wayne Pearson, *Windradyne: Wiradjuri resistance, the beginning* (Sydney: Aboriginal Education Unit, NSW Dept. of School Education, 1993).

[183] Stan Grant, *The Tears of Strangers*, pp. 63-4, 87.

[184] Mr Kevin May j.r. from Marrickville, 21st October 2008, First Australians series: Your Comments, Special Broadcasting Service website, <http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/>, viewed 16 December 2008.

[185] Pascale De Souza, 'Maoritanga in Whale Rider and Once Were Warriors: a problematic rebirth through female leaders', *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 1, no. 1 (2007), p. 23. Mark McKenna follows Ghassan Hage in observing that imagining ourselves as cultural warriors, in the way that Australians have been encouraged to as participants in the War on Terror (and the History Wars), is an essentially defensive position, which 'pushes us to define our society more narrowly, more aggressively', Mark McKenna, 'Australian history and the Australian "national Inheritance"', *Australian Cultural History* 27, no. 1 (2009), pp. 8-9.

[186] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011.

[187] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011.

self-determination', the stuff of contemporary political discourse for a people seeking recognition and independence.[188]

Dennis Foley, on the other hand, interrogates Windradyne's leadership and finds that he (like Pemulwuy and Musquito) operated in a 'most uncharacteristically Indigenous mode'.[189] He asks whether Windradyne's journey to Parramatta was anything more than a capitulation, after which Windradyne spent his final years in the service of the colonisation of the Western Plains: if he's a 'patriot' as the 1954 memorial suggests, 'was he a true patriot to ... colonial conquest ... and stealing of land, or a patriot to the Aboriginal cause?'[190] It is his negotiation of this self-same tension, though, which makes Windradyne an inspiring figure for others. Warwick Peckham, Chief Executive Officer of the Bathurst Local Aboriginal Land Council, thinks of Windradyne most days because Windradyne's dilemmas, in judging how far to accommodate the whites, how long to fight and when to compromise is something he can identify with in his own work.[191] From the mid-1980s in particular, Aboriginal communities have developed working relationships with government and other institutions (increasingly required by policy and charter frameworks to acknowledge and work with Indigenous communities).[192] Constant effort is required to maintain trust. The potential always exists for these institutions to reproduce social and economic inequalities and to 'manage Aboriginal resistance' to state rule using the very same joint initiatives that ostensibly aim to support Aboriginal aspirations.[193] This is a situation somewhere between war and friendship, in which Aboriginal leadership, and its basis in a combination of local Aboriginal and governmental structures and traditions, is a continuously contested

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[188] Tim Edensor, 'Reading Braveheart: Representing and Contesting Scottish Identity', *Scottish Affairs* 21 (Autumn 1997), p. 147. As well as a fighter and 'crusader', Bill Murray characterised Windradyne as a 'saviour of the Aboriginal people', a figure not just of survival but of deliverance. Pearson, *Windradyne: Wiradjuri resistance, the beginning.*

[189] Foley, 'Leadership', pp. 184-5. This may partly reflect the nature of the tradition within Foley's own family, in which stories of heroic Irish insurgents were brought together with those of the British-Wiradjuri conflicts of the 1820s. The details of the Irish stories were forgotten, while the reshaped stories focussed on 'Wiradjuri accomplishments on the battlefield and Windradyne's leadership'. Coe also charts a transition from the waging of a traditional Wiradjuri conflict against the British, to a war to defend land, a kind of war that was unprecedented, but which the Wiradjuri under Windradyne's leadership realised was necessary as they were steadily driven into the back country away from water and food sources. Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, p. 24.

[190] Foley, 'Leadership', pp. 184-5.

[191] Conversation with Warwick Peckham, 17th June 2010. Peckham does not have a family connection with Windradyne. He came to Bathurst from Dubbo about twenty years ago and has learnt a lot more about Windradyne's story over this period. The portrait hung in the Bathurst LALC office is a print of the J.W. Lewins lithograph of 'A native chief of Bathurst' 1815, which is widely believed to be a portrait of Windradyne.

[192] Michael Dodson, 'The end in the beginning: Re(de)finding Aboriginality', *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (1994), p. 9.

[193] Katherine Lambert-Pennington, 'What remains? Reconciling repatriation, Aboriginal culture, representation and the past', *Oceania* 77, no.3 (November 2007), pp. 320-32.

matter.[194] Windradyne's example as a more-than-warrior, with political vision, diplomatic skills, strong cultural knowledge and commitment to family, held together by a hard-won (and at times contested) integrity, can provide a stabilising and inspiring centre, as well as grist for the mill of continued deliberation on what Wiradjuri leadership is, or could be in the future.

Local and regional identifications are contested as well as confirmed around Windradyne's story. The Wiradjuri community in Bathurst is somewhat fragmented today, and co-exists with Aboriginal families from other language groups resettled in Bathurst, Orange and Dubbo over the past thirty or forty years. Marking public places with local Wiradjuri history involves sharing with Aboriginal people from other parts of the Wiradjuri nation as well as from other language groups altogether.[195] The Bathurst Local Aboriginal Land Council was originally named after Windradyne.[196] In Bill Allen's account, there has been a transition from the management of the Land Council by local traditional owners, to management by Wiradjuri people from other localities. In the mid-1990s, when there was a risk of the Land Council going into receivership, John Bugg (Allen's uncle) took responsibility for resolving many of the problems before officially removing Windradyne's name from the organization, so that his reputation could not be tarnished in the future.[197]

Paul House, a Gundangarra man from the Queanbeyan area maintains that Windradyne's father was Wiradjuri, but his mother was of one of the Gundangarra groups. She went home to the Lake George area to give birth to him, and then when he was a young man, he returned to Wiradjuri country to fight the resistance. Like the leader Onyong (or Alynyonga), who the Gundangarra look to for inspiration as a resistance leader, Windradyne was born at one of the special waterholes, Lake George and Rose Lagoon, that were known to produce warriors. Today, Lake George is known as Wirriwa, but the non-Aboriginal owners of the property have called it *Windradyne*.[198] Gloria Rogers claims that Windradyne had a Gamilaroi father and Wiradjuri mother (the Wiradjuri tradition being matrilineal) making

[194] Frances Peters-Little, 'The Community Game: Aboriginal self-definition at the local level', AIATSIS Research discussion paper No. 10 (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2000), pp. 14-15.

[195] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010; Conversation with Warwick Peckham, 17th June 2010.

[196] Gaynor Macdonald, *Two Steps Forward, Three Steps Back: A Wiradjuri Land Rights Journey* (Marrickville, NSW: Southwood Press, 2004), p. 25.

[197] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011. Gaynor Macdonald documents the forging of a strong pan-Wiradjuri feeling in the early 1980s in the lead-up to the Land Rights Bill, under which the Wiradjuri Land Council that Wiradjuri leaders had formed through their own networking ahead of the Act was registered as a Regional Land Council. Pan-Wiradjuri feeling and action through the Land Council system was put under great pressure over the following decade by the underfunding of the entire system, and by the limited opportunities that existed for the claiming of Wiradjuri lands, Macdonald, *Two Steps Forward, Three Steps Back*, pp. 10-11, 29-57.

[198] Conversation with Paul House, 12th July 2010. Bill Allen refutes this story, but states that there was a man who came from the south to assist the Wiradjuri in fighting the British, he was known as Big Bull, Conversation with Bill Allen 8th July 2011.

another, incompatible, set of links with the Wiradjuri people's powerful northern neighbours.[199] Bill Allen tells a number of stories about Windradyne's travels, across the range to King's Tableland, and to northern NSW where he has a number of Dunghutti descendants (Dunghutti country is centred on Kempsey).[200] Today, as overlapping interests in land and story are presided over by hegemonic third parties, government and legal authorities administering heritage, encouraging tourism and adjudicating native title claims, stories about family connections, exchanges and travels are brought into conflict and competition with each other by modern cartography, linear time, and demand for a single true (as well as plausible) story.[201]

Windradyne's story, now being told to Wiradjuri children by Aboriginal teachers and Wiradjuri elders, represented in artwork and film, and identified with on a daily basis, has been reclaimed by Wiradjuri people via writing and talk.[202] Here, as elsewhere, Aboriginal people's understanding of history is not 'something entirely of their own making'.[203] Written histories have played a significant part in this reclamation. As Vivienne Mason of Narooma on the South Coast of New South Wales told Mark McKenna, 'it was actually the white people who saved our history for us ... not our culture but our history ... The white man has taken our culture and history away from us but he has actually given it back in what he has recorded.'[204] At the same time, these written histories, with their claims to an authority independent from family and country, also have the potential to contest Wiradjuri history-making.

Peter Read remembers visiting Windradyne's grave with Mary and Isabel Coe in 1979, and John Bugg began to visit *Brucedale* regularly from about 1990 to talk with the Suttor family about maintaining and protecting Windradyne's grave.[205] In the early nineties, a film funded by the NSW Department of Education, *Windradyne: Wiradjuri resistance, the beginning* featured members of the Coe family, John Suttor, Theo Barker from the Bathurst Historical

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[199] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[200] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011.

[201] Heather Goodall, for example, finds that Aboriginal people are being 'forced to reconceptualise their stories about family and land' so that they can 'meet the demanding set of criteria defined by the white-Australian legal and bureaucratic system' and re-gain access to land. The vast and fluid family histories that have lived through the memories of individuals are coming into conflict with the recognised authority of linear, European-style family trees and other documentary sources. Heather Goodall, 'Telling country: memory, modernity and narratives in rural Australia', *History Workshop Journal* 47 (Spring 1999), pp. 181-4.

[202] Tom Griffiths, writing about the successful protection of Mumbulla Mountain near Bega on the NSW south coast from logging by the Yuin community, and reclamation of its sacred history for the contemporary community in the face of scepticism by the government, logging interests, and the local white community, observed that 'places can be reclaimed by writing and talk, ... continuity of occupation is not the only measure of possession.' Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 234.

[203] Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point*, p. 222.

[204] Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point*, p. 222.

[205] Conversation with Peter Read, February 2012; Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

Society and Rob MacLaughlin from Charles Sturt University.[206] The film emerged from an exchange of traditions. It was closely based on Mary Coe's book, in which she had perhaps expanded on Salisbury's tentative statements with Wiradjuri knowledge when she explained that in keeping with the Wiradjuri way of being hospitable to guests:

> Windradyne and the Wiradjuri people accepted small numbers of white settlers coming to their lands and they acted as guides for the settlers taking them to the areas away from their camping and hunting grounds and their sacred sites.[207]

In the film, John Suttor explains how Wiradjuri people guided his forebears to the spot where Clear Creek and Winburndale Rivulet meet, the place where they established *Brucedale*, when the grant promised to them on the Macquarie River proved to be a bureaucratic fiction.[208] This element of the story, which illustrates friendly relations between the Wiradjuri and the Suttor family soon after their arrival in Wiradjuri country, had apparently been preserved in Suttor family oral tradition.[209] This would seem to be the first time it had emerged into the wider public sphere. Talking with the Coe family around the film had perhaps confirmed the veracity and importance of this part of the story for John Suttor. It is probably safe to say that no party has preserved an 'independent' tradition about the friendship to the present. The Suttor family and other non-Aboriginal tellers of this story, just as much as Wiradjuri people, have in some senses re-discovered this story of friendship in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Friendship and War

The story of Windradyne's friendship with the Suttor family and its meaning amid the 'hundred years war' between the Wiradjuri and the State has shape-shifted. Over the past few decades a new emphasis on the friendship between the Suttor family in particular with Windradyne and his family prior to and through these conflicts has developed. 'Colo's' 1829 obituary for Windradyne, W. H. Suttor's story of 'western rebellions', and the plaque on the 1954 memorial represent the friendship as a situation of peaceful relations between

[206] Mary Coe and John Bugg advised on the film, and family members including John Coe, Jenny Munro and Bill Murray appeared in the film. Theo Barker had just completed his history of Bathurst, which examines the period of martial law in detail.

[207] Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, p. 19. See also Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, pp. 16-17. Warwick Peckham also emphasised that Wiradjuri people first directed the Europeans in how and where to settle. War broke out when the increasing numbers of livestock began to have a serious impact on food sources, themselves providing a readily accessible food source that was protected with firearms. Conversation with Warwick Peckham, 17th June 2010. Stan Grant senior also explained that hostilities had broken out on the Murrumbidgee after Wiradjuri hospitality had been outworn by the newcomers, Grant, *Stories Told by my Grandfather*, pp. 28-32.

[208] Wayne Pearson, *Windradyne: Wiradjuri resistance, the beginning.*

[209] Conversation with John Suttor, 20th January 2009.

Windradyne and the settlers-in-general *after* the acute conflicts of the 1820s. In his letter to *The Australian* in 1826, as well as trying to encourage all settlers to adopt a friendly attitude after the wars, 'Colo' had set himself apart as a constant friend to the Wiradjuri. But perhaps, subsequently, it wasn't politic to harp on this distinction, as William led the family to growing success in the region.[210]

Debra Jopson's *Sydney Morning Herald* article typifies the recent emphasis on the singularity of the relationship of the Suttor family with local Wiradjuri people, in the past and the present:

> In an area where some landholders – fearful of land claims – often bar access to such sites, [Bill Allen] can [visit Windradyne's grave] because of a friendship of almost 180 years and six generations between local Aborigines and one white family – the Suttors of Brucedale.[211]

Similarly, a sign erected at the entry to *Brucedale* in the latter months of 2010 states that Windradyne 'led his warriors in a bloody campaign against white settlers, and yet one white family continued to respect and befriend him'.[212] This shift from the general to the particular, from a friendship in defeat to a friendship prior to and through conflict is associated with the increased currency, since the story began to be told across a wide spectrum of public and popular literature in the 1980s, of two story elements that had hitherto had a small circulation and not been part of the main stream of the story.

The first of these is the story that John Suttor told in the 1993 film, *Windradyne: Wiradjuri resistance, the beginning*, that the Wiradjuri helped George and William Suttor find the place where they settled and have been ever since, *Brucedale*. This act of guidance illustrates the agency of the Wiradjuri in a way that friendliness after their 'defeat' in 1824 cannot, hinting at the complexity of the Wiradjuri response to the arrival of the Europeans, and the way in which the Wiradjuri may have been able to take the initiative in peaceful and warlike relations across the early 1820s. By the turn of the century, it was being interpreted in a number of ways, including as an offer of 'co-existence' to the Suttor family soon after their arrival in Wiradjuri country.[213] A recent family history (not produced by the *Brucedale* branch

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[210] Theo Barker notes his involvement in the Holy Trinity Church, the Turf Club and Agricultural Association, and his election as the first member of the NSW Legislative Council for the counties of Roxbury, Phillip and Wellington in 1843 Barker, *A History of Bathurst*, Volume 1, p. 177 and Volume 2, p. 138.

[211] Debra Jopson, 'Grave a symbol of 180 years of friendship', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th April 2002.

[212] Entry Signs to be erected at *Brucedale*, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (Bathurst).

[213] Dianne Johnson interprets this advice from the Wiradjuri: 'It appears in hindsight, that the local Wiradjuri were offering co-existence to the Suttors.' Johnson, *Lighting the way*, p. 51.

of the family) tells the story of the *Brucedale* selection as if the Wiradjuri recommendation of this spot endowed the family with special rights of possession:

> When ordered to move elsewhere the Suttors remembered the glowing accounts of rich alluvial flats and grazing hill country further out that friendly Aborigines had related to them 'where the creeks join' they said. Suttor went, saw and was convinced ... This time their right to the land was secure.[214]

It was Governor Brisbane's more open policy of settlement that allowed the family to cross the range as they had long hoped to do.[215] Yet some recent versions of the story imply that George and William Suttor were part of an early trickle of strangers, which the Wiradjuri could more or less accommodate, the friendship being one of the few remaining legacies of a peaceful period of migration and settlement before Brisbane's opening of the floodgates.[216] In this scenario, the family's settlement in Wiradjuri country seems more a 'taking-up' of land than a taking of land from Aboriginal people, echoing, perhaps, some of 'Colo's' desires to have taken land in a benevolent way.[217] David Suttor, appearing on *First Australians*, rejected this view; the governors were giving out land to white settlers, he explained, and 'we just took it ... there wasn't any treaties or ... recognition of prior ownership'.[218]

The episode in which Windradyne and his warriors surround William's hut in the night has also played a pivotal role in the changing shape of the story. Where W. H. Suttor separated this episode from his wider story of the conflicts of the 1820s, Gresser integrated it into the main narrative of his 1962 serial.[219] Salisbury signposted the dramatic potential of this 'encounter ... between the enraged natives and one lone white settler'.[220] Indeed, the

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[214] Norton, *Dear William*, p. 31.

[215] George Suttor expressed frustration with Governor Macquarie and his strict control of migration over the mountains, George Suttor, *Memoirs of George Suttor*, p. 58. This has remained part of the family story, see Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, pp. 63-4; Norton, *Dear William*, pp. 23, 33.

[216] In *First Australians*, for example, William and George Suttor's friendly contact with the Wiradjuri is established in the narrative before 'the country is opened up to anyone who can pay to settle there by the new Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane.' Nowra and Perkins, *First Australians*, Episode 1. See also Grassby and Hill, *Six Australian battlefields*, p. 148.

[217] Adam Gall critiques this persistent idea of the 'good' settler as animated in Kate Grenville's novel, *The Secret River*, where this figure is conceived as 'taking up' land, rather than taking land from Aboriginal people, Adam Gall, 'Taking/Taking Up: Recognition and the Frontier in Grenville's The Secret River', *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, Special Issue: The Colonial Present, (2008), pp. 94-104.

[218] Nowra and Perkins, *First Australians*, Episode 1.

[219] Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 18th August 1962, p. 3. He tells both versions of this story discussed below.

[220] Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, p. 22. Of course William was not alone in the unprovenanced version of the story reproduced on the following page, where he was in the company of Peneegrah, and probably at least one shepherd.

immediacy of this episode of cross-cultural frisson and resolution has had great appeal for storytellers, particularly in telling stories of friendship and reconciliation following the negotiation of the conservation agreement over Windradyne's resting place: for it is via this episode that we learn that William had a pre-existing, friendly relationship with the Wiradjuri, and that he spoke the Wiradjuri language. This revelation is both potent and inarticulate. Storytellers typically reproduce or paraphrase W. H. Suttor's version of this episode, and then leave it to 'speak for itself'.[221] The story probably originated with William Suttor himself, but it is striking that nothing of the all-important conversation with Windradyne is preserved. Subsequent generations have been left to speculate, as Bill Allen did on *First Australians*, imagining that William might have said 'he had nothing to do with the killings, and he probably would have said that he was appalled with what was going on ... [and] Windradyne probably would have accepted that'.[222] The significance of William's fluency in Wiradjuri, the sustained closeness required to learn the language and the commitment on the part of the Wiradjuri people involved to teach him, is seldom explored.[223] At the same time, William's language skills are provided with the ultimate reference: they saved his life.

What shape did the relationship take *during* the conflicts? If the Suttor family were friends to the Wiradjuri before the outbreak of hostilities, did they not attempt to restrain the violence of other settlers, or hide Wiradjuri people as Thomas Foley, Dennis Foley's grandfather's great-grandfather, hid the Wiradjuri woman he later married?[224] A correspondent to the SBS *First Australians* guestbook probed:

[221] See for example, Heritage Listing, Grave of Windradyne, State Heritage Register Database, Record Number 5051560; Johnson, *Lighting the way*, pp. 52-3; Norton, *Dear William*, p. 37; Jordan Baker, 'Heritage listing keeps proud memories alive', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24th January 2006, p. 7; Joel Gibson, 'Friendship across time and place', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11th October 2008, p. 4.

[222] Nowra and Perkins, *First Australians*, Episode One. See also Joel Gibson, 'Friendship across time and place', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11th October 2008, p. 4: '"The story goes that William spoke to Windradyne calmly and in his own language," Mr Suttor said this week, "and I would imagine he said something like "We've been friends and I haven't been doing the poisoning", and I would imagine that he would have been upset that it had happened."'

[223] A sensationalist magazine article of 1985 is one of the few renditions that seeks to explain how William came to speak Wiradjuri so well, claiming ahistorically that 'the lad had been brought up with the Aboriginals, possibly with Saturday, spoke their language and respected their customs', 'The black war: when Aboriginals were hunted, poisoned and shot in order to be taught a lesson', *Living Australia* 40 (1985), p. 21. Interpretive panels erected at Windradyne's grave in September 2010 interpolate 'William must have spent time with Wiradyuri friends to learn their language.' NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (Bathurst), 'A Shared History' panel in Windradyne's grave conservation area, 2010.

[224] Foley, 'Leadership', p. 184.

> I have been told by Bathurst locals that the Suttor family actually physically protected first Australians when under attack from white people – do you have any stories or records of this? [225]

When I asked John Suttor whether he had heard any such stories, he replied in the negative, and was anxious to ensure that new, unsubstantiated elements not be added to the story.[226] Apart from the tensions inhering in Colo's letters to the press, no insights have been gained by this historian into the battles that may have raged in Suttor hearts, as philanthropic ideas came up against loyalty to the colonial regime and interests in land, and as friendships with neighbouring settlers and local Aboriginal people perhaps became a scarcely navigable thicket.[227] That this story of confrontation could so easily have had a different ending in this time of violent confusion, fear and retaliation, is clearly part of its appeal. But it also illustrates how little the Suttor family were set apart from some of the other property owners, such as the Hassall family and its staff, who faced each other in court in August 1824 over the deaths of three Aboriginal women, after one of their stockmen was wounded on the family's property at O'Connell Plains.[228]

A second version of the story of the fraught night encounter, perhaps a parallel oral tradition within the family (which seems to have outcropped into the written record for the first time in 1957),[229] populates the events with a number of other figures. Here, William was surrounded while 'visiting one of his outlying shepherds', rather than at the main hut near today's *Brucedale* homestead, and he was in the company of Peneegrah, with whom he had 'explored the rough country between Bathurst and Mudgee'. As in W. H. Suttor's version, Windradyne and his men seemed poised to attack, and William 'flung open the door and shouted greetings in their own tongue', resulting in the swift departure of Windradyne's party.[230] According to Bill Allen, Peneegrah was Windradyne's cousin, so his presence may

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[225] Jess from Bathurst, 20th October 2008, First Australians series: Your Comments, Special Broadcasting Service website, <http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/>, viewed 16 December 2008.

[226] Conversation with John Suttor, 20th January 2009.

[227] As Grace Karskens finds on the Hawkesbury, where different Aboriginal groups and families were aligned with different settler families, who did not automatically 'combine as a group, for mutual benefits and governance', but needed to be ordered to do so, Karskens, *The Colony*, pp. 466-473.

[228] This case is discussed in detail by Theo Barker, Barker, *A History of Bathurst*, Volume 1, pp. 67-69.

[229] 'Pastoral Prosperity', *Parade* (August 1957), p. 20. Later retellings almost invariably follow W. H. Suttor's version of the story, though there are a few exceptions, including Dianne Johnson who includes both versions, and Grassby and Hill, *Six Australian battlefields*, p. 156.

[230] Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, p. 23.

have influenced the course of events in William's (or his shepherd's) favour that night, or perhaps it was Peneegrah who Windradyne had come to see.[231]

Windradyne, as Peter Read has put it, 'towers over the events' of the 1820s.[232] His historical stature has perhaps eclipsed a more extensive web of relationships between members of the Suttor family and other Wiradjuri people. The friendship is projected consistently as a masculine affair. Barbara Dawson has examined stories of European and Aboriginal women coming together around children, adornment and an appreciation of local plants and animals.[233] No such associations emerge as part of this story. 'Colo' refers to women talking and laughing together at *Brucedale* and visiting the house, where Sarah Maria Suttor and perhaps some of her daughters were living at the time.[234] The acute nineteenth century anxiety about cross-cultural desire and miscegenation may have prevented the expression of any affection for particular Wiradjuri women, although of course, 'Colo' was not specific about his relationships with men either. A brief and wonderful vignette involves Charlotte, who married William Suttor at sixteen years of age fresh off a ship from England. She 'was sitting in the lounge when a native appeared down the chimney, badly cut about and with a spear in his hand. She rushed to help him and was considered the friend of the Aboriginals for many years.'[235] The loss of glimpses of other relationships is perhaps one we feel now more than ever as historians and readers of history become increasingly interested in relationships apart from part defensive, part formal man-to-man exchanges.[236]

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[231] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011; As Dianne Johnson points out, in this version of the story the events take place at a hut in which Windradyne may not have known William was staying, Johnson, *Lighting the Way*, pp. 52-3.

[232] Read, *A Hundred Years War*, p. 10. William Suttor also towers over these events. It is generally overlooked that two of his brothers, probably Thomas Charles (b. 1804) and John Bligh (b. 1809), had also helped their father to establish *Brucedale*, and would have partaken in at least some of William's exchanges with Wiradjuri people as they did so, Suttor Family Papers ML MSS 2417, item 3 (correspondence 1800-1840), George Suttor to his wife, undated, p. 119. Percy Gresser mentioned 'Penneigrah' as a companion and guide to George Suttor Jr., William's eldest brother, who was also in Bathurst in the early 1820s, Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21c, loose leaf.

[233] Barbara Dawson, 'Sisters under the skin? Friendship: crossing the racial gulf', *Crossings (International Australian Studies Association)* 7, no.3 (2002).

[234] *The Australian*, 14th October 1826, pp. 3-4. George Suttor's memoirs refer to a number of years' residence at *Brucedale* with Sarah Maria, before returning to Baulkham Hills with their younger children in about 1831, Suttor, *Memoirs of George Suttor*, p. 59.

[235] Colleen Knights, 'Brucedale: the Family Home', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 6th May 1973, p. 122. Knights refers to this as a 'family legend'. Charlotte Suttor's surviving diaries are a terse record of health, weather, the weekly sermon, and meetings with friends and acquaintances – a close reading of entries March-April 1850 indicated that Aboriginal people at *Brucedale* would likely only be mentioned as servants, and referred to by first names that I lack the requisite knowledge to identify, Suttor Family Papers, Mitchell Library ML MSS 1520/2, Diary of Charlotte Augusta Anne Suttor, kept at Brucedale, Bathurst, March 1850 - September 1852, 1853, viewed on microfilm reel MAV/FM4/1390.

[236] Paul Carter, for instance found in Lieutenant Dawes' note books traces of intimacy and humour as he met with Pattyegarang to talk about language. He found their apparent playfulness around understanding and misunderstanding utterly different from the dry log books of words that appear in so many anonymous Aboriginal vocabularies collected around in the first decades of the colony, and his 1996 sound installation, *The Calling to Come*, commissioned by the Museum of Sydney was partly inspired by it, Paul Carter, 'Repetitions at

The powerful image of William and Windradyne face-to-face, in the intimacy of a life and death situation, resonates strongly with the discourse of fraternity that took root in the trenches in WWI, in which 'values such as self-control, honor, and courage [form] the basic bond between men', and in which symmetrical friendships between individuals of equal power, characterised by bonds of like affection from either side, are normalised.[237] The old vertical friendships of the nineteenth century, in which 'Colo' situated his patronage of the Wiradjuri, have been put aside. In *First Australians*, the viewer's focus on Windradyne and William is accentuated by their introduction as they draw nearer to each other, making their meeting pre-destined within the narrative. The night encounter forms a dramatic fulcrum and Windradyne and William's relationship is mirrored with the telling of the story by Bill Allen and David Suttor.[238] The close focus on Windradyne and William perhaps reflects a development in our relationship with story as well as a desire for fraternity. Where, in the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, the Suttor family sought to draw others into a circle of cross-cultural friendship by generalising that friendship, today it is the magic of the particular that holds the power to include and inspire others. Perkins acknowledged that the 'character-based' approach of *First Australians* was 'narrow but we tried to make the series engaging by making it personal.'[239] Similarly, Dianne Johnson, in *Lighting the way: reconciliation stories*, focussed closely on the interaction of individuals meeting, apologising and forgiving.[240] Johnson's focus on individuals, however, was not only aimed at heightening the emotional impact or persuasive power of her reconciliation stories. In Johnson's book, the renewal of friendship between the Suttor family and the Wiradjuri community around Windradyne's grave was an instance of the 'grass roots' reconciliation taking place across

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night: mimicry, noise and context' in Ross Gibson ed., *Exchanges: cross-cultural encounters in Australia and the Pacific* (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1996), pp. 81-2; Paul Carter, 'Speaking Pantomimes: Notes on *The Calling to Come*', *Leonardo Music Journal* 6 (1996), p. 95.

[237] Danny Kaplan, and Niza Yanay, 'Fraternal friendship and commemorative desire', *Social Analysis* 50, no.1 (Spring 2006), pp. 127-8; Sarah Cole finds that the 'organization of male intimacy' as a kind of 'infrastructure' with its own language and conventions is often overlooked in favour of the assumption that friendship is a 'private, voluntary relation, governed by personal sentiment and easy communion.' Cole's study of the comradeship born in the First World War finds a finds a heightened discourse of intensity, intimacy and equality developing through the culture of the 'huge conscripted armies of modern war', Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 4, 138.

[238] Nowra and Perkins, *First Australians*, Episode 1.

[239] Sandy George, '[Re]writing history: First Australians rewrites history just by telling it from an Indigenous perspective,' *Storyline* 24 (Spring 2008), p. 20. Marcia Langton's introduction to the book *First Australians* declares that the work seeks to communicate the passions and personalities of particular people rather than the impersonal 'dust, rock and debris' of archaeology, Rachel Perkins and Marcia Langton, *First Australians: an illustrated history* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008), p. xxvi.

[240] Johnson's book brings the spirit of Reconciliation to the reader through the stories of ordinary people such as John and David Suttor, and the descendants of the perpetrators and the victims of the Myall Creek Massacre. These intertwined stories include that of Des Blake, great-great grandson of John Blake (tried but not convicted after the massacre, and committing suicide twelve years later), who has made a point of recognising his ancestor's involvement in the massacre, engaging in public reconciliation activities and teaching children about 'our true history', Johnson, *Lighting the Way*, pp. 72-4.

the nation despite the Howard Government's inaction on the recommendations of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's final report, handed down in December 2000. The government had failed to make a meaningful reconciliation with Aboriginal people, and her stories of 'ordinary' Australians going ahead with personal, local and family reconciliations both shamed the government and showed that government inertia could not stop this process.[241]

Stories of friendship played an important role in *First Australians*, tempering what producer Rachel Perkins acknowledged 'is such a brutal and devastating history' with a little 'salvation and hope'.[242] Perkins and co-producer Darren Dale were aware that viewers might approach the program gripping the historical 'balance sheet' championed by former Prime Minister John Howard, a tool of moral objectivity and realism which prevents us from dwelling too much on 'negative' aspects of history.[243] In an interview with *The Canberra Times,* Dale attested to the team's efforts to bring moral 'complexity' to the screen and not make it just a simple 'goodies and baddies story.'[244] For viewers, the notion of balance was pervasive, and was intimately connected with a concern that the settlers, no matter what sufferings they ultimately caused Aboriginal people, did not, or did not *all* deliberately set out to do so.[245] On one level, this concern, played out repeatedly across the 'history wars', is part of a defensive response to the enormity of the history of Aboriginal dispossession that white Australians have been asked to recognise – it is linked to widespread public understanding of the importance of intent and totality in definitions of genocide.[246] But also, as Alan Atkinson has observed, 'the moral judgement of European-Australians is crippled so long as they are

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[241] Both Johnson and Linda Burney express these sentiments in the two prefaces to the volume, Johnson, *Lighting the way*, prefaces.

[242] Sacha Molitorisz, 'The story of black Australia', *The Age*, 9th October 2008, Green Guide, p. 12.

[243] Martin Crotty and David Andrew Roberts, *The Great Mistakes of Australian History* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006), pp. 2-3.

[244] 'Unearthing our first voices', *The Canberra Times*, 14th October 2008, The Canberra Times website, <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/unearthing-our-first-voices/1333254.aspx?story>, viewed 17 December 2008.

[245] The *First Australians* 'guest book' on the SBS website included over a thousand comments by December 2008, many of which evaluated the series according to notions of 'balance'. One admirer found 'the first episode to be very well balanced ... I was concerned that the doco may persecute the early settlers ... but rather it just painted the facts without judgement or bias.' Another contributor protested 'This show is "wrong" if its intention is to make some young Australians feel ashamed or guilty of their history ... I'd like to think the future is more positive for all Australians, aboriginal and non aboriginal (sic).' Ben from The Fleurieu, 13th October 2008; alison from ryde, 13th October 2008, First Australians series: Your Comments, Special Broadcasting Service website, <http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/>, viewed 16 December 2008.

[246] Dirk Moses shows how genocide is commonly associated with totality, a central 'Plan' of extermination that results in the complete disappearance of a race (concepts which are not in line with the UN definition of genocide), a definition that seems to provide 'proof' that genocide cannot have happened in Australia. Dirk Moses, 'Moving the Genocide Debate Beyond the History Wars', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54, no. 2 (June 2008), pp. 255-270.

convinced that their own past is nothing more than shameful'.[247] The appearance of the friendship of Windradyne and William Suttor in *First Australians* as one of those shining beacons of shared humanity in a dark past is characteristic of the contemporary struggle to accept this history. As one viewer commented: 'My ancestors were land grabbers so I found the story of Brucedale inspirational as this young man proved diplomacy could have prevented much violence and suffering.'[248]

A *Sydney Morning Herald* article introduced the *First Australians* series via the friendship between Windradyne and William Suttor, saying '... the makers of the nation's most important piece of indigenous television are hoping that [this] 200-year-old relationship and others like it will finally inspire a new, collaborative approach to Australian history.'[249] It is as if this particular friendship can help to heal the rifts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians more generally, and as if this healing process might take place through history-making itself. The relationships formed around Windradyne's grave, examined further below, like Johnson's reconciliation stories and the friendships featured in *First Australians*, could be said to bear out this notion. But, at the same time, the war has continued.

Soon after the conservation agreement over Windradyne's grave was signed in 2000, signifying a legal and bureaucratic recognition of Wiradjuri history and heritage in Bathurst's hinterland, Keith Windschuttle launched an attack on the First Australians gallery of Canberra's newly opened National Museum. The exhibit telling the story of the Bells Falls Gorge massacre, closely connected with Windradyne's story, presented Bill Allen's account of the way in which this event is remembered in his community, concluding, 'our people still hear the echoes of the women and children who died here'.[250] Windschuttle sought to demolish truth claims surrounding the massacre, partly by pointing out that 'although [the massacre story] is now claimed as part of an ancient Aboriginal tradition, Aboriginal activists only learnt about it from an article ... written by a white amateur historian in 1962.'[251] Indeed, the massacre at Bells Falls is not a precisely documented event. David Roberts found in 1995 that there was a strong feeling within the Bathurst community on the whole that a massacre had occurred, but specific details had been lost. He concluded that the story had become connected with the dramatic local landform of Bells Falls Gorge through the

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[247] Alan Atkinson, *The commonwealth of speech* (2002), cited in Gillian Cowlishaw in 'On "getting it wrong": collateral damage in the history wars', *Australian Historical Studies* 37, no. 127 (April 2006), p. 199.

[248] Debbie Jagoe from Brunswick, 13th October 2008, First Australians series: Your Comments, Special Broadcasting Service website, <http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/>, viewed 16 December 2008.

[249] Joel Gibson, 'Friendship across time and place', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11th October 2008, p. 4.

[250] Bain Attwood, 'Contesting frontiers: History, memory and narrative in a national museum', *reCollections: Journal of the National Museum of Australia* 1, no. 2 (September 2006), pp. 103-114.

[251] He was presumably referring to Percy Gresser. Keith Windschuttle, 'Social History and Aboriginal legends: a reply to Gary Morgan', *Quadrant* 46, no. 4 (April 2002), pp. 30-1.

processes of local oral tradition.[252] Windschuttle could not countenance the combination of oral and written tradition, a lack of precision linking the events to time, place and agents, and the labile nature of the story, changing and responding to present concerns. The inter-connected story of Windradyne's friendship with the Suttor family presents a similar historiographical terrain in some respects, and it seems to be precisely these qualities which have allowed the story to remain robust and relevant, and to embrace a two-way friendship once more. But in Windschuttle's view, history itself should not have a history. His insinuation that 'ancient Aboriginal tradition' had been invented in the First Australians gallery taps into a persistent valorisation of recognisably 'ancient' Aboriginal stories in public thinking and in scholarship, and a corresponding suspicion of the unfolding cultural knowledge of living Aboriginal traditions.[253] Windschuttle was not only attacking the Bells Falls massacre story, but also the prerogative of Wiradjuri people to continue to develop understandings of their history. Taking a long view, Wiradjuri people's use of the written historical record as part of their historical tradition is perhaps part of a Wiradjuri regeneration that Peter Read finds beginning in the 1920s.[254] Windschuttle's challenge of the legitimacy of this history-making is part of a long history of European-Wiradjuri relations across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, incorporating patterns of combat and accommodation, which continues into an unknown future.[255]

Mary Coe touched on Wiradjuri people's friendly relationship with the Suttor family only in passing. William was spared because he had not committed crimes against the Wiradjuri: the Wiradjuri acted according to their law, while in contrast the British engaged in indiscriminate killing.[256] Otherwise, the distinction between friendly and unfriendly settlers is not important to her story. She explains Windradyne's meeting with Governor Brisbane as a deeply ironic rapprochement, 'Windradyne tried to end the slaughter of his people by going to the Governor to make "friends" – make friends with people who had invaded his lands, had stolen his country and in cold blood had slaughtered hundreds of his people'.[257] Gloria Rogers' current interpretation of the story is very different – she understands Windradyne's journey to Parramatta to see the Governor as:

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[252] Roberts, 'Bells Falls massacre and Bathurst's history of violence', pp. 615-33.

[253] Macdonald, 'Master Narratives and the Dispossession of the Wiradjuri', pp. 170-2; Attwood, 'Contesting frontiers', pp. 110. Macdonald has developed a definition of 'tradition' that seeks to shift these preconceptions. Traditions are 'meanings and practices moving through time, dynamic ... [they] have histories ... full of tension, change and contradiction'. Traditions, she argues, do not have to be old to be important in a community's history and self-understanding. Gaynor Macdonald, 'Does "culture" have "history"? Thinking about Continuity and Change in Central New South Wales', *Aboriginal History* 25 (2001), p. 188.

[254] Read, *A Hundred Years War*, p. xiii.

[255] Read, *A Hundred Years War*, pp. xiii-xiv.

[256] Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, p. 22.

[257] Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, p. 46.

> the first act of reconciliation ... he could see that there was no good coming out of the conflict between the Wiradjuri people and the whitefellas because there was killings on both sides, and that solves nothing. So something had to be done ... We do believe that was the first act of reconciliation in Australia when he went down to hold out the olive branch, to make peace and to come to a place of understanding.[258]

But in common with Coe, although Rogers expressed her deep appreciation of a strong positive relationship with the Suttor family in the past and the present, the significant relationship here is a more general and more formal one, with the government, which mirrors the general and official nature of the warfare that preceded it.[259] A friendship with one family cannot heal the wrongs committed between two peoples.

Friendship and the Grave

Windradyne's grave sits on a low rise above Winburndale Rivulet in a broad valley overlooked by Big Flat and Mt Wiagdon. The low mound of the grave is easily hidden by the grass when it grows long, as it was when I visited in January 2009. More prominent are the concrete memorial dedicated by Mr and Mrs Roy Suttor and the Bathurst Historical Society in 1954, and the young eucalypt trees, which frame the grave in the traditional diamond pattern, planted by the local Wiradjuri community in 2000.[260] It is a tranquil place, suffused with the solemnity of death and memory. I signed the visitors' book, and headed off with John Suttor to talk somewhere cooler.

The Voluntary Conservation Agreement over Windradyne's grave, initiated in 1995, was signed by NSW Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus, in May 2000, and sent to *Brucedale*. The Suttor family and members of the local Wiradjuri community gathered at the grave. Bill Allen performed a cleansing smoking ceremony, and he and Gloria Rogers spoke of the importance of the site for the Suttor family, local Wiradjuri people and for the nation.

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[258] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[259] Similarly, Wiradjuri artist Julie Dowling, for whom Windradyne has provided inspiration, said, 'He represents to me the hundreds of elders who actively engaged with wudjulahs, in good faith, only to have their authority ignored, disrespected and diminished by the invading colonial forces. This continues on into the present day, where the authority and wisdom of the elders goes largely unrecognized by white society.' Julie Dowling, Widi Boornoo (Wild Message), August 1 - August 12 2006, exhibition notes, viewed at Brigitte Braun Art Dealer website, current exhibition pages, <http://www.artplace.com.au/exhibscurrent/Dowling_0806/storytext.html>, viewed 24 April 2012.

[260] Debra Jopson, 'Grave a symbol of 180 years of friendship', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th April 2002; Conversation with John Suttor, 20th January 2009.

About fifty people gathered on the verandah of the old *Brucedale* homestead where John Suttor signed the agreement.[261] As a *Sydney Morning Herald* article put it:

> Yesterday, the friendship between the Suttor family and the Wiradjuri warrior was formally recognised. His gravesite was given formal preservation status with the signing of a Voluntary Conservation Agreement by John Suttor, William's great-grandson. 'There was a sense of co-operation and co-existence,' Mr Suttor said of the relationship. 'We have cemented that here today. That spirit still exists.'[262]

The conservation agreement covers an area of just under a third of a hectare, taking in two grave mounds and the 1954 memorial.[263] As an agreement solely aimed at protecting 'cultural' values, it is highly unusual.[264] The agreement recognises the complex history of the place and its significance to Wiradjuri people today.[265] It specifies that Wiradjuri people and members of the Bathurst Local Aboriginal Land Council 'shall be permitted access to the conservation area provided that at least 24 hours' notice has been given to the Owner' and directs the property owner to consult with and coordinate with these parties in undertaking works and maintenance within the site.[266] The agreement 'runs with the land', that is, it binds not only John Suttor, but any future owner.

Isabel Coe's 1993 Native Title writ had a different vision. In claiming the whole of Wiradjuri country (whether claimable under native title or not) its aim was 'to contribute to a political settlement of claims made by the Aboriginal people of Australia or by the Wiradjuri who constitute part of that people.'[267] It was one of a series of cases which sought to 'articulate

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[261] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 13th July 2010; Community Based Conservation, Voluntary Conservation Agreements, Brucedale - Suttor, Bathurst District, VCA075, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water File: F/2030: 'Signing of the Suttor VCA Near Bathurst, Speech Notes', photographs in envelope labelled 'Brucedale VCA Signing 2002' [this should read 2000, and the dates on backs of each photograph have mostly been corrected by hand to read 2000 rather than 2002]. A Voluntary Conservation Agreement is an agreement between the government and landowner, see the Office of Environment and Heritage website for more information, <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/cpp/ConservationAgreements.htm>

[262] Nick Leys, 'Black warrior's spirit preserved', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27th May 2000, p. 9.

[263] As noted above, a third visually identifiable grave is located outside the area covered by the agreement. Bill Allen believes it to be Windradyne's father's grave, who may have given his name, Wirrarai to one of Windradyne's sons in turn. Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011.

[264] Voluntary Conservation Agreements have overwhelmingly been made to protect 'natural' values, with the protection of cultural values incidental, Conversation with Sally Ash, State Co-ordinator Conservation Partners Program Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, 23rd June 2010.

[265] Voluntary Conservation Agreement, Brucedale, 2000, p. 2. The agreement recognises the place as an Aboriginal burial site and burial place of Windradyne; as a part of the 'first war arena between Aboriginal people and settlers on the Western Plains'; as part of 'Brucedale', one of the original settlements in the area still in the ownership of the Suttor family; as a property that was not attacked by Windradyne and his warriors; and as a site of commemoration, via the erection of the memorial in 1954.

[266] Voluntary Conservation Agreement, 2000, section 2.3, and sections 2.2.4, 2.2.5, 3.1.

[267] In the words of Solicitor General for NSW, Keith Mason QC, Nettheim, 'Isabel Coe on Behalf of the Wiradjuri Tribe v Commonwealth of Australia and the State of New South Wales'.

through legal avenues the relationship between Aboriginal people and their land' and to show that the ongoing alienation of Aboriginal people from their land was 'a continuing act of genocide.'[268] A *Sydney Morning Herald* report on the proceedings sketched the geographical oppression of Wiradjuri people, their confinement on the reserve at Cowra, the prohibition of hunting and fishing on private land, and the impossibility of visiting important cultural sites without permission from private land holders, citing Windradyne's grave as such a place.[269] The conservation agreement, in formalising the right of local Wiradjuri people to visit the grave and their right to have a say in future management decisions, has returned Windradyne's grave to Wiradjuri people in a way that could never have been achieved under Native Title (seeing as it is situated on private property), but in a way that also requires ongoing co-operation with white owners.

Bill Allen has brought many local school groups to the grave site, and Gloria Rogers and others occasionally 'bring some people out' or just 'come and sit'.[270] As well as creation stories, the landscape around Bathurst is rich with historical associations, including places associated with the 'sorry business' of the 1820s. Bill Murray, narrating Windradyne's story in 1993, said there were fifteen massacre sites known to the community within a ten mile radius of Bathurst.[271] The Local Aboriginal Land Council had acquired small blocks of land close to two of these significant places at Wattle Flat and on the banks of the Macquarie River, but these were sold again after a change in management in the 1990s.[272] These sites, though very much in mind, remain unmarked and are seldom visited.[273] Over the past two decades at least, Windradyne's grave, situated at the confluence of Windradyne's own importance in Wiradjuri history and identity and the generous amicability of the Suttor family, has become a place of reflection and refuge. When I asked Gloria Rogers whether Windradyne's grave was a place where people go to think about 'sorry business' as well as Windradyne himself she replied:

> Yes, of course ... we're always made to feel welcome, and treated very respectfully. So when we do go out there, it is all those things that you

[268] Melinda Walker and Nehal Bhuta, 'Upholding the Law v Maintaining Legality: *Nulyarimma v Thompson*', 1st September 1999, *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 4, no. 24. 81 (1999), pp. 15-18.

[269] Tony Hewett, 'Wiradjuri People's Writ Immortalises a Warrior', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 7th June 1993, p. 8.

[270] Conversation John Suttor, 20th January 2009; Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[271] Wayne Pearson, *Windradyne: Wiradjuri resistance, the beginning.*

[272] Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011.

[273] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010. The site of the potato farm where Wiradjuri people were killed in 1823/4 is thought to be on the Macquarie River near the Japanese Gardens. As the bicentenary of Governor Macquarie's founding of Bathurst approaches, there has been some discussion about extending the river parklands to commemorate Elizabeth Macquarie. But the proposal to locate this new garden on the site of the potato farm has been highly controversial. Conversation with Wayne Feebrey, 13th March 2012.

> mentioned. We go out there to sit, to reflect, to evaluate and get strength from it I suppose, and to remember ... those Elders past and present.[274]

Bill Allen told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that visiting the grave gives him access to a past in which all the country was Aboriginal country, to draw strength for the present, saying: 'I look back to when he was alive and think of what the country would have been like and the values he and his family had.'[275] He also visits the grave with a men's group that maintains the area by weeding and cleaning up fallen branches, providing an opportunity for visiting and caring for this important part of local Wiradjuri country.[276]

For a decade John and David Suttor continued to accompany many of the grave's visitors, opening and closing gates to keep the cattle in, and conveying those without a four-wheel-drive vehicle along the rough track to Windradyne's resting place.[277] Discussions with the National Parks and Wildlife Service about improving access to the site bore fruit in late 2010, and as well as cattle grids *en route* to the grave, new interpretation panels have been installed, joining the two nineteenth century grave mounds, the 1954 memorial, and the tree memorial planted by the Wiradjuri community in 2000. The place is all the richer as these tributes of different eras to Windradyne combine, with an occasional, invisible curdling of the air as they refuse to align.[278] Before exploring the meanings of these memorials and their combined creation of a *lieu de memoire*, I examine the historiographical processes that have lead to the identification of this grave as Windradyne's grave and explore the significance of the possibility that Windradyne is buried elsewhere.

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[274] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[275] Debra Jopson, 'Grave a symbol of 180 years of friendship', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th April 2002.

[276] Conversation with Bill Allen, 26th July 2011. A research project discussing kinship with the natural world with Aboriginal people from various parts of NSW, found that the opportunity to visit special places and to care for them regularly was extremely important to participants. Phil Sullivan, a Ngiyampaa man based in Bourke, for example, explained how caring for rock art at Gundabooka as part of his role as an Aboriginal Sites Officer with the National Parks Service connected him to significant places right across the Manara Hills and with his own ancestors who may have been among those who placed their hands on the rock walls to create the stencils he cares for today, Deborah Bird, Diana James and Christine Watson, *Indigenous Kinship with the Natural World in New South Wales* (Sydney: NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 2003), p. 61.

[277] Conversation with John Suttor, 20th January 2009. Including some local visitors, but many from further afield as well. John was particularly impressed by a group of Aboriginal visitors from Western Australia and the strength of their respect for the place, so far from their own home – one young man was left under a tree at some distance from the burial ground, as he had been forbidden to approach the grave by his elders, due to a wrong committed at home.

[278] Frances and Scates discuss the way in which 'a dialogue in which one perspective [on] history challenges another' can be achieved by the addition of a memorial alongside pre-existing commemorative material. The conversation they refer to is between the La Grange memorial standing in Esplanade Reserve, Fremantle, commemorating the deaths of a group of explorers at the hands of Aborigines, and a new memorial, proposed in 1988, which was to give the Aboriginal side of the story, and affirm 'the right of Aboriginal people to defend their culture and their land'. Rae Frances and Bruce Scates, 'Honouring the Aboriginal Dead', *Arena* 86 (1989), pp. 78-9.

John Suttor, in his early teens in 1954, remembers that when the memorial was to be erected, his father Roy followed instructions provided by *his* father and one of his uncles years earlier to identify which of the two tumuli on the hill above Winburndale Rivulet was Windradyne's grave. There was a moment of anxiety, as Roy wondered whether he had chosen the correct grave, before resting certain in his decision.[279] Already, Roy had made an even more significant decision – to act on the story handed down to him by his father and uncle, H.C. and Horace Suttor, who were convinced that Windradyne was in fact buried at *Brucedale*.[280] Their older brother, W. H. Suttor, had written that Windradyne was 'buried, wrapped in his opossum cloak, in the grounds of the old hospital at Bathurst'.[281] It was apparently the publication of his *Australian Stories Retold* in 1887 that sent the siblings into debate upon the matter. H.C. and Horace Suttor's story, as documented by Salisbury and Gresser, runs that Windradyne died in 1835 after being badly wounded in a tribal fight. He was taken to the old Bathurst Hospital where Dr. Busby dressed his wounds, but then he returned to *Brucedale*:

> To be confined in hospital was too much for Windradyne, so he tore off the bandages and made his escape, making his way to *Brucedale*, where there were a number of his own people. Gangrene supervened and he died, and was buried, wrapped in his o'possum mantle, by his fellow Aborigines in the sacred tribal cemetery on *Brucedale*.[282]

'Colo', announcing Windradyne's death to the Sydney press in March 1829, had reported that Windradyne was wounded in the knee during a night skirmish on the banks of the Macquarie River with a tribe from the south, and that the wound 'mortified', leading swiftly to his death: 'He continued talking to his countrymen till life was extinct, in the hospital at Bathurst, near which place he was buried, his body being wrapped in his mantle, and his weapons deposited in the grave.'[283] It is not known whether this contemporary account of Windradyne's death and burial informed the debate between William Suttor's sons. Grace Hendy-Pooley closely paraphrased 'Colo's' account in a short history of Bathurst published in

[279] Conversation John Suttor, 20th January 2009. Roy Suttor had also told Percy Gresser he was not sure 'which of the graves is Windradyne's but he was certainly buried in the close vicinity', Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/3/a, p. 120.

[280] Conversation John Suttor, 20th January 2009; Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, pp. 42-3.

[281] Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, note to page 45.

[282] Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, pp. 42-3.

[283] *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3.

1905.[284] Subsequently, though, it seems to have fallen below the horizon for tellers of Windradyne's story.

The flurry of writing activity around Windradyne and the Wiradjuri wars since 1980 has largely short-circuited research by referring to Salisbury and Gresser's 1971 book.[285] Their handling of Windradyne's burial has therefore been influential in the subsequent life of the story. Gresser, in his 1962 serial, reported that Windradyne had left the hospital and died and been buried at *Brucedale*.[286] Salisbury, however, noted that W. H. Suttor, in a footnote to *Australian Stories Retold*, gave Windradyne's place of death and burial as the old hospital at Bathurst. He determined to trace the *Brucedale* version of the story to its source as well.[287] When he published his history in 1971, Salisbury understood the two stories as parallel oral traditions passed down through the third generation of Suttors on Australian soil, W. H. Suttor and his brothers H.C. and Horace.[288] But Salisbury implicitly favours the *Brucedale* story. Like Gresser, he missed George Suttor's 1829 letter to the Sydney papers.[289] Thus, he states that the first documentation of the death and burial of Windradyne is to be found in W. H. Suttor's *Australian Stories Retold*, penned 'more than 50 years after that event'.[290] The reader is reminded that W. H. Suttor was not born until 1834, '...and obviously is recounting a story handed down by word of mouth, yet it is *not* the same account of Windradyne's burial that [William Suttor] told his other children' (emphasis in original).[291] The reliability of W. H. Suttor's version is impugned via a reminder to the reader that his account of Windradyne's surrender to Governor Darling is erroneous (Windradyne went to see Governor Brisbane).[292] Salisbury goes on to give the account quoted above of

[284] Grace Hendy-Pooley, 'Early History of Bathurst and Surroundings', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 1 (1905), pp. 230-236. Hendy-Pooley does not cite Suttor's 1829 letter, but closely follows his story and replicates his unusual spelling 'Windrodine'.

[285] Most of the more recent renditions of the story I have been discussing refer almost exclusively to Salisbury and Gresser's 1971 work for the period of Martial Law and surrounding months (or to other histories which have already stood on their shoulders), including the work of Mary Coe, Bruce Elder, Grassby and Hill, and others such as David Lowe, *Forgotten rebels: black Australians who fought back* (Melbourne: Permanent Press, 1994).

[286] Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst District', *The Western Times*, 31st August 1962, p. 7.

[287] Salisbury to Gresser, 20th April 1967, in Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21h, pp. 20-1.

[288] Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, pp. 42-3.

[289] In his bibliography, he indicates that the *Sydney Gazette* and *The Australian* have been perused for the years 1824-1826, the main period of interest for the purposes of this book, which focuses on the implementation of martial law at Bathurst. His interpretation of Hendy-Pooley's 1905 article is revealing – her version of the story is seen as representing an independent oral tradition, an argument which rests on her outlying transliteration of 'Windrodine' – which, as noted above, is identical to George Suttor's spelling in his 1829 letter. Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, pp. 41-2; *Sydney Gazette*, 21st April 1829, p. 3; Hendy-Pooley, 'Early History of Bathurst and Surroundings', pp. 230-1.

[290] Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, p. 42.

[291] Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, p. 42.

[292] Suttor wrote, 'Saturday surrendered himself, and was taken to Governor Darling at Parramatta', Suttor, *Australian Stories Retold*, note to page 45.

Windradyne's escape from the hospital and his death and burial at *Brucedale*. An account of the grave's preservation by the Suttor family follows, along with a description of the 1954 memorial. The assumption that *Brucedale* is the real resting place of Windradyne is subtly reinforced by the titling of the final chapter 'A True Patriot', as per the memorial's inscription. Salisbury concludes with a meditation on the peaceful and timeless landscape that forms a setting for the *Brucedale* grave.[293] For Salisbury, the story of burial at *Brucedale* seems to have held the veracity lent by greater poignancy and poetic justice, and perhaps the weight of conviction of Gresser and Roy Suttor also helped to sway him in that direction.

Subsequent storytellers have apparently been content to follow Salisbury's semiotically evident preference, and have seldom called into question the burial of Windradyne at *Brucedale*.[294] The transformation of the old Bathurst hospital site, on the corner of Bentick and Howick Streets, into a traffic-bound supermarket precinct with little open space and no aesthetic appeal has certainly not inclined storytellers to identify that place with Windradyne's grave. John Suttor and his family acknowledge, on the same evidence that Salisbury did, that there is a parallel tradition which places Windradyne's burial near the old hospital.[295] However, the Voluntary Conservation Agreement excludes the hospital story and the 2006 State Heritage Register listing places no qualification on its statement that Windradyne inhabits the grave in question. This listing is based solely on a visit to the grave at *Brucedale* and Coe's *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, quoting her imaginative account of the burial:

> Windradyne was given a Wiradjuri burial by his people at sunrise. He was placed sitting up facing the rising sun, wrapped in his possum skin cloak with all his weapons beside him. There was great mourning at the passing of their mighty warrior and many kooris gathered to farewell Windradyne. Several trees were carved to mark out the grave. These trees were meant as a living memorial to the dead and the kooris did not return to the place of his burial until twelve months passed.[296]

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[293] Salisbury and Gresser, *Windradyne of the Wiradjuri*, p. 43.

[294] Johnson is a notable exception, making reference to both versions of the story of Windradyne's death and burial, Johnson, *Lighting the Way*, p. 56.

[295] Conversation John Suttor, 20th January 2009.

[296] Coe, *Windradyne* (1986), as quoted in Heritage Listing, Grave of Windradyne, State Heritage Register Database, Record Number 5051560. Windradyne's grave has an important place in the history of the State Heritage Register itself as one of the few places listed for their Aboriginal historical and social significance before the institution of the thematic listings program in 2010, which seeks to rectify the register's underrepresentation of Aboriginal places. Conversation with Tanya Koeneman, Senior Aboriginal Heritage Officer, NSW Heritage Branch, 15th December 2011.

David Roberts expressed disquiet about the use of Coe's book as a historical source for the period of martial law at Bathurst by the *Oxford History of Australia* (1986). Her book aims to bring Windradyne to life as a heroic figure and is not a work which holds itself to academic or professional historical standards.[297] In this case also, signifying the gazettal of the grave under the NSW *Heritage Act*, it is alarming that a broader range of sources was not considered. The conservation agreement is based on a brief history prepared by Bill Allen which similarly states without reservation that Windradyne was buried at *Brucedale*, and media coverage of the agreement followed suit.[298] The wording of the conservation agreement itself, however, is somewhat more circumspect, linking the significance of the site to the ongoing relationship between the Wiradjuri people and the Suttor family and the commemorative value of the site as much as the 'believed' presence of Windradyne's remains.[299]

Much goodwill has been generated around Windradyne's grave at *Brucedale*, and members of the Wiradjuri community draw a great deal of inspiration from the site. Uncertainty over the location of Windradyne's grave is a sensitive matter. The power of the grave would not be the same if an unknown Wiradjuri person was thought to be buried there. In fact the two other burial tumuli nearby, and their meaning alongside Windradyne's burial, is often overlooked.[300] Ground penetrating radar undertaken in 2010 showed that two burials had taken place in Windradyne's grave, and one in the adjacent grave.[301] Stories about the other burials, such as Percy Gresser's idea that these graves may contain the remains of Aboriginal people who worked on *Brucedale*, continuing the use of the locality as an earlier burial ground, have not been pursued.[302]

David Roberts brought 'Colo's' 1829 letter, with its statement that Windradyne was buried alongside the old hospital, back to light in his 2005 entry for Windradyne in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.[303] When I visited *Brucedale* in 2009 I noticed that this letter was not

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[297] Roberts, 'Bells Falls massacre and Bathurst's history of violence', pp. 631-2.

[298] The conservation agreement is based on a history prepared by Bill Allen, included in the Plan of Management, Appendix 1; Nick Leys, 'Black warrior's spirit preserved', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 May 2000, p 9.

[299] Voluntary Conservation Agreement, Brucedale, 2000, p. 2, clauses A-H, and Plan of Management, section 6, 'Cultural Conservation Values'.

[300] The heritage listing of Windradyne's grave, for example, mentions the adjacent grave in its description of the site, but not in its assessment of the place's significance. Heritage Listing, Grave of Windradyne, State Heritage Register Database, Record Number 5051560.

[301] NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (Bathurst), 'Two centuries later ...' panel in Windradyne's grave conservation area, 2010.

[302] Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/3/a, pp. 119, 132.

[303] David Andrew Roberts, 'Windradyne (1800–1829)' [2005], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/windradyne-13251/text4471>, accessed 28 April 2012.

among the sources in the family file, and promised to send John Suttor a copy. I immediately regretted my offer. I was loath to intervene in his and David's passionate involvement in the story of friendship that surrounds the grave at *Brucedale*. But I felt I owed it to the custodians of this story, to let them assimilate this new information in privacy and in their own time.[304] As I wrote to John, however, I realised that the friendship is far too resilient to be put off balance by this rediscovered letter. John replied with great enthusiasm, saying he was looking forward to showing it to a group of Wiradjuri visitors the following day. He commented that the date of death on the 1954 memorial plaque, 1835, would have to be changed in the light of this new information, but did not comment on the letter's statement about Windradyne's place of burial.[305] The new interpretive panels add the 'discovery' of this letter to Windradyne' story. On one panel, 'Colo's' date, 21st March 1829, is adopted as the actual date of Windradyne's death. That the 1954 memorial records the end of Windradyne's life in 1835 is attributed to the vagaries of history, 'how difficult it is to be sure of historical events from a time when written records were scarce and some of those have been lost.'[306] The place of burial is discussed on another panel, which acknowledges that (prior to the ground penetrating radar survey, at least) 'there has ... been some doubt about exactly where Windradyne's grave is – and even if he was buried here at all'. For the first time, an explanation is offered in an effort to combine the two stories into one:

> In his recently discovered letter of 1829, George Suttor wrote at length about 'Windrodine', and his death. He says the warrior died 'in the hospital at Bathurst, near which place he was buried ...' Was Suttor being deliberately vague to protect Windradyne's resting place? We may never know the answer to these and other questions.[307]

Convincing or otherwise, this explanation engages with the issue at the place of burial itself. The new panels refer to the 1954 memorial as a 'gravestone', subtly changing its status from memorial to memorial-marker, with an intrinsic link to the grave.[308] David Suttor evinced some relief that the ground penetrating radar had detected signs of burial under both mounds, providing some more tangible evidence of the site's significance the new interpretation and access works went ahead.[309] The interpretive panels cite the burial of Windradyne at *Brucedale*, along with William's knowledge of the Wiradjuri language, the

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[304] I sent a number of copies accompanied by a note giving my analysis of how special and unusual a tribute 'Colo's' obituary to Windradyne was, and asking John to forward a copy to Bill Allen, who I had not yet met.

[305] Letter from John Suttor, 4th February 2009.

[306] NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 'A Shared History' panel.

[307] NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 'Two Centuries Later ...' panel.

[308] NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 'A shared history' and 'Two Centuries Later ...' panels.

[309] Conversation David Suttor, 8th June 2010.

fact that the Suttor property was not attacked when others were, and George Suttor's 1826 letter, as a key piece of evidence for the friendship. Bill Allen is quoted, 'Windradyne formed a close friendship with this white man culminating in him being buried on the Suttor family property.'[310]

In May 2010 I made enquiries with the NSW Heritage Branch about the possibility of revising the State Heritage Register listing of Windradyne's grave, motivated by my own respect for Windradyne's story (as a former heritage consultant, I find the listing less than adequate) and by a desire to contribute something to the public history-making around the story. I put my case to the Listings Team; the Aboriginal heritage advisor, Tanya Koeneman, and the Aboriginal Heritage Advisory Panel. At the same time, I contacted the Suttor family and the Bathurst Local Aboriginal Land Council. One of the reasons I cited for revising the listing was that it did not acknowledge the parallel story of Windradyne's death and burial at the old hospital, saying 'I believe that it is of vital importance for the credibility of the listing, and its capacity to help protect the two graves at *Brucedale* in the long term, that both traditions are acknowledged.'[311] But I soon began to worry. In doing my job as a historian, was I threatening to violate Windradyne's remains? Notwithstanding my conviction that the acknowledgement of both stories would help to protect his grave into the future, was the very nature of my enquiry disrespectful? Good intentions cannot protect one's research once it appears in the public realm, as David Roberts found when Windschuttle based his attempted debunking of the Bells Falls massacre on Roberts' sincere musings about the nature of that story.[312]

Apart from the removal of the carved trees around the graves at Brucedale, the remains there have been allowed to rest in peace, unlike the remains of so many Aboriginal people, exhumed, collected, measured, classified, to produce knowledge which further disempowered their descendants.[313] The human remains at Brucedale appear never to have been threatened with exhumation, yet the fear that they might have been is never far off. Mary Coe wrote: 'It is rumoured that even Windradyne's body was disturbed by these grave robbers and his head shipped to England'.[314] I began to wonder whether an attempt to dislodge the story from the grave, however well-meaning, would amount to the same thing.

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[310] NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 'A Shared History' panel.

[311] Letter to the Aboriginal Heritage Advisory Council, 18th May 2010.

[312] Attwood, 'Contesting frontiers', pp. 105-6.

[313] Denis Byrne, 'The Ethos of Return: Erasure and Reinstatement of Aboriginal Visibility in the Australian Historical Landscape', *Historical Archaeology* 37, no. 1 (2003), pp. 73-77; Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, pp. 25-31.

[314] Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, p. 73. Recent discussions about the enhancement of Bicentennial Park, on the Macquarie River, have also taken some alarming turns in this direction. There has been some

When I visited the Bathurst Local Aboriginal Land Council in June 2010, Warwick Peckham told me that he had consulted with a number of people, and it was his own view and theirs that I should leave the heritage listing as it is. Many people believe very strongly that Windradyne rests at *Brucedale*. It is better not to dig around in the story, better to let it rest.[315] John Suttor wrote to me the following week telling me about the current works at the site, hoping that the confirmation via ground penetrating radar that the grave indeed contains human remains, and the suggestion that 'George Suttor ... was trying to protect the site when he says near the old Bathurst Hospital', might 'be an answer to some of [my] concerns'.[316] Gloria Rogers told me:

> We have heard that story of him supposedly dying up there at the hospital ... and that he was buried there near the hospital. *But*, and that there's that 'but' there, and it's underlined and it's in red, we think it was just a story ... If he was buried there, why take him from that resting place back to Brucedale? Certainly Aboriginal people would not have done that, once a person is laid to rest, that is where they stay ... Because the Suttor family had a good relationship with Wiradjuri people ... we could not see [them] agreeing to Windradyne being taken ... from the hospital grounds out to their place ... So that is why I believe he died out there [at Brucedale] and that was his last resting place.[317]

Her conviction that Windradyne's remains now rest at *Brucedale* is so strong that the only alternative she can conceive of is that he was buried at the hospital, and then moved to *Brucedale* later on, a scenario that she cannot find credible. There is a consensus among those who care for the grave that it would be best if I were to leave Windradyne in peace, and I have agreed to do so.[318]

The 1954 memorial still sits quietly beside the grave with commemorative sediment from an earlier age embedded in its cement. In 1986, Mary Coe addressed its inscription:

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discussion about erecting a statue of Windradyne near the river, partly inspired by the statue of Peter Brock at Mt Panorama. Some white people have also suggested that Windradyne's remains might be disinterred and then reburied near the river as part of the Bicentennial Park commemorative landscape. Conversation with Wayne Feebrey, 13th March 2012.

[315] Conversation with Warwick Peckham, 17th June 2010.

[316] Letter from John Suttor, 17th June 2010.

[317] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[318] I wrote to the Heritage Branch retracting my enquiry. I had not contacted Bill Allen at this stage. When I did, in early 2011, I had already made this commitment, and decided not to re-open the issue. Bill Allen pointed out to me the site of the old hospital on the corner of Bentick and Howick Streets, now a busy and built-up part of town, explaining that Windradyne had left there, tearing off his bandages, and returned to *Brucedale*. Conversation with Bill Allen, 8th July 2011.

> The Historical Society did not understand Windradyne and his people. The Society called him 'the last chief' but this is wrong. There have been a great many Wiradjuri leaders since the days of Windradyne, right up to the present ... 'First a terror and then a friend to the settlers' – Windradyne was trying to defend his land, his people, his culture against the invading forces and in the end, if he had continued his armed resistance against them, the whites would have surely killed all his people ... Windradyne is a true patriot to the Koorie people of Australia.[319]

For Coe, the memorial's first two epithets were inept and unjust. The affinity of this memorial to a war memorial, however, appealed to her. Her re-bestowal of the epithet 'a true patriot' on Windradyne resonated with the discourse developed by Kevin Gilbert and others around the Aboriginal patriot as a person of rare courage, vision and commitment, who could truly advance the Aboriginal 'nation'.[320] Commemorating Windradyne in 2000, the Wiradjuri community did not place a priority on 'correcting' the 1954 memorial. In fact, the conservation agreement documents suggest that the memorial is embraced by the Wiradjuri people involved, perhaps because of the vital role it has played in attesting to the grave and marking its presence. Drawing on Bill Allen's comments on the initial site recording form, the final agreement includes a clause stating that both the Aboriginal burial sites and the 1954 memorial are of 'special significance to the Wiradjuri people'. The management plan specifies that the memorial be conserved.[321] Rogers feels that John Bugg's collaboration with the Suttor family to protect the grave was so important because 'it was just a stone in the middle of a paddock' at that stage, but also because the 'stone' itself was beginning to weather.[322] The conservation agreement documents, as overseen by Bill Allen, and the recently commissioned interpretive material also make prominent references to Windradyne as a 'patriot' as well as a leader and warrior, creating a certain solidarity with the 1954 memorial as well as with Coe's story, though this descriptor looks somewhat archaic as Aboriginal commentators continue to modify the pan-Aboriginal nationalism championed by Gilbert, Michael Anderson and others in the 1970s.[323]

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[319] Coe, *Windradyne – A Wiradjuri Koorie*, p. 62.

[320] See Kevin Gilbert, *Because a White Man'll Never Do it* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973), pp. 191-2; Kevin Gilbert, 'Pearl Gibbs: Aboriginal patriot: three tributes to Pearl Gibbs (1901- 1983)', *Aboriginal History* 7, no 1 (1983), pp. 4-9.

[321] Voluntary Conservation Agreement, Brucedale, 2000, p. 2.

[322] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[323] Julia Martinez finds that Aboriginal people increasingly articulated multiple layers of identification through the 1980s and 1990s, not necessarily repudiating the pan-Aboriginal model, but rendering it secondary to family networks and local identifications, Julia Martinez, 'Problematising Aboriginal Nationalism', *Aboriginal History* 21 (1997), pp. 133-146. One of the few changes Gloria Rogers suggested to the National Parks Service

Allen's notes reveal that the erection of a statue of Windradyne was considered, but by 1997 the idea had been abandoned.[324] The memorial chosen by the Wiradjuri community was a reinstatement of the traditional diamond pattern of eucalypts around the grave, which observes and honours the rising and setting sun. According to Rogers, because Windradyne's age, his personal and clan totems are not known, it is not at present intended to carve the trees in the traditional Wiradjuri way.[325] Rogers talked about Windradyne's trees in conjunction with the trees planted around the remains of an unknown 'old fella' recently repatriated from the Australian Museum.[326] The planting of trees around Windradyne's grave was perhaps in a sense a reclamation of Windradyne and his resting place for Wiradjuri culture and history.

The trees will grow and mature and eventually die, in contrast to the concrete and brass memorial which was intended to remain the same for all time and to give out the same message.[327] The tree memorial does not spell out a new version of history for the visitor. Rather, it needs interpretation by someone with the right cultural knowledge. In effect, Wiradjuri people have established a memorial here with meaning chiefly accessible to themselves. Bronwyn and Paul Batten, visiting the Wybalenna Chapel and adjoining Aunty Ida West Healing Garden in Tasmania, felt that the commemorative work at this place was unfinished. Although the garden and its two inscriptions provide 'a sense that this is a significant Aboriginal site and that its history lives on today', this 2004 memorial does not directly confront the memorial import of the chapel, conserved in 1978 as a memorial to a 'lost race'. While Batten and Batten feel that the garden provides an important place for descendants of the Palawa people interned on Flinders Island to 'reflect and remember', they wonder whether an educative opportunity has been missed.[328] For a decade, the concrete memorial and diamond of trees at Windradyne's grave engaged in a similar commemorative dialogue. As National Parks Ranger Gavin Newton put it, it looked like 'just

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interpretive brochure (2011) was that Windradyne be described as 'warrior' rather than 'patriot' in its title – a recommendation which was not carried out, Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[324] Bill Allen, National Parks and Wildlife Service site recording form, 12th July 1995 in Voluntary Conservation Agreement file, Brucedale. The Draft Plan of Management, dated December 1995, in the same location, includes a reference to the statue which is crossed out and replaced in handwriting with 'a cairn on the site will be maintained' (p. 4). The Draft Plan of Management, 1997, includes no reference to a statue.

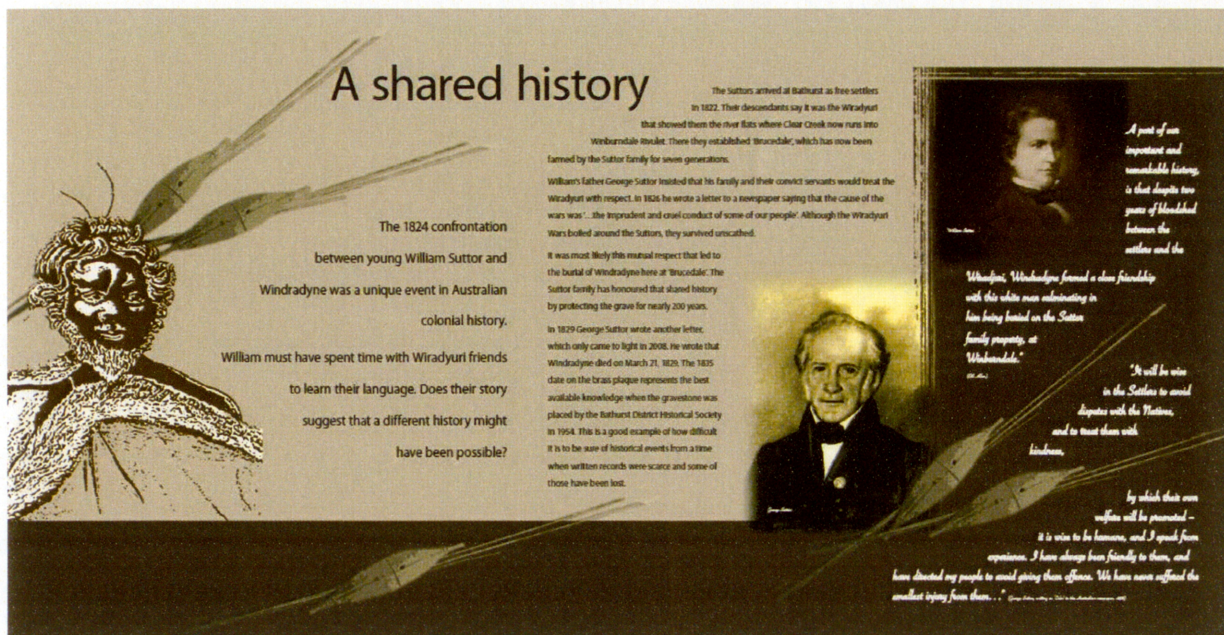
[325] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010. Wiradjuri people have also undertaken more general plantings around the graves as a National Parks newsletter of 2002 reports: 'local Wiradjuri people planted 18 varieties of endemic flora in memory of Windradyne and the Wiradjuri nation', 'Brucedale – site of Windradyne's grave – caring for our cultural heritage', *Bush Matters* (National Parks and Wildlife Service NSW) (Spring 2002), p. 3.

[326] Conversation with Gloria Rogers, 15th June 2010.

[327] In a sense this makes the trees are an 'anti-memorial' in the sense that Sue-Anne Ware develops – they will change, grow and die along with memory, instead of attempting to freeze memory in time, Sue-Anne Ware, 'Contemporary Anti-Memorials and National Identity in the Victorian Landscape' (2004), cited in Ashton and Hamilton, 'Places of the Heart', p. 8.

[328] Batten and Batten, 'Memorialising the Past', p. 107-112.

a block of land' – the story was not visible to the visitor unless he or she was accompanied by a knowledge-holder.[329]



3.5 Design for 'A Shared History' panel in Windradyne's grave conservation area, courtesy Gavin Newton, NPWS (Bathurst). Portraits of George Suttor (right) and his son William Suttor (far right) face J.W. Lewins' lithograph 'A native chief of Bathurst' (1815), which is widely believed to be a portrait of Windradyne.

The interpretive material prepared under the auspices of the National Parks Service in 2010, takes on the task of articulating the story of Windradyne and his grave in a way that educates the new visitor and supports the memory work of regular visitors.[330] The panels within the conservation area tell a broader story of Wiradjuri life in the three rivers country before invasion and, in answer to the 1954 memorial, point to the survival of the Wiradjuri as a 'strong people ... proud of their heritage and how they have adapted to massive changes in their way of life'.[331] The panels give an account of Windradyne's life in context of the wars, and support the site's function as a defacto commemorative place for massacre and sorry business, by telling the story of the mutual bloodshed of 1823-4.[332] The signs installed at the entrance to *Brucedale* prepare the intending visitor to be embraced by a shared place of memory, by welcoming the visitor to Windradyne's grave, 'a special place for two cultures',

[329] Conversation with Gavin Newton, National Parks Bathurst Area, 31st May 2010.

[330] One of the panels mentions that trees were traditionally carved at burial sites and other important places, and another notes the recent plantings of 'culturally important' species around the graves by Wiradjuri people, but the connection that Rogers and others make between their plantings and the commemorative trees that may once have surrounded the graves is not pointed out. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (Bathurst), 'Two centuries later ...' and 'People of the three rivers – Wiradyuri life' panels.

[331] NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 'People of the three rivers – Wiradyuri life' panel.

[332] NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 'Wiradyuri Wars' and 'Windradyne, a Wiradyuri patriot' panels.

on behalf of the 'Wiradyuri people and the Suttor family'.[333] The panels develop the theme of shared history and shared knowledge by quoting extensively from Allen and Coe, along with 'Colo' and W. H. Suttor.

The friendship between Windradyne and William is honed to a fine point, focussed on the night encounter of 1824. This dramatic fulcrum looks back to the advice of George Suttor to his son to 'treat the Wiradyuri with respect' and forward to the ongoing good relations that saw Windradyne buried at *Brucedale*. Meditating on this 'unique' encounter, the visitor is asked to consider whether 'a different history might have been possible', presumably one in which mutual respect and compromise prevented bloodshed. While this is a viewpoint from amidst the conflicts themselves, it is also a point of stillness, a moment of calm amidst the storm. The panels depict the Suttor family as a neutral party in the conflicts of the 1820s, saying 'although the Wiradyuri wars boiled around the Suttors, they were unscathed'.[334] As much as this suggests the 'liberal fantasy', that goodwill might have prevented dispossession, it is also in keeping with the meaning of Windradyne's grave as a place of rest. As visitors approach Windradyne's grave, they are informed that they are entering a 'quiet place'. The conservation agreement has created an island of calm amongst the landscape of ownership and dispossession. As a place where a range of voices can be heard on an equal footing, Windradyne's grave is perhaps also a place of calm amidst the storm of history-making.

David Roberts described the Bells Falls Gorge massacre story as a 'nut without a kernel', because so much of its detail has been lost over time that it cannot be fleshed-out, and remains on the threshold between myth and history.[335] Though this story of friendship is comparatively well-documented, it too has lost much of its meat. The story's substance could almost be said to exist in the *feeling* between the sparse constellation formed by the mercy extended to the Suttor family and their property by the Wiradjuri warriors, William's language skills, George Suttor's 1826 letter and Windradyne's burial at *Brucedale*, as much as in these factual pillars themselves. Today, the friendship is chiefly in the telling. John and David Suttor, Bill Allen, Gloria Rogers and others tell Windradyne's story, and the story of his good relations with the Suttor family, with a conviction based in history, but which extends beyond history too. The feeling at this place, Windradyne's grave, is significant to the story whether or not Windradyne's remains lie here or elsewhere. Who taught William the Wiradjuri language, and how proficient was he? To what extent was he adopted into

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[333] NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (Bathurst), Entry sign installed at the gate of *Brucedale*, Peel Road, 2010.

[334] NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 'A Shared History' panel.

[335] Roberts, 'Bells Falls massacre and Bathurst's history of violence', p. 626.

Wiradjuri networks and ways of thinking? What did William and Windradyne say to each other on that fateful night in 1824? How did Windradyne and other Wiradjuri people understand this friendship? How much did the relationship change when William married, and as European settlement became more established and more populous across the late 1820s and 1830s? Did some local Wiradjuri people maintain links with country at *Brucedale* beyond the family's understanding? These and many other questions about the overlapping histories of the Suttor family and the local Wiradjuri people are hushed at Windradyne's grave. They are not silenced, but are perhaps calmed as William and Windradyne look into each other's eyes through the thick air of a dangerous night, and as Windradyne and his companions lie in the earth.

Oodgeroo and Judith – reciting a cross-cultural sisterhood

Kath Walker and Judith Wright first met in 1963.[1] Wright had encountered Walker via her manuscript of *We Are Going*, submitted to her as reader for Jacaranda Press. She was moved by the passion, anger and persuasive power of the poems and recommended their publication.[2] She approached Walker at a writers' function to tell her that 'Son of Mine' was a poem she wished she'd written herself.[3] In the poem, Walker addressed her son Denis 'what can I tell you, son of mine?/ I could tell you of heartbreak, hatred blind, ... Of brutal wrong and deeds malign, ... But I'll tell you instead of brave and fine/When lives of black and white entwine'.[4] For Wright, Walker's vision of deep and equal cross-cultural friendship was like an invitation, one which she dearly wanted to accept. A friendship blossomed which Wright later felt had changed her whole orientation towards the world, helping her to break through the deep-seated, subconscious reaction to Aboriginal people, 'a sort of shame mixed with misunderstanding', that she could now see in all white Australians.[5]

The two women found common ground in their strength of commitment to their shared and several causes. Wright wrote to her biographer, 'I wonder why you have never mentioned conservation issues in all the sessions we have had – it's as though you were interested only in the poems that talk about women's life and loves; but those are secondary in my life.'[6] Walker's poem 'My Love' expresses a similar sense of commitment to a quest beyond the merely personal. 'Possess me?' she asks, 'No, I cannot give/ The love that others know,/ For I

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[1] Kath Walker officially changed her name to Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal tribe in 1987. Walker's relationship with this name is explored here, but I continue to refer to the two friends as Walker and Wright throughout to avoid confusion as the story moves backward and forward in time.

[2] Judith Wright, 'The Poetry' in Kathie Cochrane ed., *Oodgeroo* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1994), pp. 165-9.

[3] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Fryer Library collection, Tape 4, side 2. This interview is undated, but seems to have been conducted over several sessions (there are 7 audio tapes) probably in early to mid-1978. On tape 4 Walker refers to published material by American scholar Margaret Read Lauer (who visited Wright and Walker in 1976), and to her plans to visit Honolulu on her way home from an upcoming overseas trip. By August 1978 Read Lauer was finalising an application for a Fulbright scholarship to fund Walker's visit to the United States (the trip had been in the planning from January 1978), and Walker took this journey in October – December the same year. It seems likely that the later interviews with Schwenke took place between August and October that year. See Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Fryer Library Manuscript Collection, UQFL 84, Box 39, Walker to Wright, 28th January 1978 and Wright to Walker, 30th August 1978; Papers of Judith Wright, National Library of Australia Manuscript Collection, MS 5781, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright 3rd October 1978 and 17th November 1978.

[4] Kath Walker, 'Son of Mine' in *We Are Going* (Brisbane: The Jacaranda Press, 1964), p. 13.

[5] Judith Wright, interview with Ramona Koval, ABC Radio National, 'Books and Writing' Program, 30th June 2000, transcript viewed on ABC website http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/bwriting/stories/s143393.htm, 29th Sept 2009.

[6] Patricia Clarke and Meredith McKinney, *With Love and Fury: Selected letters of Judith Wright* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2006), Wright to Veronica Brady, 17th January 1996, p. 528.

am wedded to a cause ... Mine is a dedicated life'.[7] They constantly worked at the question of how best to make a difference, and commiserated with each other about the glacial pace of change. 'We're ripping this country apart at such a rate I doubt if it's going to last us more than another twenty years ... You and I both ought to have permanent knobs on our skulls, the brick walls we keep bashing against', Wright wrote to Walker in 1970.[8] Wright's occasional offers of financial help to her friend were made in a similar frank, comradely tone 'I'm now 65 and happy with it so far, and I seem to have a bit of a stranglehold on the money situation – so can I help with the bills?'[9] Walker wrote in an unsteady hand to tell Wright of her separation from partner of five years, Bill, in 1976,[10] and her frequent, fond references to Nugget Coombs suggest that she was apprised of Wright's relationship with Coombs, which had begun in 1972 and caused her so much secret joy as well as anguish during their long periods apart.[11] It was a working and a personal bond. Reflecting on their friendship near the end of her life, Wright called Walker her 'greatest friend'.[12]

Walker had a number of close white women friends, including Kathie Cochrane, who was to write her biography, and Patti Walker, her daughter-in-law, who both lived in closer proximity to her than Wright, and with whom she shared more of the quotidian. But it was with Wright, famous poet and stalwart environmental campaigner, that she sought to provide a public example of cross-cultural sisterhood. Walker and Wright acted out testimony and listening; recognition and forgiveness; sharing and difference. As the two women told the story of their friendship over more than twenty years, they each offered the other public support for her struggles with history, place and the present. They also wove a story in which the personal and the historical were intermingled and where their coming-together was part of a new narrative that held possibilities for social healing.

The poetry of friendship

When the two women crossed paths they were both in their forties. Wright was a poet with five major publications under her belt, recognised as one of Australia's greatest poets.[13] She was involved with the nascent conservation movement as a founding member of the Wildlife

[7] Kath Walker, *My People* (Milton, Qld.: The Jacaranda Press, 1970), p. 50.

[8] Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 39, Wright to Walker, 4th August 1970.

[9] Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 54, Wright to Walker, 18th June 1980.

[10] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 5th October 1976.

[11] Fiona Capp, 'In the Garden: Judith Wright & Nugget Coombs', *The Monthly* 46 (June 2009), pp. 42-9; When Walker made her visit to America under the Fulbright scholars program, and stayed with her younger son Vivien in California, she mentioned Coombs in almost all of her letters to Wright, 'love to Nugget and all others', and 'I hope Nugget got my letter ... has he shown it to you' and so on, Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 3rd October 1978, 17th October 1978, 21st November 1978, 27th December 1978.

[12] Judith Wright, interview with Ramona Koval, 30th June 2000.

[13] Tim Bonyhady, 'Torn between Art and Activism', *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* 3 (2007), p. 20.

Preservation Society.[14] Walker was deeply involved in the civil rights movement, and was one of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders' most persuasive and valuable campaigners. She would drink with Menzies and be the only delegate allowed into Holt's office in 1966.[15] When *We Are Going* was published the following year, she also became nationally recognised as a poet. Sales were so swift that the publisher had difficulty finding enough copies of the book to display at its official launch – they had all been sold.[16] The two women knew of each other. Giving an account of her education in letters in the early 1990s, Walker told of her response to Wright's poem 'Bora Ring', which evokes the power of Aboriginal tradition and the tragedy of its loss in the earth ring 'where only the grass stands up'; 'the song is gone, the dance/is secret with the dancers in the earth'. The white witness is chilled, 'halts at sightless shadow, an unsaid word/ that fastens in the blood the ancient curse,/the fear as old as Cain'.[17] This poet, the young Walker had thought, was someone who cared about the destruction of Aboriginal communities and ways of life.[18] Wright knew of Walker as an 'acknowledged leader in the new Aboriginal movement.'[19] Although Walker described herself and Wright as 'firm friends' from their first meeting, she also described the friendship as 'hovering in the background' through the mid-1960s.[20] Wright, when assisting Kathie Cochrane with her biography of Walker, recommended that she talk with Brian Clouston of Jacaranda Press about the particulars of 1963-4; her own memories were 'foggy' as she was preoccupied with her husband Jack, who was seriously ill at the time.[21] By the turn of the decade, however, Walker and Wright were looking to each other for a writing friendship and a fighting friendship at a pivotal moment in both lives.

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[14] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, 1991-2000 (Kathie Cochrane), Fryer Library Manuscript Collection, UQFL 286, Wright to Cochrane, 2nd October 1991.

[15] Kath Walker, interview with Hazel de Berg, Hazel de Berg Collection, National Library of Australia, DeB923, 10th March 1976, side A; Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 69; Elaine Darling, *They spoke out pretty good: politics and gender in the Brisbane Aboriginal Rights Movement 1958-1962* (St Kilda, Vic.: Janoan Media Exchange, 1998), p. 187.

[16] Kath Walker, interview with Hazel de Berg, side A.

[17] Judith Wright, 'Bora Ring' [1946] in *A Human Pattern: Selected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1992), pp. 2-3.

[18] Kath Walker, 'Writers of Australia, "I dips me lid"', delivered at the Opera House, 9th June 1993, reproduced in Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, pp. 217-8.

[19] Wright, 'The Poetry', pp. 163, 5.

[20] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B.

[21] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, 2nd October 1991. She also depicted herself as remote from Brisbane and the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, and as preoccupied with 'starting the Wildlife Preservation Society, looking after a sick husband and a small daughter and living 60 miles from Brisbane' in a letter to Cochrane dated 1st January 1999 in the same location.

Walker had honed a swift and stinging response to white people's racism, which she'd weathered through her years of domestic service in the 1930s in particular.[22] In her 1977 'film-biography' *Shadow Sister*, she tells of moving into her new home in Holland Park, Brisbane in the early 1950s. She didn't meet anyone, but could see women peering at her from behind their curtains. Eventually, her next door neighbour emerged and said that the other women were asking questions about Walker – did she wash her clothes? To which the woman had already replied that she did, and she was amazed at how white her whites were. Then she asked, did Walker drink methylated spirits? To which Walker replied 'Look if I'd known that the people in this street drank methylated spirits, I would have had a housewarming and invited them in and I would have been glad to buy them the methylated spirits.'[23] But she also maintained an open heart to white people who were willing to listen, who wanted to meet her on equal terms. When Kathie and Bob Cochrane arrived on her doorstep in 1958 hoping that Walker might join the new Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), she let them in, and worked closely with them and other white activists for Aboriginal civil rights for more than a decade, as well as making a lifelong friendship.[24] But in the late 1960s, many Aboriginal activists began to question the ethic of 'working together', often under non-Aboriginal leadership; many more now had the skills to run their own campaigns, and began to see limitations in the civil rights agenda.[25]

Walker returned from the 1969 World Council of Churches convention on racism in London with a new understanding of what she was fighting for: where she had seen a class struggle, she now saw one of race.[26] In a series of passionate speeches and articles she argued that Indigenous Australians must become an empowered, 'unified and solid fighting force' before there could be 'any consideration given to black and white Australians forming a coalition for a better way of life for all Australians' – for she could see that even an organisation like FCAATSI might reproduce white power while it remained under white control.[27] She was at

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[22] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 1, side B.

[23] Frank Heimans, *Shadow sister: a film biography of Australian Aboriginal poet Kath Walker* (Sydney: Cinetel Productions, 1977).

[24] Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, pp. xii, 25.

[25] Sue Taffe traces the increasing confidence of the Aboriginal caucus of FCAATSI across the 1960s, and a growing will on the part of Aboriginal delegates to lead the executive and the agenda of the Council and to establish Aboriginal-led State and regional bodies, not steered by union or church agendas, a will which culminated in the FCAATSI split in 1970. Sue Taffe, *Black and White Together: FCAATSI: The Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders 1958-1973* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2005), pp. 219-266.

[26] Sue Taffe, 'Kath Walker', 'Collaborating for Indigenous Rights 1957-1973' website, National Museum of Australia, created 2007-8, <http://indigenousrights.net.au/person.asp?pID=988>, viewed 28 August 2009.

[27] Kath Walker, 'Black-White Coalition Can Work', *Origin*, 18th September 1969, p. 6; Kath Walker, 'Racism: double-thinking, complex state of mind', *Origin*, 7th August 1969, p. 2.

the head of the move to Aboriginal self-determination and led the formation of a National Tribal Council in which only Indigenous members were to have voting rights.[28] But she did not mean that she didn't want to work together with white people who could respect Indigenous leadership and decision making. Many of the young people of the Tribal Council, like the Black Powerists of Birmingham she had encountered in London, did not want to negotiate with the white world any more in the early 1970s, but Walker 'still had faith in the whites ... I still believed that the whites should be won over'.[29] Walker sat at Wright's kitchen table 'on and off for a fortnight' in late 1969 talking out her 'despair over her people's situation ... rapidly convincing herself that bloody revolution is the only answer.'[30] In the midst of this great personal and political struggle, she seemed to trust Wright implicitly, proposing that the two write a book together with Wright 'thinking white' and Walker 'thinking black' to 'guide [Australians] out of the mess they are in.'[31]

At least in retrospect, Wright thought of her meeting with Walker as the fulfilment of a long yearning for an Aboriginal friend. In the early 1990s, she wrote 'it was not until I was in my forties that I was able to meet Kath Walker', as if the friendship had somehow been predestined, yet delayed.[32] Wright had long been troubled by an unrequited childhood connection with a little girl who had passed through the New England farm where she grew up, a place where opportunities to play with other children were few and far between. 'You can't play with her; she's black', was the parental decree. Wright could see a ready solution to that, and she dragged the younger girl around the back of the house and began to cover her with white-wash, only to be punished for her logic.[33] When she addressed Walker in her poem 'Two Dreamtimes' in 1972, Wright drew a direct link between Walker and this little girl, writing:

> You were one of the dark children
> I wasn't allowed to play with
> riverbank campers, the wrong colour

[28] Peter Read, 'Cheeky, Insolent and Anti-white: The split in the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders - Easter 1970', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 1 (1990), p. 79.

[29] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side A.

[30] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Kathleen McArthur, undated, p. 203. Wright had issued an invitation in mid-1969, and Walker wrote to say she hoped to take it up in October of that year, Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 31st August 1969. As she wrote in her report to the Australian Council of Churches on the World Council of Churches 'Consultation on Racism' held in London 19th May 1969: 'We have I believe, 10 years to bring about instant evolution or face the consequences of a bloody revolution', Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 30.

[31] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 8th September 1969.

[32] Judith Wright, 'Moongalba' in *Born of the conquerors; selected essays* (Canberra; Aboriginal Studies Press, 1991), p. xi.

[33] Judith Wright McKinney, 'You can't play with her. She's black', *Aboriginal Treaty News* 9 (October 1983), p. 10. (viewed in Aboriginal Treaty Committee Papers, AIATSIS Library, MS 1867).

(I couldn't turn you white.)

So it was late I met you,
late I began to know
they hadn't told me the land I loved
was taken out of your hands.[34]

From her first volume of poetry, *The Moving Image*, published in 1946, Wright had filled her life's landscapes with disquiet, with histories imperfectly erased like half-buried bones. Not only the earth, but her own body contained traces of the violence perpetrated against New England's Aboriginal people. Her father's story of 'Nigger's Leap', a dramatic granite promontory close to her childhood home, where he believed a massacre had been perpetrated, left her with the chilling conclusion, 'did we not know that their blood channelled our rivers,/ and the black dust our crops ate was their dust?/ O all men are one man at last'.[35] In 1955 Wright's husband, Jack McKinney, returned from a visit to Palm Island (where his daughter from his first marriage was living), 'distressed by the state of the Aborigines on that miserable island'. This left Wright even more uneasy, and wondering what she might do to help.[36]

When Wright encountered Walker's manuscript for *We Are Going*, she was struck by the directness of the poems, 'we want hope, not racialism,/ Brotherhood, not ostracism,/ Black advance, not white ascendance:/ Make us equals, not dependents', demanded Walker. 'My own response to the poems' wrote Wright, 'their merciless accusations, their notes of mourning and challenge, was immediate ... this poetry had to be published and listened to'.[37] As Wright told Kevin Gilbert twenty years later, Walker's poetry, as well as his own, had 'activated' her.[38] Fired, she wanted to write about Aboriginal experiences, but she felt it wasn't appropriate for her to do so, and was impatient for the growth and development of an Indigenous literature expanding on Walker's work and on Colin Johnson's first novel.[39] She took a six week reading tour of regional Queensland in the late 1960s, taking *We Are Going* and Walker's recently published second collection, *The Dawn is at Hand*, with her. She returned filled with even greater respect for Walker's poetry, having seen its relevance and power reflected in the faces of her audiences who 'sat up' when she read Walker's work.[40]

[34] Wright, 'Two Dreamtimes', *A Human Pattern*, p. 166. First published in *Alive* (1973).

[35] Wright, 'Nigger's Leap: New England', *A Human Pattern*, p. 8.

[36] Wright, *Half a Lifetime* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1999), p. 284.

[37] Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 166-8.

[38] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Kevin Gilbert, 8th February 1992, p. 482.

[39] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Martin Robinson, 8th September 1968, pp. 191-2.

[40] Wright, 'The Poetry', pp. 175-78.

Wright looked to Walker as someone with the power to bring an Aboriginal perspective to white Australians in a way that could at once inform and galvanise. Planning a 'Teachout Talkout Singout Poetryreadout Campout' late in 1971, she asked Walker, 'what about you coming and telling it like it is about the Aboriginal attitude to land?'[41]

Walker again took up Wright's standing invitation to stay with her on Mt Tambourine when she was commissioned by Angus and Robertson to write *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in the summer of 1971/2, finding that her new home at Moongalba had already become as busy as 'Grand Central Station'.[42] When she showed Wright her newly drafted story 'Oodgeroo', Wright started with recognition. She replied by handing Walker a copy of her own poem 'Canefields Country' first published in 1955, in which a young Aboriginal woman seems to mourn her lost history and people in a transformed landscape, yet nearby 'the paperbarks/ unroll their blank and tattered parchment,/ waiting for some unknown inscription' and the waterlily prays for the meeting of time with eternity.[43] Almost mystically, Wright's poem seemed to both women to anticipate the story of Oodgeroo.[44] Grown to womanhood, Wright's young girl begins to inscribe those waiting parchments with the knowledge of the land, recovered from the just-extinguished camp fires of her people, guided by Biami the Good Spirit. In Oodgeroo's story, time does meet eternity, and is forced to wait for it.[45] Telling Hazel de Berg this story in 1976, Walker said that she and Wright had effectively written the 'same poem'. When she asked Wright how did she write this poem, 'how did Judith *know*?' Wright had replied 'I think you and I have met a long time ago in yet another dreamtime when we were shadow sisters'.[46] In this encounter, as Walker understood it, the two women were able to meet on a number of levels; personally, creatively, and on a level which defied time and place as well as being thoroughly situated in them. Wright's poem 'Two Dreamtimes', which she was to send Walker a few months later, again depicted the two women as 'shadow sisters', irreducibly different yet inextricably joined.[47]

As Walker remembered this most well-known visit to Wright near the end of the decade, they had followed a strict writing timetable, working from five in the morning until two in

[41] Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 39, Wright to Walker, 12th November 1971.

[42] Candida Baker, *Yacker 2: Australian Writers Talk about their Work* (Sydney: Pan Books, 1987), p. 289.

[43] Wright, 'Canefields Country', *A Human Pattern*, p. 79.

[44] Kath Walker, interview with Hazel de Berg, side B.

[45] Kath Walker, 'Oodgeroo (Paperbark Tree)', *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1992), pp. 78-80.

[46] Kath Walker, interview with Hazel de Berg, side B.

[47] Wright, 'Two Dreamtimes', *A Human Pattern*, pp. 166-9.

the afternoon, then taking a drive somewhere, having dinner and working again until ten.[48] Walker recalled it as a productive time for both writers, and a time full of emotion on which to draw.[49] Jack McKinney, Wright's husband and soul-mate had died in 1966 and she felt his absence acutely. Walker had invited herself to stay (braving the bunyip on Mount Tamborine) partly because she, along with other friends of Wright's, was worried about her friend living alone, grieving for her husband.[50] 'Sometimes, lost in thought or reading, she would raise her eyes and a shadow would suggest Jack in his old chair. And yet his absence was as real to her now as his presence had once been', wrote Fiona Capp in response to Wright's dream diary, her poetry and letters of the decade up to 1976, when Wright was finally ready to leave their home 'Calanthe'.[51] In the early seventies she was still in constant conversation with Jack's memory, 'A supplies the words/ B adds the silence',[52] wrote Wright:

> Space between lip and lip
> And space between
> living and long-dead flesh
> can sometimes seem the same.
>
> We strive across, we strain
> to those who breathe the air,
> to those in memory;
> but Here is never There.[53]

Walker was relieved to see Wright taking up her work again and producing some of the beautiful sad poems reflecting on Jack's departure and her loss, like the poem about the flame tree that Judith, Jack and their daughter Meredith had watched with a great sense of anticipation every year finally bursting into an 'agony of flower' after he had gone. 'We did each other the world of good', she told Julianne Schwenke.[54]

The visit probably also incorporated intense late-night talking sessions. In 'Two Dreamtimes' Wright depicted Walker 'sitting all night at my kitchen table/with a cry and a song in your

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[48] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B. See also Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Jennifer Jones, 7th September 1999, p. 560.

[49] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B.

[50] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B; Oodgeroo Nunukul, interview with Caroline Jones, 'A search for meaning' series, ABC Radio Tapes, Tape 181, side A. The catalogue dates the interview to c1990, but Jones refers to events having occurred in 1991 in her introduction.

[51] Fiona Capp, *My Blood's Country* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2010), p. 154.

[52] Wright, 'Dialogue', *A Human Pattern*, p. 164.

[53] Wright, 'Dialogue', *A Human Pattern*, p. 165.

[54] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B; Judith Wright, 'The Flame-tree-Blooms', quoted in Capp, *My Blood's Country*, pp. 151-2.

voice'.[55] Writing to Barbara Blackman, one of her most frequent and intimate correspondents, Wright described a later visit in which Walker stayed with her in the fashion of a retreat, 'recovering from sinusitis and too much work' in 1980. 'We had a fine time catching up', she wrote:

> for some reason Kath is the one person I can really connect with all the time ... Everyone else seems unspontaneous beside her ... She's started her own business in Melbourne, fabric design, and spent most of the time drawing crazy Neo-Aboriginal stuff in sketchbook after sketchbook, writing poems and talking flat out. I couldn't take it as a permanent part of life – one doesn't get a word in.[56]

Walker too was navigating a personal as well as political crisis when she stayed with Wright in the summer of 1971/2. Having led the move to Indigenous control of the civil rights movement, having been at the forefront of the transformation of this movement into one for self-determination and Indigenous rights, having established the National Tribal Council with her son Denis and others and dedicated her energies to its Brisbane branch for a year,[57] she was abruptly asked to leave in early 1971. A messenger from the young men of the council told her she was 'considered too old to be of further use'. She was shocked and very hurt.[58] She resigned, withdrew from active involvement in the Tribal Council, and, at her younger son Vivian's suggestion, moved back to Stradbroke Island, where she began to build her recuperation and education centre, 'Moongalba'.[59] She struggled with her relationship with Denis and with the movement, particularly around the ethics and efficacy of violent action for the cause. Walker herself had predicted race war and experimented with the idea of 'bloody revolution'. But the involvement of the Tribal Council in a violent demonstration in November 1971, in response to the new Queensland Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Bill, and Denis' affirmation of militancy at a new level, as he formed the Brisbane Chapter of the Black Panthers, led her to distance herself from this most extreme form of the new wave.[60] *New Dawn* reported:

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[55] Wright, 'Two Dreamtimes', *A Human Pattern*, pp. 166, 168.

[56] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Blackman, 18th November 1980, p. 339.

[57] Sue Taffe, 'Barrie Pittock', 'Collaborating for Indigenous Rights 1957-1973' website, National Museum of Australia, created 2007-8, <http://indigenousrights.net.au/person.asp?pID=1018> , viewed 12 September 2009; Kath Walker, 'Black-White Coalition Can Work', p. 6.

[58] Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 84; Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side A.

[59] Susan Mitchell, *The Matriarchs* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1987), p. 205.

[60] Peter Read, *Charles Perkins: A Biography* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 2001), p. 156; Simon Townsend, 'Black Power Comes to Australia', *The Australian*, 5th December 1971, p. 11.

> Aboriginal poet, Kath Walker spoke up to condemn the Black Power movement in Australia. She also repudiated the methods by her son, Dennis (sic) Walker, who is a leading Black Power advocate ... While suggesting that there would be more violence because some young Aborigines saw no other way out, Mrs Walker warned that Aborigines were cutting their own throats by advocating violence.[61]

When she stayed with Wright in the summer of 1971/2, Walker was in the midst of working out how she was going to continue to work for Aboriginal rights and foster Aboriginal culture outside the frameworks of FCAATSI and the Tribal Council. Her encounter with Wright perhaps helped Walker emerge from the shadow that Denis' controversial activism and belligerent rhetoric cast over her personal and public life,[62] and to develop a fresh approach to co-operation and friendship with white Australians. She would still use her tongue to 'lash' white people, and to call them to account for their part in the repression of Aboriginal people in the present, but by the early 1970s she knew she wanted to teach all Australians the true meaning of equality and the complexity and sustaining power of Aboriginal cultures.[63]

Meredith McKinney and Patricia Clark see Wright departing from her previously intense engagement with poetry with Jack's death, and dedicating herself instead to causes – environmental activism and Indigenous rights – which became her main concern in life as she emerged from period of intensely private mourning in the early 1970s.[64] Like Walker, she was 'chang[ing] tack to get a fresh breeze',[65] and it is likely that the late-night talks with Walker at this time helped to bring her convictions about conservation together with her deep feelings about Aboriginal-settler relations. Wright was surely an important influence on Walker's decision to remain on Stradbroke Island and concentrate on changing the world through 'conservation instead of politics'.[66]

Walker sent Wright a copy of her published *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, with a letter of thanks, and about three months later she responded with the poem 'Two Dreamtimes', addressed

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[61] As reported in 'Smoke Signals: Kath Walker condemns violence', *New Dawn*, 1st Jan 1972, p. 15.

[62] Denis' public assessment of his mother's achievements in late 1971 was that she was militant only with words, and had achieved nothing over her twenty years of activism, Townsend 'Black Power Comes to Australia', p. 11.

[63] Heimans, *Shadow sister*.

[64] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, p. xii.

[65] John Collins, 'A Mate in Publishing' in Adam Shoemaker ed., *Oodgeroo: a tribute* (St. Lucia: Australian Literary Studies and University of Queensland Press, 1994), p. 18.

[66] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 5th July 1972.

to 'Kathy my sister with the torn heart.'[67] In the poem, Wright addresses Walker as a 'sister' with whom she has come together from polar opposites of historical experience to talk and to listen, and with whom she shares a sisterhood of loss. Both have loved and belonged to the land. Where Wright's forbears stole the country of Walker's Aboriginal ancestors, now the women share a loss of country – to extractive industry, foreign investment and the government's disregard for a future beyond short-term profit – and of enchantment:

> With a knifeblade flash in your black eyes
> that always long to be blacker,
> your Spanish-Koori face
> of a fighter and a singer,
>
> arms over your breast folding
> your sorrow in to hold it,
> you brought me to you some of the way
> and came the rest to meet me;
>
> over the desert of red sand
> came from your lost country
> to where I stand with all my fathers,
> their guilt and righteousness.
>
> Over the rum your voice sang
> the tales of an old people,
> their dreaming buried, the place forgotten ...
> We too have lost our dreaming.
>
> We the robbers are robbed in turn,
> selling this land on hire-purchase;
> what's stolen once is stolen again
> even before we know it.
>
> If we are sisters, it's in this –
> our grief for a lost country,
> the place we dreamed in long ago,
> poisoned now and crumbling.[68]

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[67] Oodgeroo Nunukul, interview with Caroline Jones, side A.

[68] From Wright 'Two Dreamtimes', *A Human Pattern*, pp. 166-9.

Wright had listened carefully to Walker and learnt from her anger and sorrow as she told 'tales of an old people,/ their dreaming buried, the place forgotten' and showed Wright the personal significance of 'the dying children/ the blank-eyed taken women,/ the sullen looks of the men who sold them/for rum to forget the selling'. She acknowledged their 'separate griefs ... yours and mine are different', and recognised that history continued to intervene, that even in the present 'I am born of the conquerors,/ you of the persecuted', with Wright's 'righteous kin' and present injustices looking over her shoulder as she meets with Walker in 'secret kindness'.[69] This brief meeting exists in a rare and delicate moment between a past comprised of terror and ignorance, and an uncertain future. Walker wrote back in May 1972 apologising for not having responded immediately because 'your beautiful poem left me without words, or rather I couldn't find the right words to write and thank you'. She hoped it would be published.[70]

'Two Dreamtimes' was published in Wright's 1973 collection *Alive*.[71] In the context of Judith's opus, already cherished by Australians, the poem was not simply an expression of personal feeling, it was a call to all non-Indigenous Australians to re-assess their sense of belonging. Wright loved the country she lived in, and her early work had been nourished chiefly by the 'high lean country' of New England where she lived as a child, her 'blood's country'.[72] But this love, and sense of belonging, was always shadowed with a deep unease – stemming from her growing realisation that 'the land I loved/ was taken out of [Aboriginal] hands', and a sense that disenchantment threatened to dispossess the 'conquerors' in turn.[73] In 'At Cooloolah' (first published 1955) the conquering stranger finds herself 'unloved by all my eyes delight in', and ill at ease in a land once named by 'those dark-skinned people who ... knew that no land is lost or won by wars,/ for earth is spirit.'[74] Wright's interest in the 'shadow' was informed by Jungian principles, in which the shadow is a part of the unconscious, cast onto the world as we try to perceive it, and encountered by each person as a part of that external world, rather than as a part of herself.[75] In her relationship with

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[69] Wright 'Two Dreamtimes', *A Human Pattern*, pp. 166-9.

[70] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 11th May 1972.

[71] Judith Wright, 'Two Dreamtimes', *Alive* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973), pp. 22.

[72] Wright, 'South of my Days', *A Human Pattern*, pp. 11-12.

[73] Gerard Hall, 'Judith Wright (1915-2000): Australian Poet and Prophet', *National Outlook* (November 2000), Australian Catholic University website, <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/staffhome/gehall/Judith.htm>, viewed 29 September 2009.

[74] Wright, 'At Cooloolah', *A Human Pattern*, p. 83.

[75] C.G. Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, trans. R.F.C. Hall in Collected Works of C. G. Jung series, vol. 9, part 2 (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1959), pp. 8-10. Wright had long understood herself in terms of a Jungian 'I', which she laid before Barbara Blackman, for example, in a letter of 22nd April 1958. She wrote to a new correspondent in 1971 of her understanding of the budding conservation movement with the aside, 'you can see I am Jungian'. Her use of the 'shadow' as a way of understanding race relations is demonstrated in a 1989 letter to Gillian Coote, Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, pp. 109, 216, 450.

Walker, and in her writing through the seventies in particular, Wright was undertaking that 'considerable moral effort' Jung felt was necessary to make the shadow conscious, to discard the deep-seated fear of the ongoing Aboriginal presence and acknowledge Aboriginal sovereignty, a prerequisite for emotional maturity.[76] As Jennifer Jones observes, Wright 'eschewed the conventional and convenient invisibility of whiteness, choosing instead to face her inheritance'.[77] 'Two Dreamtimes' brings to life a crucial moment in this endeavour – as it animates a relationship well beyond the shadow. The two women in the poem are 'sisters' as well as 'shadow sisters'. Walker is real and irreducible, with that 'knifeblade flash in your black eyes ... a fighter and a singer'. Judith's moral effort was not enough to cover the distance between them; she attributes their coming together to Walker's ability to bring 'me to you some of the way/ and [come] the rest to meet me'.

The response of Shirley Walker (one of Wright's foremost appreciators and critics) to the poem highlights just how significant a development this was. Writing in the late seventies, she described 'Two Dreamtimes' as 'banal' without elaboration.[78] She was much more enthusiastic about 'The Dark Ones', which appeared in Wright's following volume, *The Fourth Quarter*. In this poem she understood Aborigines to be 'identified with the dark and potent contents of the unconscious ... the shadow side of the self', rising 'up like wraiths to confound and reproach the confidence and assurance of the daylight world ... Like the Jungian shadow, the aboriginals must be brought up into the consciousness, accepted and assimilated, before the shame and guilt of the white race can be healed.'[79] It was perhaps her excitement about the potential for psychoanalytic characterisation of race relations that made the mutuality of 'Two Dreamtimes' pedestrian for Shirley Walker. But it is hard to see how she could have missed the tension in that poem as the two women come face to face, each the historical shadow of the other, but each more substantial, more vocal, more independent than a mere shadow could be. Shirley Walker, like those who had not been able to countenance Aboriginal control of FCAATSI, may not have been ready for the shadow to speak. The Walker of 'Two Dreamtimes' strode briskly out from the shadows of regret and guilt, to share grief, a love of the land and the life of a poet with Wright, and to teach her, and many of her readers, something of the reality of Aboriginal experience.

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[76] Jung, *Aion*, pp. 8-10; Judith Wright, interview with Jim Davidson, 26th May 1982, Meanjin Collection, National Library of Australia, Tape 1, side A.

[77] Jennifer Jones, 'Why weren't we listening? Oodgeroo and Judith Wright', *Overland* 171 (Winter 2003), p. 47.

[78] Walker described the whole collection in which it appeared as weighed down too much with an 'over-seriousness and too keen an awareness of evil and violence', Shirley Walker, *The Poetry of Judith Wright: a search for unity* (Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1980), p. 162, 169.

[79] Walker, *The Poetry of Judith Wight*, pp. 169-70.

Walker answered Wright with a poem, 'Sister Poet' in 1975, like 'Two Dreamtimes' sent to her friend privately in the mail. It is a less ambitious poem than Wright's, and does not offer an alternative history of the friendship. Rather, Walker wrote within the terms of Wright's poem:

> Sister poet, I answer you,
> Where you sit with your "civilised" kin
> Shadow sister, your high ideals
> Compensate me for their sin.
>
> Today you fight for Fraser,
> armed with document and pen.
> You, the embarrassing "stirrer"
> Scorned by "civilised" men.
>
> You the protector of Nature's Hearth,
> Attacking greed and corruption
> And those who make their living
> Raping the bowels of Mother Earth.
>
> Roaming east, north, south and west,
> You talk and write and hope and pray,
> That in your lifetime's call,
> Man will respect and protect
>
> Nature's balance realm
> That was created for all.
>
> My shadow sister, I talk to you,
> From my sit down place with the Koorie dead.
> In Quandamooka the knife I threw
> I know not where the handle lies.
> But, my shadow sister, this I know.
>
> Your dreams are my dreams
> Your thoughts are my thoughts
> And our shadow that made us sisters
> That binds us close together,
> Together with us

CRIES ...[80]

It was a tribute to Wright's poem, and an acceptance of her understanding of how their sisterhood was formed. It is notable, though, that where Wright emphasised a sisterhood through loss of land or country, Walker pays tribute to her friend's efforts and perhaps unites the two in aspiration rather than in loss. Walker would not accept her friend's final act: 'The knife's between us. I turn it round,/ the handle to your side,/ the weapon made from your country's bones./ I have no right to take it', wrote Wright in 'Two Dreamtimes'.[81] Jennifer Jones has suggested that Wright's knife might stand for the weapon that words formed in the hands of both women, as activist-poets, with Wright passing the baton to Walker as an Aboriginal writer who might much more legitimately draw creative inspiration from the land.[82] This interpretation resonates with the way in which both women had seen Wright's work as somehow anticipating Walker's. Walker, though, read Wright's offer of the knife at least partly as an expression of guilt, a hope that Walker might take the knife and wound her in a way that would release her from the feeling that she had something 'to make up for'.[83]

Wright certainly did take a great burden of past and present wrongs unto herself. She concluded her half-biography with an apology to 'all the peoples of the old and true Australia on whose land I have trespassed and whom, by being part of my own people, I have wronged ... I now bend my head and say sorry. Sorry, above all, that I can make nothing right.'[84] She came to Walker in 'Two Dreamtimes' as a supplicant. Walker did not see guilt as a constructive emotion. Speaking in Tasmania in 1982, she urged her audience to discard guilt and take up action, as 'guilt is the most useless of human emotions. It paralyses thought and action and can most surely turn to hate'.[85] In 'Sister Poet', it is Wright's activism that absolves her, she is 'the embarrassing "stirrer"/ scorned by "civilised" men ... attacking greed and corruption'. Her origins may sit with her 'civilised kin', but she has burst these bounds, and Walker declares that her 'high ideals/ compensate me for their sin'. She answered Wright's offer of the knife decisively: 'In Quandamooka the knife I threw/ I know not where the handle lies'.[86] Walker told Caroline Jones in 1991 that she could still feel the hurt in

[80] Margaret Read Lauer, 'Kath Walker at Moongalba: Making a New Dreamtime', *World Literature Written in English* 17, no. 1 (April 1978), pp. 89-90.

[81] Wright 'Two Dreamtimes', *A Human Pattern*, pp. 166-9.

[82] Jones, 'Why Weren't We Listening?', p. 47.

[83] Judith Wright, interview with Ramona Koval, 30th June 2000.

[84] Wright, *Half a Lifetime*, p. 296.

[85] Walker, 'A Stranger in Tasmania' in Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 195.

[86] Quandamooka is the Noonuccal-Nughie name for Moreton Bay and the waters surrounding Minjerriba, Stradbroke Island.

Wright's poem. Wright had warned, 'trust none – not even poets', and Walker still rushed to staunch this wound; 'Judith, Judith, Judith...' she effused, 'there's no way I'm going to take a knife to her' – not even to ease her feeling of guilt.[87]

In answer to Wright's careful acknowledgement of the 'separate griefs' sustained by herself and her friend, Walker collapsed difference altogether. She comforted Wright with a declaration of unconditional love 'my shadow sister, this I know,/ Your dreams are my dreams/ Your thoughts are my thoughts'. Walker adopted Wright's epithet for the friendship, but she characterised the shadow as an entity external to both women. She closed her poem 'our shadow ... That binds us close together,/ Together with us/ CRIES.' Walker elsewhere explained that it is Noonuccal practice to externalise negative or difficult feelings, sometimes investing them in a person's shadow, so that they can be conversed with and resolved.[88] She perhaps meant this creation of a kind of third party in the relationship, a repository for grief, to be part of a healing process for Wright and for herself. Wright accepted the separation of the shadow, responding to Walker when she received the poem, 'I am proud to have it. I am keeping [it] in my special treasures and though our shadow cries, still we are tied together in a special way and I love you.'[89]

This was an intensely personal exchange on one level, but was also, from the outset, a public dialogue. Walker saw her poetic opus as a conversation with Wright's work, and embarked on a reading tour of Western Australia in April 1971, on which she read from both her own and Wright's poems, as Wright had done in Queensland a few years earlier.[90] The message came through; at least some listeners associated the two poets' work closely. A contributor to a collection in honour of Walker published in 2000 felt his experience of Wright's poetry as a schoolboy had waited like seed sown until, at the University of Queensland in the sixties, he heard Wright read some of Walker's poetry: 'she spoke of Oodgeroo/ and *municipal gum* was read and/ *last of his tribe* and *we are going*/ and the thread was joined/ a reconciliation/ a fragile understanding/ of white and black/ and many colours in between'.[91]

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[87] Oodgeroo Nunukul, interview with Caroline Jones, side B.

[88] Baker, *Yacker 2*, p. 296. Brigid Rooney finds that Walker had already engaged with the haunting and elusive aspects of the 'shadow' in *We Are Going*, having taken up the theme partly as a response to Wright's poem 'Bora Ring', Brigid Rooney, *Literary activists: writer-intellectuals and Australian public life* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 2009), pp. 60-2.

[89] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Walker, 11th August 1975, pp. 287-9.

[90] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 23rd April 1971.

[91] John Robertson, 'The Two Sisters' in Janelle Evans ed., *Moongalba: Poems in Honour of Oodgeroo* (Brisbane: IBIS Editions Australien, 2000), p. 83. He writes of hearing her speak in 'Abel Smith', a lecture theatre at University of Queensland's St. Lucia Campus.

In 'Two Dreamtimes' Wright addressed her friend as a representative of settler-Australians to a representative of the continent's Aboriginal peoples, and Walker responded in the same spirit. Though Wright sometimes brushed aside the notion that she might be a prophetic voice for Australians, by the time she was waging her campaign against oil drilling on the Great Barrier Reef in the late 'sixties she recognised the 'special advantage' she had in speaking out on conservation issues, and increasingly, Aboriginal rights and reconciliation, as a poet considered '"the greatest [then] living poet of the Australian landscape", "Australia's greatest woman poet", and even "the greatest woman poet since Sappho"'.[92] Walker, with much less reservation, stood as 'a symbol of the Aboriginal people'.[93] Talking to Jim Davidson of *Meanjin* in 1977, she explained that her book *We Are Going* 'was more a book of their voices ... I'm putting their voices on paper ... in the Aboriginal world we don't think as individuals, we think as a group. So my responsibility was to record, if you like, the feelings, the aspirations and frustrations of the Aboriginal people.'[94] The two women had never written that book in which Walker was to 'think black' and Wright 'think white', but although Wright's poem took a very different approach to the dialogue Walker had envisaged, she felt strongly that 'Two Dreamtimes' modelled the learning which white Australians needed to undertake. Speaking at Griffith University in 1989, as she accepted an Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Walker argued that Australians needed to learn respect for Indigenous knowledge at every level of the education system before equality and harmony could be achieved. Asking 'where then does this leave seventh generation Australians?', she offered 'Two Dreamtimes' by way of an answer.[95]

Much of the communication between Walker and Wright took place through correspondence, which was frank and often casual. But the two women lived too far apart for most of their lives to see each other regularly or casually. Rather, they enacted the visible part of their friendship through mutual appreciation on public occasions and exchange of poetic gifts. Their sojourns together became almost canonised as the friends themselves endowed them with symbolic meaning. Walker's visit to Wright in the summer of 1971/2, in particular, featured as it was in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* and 'Two Dreamtimes', became a pillar in the story of the friendship as the two friends told and retold it in collaboration with

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[92] Bonyhady, 'Torn between Art and Activism', p. 20. He is quoting partly from Wright's *The Coral Battleground*, 1977.

[93] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1st August 1977, p. 4.

[94] Jim Davidson, 'Interview - Kath Walker', *Meanjin* 36, no. 4 (1977), pp. 428-9.

[95] Oodgeroo Noonuccal, *Towards a global village in the southern hemisphere* (Nathan, Qld: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University, 1989), pp. 3-6.

others.[96] Christine Milne, Spokesperson for The Australian Greens, lobbying for the protection of Wright's bushland home (from 1975) near Braidwood in 2007, cited a visit from Walker with a sense of reverence as part of the heritage of the place. At least part of that reverence came from Wright's own rendition of the visit, as a rare and precious interlude in which the two women had healed, hoped, mourned and created together.[97]

The friendship, even as it was taking shape, was perhaps somewhat courtly. The two friends' politics were radical in some ways, and so was their friendship, but the aesthetic of the friendship was not. It perhaps appeared old-fashioned and rather ladylike to the younger generation of activists in particular. In his recent play based on Walker's life, *Oodgeroo – bloodline to country*, Sam Watson depicted Walker in a friendship with Jessie Street, a noted feminist who had drafted the constitutional changes and inspired the campaign that culminated in the 1967 Referendum.[98] Street died in 1970, but throughout the spiralling chronology of the play, it is the formally dressed and aristocratic sounding Street with whom Walker communes as she develops her ideas about continuing to work with non-Indigenous people as her son Denis turns to a more militant approach.[99] The effect of having Street stand in, as it were, for all Walker's friendships with white women, is to make Walker's cross-cultural friendships seem antiquated as time moves on, as well as ageing Walker's character by linking her to Street's generation. Watson established the Brisbane chapter of the Black Panthers with Denis Walker, and recalls himself very much attracted to the slightly older man's brinkmanship at that time.[100] Now, he sees himself as 'a link' between the Brisbane 'Murri community' and the 'white left' and draws much inspiration from his Aunty

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[96] See, for example: Read Lauer, 'Kath Walker at Moongalba', p. 89; Oodgeroo Nunukul, interview with Caroline Jones, side A.; Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B; Kath Walker, interview with Hazel de Berg, side B.

[97] Milne wrote: 'There is nothing stopping the demolition of the house in which Oodgeroo in Judith Wright's own words, "pinned a poem to the wall in Nellie's memory and that of her poor, poor country, bordering the text with eucalypt twigs and leaves that look like tears falling,"' Christine Milne to Malcolm Turnbull, 14th September 2007, as archived on 'How do we treat cultural treasures? Judith Wright's home must be protected', The Greens website, < http://christine-milne.greensmps.org.au/content/media-release/how-do-we-treat-cultural-treasures-judith-wrights-home-must-be-protected>, viewed 8 November 2011. She quoted from Wright, 'From the Ridge to the River', p. 27. This visit and its importance to Wright are further discussed below.

[98] Heather Radi, 'Street, Jessie Mary Grey (1889–1970)' [2002], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/street-jessie-mary-grey-11789/text21089>, viewed 6 November 2011.

[99] The same actress played Dame Mary Gilmore, who appeared briefly supporting Walker in her poetic work, Sam Watson, *Oodgeroo - bloodline to country*, La Boite Theatre Company at the Roundhouse Theatre, Brisbane, 30 June - 11 July 2009.

[100] Sam Watson, interview with ourbrisbane, 'From Aunty Kath to Oodgeroo', Brisbane City Council <http://www.ourbrisbane.com/whats-on/performing-arts/from-aunty-kath-to-oodgeroo>, viewed 16 June 2009. See also Sam Watson, interview with Florence Spurling, 'One Dreaming Stilled', Radio National *Encounters* program, broadcast 14th March 2010, accessed via Radio National website, <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/encounter/one-dreaming-stilled/2976770>, downloaded 2 April 2012. In this interview, Watson describes Denis Walker's Black Panthers-influenced approach as a 'pure political spearhead' aimed straight at the centres of power.

Kath, who he described in an interview about the play as 'the first great national champion of reconciliation.'[101] Playing out the tensions between the violent and non-violent approaches as they presented themselves to Watson as a young activist, *Oodgeroo – bloodline to country* perhaps reflects in some degree his impressions of Walker's friendship with Wright at that time. The two friends weren't seen to sweat together, sleep rough or drink at the pub together, or face police cordons side by side. As Denis and others hit the streets to protest the Springboks tour in July-August 1971, Walker, Wright and Pastor Don Brady dined provocatively close to the team in the hotel restaurant where Walker had also booked in to stay, asserting a black presence through non-violent direct action.[102] The two friends' stroll through Walker's country in the film *Shadow Sister* was tame compared to the bond-forming work of anthropologists and their informants on remote country in Cape York that Peter Sutton recalls.[103] While they were certainly bound together in the kind of solidarity that Sutton remembers being produced by the petty but always menacing surveillance of the Bjelke-Peterson regime, that aspect of their bond was left aside as they conveyed the more cerebral aspects of their friendship to the public.[104]

With each supporting the other's story of self

Walker's return to Stradbroke Island was a move back to the landscape of her childhood, and back to her country as a Noonuccal woman. It was about land, as the movement began to turn its attention to land rights.[105] It was about culture; a place where she would act on her growing realisation, as part of the Aboriginal rights movement, that culture was as important for the future of Aboriginal people as politics was.[106] She immersed herself in the rhythms of the island once more, recalling lessons about the seasons that 'the Grannies' had taught her as a child, and adding to them with her own experiences.[107] She wanted to learn more about the history of her people, and in 1974 recorded a long interview with Paul Tripcony, a keen local historian and member of the Nughie community.[108] It was here that

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[101] Karen Fletcher, 'Sam Watson: a life-long fighter against racism', *Green Left Weekly*, 19th September 2001, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/2001/465/25170>, viewed 16 June 2009; Sam Watson, interview with Christopher Piggot-McKellar, SBS Radio, 3rd July 2009, <http://www20.sbs.com.au/podcasting/index.php?action=feeddetails&feedid=65&id=36677> downloaded 1 February 2010.

[102] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side A; Veronica Brady, *South of my days: a biography of Judith Wright* (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1998), pp. 309-10.

[103] Peter Sutton, 'After Consensus', *Griffith Review* 21 (Spring 2008), pp. 204-5.

[104] Sutton, 'After Consensus', pp. 202-3.

[105] Conversation with Valerie Cooms, 17th November 2009.

[106] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 2.

[107] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 1; Kath Walker, interview with Jill Lennon, 'The Greening Years' part 4, ABC Radio, broadcast 15th April 1982.

[108] 'Kath Walker talks to Paul Tripcony at Stradbroke Island', audio tape held in Fryer Library (University of Queensland), c1973.

Kath Walker began to find herself as Oodgeroo. She attributed the idea to a conversation with Pastor Don Brady, as they waited together ahead of a mourning ceremony to mark Captain Cook's bicentenary. He suggested that 'if we had our own way of life ... the tribal elders would have called you Oodgeroo, because you couldn't do it without your sister, the paperbark tree', 'Oodgeroo' in the Noonuccal language.[109] This was a way of connecting Aboriginal storytelling with the imported art of writing, a crucial point of reflection for Indigenous writers to the present.[110] In her story 'Oodgeroo', published in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in 1972, she created a figure of cultural renewal, who links the past and present, the old and new Dreamtimes, through her work.[111] She later said that she was writing about herself, though it took others some time to understand that.[112]

4.1 Paperbark tree leaning over Brown Lake, North Stradbroke Island. Sam Watson recalls that this tree was special to Oodgeroo, and that it featured in Kathie Cochrane's biography about her [Conversation with Sam Watson, 23rd October 2009].

Wright travelled alongside Walker as she began to inhabit this new story of self. She understood right away that 'Oodgeroo' was Walker herself – in 'Two Dreamtimes' she thanked Walker for her 'dreamtime stories of joy and grief/ written on paperbark'. Her understanding perhaps confirmed for Walker that white Australians might be able to

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[109] Anna Rutherford, *Aboriginal culture today* (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1988), p. 20. See also Kath Walker, interview with Hazel de Berg, side B.

[110] See for example, Jack Davis, Stephen Muecke, Mudrooroo Narogin and Adam Shoemaker, *Paperbark: a collection of Black Australian Writings* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1990), pp. 3-4.

[111] Jennifer Jones finds that the Dreamtime and the present were even more thoroughly merged in the manuscript of the story 'Oodgeroo' prior to the editing and publication process. Jennifer Jones, *Black Writers White Editors: episodes of collaboration and compromise in Australian publishing history* (Sydney: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009), pp. 9-11.

[112] Rutherford, *Aboriginal culture today*, p. 20.

appreciate the significance of this identification on poetic and symbolic levels. Walker's home and her vision for an education centre at Moongalba were central to her new self-understanding. Wright had been closely involved in Kath and Denis Walker's proposal for an Aboriginal education and cultural centre, 'Burnong Mumba', a Brisbane Tribal Council initiative.[113] When Walker decided to pursue some of Burnong Mumba's aims under her own steam, Wright was behind her, providing all-important funding in the early stages, and directing royalties and other spare monies to the project across the following twenty years.[114] She declared her commitment to Moongalba in support of a submission to the Federal Government made by Walker and Schwenke in 1979,[115] and called attention to Walker's battle to gain title to the land as an issue of land rights.[116] She was no uncritical devotee, however, writing to Walker in 1974, rigorous and unsentimental in pursuit of resources for the project:

> As I see it, the chief troubles in the way are, first the Department's financial problems, second the fact that the land is owned by the State ... third the question of how much the Project can actually contribute to Aboriginal art and culture ... could you tell me what plans you have for the next few years?[117]

Some of the most memorable images of Walker as she became 'earth-mother, environmentalist and elder' emerged from her film collaboration with Frank Heimans, *Shadow Sister: a film biography of Australian Aboriginal poet Kath Walker*.[118] *Shadow Sister* shows Walker living at Moongalba, feeding the birds, harvesting and eating eggs, fruits and shellfish, and talking to the trees. Walker's voiceover tells us that this is a historical place, a place where her people sat down. Living here, she is learning to communicate with the birds

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[113] She had agreed to be a 'consultant' to the project, and travelled around Brisbane's hinterland with Walker looking for suitable sites for the centre, Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 39, Oodgeroo to Secretary, Specialist Committee, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Affairs, 30th December 1969; Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Denis Walker to Wright, 20th March 1970, 2nd September 1970; Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, 17th May 1992.

[114] Wright donated $5000 in February 1974. Walker was clear that she did not see Moongalba as the realisation of the Burnong project, which was intended to operate on a much more ambitious scale. As she told Julianne Schwenke in 1978, 'maybe the Burnong is not for our generation, but for a future generation', Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 2nd March 1974; Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 6, side B.

[115] Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, pp. 95-8.

[116] Wright kept up a persistent campaign to persuade conservation bodies to recognise the importance of land rights, at least partly inspired by Walker's efforts at Moongalba. Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 469, clipping from *Wildlife News* 12, no. 7 (February 1992), 'The gospel for those who demand a radical change in national parks status is Judith Wright McKinney's essay "Wilderness and Wasteland"'; Clark and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Wilderness Society, 11th June 1991, pp. 475-6.

[117] Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 39, Wright to Walker 29th June 1974.

[118] This epithet for Walker's presence across the twenty years from 1970 is taken from Philip Morrissey, 'Shadow sister', *Australian Book Review* 166 (1994), pp. 13-14.

and animals in 'the old way, the Aboriginal way'.[119] She shows a group of white school girls her collection of Indigenous artefacts from around the world, responding to their questions ('Are you related to Truganini?'), and telling them how it was – that William Lanne was decapitated after death in the name of 'Christian science' (the camera flicks over the shocked face of a teacher). She takes a group of Aboriginal kids and teenagers from the city out to the beach, racing a little boy across the sand, and playing in the waves. As they make paperbark collages, Walker's voiceover tells us how city kids miss out on being Aboriginal, and how even a short visit to Moongalba can restore their pride in themselves.[120]

Walker's self-presentation in the film emerged partly from her already well-known friendship with Wright. Its title, *Shadow Sister*, situated the film within the friendship, and the film features a visit from Wright. As the two women walk through the Stradbroke Island forest, Oodgeroo's voiceover tells the story of the friendship and reads from 'Two Dreamtimes' and 'Sister Poet'. In the evening a Kup Mari feast (where the food is cooked in Islander fashion, in an earth oven) is held in Judith's honour, and as the fire illuminates a group of dancers decorated with body paint and bunches of fresh eucalypt leaves, the camera returns several times to Judith's face as she watches the dancers.[121]

The film was at least part way to being an autobiography. Heimans approached Walker as a long-time admirer of her poetry. He had featured two of her poems in a previous film, *What have you done with my country?*, and wanted to include Walker in his planned series 'Woman Unique'. He envisaged a film made on the usual documentary model at that time – footage of the subject interpreted for the viewer by a 'voice of god' narrator.[122] But Walker wanted to speak for herself.[123] 'I was officially the director', Heimans explained to me, but 'Kath took over'. One of his most important interventions was to ensure that Wright appeared in the film.[124] Wright herself considered the film to be very much Heimans' and Walker's project. Writing to Barbara Blackman, she described her involvement: 'have been up to Stradbroke Island recently to lend my countenance to a film Frank Heimans is doing about Kath Walker and her life'.[125] Walker herself had not wanted to impinge upon Wright's time and had written in a letter filled with other news 'Frank Heimans is doing a film of me.

[119] Heimans, *Shadow sister*.

[120] Heimans, *Shadow sister*.

[121] Heimans, *Shadow sister*.

[122] Conversation with Frank and Josette Heimans, 22nd October 2010.

[123] She did not want a script written at all, and was very proud of the way in which she had managed to create a natural and spontaneous voiceover for the film, Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 7, side B.

[124] Heimans edited the film down from fifteen hours of footage which is now held by the National Film and Sound Archive, Conversation with Frank and Josette Heimans, 22nd October 2010.

[125] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Barbara Blackman, 23rd September 1976, p. 294.

He wants to involve you too. Say no if you don't want to be involved. I know how busy you are'.[126] Heimans, on the other hand, was determined to feature Wright in the film. Though he hoped she would come to Moongalba, he was willing to transfer his film crew to Canberra to interview her if that were necessary.[127]

4.2 Kath Walker and Judith Wright stroll along the edge of one of North Stradbroke Island's lakes together, picking up rubbish as they go [Still from Frank Heimans, *Shadow sister* (1977)].

When Walker talked about her friendship with Wright on her first meeting with Heimans and script-writer Jenny Nussinov in May 1976, the film-makers immediately decided that this friendship should be part of the film, and adopted 'Shadow Sister' for its title.[128] Heimans and Nussinov perhaps understood more than the friends themselves the impact of showing the pre-eminent, but reserved and decidedly un-theatrical Wright walking alongside their subject in this sixteen millimetre biography at a time when Aboriginal life and culture (especially outside the desert) remained very marginal in popular understandings of Australianness. In her 'treatment' of the film sent to the Australian Council for the Arts as part of an application for funding, Nussinov described the film's title as 'self-explanatory in defining the depths of feeling this foremost contemporary Australian poetess has for her

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[126] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 22nd July 1976. See also Walker to Wright, 18th August 1976, same location.

[127] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Heimans to Wright, 20th August 1976. It is probable that Heimans subsidised Wright's trip to Stradbroke Island to appear in the film, she had apparently declined his initial invitation, 'would be delighted to be in it but I am too tied down here (and a bit too tight moneywise) to come to Stradbroke.' Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 39, Wright to Walker, 1st August 1976.

[128] Conversation with Frank and Josette Heimans, 22nd October 2010.

black counterpart'. In the film they planned to 'catch the essence of [this] very important and unusual literary friendship'.[129]

Initially, no television station would buy the film, despite enthusiastic reviews following its preview screening. Heimans was told that the film would not 'rate' as people were not interested in Aborigines. While he continued to work on the broadcasters, he and Walker organised showings to school groups as an alternative way of distributing the film. It was shown to about fifteen thousand school students in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane in the latter months of 1977.[130] Walker introduced the screenings at the Sydney Opera House and elsewhere in person, reading a selection of her own and Wright's poems before responding to questions from the audience.[131]

Some viewers would have been introduced to Walker's work at Moongalba by an article Wright had written for the *National Times* in 1976, in which she presented Moongalba as an 'experiment' in '"alternative living" ... perhaps the most adventurous of them all'. She drew attention to the lack of government support for the project and concluded that although it needed money to reach its full potential, it was already 'a vital place, warm, welcoming and giving refuge as well as education', offering Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children more than 'white officialdom could ever give or conceive of giving'.[132] Wright's thoughtful, warm endorsement of Moongalba in the article was quite different from the ways in which her friendship with Walker continued to be harnessed to the film following its release. Reviews reminded readers of the origin of the film's title in Wright's 'Two Dreamtimes' and emphasised the gentleness of the film – it wasn't the polemic that the public might expect from Walker, but a film in which 'black and white entwine', both through Walker's friendship with Wright, and the open welcome to white children at Moongalba.[133] As Walker presented her new self to the world through the film, she did so not under the title 'Oodgeroo', which was a name she only officially adopted in 1987, but as 'shadow sister'. Standing outside this poem, un-coupled from Wright's sincere musings about the shadow, this epithet for Walker did perhaps place her in the position of Indigenous 'other' in a way that Wright had not foreseen. A contributor to a collection of poetry in honour of Walker perceptively depicted

[129] Jenny Nussinov, 'Exploratory points for the film "Shadow Sister"', May 1976, from the collection of Frank Heimans.

[130] Conversation with Frank and Josette Heimans, 22nd October 2010. Walker's papers at the Fryer Library contain the residue of her promotion of the film to schools, and the bookings she organised at University of Queensland's Schonell Theatre and elsewhere, Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 35.

[131] Conversation with Frank and Josette Heimans, 22nd October 2010; Carol Kitching, 'Shadow Sister', newsclipping in Frank Heimans' collection.

[132] Judith Wright, 'Creating a New Dreamtime', *The National Times*, 14-19th June 1976, pp. 46-49.

[133] Newsclippings in Frank Heimans' collection: Theo van Leeuwen, 'Shadow Sister', *Education*, 20th July 1977; Helen Frizell, 'Subtle, charming'; and Carol Kitching, 'Shadow Sister'.

her emergence as Oodgeroo in the classroom as a gain in strength, and a prompt to foreground her political significance:

> named shadow sister by our noblest
> your name today casts stronger tones
> while students argue how to say Noonuccal
> and teachers try to reconstruct the past
> "I met her in the 60s stirring cairns"
> "who cares?"
> "shut up, Jay"
> "go on miss"'[134]

It was perhaps partly Wright's endorsement of her friend's public persona and her teaching project which made it possible for others to accept Walker's transformation from a civil rights activist in twin-set and pearls, to a kaftan-wearing mother-figure who wanted to educate the world's children to dismantle racism and embrace equality and difference. Walker continued to send out mixed messages to white Australians; she still spouted the fire she had become so famous for, and alienated her audiences at times. Writing to Wright in 1989 of her address at Griffith University, 'hope you approved ... a lot of people walked out on it. I hit some sore spots which is good because I gave them something to think about.'[135] Her public friendship with Wright was one of the things that continued to reassure many non-Indigenous Australians that Walker was acceptable to the audience she most wished to embrace – Australian children, and necessarily their parents and teachers – as well as accepting.[136] *Shadow Sister* was finally broadcast nationally by Channel Seven in a prime-time evening slot from May 1980.[137] Not only Walker, but Wright too received appreciative letters, and although Wright's appearance in the film constitutes a fraction of its content, it has been remembered at times as a portrait of her friendship with Walker.[138]

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[134] Julianne Sweeny, 'Class Shadows' in Janelle Evans ed., *Moongalba*, p. 24.

[135] At Griffith University and elsewhere, she was perhaps preaching to the converted, and lost audience members' goodwill at times by refusing to give them credit for their existing knowledge and support, Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 471, Walker to Wright, 13th September 1989.

[136] Walker wrote in a postcard to Wright from Moongalba, 'I'll concentrate on lecturing children. After all they haven't yet been brainwashed to the extent of their adults who are beyond help in view of being so mentally constipated', Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 10th February 1977. See also Kath Walker, interview with Hazel de Berg, side B.

[137] Steve Moffatt, 'Out of the Shadow!', *TV Times*, 10th May 1980, p. 14.

[138] Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 54, Wright to Walker, undated. Kathie Cochrane, writing her biography of Walker in collaboration with both Walker and Wright, centred her brief account of their friendship on the film, saying 'the two friends came together ... to make a film about Moongalba', suggesting it had been a joint endeavour. Her manuscript refers to the film as *Shadow Sister*, in the singular. But in the published version, the title became 'Shadow Sisters'; one of the editorial staff had apparently 'corrected' the title to encompass both Walker and Wright, helping to perpetuate the idea that the film was inseparable from both women. Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, 'Manuscript of *Oodgeroo* by Kathie Cochrane'; Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 96.

As Jennifer Jones has observed, the two women were engaged in mutual mentorship and patronage, and Walker also provided support for Wright's self-understanding and public endorsement of her projects and ideas.[139] Walker had given considerable thought to the understandings and attitudes of white Australians.[140] She felt that the breakdown of racist thinking was essential for the achievement of equality and, therefore, of Indigenous self-determination. The 'hatred, contempt, discrimination, ignorance and misunderstanding' that perpetuated and was perpetuated by inequality was 'as destructive to [white Australians] as it has been for black Australians'.[141] In an address delivered in Melbourne in October 1973, Walker found that the racism embedded in the constitution prevented Australians from forming a secure and satisfying identity. But she could see 'today, the fifth generation Australian is recognising the need to emerge, to identify and to write. To do this he has to throw out the brutal pattern of the past', and to face up to the untruth of the story of discovery and occupation by the British that has formed the backbone of the national narrative.[142] Though she phrased her tribute in the masculine, Walker's account of the 'fifth generation Australian's' struggle was a distillation of her friend's great effort to recognise her inheritance and to forge a new belonging that acknowledged Aboriginal ownership of the land. Ahead of her poetic response to Wright's 'Two Dreamtimes', this was a public acknowledgment of the significance of Wright's moral effort and its worth in the struggle for mutual respect.

Walker's acknowledgment and approval was of utmost importance to Wright. When a new edition of Wright's *The Day the Mountains Played*, a children's book telling a version of an Aboriginal creation story, was published in 1975, Wright felt anxious about its reception fifteen years after its first publication. She was pleased and relieved to have Walker speak at the launch. Wright wrote, 'I felt much cheered to have you there ... I've always worried a bit about whether you people mightn't resent what could look like a sort of takeover ... and I'm specially glad you don't feel it's too far off the work of helping white kids to appreciate black ones.'[143]

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[139] Jones, 'Why weren't we listening?', pp. 44-49.

[140] She attributed at least some of the success of her own campaigning and leadership to this effort, feeling that the Brisbane Tribal Council leadership was not so successful following her departure because they had not realised the significance of understanding the white Australian mentality, Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 6, side B.

[141] Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 30, 'White Racism and White Violence', speech delivered June 1969.

[142] Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 30, 'Identity: Melbourne Seminar', speech delivered October 1973.

[143] Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 39, Wright to Walker, 20th November 1975. Judith had asked for Walker's approval before going ahead with re-publication of *The Day the Mountains Played*, Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Kathleen McArthur, 29th May 1988, p. 435.

In 'Two Dreamtimes' Wright reflected on a sense of belonging to the land, which was slipping from her grasp, 'I riding the cleared hills,/ plucking blue leaves for their eucalypt scent,/ hearing the call of the plover,/ in a land I thought was mine for life.' As part of the process of facing her inheritance, Wright revised her family story from the largely personal exploration of family diaries she had presented in *The Generations of Men* (1945) – in which she could only 'hint' at the history beyond her own grandparents' perspectives – to a history exploring her family's implication in the dispossession of the Wadja people and degradation of the environment.[144] The conclusion to *The Cry for the Dead*, published in 1981, was almost unremittingly pessimistic: as the land is choked by prickly pear and the waterways fill with silt, and all the people with connections to this country vanish – both the Wadja people and Albert and May Wright's descendants.[145] Part of Wright, at least, felt she could say nothing right as one 'born of the conquerors'. She began an interview with *Meanjin's* Jim Davidson in 1982 joking about the rather proper voice that was bound to represent her on the recording. She later told him that she felt like she was in the 'wrong camp', but rejected the notion that she could become Aboriginal via the kind of 'cultural convergence' her fellow poet Les Murray seemed to espouse. The only hope was reincarnation – 'next time' she quipped, 'I propose to be born something rather less British'.[146]

In the face of her own determinism, Wright embraced a new story in which she hoped to be part of a great wave of change in consciousness and in the shape of the nation. Dedicating much of her time and energy to the Aboriginal Treaty Committee in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Wright, along with Nugget Coombs, Kevin Gilbert and others sought a constitutional instrument that could hold governments to their responsibilities to Indigenous Australians.[147] She thought of her friendship with Walker as one of the main steps on her path to the Treaty Committee, as an important part of her introduction to Aboriginal affairs and advocacy, and to the reality of Aboriginal life in Queensland.[148] As Walker urged white

[144] When Jim Davidson asked Wright to talk about her revision of her family story soon after *Cry for the Dead* was published, she rejected his suggestion that this rewriting process was the result of an 'awakening'. Instead, she explained, she had only one year to write *Generations of Men* drawing on family diaries, at a time when there was very little literature on Aboriginal dispossession with which she could put this story into context. She could see some of the wider implications of the story for Aboriginal people as it emerged from the diaries, but could only gesture towards them. If she had been awakened in some way, it was to be able to see Aboriginal people as active agents in history, whereas she felt her first history conveyed their involvement as passive. Judith Wright, interview with Jim Davidson, Tape 1, side A.

[145] Judith Wright, *The Cry for The Dead* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 268-80.

[146] Judith Wright, interview with Jim Davidson, Tape 1, side A.

[147] Judith Wright, *We Call for a Treaty* (Sydney: Collins, 1985), p. xv.

[148] Wright, '"You can't play with her. She's black"', p. 10.

Australians to turn away from guilt and towards action, speaking in Tasmania in 1982, it was the Treaty Committee she pointed to as a worthy direction for their efforts.[149]

Wright maintained a standing apology to Aboriginal Australians partly through her stance as a displaced person, dispossessed of her youth's attachment to the land by her acknowledgement of Aboriginal dispossession. As Peter Read mused in 2000, 'perhaps she now feels embarrassed at the intensity of her own sense of belonging in the New England tableland, even though thousands of Australians like me have learned to love her verse, and through it, her blood's country'.[150] Yet she continued to care, and to write about the land. As well as recognising the value of Wright's great and painful 'moral effort', and the value of her activism, Walker endorsed Wright's passion for the land and her authority to speak about it. In her introduction to *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, aimed at a young readership, Walker depicted Wright as a guardian of Tambourine Mountain, protecting it 'and its creatures from the greedy speculators who threaten to ... dig it up and destroy it.'[151] Walker is not entirely comfortable on the mountain because of its resident bunyip, but Wright is thoroughly at home there, and the birds and animals in her garden are best known by herself: the resident bower bird appears 'disdainful' to Walker at first but Wright knows she is 'really timid and shy'.[152]

'Two Dreamtimes', even in its grieving, asserts that Wright continued to have feelings of belonging too, and Walker acknowledged these. She respected Wright's knowledge about the land, and made it clear that it was valued at Moongalba. She invited Wright to be a trustee and hoped that she would speak to visitors about 'conservation and the balance of flora and fauna'.[153] In *Shadow Sister* Walker meets Wright at the wharf with a spray of orchids 'grown especially for you'. Wright thinks she can identify them, with their Latin name. As the two women walk through the bush, Walker points out a lemon tree, admiring her ancestors' foresight in planting seeds for those who would come after them, and Wright replies that her people did this too.[154] As she built her vision at Moongalba, Walker at times claimed the terrain of conservation for Aboriginal people, and suggested that a connection to and sympathy with the land were essentially Aboriginal, even at the expense of Aboriginal self-definition. Speaking with Jim Davidson in 1977, she did not see a place for Aboriginal people who adopted a city life and white ways, but she did maintain that there would be a

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[149] Kath Walker, 'A Stranger in Tasmania' in Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 198.

[150] Peter Read, *Belonging* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000), p. 14.

[151] Kath Walker, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972), preface.

[152] Walker, *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, preface.

[153] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 64, Folder 470, Walker to Wright, 3rd July and 10th July 1973.

[154] Heimans, *Shadow Sister*.

place for white people who were willing to accept the Aboriginal way.[155] There was clearly always a place for Wright, and as Walker depicted herself in her own country through *Stradbroke Dreamtime* and *Shadow Sister*, she cleared spaces for Wright to set down roots, and be a teacher and fighter for the land in her own fashion.

Wright moved south in 1975, to 'The Edge' near Braidwood, to escape Joh Bielke Petersen's Queensland and to return from the tropics to a 'high, lean country' like the New England of her youth. She wanted to be closer to her daughter Meredith when she visited Canberra from Japan, and to be closer to Nugget Coombs.[156] With Solrun Hoaas in 1978, Wright made a film biography centred on her relationship with the land at 'The Edge'. As a self-portrait, it almost echoes *Shadow Sister*. Wright strolls through the eucalypt forest, fingering seedpods and the marks on the trunks of scribbly gums, as her voiceover reads poems that bring the landscape to life. Where Walker's film was selectively populated with friends and visitors, though, Wright's is inhabited only by herself (with occasional glimpses of the film maker). She shows herself living lightly on the land, with the bush coming right up to her energy-efficient house, where she writes and enjoys living amongst this ecology, topography, its weather.[157] It was perhaps partly Walker's ongoing support that enabled Wright to present herself in this way, as an Australian 'at home' in the bush, bound to the land through delight and awe at its intricacy, and a hope that humanity and nature might find a new balance through a commitment to sustainable living.

Later, Wright added Walker to this landscape. In her essay 'From the Ridge to the River', published in 1990, Wright writes a path through a landscape full of history, crossing the paths of Aboriginal people travelling from the high country to the coast, an old convict road and an Irish convict poet, the shafts dug and left by gold miners. While she celebrates the escape of this country from grazing, she can see the effects of other industries in the wood-chipping operations on adjacent ranges and the never-built Welcome Reef Dam, which seemed inevitable to her at the time.[158] When she reaches Little River, it is the absence of Aboriginal presence that speaks loudest to her. She can see fresh water mussels in the sand, and recalls the story of Nellie, the 'last of the Braidwood people', who, having lost her husband and daughter to tuberculosis, is said to have returned to the nourishing river in her final days.[159] The absent presence of Nellie and her people is the only positive human

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[155] Davidson, 'Interview - Kath Walker', pp. 431-5. See also Roberta Sykes, *Murawina: Australian women of high achievement* (Sydney: Doubleday, 1993), pp. 154-5.

[156] Capp, 'In the Garden', pp. 42-9.

[157] Solrun Hoaas, *At 'Edge' with Judith Wright* (Sydney: Sync-or-Swim Documentaries, 1981).

[158] Judith Wright, 'From the Ridge to the River' in R. McDonald ed., *Gone Bush* (Sydney: Bantam Books, 1990), pp. 15-21.

[159] Wright, 'From the Ridge to the River', p. 26.

presence in the landscape for Wright; the other humans there have abused and contaminated the land, and threaten its plants and animals.[160] But as she closes, she recalls a visit from Walker. After hearing Nellie's story from Wright, and visiting Nellie's 'haunts' with her friend, Walker honoured Nellie's memory with a poem, decorating it with eucalypt twigs and leaves 'that look like tears falling' where she pinned it to Wright's kitchen wall.[161] While Walker could not resolve the injustice of the history of Wright's place, she is a companion in mourning who can soothe Wright's potentially corrosive sense of culpability and share a peaceful sadness. With Walker's support, Wright even allowed herself the hope that the land might be 'a place where we [white Australians] find some kind of rest, joy, and even forgiveness.'[162]

Wright and Walker were both fiercely independent thinkers, preoccupied each with her own projects, always preserving the right to define themselves, and who were not necessarily forthcoming about their relationships. Even as *Shadow Sister* was in the making in the mid-1970s, Wright did not necessarily mention her friendship with Walker when interviewed about her life, work and concerns. Talking to Hazel de Berg in 1976 (interviewed on the same day as Walker), she spoke about her childhood and her love of country, Jack and his philosophical work, her involvement in the conservation movement and her pessimistic-realism about the state of the world, but not Walker.[163] A few years later, having given Jim Davidson an account of her ideas about the more holistic and less materialistic way in which Aboriginal people think about the world and its affinities with poetry, as if in defence of her thesis, Wright added 'I've argued all this out with Kath Walker', a reference which perhaps lay behind many of her statements on related matters.[164] Walker liked to define herself as a loner, even as a child surrounded by siblings, and as someone who had difficulty making friends. When asked in the early eighties 'did you remain a loner through your school days?', Walker replied, 'all my life I've been a loner.'[165] In her extended and relaxed interview with would-be biographer, Julianne Schwenke in 1978, it was Schwenke who prodded Walker to talk about her friendship with Wright. She asked first about the important influences in Walker's life in the early 1970s, then about her friendships with Wright and Coombs (to which Walker chose to respond first and at greater length on the matter of Coombs), and pursued the matter of whether Walker had written one of her books while staying with

[160] Wright, 'From the Ridge to the River', pp. 19, 20, 25-6.

[161] Wright, 'From the Ridge to the River', p. 27.

[162] Wright, 'The Broken Links' (1991), quoted in Read, *Belonging*, p. 14.

[163] Judith Wright, interview with Hazel de Berg, Hazel de Berg Collection, National Library of Australia, DeB924, 10th March 1976.

[164] Judith Wright, interview with Jim Davidson, Tape 1, side A.

[165] Kath Walker, interview with Jill Lennon.

Wright. Schwenke perhaps felt, as Heimans seemed to, that (unlike Walker herself) Walker's story was not ready to walk in the world alone. Walker gave an affectionate account of the visit, but remained perhaps less forthcoming in characterising the friendship than a prospective biographer would have liked.[166] As Wright put it in 'Two Dreamtimes', 'Time that we shared for a little while,/ telling sad tales of women/ (black or white at a different price)/ meant much and little to us.'[167]

The two women did not promote their sisterhood at every opportunity, but were selective and purposeful. Wright refused to appear in the 'This is Your Life' episode featuring Walker in 1980. She did not like the program, and had objected to its treatment of other friends. She turned down the expenses-paid telegram sent to her by 'that rather awful TV lot' and sent her own, independently-funded telegram to be read out on the show instead.[168] In 1992 Walker and Wright rejected overtures to appear in a television documentary titled 'Three Women' alongside Elizabeth Riddell. It proposed to explore the different ways in which the three Australian women poets had negotiated the events of the twentieth century. On top of the would-be director's rather cavalier attitude about Wright's deafness, and underhand approach to recruiting the two friends,[169] Walker and Wright could not see that anything constructive would emerge from the project; they felt the concept was flawed and could not see much in common with Riddell. To end the matter, Wright wrote a stinging letter, saying 'I can't spare the time, quite frankly, for anything that doesn't look in any way useful – indeed urgent – for the cause of Aboriginal rights, and this one seems at best irrelevant.'[170] Their friendship was no generic sisterhood based simply in the category 'woman' or the vagaries of the century. It was a learning friendship in which both women had developed trust, and created a space for communication about the history and present realities of Aboriginal and settler-Australian relations. They perhaps felt at times that they had outgrown the need to represent their friendship publicly, or that other things were more urgent – but it was something that each turned back to in the early nineties. The friends were reaching a more reflective phase of life at the same time as public conversations about reconciliation got underway. The friendship seemed emblematic to many of those engaged

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[166] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B.

[167] Wright, 'Two Dreamtimes', *A Human Pattern*, p. 168.

[168] Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 54, Wright to Walker, 2nd March 1980. She wrote 'As for the THIS IS YOUR LIFE people, they are probably coining money out of you; its not an outfit I like I'm afraid; but if it does anything to help Aborigines or Moongalba it will be worth while no doubt,' Wright to Walker, 21st April 1980, same location.

[169] Jennifer Ainge wrote to Judith: 'Given the problems of your deafness we would obviously do as the Bookshow did and fake it. I know you have reservations about this way of doing things but I saw the program and it did work.' Papers of Judith Wright, Box 73, Folder 529, Ainge to Wright, 6th October 1992, Wright to Ainge, 10th and 11th October 1992, Wright to Walker, 17th October 1992; Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane 20th October 1992, Cochrane to Wright 23rd October 1992.

[170] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 73, Folder 529, Wright to Ainge, 27th October 1992.

in the promotion of reconciliation, and the symbols of the friendship developed in the 1970s, emerging from their ideas about psychology and race relations, resonated with the reconciliation discourse.

Walker recalled the story about recognising herself in Wright's poem 'Canefields Country' in her last major public address, at the Opera House in 1993,[171] and had read 'Two Dreamtimes' on Radio National in 1991. She told Caroline Jones and her listeners that she had needed to practise for several years in private before she could read the poem aloud without crying, it filled her with such compassion for 'the whites'.[172] In 1970, Walker had announced to the national press that she had 'had' Australia and was leaving for Asia where she could just be herself – she was 'tired of her own personal fight to get and retain dignity'.[173] It was probably a battle that she fought many times over the next twenty years, like Charles Perkins who felt even near the end of his life that 'Aborigines still had no dignity. Each morning was a new struggle, another re-identification. "You have to prove yourself every hour of the day."'[174] But Walker didn't have to harry Wright. She didn't have to protest her dispossession or her survival – Wright recognised both, and accepted as far as she could understand it, Walker's identity as a Noonuccal woman. Wright's refusal to speak *for* Aboriginal people, and deference when she was given opportunity to speak about them, her closely-held feeling that she was implicated in their dispossession, and her constantly proffered apology allowed Walker the power of generosity, the power to forgive. Wright, said Walker on the radio, was in a flap about being referred to as 'the white Kath Walker', whereas she was delighted for this to be said.[175]

To listen, to speak

Walker did not think highly of 'reconciliation' as envisaged by the Australian Government, and watching her interview on SBS television in September 1991 confirmed Wright in her view that it was 'a complete con', which demanded far greater sacrifices from Aboriginal people than from other Australians. As Walker had come to understand the 1967 Referendum over the following decade, reconciliation was likely to make white people feel good about themselves without resulting in real change.[176] Wright quickly made her own views known in public too, stating at the launch of her book *Born of the Conquerors* same

[171] Walker, 'Writers of Australia, "I dips me lid" in Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, pp. 218-9.

[172] Oodgeroo Nunukul, interview with Caroline Jones, side B.

[173] *The Australian*, 27th November 1970, viewed in Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 36.

[174] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p. 341.

[175] Oodgeroo Nunukul, interview with Caroline Jones, side B.

[176] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 534, Wright to Walker, 4th September 1991; Kath Walker, interview with Hazel de Berg, side B.

month, 'if I was an Aboriginal person I would be saying JUSTICE BEFORE RECONCILIATION.' She wrote to Walker of the proposed Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 'I wouldn't be on it for millions'.[177] With Walker's death in 1993, those closest to her sent out a message of reconciliation to the world without qualification. Denis Walker, speaking at her funeral, was quoted as saying that her legacy was about 'reconciliation and healing',[178] and Oodgeroo's eldest grandson, Raymond, that 'she wanted us all to live in paradise together ... and live with each other so the colour of our skin was no different [in significance] to the colour of one's eyes.'[179] Although Wright could see the limits of the reconciliation discourse, she stood beneath its banner, her last public appearance being at a reconciliation march in Canberra in May 2000.[180]

Wright's attitude as a friend to Walker has been understood as a model for non-Indigenous Australians engaged in the reconciliation endeavour. Her ability to listen profoundly was a particularly powerful part of this model. In 'Two Dreamtimes' she sits at the kitchen table through the night listening to Walker's stories of dispossession, of the 'dying children,/the blank-eyed taken women,/the sullen looks of the men who sold them/ for rum to forget the selling.' She also listens to Walker's search for the lost Dreamings of her people, forgotten, yet still strongly felt.[181] Jennifer Jones describes their performance of sisterhood as yielding 'a much needed positive model of cross-cultural encounter, 'a legacy of active listening and learning, a way of living together in the contact zone'.[182] Jones inverts Henry Reynolds' question 'why weren't we told?' to ask 'why weren't we listening?' – understanding a pervasive 'white deafness' as the obstacle to constructive change in Aboriginal-non-Indigenous relations through the latter part of the twentieth century. She holds up Wright's friendship with Walker as a space where real listening happened, for Wright listened deeply and openly – not limiting her listening to a selective hearing which suited a version of

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[177] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 534, Wright to Walker, 4th September 1991.

[178] Fiona Hamilton 'Tributes flow for "grand old lady"', newsclipping in Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533.

[179] 'Farewell: May her Dreaming be powerful', *Courier Mail*, 21st September 1993. Mudrooroo, on the other hand, speaking at the Warana Writer's Festival in Walker's honour protested that it is white people who need to reconcile with Aboriginal people, not the other way around – Aboriginal people should not sit on reconciliation panels, he said, 'Minjerriba tribute [sound recording]: Warana Writers' Week', 30th September 1993, Stradbroke Secondary School, Stradbroke Island, held in Fryer Library (University of Queensland).

[180] *The Canberra Times*, 29th May 2000, p. 6; Jackie Huggins, Judith Wright Address, Native Title Representatives Bodies Legal Conference, Townsville, 28-30th August 2001. Although she was a 'patron of Reconciliation in the ACT', Wright remained ambivalent about reconciliation. She planned to attend a 'sea of hands' event in late 1997 even if she had to do so in a pushchair, writing with a great sense of anticipation: 'there is I think a change of heart coming'. Yet a month earlier, she had questioned the basic principle of reconciliation, writing: 'who is being reconciled and to what? ... If Indigenous people know as they do now what crooks we all are why did they agree to being reconciled with us?', Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Mary McMahon and Tim Coombs, 20th November 1997, and Wright to Rosie Scott, 3rd October 1997, pp. 539, 546.

[181] Wright, 'Two Dreamtimes', *A Human Pattern*, pp. 166-7.

[182] Jones, 'Why weren't we listening?', p. 49.

Aboriginality that would not require her to change, as so many others had.[183] Wright realised that it wasn't simply enough to listen, one had to show that one was ready to hear, and her standing apology, her acknowledgement of history and the inequalities of the present, and her respect for Walker and other Aboriginal people helped to signal that she was listening with a will to understand.

The ethic of listening that Wright expounded in 'Two Dreamtimes' outlived and perhaps outreached even her own capacity to hear. Wright heard deeply what it was that Walker and her people had lost, but was perhaps less able to distinguish clearly what it was that Walker *found* when she returned to Stradbroke Island and turned back to her own education as a Noonuccal woman. Wright gave a seminar at the East-West Centre in Honolulu in 1974 about Aboriginal writing. She did not take her legitimacy as speaker for granted, and once Walker had helped her to overcome her reservations, she consulted with Kevin Gilbert and visited Walker to discuss the seminar in depth.[184] As Walker later told Julianne Schwenke, Wright had 'done her homework'.[185] In Honolulu, though, Wright described Walker's *Stradbroke Dreamtime* as 'lively, funny and gay' and at the same time a dignified portrait of these 'fringe people' living a 'makeshift existence' on the 'edge of an alien civilisation'. The stories were accessible and liked by 'every child who reads [them]'.[186] She had understood far more than this, perhaps, as Walker wrote those same stories alongside her at 'Calanthe'. If she had perceived then that the book was about her friend's search for and renewal of her people's culture and her own role as a learner and teacher of Aboriginal knowledge, it was not something she was able to communicate (or perhaps not something she felt was appropriate for her to communicate) to her audience in Honolulu.

In the same address, Wright questioned the authenticity of Wilf and Olga Reeves' *The Legends of Moonie Jarl*, a book based on Butchulla stories told to the authors by their father when they were children. Writing an appreciative essay about Walker's work almost twenty years later, Wright defended it from this kind of interrogation, saying that such questions were clearly a way of measuring Aboriginal literature against the romanticised desert 'song man', from whom white Australians had expected to hear about Aboriginal culture when her poetry was first published.[187] Here, she mounted a brief defence of Walker's right to make a

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[183] Jones, 'Why weren't we listening?', p. 44.

[184] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B; Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Gilbert, 9th June 1973, pp. 250-1.

[185] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B.

[186] Judith Wright, 'The Voice of the Aboriginals', delivered at the East -West Centre, Conference on Socioliterature, Honolulu, 1974, in Judith Wright, *Because I was invited* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 155-6.

[187] Wright, 'The Poetry', p. 173.

foray into prose, and the legitimacy of combining stories from her own childhood with what she could salvage of her people's 'lost legends'.[188] She did not think of the *Stradbroke Dreamtime* stories as trivial, as Walker's friend and publisher John Collins appeared to (writing that Walker had 'celebrated her return to something approximating normality after the turmoil of the sixties by writing some simple stories'[189]). Wright herself felt keenly the interwoven nature of spiritual and cultural life with the land,[190] and long after her friend's death she continued to puzzle over the meaning of the *Stradbroke Dreamtime* stories. In 2000 she asked herself, 'How did [Walker] see these stories?', and hazarded an answer centred on Walker's commitment to 'restore some of that dream and meaning' that the island and its peoples had been robbed of via dispossession and a western education. But she still struggled to understand or articulate the nature of the tradition Walker was tapping into, and the relationship of its 'authenticity' with its legacy of loss.[191]

She was certainly not alone. Schwenke, straining to hear Walker's Aboriginality in 1978, had struggled to distinguish it. Walker's knowledge of land and Noonuccalness was an embodied one, a 'praxis' more than a theory of Aboriginality and it was this she enacted for the camera as she gathered and ate the fruits of Moongalba in *Shadow Sister*. Food loomed large in her stories of Stradbroke Island; childhood was a 'hunting time', she explained.[192] She told Schwenke about fishing and collecting food under the tutelage of her father, the dugong hunt, and how the meat was divided up amongst the community. But she also explained the ambivalence within the Noonuccal-Nughie community about education of the children: Walker's parents, Ted and Lucy Ruska, had felt it was most important that their children had a good education in the white world, saying of her father 'he wouldn't let us mix, he wouldn't let us talk the language ... threw everything black overboard'.[193] As Schwenke sought clarification – had Walker's parents lost all their knowledge about being Aboriginal except their knowledge of food?[194] – she was partly missing the point. That is what Ted Ruska *did* know, and what he did pass on to his children, and together with 'the Grannies'' teaching of the seasons, this was how Walker learnt about the rhythms of the land and how to be a part of them. When she wanted to demonstrate to the *Noosa Citizen* that she was living a thoroughly Aboriginal life, Walker gave an account of her 'natural' diet.[195] In a survey

[188] Wright, 'The Poetry', p. 174.

[189] Collins, 'A Mate in Publishing', p. 7.

[190] Read, *Belonging*, pp. 38, 46-7.

[191] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 105, Folder 748, Judith Wright, draft autobiography, Chapter 2: 'New Problems and new friends', p. 5.

[192] Kath Walker, interview with Jill Lennon.

[193] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 1; Kath Walker, interview with Jill Lennon.

[194] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 1.

[195] 'Restore Natural Balance', *Noosa Citizen*, 16th September 1981, p. 8.

of Aboriginal autobiographies focussed on childhood, Heather Scutter characterised Walker's stories (among others) as 'fixated on food', like Schwenke somewhat puzzled about its significance in Walker's cultural experience.[196]

It was easy for non-Indigenous Australians, perhaps even Wright, to hear Walker's eating practices as just a series of daily childhood necessities. The importance to Aboriginal communities of south-eastern Australia of harvesting foodstuffs and medicinal plants in a cycle of maintenance and re-inscription of cultural significance on the landscape is only just appearing on the horizon for scholars, planners and legislators, as access to these resources is being further constricted by industry, tourism and environmental degradation.[197] The collaboration of the Aboriginal community of Stradbroke Island with scholars and heritage practitioners in sharing and documenting their knowledge and use of plants and sea-foods continues to contribute to this gradual realisation,[198] and may eventually result in a sort of sharing of country that Peter Read hopes for, if we can overcome the contemporary narrow understanding of land ownership and natural resource economics.[199]

Quandamooka woman and scholar Karen Martin, building on Aboriginal scholarship of the 1990s, is able to offer a very different reading of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in the twenty-first century.[200] Martin develops a theoretical framework for research based in Quandamooka ontology. Inspired by Walker, she writes 'although our worlds are now historically, socially and politically imbued with features of western worldviews and constructs, we never relinquished, nor lost the essence of, our Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being, and this is reflected in our Ways of Doing.'[201] She finds articulated in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* the relational nature of the Noonuccal worldview, recognising and respecting all things – people, plants, animals, the sky and sea – 'for their place in the overall system'.[202] In Martin's

[196] Heather Scutter, 'Writing the Childhood Self: Australian Aboriginal Autobiographies, Memoirs, and Testimonies', *The Lion and the Unicorn* 25, no. 2 (April 2001), p. 236.

[197] See for example Anthony English and Louise Gay, *Living Land, Living Culture: Aboriginal Heritage and Salinity* (Sydney: Department of Environment and Conservation NSW, 2005); Beryl Cruse, Liddy Stewart and Sue Norman, *Mutton Fish: the surviving culture of Aboriginal people and abalone on the south coast of New South Wales* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005).

[198] Anne Ross and members of the Quandamooka Land Council, 'Aboriginal Approaches to Cultural Heritage Management: a Quandamooka case study' in Sean Ulm, Ian Lilley and Anne Ross eds., *Australian Archaeology '95: proceedings of the 1995 Australian Archaeological Association Annual Conference* (St Lucia, Qld.: Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland, 1996), pp. 107-112; Jonathan Prangnell, Anne Ross and Brian Coghill, 'Power relations and community involvement in landscape-based cultural heritage management practice: an Australian case study', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, no. 1 (2010), pp. 140-55.

[199] Read, *Belonging*, p. 223.

[200] Quandamooka is the Noonuccal-Nughie word for the waters surrounding Stradbroke and Moreton Islands, and she uses the term to embrace several groups for whom these waters are central.

[201] Karen Martin – Booran Mirraboopa, 'Ways of knowing, being and doing: A theoretical framework and methods for indigenous and indigenist re-search', *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 76 (2003), pp. 211, 214.

[202] Martin, 'Ways of knowing, being and doing', pp. 208-9.

account, Walker's work becomes part of a collective way of thinking that connects people and places. Walker becomes part of a community of storytellers, of which no member is all-knowing or self-sufficient. When such knowledge is separated from its context, Martin observes, and is corralled within western ways of thinking, as it was when the Quandamooka community first sought and failed to gain registration as a native title claim group in 1996, it loses its significance and power.[203]

But the model of listening that Wright offered was open-ended, and is able to embrace meanings that are becoming increasingly audible to many non-Indigenous Australians in the present. Peter Read has found 'Two Dreamtimes', and the friendship that it represented, a powerful model for his own friendship with colleague Dennis Foley. Read had researched and written about Aboriginal history in NSW for several decades before realising that the very landscape of his childhood, the northern beaches of Sydney, was within his own lifetime an Aboriginal landscape too. Foley, of Wiradjuri and Gaimarigal descent, grew up among the same rocky ledges and swimming spots, but for him they were mapped by different stories, those of living Aboriginal tradition.[204] Read makes sense of this experience through Wright's poem, calling Foley his 'shadow brother', and adopting Wright's vision in the poem of 'listening ... with discernment', a sharing based on 'equal partnership' and through these, a belonging to country for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.[205] Ironically, Wright's poem, just as it held out the possibility of a tenable future of sharing, whisked it away again; her pessimism about environmental destruction was such that she could only conceive of a shared apocalyptic loss of both country and enchantment. Read replied to her as he addressed his 'shadow brother': 'yes, Dennis, our griefs are different, but your dreamtime is not dead. Neither we nor our peoples are dying. The deep future lies before us.'[206]

The 'space of risk and revelation' that Walker and Wright created between them, 'a space within which they ... perhaps began to unfix the immobile, binary identities of coloniser and colonised,'[207] could not be made by Wright and her listening alone. Walker too put forward a model – a model for speaking, not only for making political demands, but also for trusting, and making audible her history and experience as an Aboriginal woman when she could see that she would be respected. For many Aboriginal people she had gone too far. Speech was powerful, and if some were happy for Walker to speak on their behalf, there were many who

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[203] Martin, 'Ways of knowing, being and doing', pp. 204-5, 209.

[204] Read, *Belonging*, pp. 21-7, 198-224.

[205] Read, *Belonging*, pp. 28-9, 223.

[206] Read, *Belonging*, pp. 224.

[207] Rooney, *Literary activists*, p. 72.

would have preferred her to stay quiet. In the 1960s, speaking out about Aboriginal experiences and aspirations was a risky business. Isabel Flick has reflected on her growing courage and skill in communicating strategically with the white people in her community in Collarenebri, the minister, the police, the matron, in pursuit of justice and equal opportunity for her people. To be a mediator, a negotiator, she needed to be willing to face 'confrontation', and she learned to be thick skinned about being seen as a troublemaker for speaking out.[208] Walker not only spoke out bravely, she entered the limelight. She faced confusion and derision from her family and community at times, and death threats and constant combat from white people who were alarmed by her views and her effectiveness in expressing them.[209] Her approach was seen as radical even in the context of other stalwart workers for the betterment of her people, such as Rita Huggins and others who preferred the One People of Australia League as a vehicle for action that allowed them to work on the amelioration of Aboriginal poverty and distress through humanitarian frameworks, without demanding changes to the constitutional and legislative frameworks of the nation or declaring to the world what it was to be Aboriginal.[210] That Walker's approach is often contrasted with the militancy of her son Denis' activism in the early 1970s – casting her primarily as a pacifist and gentle negotiator – eclipses the enormous difference between her (at times combative) outspokenness and the ongoing hush over much of the Aboriginal community even to the present.[211]

As Walker explained to Schwenke, her own parents were part of a generation who had not wanted Noonuccal and Nughie children to learn language and culture.[212] Blending in with the white community and staying quiet was partly a matter of 'keeping things straight' so that the authorities could have no excuse to remove children from the family. Lucy Ruska, Walker's mother, had been pregnant when she first arrived on Stradbroke Island, and her daughter was taken away. The Ruska family spent years searching for her, and was

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[208] Isabel Flick and Heather Goodall, *Isabel Flick: The Many Lives of an extraordinary Aboriginal woman* (Crows Nest, NSW.: Allen and Unwin, 2004), pp. 104-113.

[209] Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 72. When Jim Davidson asked her whether her own community thought she'd deserted them she replied, 'In the early stages, they felt that any Aboriginal who walked away walked out. They now realise that in order to handle the whites we have to walk away.' Jim Davidson, 'Interview - Kath Walker', p. 436. Accepting her honorary doctorate at Griffith University she said, 'There are many Aboriginal people in Australia leading [a] double existence who are irreparably damaged by the 'static' they receive from their own families and communities for their achievements in the Anglo-Saxon world. Their strivings are seen as betrayal.' At the same time, these 'super heroes' battle with the white education system, 'frozen out of the education system until they learn to be "rational". Becoming "rational", of course, means "agreeing to assimilate"'. Oodgeroo Noonuccal, *Towards a global village in the southern hemisphere*, p. 2.

[210] Darling, *They spoke out pretty good*, pp. 143-190.

[211] Sam Watson's recent play *Oodgeroo - bloodline to country*, made such a contrast between the activism of Kath and Denis Walker. One reviewer observed aptly that 'Watson, with permission and guidance from the family, presents Oodgeroo as a guileless, kindly pacifist', Jason Whittaker, 'Oodgeroo - Bloodline to Country', Australian Stage website, <http://www.australianstage.com.au/200907062684/reviews/brisbane/oodgeroo-bloodli...>, 6 July 2009, viewed 16 July 2009.

[212] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 1.

determined that no more children be taken.[213] The Quandamooka community was haunted by the story of a young girl who had been flogged to death by the matron of the Myora Mission for a perceived misdemeanour. 'At that time', Joan Costelloe and Phyllis Donovan recount, 'everyone was too scared to speak up about the flogging because it would have meant that you were sent away for speaking out against anyone'.[214] When Aboriginal researcher Kath Schilling travelled to Aboriginal communities in New South Wales between 2003 and 2008 as an employee of the NSW Department for Environment, Climate Change and Water, encouraging older members of the community to contribute their stories to a series of books about the living heritage of their communities, many were cautious. To tell their stories publicly, in print and to someone from the government, was an enormous risk to take. One storyteller from the Brungle and Tumut community said of her involvement in the series, 'in my day it was to be seen and not heard by the government ... we have [had] the opportunity to share and talk without getting into trouble,' and another from Bourke, 'to speak out, all of us, it was an effort for me and my people.'[215] It was the success of the project that prompted the demand from one participant, directed at researchers and the government in the future: 'don't tell us any more about us, let us tell you'.[216] Keeping 'out of sight, out of trouble' a central dictum for Aboriginal people's survival and resistance in Brisbane in the 1940s and 1950s, continued to be an important strategy for Aboriginal people, particularly in Queensland where the Bjelke Petersen government's Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement maintained a high degree of surveillance and control over Aboriginal people's movements, wages, health and education.[217]

Walker was always a part of her family and community, but she stood out as daring, outspoken and living life on a very different scale to her peers. Noonuccal Elder Eileen O'Laughlin wrote a commemorative poem depicting Walker as a seven year old sitting on the sand with the other children listening to the clicking of the mud crabs, before straying far from the expectations those children had shared. After joining the army, she 'sought more education/ but still she wanted more/Alone she went to distant foreign lands/Told them of our history'. She returned to the island as a 'great ambassador' drawing visitors 'from all

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[213] Conversation with Valerie Cooms, 17th August 2009.

[214] Bernice Fisher, *Moongalba (Myora): Sitting Down Place* (Dunwich: North Stradbroke Island Historical Museum Association Incorporated, 1997), p. 30.

[215] Berenice Carrington and Pamela Young, *Aboriginal Heritage and Wellbeing* (Sydney: NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, 2011), p. 71.

[216] Carrington and Young, *Aboriginal Heritage and Wellbeing*, p. 58.

[217] Darling, *They spoke out pretty good*, p. 11; Lyndall Ryan 'Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders' in Allan Patience ed., *The Bjelke-Petersen premiership 1968-1983: issues in public policy* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), pp. 114-120.

around' to her campfire.[218] Walker's niece, Valerie Cooms, remembers her as a first stop for young people when they had a problem they did not feel they could directly communicate to their own parents, because she was 'unshockable'. Unlike most other women in the community, Walker said exactly what she thought. She could be loud and ribald, she smoked, drank, never swept under the bed, and horrified her sisters (who she described as 'housewives') to the point of speechlessness with some of the declarations she made – like the time she was interviewed about her love life and responded: 'I don't even have affairs any more. I masturbate.'[219]

Walker, through her time in the army, her involvement with the Communist Party, and ongoing self-education, managed to gain a social and political overview that was very different from the ways in which most people in her community understood their lives. Valerie Cooms has reflected that it was through her own tertiary studies in history that she 'learned that my grandmother's story, along with Mum's experiences, Aunty Kath's work, deaths in custody and native title were all processes linked to the impact that colonialism has had on members of my family.'[220] Soon after her death, Eve Fesl, a Gubbi Gubbi Elder from the mainland to the north of Quandamooka, gently but firmly corrected claims Walker had made to have been the 'voice' of the wider Aboriginal community.[221] She reflected that Walker had been an 'outsider' to the Aboriginal perspective in the fifties and sixties, not having lived under the Act or experienced life on a mission. Her relatively free life, enjoying encouragement from her Scottish schoolteacher and mixing with white people in the army, allowed her to develop a 'faith in the white community which was not shared by the "mission blacks"'. She was able to think in 'international rather than parochial terms', and to recognise the potential for changing white views through her writing. Many Aboriginal

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[218] Eileen O'Laughlin, 'Tribute to Oodgeroo' in Shoemaker ed., *Oodgeroo: a tribute*, pp. 6-7. O'Laughlin also sent this poem to the Poetry in the Pub, Maitland's tribute to Oodgeroo in October 1993, Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, correspondence from Poetry in the Pub, Maitland, 1st November 1993.

[219] Conversation with Valerie Cooms, 17th November 2009; Mitchell, *The Matriarchs*, p. 209. She described her sisters as 'housewives' in Rosa Shiels and Claire Leimbach, 'Stradbroke dreamtime and beyond: conversations with Kath Walker at Moongalba', *Simply Living* 17 (1981), p. 24.

[220] Valerie Cooms, 'Yours in the Indigenous Struggle', unpublished manuscript, and conversation with Valerie Cooms, 17th November 2009.

[221] It was a stance that reflected her experience as one of the few accomplished Aboriginal speakers available to take the lectern in the Referendum campaign, and also her reception as one of the first published Aboriginal poets, but perhaps seemed to claim unwarranted authority as she continued to make these claims of her own work into the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed after her poem 'Aboriginal Charter of Rights' had helped to galvanise Indigenous FCAATSI delegates at the 1962 meeting, she promoted its dissemination in FCAATSI literature, declaring 'that poem is not for sale and I do not intend making money out of it. It belongs to my people in the interests of my people'. Taffe, *Black and White Together*, p. 230. She declared of *Shadow Sister*: 'What Kath Walker is is a symbol of the Aboriginal people. I did not make it for Kath Walker but to bring the voices and cries of the Aboriginal people to the surface.' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1st August 1977, p. 4. She was quoted in the *Noosa Citizen* explaining that: 'her art is not personal, "but the voices of all aboriginal people. They told me the words to put in. When they talk, I write it down"', *Noosa Citizen* 16th September 1981, p. 8. In 1988 she claimed of *We Are Going*, 'Aboriginal people don't see it as my book, they see it as theirs, and it's true. It is their book, because it's their voices, their hopes, their inspirations, their frustrations, their aspirations.' Rutherford, *Aboriginal Culture Today*, p. 19.

people were not literate at that time, and her influence on the Aboriginal community built slowly over the decades until she became recognised as a greatly inspiring 'role model' in her 'latter years'.[222] It was perhaps easiest to acknowledge Walker's mandate after her death. As friend and biographer Kathie Cochrane wrote to Walker's former publisher John Collins, 'I consulted with the Elders with regard to the use of Kath's/Oodgeroo['s] name: "Shout it from the roof-tops", they said. "We're so proud of her."'[223] She inspired many Indigenous people across the country to speak out and to take up writing in particular. Philip McLaren recalls first seeing Walker on television in 1964, and finally meeting her when he received the David Unaipon Award in the early nineties, 'she leaned forward and tightly grabbed both my arms. "We desperately need more writers," she said "it is our turn to tell our stories and we need as many writers as we can muster ... promise me you'll keep going."'[224]

The relationships that made Walker a Noonuccal woman, with her family and the Quandamooka community, were not opened to public view in the way that her friendship with Wright was. The newspapers pursued her stormy relationship with elder son Denis,[225] but she rarely appeared to the wider world alongside her own sisters or other members of the community. The 'This is Your Life' program featuring Walker in 1980 was an exception; one of Walker's sisters, Lucy Petit, appeared, as well as her daughter-in-law, Patty Walker and grandchildren Che, Petrina, Joshua and Raymond.[226] Walker's elder sister Florrie Coolwell had declined to appear in *Shadow Sister*, but had allowed two of Walker's grandsons to be filmed, playing with their grandmother on the beach.[227] Ironically, Valerie Cooms remembers that many of the admirers who wrote to Walker at Moongalba, and whose letters are marked 'answered' in Walker's archive, in fact received answers penned by herself and other members of the family, helping Aunty Kath keep her public satisfied in a way invisible to that very public.[228]

In *Stradbroke Dreamtime* Walker depicted herself as a figure of cultural renewal, Oodgeroo, engaged in a solitary labour advised only by remote ancestors. But over the following twenty years, Walker was very much involved in her community's cultural life. She was a keen

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[222] Eve Fesl, 'The Road Ahead' in Shoemaker ed., *Oodgeroo: a tribute*, pp. 143-4.

[223] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Cochrane to Wright, 2nd November 1993.

[224] Philip McLaren, 'Maang: bagan di (A message for my elder sister)' in Shoemaker ed., *Oodgeroo: a tribute*, pp. 24-6.

[225] See for example *Daily Telegraph*, 14th July 1977, p. 13; and Greg Roberts, 'Kath Walker Makes a Stand in the Sitting Down Place', *Good Weekend*, 28th February 1987, p. 20.

[226] Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, pp. 114-5.

[227] Conversation with Frank and Josette Heimans, 22nd October 2010.

[228] Conversation with Valerie Cooms, 17th November 2009.

sportswoman, and organised the community into softball games and cricket, as she had done as a young woman organising the sports events which brought her community together with the men of the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum.[229] She led the formation of the North Stradbroke Island Housing Co-operative, teaching others about meeting procedure and account keeping, resulting in a highly successful organisation currently providing aged care facilities for everyone on the island.[230] She was a founding member of the North Stradbroke Island Historical Museum, which presents an integrated history of the Noonuccal-Nughie and non-Indigenous communities to a deeply involved local audience as well as students and tourists.[231] She helped to create an environment in which the younger generation could explore their Aboriginality. One of the paintings in the new art gallery at Dunwich in August 2010, by her grandson Joshua, told the story of coming home from a food-gathering expedition with Oodgeroo, laden with good things to eat.

The community organisations Walker helped to establish grew and inspired other ventures. The Friends of Myora Aboriginal Cemetery was formed in 1982, in association with the museum, centred on the care and documentation of the cemetery at the Myora mission.[232] The group's second book features stories of its members and illustrates how they came together around the shared experience of tending the graves with their grandparents' generation and the experience that many of them had shared of living at the mission for part of their lives.[233] Walker had never lived on the mission, was not part of the group, and is not named amongst those that the storytellers reminisce about. Yet, on the final page of the book there is a photograph of people gathered in 'The Round House', an open air meeting space constructed by Walker at her education centre, which occupied part of the old mission site. The caption notes that Walker named her centre 'Moongalba – Sitting Down Place', perpetuating the name that Noonuccal people had always preferred for Myora.[234] This is perhaps an acknowledgement that the spaces Walker created for speaking and writing about Aboriginal experience, history and heritage were part of the formation of this group and its achievements. The stories the contributors tell overlap with the stories Walker's told in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* and elsewhere. Here it becomes clear that her memories about Sam Rollins and the excitement of a dugong catch, the sharing of the meat among the families,

[229] Conversation with Valerie Cooms, 17th November 2009.

[230] Conversation with Valerie Cooms, 17th November 2009.

[231] Conversation with Elisabeth Gondwe, 12th August 2010. When I visited the museum, it was a hive of activity, with volunteers working on research and curation, and local people dropping by to talk and to reminisce with the aid of the museum's collection. Walker's friendship with Wright has a prominent place in the museum, with a photograph of the two friends together in the early 1990s mounted in the front room.

[232] Fisher, *Moongalba*, pp. 13-20.

[233] Fisher, *Moongalba*, p. 8.

[234] Fisher, *Moongalba*, p. 60.

and learning from 'the Grannies', were the shared memories of her community and of her generation on Stradbroke Island.[235] Walker had told her community's stories to the world a decade earlier, but another layer of their truth lies in their local, shared meaning.

Walker and Wright spoke and listened to each other in many ways across their years of friendship, in a complexity of communication that cannot be reduced to any particular template of cross-cultural speaking and listening. Over the past decade, though, they have been most often heard in the act of inspiring (Walker) and uttering (Wright) 'Two Dreamtimes'. This act of communication embodies a crucial moment in reconciliation as characterised by Gillian Whitlock, part of the dynamics of testimony central to reconciliation. Whitlock's testimony is a relationship in which the teller and their true stories require a witness who responds with compassion and belief. This listener then has a responsibility to do justice to what she has heard by carrying the account of trauma forward to awaken compassion in others, and is characteristically anxious about her ability to fulfil the role of witness.[236] Whitlock notes that this act of witnessing has become a key model for civic virtue in post-reconciliation children's education and elsewhere.[237]

'Two Dreamtimes' embodies Wright's moment of witnessing, after hearing Walker's true stories of living as a dispossessed Aboriginal woman. Walker's speech signifies testimony, to which Wright responds. A 2005 article by Katherine Gallagher, celebrating Wright and Walker for the inspiration and leadership they provided for reconciliation and 'national healing', typifies this reading of their roles. Gallagher characterises Walker as an Aboriginal 'voice', ringing out loud and clear from the early 1960s, inspiring other Indigenous 'voices'. She pays tribute to Wright's recognition of dispossession and her 'apology' in 'Two Dreamtimes'.[238] Walker's ideas in response, on the usefulness of witness, apology and guilt and their relationship with justice are not seen as a necessary part of the conversation. Indeed, Walker's poem 'Sister Poet' and her other responses to 'Two Dreamtimes' are rarely cited alongside that poem. While 'Two Dreamtimes' gains part of its power by addressing Walker, it is in a sense written both to Walker and *past* her. As Brigid Rooney observes, it was always bi-vocal in its address: 'on the one hand, the poem's dedication to "Kath Walker" invites us to see the poem as part of a personal conversation between the women. On the other, it is a public declaration or performance of interracial sisterhood which fuses personal

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[235] Fisher, *Moongalba*, pp. 20, 22-3, 31, 34-6, 39, 47, 55, 57.

[236] Gillian Whitlock, 'Strategic Remembering: Fabricating local subjects' in Rosalind Dalziell ed., *Selves Crossing Cultures: Autobiography and Globalisation* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002), p. 168.

[237] Whitlock, 'Strategic Remembering', p. 168.

[238] Katherine Gallagher, 'Towards Reconciliation: inspiration and leadership – Oodgeroo of the Tribe Noonuccal (1920-1993) and Judith Wright (1915-2000)', *Agenda* 41, nos 1-2 (2005), pp. 37-48.

with national history'.[239] The poem finishes in a half-cadence; it is intended as a gift to Walker, but it has that knife in it, with a handle ready to be held. Something will happen next, punishment perhaps, a slim chance of forgiveness, and certainly a change in the balance of power. Of course Walker flung the knife away, and bestowed absolution on Wright repeatedly. But Walker's response does not provide closure. Barrett Reid, editor of *Overland* magazine, wrote to Wright in 1988, imagining her visiting Brisbane with Walker beside her, 'I remember as if I read it yesterday your poem to her and the spinning of the knife'.[240]

4.3 Plaque honouring Judith Wright in 'Writers Walk', Circular Quay, Sydney. American poet Laurie Kutchins found herself transfixed on this bronze circle, in which a stanza of 'Two Dreamtimes' is inscribed. She felt a chill rise up though her at the poem's critique of the 'disturbing, familiar list of imperialistic history, of environmental disregard ... the list we are taught from the age of my daughter to be proud of'. She characterised the poem's 'silence breaking scream' as a 'wild sound, wild wound' (Laurie Kutchins, 'A Wild Sound, Wild Wound: Some Thoughts on Judith Wright', *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* 3 (2007), pp. 42, 47.) A similar plaque nearby features part of Walker's poem 'Son of Mine'.

Beyond their friendship, the knife was still spinning. Peter Read, presenting the powerful testimonies of Aboriginal people in 'The Stolen Generations', and interpreting their overall historical significance, in 1981, concluded: 'perhaps in time the whites will suffer in the

[239] Rooney, *Literary activists*, p. 60.

[240] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 69, Folders 496-7, Reid to Wright, 21st July 1988.

knowledge of what they have done. But they cannot expect forgiveness'. In a later edition he observed that 'many readers in 1981 were upset by this conclusion', but emphasised that public sympathy alone did not deserve forgiveness – forgiveness may be 'achieved' when Australians have ensured that Aboriginal children will never be separated from their parents again.[241] There is perhaps a tension between not expecting forgiveness when it has not been earned, and not expecting or requiring a response of any sort from Indigenous people to the non-indigenous desire for reconciliation. Unlike the South African Truth and Reconciliation process, in which perpetrators were forced to seek amnesty, in 'settler' states undertaking 'reconciliation', it would seem that no official response is sought from Indigenous people to government apology. As Miranda Johnson observes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma had the opportunity to respond to Rudd's apology as formality dissolved into the relative informality of the reception, as those present 'ate morning tea, chatted quietly among themselves and clinked spoons against teacups'. After a similar apology in New Zealand, differentiated by the promise of substantive restitution, Maori leader Sir Paul Reeves staged a parliamentary ceremony 'accepting the Crown's profound regret' and forgiving the Crown for its actions. Calma closed by strongly urging parliament to enact the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home* report, to complete this 'unfinished business'.[242] The ambiguity of 'Two Dreamtimes'' address, and the relative importance of Walker's responses to the poem as ostensible addressee, will perhaps take on different shapes in the future, as justice and self-determination seem more or less achievable.

In Memoriam – mediating Oodgeroo

Wright had turned down the job of writing Walker's biography sometime in the late 1980s,[243] after Julianne Schwenke had reluctantly relinquished the task of 'doing justice' to her subject as just too difficult.[244] Vivian Walker had died of AIDS-related illness while collecting material for his mother's biography.[245] Although Walker said that she couldn't

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[241] Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999), p. viii.

[242] Miranda Johnson, 'Reconciliation, indigeneity, and postcolonial nationhood in settler states', *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no.2 (2011), pp. 195-6; Tom Calma, 'Let the Healing Begin: Response to Government to the National Apology to the Stolen Generations', speech delivered 13th February 2008 in the Member's Hall, Parliament House, Canberra, Australian Human Rights Commission website, <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/speeches/social_justice/2008/20080213let_the_healing_begin.html>, viewed 12 November 2011.

[243] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, 28th July 1991.

[244] Oodgeroo wrote an open letter describing Julianne as a 'close personal friend' and encouraging addressees to assist her in the preparation of the biography, Papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 39, Walker to multiple addressees, July 1976; Box 54, Julianne Schwenke to Oodgeroo, undated (most likely 1979/80).

[245] In February 1987 he had been working on it for about six months, and told the *Good Weekend*, 'I'm so proud of her. She's fascinating to write about because she is constantly changing and evolving,' Roberts, 'Kath Walker Makes a Stand in the Sitting Down Place', p. 21.

think of anything more tedious than writing about herself, she clearly wanted a biography written, and in 1991, persuaded her old friend Kathie Cochrane to take it on.[246] Cochrane wrote to Wright almost immediately, appealing for her help in writing an appreciation of Walker's poetry.[247] Wright and Cochrane corresponded frequently, giving each other encouragement and feedback as well as news of their mutual friend.[248] Isolated by distance and old age, Wright hungered for news of Walker. Walker was busy working on Stradbroke Island projects, her tertiary education program with Rhonda Craven in Sydney, and was at times too ill to travel.[249] One of their last meetings was in February 1993, when Walker and Wright met for a picnic with the help of a friend. 'Looking forward to seeing you, it's been too long between sightings' wrote Walker as they organised the day.[250] Walker visited Kathie and Bob Cochrane every so often, and read and made corrections to the manuscript, approving of the overall tone and scope of the project.[251] Wright and Cochrane developed their own friendship based in a mutual sense of responsibility for Walker's story, a shared commitment that was to endure after her death.

Wright's contribution to the book gave a vivid account of the impact of Walker's poetry as it burst onto the scene in the sixties. She addressed Walker's poetry as an intervention in Australia's cultural life. Walker's poems asserted a contemporary Aboriginal presence at a time when Aborigines were seen as a people of the past, a set of Aboriginal demands when Aborigines were understood to be silent, and the right of poetry to engage with real life at a time when the Australian scene was dominated by a cultural elite with a narrow conception of the arts as a detached, cerebral pursuit.[252] Wright acknowledged that not all of her friend's poetry possessed deathless lyricism or perfection of form, but this was not Walker's primary aim; 'when a poet has something urgent, deeply felt, to say, those formal requirements can go hang', she wrote, 'this stuff was alive'.[253] The piece was a heartfelt

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[246] Baker, *Yacker 2*, p. 301; Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 534, Cochrane to Wright, undated.

[247] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 534, Cochrane to Wright, undated.

[248] Wright and Cochrane exchanged several letters each month across most of 1992-1993. They were both concerned about how Oodgeroo was coping with life at Moongalba amidst an ever-growing family who they felt were less than considerate of her wellbeing, see for example Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Cochrane to Wright, March 1992, 13th April 1992, 9th June 1992. When the manuscript was completed, Cochrane wrote to thank her pen friend: 'Judith, you have been so great a friend ... in this whole enterprise ... it couldn't have turned out as it has without your huge help.' Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 534, Cochrane to Wright, 23rd October 1992.

[249] Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 153. Wright often sent news and regards to Walker via Cochrane in the year before Walker's death, see for example, Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, 28th November 1992, 4th May 1993.

[250] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Walker to Wright, 28th February 1993. They planned another picnic in August, but by this time, Walker was very ill and had cancelled all her intended travels, in the same location Walker to Wright, 12th July 1993, and Cochrane to Wright, 15th August 1993.

[251] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Cochrane to Wright, 11th October 1991.

[252] Wright, 'The Poetry', pp. 166-69.

[253] Wright, 'The Poetry', pp. 166, 178-9.

testimony to Walker's significance in Wright's own life and the ongoing inspiration Walker had provided about the power of poetry, something Wright constantly questioned, wondering at times whether the only audience left to poets was the 'captive' audience of the classroom.[254] It was also an affirmation of Walker's own experience and self-evaluation – she had weathered the critics' 'tight lipped' responses to her work by appropriating the idea that her success was in fact a '*succès de curiosité*' and by designating her own verse 'simple', 'plain and civil-writerish'.[255]

It was of utmost importance to Wright that Walker read and responded to her chapter. She was distressed to find that the draft she had sent in February 1992 had not reached Cochrane and Walker, and sent two copies just to be safe in April 'I have had a few nasty reminders of mortality over the past months ... I do want to be sure that Oodgeroo at least sees this chapter. So please ... give it to her as soon as possible'.[256] Walker did approve of Wright's essay.[257] But she never saw the biography, titled simply *Oodgeroo*, in print – it was still in the process of editing when she died. It was a modest book, which aimed, as Walker made clear was important to her, to be both accessible and affordable and to speak to Aboriginal readers and the general Australian public.[258] At the time of publication, and subsequently, it has not been seen as a 'definitive' biography, but it was one that sought to ensure 'that the story of [Walker's] life, as she saw it, would survive.'[259]

Oodgeroo died early in the morning on 16th September 1993 surrounded by family and friends, after just a few weeks in hospital following a cancer diagnosis. Cochrane had kept Wright up to date as the terminal nature of her illness unfolded.[260] But Wright had not been able to visit; she found travel immensely difficult, her husband Jack had died in that same hospital and she was loath to return, and she was recovering from a challenging winter – her friend and lover Nugget Coombs on the opposite side of the continent, and her vanishing hearing giving way to strange noises and voices in her head.[261] Cochrane wrote to reassure

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[254] See, for example, two lectures delivered at the University of Queensland in 1967, Judith Wright, 'What has happened to the poet's audience?' and 'Why not do away with verse?', in *Because I was invited*, pp. 1-13.

[255] Walker, *The Dawn is at Hand* (1966), quoted in Wright, 'The Poetry', p. 173; Kath Walker, 'Aboriginal Literature', *Identity* 2, no. 3 (1975), pp. 39-40.

[256] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, 9th and 11th April 1992.

[257] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Cochrane to Wright, March 1992.

[258] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 534, Cochrane to Wright, undated; Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Cochrane to Wright, July 1991 and March 1992. She had told John Collins at Jacaranda press, 'I want it at a reasonable price because the young buggers can't afford an expensive one!', John Collins, 'Review: Oodgeroo, by Kathie Cochrane', *Aboriginal History* 19 (1995), p. 220.

[259] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, University of Queensland Press statement, appended to letter Cochrane to Wright, 2nd March 1994; Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, Laurie Muller, 'Publisher's Note', front pages, p. xiv.

[260] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Cochrane to Wright, 15th August 1993; Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Cochrane to Wright 24th July and 22nd August, 1993.

[261] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, 26th August 1993; Capp, 'In the Garden', p. 48.

her that the hospital had improved markedly since the sixties; Oodgeroo was in good hands, and was not engulfed by the same drab surroundings she and Jack had endured.[262] Wright was expecting to have her friend for 'perhaps six months more'.[263] Within a few hours of her friend's death, after searching in vain for Wright's fax number, Cochrane wrote to Wright with the news.[264] But Wright knew already. The crew from the 'wretched 7:30 Report' had arrived by helicopter and taken 'over my small kitchen-living-dining room and my entire afternoon'.[265] Peter Cassuben was apologetic about the 'terrible rush'. But the archival material held by the ABC was not enough to do justice to Walker's passing, which merited an all-stops-out tribute the same night, and Wright was considered their 'most important interviewee'.[266] Before the ABC team departed, a message arrived from a journalist at *The Australian* saying 'you've been described to me as "Oodge's best friend"' and asking whether Wright would like to send in a tribute for the next morning's paper, followed closely by a request from the *Sydney Morning Herald*.[267]

As a famous friend of the famous deceased Wright was being asked to pay tribute in public immediately, and not only to mark her own loss but to realise 'Australia's loss of Kath Walker',[268] to encapsulate her contribution to public life, the shape of her genius, her place in the nation's history. Cassuben had sent a facsimile before the ABC team set out, to give Wright a little time to think, and as the 7:30 Report helicopter approached, she was typing answers to his questions: 'Who was Kath to you? How important was her contribution to awareness? ... What were the key influences and changes in her life? How will Kath be remembered?' 'She is one of my oldest friends' replied Wright, 'a most gallant and intelligent fighter for her people ... an inspiration and a light for the future – if we have one'.[269] She had recovered her equilibrium a little by the time she wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, bringing together her own feelings for Walker with an assessment of her significance to the nation, and putting a little sting in the tail for those in government and elsewhere who had given her less support than they might have:

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[262] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Cochrane to Wright, 5th September 1993.

[263] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Tina Lister, 5th October 1993, p. 508.

[264] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Cochrane to Wright, 16th September 1993, 9:30am.

[265] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Tina Lister, 5th October 1993, p. 508.

[266] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, facsimile from Peter Cassuben, 16th September 1993, 10:39am.

[267] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Judy Robinson, 16th September 1993, p. 506. The facsimile from the *Sydney Morning Herald* arrived just before two o'clock in the afternoon, and asked for a tribute for by 5:30pm. Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, fax from Sydney Morning Herald office, 16th September 1993, 13:58hrs.

[268] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, facsimile from Peter Cassuben, 16th September 1993, 10:39am.

[269] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, facsimile in reply to the 7:30 Report, 16th September 1993.

> Her success as a writer, educator and communicator has had a great influence not only – or even chiefly – in Australia but also overseas on her many visits to other countries. It is one of our great tragedies that such women can never reach their true potential ... The Commonwealth referendum in 1967 ... owed much to her influence and her hard work and travel, which left her exhausted, penniless and far from home ... I shall miss her greatly, a fine companion and friend and an irreplaceable fighter for justice and real peace.'[270]

The facsimile from the ABC, the first Wright had heard of the news, was unfortunately headed: 'we are all saddened to hear of Australia's loss of Judith Walker today,'[271] making Wright feel rather mortal and perhaps exacerbating her ambivalence about having to bear responsibility for guiding the public mourning of her friend when she had not had even a moment for private grief. As she wrote to her cousin and close confidante Tina Lister a few weeks later, 'They obviously wanted footage for my own obit. as well. Yes, I miss her, and many others of my generation too.'[272] Wright, never fond of what she called the 'meeja', resented this sudden whirlwind of posthumous attention, feeling that it paid no respect to humanity, either for those it lauded or for those it ignored.[273] Her daughter, Meredith McKinney was to experience very similar sensations when Wright herself died seven years later. The flurry of media attention, and the expectation that she would somehow represent Wright, 'the famous poet and activist everyone else imagined they knew', seemed to overlook entirely that she had lost her own mother.[274]

Just a few days after Walker's death, Wright observed in a letter to Cochrane, 'I think we have tapped into a basic vein of some kind of archetype over Oodg's death.'[275] At least part of this was about the two women's friendship – Wright received a 'flood' of correspondence in its wake. Along with letters of sympathy from friends, including Dymphna Clark and anthropologist Isobel White, missives came from acquaintances and strangers, many of them paying tribute to the profundity, longevity and equality that they saw in this

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[270] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16th September 1993, p. 506.

[271] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, facsimile from Peter Cassuben, 16th September 1993, 10:39am.

[272] Clarke and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Tina Lister, 5th October 1993, p. 508.

[273] She wrote to Kathie Cochrane: 'I hate the Meeja at the best of times - and to be told of Oodg's (sic) death by a journo was pretty awful', Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Wright to Cochrane, 21st September 1993.

[274] Capp, *My Blood's Country*, p. 172.

[275] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Wright to Cochrane, 21st September 1993.

friendship.[276] A correspondent from Tasmania quoted from Wright's poem 'Canefields Country', inspired by an ABC Radio tribute featuring this story about the creative and almost spiritual meeting of the two women.[277] A young woman who had stayed at Moongalba for several months helping Walker put her papers in order reached out to Wright as the other half of a friendship she had learned to celebrate through Walker: 'we talked about the divisions of race being leaped by love and the luminescent quality that this love has brought to our lives, like a sigh of relief ... I know that you sustained and inspired and loved one of the most brilliant people to ever live'.[278] Someone else sent a 'shadow sister' drawing in black felt-tip pen on a circular piece of card, two female faces in profile, black and white, engaged in perpetual conversation like the two complementary energies of the Chinese yinyang symbol.[279]

4.4 Sympathy card in Judith Wright's Papers [NLA MS5781, Box 74, Folder 533].

Some of the strangers who wrote to Wright after Walker's death were perhaps looking to her to show them how to mourn Walker, to approve their appreciation of the significance of

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[276] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Dymphna Clark to Wright, 16th September 1993, Isobel White to Wright, 17th September 1993.

[277] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, name illegible to Wright, 20th September 1993.

[278] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Felicity to Wright, undated.

[279] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, card signed 'JS '93'. 'JS' was possibly Judith Sercombe whose letter is in the same location (though not attached to the card), a ceramicist who was inspired by a television appearance of Walker some time earlier to work on a 'two faced' ceramic doll with a 'shadow sister' theme. She had been meaning to read 'Two Dreamtimes' and was emboldened by news of Walker's death to write to Wright. Judith Sercombe to Wright undated, and cover letter 16th September 1993.

Walker's life as a fellow white Australian with a privileged connection to this famous and formidable Aboriginal woman. A 'Poetry in the Pub' group based at Maitland sent a sympathy card to Wright with a detailed account of their tribute night to Walker (in lieu of an expected visit from Walker herself in September 1993). The compère read Walker's 'All One Race' followed by Wright's 'Rainforest', as well as poems sent by Noonuccal women Margaret Iselin and Eileen O'Laughlin in response to an invitation to attend the evening.[280] The group had sought input from the Local Aboriginal Land Council, and the event was sponsored by both organisations. Ironically, though, it embodied some of the limits of reconciliation. Wright's correspondent had been disappointed by the Land Council's response, sending 'only' two representatives and failing to organise promised dancers and musicians. He surmised that some kind of 'politics' were 'mixed up with what should have been a great coming together'.[281] There may indeed have been some debate about how much of the Land Council's human resources to commit to such an event. In his address on the night, Wright's correspondent perhaps expressed his feeling about the Land Council's degree of commitment when he said, 'Kath Walker was one of those beings blessed with many gifts who unselfishly, in the true spirit of her people, shared those gifts with all'.[282] The feeling that Oodgeroo was exceptional among Aboriginal people, and aspirations to the kind of ideal communion offered by the literary meeting of 'Two Dreamtimes' and 'Sister Poet' left this correspondent feeling closer to Walker and Wright and their friendship than to his own Aboriginal neighbours. This was a discernable theme in the correspondence Wright received, she observed, 'apparently [Walker] had touched many hearts; not so the rest of the Aboriginal population – people can so easily detach and distinguish their sympathies alas, so that I get letters saying yes she did good work but the others are a different matter.'[283]

A number of invitations to write tribute pieces for academic journals arrived, and Wright refused them and advised Cochrane to do the same.[284] *Race and Class* planned a special issue on Aboriginal matters, and wanted very much to include a commemorative piece about Oodgeroo, particularly her work towards the 1967 Referendum and the development of her writing. A representative appealed to Wright: 'Everyone I've spoken to has suggested

[280] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Bruce Coffing (?) to Wright, 1st November 1993.

[281] Maryrose Casey observes that this was a common feeling among non-Aboriginal people feeling virtuous about reconciliation, that 'politics' should not come into it, that Aboriginal people being 'political' around reconciliation were betraying the process, Maryrose Casey, 'Referendums and reconciliation marches: What bridges are we crossing?', *Journal of Australian Studies* 30, no. 89 (2006), p. 148.

[282] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Bruce Coffing (?) to Wright, 1st November 1993, and 'Kath Walker – A Tribute', speech read 24th October 1993 enclosed.

[283] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, 4th October 1993.

[284] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Race and Class Journal to Wright, 26th November 1993, Aboriginal History Journal to Wright, 5th October 1993.

that ... you would be the best person to write the piece'.[285] A request from *Aboriginal History* had come a bare three weeks after Walker's death: 'The journal would not appear until late next year, what we are looking for is not your immediate reaction to Oodgeroo's death, but your considered reflections on her life and work.'[286] No doubt both these requests were based in a sincere wish to pay respect to Walker, but as they arrived in Wright's mail box they took on a demanding and insensitive tone. As with the *7:30 Report* and the newspapers, Wright was the first stop in the journals' search for an eminent, articulate friend of Walker's who would know what was required of her and meet a deadline. The editors perhaps also hoped that Wright might be able and willing to characterise Walker and her achievements in a sincere but also penetrating way, as both a friend and an intellectual. Wright had perhaps felt the heat of such expectations before. John Collins, who was to publish *Oodgeroo* at Jacaranda Press, in the event, rejected the manuscript. His letter of rejection went some way towards implying that Wright, rather than the non-literary Cochrane, would have been the right woman to give Walker the 'more detailed, objective treatment' he felt her life and cause deserved. He heaped praise on Wright's short contribution to the biography, and pointed to David Marr's writerly biography of Patrick White – six-hundred pages long and laying bare White's character to an extent the subject found painful – as a model.[287] Writing articles was not the way in which Wright wished to pay tribute to her friend.

Less than a week after Walker's death, Wright had written to Roberta Sykes at the Black Women and Education Foundation (she had been involved in the organisation for some time, and had been honoured with life membership for her contributions), envisaging a lecture tour in memory of her friend, and offering eight to ten thousand dollars immediately, and more when it was to hand. She wanted to provide an opportunity for Indigenous women to express their particular concerns about land rights, observing that much of the contemporary campaign was undertaken by men, and felt that this would extend Oodgeroo's own public education work begun in her 'brilliant campaigning' up to the 1967 referendum. 'With love and in fury at all white governments' she signed off.[288] At this point, Wright was less interested in attempting to represent Aboriginal interests or in promoting

[285] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Race and Class Journal to Wright, 26th November 1993.

[286] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Aboriginal History Journal to Wright, 5th October 1993.

[287] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 534, copy of letter to Kathie Cochrane from John Collins, 25th January 1993; David Marr, *Patrick White: A Life* (Sydney: Vintage, 1992), p. 646.

[288] Clark and McKinney, *With Love and Fury*, Wright to Roberta Sykes, 22nd September 1993, pp. 507-8. After some deliberation, Wright and Cochrane also decided to direct the royalties from *Oodgeroo* to the BWAEF, Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, Wright to Cochrane, 13th November 1993, Cochrane to Wright, 24th November 1993 and 2nd March 1994, Wright to Sykes, 24th November 1993. On Nugget Coombs' death too, Wright thought that he would prefer 'that any memorial to him should take the form of a renewed treaty movement and true reconciliation to be sealed by such a treaty', Papers of Judith Wright, Box 97, Folder 696, Wright to Emma McDonald, 'Nugget and the Treaty Movement', undated.

reconciliation through writing about Walker and their friendship than in facilitating opportunities for Indigenous people to get their messages across. Theirs had been a comrades' bond and, most of all, Wright wanted her friend's memory to go on fighting. As the launch of Walker's biography approached, she wrote to Cochrane with her characteristic pessimism-tinged fire, 'I hope the reviews and publicity are thorough enough to put a bit of ginger in the Qld government – a hopeless job I fear'.[289] Wright lived and felt through her causes. She mourned environmental degradation through her own body, convinced that she was experiencing the hole in the ozone layer as she suffered from the glaring light.[290] She mourned Walker partly through the failure of government to recognise Indigenous rights, as she wrote to Cochrane, 'I feel broken up – with the 2 governments and all the rest letting us down in all directions, and the feeling that Oodgeroo died partly because of that. We've lost so much!'[291]

Wright's autobiographical *Half a Lifetime* was published in 1999, and she was working on a second volume with her editor Patricia Clarke, taking up where the first book left off. Her draft chapter 'New problems and new friends' gave an account of her friendship with Walker as she had reflected on it in the years since Walker's death. As she wrote, Wright was feeling old and frail, and she remembered her friend as a stunning, forceful woman who had thoroughly captivated her. 'I might have been swept up in her train', reflected Wright, and 'many people were in love with her once they knew her'.[292] In memory, Wright became even more the listener than she had been in life. In this story, she was more a witness to Walker than the sharing, supporting, debating comrade who had had such an influence on her friend's life direction. Walker had become almost a natural phenomenon:

> She was as immediate as a force of nature ... she spoke what she felt and she felt what she spoke, without reserve. And one might as well try to change the course of a waterfall as to change her mind once it was made up.[293]

Walker herself had claimed a naturalness for Aboriginal creativity at times – Wright remembered her expounding a theory that Aboriginal people 'make art simply because it is a natural thing to do', where a western education teaches that art is difficult and must be

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[289] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, 8th September 1994.

[290] She wrote to Kathie Cochrane, 'the ozone loss is affecting my eyes ... I was in the country for a week... and there seemed more light than the landscape could take; birds are suffering ...', Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, 14th January 1995.

[291] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, undated.

[292] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 105, Folder 748, draft autobiography, Chapter 2: 'New Problems and new friends', pp. 2, 6.

[293] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 105, Folder 748, 'New Problems and new friends', pp. 5-6.

learned. Here, Wright thoroughly subscribed to this notion in characterising her friend's creativity. 'There was nothing schooled or formal in her approach to life or to art', wrote Wright, 'the poems and drawings she made fell from her naturally and were forgotten, like the gumleaves she loved.'[294] Witnessing this apparent effortlessness in retrospect, Wright felt that Walker had not 'problematised' her art, she hadn't agonised or hesitated or wrestled with her writing like Wright herself had, and though Wright felt she operated at a very 'deep' level in all parts of life, she also wrote and lived 'in a way that writers like myself might have called childlike.'[295]

Wright's representation of Walker had a strange ring to it. Had this portrait been published, Wright may have been charged with a patronising attitude towards her friend. Her writings about Walker for the most part had seen her engaged as an advocate for Walker's causes, for recognition of Aboriginal people's claims for land and for respect, for Moongalba, for the significance of Walker's poetry and of her life to the nation, as both women sought to reshape the nation. In her draft autobiography, perhaps for the first time since 'Two Dreamtimes', Wright attempted to capture the imprint Walker had left on her. Without the scaffolding provided by a political agenda (and without Walker to discuss it with) it was much more hazardous. As Rooney observes, sincerity would not necessarily protect Wright from the inherent pitfalls of cross-cultural representation, for the 'sincere and the personal ... are too easily transformed into counterfeit'.[296] Wright told the story of her excursions with Walker in the early 1970s searching for a site for an education centre in Brisbane's hinterland (before Walker had secured Moongalba). On one trip, the two friends felt they had uncovered a burial site, perhaps a massacre site. Wright, thinking she could see bullets on the ground, scuffed them into the soil, perhaps wishing to protect Walker, and their friendship, from knowledge of the events they might signify. Rooney felt that a degree of 'big sisterness', inhered in Wright's actions here.[297] It is worth noting that Walker had at times displayed a degree of 'big sisterness' towards Wright too. Caroline Jones had asked Walker to talk about her friendship with Wright 'our great poet' in 1991, and Walker had depicted Wright as rather uncertain of herself, a little naïve, and full of pain and guilt she wished Walker would help her to ease. Jones uncharacteristically allowed her discomfort as a listener to become audible, either because of Walker's rising level of emotion, or because

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[294] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 105, Folder 748, 'New Problems and new friends', pp. 4, 6.

[295] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 105, Folder 748, 'New Problems and new friends', p. 4.

[296] Rooney, *Literary Activists*, pp. 75-6.

[297] Rooney, *Literary Activists*, pp. 75-6.

Walker's depiction of Judith Wright 'our great poet' was not quite what she was expecting.[298]

Rooney suggests that representation may have been a burden for Walker and Wright. As the audience they sought to reach together was largely a non-Indigenous one, the emphasis was bound to be on the representation of Walker as Aboriginal 'other'.[299] As Rooney observes, though, Walker seems to have embraced this burden. When American scholar Margaret Read Lauer visited in 1976, on behalf of the *Journal of World Literature Written in English*, she had intended to write about both women. But the resulting article was *about* Walker, understood via Wright's perspective. It reflects a three-part dance, as it were, of representation. Walker told Julianne Schwenke, with an air of satisfaction, that Wright had 'frustrated [Read Lauer] a bit by talking about me instead of herself'.[300] Read Lauer based her article 'Kath Walker at Moongalba: Making a New Dreamtime' firmly in the friendship between the two women, reproducing the friends' poetic call and response from earlier in that decade (the first time Walker's 'Sister Poet' had been published) and telling the story of how she had been handed from one poet to the other. She concluded: 'it was Kath who had built the bridges that connected all of us ... "You brought me to you some of the way/ and came the rest to meet me"', relating her own interactions with Walker through Wright's poetry. She quoted Wright on Walker's significance as an activist before including extracts from her own interview with Walker.[301] Walker thoroughly approved of the article, telling Julianne Schwenke that Read Lauer had done a 'marvellous job'.[302]

Phillip Morrissey, reviewing Cochrane and Wright's biography of Walker, found it a 'testament to [Cochrane and Walker's] long friendship and a sensitive portrayal of Oodgeroo.' But 'in some ways this is its limitation', he continued, 'it can be difficult reconciling affection with analysis and criticism and in view of the sensitive issue of White biographies of Aboriginals may be best avoided'.[303] Walker herself would not have agreed with him. It was part of her 'patronage' of Wright that she allowed (or even encouraged) her friend to represent her. Walker had perhaps enjoyed the reflection of herself she could see in Wright's admiration of her vitality, her unbounded and proudly un-intellectualised (yet very conscious) relationship with her environment and her work. Jennifer McDonell, also reviewing the biography, observed that Walker had 'strategically adopted a form of identity

[298] Oodgeroo Nunukul, interview with Caroline Jones, side B.

[299] Rooney, *Literary Activists*, pp. 75-6.

[300] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B.

[301] Read Lauer, 'Kath Walker at Moongalba', pp. 89-90.

[302] Kath Walker, interview with Julianne Schwenke, Tape 4, side B.

[303] Philip Morrissey, 'Shadow sister', pp. 13-14.

politics which assumed an authentic voice of her people ... a stable, integrated, uncolonisable position' from which she could negotiate 'harmony and brotherhood between races'. She found that the biography had naturalised Walker's strategic claim to universality at the expense of showing how she had conceived of and maintained this position.[304] Indeed Walker had made it clear to Cochrane that she did not want a 'searchlight type of biography', and the result was aptly characterised as 'the story of [Walker's] life, as she saw it.'[305] Likewise, though it might appear sentimental and even gauche in isolation, Wright's final representation of her friend, in her unfinished autobiography, arguably reflected not only her genuine fascination with Walker's evolving self-understanding, but also a loyalty to Walker's version of herself.

'Two Dreamtimes' into the future

Wright took the platform at a vigil outside Parliament House to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the 1967 referendum, and read 'Two Dreamtimes'.[306] It was to be a decade of political turmoil close to the matter of the poem. The Mabo and then Wik decisions confirmed that Australia's Indigenous peoples had rights to land before British colonisation, and that not all of these rights had been extinguished.[307] Not only Wright, but all Australians were instructed by the High Court to acknowledge that the land they called home was taken out of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander hands. She joined the Reverend Tim Costello, actor Ruth Cracknell and others in supporting the opposition of the Indigenous Working Group to the Howard Government's response to the Wik decision.[308] The government's refusal to acknowledge the *Bringing Them Home* report, presenting the experiences of the 'Stolen Generations' the same year, also set in train scholarly and public debate. Were apologies and reconciliation merely a salve to the white Australian conscience, and irrelevant to Aboriginal welfare and empowerment?[309] Or was it still vitally important for

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[304] Jennifer McDonell, 'In memory of Oodgeroo Noonuccal', *Southerly* 55, no.4 (Summer 1995/ 1996), pp. 197-203.

[305] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Cochrane to Wright, 13th April 1992; Papers of Judith Wright, Box 74, Folder 533, University of Queensland Press statement, appended to letter Cochrane to Wright, 2nd March 1994; Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, Laurie Muller, 'Publisher's Note' and p. xiv.

[306] Papers relating to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wright to Cochrane, undated; Sue Bull, 'Vigil for Justice', *Green Left Weekly* 277, 4th June 1997.

[307] See, for a concise discussion of the potential for the recognition of these rights, and their curtailment via the *Native Title Act* itself and in the courts, and via the Howard government's *Native Title Amendment Act (1998)*: Chris Cuneen, Larissa Behrendt, Terri Libesman and Robynne Quiggin, *Indigenous Legal Relations in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 181-6.

[308] James Woodford, 'Big names unite against PM on Wik', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th May 1997, News and Features, p. 3.

[309] Casey, 'Referendums and reconciliation marches', pp. 137-148.

non-Indigenous Australians to open their hearts and minds to Indigenous experiences and aspirations, and for people to come together to reflect on a shared past?[310]

Kathie Cochrane implored Wright to live to see a change of government, but she could not.[311] Obituaries and tributes lauded her as the poet of the nation, the poet that can bring us to terms with our environment and with Australian history, who articulates what the concerned conscience feels.[312] As Mulligan and Nadarajah put it, 'in troubling times people look to creative thinkers or people with some kind of moral authority for inspiration and Judith Wright was both of these.'[313] As the century turned, though, psychoanalytic approaches to race relations began to look self-indulgent to some, the acute fear of the loss of Australia's natural riches to industry and foreign investment had faded since the seventies, and Wright's once radical outline of Australian history had already been widely adopted by the intelligentsia, at least; it was time to reassess Wright's opus. Andrew McCann found that Wright's desire for social justice is not entirely borne out by her poetry, as the strong romantic impulses in her work tend to transcend conflict via an appeal to the beauty and continuity of natural rhythms and even to find aesthetic solace in Aboriginal extinction.[314] Gig Ryan showed a similar respectfulness towards Wright's intentions, and engaged with some of the acute difficulties of articulating these through poetry. But she dismissed 'Two Dreamtimes' out of hand for 'romanticising Aboriginality and white guilt', and being a confused and sentimental poem that attempts to make the pain of guilt equivalent to the pain of dispossession.[315]

In reply, Sue King-Smith was concerned to establish that although some of Wright's *early* work might transform history into a pastorale of regret, overall her opus remains politically invigorating. Though she found McCann's criticisms insightful, she defended Wright the person against their retrospective potency; Wright's representations of Aboriginal people may not have been perfect, but she became (as McCann himself had acknowledged) a sincere and effective fighter for social justice at a time when few others were.[316] In *Belonging*, Peter Read was emphatic that 'escaping the burden of guilt' by conflating

[310] Patrick Dodson, 'Beyond the bridges and sorry', delivered in the Great Hall of the Parliament, 25th May 2004 (Canberra: Australian National University Institute for Indigenous Australia, 1 July, 2004).

[311] Papers of Judith Wright, Box 104, Folder701, Cochrane to Wright, 4th June 2000.

[312] Gerard Hall, 'Judith Wright (1915-2000): Australian Poet & Prophet', *National Outlook* (November 2000), Australian Catholic University website, <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/staffhome/gehall/Judith.htm>, viewed 29 Sept 2009.

[313] Martin Mulligan and Yaso Nadarajah, 'Fanning the Flames of Compassion and Creativity', *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* 3 (2007), p. 4.

[314] A. L. McCann, 'The Literature of Extinction', *Meanjin* 65, no. 1 (March 2006) pp. 52-4.

[315] Gig Ryan, 'Uncertain Possession: The Politics and Poetry of Judith Wright', *Overland* 154 (1999), p. 29.

[316] Sue King-Smith, 'Ancestral Echoes: Spectres of the Past in Judith Wright's Poetry', *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, Special Issue (2007), pp. 125-7.

Aboriginal dispossession with fragmented historical white losses of land and home on this continent is not excusable, and equally clear that Wright did not 'take refuge' in this notion as some others have. 'Two Dreamtimes' recognised Wright's own and Walker's losses as intrinsically different, 'separate griefs'.[317] On all sides of the discussion, an investment in Wright and her friendship with Walker is apparent – though its literary fruits may seem spotted and overripe in parts, Wright's intentions are honoured. As Sharon Sullivan and Peter Read remind us, relationships are un-perfectible. Perhaps there will never be a time when everything can be shared between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people here. It is most important to be ready to share what can be shared right now, something that must be renegotiated by each generation.[318] These reflections on 'Two Dreamtimes' thirty years after Wright addressed it to Walker perhaps show that the poem's very imperfections, and its many layered relationship with the friendship between the two women as well as the broader, still-unfolding, processes of testimony, witness, apology and forgiveness with which they connected the poem, are its value.

[317] Read, *Belonging*, p. 47.

[318] Sharon Sullivan, 'Out of the box' in Ingereth Macfarlane with Mary-Jane Mountain and Robert Paton eds., *Many exchanges: archaeology, history, community and the work of Isabel McBryde* (Canberra: Aboriginal History, 2005), pp. 84-6; Peter Read 'The McBryde Principle' in the same volume, pp. 98-99.

Conclusion: Living histories, living stories

Inga Clendinnen, returning to Bennelong's story, found the mass of public and popular history about him oppressive or at least distracting. She used the less common spelling 'Baneelon' (Watkin Tench's transliteration), hoping this small dose of unfamiliarity might help her 'escape the freight of banalities time has placed on the word Bennelong'.[1] When I first encountered Clendinnen's remark, it crystallised my project: I wanted to engage with this very same 'freight of banalities'. I found that the commonplace has its particular challenges. The life of a story is made up of patterns of repetition and transformation.[2] Those patterns that characterise public, popular, family and local history-making are quite different from those the academic or professional historian usually considers. I found I was much better equipped to analyse the kind of transformation that results from reassessment and reflection than I was to recognise or understand the transformations that accrue via repetition.[3] One challenge lay in divesting myself of the disdain implied in the term 'banalities', and in the end this thesis has left me more sanguine about the commonplace and more sensitive to repetition.

Film theorist Kara Keeling develops the idea of the 'cliché' as a repository of shared meaning with the potential for creative use. In Gilles Deleuze's account, 'cliché' is the usual human response to stimuli. When we come upon a new situation, a reflex of memory quickly supplies us with something that is familiar, something that can reconcile the new experience with 'common sense'. Occasionally, when we reach out for a helpful memory, nothing familiar can be found. Deleuze valorised this moment, in which no cliché can be grasped and common sense is out of reach, as a moment when original thought must occur. But Keeling finds the cliché itself full of possibility as a starting point of shared understanding, from which new meaning might be created even as common meanings are consolidated.[4]

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[1] Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003), pp. 103-4. Clendinnen's second reason for using this unusual transliteration was to remind herself and the reader about the 'complex store of social meanings stored within' Bennelong's five names, meanings which are often 'swept aside'.

[2] As Foucault observes, at the same time as I encounter these patterns of continuity and discontinuity, I have also constituted them by making the 'life of a story' my field of enquiry and asking of each instance that I thereby recognise as an 'event' (the enunciation of something that is indefinitely 'repeatable'), 'why tell this story now?' Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Knowledge* tr A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), pp. 29-30, 104-5.

[3] As Kama Maclean observes, following the posthumous life of Indian revolutionary nationalist and martyr Bhagat Singh in popular (mostly visual) narrative, academic histories can diverge from popular histories to the point where academics may lack the tools to understand the popular historical vocabulary. Kama Maclean, 'The Portrait's Journey: The Image, Social Communication and Martyr-Making in Colonial India', *Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no. 4 (November 2011), p. 1054.

[4] Kara Keeling, *The Witches' Flight: the cinematic, the black femme and the image of common sense* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 14-21.

'Common sense', the pattern created by this constant activity, is 'a record of a group's survival'.[5]

When I encountered the Bowen Historical Society (via its 2002 publication *James Morrill: his Life and Adventures*) *not* asking new questions of Morrill's story after telling it for almost forty years, I was puzzled. The Society's repetition of the story was difficult to 'read', it produced an illegible historiographical grammar. It didn't seem to be self-aware, it wasn't ironic or even apparently reactionary. Instead, it seemed to be best described by Meaghan Morris' term 'non-differentiated repetition' – a term which reveals how much scholars expect of repetition.[6] In me, it produced frustration and potential 'moral outrage' as well, because no signs of transformation could be seen in it when in my understanding, the world had changed.[7] Similarly, when Kathie Cochrane and Judith Wright wrote a biography of Kath Walker based firmly in their subject's own favourite stories about herself, they failed to offer a fresh, much less penetrating, view of their friend. Their intended publisher found the result unpublishable – it was neither *authentic* as an autobiography would have been, nor *original* as he expected a biography to be, but in an unsalvageable territory somewhere in between.[8] But Walker's friends had done what they set out to do, which was, as their publisher-in-the-event put it, to ensure that the story of Kath Walker's life, as she understood it, would survive. Cochrane and Wright, and perhaps also the Bowen Historical Society, had engaged in 'positive unoriginality'; not simply naïve or unthinking repetition but an affirmation of 'common sense'.[9]

The 'common sense' that Cochrane and Wright were affirming was the self-understanding of an Aboriginal woman and her self-presentation across three decades. The 'common sense' that the Bowen Historical Society seemed to be affirming was one of failing to recognise an Aboriginal presence through Morrill's story, as it had failed to be recognised over several generations. There seemed to be more merit in one of these affirmations than in the other.

[5] Keeling, *The Witches' Flight*, p. 21.

[6] Meaghan Morris, 'Tooth and Claw: Tales of Survival and Crocodile Dundee', *Social Text* 21 (1989), pp. 119.

[7] Mark McKenna found that both the testing of past 'against the language of contemporary politics' and its moral condemnation had readily captured media and public attention during the 'history wars'. Both these ways of making history seemed to obviate sincere and open-ended historical investigation. I found this threat within my own responses. Mark McKenna, 'A Preference for Forgetting: Some Reflections on Publishing Looking For Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History of Place', *Aboriginal History* 27 (2003), p. 134.

[8] Papers of Judith Wright, MS5781, National Library of Australia Manuscript Collection, Box 74, Folder 534, copy of letter to Kathie Cochrane from John Collins, 25th January 1993.

[9] Meghan Morris develops this term in response to the myth that Australians are 'positively unable to originate', destined forever to feebly imitate American and European cultural innovations (citing Jessie Ackerman (1914), an American who visited Australia as an organiser for the Women's Christian Temperance Union). Morris, via an analysis of *Crocodile Dundee* (1986), transforms this supposed tendency to be 'positively unoriginal' into a capacity for 'positive unoriginality', a term intended to capture the innovation inherent in reuse and imitation, and the distinctive and assertive nature of the statements that can be made thereby, Morris, 'Tooth and Claw', pp. 105-27.

As Graeme Davison observes, it can be difficult for historians to differentiate between a response to historiographical 'grammar' and a response to the politics of history.[10] But writing the biographies of each of these stories demanded that I attempt to understand each, and it was this approach that helped me to hear Gillian Cowlishaw's call to engage with the meaning-making of 'rural whitefellas' with an 'equally sympathetic, or should I say objective, analysis', as a record of *this* group's survival.[11] The challenge put to me by Wright's and Cochrane's remembering was different; not to become a champion and defender of this friendship or to hide the difficulties in history-making emerging from it, as Wright had scuffed those bullets into the ground, but to give an account of this story unfolding. Only in the process of telling the story did I realise that there's no need for a protective 'big sisterness' towards this friendship. As Wright wrote of Walker's poetry, this story can 'take care of itself'.[12]

As anticipated, the position of observer, making a study that is chiefly descriptive, has not always been comfortable or readily defendable. The process, however, has led me to reflect on the value as well as the limitations of scholarly conversations, and the potential value of my own history-making practice as a *participant*-observer. I am now more committed (as well as far better equipped for the task) to adding greater historical complexity to public discussions about the past, finding ways to help local history-makers overcome barriers to recognising Aboriginal histories that overlap with their own, and to opening up opportunities for Aboriginal people to tell their stories.

I experienced the power of repetition first hand when I told Windradyne's story at a forum focussed on the approaching bicentenary of the 'crossing of the Blue Mountains' organised by Lithgow City Council in March 2011. I went with Kath Schilling, a senior colleague at the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, and a Wiradjuri woman with links to the Darlington Point area of south-western NSW, who had been asked to run a workshop on Aboriginal histories connected with this bicentenary. The day opened with a 'Welcome to Country' and many of the speakers acknowledged the traditional owners of the places they spoke about. But the morning sessions had focussed closely on the histories of Blaxland,

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[10] Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), pp. 238-41.

[11] Cowlishaw argues that the condemnation of local histories that appear to deny an Aboriginal presence and to reinforce old racial hierarchies is partly a symptom of liberal historians' preoccupation with combatting the 'racist right', and prevent them from perceiving the local interactions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal meaning-making, Gillian Cowlishaw, 'On "getting it wrong": collateral damage in the history wars', *Australian Historical Studies* 37, no. 127 (April 2006), pp. 195, 201.

[12] Wright, Judith, 'The Poetry' in Kathie Cochrane ed., *Oodgeroo* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1994), p. 183. 'Big-sisterness' as Brigid Rooney suggested might be inherent in some of Wright's relations with Walker, Brigid Rooney, *Literary activists: writer-intellectuals and Australian public life* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 2009), pp. 75-6.

Wentworth and Lawson, the surveying of roads by Evans and Cox, and the European-Australian heritage associated with the road-makers. There were a number of Wiradjuri and Gundungurra people present, but there were few openings for connecting Aboriginal histories to these discussions. A seasoned convenor, Kath Schilling had arranged the program so that I would open the afternoon session by telling the story of Windradyne and his crossing of the Blue Mountains west-to-east, and his friendship with the Suttor family, before she opened the floor to discussion. Conscious that for the first time I would be telling this story back to Wiradjuri people, on the western side of the mountain range, I focussed on telling the story of war and friendship in brief, but from as many perspectives as possible. I knew it was beside the point to analyse its meanings or to emphasise my own interpretations, but I did not fully understand my role in telling *this* story *here* until after I'd finished. Windradyne's story had opened up possibilities. Kath introduced Bill Allen and a number of other Wiradjuri and Gundungarra people to the audience, and they took the stage to talk about language and history. No one now needed to demonstrate the relevance of Aboriginal histories to the crossing of the Blue Mountains – Windradyne's story had made the connection; the Wiradjuri and Gundungarra Elders were free to talk about the cultural and historical matters most important to them. The audience of mostly non-Indigenous history enthusiasts listened with warmth perhaps partly because of the inclusive space opened up by the narration of the Suttor family's friendship with Windradyne. As Mark McKenna has observed, it is not enough for a new kind of history to be made and told once; rather, it is necessary to 'retain and repeat' histories that recognise the presence of Aboriginal people and open opportunities for dialogue in conversation after conversation.[13]

Critical histories, re-visiting the sources, questioning accepted understandings of the past, and investigating afresh the relationships of people to place, have been vital in the recognition of Aboriginal dispossession and survival, and in the ongoing process of reconciling 'Australia and its Aboriginal history', as Lorenzo Veracini puts it.[14] But critical history is perhaps not the only kind of history-making that can be a rallying point for change, and for ending the 'silences and denial' that are a barrier to thinking about Aboriginal people's claims to the places in which non-Indigenous Australians also live. Particularly on a local scale, a transformed 'common sense' may also come about through the affirmative

[13] Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point* (Sydney, NSW: UNSW Press, 2002), p. 220-1.

[14] Veracini gives an account of the impact on the public sphere, and in legal decisions, of historians working to bring together apparent oppositions in Australian history such as 'invasion' and 'settlement', 'resistance' and 'accommodation', 'genocide' and 'survival', and 'colonial' and 'contemporary' pasts. He argues that this conceptual 'incorporation' of oppositions through the examination of regional and thematic histories (that are both 'critical' and 'synthetic'), has gradually ushered a basic recognition of Aboriginal pasts, presents and futures beyond debate and into public consciousness. Lorenzo Veracini, 'Of a "contested ground" and an "indelible stain": a difficult reconciliation between Australia and its Aboriginal history during the 1990s and 2000s', *Aboriginal History* 27 (2003), pp. 224-239.

retelling of the stories with which people are already familiar in the changing contexts created by critical histories and social activism, as well as law, policy and local economies.[15]

The national reconciliation movement has given a new intensity of life to stories of Aboriginal-settler friendship, and a greater urgency as potential beacons of hope, 'lighting the way' to a new future.[16] Each of these stories has been touched by the reconciliation zeitgeist, which has popularised the concept of sharing histories, and set up expectations about history's power to heal. My approach has not led me to make comprehensive studies of the aspirations and actions of particular communities engaging with histories of healing. Rather, the outcomes are defined by the lives of these four stories, via which history-makers have acted out desires and anxieties linked to reconciliation using inherited materials. These story biographies show that there is no simple answer to the relationship between history and reconciliation. They illustrate how complex matters of remembering and forgetting are, and how interwoven the sharing of histories is with practices of history making.

A fresh start in history-making is part of reconciliation rhetoric – a review of the *First Australians* series was titled 'Unearthing our first voices', as if the truth of the past had been kept safe underground and could be experienced afresh in the present, after knocking off some soil.[17] But as the meaning of Stanner's 'Great Australian Silence' and our emergence from it have been further reassessed, the call to cease forgetting and to instead remember Aboriginal history has begun to look oversimplified.[18] The four story biographies narrated in

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[15] Mark McKenna made recommendations for accessible, affirmative public history making of this kind for the south-eastern corner of NSW, including dual naming of landscape features and the commemoration of some of the region's important Aboriginal residents, McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point*, pp. 223-7. Bain Attwood has argued that in contexts outside academia, there is often only space to put across a single, clear message, so the best approach may be to emphasise 'compromise' itself. Public histories such as the City of Sydney's 'Barani/ Barrabugu (Yesterday/ Tomorrow)' walking tour, and the Australian National University's 'Deepening histories of place' project take this approach to communicating complexity with simplicity by bringing interconnected histories of place to life through innovative interpretation materials. Bain Attwood, *In the Age of Mabo* (1996) cited in Veracini, 'Of a "contested ground" and an "indelible stain", p. 230; *Barani/Barrabugu (Yesterday/Tomorrow): Sydney's Aboriginal Journey* (City of Sydney with the City's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel, June 2011); Description of the 'Deepening Histories of Place' research project, Australian National University, Australian Centre for Indigenous History, Research pages, < http://acih.anu.edu.au/research/project/deepening-histories-place>, viewed 22 April 2012.

[16] To quote the title of Dianne Johnson's book, *Lighting the way: reconciliation stories* (Annandale, NSW: Federation Press, 2002).

[17] *The Canberra Times*, 14th October 2008. Prime Minister Rudd, in his Apology to the Stolen Generations, proposed a new start both in history and in history-making: 'Let us turn this page together: Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, government and opposition, Commonwealth and state, and write this new chapter in our nation's story together', Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website, 'Speech by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to the Parliament', 13th February 2008, <http://www.dfat.gov.au/indigenous/apology-to-stolen-generations/rudd_speech.html > viewed 27th March 2012. For a discussion of these metaphors and impulses see, Paula Hamilton, 'Memory studies and cultural history' in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White eds., *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003), pp. 95-6.

[18] See, for example, Mitchell Rolls, 'Why Didn't You Listen: White Noise and Black History', *Aboriginal History* 34 (2010), pp. 11-33; Ann Curthoys, 'WEH Stanner and the historians' in Melinda Hinkson and Jeremy Beckett eds., *An Appreciation of Difference: WEH Stanner and Aboriginal Australia*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2008), pp. 233-250.

this thesis show an intricate relationship between fresh perspectives and old stories. As particular stories about the past, they have never been completely assimilated to the values or demands of the unfolding present. Each story embodies a complex inheritance of genres formed and re-formed by many generations, symbols tinged with nineteenth century ideas about race, trajectories set by older moral compasses. The condemnation of Bennelong by some of his contemporaries continued to resonate via (scientifically defunct but socially fecund) diagnoses of 'degeneration' and 'race suicide' by historians and anthropologists of the post-war decades. Recent renditions of a failed Bennelong, re-examined in the light of reconciliation, forge fresh meanings even as they put back into circulation some of these still-powerful associations. History-makers seldom reflect on the shaping of their stories by past relationships, resulting in unpredictable and multiple meanings in the present as stories continue to speak of the ways in which they were formed at the same time as they address current concerns. The heritage embodied in historical stories is not a chosen heritage, like the canonical 'national inheritance' John Howard would have liked all Australians to subscribe to.[19] Rather, it is a 'common sense' in which family, local and national concerns are combined, and which is played out across local landscapes. A reconciliatory 'shared history' may be a hegemonic notion, not entirely different from a 'national inheritance', but it is also an unrealistic one: layer upon layer of smaller histories would precede and follow any such overarching narrative, slowly modifying and multiplying meaning.

The old shapes are not rigid. Marcia Langton found that the cinematic Aboriginal 'tracker', a stock character of cultural difference and subordination in Australian films of the 1940s-1960s, with a significant role in 'myths of Australian nationhood', has been subject to 'cultural reconsideration'. In films such as *One Night the Moon*, *The Tracker* and *Rabbit Proof Fence* the tracker has instead become a character which animates 'national tensions'.[20] David Gulpillil and others have been able to play the role of tracker in a way that is recognisable against the background of that older cultural vocabulary, at the same time as broadening it in a context in which the parameters of film itself as well as the relationships between actors and audiences have changed.[21] The same is true of many of the roles, genres and symbols that have been explored in this thesis. The warrior, the interpreter, the castaway, the friend have all been transformed by changing contexts and by the history-making of Aboriginal people that increasingly claims attention in public forums.

[19] Mark McKenna, 'Australian history and the Australian "national inheritance"', *Australian Cultural History* 27, no.1 (April 2009), pp. 1-12.

[20] Marcia Langton, 'Out from the Shadows', *Meanjin* 65, no. 1 (2006), pp. 57-9.

[21] Langton, 'Out from the Shadows', pp. 59-60.

When Aboriginal artist Robert Paul painted a mural telling Morrill's story centred on a studio portrait that had perhaps marked Morrill's own 'return to civilisation', he told this story in a way that is indeed instantly recognisable. To interpret his use of the image as 'appropriation' might suggest that he had felt it necessary to 'steal' this image and its story from local white historians and to rehabilitate it by re-representing Morrill from an Aboriginal perspective.[22] But there is no reason to believe that the portrait is contested in this way. It has undeniably played a role in white histories that have continued to affirm an Aboriginal absence, but it is also the portrait of a man whom Birri-gubba people's ancestors adopted and who attested to their presence and culture. These incommensurable meanings can sit down side by side around Paul's mural, as on Bill Ashcroft's 'verandahs' of meaning, where post-colonial stories (all stories since the foundation of a colony) look inwards as well as outwards. Each perspective creates its own verandah which joins it with, as well as delineates it from, others.[23] As an important part of a local social knowledge, the same story can be told to forget or to remember Aboriginal histories and presence.

These four story biographies show Aboriginal and non-Indigenous storytellers at times creating distinct forms of 'common sense' using an overlapping store of images and narratives. This is a dimension of 'sharing histories' that warrants further attention. The 'separate griefs' of Kath Walker and Judith Wright coincide at times in a shared vocabulary of loss, and both draw on the historiography of Aboriginal dispossession and environmental destruction that formed part of the currency of their relationship. Recently, of course, there has been much less certainty about whether this language of loss can properly belong to both women at the same time. There is perhaps no clear demarcation between this sharing in 'overlapping' meaning and the ongoing appropriation of Aboriginal meaning and knowledge for the cultural and economic gain of dominant non-Indigenous groups, particularly where stories of cross-cultural collaboration and friendship are concerned.[24] However it cannot be avoided and needs to be better understood. In turn, a more thorough recognition of the many ways in which Aboriginal and non-Indigenous interests overlap, at times in contest, but often able to co-exist, in story as well as in land, may help to break

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[22] Meaghan Morris reminds the scholar with an enthusiasm for the postmodern that life simply is intertextual. Why should we be surprised when an image or a story is reused by another party? It is perhaps only the scholar who selectively deems this kind of reuse transgressive by designating it 'appropriation', Morris, 'Tooth and Claw', p. 123.

[23] Bill Ashcroft, 'Excess: Post Colonialism and the Verandahs of Meaning' in Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson eds., *De-scribing Empire: post-colonialism and textuality* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 33-44.

[24] As Tony Birch finds in his study of the restoration of Aboriginal names to the Grampians, Victoria, the long tradition of settler history-makers using Aboriginal cultural knowledge to lengthen their own histories in a place and to dis-place Aboriginal people is not necessarily countered by ostensibly collaborative history-making, but can also be perpetuated thereby, Tony Birch, '"Nothing has changed": the making and unmaking of Koori culture', *Meanjin* 51, no.2 (Winter 1992), pp. 107-118.

down the still-robust barriers in non-Indigenous minds and management practices to sharing access to the places across which these stories were, and still are, played out.[25]

Heather Goodall calls for 'open-ended' spaces in which matters of reconciliation, apology, shame and responsibility can be worked on in public. Because these matters are so complex and difficult to articulate literally, she feels that spaces of 'evocation' are acutely important.[26] These four stories of friendship, diplomacy and adoption, and many more like them, can be understood as such open-ended spaces, in which history, understandings of landscape, public space and social relationships are negotiated and re-negotiated in an ongoing way. Many local tellers of Morrill's story do not embrace Noel Loos' idea that they might stand together proud of a common ancestor. Yet the storytelling of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people in the Bowen-Townsville region interacts through telling this story in a mutually recognisable way, creating opportunities for diffuse, and diverse, personal exchanges, some of which are bound to be uncomfortable, and some imbricated with the perpetuation of a social, political and economic status quo, in which the recognition of Birri-gubba shares is not secure. The stories of Windradyne and William Suttor cross paths in an enigmatic but powerful way at Windradyne's resting place, forming the foundation for an agreement about the custodianship of land, an agreement which perhaps achieves much more than simply actualising reconciliation aspirations. At the same time, though, the meaning of this space of sharing for Wiradjuri people is much more complex than an affirmation of the past goodwill between William Suttor and Windradyne. The results of negotiations at *Brucedale* are inseparable from a chequered landscape of recognition and denial, sharing and segregation across Wiradjuri country. The story of Bennelong's friendship with the colony and its consequences perhaps functions as a space for an ongoing popular and public dialogue about the dangers of sharing pasts and histories. As a space of 'evocation' the story accommodates multiple and changing meanings, allowing for communication across a range of scales and on literal and metaphorical planes. Bennelong's story is often about Sydney and about the recognition and understanding of Aboriginal experiences of and claims to urban space, but also functions as a founding parable through

[25] While the Native Title Act has provided a basis for a growing awareness that Aboriginal people have moral and legal rights in land, and fostered a 'climate of constructive agreement-making' beyond the limits of the Act itself, there remains a great reluctance to enter into negotiations even on a small scale when there is no legal or economic imperative. The Voluntary Conservation Agreement over Windradyne's Grave, as I have already mentioned, is one of a very few such agreements that recognise cultural values. A NSW government program aimed at encouraging land owners to enter into similar agreements resulted in an almost complete lack of success, Andrew Collett, 'Discussion Paper Relating to the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988 (SA)', for the Government of South Australia, Department of Premier and Cabinet, December 2008, p. 17; James F. Weiner, Luke Godwin and Scott L'Oste-Brown, 'Australian Aboriginal heritage and native title: an example of contemporary indigenous connection to country in central Queensland' (Perth: National Native Title Tribunal Occasional Papers Series, 2002), p. 7; Conversation with Denis Byrne and Steve Brown, Office of Environment and Heritage, 18th April, 2012.

[26] Heather Goodall, 'Too early yet or not soon enough?: reflections on sharing histories as process', *Australian Historical Studies* 33, no.118, (2002), pp. 17-23.

which the dilemmas and tensions in cross-cultural relationships are continually played out in the telling, often on a national or even transnational scale. Similarly, Oodgeroo and Judith's friendship, as presented by the friends themselves, continues to be a place where historians and other intellectuals debate the possibilities for cross-cultural friendship and its representation, and the place of mourning and hope, sharing and self-determination in pasts, presents and futures in which Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians have a share.

Each of these stories remains in the process of telling. Wesley Enoch's play *I am Eora* was performed as part of the Sydney Festival just as I was finishing this thesis. Enoch has drawn on historiography that has contrasted Bennelong and Pemulwuy for decades, and has reflected on Bennelong's changing relevance to Aboriginal people in a way that could perhaps only have been expressed in theatre. Through country-blues and the well-known actor Jack Charles, Bennelong's character interacts with the diverse Aboriginal 'nation' Enoch brings to the stage. I offer these four story biographies as a continuation of this process of re-telling, in the hope that they will yield insight not only into the lives of these particular stories, but also into the function of storytelling itself, into the evolving relationship of academic history-making with public, popular, local and family histories, and into the processes of sharing histories in our postcolonial world.

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Dilys Maltby (2nd December 2010).

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