

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER: REPRESENTATIONS OF
AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES IN THE PUBLISHED WORKS OF
COLONIAL WOMEN WRITERS

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been previously submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any university or other institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Barbara Dawson

December 2007

Notice to Indigenous Readers

Some nineteenth and early twentieth-century words and phrases quoted in this thesis are considered offensive by today's standards. In repeating these words I mean no disrespect nor wish to cause any offence to Aboriginal people.

Abstract

This thesis explores aspects of identity, gender and race in the narratives of six white women who wrote about their experiences with Australian Aborigines. Five of the works relate to nineteenth-century frontier encounters, described by middle-class, genteel women who had travelled to distant locations. The sixth (colonial-born) woman wrote about life in outback Queensland in both the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Her perceptions and opinions act as a foil to the five other texts, written by British-born authors.

My analysis of these works takes into account current colonial racial attitudes and the nineteenth-century utilitarian urge to 'educate'. It involves discussion of the influences during the nineteenth century of the Enlightenment idea of 'man's place in nature', of evangelical Christianity and the role of underlying notions of race based on scientific theories. All these aspects inform the women's works, directly or indirectly. While reflecting ideas about Aborigines expressed in male colonial narratives, these female writers deal with their relationship with Aborigines from a woman's perspective. I have researched the women's social and economic backgrounds in order to investigate biographical factors which lay behind their racial views and perceptions.

The thesis explores the influences of publishers' requirements and reader expectations on the way Aborigines were represented in published works. The writer's need to entertain her audience, as well as to 'educate' them, often led her to incorporate the traits and language of popular literary trends. Two of these were English Victorian romantic fiction, and the 'ripping yarn' adventure narrative, popular from the late nineteenth century. The incorporation of these literary genres often resulted in conflicting messages, and a confused and ambivalent rendition of Aborigines.

Within the dynamics of the male power structure at the frontier, these selected female narratives offer another perspective on interracial relations. The six texts refer to the fractious climate of colonisation. They are told by women mostly constrained within the expectations of ladylike decorum and often strongly influenced by the abiding literary contexts of the nineteenth century. What the writings show is that as women grew to know Indigenous people as individuals, representations of Indigenous humanity, agency and authority replace racial clichés and stereotypes, and literary imperatives.

What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.

T.S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton', *Four Quartets*.

Contents

List of Maps	viii
List of Illustrations	viii
Acknowledgements	xi
Introduction	1
1. Sowing the Seeds for Nineteenth-century and Early Twentieth-century Women's Writing	23
PART A: Adventurers	
2. Influences: Early Perceptions of Aborigines: Eliza Fraser	63
3. Literary Excesses: Eliza Davies : Imagination and Fabrication	99
4. Queensland Frontier Adventure: Emily Cowl : Excitement and Humour	141
PART B: Settlers	
5. An Early, Short-term Settler: Katherine Kirkland : Silences	193
6. Mary McConnel : Motivated by Paternalism and Evangelism	233
7. Australian-born Settler: Rose Scott Cowen : Bridging the Racial Divide?	283
Conclusion	323
Abbreviations	333
Appendix A	334
Appendix B	336
Bibliography	339

List of Maps

Map 1: Location of regional maps	xiv
Map 2: Eliza Fraser	62
Map 3: Eliza Davies	98
Map 4: Emily Cowl	140
Map 5: Katherine Kirkland	192
Map 6: Mary McConnel	232
Map 7: Rose Scott Cowen	282

List of Illustrations

Engraving of Eliza Fraser (John Curtis, <i>The Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle</i> , 1838).	62
The long trek south, Fraser Island (Barbara Dawson, July 2005).	72
The soggy, boggy ground on the banks of the Noosa River near Fig Tree Point where Eliza Fraser is thought to have been found (Barbara Dawson, July 2005).	74
Eliza Davies (Frontispiece, <i>Story of an Earnest Life</i>).	98
Eliza Davies in boat, Aborigines left foreground (?J.M. Skipper, ‘Extreme point at the junction of the Murray with Lake Alexandrina. Victoria the Lake in the distance. Expedition going up the River, December 1839’, from a sketch by Governor Gawler).	111

Thomas and Emily Cowl, ‘The Event of their Golden Wedding’ (<i>Some of My Experiences</i>).	142
Katherine Hamilton, later Kirkland (J.K. Wilson, reproduced in Hugh Anderson. <i>The Flowers of the Field</i> , 1969).	192
Katherine Kirkland, ‘In Her Later Years’ (<i>Life in the Bush</i> , c.1995).	196
Trawalla homestead (Barbara Dawson, August 2004).	202
Katherine’s dairy (Barbara Dawson, August 2004).	207
David and Mary McConnel (<i>Memories of Days long gone by</i>).	232
Bulimba homestead, now located in the Brisbane suburb, Bulimba (Barbara Dawson, June 2006).	239
Cressbrook homestead, Dungibara left foreground (Conrad Martens 1851, reproduced in Susanna De Vries, <i>Strength of Spirit: Pioneering Women of Achievement from First Fleet to Federation</i> , 1995).	248
Mary McConnel with her family at Cressbrook, 1885 (John Oxley Library).	250
Rose Scott Cowen (Frontispiece, <i>Crossing Dry Creeks</i>).	282
Farm buildings, Tambo station (Barbara Dawson, June 2006).	285
‘My beloved West’ (Barbara Dawson, June 2006).	298

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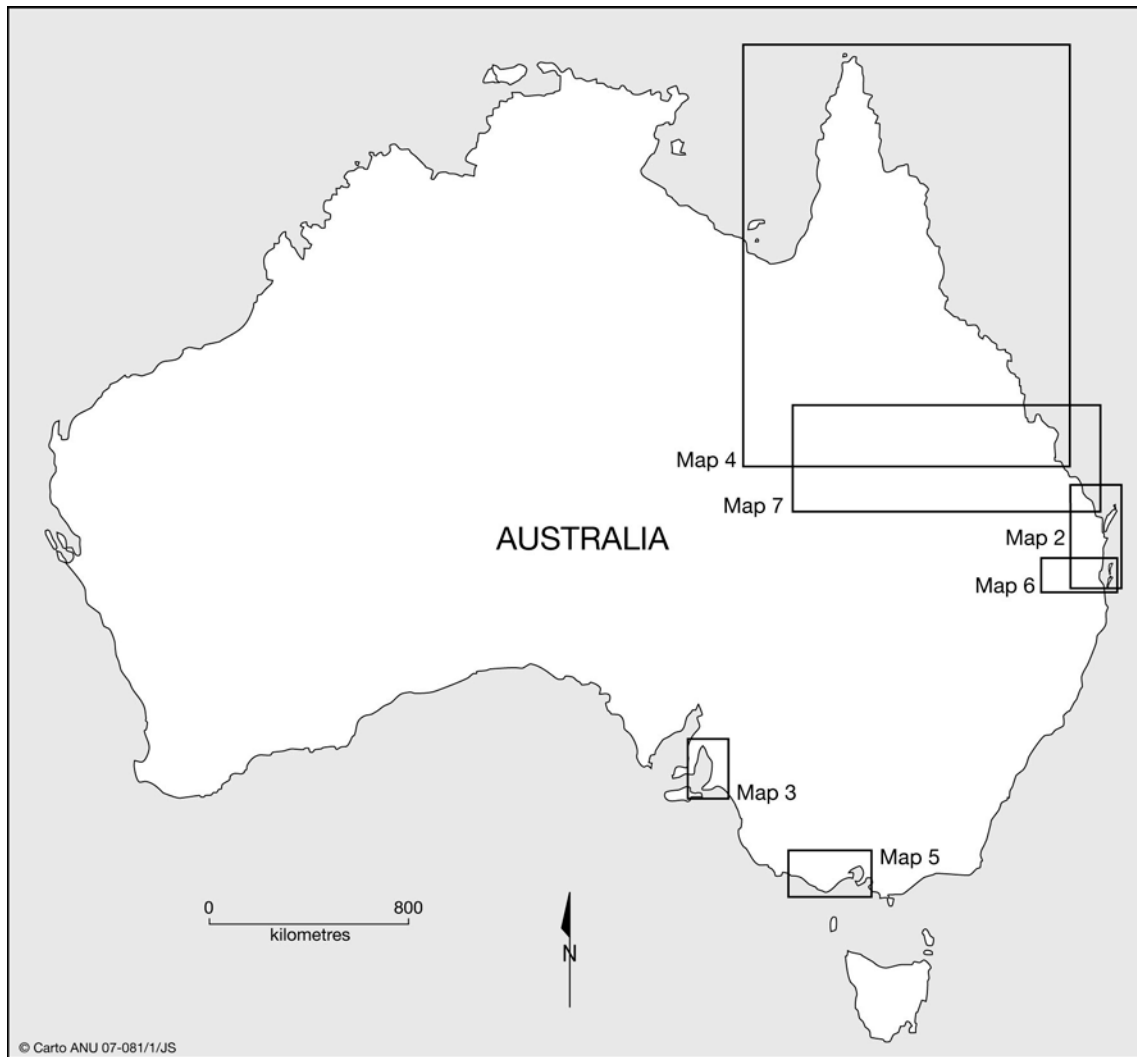
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Map 1: Location of regional maps

Introduction

Aims and Justification

‘it would be worthwhile to pursue and describe ... the gamut of relationships between White and Aboriginal women in Australia’.¹

This thesis addresses Kay Saunders’ appeal that ‘no real understanding of the complexity of Australian history can emerge until question of the interrelationship of race, class, gender and region are systematically addressed’. It also acknowledges her plaint that, ‘[u]ntil then all women will remain white and Black women will exist on the margins’.² While I have referred to the frontiers of other countries, the focus of investigation in this thesis is six authors’ accounts of their day-to-day life on Australian frontiers.³

My study deals with published works, in which the projection of social and cultural norms is bound up with the authors’ projected identity.⁴ I therefore pay particular attention to the values and beliefs behind the women’s representations. Because the works have been published, I assess the extent to which the authors presented their writing to accommodate reader acceptance, taste and enjoyment, and their expectation to be ‘informed’ and entertained. By investigating the considerations of author and publisher, I work towards an understanding of the way in which perceptions of Aborigines persisted over time. My

¹ Myrna Tonkinson, ‘Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude? Black Women and White Women on the Australian Frontier’ in *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 12, 1988, p. 39.

² Kay Saunders, ‘All the Women Were White? Some Thoughts on Analysing Race, Class and Gender in Australian History’, in *Women/Australia/Theory: Special Issue of Hecate*, Volume 17, Number 1, 1991, p. 160.

³ ‘Frontier’, an Old French-Middle English word used in the United States of America to refer to that part of the country which formed the border of its settled or ‘uninhabited’ regions, is a term inapplicable to the notion of country for Indigenous people, as pointed out to me by Dr Gordon Briscoe. It has been used, however, in Australian English since 1840 to describe the edge of occupation, J.M. Arthur, *The Default Country: A Lexical Cartography of Twentieth-Century Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2003, p. 33. As it has become accepted in Australian colonial histories, I have used it in this thesis. Tom Griffiths offers Australian alternatives, including ‘the outback’, Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds), *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, Melbourne University Press (henceforth MUP), 1997, p. 10.

⁴ Cf. Tanya Dalziel, ‘“We should try, while there is yet time, to gather all the information possible of a race dying out”: Unsettling Sympathetic Women’, in *Australian Feminist Studies*, Volume 17, No. 39, 2002, p. 329, pp. 338-39. I do not include historical novels such as Catherine Martin’s *An Australian Girl* (1890) or Katharine Susannah Prichard’s *Coonardoo* (1928) in my chosen category.

analysis also explores influences which broke down the accepted racial views of Indigenous people to reveal common elements of humanity.

I have divided my thesis into two parts (Adventurers and Settlers) as a way of differentiating between short-term ‘visitors’ to a frontier location, and women who settled in rural outposts. This division allows me to examine some of the differences in the women’s interpretations. Those between the three adventurers and the three settlers rested on the ephemeral nature of the adventurers’ experiences with Indigenous people, compared with the settlers’ longer-term relationship with them. I hope to show that the settlers’ dependence upon and use of the services supplied by Aboriginal people significantly influenced their representations of them. The differing circumstances of the settler women, however, meant that I could assess these differences in the light of the influences which determined what each one chose to say, (and how she chose to say it).

My interest in colonial rural women began when writing a Master of Arts thesis on nineteenth-century land settlement on the New South Wales southern Monaro property, Bibbenluke.⁵ Immersed in the life of squatters, selectors, shepherds and shearers as revealed in station records, sheep diaries and the correspondence flowing freely between the station manager and absentee owner, I keenly felt the omission of the mention of women, beyond the occasional scant reference to the employment of a housekeeper, cook or laundress. I was intrigued. What did they do? How did they cope?

Consulting Joy Hooton and Kay Walsh’s *Australian Autobiographical Narratives: an annotated bibliography*,⁶ I found that numerous women had recorded their experiences of colonial Australia. My focus was drawn to the fact that many wrote about their contact with Aborigines, particularly with Aboriginal women. From a large selection of writing possible to explore, I chose six women (all British) whose narratives offered a rich resource for investigation. All wrote in some detail on their impressions, opinions and attitudes concerning Indigenous people on Australia’s frontiers. My choice focused on narratives

⁵ Barbara Dawson, ‘Holding Selectors at Bay: An Analysis of the Robertson Land Acts on the Property of Bibbenluke in the Southern Monaro 1861-1884’, M.A. Thesis, ANU, 1996.

⁶ Kay Walsh and Joy Hooton, *Australian Autobiographical Narratives: An annotated bibliography*, Volume 1: To 1850, Australian Scholarly Editions Centre, University College, ADFA, Canberra, 1993; Volume 2, 1850-1900, 1998.

which either exemplified current social and racial attitudes, or moved in perception away from these constraints. The extent to which the writers adhered to racial clichés or rejected them forms the basis of the thesis argument.

Some historians have focused research on the dynamics of interracial violence.⁷ Those who have looked at specific regions include R.H.W. Reece (New South Wales), Michael Christie (Victoria), Neville Green (south-west Western Australia and the Kimberley), Lyndall Ryan (Tasmania), Raymond Evans (Queensland) and Noel Loos (North Queensland).⁸ Others, such as Henry Reynolds, Andrew Markus, Bain Attwood, Raymond Evans and Richard Broome, have applied a wider lens to frontier conflict. While my thesis acknowledges—and to some degree, explores—frontier violence, it focuses on relationships between white women and Aborigines, particularly Indigenous women. By so doing, it adds to the work, cited by editor, Lynette Russell, in *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies*, of Ann McGrath, Bain Attwood, Marie Fels, Bob Reece and John Mulvaney, who have explored the ‘co-operative and collaborative aspects of past colonial black-white relations’.⁹

During the 1980s and 1990s the literary genre investigating the lives of colonial Australian women consisted largely of the publication of letters and diaries, often presented as anthologies or accompanied by commentary. These included Patricia Clarke’s *The Governesses: Letters From The Colonies 1862-1882* (1985), *A Colonial Woman: The Life and Times of Mary Braidwood Mowle, 1827-1857* (1986), *Pen Portraits: women writers*

⁷ Nineteenth-century commentators indicted the settlers’ role in frontier conflict. Cf., for example, *The Way We Civilise; Black and White; The Native Police; A Series of Articles and Letters Reprinted from the Queenslander*, G. and J. Black, Brisbane, 1880; and George William Rusden’s *History of Australia* (1883).

⁸ R.H.W. Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists: Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830s and 1840s*, University of Sydney Press, 1974; M.F. Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria, 1835-86*, SUP, 1979; Neville Green, *Broken Spears: Aborigines and Europeans in the southwest of Australia*, Focus Education Services, Perth, 1984; Green, *Aborigines of the Albany Region*, University of Western Australia Press, 1989; Green, *The Forrest River Massacres*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1995; Lyndall Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996; Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*, UQP, 1988, 1993; Noel Loos, *Invasion and Resistance: Aboriginal-European Relations on the North Queensland Frontier 1861-1897*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1982.

⁹ Lynette Russell (ed.), *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies*, Manchester University Press, 2001, p. 5.

and journalists in nineteenth century Australia (1988), *Pioneer Writer: the life of Louisa Atkinson, novelist, journalist, naturalist* (1990) and (with Dale Spender) *Life Lines: Australian women's letters & diaries 1788-1840* (1992); Fiona Giles' edition, *From The Verandah: Stories of love and landscape by nineteenth century Australian women* (1987); Lynne Spender's *Her Selection: Writings by Nineteenth-Century Australian Women* (1988) and Debra Adelaide's *A Bright and Fiery Troop: Australian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (1988); Dale Spender's *The Penguin Anthology of Australian Women's Writing* (1988); Elizabeth Lawson's *Louisa Atkinson: The Distant Sound of Native Voices* (1989); and Lucy Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady: Voices from the Australian Bush* (1984), *A face in the glass: The journal and life of Annie Baxter Dawbin* (1992), and her edition of *The Journal of Annie Baxter Dawbin 1858-1868* (1998).¹⁰ *The Letters of Rachel Henning*, first published by *The Bulletin* in 1951-52 and *Annabella Boswell's Journal: An Account of Early Port Macquarie* (1965) were two earlier publications which fitted this genre. These studies form a body of work about colonial women's experiences to which other studies could contribute.

In 1977, historian Anne Allingham had written that she regretted not adding women, or Aborigines, to the 'male dominant squatting record' of North Queensland.¹¹ In 1985, Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly further observed that: 'Perhaps the most consistently invisible women in conventional historical accounts ... have been Aboriginal'.¹² In the past thirty years, historians have increasingly addressed this absence, with white feminist historians such as Patricia Grimshaw, Ann McGrath, Kay Saunders, Lyndall Ryan and Lyn

¹⁰ Also, Debra Adelaide, *Australian Women Writers: A Bibliographic Guide*, Pandora Press, London, 1988, and *Bibliography of Australian Women's Literature 1795-1990: a listing of fiction, poetry drama and non-fiction published in monograph form arranged alphabetically by author*, D.W. Thorpe in association with National Centre for Australian Studies, Port Melbourne, 1991.

¹¹ Anne Allingham, "*Taming the Wilderness*": *the First Decade of Pastoral Settlement in the Kennedy District*, History Department, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1977, p. 221.

¹² Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly, *Double Time: Women in Victoria-150 years*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1985. p. viii. Jan Pettman's study into 'intersections of race, ethnicity, class and gender' supports this statement, Jan Pettman, *Living in the Margins: Racism, sexism and feminism in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1992, p. vii, p. 18.

Riddett specifically investigating the subject of black-white female relationships.¹³ In 1992, Mary Anne Jebb and Anna Haebich summarised the current historiography in ‘Across the Great Divide: Gender Relations on Australian Frontiers’ and threw out a challenge to understand ‘fully’ gender relationships of the frontier.¹⁴ In the same publication, Jackie Huggins and Thom Blake lamented the lack of studies by academic historians on interracial female relationships, while citing the growing body of work by Indigenous women writing of their own experiences.¹⁵ A recent book contributing to this latter genre is *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*.¹⁶ My study adds to this growing body of work, exploring the relationships between white women and Aborigines.

Historical and anthropological studies have either endorsed the ‘accepted versions’¹⁷ that white women were exploitative in their attitudes towards black women, or have chosen to focus on interracial female relationships which centred on shared outdoor activities such as bush walks, Indigenous food foraging trips or swimming expeditions to the river or waterhole. Helen Thomson identified this form of relationship with her comment that:

[White women’s] sense of sisterhood with black women, imperfect though it may be, was expressed most

¹³ Patricia Grimshaw, ‘Aboriginal women: a study of cultural contact’, in Norma Grieve and Patricia Grimshaw (eds), *Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1981; Lyndall Ryan, ‘Aboriginal Women and Agency in the Process of Conquest: A Review of Some Recent Work’, in *Australian Feminist Studies*, No. 2, Autumn 1986, pp. 35-43; Ann McGrath, ‘Europeans and Aborigines’, in Neville Meaney (ed.), *Under New Heavens: Cultural Transmissions and the Making of Australia*, Heinemann Educational Australia, Melbourne, 1989; Kay Saunders, ‘All The Women Were White? Some Thoughts on Analysing Race, Class and Gender in Australian History’, in Carole Ferrier (ed.), *Women/Australia/Theory: Special Issue of Hecate*, Hecate Press in association with the Unit for Women, Ideology and Culture Research (WICR), St Lucia, Queensland, Volume 17, Number 1, 1991, pp. 157-160; Marilyn Lake, ‘Colonised and Colonising: the white Australian feminist subject’, in *Women’s History Review*, Volume 2, Number. 3, 1993, pp. 377-386; Lyn Riddett, “‘Watch the White Women Fade’: Aboriginal and White Women in the Northern Territory 1870-1940’, in *Hecate*, Volume. 19. no. 1, 1993, pp. 73-92.

¹⁴ Mary Anne Jebb and Anna Haebich, ‘Across the Great Divide: Gender Relations on Australian Frontiers’, in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Department of History, The University of Queensland, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1992, p. 30.

¹⁵ Jackie Huggins and Thom Blake, ‘Protection or Persecution? Gender Relations in the Era of Racial Segregation’, Saunders and Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia*, p. 53, pp. 56-57.

¹⁶ Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins & Fiona Paisley (eds), *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2005.

¹⁷ Kay Ferres (ed.), *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1993, p. 3.

powerfully through a shared, benign relationship with the natural world, in contrast to the exploitative violence of men.¹⁸

Some of the women who wrote of these relationships were Katie Langloh Parker (later, Catherine Stow) in the 1880s and 1890s at Bangate, near Angledool, close to the Queensland border in north-western New South Wales; Ethel Hassell, at Jarramungup, 170 kilometres north-east of Albany, Western Australia, during the 1880s; and Jeannie Gunn of Elsey Station near Katherine in the Northern Territory, in the first years of the twentieth century. All these women, however, were also exploiters of Indigenous women whom they considered to be lower in status and unworthy to enter the station homestead, except as domestic servants. None of these women has been chosen for analysis in this thesis although their experiences, attitudes and racial perceptions enter my argument by way of comparative analyses. The authors I have chosen revealed the complexity of black-white relations. Furthermore, their representations of these relationships allowed for a close analysis of the influences and motives behind their writing.

Anthropologist Myrna Tonkinson's 'Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude? Black women and White Women on the Australian Frontier'¹⁹ gave me questions to ask and hypotheses to explore. In her quest to 'discover and explain evidence for and against relationships of sisterhood' which she defines as 'friendship based on equality' between Aboriginal and white women, Tonkinson wrote that:

There is surprisingly little detail in the literature on relationships of any kind between [black and white] women ... It is more common to find references to those relationships between women which were mediated through men, as the objects of sexual jealousy or as makers of invidious comparisons ... However, the evidence has by no means been exhaustively explored ... ²⁰

Although Tonkinson acknowledged that relationships between settlers and Aboriginal men, white men and Aboriginal women, and individual settlers and an undifferentiated group of

¹⁸ Helen Thomson, 'Gardening in the Never-Never: Women Writers and the Bush', in Ferres (ed.), *The Time to Write*, pp. 35-36.

¹⁹ Tonkinson, 'Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?', *Aboriginal History*, No. 12, 1-2, 1988, pp. 27-39.

²⁰ Tonkinson, 'Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?', p. 39.

Aborigines ('natives') had all entered published works, she called for an intensive examination of interracial female one-to-one relationships in order to redress the historical record as it was at the time of her writing—a challenge which directed my analysis.

In 1996, Patricia Grimshaw and Julie Evans wrote about the contribution of three colonial women writers, Rosa Campbell Praed, Mary Bundock and Katie Langloh Parker. They drew attention to the 'fragmentary alternative readings that contested aspects of the dominant colonial discourse' to identify instances of Aboriginal agency and authority. While not seriously analysing the social and racial influences on their works, the authors acknowledged the contribution to Australian history of Praed, Bundock and Parker in revealing that 'injustice towards Aborigines was involved in the process of settlement'.²¹ My thesis adds to this work by offering further examples of white women's empathy with Aborigines, while also exploring the social and racial influences on their writing.

Again, in 2003, Grimshaw and Evans, along with Ann Standish, investigated the role of Katie Parker in recording Yuwalaraay women's traditional stories. They stated that:

Given ... the paucity of sources on Aborigines coexisting with colonizers in the outback ... we need to revisit these texts as some of the few available sources of understanding Aboriginal women's experiences of colonization.²²

My investigation of women at the frontier not only helps break what the authors saw as 'the great silence about Australian colonialism' with my analysis of six other colonial women and their impressions of Aborigines, it also responds to their call to offer reinterpretations of frontier relationships. My study transcends the 'reciprocity and negotiation'²³ operating between Parker and the Yuwalaraay women to reveal other dynamics in cross-cultural

²¹ Patricia Grimshaw and Julie Evans, 'Colonial Women on Intercultural Frontiers: Rosa Campbell Praed, Mary Bundock and Katie Langloh Parker', in *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 27, Number 106, April 1996, p. 81, p. 95.

²² Julie Evans, Patricia Grimshaw and Ann Standish, 'Caring for Country: Yuwalaraay Women and Attachments to Land on an Australian Colonial Frontier', *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 14, no. 4, Winter 2003, p. 18.

²³ Evans, Grimshaw and Standish, 'Caring for Country', pp. 31-32. Anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner first coined the term 'The Great Australian Silence' when he used it as the title of his second 1968 ABC Boyer Lecture.

association. While acknowledging the women's superior position of power, it explores a variety of relationships existing between individuals. Furthermore, it assesses the factors that influenced the representations.

In my assessment of the three writers who were colonial settlers, I have explored the concept of friendship across cultures, seeking to probe Tonkinson's hypothesis that:

The virtual absence of friendships between Black and White women in colonial Australia, at the same time as sexual relationships between Black women and White men were widespread, is an apparent paradox. Yet it makes sense [because] there is an assumption by the colonisers that they are inherently superior to the colonised ... Since friendship is founded on notions of affinity and equality between individuals, it is not a condition to which colonial settings are conducive.²⁴

In *Philosophy and Friendship*, philosopher Sandra Lynch wrote about the meaning and significance of friendship, identifying and assessing its characteristics. While Lynch does not specifically deal with aspects of friendships crossing races or cultures, her discussion not only accommodates the concept of interracial attachments but also, in her finding that 'toleration of difference' is a key asset in friendship, embraces it within her definition. Through her analysis of philosophical discourse dating back to Aristotle, Lynch asserts that '[d]ifference is celebrated as the most crucial element in friendship', while '[s]hared activity, similarity of interest and of values and reciprocal services are seen as necessary conditions and pleasures of friendship'.²⁵ I will argue that the relationship between Rose Scott Cowen, the sixth of my selected writers, and an Indigenous woman, 'Minnie', fits these criteria.

Some studies of black-white female relationships have not formed part of my investigation. Relationships between women on missions, and works which investigate interracial relationships of the (later) twentieth century are subjects outside the scope of this thesis. Although Rose Cowen wrote about her experiences with Aborigines in the early twentieth century, her childhood and formative years (in which she also lived with Aboriginal people) were in the nineteenth century.

²⁴ Tonkinson, 'Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?', pp. 34-35.

²⁵ Sandra Lynch, *Philosophy and Friendship*, Edinburgh University Press, 2005, pp. 76-77.

Sources

My 'primary' sources are the six published texts. Although four of my authors published their work long after their frontier experiences, three of them (Eliza Davies, Emily Cowl and Mary McConnel) depended on diary notes to which they referred either directly or indirectly, McConnel reproducing entries from her diary into her text. Two others, Eliza Fraser and Katherine Kirkland, recorded their experiences soon after the events they discuss; (and Katherine Kirkland's letters to her mother are thought to have been her primary source). While not referring to the use of notes, the sixth woman, Rose Cowen, who lived most of her life in outback Queensland, has dipped into a wellspring of information about people and places she knew well.

Importantly for my thesis, the narratives I have chosen for analysis are anchored in personal and individual 'real life experiences'. Nevertheless, I have remained aware of the role of memory in the writing of past events, particularly in the publications which have occurred up to forty years after the experiences and impressions represented. Robert Foster, Rick Hosking and Amanda Nettelbeck, for example, have pointed to the manipulation of memory in the creation of the silences which transformed the killing of Aborigines into benign (or comparatively innocent) encounters during colonisation.²⁶ In the case of my writers, intervening years between experiences and publication allowed changing social and racial attitudes to influence their representations. Another contributing factor was the changed expectations of audiences over intervening years.

This thesis is interested in what Paula Hamilton has called the 'essential interdependence between memory and history'; and also in storytelling which Ann Curthoys has stated

²⁶ Robert Foster, Rick Hosking and Amanda Nettelbeck, *Fatal Collisions: The South Australian frontier and the violence of memory*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, South Australia, 2001, pp. 1-2, p. 139.

forms part of 'history's divided identity'.²⁷ I.A. Richards observed that, 'We have to escape from the crude assumption that the only way in which what is past can be repeated is by records being kept', and added that: 'There is no kind of mental activity in which memory does not intervene'.²⁸ Bill Gammage and Wendy Lowenstein's acceptance of the reliability of oral history (sometimes, but not always, 'storytelling'), a form of history which relies on memory, adds support to the role of memory in the recording of history. Gammage further argues that written records are themselves 'partial in origin even before they come to be selected by the historian'. Lowenstein states firmly that, 'if you want the flesh and bones ... ask the people who were alive on that day'.²⁹

Throughout the thesis, I have embraced the texts as examples of 'women's' evidence which can add to and enrich the still emerging picture of life on the Australian frontier. Except for Eliza Fraser, the women were writing for women who, in the nineteenth century made up a large percentage of the reading public. They write about their hardships and their coping strategies; they reflect women's interests and present the context of their life from a woman's viewpoint. The writers divulge small, private details of their everyday lives which, in the case of the settlers, include the intricate exchanges which take place between women, often recorded by way of reproduced dialogue. As the three chosen settlers were isolated from white contemporaries, the women they drew close to were Indigenous women.

Because the writers inhabited different environmental and social frontiers and represented different phases of colonisation, I have included in each chapter a contextual analysis which

²⁷ Paula Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History', in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton (eds), *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, OUP, Melbourne, 1994, p. 12; Ann Curthoys, 'Thinking About History', in Patricia Grimshaw and Diane Kirkby (eds), *Dealing With Difference: Essays in Gender, Culture and History*, History Department, The University of Melbourne, 1997, p. 222. Cf. also, Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath (eds), *Writing Histories: Imagination and Narration*, School of Historical Studies, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, 2000, pp. 1-13, pp. 45-53; and Niel Gunson, 'Review article: Reality, history and hands-on ethnography: the journals of George Augustus Robinson at Port Phillip 1839-1852', in *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 26, 2002, pp. 224-25. Many settler and Indigenous histories rely on reminiscences and storytelling as tools to evaluate and elucidate the past, cf., for example, Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan (eds), *Telling Stories: Indigenous history and memory in Australia and New Zealand*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2001.

²⁸ I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, London; Harcourt, Brace & Co. Inc., New York, 1925, p. 104, p. 106.

²⁹ Quoted in John Murphy, 'The Voice of Memory: history, autobiography and oral memory', in *Historical Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 87, October 1986, p. 162.

relates their documents to the social history of their time and place. One subtext which informs my study is the way in which the writers reported interracial conflict. Their writing therefore provides complementary (female) evidence for the large body of historical work which deals with a male frontier from a man's point of view. By offering views of racial violence from a woman's perspective, my study supplements male reports, thus enabling a broader picture of frontier life, and its interpretations, to emerge.

In a close analysis of the six separate narratives, I explore similarities to identify and formulate how strongly held beliefs continued to influence representations of Aborigines over time. In addressing the differences in writing modes, I offer an interpretation of the factors which lessened the effect of British racial attitudes. This thesis therefore provides a tentative progression of how attitudes towards Aborigines softened under the changing factors of place and time. An important ingredient in this equation was the authors' motivations.

The aim of the thesis is not however to directly compare the narratives. Because the experiences of the six women refer to six different frontiers, a reconstruction of each frontier into which each selected woman entered as an idiosyncratic character, with her own hopes, strengths and prejudices, leaves open threads of meaning from which individual interpretations can follow. At a time when Indigenous men and women are adding their own perspectives to nineteenth-century history,³⁰ my analysis of these colonial texts investigates aspects of Aboriginal authority and humanity which are often overlooked in histories concentrating on racial conflict.

³⁰ Cf., for example, Hazel McKellar (Tom Blake, ed.), *Matya-Mundu: A History of the Aboriginal People of South West Queensland*, Cunnamulla Australian Native Welfare Association, Cunnamulla, 1984; Labumore: Elsie Roughsey, [Paul Memmott and Robyn Horsman, eds], *An Aboriginal Mother Tells of the Old and the New*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1984; Ann Curthoys, 'Identity Crisis: Colonialism, Nation, and Gender in Australian History', in *Gender & History: Special Issue on Gender, Nationalisms and National Identities*, Volume 5, Number 2, Summer 1993, pp. 169-170; also Elizabeth Nelson, Sandra Smith and Patricia Grimshaw (eds), *Letters from Aboriginal Women of Victoria, 1867-1926*, History Department, The University of Melbourne, 2002.

Importance of Place

While 'place' was not a criterion in the selection of the works, it became an important part of the analysis. Five of the women (the exception is Eliza Fraser, whose focus was on her own sad plight) wrote about their surroundings. The representations of landscape of four of these writers contained literary tropes which informed and reflected their racial perceptions. Rose Cowen, the only Australian-born writer in my selection, was the exception. As attitudes to the Australian landscape were associated with attitudes to Aborigines, Cowen's Australian birth is important to my argument.

To put the women's representations into perspective, and 'to see for myself', I visited the sites associated with all six writers. To travel to the places where they lived, to stand on the ground and assess the topography and the (sometimes unchanged) vegetation (in the case of western Queensland) added a geographical dimension which seemed to release an historical reality. Although difficult to pinpoint, it enriched my 'understanding' of, and 'empathy' with, the women who wrote of these places. Assessment of distances: from a river, or along a beach, or 'inland'; and how hot or windy a place may have been, are two examples of how this knowledge increased my understanding of the contingencies of the women's day-to-day life, thereby assisting my analyses.

Chapters

The thesis division into 'Adventurers' and 'Settlers' allowed me to explore differing influences acting upon each group. The 'adventurers' (and, to some extent, also the 'settlers') reflect the trend during the nineteenth century for women to travel, either alone or as wives, to outback, 'unknown', and therefore exciting, places. These women therefore join the genre of 'women travellers', a popular historical genre which I shall briefly outline.

The period from the 1840s until the end of the nineteenth century has been coined the 'age of ... lady travellers'. Women travelled from America to Europe,³¹ from England to

³¹ Alexandra Allen, *Travelling Ladies*, Jupiter, London, 1980, p. 9; Shirley Foster, *American Women Travellers to Europe in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Keele University Press, Staffordshire, 1994, pp. 4-5.

Australia, and from Australia to Britain.³² While many women came as assisted immigrants to the Australian colonies,³³ others arrived independently on quests for adventure, employment opportunities or to improve their marriage prospects,³⁴ as increasing social emancipation offered to women greater independence and opportunity. The ‘tyranny of distance’ which separated Britain from its Australian colonies was reduced in the 1850s with the introduction of the steamship to the Australian run. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 further encouraged women to travel to the southern continent by reducing the duration of the voyage from three to little over one month.³⁵

Examples of female travellers who have become well known through literary representation include Amelia Edwards who toured Egypt from 1873 to 1874; Kate Marsden who travelled through Russia and Siberia in the 1890s to work with leprosy patients; Alexandra David-Neel who travelled to India and Ceylon in the 1890s and later went to Tibet; and Marianne North and Isabella Bird Bishop whose journeys took them to America, Australasia, Asia and Africa. Daisy Bates who lived amongst the Pitjantjatjara people at

³² Ros Pesman, *Duty Free: Australian Women Abroad*, OUP, Melbourne, 1996, and Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonisation, and Modernity*, OUP, 2001, deal with travel after 1870.

³³ The history of female migration to Australia began when the London Emigration Committee organised an assisted immigration scheme from 1833 to 1837 for single, free British women to fill a colonial female labour shortage, Elizabeth Rushen, *Single & Free: Female Migration to Australia, 1833-1837*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2003. Between 1850 and 1900, almost 100,000 single women emigrated from Britain on assisted passages. Various colonial government rendered assistance for immigration of single females at different times during the nineteenth century. The Victorian government offered such assistance from the 1850 to 1873, Jan Gothard, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia*, MUP, 2001, pp. 2-3.

³⁴ Dorothy Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965, p. 3, p. 7; Lisa Chilton, ‘A New Class of Women for the Colonies: *The Imperial Colonist* and the Construction of Empire’, in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Volume XXXI, May 2003, No. 2, p. 48; Bob Reece, ‘Australia, The Beckoning Continent: Nineteenth Century Emigration Literature’, The Trevor Reese Memorial Lecture, 1988, University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Australian Studies Centre, 1988, p. 24.

³⁵ Pesman, *Duty Free*, p. 23.

Ooldea in south-western South Australia in the early twentieth century joins the genre as a well-known example of an Australian female ‘adventurer’.³⁶

The element of ‘strangeness’ became a vital part of the publishable work, the intrepid nature of the trek receiving particular attention. Monica Anderson’s analysis looks at ‘gender, nation, and performance’ as integral parts of the works by women travellers of the late nineteenth century. She found that women presented themselves in ways which reinforced social and cultural expectations of the imperial agenda.³⁷ These criteria formed part of the writing of the women of this thesis.

A corollary of ‘strangeness’ and ‘excitement’ was danger. The works of my three ‘adventurers’ tapped into the popular captivity narratives of nineteenth-century literature. As Angela Woollacott observed, this genre ‘garnered a global market with rapid circulation’.³⁸ In the case of Eliza Fraser, this element was energetically adopted by the chroniclers of her story. My analysis of the ‘adventurers’ therefore contributes to historical debate on the part played by captivity tales in the representation of Indigenous people within an imagined frontier.³⁹ Because the time spent amongst Aborigines by these women was short and their contact more ‘distant’ than the experiences of the settler women, they introduced sensational elements into the portrayal of Aborigines in keeping with the demands of the genre. Unlike these ‘adventurers’, settler women got to know Indigenous people as individuals. I was able therefore to formulate questions about whether (and how much) the development of closer interracial relationships made a difference to the way nineteenth-century women chose to write about Aboriginal people. I was also able to ask

³⁶ Julia Keay, *With Passport and Parasol: The Adventures of Seven Victorian Ladies*, Penguin Books, ABC Books, London, 1990; Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers*, passim; Allen, *Travelling Ladies*, passim; Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: an analysis of women’s travel writing and colonialism*, Routledge, London, 1991, investigates the influences of patriarchy and colonialism on the texts of nineteenth-century women travellers. Dea Birkett’s *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, England, 1989; *Mary Kingsley: Imperial Adventuress*, Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd, Basingstoke, England, 1992; and *Off the Beaten Track: Three Centuries of Women Travellers*, Hardie Grant Books, South Yarra, Victoria, 2004, focus on women ‘explorers’.

³⁷ Monica Anderson, *Women and the Politics of Travel, 1870-1914*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Madison, New Jersey, 2006, p. 13, p. 20.

³⁸ Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, England, 2006, p. 39.

³⁹ Kate Darian-Smith, ‘“Rescuing” Barbara Thompson and Other White Women: Captivity Narratives on Australian Frontiers’, in Kate Darian-Smith, Liz Gunner and Sarah Nuttall (eds), *Text, Theory, Space: Land, literature and history in South Africa and Australia*, Routledge, London, 1996, pp. 99-100.

questions about the associated attitudes to landscape as, unlike my first three writers, the settlers came to express an affection for the local landscape which surrounded their homes.

Chapter 1: Sowing the Seeds for Nineteenth-century and Early Twentieth-century Women's Writing

All six women were ostensibly middle-class ladies of the economically vigorous and expansive British empire. Chapter one addresses the social, racial, scientific and literary ideas of a confident imperial Britain, extended and realised in its colonies.⁴⁰ Appearance and behaviour were important to the identity of genteel women and formed a basis from which they assessed other people. I investigate the influence on their narratives of social expectations, of racial attitudes dependent on religious and scientific ideas, and of literary works. To place their works into context, I also explore changes in racial perceptions amongst early Australian settlers. These considerations form a background to my exploration of the way the women represented interracial relationships.

Chapter 2: Eliza Fraser

I chose to begin my investigation of British women's representation of Australian Aborigines with the brief accounts recorded by Eliza Fraser after what has been carried down through history as her 'rescue' from the Ka'bi people in 1836. Although Eliza's story can be categorised as a 'report', the argument in this chapter rests on the way in which her accounts have been adopted and distorted, not only immediately after her return to 'civilisation', but also in the ensuing years, decades and centuries. I chose to include Eliza's story at the beginning of my thesis in order to explore ways in which her iconic story had influenced and fed the perceptions of the five representations which follow. Just one example of how quickly and firmly Eliza's tale became part of the folklore of 'savage' and 'cruel' Aborigines is found in the first children's book to be published in Australia. Written

⁴⁰ In this way, my thesis reflects Michel Foucault's post-structuralist ideas that statements should be analysed within their historical context.

by Charlotte Barton in 1841, it includes the story of Eliza Fraser's plight in which Aboriginal 'monsters' capture her and treat her with 'wanton barbarities'.⁴¹

Eliza's journey from shipwreck to salvation is a complicated one, not assisted by the conflicting and confusing extant accounts left by her and other survivors. Mainly for this reason, I travelled to Fraser Island (in the winter months of course! when Eliza spent her time there) and walked along the beach she walked along; and imagined how cold her bare skin might have been at night, in order to better understand and appreciate what her ordeal might have entailed. I also visited the northern banks of Lake Cootharaba where she is said to have been found, so that I could put in perspective distances travelled, look at the type of undergrowth vegetation and see the soggy, boggy soil on which her bare feet would have trodden.

Chapter 3: Eliza Davies

My second adventurer was an intrepid traveller, who had circumnavigated the globe twice and who had quite a story to tell! She certainly chose to project herself in this light and to appropriately embellish her narrative with the ingredients which would fascinate her North American readership. Eliza Davies is an example of a writer whose work was published a long time after her adventures in Australia, and who adjusted her text to fit the requirements of her audience in the place and time of the publication. My argument in this chapter is that Davies' portrayal of Aborigines has been fabricated to comply with these demands. I also analyse her text not only to explore these influences but also to identify a 'truer' voice in other chapters of her book. These views run contrary to her opinion on Aborigines espoused in her main chapter on them.

Although I did not, till later, drive along the Murray River from Lake Alexandrina to the 'Great Bend' in South Australia where Davies' meeting with Aborigines took place, I did 'trek inland' from Kirribilli to Willoughby where she set up a school in 1862 in the 'wilds'

⁴¹ *A Mother's Offering to Her Children by A Lady Long Resident in New South Wales*, Facsimile edition, The Jacaranda Press, Milton, Queensland, 1979, pp. 170-83; first printed by the *Gazette*, Sydney, 1841; Patricia Clarke, 'Barton, Charlotte (1796 - 1867)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barton-charlotte-12787/text23073>, accessed 2 February 2013. Charlotte was the mother of Louisa Atkinson, referred to in this chapter, and in Chapters 1 and 5 of this thesis.

of North Sydney. Speedily travelling over the 1860s' gorges and water courses now flattened by motorways and harnessed or obliterated by drains or tunnels, I could still appreciate the trials of this stalwart woman as she trudged with her shopping from the Port Jackson ferry wharf during flooding rain or under beating sun. It helped me understand that, while her narrative exaggerated and distorted where convenient, aspects of life about which she wrote were authentically arduous.

Chapter 4: Emily Cowl

Emily Cowl finds a place in my thesis as a connecting writer who represents in some way both adventurers and settlers. A (now) Northern Ireland immigrant who settled in Queensland, Emily was a town-dweller. In this respect, she differed from my three 'settlers' who were wives of landholders. My argument in this chapter relies on the fact that, while Emily often saw individual Kurljar people, she was physically separated from them within the town of Normanton, in far north Queensland, where she resided in the 1870s. Her isolation from Aborigines was made more distinct because, unlike my pastoral settlers, Emily did not call on Aborigines to assist her. They remained the savage 'other', occasionally encroaching on her space. This author, however, qualifies as an 'adventurer' because of the way she chose to write about her experiences. Fitting the genre of the 'ripping yarns' of the late nineteenth century, her presentation depends on various literary devices to exaggerate suspense and fear that her audience might easily associate with 'barbaric' Aborigines. The chapter explores the way Emily incorporated the elements of danger, violence and salvation—intrinsic to her literary style—to form her representation of Aborigines.

While I travelled to Normanton only via Google Earth, I nevertheless visited the street in (present day) suburban Brisbane where Emily and Thomas Cowl lived for most of the twenty years up to 1905. Although I was unable to locate their actual house (the nameplate having been replaced by street numbers), many of the houses dated from the Cows' periods of residence. I was therefore able to get an impression of the state of 'respectability' and 'gentility' which Emily was so keen to espouse in her writing.

Settlers

Before proceeding to the précis of my final three chapters, I need to explain that the Aboriginal people who related to settler women were 'civilised' or 'station' Aborigines, as opposed to 'wild blackfellows' or 'outsiders'. After colonisation, as Aborigines assessed their situation, some resisted and fought for their land and maintained that resistance; others adjusted to the prevailing white expansion by agreeing to work for the white man as a means of staying on their country. This reciprocal arrangement was sustained by the handing out of rations as the game and fruits of their land were replaced by livestock and planted crops. Tim Rowse, Bain Attwood and Robert Foster are amongst the historians who have written on this developed symbiotic relationship between Aborigines and settlers.⁴² Diane Barwick's research found that Aboriginal women 'were invariably eager to come to the stations, and subsequently stayed even when their menfolk wandered'.⁴³ Although Katherine Kirkland briefly refers to 'wild' Aborigines in the hinterland of Geelong in the 1830s, most of the references to Aboriginal people in these chapters are to 'station Aborigines'.

Chapter 5: Katherine Kirkland

This text is rich for analysis. As an early settler in the present Western District of Victoria, Katherine Kirkland offered an insight into what rural women were doing on an everyday basis: how they were coping; and how they adapted particularly if, like Katherine, they were a new arrival. This account, though short, is the one which most fully answers my initial questioning about the coping strategies of frontier women.

⁴² Cf. Tim Rowse, *White Flour, White Power: From Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 204; Rowse, "'Were You Ever Savages?" Aboriginal Insiders and Pastoralists' Patronage', in L.R. Hiatt and Francesca Merlan (eds), *Oceania*, University of Sydney, Vol. 58, No. 1, December 1987, pp. 81-99; Rowse, 'Aborigines As Historical Actors: Evidence and Inference', in *Historical Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 87, October 1986, p. 179; Bain Attwood, *My Country': A History of the Djadja Warrung 1837-1864*, Monash Publications in History: 25, and DJA Wrung Aboriginal Association Inc., Melbourne, 1999, p. 28, p. 30; Robert Foster, 'Rations, coexistence, and the colonisation of Aboriginal labour in the South Australian pastoral industry, 1860-1911', in *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 24, 2000, p. 3; Howard Morphy and Frances Morphy, 'The "Myths" of Ngalakan History: Ideology and Images of the Past in Northern Australia', in *Man: The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society*, London, Volume 19, Number 3, September 1984, p. 464, pp. 473-4; also cf. C.D. Rowley, 'Aborigines and the Land', in *Identity*, The Aboriginal Publications Foundation Inc., Sydney, Vol. 1, No. 1, July 1971, pp. 10-11.

⁴³ Diane Barwick, "And the lubras are ladies now", in Fay Gale (ed.), *Women's Role in Aboriginal Society*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, second edition, 1974, p. 53.

An analysis of this text also reveals the difficulty faced by British women, steeped in the racial assumptions about Aborigines yet aware of the falsehood of these beliefs. Because Katherine was a short-term resident, returning to Britain after three years in Australia; because she wrote early in the history of settler narratives, without precedents of first-hand Australian colonial reports; and because she was conscious of maintaining her identity as a British 'Lady', the analysis of her cautious representation is intrinsic to my overall argument. I will argue that what she has chosen not to divulge (particularly about black friendship) is as relevant as that which she has elected to include.

I stood on the spot at Point Henry on Port Phillip Bay where Katherine landed from Van Diemen's Land in January 1839. I travelled to Trawalla, Katherine's home, following the route she took from Geelong, and identifying along the way, from distances and landmarks, the sites of a corroboree, and her encounters with the Wathaurong people. Trawalla's then present owner, Fiona Mackenzie, welcomed me to the original homestead with its internal, wide slab walls. I visited Katherine's dairy and other outbuildings dating back to the time of her residence. Only because of an AFL match being played at that time in Melbourne did I miss meeting Georgia Hamilton Scott, Katherine's English great-great-great-granddaughter, who had been working at Trawalla in 2004 as a jillaroo.

Chapter 6: Mary McConnel

Mary McConnel's writing was chosen because her attitudes and motivations were shared by many other nineteenth-century middle-class women: she was confident in her racial superiority and strongly convinced of the rightness of Christian evangelism. So committed was this benevolent woman to the idea that Aborigines should be 'civilised' that she took an Aboriginal boy to Britain for nine years, ostensibly to separate him from his people in her well-meant aim to control his future within a colonised world. Her writing offers an opportunity to assess the assumptions behind her will to coerce Aborigines to adopt British social and religious standards. Mary knew very well some of the Aboriginal women on her husband's landholding, Cressbrook. They expressed to her their authority over land and revealed the strength of their racial identity. Although Mary was happy to incorporate these reflections into her memoirs, as a successful coloniser, bound to the concept of English Victorian paternalism, she was unable to accept them.

I visited the two McConnel properties about which Mary wrote: Bulimba (now in the Brisbane suburb of the same name) and Cressbrook, near Toogoolawah, between Ipswich and Kilcoy. Although I could go only to the front gate of the home paddocks of Cressbrook, without seeing the homestead, I could take in the vista of the landscape which Mary had described on her first arrival in 1849. At nearby Esk, I saw the church that her husband built to commemorate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.

Chapter 7: Rose Scott Cowen

Rose Cowen was a Queensland-born ‘bushie’ whose down-to-earth attitudes, stripped of racial dogma in the harsh realities of outback life, provide a foil to the previous five representations. As a woman who rejected British attitudes associated with class hierarchy and racial superiority, Rose’s work offers the possibility of exploring ways in which representations of Aborigines altered in direct reference to a woman’s racial attitudes. Her writing also allows questions to be asked about the effect that publishing in the mid-twentieth century had on the way her story was told.

My trip to central western Queensland was the highlight of my historical treks. The flat, expansive plains, which stretched in every direction, brought to me an understanding of Rose’s experiences that the written page alone could not. I visited Tambo Station where she was born, saw the extent of its holdings and was driven by the present owner, Dave Nugent, along the banks of the Barcoo River, and across the claypans and outer paddocks. Having then travelled north-west, then south-west to the Channel Country, I was prevented access to Longford Station because of flooded streams from overnight rain. From afar, I could see the ‘modern’ Longford, the present owner, Melvyn Dales, having explained that in 2005 he had dismantled the iron building that had been Rose Cowen’s home.

Before proceeding, I wish to acknowledge the influences which of necessity work upon the direction of my interpretation. As E.D. Hirsch observed: ‘Every act of interpretation involves ... at least two perspectives, that of the author and that of the interpreter’.⁴⁴ The most significant influences of which I am conscious are my regret, as a non-Indigenous

⁴⁴ E.D. Hirsch, ‘Faulty perspectives’, in David Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A reader*, Longman, London and New York, 1988, p. 262.

woman, for violence against Aborigines during the nineteenth century; and my recognition of the essential equality of all people whatever their social class or race.

Sowing the Seeds for Nineteenth-century and Early Twentieth-century Women's Writing

‘how entire the difference between savage & civilised man is’.⁴⁵

The social, racial, scientific and literary influences that formed the attitudes and perceptions of the women writers discussed in this thesis all incorporated the idea of ‘difference’. In a direct translocation of culture, Britons applied their ‘confident, authoritative and self-congratulatory’ opinions as members of the powerful and successful British empire to the less civilised people of the world.⁴⁶ The notion of superiority was particularly applied to the ‘uncivilised’ Australian Aborigines. This chapter investigates those influences.

Class

Underlying the representations of Aborigines in the women’s writing was the concept of identity and social class. Its importance is particularly evident in the work of my five British-born writers. The sixth (Australian-born, Rose Scott Cowen) patently rejected class divisions.

All the writers in this thesis, however, were (or espoused to be) members of the British middle class.⁴⁷ As ‘respectable’ women, they adopted a form of genteel culture, described by Linda Young as ‘a rigid structure of explicit and implicit rules’.⁴⁸ A British woman’s identity was determined and judged by the way she looked and acted within class

⁴⁵ Richard Darwin Keynes (ed.), *Charles Darwin’s Beagle Diary*, CUP, 1988, Diary entry, 18 December 1832, p. 122.

⁴⁶ Edward Said espoused the all-important role of culture in maintaining identity and shaping attitudes, Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said: The paradox of identity*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, p. 87.

⁴⁷ Within this category, the identity of Australian-born, Rose Cowen, is less distinct.

⁴⁸ Linda Young, *Middle-Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia and Britain*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, UK, 2003, p. 189. Young explains that, behind this facade, there was a fluidity that enabled aspirants to join the middle class.

expectations.⁴⁹ Nineteenth-century perceptions of respectable womanhood involved decorous appearance and the ‘civilised’ behaviour of modesty, sobriety and adherence to strict Christian moral values. In extreme form, the adoption of Puritan sexual mores could result in undue propriety or prudery. Earnestness, ‘duty’, hard work, cleanliness, tidiness, thrift and respect for the law were esteemed attributes.⁵⁰ In Britain, these qualities differentiated genteel women from the dissolute and irresponsible aristocracy and the feckless and irreligious urban poor.⁵¹ An awareness of these cultural demands in colonial Australia informed the writings discussed in the following chapters.

The responsibility of maintaining standards of refinement rested mainly on women, both in Britain and its colonies. While men were required to enter the competitive financial and business world, or the often vulgar profession of politics, women were expected to meet the demands of gentility by maintaining a respectable household to which their men could return.⁵² Women therefore strove to define the ideals of neatness, orderliness and cleanliness, even in a slab hut on remote colonial outposts. Penny Russell has termed the display of proper behaviour by Australian colonial woman as the ‘genteel performance’ which,

reinforced the delineation and policing of Society. Society was so competitive, its membership so fluid and its boundaries so contested, that something more was required to identify the gentry, to

⁴⁹ Portrayal of self in autobiography was often distorted to fit perceived acceptable social standards. Cf. Rob Foster and Amanda Nettelbeck, ‘Writing William Wiltshire’; and Margaret Allen, ‘She seems to have composed her own life: thinking about Catherine Martin’, in Susan Margarey & Kerrie Round (eds), *Living History: Essays on History as Biography*, Australian Humanities Press, Unley, South Australia, 2005, pp. 79-91, pp. 93-111.

⁵⁰ Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, p. 399; Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas: A Companion for the Modern Reader of Victorian Literature*, W.W. Norton & Company Inc., New York, 1973, pp. 174-76; J.B. Schneewind, *Backgrounds of English Victorian Literature*, Random House, New York, 1970, p. 126; Jerome H. Buckley, ‘Victorian England: The Self-Conscious Society’, in Josef L. Altholz (ed.), *The Mind and Art of Victorian England*, The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1976, p. 1. Samuel Smiles extolled middle-class virtues in his numerous publications, e.g., *Self-Help: With Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance* (1859), *Character* (1871), *Duty: With Illustrations of Courage, Patience and Endurance* (1880), *Thrift* (1875). By 1953, *Self-Help* had been reprinted 71 times.

⁵¹ The middle class was usually defined as comprising property-owning groups engaged in manufacturing, trade and the professions. It was different from the aristocracy and gentry by virtue of active participation in the productive economy, and from the working class by abstention from manual wage labour, Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English industrial city 1840-1914*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2000, pp. 14-15.

⁵² Penny Russell, ‘A Wish of Distinction’: *Colonial Gentility and Femininity*, MUP, 1994, pp. 58-59.

make them socially distinct and recognisably superior. The genteel performance was the key to displaying social merit⁵³

A need to maintain conventional household standards, geared by the Protestant work ethic, demanded constant attention to household chores. Domestic servants were seen as necessities for the middle class, whether in the towns of England, settler communities in the American West, on the plantations of Trinidad, or in the burgeoning towns of the Australian colonies. Barry Higman has identified that there was a rapid growth in the population of domestic servants in the Australian colonies, particularly between 1820 and 1860.⁵⁴ On pastoral properties, especially if these properties were on the edge of white settlement where servants were often difficult to find or to keep, Indigenous women frequently filled the servant role for white women.

Importance of Clothing

The identification of the middle class became embodied in the adoption of appropriate clothing. While men adapted their clothes in the Australian colonies to the requirements of heat and outdoor activities, women were expected to uphold a respectable appearance, dictated by British fashion. John Cotton, of Doogallook station, 80 kilometres north of Melbourne, confirmed the early adjustments allowed to male fashion. Having arrived in Melbourne in 1843, Cotton wrote in January 1844 that:

We cannot be too lightly clad during this hot weather ... A waistcoat is quite a superfluous vest here and I seldom wear anything over my shirt during the heat of the day. Braces, too, are thrown on one side, and a leather strap round the waist answers the purpose ... [Cabbage-tree] hats ... are generally worn throughout the colony; a handkerchief, tied loosely around the neck, with white or other trousers, socks and shoes ... complete the costume.⁵⁵

⁵³ Russell, 'A Wish of Distinction', p. 58.

⁵⁴ Lillian Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey*, Schocken Books, New York, 1992, pp. 86-87; Beverley Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter, and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Ltd, Melbourne, 1975; Barry Higman, *Domestic Service in Australia*, MUP, Carlton, Victoria, 2002, pp. 23-26.

⁵⁵ R.V. Billis and A.S. Kenyon, *Pastures New: An Account of the Pastoral Occupation of Port Phillip*, (first published in 1930), Stockland Press Pty Limited, Melbourne, 1974, p. 247.

Female clothing, however, served to maintain a woman's position within the English class system. A 'refined' appearance not only identified her own status but also allowed her to identify other women of her class. It also nominated by implication her possession of the middle-class virtue, 'morality'.⁵⁶

When British women and Aborigines first encountered each other, their mutual amazement centred on clothing or the lack of it. Emily Cowl and Katherine Kirkland refer to Aboriginal curiosity and amusement when confronted by the intricate pieces of female dress. When Eliza Fraser was stripped of her clothing, she sustained insults not only to her modesty but also to her identity as a civilised, respectable woman. From the settlers' point of view, Aboriginal nakedness, whilst visually affronting British notions of morality, also denied the colonists a class-based standard by which they could classify and assess the Aborigines. The absence of hierarchical emblems of regalia on Aborigines also confused British observers, who relied on clothing to identify rank. Without clues to identify 'chiefs' within the homogenous Indigenous society, early observers resorted to depicting Indigenous people generically as a mass of primitive 'savages'.⁵⁷

Adult middle-class female fashion was elaborate, consisting of layers, both on the outside and underneath. Late Georgian or early English Victorian dresses of the 1830s and 1840s featured tiny waists, fortified by tightly laced corsets, and wide skirts. Neck ruffs and frilly sleeves were popular forms of ornamentation. Shawls were an essential part of outdoor attire, as were bonnets. During the 1830s, the usual style was the capote bonnet which featured a circular brim, lined and decorated with frills of lace, netting, flowers or ribbons to form a frame for the face. The sides of bonnets might also be ornamented with feathers or flowers. Decorative large veils of lace, embroidered net or figured gauze were often

⁵⁶ Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas*, p. 174; Schneewind, *Backgrounds of English Victorian Literature*, p. 99.

⁵⁷ Harriet Daly conceptualised this idea when she first saw the naked Larrakia people in 1870, near present-day Darwin. Attempting unsuccessfully to distinguish the 'heads of the clan', Harriet referred to the undifferentiated mass of Larrakia as a 'barbarous horde of natives', Mrs Dominic (sic) D. Daly, *Digging, Squatting and Pioneering Life in the Northern Territory of South Australia*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, London, 1887, p. 45.

worn draped over the sides and back of the headdresses, particularly when travelling. Shoes were tight-fitting, slim and heelless.⁵⁸

Henry Handel Richardson recorded the layers of female dress, seen and unseen, of the 1870s when, as a young girl in Victoria, she watched her two middle-aged aunts disrobing for a swim. In the short story, 'The Bathe: A Grotesque', she described female garb, in the order in which it was discarded:

Tight, high bodices of countless buttons went first, baring the massy arms and fat-creased necks of a plump maturity. Thereafter bunched skirts were slid over hips and stepped out of. Several petticoats followed, the undermost of red flannel, with scalloped edges. Tight stiff corsets were next squeezed from their moorings and cast aside; the linen beneath lay hot and damply crushed. Long white drawers unbound and, leg by leg, disengaged, voluminous calico chemises appeared, draped in which the pair sat down to take off their boots – buttoned boots – and stockings, their feet emerging red and tired-looking, the toes misshapen ... Above the knees, garters had cut fierce red lines in the skin; their bodies were criss-crossed with red furrows, from the variety of strings and bones that had lashed them in⁵⁹

Although while inside the house, longer-term residents or colonial-born women might adopt some modifications to female dress,⁶⁰ both the inner and outer layers were expected to be maintained, whatever the temperature, whenever a woman presented herself in public. Louisa Anne Meredith was one colonial woman who disregarded the custom of wearing full dress indoors, although she conceded that her own practice flouted customary procedure. She wrote that the expectation for women to be, at all times of the day, 'in a state of smartness and precision as regards flounces, ribbons, and collars ... is wholly and utterly incompatible with any kind of domestic occupation or duty whatsoever'. Margaret

⁵⁸ Katharine Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, Kenneth W. Mackenzie, "Trawalla", Beaufort, Victoria, c. 1995, p. 4; Georgine De Courtais, *Women's Headdress and Hairstyles in England from AD 600 to the present day*, B.T. Batsford Ltd, London, 1988, p. 116; Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria 1835-1890*, MUP, 1983, p. 90.

⁵⁹ Henry Handel Richardson, 'The Bathe; A Grotesque', in Dale Spender, *The Penguin Anthology Of Australian Women's Writing*, pp. 471-2, from Richardson (1870-1946), *The End of Childhood and Other Stories*, Heinemann, London, 1934. This description is also reproduced in Leigh Summers, *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset*, Berg, Oxford, UK, 2001, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁰ The wearing of different caps in the morning, evening and night was an important part of indoors garb.

Maynard has suggested that the practice of maintaining, even nurturing, bourgeois codes of formality in the bush was to counteract any suggestion of 'colonialism'.⁶¹

The stark difference between white, ornately clothed, controlled, Christian, civilised women and their binary opposite—black, naked, 'uncontrolled', heathen natives—fed into British racial assumptions that encouraged the stereotypical depiction of Aborigines as 'savage', 'ugly' and 'depraved'.⁶²

Assessing Australian Aborigines

When William Dampier sailed the merchant ship, *Cygnets*, into King Sound on the northern Western Australian coast in January 1688, his description of the Aborigines⁶³ set the scene for later depictions. Because he was an eyewitness, his 'factual' accounts replaced earlier vague and fantastical ideas of giants and other human oddities that were reproduced onto navigational maps of the Southern Seas, incorporated into contemporary 'scientific' texts and which entered into the perceptions of seventeenth-century Dutch navigators, who had been led to believe in their existence in this region.⁶⁴ The idea of strange people living beyond the known limits of habitation had reached back to fifth-century BCE Greece when Herodotus theorised about humans with anatomical abnormalities and those who resorted to cannibalism,⁶⁵ a trope which was to become synonymous with the idea of 'savagery'. Dampier's words, therefore, were accepted as authentically accurate. His often reproduced description, from *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697), is worth repeating here. He wrote that:

⁶¹ Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly, *Double Time: Women in Victoria_150 Years*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1985, Letter, P. Selby to Mary and Kate Earles, 26 January 1841, p. 33; Vivienne Rae Ellis, *Louisa Anne Meredith: A Tigress in Exile*, Blubber Head Press, Sandy Bay, Tasmania, 1979, p. 115; Margaret Maynard, *Fashioned From Penury: Dress as Cultural Practice in Colonial Australia*, CUP, Melbourne, 1994, p. 115. By the 1890s, Queensland women had adopted long skirts and long sleeved blouses with high necks and full sleeves as seen in photographs of the Jardine family on Aberfoyle station. Both caps and bonnets had been discarded under the shade of verandas and replaced, for outdoors, by wide-brimmed hats, *Murray -Prior Family, Papers*, NLA MS 7801, Folders 42-46 /Folders 7-11.

⁶² Helen Trager has explored this attitude in the British colony of Burma where nineteenth-century American Baptist missionaries viewed a whole people of Buddhist Burmese as cruel, wicked, ferocious and barbarous. In the eyes of the evangelists, the 'sin' of the Burmese was their 'difference' from white Britons, Helen G. Trager, *Burma Through Alien Eyes: Missionary Views of the Burmese in the Nineteenth Century*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1966, pp. 143, pp. 204-6. Thought to be the Bardi people from the area around Derby.

⁶⁴ Tim Flannery (ed.), *The Explorers: Stories of Discovery and Adventure from the Australian Frontier*, The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1998, p. 8.

⁶⁵ Herodotus, *The Histories*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1966, p. 222, p. 306, p. 276.

The Inhabitants of this Country are the miserablest People in the World ... And, setting aside their Humane Shape, they differ but little from Brutes. They are tall, strait-bodied (sic), and thin, with small long Limbs. They have great Heads, round Foreheads, and great Brows. Their Eye-lids are always half closed, to keep the Flies out of their Eyes ... And therefore they cannot see far, unless they hold up their Heads, as if they were looking at some-what over them. They have great Bottle-Noses, pretty full Lips and wide Mouths. The two Fore-teeth of their Upper-jaw are wanting in all of them, Men and Women, old and young ... They are long-visaged, and of a very unpleasing Aspect, having no one graceful Feature in their Faces. Their Hair is black, short and curl'd, like that of the Negroes ... The Colour of their Skins, both of their Faces and the rest of their Body, is Coal-black, like that of the Negroes of *Guinea*⁶⁶

A New Voyage Round the World was a best-seller, as were Dampier's later books: *Voyages and Descriptions* (1699), which dealt with his second voyage to the western Australian coast as commander of a royal naval expedition in 1699 aboard HMS *Roebuck*; and *A Voyage to New Holland* (in two parts, 1703 and 1709), all of them influencing readers in their perceptions of Aborigines. Dampier also influenced later writers that dealt with 'savages' or 'odd' people in outlandish places, including Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift. Defoe is said to have studied Dampier's voyages before writing *Robinson Crusoe*, which has been republished in numerous forms since its first edition in 1719.⁶⁷ The story is thought to have been based on the adventures of Alexander Selkirk, who had been abandoned on the uninhabited Ascension (St Helena) Island in the Atlantic Ocean during a voyage on which Dampier sailed, and who was later to be rescued during another of Dampier's voyages. In *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Swift named Gulliver's ship, the *Antelope* (a ship also in Dampier's fleet during his 1699 second voyage); and, like Dampier, Gulliver set sail from England in 1699. Swift also specifically acknowledged 'my cousin Dampier'. The similarity of writing styles, a likeness in personality between Dampier and Gulliver, and the location of Lilliput, shown on a map in *Gulliver's Travels* to

⁶⁶ William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World*, With an Introduction by Sir Albert Gray, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1937, pp. 312-13. A version is reproduced in Flannery, *The Explorers*, p. 27.

⁶⁷ Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner: who lived eight and twenty years, all alone in an uninhabited island on the coast of America, near the mouth of the great rive of Oroonoque; having been cast on shore by shipwreck, whereon all the men perished but himself. With an account of how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by pyrates. Written by himself*, W. Taylor, London, 1719.

have been located south of Sumatra in the vicinity of the north-western coast of Australia (and ‘discovered in 1699’) are other connections with Dampier’s works.⁶⁸

Dampier’s descriptions of Aborigines also influenced men of science who, during the eighteenth and nineteenth-century, were investigating apparent differences in human races. Charles Darwin referred to Dampier’s work as a ‘mine’ of information. Natural scientist and geologist, Alexander Von Humboldt, admired his works, writing that ‘subsequent studies of great European scholars, naturalists and travelers had added little’.⁶⁹ Lord Monboddo (James Burnett), a monogenist who promulgated the belief that man and apes belonged to the same species, confirmed Dampier’s reputation. In his treatise, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (1773), he asserted that, ‘This Dampier appears to me to be one of the most accurate and judicious of our modern travellers’. He validated Dampier’s personal observations by acknowledging that, ‘we can hardly doubt of the truth of the fact’.⁷⁰

In spite of his acclaimed authority, Dampier’s actual reports are now thought to have differed from the published versions. A study of the unpublished draft of *A New Voyage* by Diana and Michael Preston has identified differences between Dampier’s journal notes and the final publication. Consistent with his recognised objective style of observation, Dampier described the Aborigines in his journal as being ‘of good stature but very thin and lean’, a condition which he attributed to ‘want of food’. Their hair was ‘matted-up like a negroe’s’ for ‘want of combs’. The Prestons suggest that the inclusion of the emotive expressions, ‘Brutes’ and ‘unpleasing Aspect’, which were not recorded in Dampier’s journal, may have been included either by Dampier or his publisher to sensationally augment the idea of Indigenous ‘savagery’ in the interest of an increased readership.⁷¹ This is a consideration which will enter my argument in this thesis. The replication of these

⁶⁸ Diana & Michael Preston, *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind, Explorer, Naturalist, and Buccaneer: The Life of William Dampier*, Walker & Company, New York, 2004, p. 3, p. 174, p. 7, p. 328. In the map in *Gulliver’s Travels*, the representation of part of ‘Dimens Land’ identifies Lilliput somewhere on or near the north coast of Western Australia, the Australian coastline in 1726 being largely uncharted.

⁶⁹ Preston, *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind*, p. 3, p. 328.

⁷⁰ Lord Monboddo, James Burnett, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, Vol. I, The Scholar (sic) Press, Menston, England, Facsimile Reprint, 1967 (first published 1773), in Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Second edition, Harper & Row, Publishers, Sydney, 1985, p. 101.

⁷¹ Preston, *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind*, p. 175.

racial stereotypes also reveals how published works could continue to replicate racial clichés, which actual experience could dissolve—another argument followed in this thesis.

James Cook's 1770 interpretation of Australia's Indigenous people was to ascribe to them Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Enlightenment concept of the 'noble savage'. Adopting the notion that noble savages lived a virtuous and happy life in harmony with natural laws, Cook wrote that the Aborigines were 'far more happier than we Europeans', living tranquilly without unnecessary possessions or the struggle of class hierarchy, in a temperate climate with unspoiled air.⁷² His opinions belong to what Jean Woolmington has identified as the Enlightenment contribution to developing attitudes of respect for 'ancient civilisations'.⁷³ Some visual images from the late eighteenth century supported this changing perception. In Phillip's *Voyage* (1789) and John Hunter's *Historical Journal* (1793), for example, Aborigines were drawn with idealised physical proportions, and classical poses and expressions seen in Roman art. While 'noble savage' images persisted until the end of the nineteenth century, Bernard Smith has observed that by 1793 the pictorial convention of the noble savage was declining in Australia.⁷⁴ Bruce Scates partly refutes this assumption, however, finding that representations in the colonial paper, *Boomerang* (published from 1887 to 1892), vacillated between the two extremes of 'noble' and 'degraded' Aborigines.⁷⁵

⁷² Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 193-94; Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 86, p. 87, p. 102. In accordance with nineteenth-century patriarchal values, noble savagery usually applied to Aboriginal males, who were seen to encapsulate the English Victorian value of 'manliness' in their tall, straight, healthy bodies, masculine energy and physical power, W.J. Reader, *Victorian England*, B.T. Batsford Ltd, London; G.P. Putman's Sons, New York, 1974, p. 188; Ross Gibson, *Diminishing Paradise: Changing Literary Perceptions of Australia*, Sirius Books, Angus & Robertson, Australia, 1984, p. 183; Smith, *European Vision*, p. 169.

⁷³ Jean Woolmington, "'Writing on the Sand": The First Missions to Aborigines in Eastern Australia', in Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (eds), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies*, Australian Association for the Study of Religions at the South Australian College of Advanced Education, Bedford Park, South Australia, 1988, p. 77.

⁷⁴ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, pp. 171-72, p. 173. Nicolas Peterson has located romanticised versions of Aborigines into the 1890s, reproduced in photographs as popular images on picture postcards, Nicolas Peterson, 'The Popular Image', in Ian Donaldson and Tamsin Donaldson, *Seeing The First Australians*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, p. 164.

⁷⁵ Bruce Scates, "'We are not ... [A]boriginal ... we are Australian": William Lane, Racism and the Construction of Aboriginality', in *Labour History: A Journal of Labour and Social History*, Sydney, Number 72, May 1997, p. 42.

On the other hand, Joseph Banks's assessments of Aborigines bear the strong influence of Dampier. Recently elected Fellow of the Royal Society, Banks published his journal from the *Endeavour* voyage with Cook soon after his return to England in 1771, motivated by the growing utilitarian impulse for the 'advancement of useful knowledge'.⁷⁶ Jeremy Bentham was to introduce this concept into British mainstream thinking with the publication of *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* in 1789.⁷⁷

Deferring to Dampier's descriptions as a yardstick by which to assess Indigenous skin colour, Banks wrote that he saw through his binoculars, '5 people who appeared (sic) ... to be enormously black: so far did the prejudices which we had built on Dampier's (sic) account influence us that we fancied we could see their Colour when we could scarce distinguish whether or not they were men'. Subsequent entries strove to qualify and refine Dampier's observations, while continuing to underline Aboriginal differences in skin colour, habits and behaviour from civilised, refined white men.⁷⁸

Banks's depiction included moral judgements. He stressed the primitive nature of Aborigines, describing them as 'coverd (sic) with their filth which I beleive (sic) they never wash of'. He stated that the dirt on their bodies seemed 'to have stuck to their hides from the day of their birth without their once having attempted to remove it',⁷⁹ thereby relegating Aboriginal people to an unenlightened and degraded status. Unable to detect any form of agricultural cultivation, he cast them to a rank 'little superior to that of monkies (sic)'.⁸⁰ This assessment mimicked eighteenth-century social philosopher David Hume's 1745 comments that: 'There never was a civilised nation of any other complexion than white' because there were no 'ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences'.⁸¹ In Christian theological terms, Banks placed Aborigines in the evolutionary

⁷⁶ Ann Moyal, *A Bright & Savage Land*, Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, 1993, p. 10; John Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture*, CUP, 1994, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁷ Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas*, p. 115, p. 119.

⁷⁸ J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks 1768-1771*, Volume II, The Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales in association with Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1962, p. 50, p. 55, p. 58.

⁷⁹ Beaglehole, *The Endeavour Journal*, Vol. II, p. 112, pp. 123-24.

⁸⁰ Beaglehole, *The Endeavour Journal*, Vol. II, p.123.

⁸¹ David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, Edited, With Preliminary Dissertations and Notes, by T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, in Two Volumes, Vol. 1, Reprint of the new edition, London, 1882, Scientia Verlag Aalen, Germany, 1964, footnote, p. 252.

scheme as early humans, describing them as: 'naked as ever our general father was before his fall, they seemd (sic) no more conscious of their nakedness than if they had not been the children of Parents who eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge'. Indigenous women were similarly depicted as 'more naked than our mother Eve'.⁸²

Banks perceived Indigenous painted bodies and the 'uncouth' bone 'as thick as a mans (sic) finger and 5 or 6 inches long' through the nose as signifiers of savage aggression, underlining this image with a reference to their brandishing spears and boomerangs at the Europeans in what Banks interpreted as a menacing act.⁸³ On his return to England, his racially slanted observations were readily accepted by the scientific community, and contributed to the formulation of British perceptions of Australian Aborigines.

Banks's characterisation of Aborigines echoed other authors' depictions of non-Europeans. For example, his reference to the skin of beasts replicated the views of Edward Long, a Jamaican planter who, in the three-volume *The History of Jamaica* (1774) described Negroes as having a 'covering of wool, like the bestial fleece, instead of hair'.⁸⁴ Like Banks, Long characterised Negroes by reference to their colour, which failed to lighten 'though they continue ever so long in a cold climate' in North America. He similarly depicted Negroes as people with reduced intellectual powers and bestial habits.⁸⁵ Long's focus on the so-called 'bestial' appearance, behaviour and degree of cleanliness of his Negro workers (whom he deemed to be a subspecies of low intelligence and without culture) led him to liken Negroes to apes and particularly to the newly discovered 'oran-outang', or 'wild man', thought in the eighteenth century to be the 'missing link' between apes and humans. Hottentots of southern Africa were similarly categorised.⁸⁶ According to James Walvin, Long's racial extremism strongly contributed to nineteenth-century

⁸² Beaglehole, *The Endeavour Journal*, Vol. II, p. 110, p. 124.

⁸³ Beaglehole, *The Endeavour Journal*, Vol. II, p. 91, pp. 92-93, p. 53.

⁸⁴ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, Or, General Survey of the Antient (sic) and Modern State of that Island: with Reflections on its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Laws, and Government*, Volume 3, T. Lowndes, London, 1774, pp. 351-52.

⁸⁵ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, p. 363, p. 365.

⁸⁶ Long, *History of Jamaica*, p. 383, pp. 364-65, pp. 351-52, p. 382, p. 353, p. 355, p. 363. Dampier had deemed that Hottentots, although a 'Nasty People', were 'Gentlemen' compared to Aborigines.

racism.⁸⁷ Eliza Davies extended the connection between Aborigines and beasts when she depicted Aborigines in South Australia as animal-like people with the physical skills of agility and speed in running, traits which both Hottentots and orang-outangs were said to possess.

The Changing Views of Colonial Observers

Stereotypes of Aborigines as repulsive, brutish and grotesque, distorted in body and character formed the prevalent view in colonial Australia, continuing the tradition of ancient prejudices concerning racial difference, and involving exclusion of ‘outsiders’ across cultures.⁸⁸ Deborah Bird Rose, for example, found that the *Northern Territory Times* during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries referred to Aborigines as ‘black fiends’ of ‘savage cruelty’, and as ‘a race of creatures resembling men in form, but with no more trace of human feeling in their natures, than the Siberian wolves’.⁸⁹ While these attitudes continued, some colonists had been expressing from the beginning of European settlement a more sympathetic view of Aborigines

Watkin Tench, captain-lieutenant in the marines and official scribe of the first four years of British settlement at Port Jackson, was one of these. In *Sydney’s First Four Years: A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay* (1789),⁹⁰ Tench had reiterated the derogatory racial attitudes of Dampier and Banks; disparaged Indigenous workmanship, except the skill in weaving—a trait that became stereotypically associated with Aborigines in the works of later colonial observers; criticised Aboriginal houses as ‘rude in construction’ and their canoes as being ‘as despicable as their huts’. By implication, Tench deemed Aborigines to be unintelligent because they had no comprehension of ‘the use or benefit of cloathing

⁸⁷ James Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro and English Society 1555-1945*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 1973, p. 163, p. 170, p. 55.

⁸⁸ Citizens of the Roman Empire regarded non-Romans as ‘barbari’ (barbarus-a-um: foreign, uncultivated, savage, *Cassell’s Latin-English, English-Latin Dictionary*, 1957) with connotations of being uncivilised, ignorant, uncouth, fierce and cruel. Early Buddhist writings also discriminated between peoples of Asia in terms that focused on differences in moral and natural orders, Andrew Turton (ed.), *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*, Curzon Press, Richmond, UK, 2000, p. 7.

⁸⁹ Deborah Bird Rose, *Hidden Histories: Black Stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1991, p. 27.

⁹⁰ Tench’s journals have been published in: Captain Watkin Tench, *Sydney’s First Four Years: A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay and A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson 1788-1791*, introduced and annotated by L.F. Fitzhardinge, Library of Australian History in association with the Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, 1979.

(sic)', despite the fact that he had seen them 'shivering, and huddling themselves up in heaps in their huts, or the caverns of rocks, until a fire can be kindled'.⁹¹

Well-educated and living some time in France, Tench rejected Rousseau's noble savage imagery (while reflecting Humboldt's theory of a fixed relationship between animal life and landscape), writing that:

Notwithstanding the disregard they have invariably shewn for all the finery we could deck them with, they are fond of adorning themselves with scars, which increase their natural hideousness. It is hardly possible to see any thing in human shape more ugly, than one of these savages thus scarified, and further ornamented with a fish bone struck through the gristle of the nose. The custom of daubing themselves with white earth is also frequent among both sexes: but, unlike the inhabitants of the islands in the Pacific Ocean, they reject the beautiful feathers which the birds of their country afford.'⁹²

In *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson* (1793), however, Tench revealed how a closer knowledge of the Darug⁹³ people had changed his attitude to reveal an appreciation of the universal human need for body decoration. He wrote:

Unsatisfied ... with natural beauty, like the people of all other countries, [the Darug] strive by adscititious [supplementary] embellishments to heighten attraction, and often with as little success. Hence the naked savage of New South Wales, pierces the septum of his nose, through which he runs a stick or a bone; and scarifies his body, the charms of which increase in proportion to the number and the magnitude of seams, by which it is distinguished. The operation is performed by making two longitudinal incisions, with a sharpened shell, and afterwards pinching up with the nails the intermediate space of skin and flesh, which thereby becomes considerably elevated, and forms a prominence as thick as a man's finger. No doubt but pain must be severely felt, until the wound be healed. But the love of ornament defies weaker considerations: and no English beau can bear more stoutly the extraction of his teeth, to make room for a fresh set from a chimney sweeper; or a fair one

⁹¹ Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, p. 47, p. 48.

⁹² Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, p. 47, p. xxi, p. xvi.

⁹³ I have adopted the name for the language group, used by Val Attenbrow, *Sydney's Aboriginal Past: investigating the archaeological and historical records*, UNSW Press, 2002.

suffer her tender ears to be perforated, with more heroism, than the grisly nymphs, on the banks of Port Jackson, submit their sable shoulders to the remorseless lancet.⁹⁴

Tench's description of Arabanoo, a young Darug man, who had been forcibly captured during the first years of colonisation, demonstrated his growing understanding of Aboriginal individuality. He depicted not only the physical beauty of Arabanoo's robust body but also his 'gentleness and humanity', his 'vivacity and good humour' and his disgust at the inhumane practice of flogging. His appraisal of Arabanoo's physical and moral strength, his fine character and demeanour, complied with the later adopted nineteenth-century esteemed ideals of 'manliness and sensibility'.⁹⁵

Among the colonial chroniclers who represented Aborigines as hideous and repulsive, unclean and 'wild' was J.O. Balfour. Promoting himself as 'For Six Years a Settler in the Bathurst District', Balfour was disgusted by Aboriginal nudity, the bone through the nostrils and the 'inability ... to civilize them'. He considered the 'Bogan tribe' to be treacherous and 'avowed cannibals'. An intriguing textual similarity of Aborigines sometimes 'representing burnt stumps of trees, at other times lying like logs of black wood on the ground'⁹⁶ in the works of Balfour and of Katherine Kirkland suggests a shared source or possible plagiarism. Both works were published in Britain in 1845.

Roderick Flanagan also depicted Aborigines as 'degenerate', cannibalistic and low in the human scale of existence, and without a system of government or religion understandable by nineteenth-century British codes. Flanagan's theory that the 'fine manly' Aborigines of Northern Australia were superior to the degenerate, debased and barbaric Aborigines of the south was a sentiment which Emily Cowl incorporated into her own racial perceptions. Eliza Davies may have consulted Flanagan's *The Aborigines of Australia* before she included in her own work Flanagan's description of a 'future wife' being 'carried off by her

⁹⁴ Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, p. 277.

⁹⁵ Norman Vance, *The sinews of the spirit: The ideal of Christian manliness in Victorian literature and religious thought*, CUP, 1985, p. 1, p. 8; Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, p. 139, p. 143, p. 142, p. 145.

⁹⁶ J.O. Balfour, *A Sketch of New South Wales*, Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1845, p.14, p. 16, p. 18, p. 10, p. 8.

admirer by main force'.⁹⁷ This, however, may have been a well-known trope: Godfrey Mundy in 1852 had similarly written that Indigenous women were '[w]ooed, as it is said, by dint of blows'.⁹⁸

Peter Cunningham, naval surgeon on convict transports and short-term settler in the Upper Hunter region of New South Wales, referred to Aborigines' 'natural filthiness', their cannibalism and their drunken debauchery after having been given rum. Cunningham, however, also described Aborigines as 'lively, good-humoured, inquisitive, and intelligent', quick to learn to read and write and to speak English. Although believing (like Flanagan) that an undeveloped form of government prevented their elevation to civilisation, Cunningham conceded that: 'Civilisation depends more on circumstances under which man is placed than upon any innate impulse of his own'.⁹⁹

Mundy, who arrived in Sydney in 1846, wrote in similar vein that:

In his purely natural state the New Hollander is little better than a wild beast ... Strong, agile, fierce, voracious, crafty ... Yet, low in the scale of humanity as [he is], I ... believe the assumption unfair that he is incapable of attaining the same standards of intelligence as the European [even though] [e]fforts to civilise and Christianise him ... have ... met with signal failure.¹⁰⁰

Mary McConnel seemed aware of these notions when she assured her readers that Aborigines were 'not by any means so low down in the scale of the human race as they are generally supposed to be'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Roderick Flanagan, *The Aborigines of Australia*, first published as a series of articles in 1853-54 in the *Sydney Empire*, Edward F. Flanagan and George Robertson and Company, 1888, pp. 12-13, pp. 17-18.

⁹⁸ Lt. Colonel Godfrey Charles Mundy, *Our Antipodes: Or, Residence and Rambles in The Australian Colonies. With A Glimpse Of The Gold Fields, In Three Volumes*, Second Edition, Revised, Richard Bentley, London, Vol. I, 1852, p. 219.

⁹⁹ P. Cunningham, Surgeon, R.N., *Two Years in New South Wales; A Series of Letters, Comprising Sketches of the Actual State of Society in that Colony; Of Its Peculiar Advantages to Emigrants; Of Its Topography, Natural History, &c. &c.*, In Two Volumes, Vol. II, Henry Colburn, London, 1827, p. 45, pp. 15-16 p. 19, p. 21, p. 49, p. 46; L.F. Fitzhardinge, 'Cunningham, Peter Miller (1789-1864)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cunningham-peter-miller-1942/text2325>, published in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 9 September 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Mundy, *Our Antipodes*, p. 238.

¹⁰¹ Mary McConnel, *Memories of Days long gone by, By the Wife of an Australian Pioneer*, [M. McConnel, Brisbane?, 1905], p. 43.

Mundy also qualified racial stereotypes with his own opinions. He wrote that: ‘Although ugly, according to European appreciation, the countenance of the Australian is not always unpleasing’. He admired their ‘particularly manly and graceful’ gait, adding that, ‘in form and carriage at least [the Aborigine] looks creation’s lord’. He also liked the ‘soft and full vowels and liquids’ of Aboriginal language, preferring the use of native placenames over the ‘vulgar and unmeaning European titles’.¹⁰² This view was also expressed by Katherine Kirkland.

Furthermore, Mundy sympathised with Aborigines, referring to ‘women and children [being] butchered without distinction or stint’ and ‘[d]readful tales of cold-blooded carnage’. While at the same time representing Aborigines as ‘treacherous, blood-thirsty, cruel, ungrateful’, he evened the scales by denouncing the white man who ‘[h]eardless of the heritage of the savage’ takes the land ‘neither by inheritance, by purchase, nor by conquest, but by a sort of gradual eviction’. Mundy empathised with Aboriginal reaction, when almost ‘starved to death’: ‘What wonder’, he wrote, ‘that the native retaliates upon the sheep and cattle of the pale-faced trespasser on his land and food’.¹⁰³

Opinions of Indigenous women by early observers were unflattering. In his analogy of Aborigines as the possible ‘connecting link between man and the monkey tribe’, Cunningham described elderly Indigenous women as only lacking a ‘tail to complete the identity’. Balfour wondered if an Aboriginal woman ‘belongs to the mammalia order or not’. Naturalist, George French Angas, and Godfrey Mundy viewed Aboriginal women as the ‘drudges in all heavy work’. Louisa Meredith, writing of Aborigines near Bathurst, considered the position of Indigenous women as degraded because they ‘perform all the labour’.¹⁰⁴ Angas and Mundy interpreted the position of women in Aboriginal society as lowly because the women walked behind the man when travelling, and carried the infants

¹⁰² Mundy, *Our Antipodes*, p. 218, p. 225.

¹⁰³ Mundy, *Our Antipodes*, p. 229, p. 230, p. 226, p. 228.

¹⁰⁴ Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales*, p. 46; Balfour, *A Sketch of New South Wales*, p. 8; George French Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand: Being an Artist's Impressions of Countries and People at the Antipodes, In Two Volumes*, Vol. I, Smith, Elder, and Co., London, 1847, p. 82; Mundy, *Our Antipodes*, p. 219; Mrs Charles (Louisa Ann) Meredith, *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales During a Residence in that Colony from 1839 to 1844*, Ure Smith, Sydney, in association with the National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.), 1973, p. 93.

and the ‘baggage’. Louisa Atkinson reiterated this idea when she wrote that an Aboriginal woman ‘follows her lord, who carries his spears and weapons’. Western Australian settler, Ethel Hassell, however, offered another interpretation, observing that the man walked ‘a few steps ahead ready to defend [the woman] from all dangers in their path.’¹⁰⁵ None of my selected writers reiterated derogatory remarks about Indigenous women they knew, or had casually met. Cannibalism (and infanticide), frequently mentioned in early texts, were also mentioned by Eliza Davies and Katherine Kirkland, although with expressed reservations.

Humanitarian Settlers

Among longer-term colonial chroniclers who sympathised with Aborigines was Gideon Lang. In a lecture delivered in July 1865 in Melbourne and later published as *The Aborigines of Australia*, Lang criticised the treatment of Aborigines. While expressing the common settler attitude that Aborigines were ‘blood-thirsty savages’, Lang nevertheless acknowledged their humanity. A squatter from 1841, and taking land at Lake Mundy near Adelaide in 1846, he noted Aboriginal inventiveness in hunting and fishing, ingenuity in making nets and weapons, their knowledge of astronomy and the intelligence exhibited in their poetry and corroborees.¹⁰⁶ He sympathised with their loss of hunting grounds and deplored settler disregard for their interests, rights and sustenance and, in particular, the cruelty against them from the Native Police force.¹⁰⁷

Edward Curr was similarly sympathetic, through perceptive awareness of the Aborigines whom he observed to be ‘so like us’. His account of a peaceful confrontation between himself and two Aboriginal men while managing his family’s farm, 35 kilometres south-east of Bendigo in 1841, demonstrates his acknowledgement of universal human emotions and natural reactions. While representing the men’s intent as ‘murderous’, he also noted their uncertainty and caution at the sight of his gun, a hesitancy that Curr was

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Lawson, *Louisa Atkinson: The Distant Sound of Native Voices*, Occasional Paper No. 15, English Department, University College, ADFA, Canberra, 1989, p. 47; Ethel Hassell, *My Dusky Friends: Aboriginal life, customs, and legends and glimpses of station life at Jarramungup in the 1880s*, C.W. Hassell, East Fremantle, 1975, p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ Gideon S. Lang, *The Aborigines of Australia, In Their Original Condition And In Their Relations With The White Men. A Lecture, Delivered At St. George’s Hall, Melbourne, July 12, 1865, in aid of the Leichhardt Search Fund*, Wilson & Mackinnon, Melbourne, 1865, p. 32, pp. 19-22, p. 26. Cf. Gordon Reid, *‘That Unhappy Race’: Queensland and the Aboriginal Problem 1838-1901*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2006, pp. 56-66.

¹⁰⁷ Lang, *The Aborigines of Australia*, pp. 37-38, pp. 45-52.

simultaneously experiencing when he saw their spears. He similarly observed their reluctance to lose face by retreating from a raw young white man,¹⁰⁸ portrayals that cut across the stereotypes commonly used by settlers. Later, having moved north to settle in the Goulburn River region, Curr came to respect the Indigenous Bangerang people, learned their language and observed that:

... notwithstanding many differences between the Black and the white man, their sympathies, likes and dislikes were very much what ours would have been if similarly situated; so that a very limited experience enabled both parties to understand and appreciate the position of the other. This fact only gradually dawned on me, as I had somehow started with the idea that I should find the Blacks as different from the white man in mind as they are in colour.¹⁰⁹

This identification with Indigenous people led Curr to announce that the indiscriminate killing of Aborigines was ‘wrong’.¹¹⁰

Robert Christison was another example of a humane settler. According to his daughter Mary Montgomerie Bennett, Christison was one of the ‘honourable exceptions’ among white men—a man who ‘treated the blacks kindly and employed them to look after their flocks and herds, transforming them from hunters to shepherds’. Settling on Lammermoor in central western Queensland in 1864, Christison established reciprocal ground rules along the lines of: ‘Country belonging to you: sheep belonging to me’. Within this understanding, the Dalleburra people were to continue living along the river bank and hunting their food, and Christison’s stock was to be left unharmed. On one occasion when the rule was broken and a stud ram killed and cooked, Christison upbraided the culprit in a transaction which was individual to individual. As the Aboriginal thief was selfish, gluttonous and mean-spirited, Christison gained allies from his long-suffering wives.¹¹¹

Christison represented the Dalleburra as kindly and intelligent, the men as ‘fine,

¹⁰⁸ Edward M. Curr (1820-1889), *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria, Then Called the Port Phillip District (From 1841 to 1851)*, Second edition, (first published in 1883), Rich River Printers, Echuca, Victoria, 2001, p. 285, pp. 56-61.

¹⁰⁹ Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*, pp. 92-93.

¹¹⁰ Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*, p. 120.

¹¹¹ M.M. Bennett, *Christison of Lammermoor*, Alston Rivers Ltd, London, 1927, p. 29, p. 68, pp. 79-81.

upstanding, [well-formed] fellows' and their society as compassionate and family-orientated, their members tending to the old and deformed. He admired 'their habitual cheeriness, their ... sagacity'; their boomerang making and their 'resource and patience' in hunting. He knew them as a 'virile, vivacious race', unlike those who had survived white depredations to become 'degraded township blacks'. He sympathised with their lack of legal rights and of protection, censuring, like Mundy and Lang, the 'shameful and cruel treatment they suffered from the whites',¹¹² and offering explanations in his understanding of their reaction to white incursion.

Christison 'declared energetically for "letting the blacks in"'. Although expressed in the language of white superiority, he 'trusted' them, and accepted their hunting near the homestead. His experience showed that they were 'capable of loyalty and devotion'. Amidst a climate of racial violence (which included many unreported massacres),¹¹³ Christison's voice speaks out as a late nineteenth-century Queensland settler who acted humanely towards Aborigines. Like Lang, he abhorred the actions of the Native Police and their indiscriminate raids against Aborigines, and protected the Dalleburra by personally appealing to the white officer-in-charge. When Christison sold Lammermoor in 1910, he sought a buyer who 'will treat my blacks well', refusing to 'discuss anything until [the Aborigines'] right to remain on the station as their home is settled'. He also explained to the Dalleburra that the purchasers 'recognised their rights in the place', and he undertook to send an annual contribution to assist them.¹¹⁴ Humanitarian settlers, such as Christison, acted as examples of which the women settlers of this thesis may have been aware.

The Power of Christian Evangelicalism

The Puritan aspect of religion that had been fundamental to middle-class values since the seventeenth century was reinforced during the nineteenth century by the resurgence of

¹¹² Bennett, *Christison of Lammermoor*, p. 146, p. 63, p. 79, p. 100, p. 59, p. 83, p. 86.

¹¹³ Bennett, *Christison of Lammermoor*, p. 82, p. 83.

¹¹⁴ Bennett, *Christison of Lammermoor*, pp. 246-47, p. 255.

evangelical Christianity.¹¹⁵ Evangelicalism formed the basis of nineteenth-century English morality and exerted an overriding influence on social and cultural values. By the 1840s, a particular standard of moral behaviour had been established by which cruelty, extravagance and dissolution were harshly judged. Nonconformists—Baptists, Wesleyans and Congregationalists, and the Evangelical wing of the Church of England—were particularly strict in their practices and in their moralising attitudes. The Baptist, and later Churches of Christ convert, Eliza Davies, fits this profile. Evangelicalism also promoted the concept of an ‘elect people’, justifying the accumulation of imperial wealth and power. Motivated by the creed of industrialisation and progress, this perception became a principal element in imperial expansion, which encouraged attitudes of racial superiority, backed by cultural arrogance.¹¹⁶

As the evangelistic urge to extend the Christian empire permeated the world during the first half of the nineteenth century, belief in God’s call for ‘improvement’ encouraged the idea that racial differences in standards of civility and morality could be eradicated through the power of Christianity. Evangelists believed that by instruction and example ‘uncivilised’ people, who were different from the English in appearance, values, culture and behaviour, could be raised from ignorance to a level, approximating (although probably never quite achieving) the superior status of British society and culture. The aim of civilising and ‘cultivating’ pagan savages was to be realised by the redeeming of their heathen souls through God’s saving grace.¹¹⁷

Evangelical motives underlay Australian social and political life. A Diocesan Committee of the Societies for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and for Promoting Christian Knowledge (Australia) had been established in Sydney in 1836 for the purpose of building churches and Christian schools, distributing the Bible, Prayer Book and other religious tracts, and for establishing and maintaining clergymen and missionaries

¹¹⁵ Reader, *Victorian England*, p. 172; Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900*, The University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 99.

¹¹⁶ G.M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age*, OUP, London, New York, 1953, p. 4, p. 8; Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1971, p. 209.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Martin Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America*, The Dial Press, New York, 1970, pp. 78-88.

throughout the British Empire.¹¹⁸ The ‘special call’ of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was to ‘make disciples of all the nations’. Its aim was to commit ‘its labours in planting the Church in the British Colonies and in evangelising the heathen’.¹¹⁹ The New South Wales Church Building Act (Act No. III of 1836) stated that, ‘for the advancement of the Christian religion and the promotion of good morals it is expedient to encourage the observance of public worship’.¹²⁰ In 1799, missionaries from Otaheite (Tahiti) had moved on to Sydney with the aim of converting the convict population, and as many as possible of the ‘native heathens’. Their intention was to instruct the ‘uncivilized part of mankind’ for ‘the welfare and improvement of the human race’. In this quest, white women were singled out as potentially ‘of peculiar use’ in the ‘great duty’ of converting the Aborigines.¹²¹ Calvinist, Mary McConnel, was one woman who heeded the call as she strove to apply ‘Christianising’ methods of salvation to the Aboriginal people.

On the other hand, evangelical Christians represented Aborigines sympathetically as people who were equal before God with the rest of humanity, and awaiting Christian teaching, baptism and salvation. According to Henry Reynolds, St Paul’s exhortation that ‘all nations were of one blood’ was the most significant factor supporting racial equality in Australia, a message adopted by Christian missionaries.¹²²

¹¹⁸ *A Statement of the Objects of the Committee of the Societies for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and for Promoting Christian Knowledge (Australia)*, Stephen and Stokes, Sydney, 1836, NLA mc N 1475, item 7186, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ C.F. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.: An Historical Account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 1701-1900*, published at the Society’s Office, London, 1901, p. ix.

¹²⁰ A.H. Body, *Firm Still You Stand: The Anglican Church of St John the Baptist, Canberra, Its Parish and Parishioners 1841-1984*, St John’s Parish Council, Canberra, 1986, note 22, p. 339.

¹²¹ Letter from ‘The London Missionary Society to Governor Hunter, October 1799’; Letter from ‘The London Missionary Society to The Missionaries at Sydney’, in F.H. Bladen (ed.), *Historical Records Of New South Wales, Vol. III–Hunter 1796-1799*, Charles Potter, Sydney, 1895, pp. 731-32.

¹²² Kevin Blackburn, ‘Imagining Aboriginal Nations: Early Nineteenth Century Evangelicals on the Australian Frontier and the “Nation” Concept’, in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 48, Number 2, 2002, p. 178, p. 182; Henry Reynolds, *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996; first published 1987, p. 93.

While English missionary societies, proselytising to Aborigines in the 1820s and 1830s, were ultimately unsuccessful,¹²³ missionaries exhibited Christian humanitarianism in their concern for Aborigines' welfare. They provided rations, held classes to teach English, and in some cases introduced agricultural practices to their mission stations. Among the views expressed by missionaries were recognition that Aborigines were the 'natural owners of the country', and an understanding of the harm done to Indigenous people by displacement and maltreatment at the hands of some colonists. Furthermore, a common humanity was seen in their 'true human feelings' and their spiritual sense and understanding of a 'future state'. It was through an awareness of these traits that missionaries aimed to improve Aboriginal souls by grace and good works. These views were symptomatic of a wider world trend that saw antislavery campaigns directing attention towards the plight of colonised people.¹²⁴

In 1838, the Aboriginal Protection Society was formed in Sydney by men spurred on by evangelical humanitarianism and feelings of compassion and guilt. George Augustus Robinson, who worked with Aborigines from 1829 to 1842 in Van Diemen's Land, and at Port Phillip where he was Protector of Aborigines for ten years, expressed a sympathetic understanding of Aborigines. He wrote of their complex social and political units from which treaties were forged with neighbouring groups, their development of intricate and separate languages, and their 'national feeling', or patriotism. An Assistant Protector, William Thomas, similarly reported Indigenous 'national pride' and a distinctive 'national character', and stated that Aborigines were 'not more cruel than other Nations'.¹²⁵

Although Robinson's private journals were not published until after 1966, his ideas were reflected in the writing of fellow evangelists. Another of his Assistant Protectors, Edward Parker, published in 1854 *The Aborigines of Australia* in which Parker analysed the structure and diversity of Indigenous society.¹²⁶ John Dunmore Lang, a leader of the

¹²³ Cf. L.E. Threlkeld, 'Aboriginal Mission, Lake Macquarie, New South Wales', London Missionary Society Circular, May, 1827; Lancelot Edward Threlkeld, 'The Final Report of the Mission to the Aborigines, Lake Macquarie, New South Wales, 1841', in Niel Gunson (ed.), *Australian Reminiscences & Papers of L.E. Threlkeld, Missionary to the Aborigines, 1824-1859*, Volume I, Australian Aboriginal Studies No. 40, Ethnohistory Series No. 2, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1974, pp. 168-170.

¹²⁴ J.D. Bollen, 'English Missionary Societies and the Australian Aborigine', in *Journal of Religious History*, Volume 9, Number 3, June 1977, p. 269, p. 273, p. 277, p. 279, p. 283, pp. 285-86.

¹²⁵ Bollen, 'English Missionary Societies', p. 286; Blackburn, 'Imagining Aboriginal Nations', p. 180, p. 183, pp. 190-91.

¹²⁶ Edward Stone Parker, *The Aborigines of Australia, a lecture delivered in the Mechanics' Hall*,

Presbyterian Church in Australia, had also disseminated information on Tasmanian Aborigines after discussion with Robinson in 1838. The most widely known publication associated with the Aborigines Protection Society, William Howitt's *Colonization and Christianity* (1838), condemned the means of European colonisation and defended the rights of Indigenous people against a 'lawless and dominating [white] race'.¹²⁷ Within this social climate of evangelical humanism, the women of this thesis constructed their own ways of seeing.

Scientific Theories

Scientific racial theories about man's place in nature proliferated during the nineteenth century. The polygenist view, espoused by David Hume, was that there were different species of humans, exhibiting different characteristics and all inferior to the white race.¹²⁸ The monogenist notion of a chain of being as a linked, one-dimensional natural progression from meanest animal to humans, originating from Aristotle's idea of the *scala naturae*, became associated in the nineteenth century with 'missing links',¹²⁹ as new species of animals were discovered, and as travellers met different racial groups. Associated with this idea was the concept of 'freaks'.

Coinciding with the time that Eliza Davies was living in the United States of America, the American entrepreneur and showman, Phineas Taylor Barnum, capitalised on popular curiosity about odd creatures with his exhibits of 'freaks of nature' from around the world. From 1841, as proprietor of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, he presented to the public 'living curiosities', including a 'mermaid'. Within this exhibit mentality, Indigenous people were often viewed, like the eighteenth-century Negro, as fascinating 'missing links'. In Australia, collector R.E. Johns displayed in his museum in Moonambel, central Victoria, 'all things curious, bizarre, unmentionable or merely

Melbourne before the John Knox Young Men's Association on Wednesday, May 10th, 1854, (Melbourne, 1854), in Blackburn, 'Imagining Aboriginal Nations', p.189.

¹²⁷ Blackburn, 'Imagining Aboriginal Nations', p. 191, p. 180.

¹²⁸ Hume, 'Of National Characters', in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, Vol. 1, p. 252, p. 244, p. 250, p. 249.

¹²⁹ Harriet Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1997, p. 223 note 126, p. 27, pp. 30-31, p. 40, p. 72, p. 46, p. 188. For the fascination of missing links to late nineteenth-century readers, cf. Gillian Beer, *Forging the Missing Link: Interdisciplinary Stories*, CUP, 1992.

interesting', including skulls of Aborigines.¹³⁰ Eliza Davies (indirectly) and Mary McConnel (by direct reference) revealed their knowledge of 'freaks' or 'missing links'.

Ethnological studies, based on classifying physical and cultural characteristics, followed the Christian belief that all humans had descended from Adam and Eve, and that diversity in appearance and culture of non-Christian 'savages' was due to degeneration since Creation. Emily Cowl's assessment of Aborigines reflects this approach.

The publication of Charles Darwin's *On The Origin of Species*, available for sale in Sydney just four months after its publication in Britain in 1859,¹³¹ resolved tensions between the 'monogenist' and 'polygenist' interpretations of human descent by affirming human unity, yet explaining racial diversity by relegating 'savages' to ape status.¹³² Darwin's classification of all living organisms as evolving from earlier forms by slow transformation complied with eighteenth and nineteenth-century ideas of the ordered gradation in nature. It struck a chord with nineteenth-century readers, bound to ideas of imperial progress. Like the central idea in the popular 'great chain of being' theory, Darwin's theory is thought to have gained strength as the 'natural' view because of its similarity to the English social structure with its dependence on order, connection and rank in classes.¹³³ As Tom Griffiths has observed, however, '[e]volutionary theory provided a new scientific language and a host of fresh metaphors with which to express old prejudices'.¹³⁴

Darwin had been formulating his theories of biological adaptation during his five-years voyage on the *Beagle* to South America and the Pacific Islands, from which he returned in 1836. According to Barry Butcher, some of the views held by Darwin while working out his theory of natural selection were the same as those later to be encapsulated in the 'Social Darwinist' ideas of Herbert Spencer. In the 1872 edition of *Origin of Species*, Darwin

¹³⁰ Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, CUP, 1996, p. 32, p. 47.

¹³¹ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species By Means Of Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, Claremont Classics, Australia, 1999; Barry W. Butcher, 'Darwin down under: science, religion, and evolution in Australia', in Ronald L. Numbers and John Stenhouse (eds), *Disseminating Darwinism: The Role of Place, Race, Religion, and Gender*, CUP, 1999, p. 39.

¹³² Jonathan Howard, *Darwin*, OUP, 1982, pp. 10-19; Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, pp. 17-25.

¹³³ Howard, *Darwin*, pp. 77-85.

¹³⁴ Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 45.

introduced the explicit phrase ‘survival of the fittest’, which Social Darwinists applied to the idea of victory by the strongest (organism or race) as a necessary condition for progress. Butcher suggests that Darwin’s views on race were formed from his ‘observations and experiences in Australia’, which Darwin had visited in 1836; and that he was further influenced by the ‘scientific and exploration literature emanating from Australia’, from which he probed how the ‘mechanism of natural selection might apply in the case of human beings’.¹³⁵ Eliza Davies referred to her reading Darwin’s *Beagle* Journal, in which he deemed Aborigines to be only slightly less degraded than the Fuegians he had seen in South America.

In Australia, theories of race were debated as energetically as in Britain.¹³⁶ Furthermore, anthropologists, Lorimer Fison and Alfred William Howitt, (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen contributed to post-Darwinian discussion, as did evolutionary theorists such as Thomas Huxley, J. Lubbock (Lord Avebury), E.B. Tylor, Sir John Evans, A.L. Pitt-Rivers, L.H. Morgan, J.F. McLennan, Sir James Frazer and Andrew Lang. The findings from extensive anthropological fieldwork were published in such works as Fison’s *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* (1880); and Spencer and Gillen’s *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1904).¹³⁷

Mark Francis has pointed out that the application in Australia of nineteenth-century scientific theories to racial questions was varied and idiosyncratic, and dependent on interpretation. Prevalent, however, was the condoning of ‘[c]onquest and the takeover of Aboriginal lands’, based on the belief that Aborigines were at the lowest level of humankind, a ‘lost cause’, unable to be civilised, and that their culture was ‘primitive and

¹³⁵ Barry W. Butcher, ‘Darwinism, Social Darwinism, and the Australian Aborigines: A Reevaluation’, in Roy MacLeod and Philip F. Rehbock (eds), *Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific: Darwin’s Laboratory*, University of Hawai’i Press, 1994, p. 380.

¹³⁶ Cf. e.g., Barry W. Butcher, ‘Gorilla warfare in Melbourne: Halford, Huxley and ‘Man’s place in nature’, in R.W. Home (ed.), *Australian Science in the making*, CUP, 1988, pp. 153-169. Other nineteenth-century evolutionary theorists included French naturalist and geologist Jean Baptiste de Lamarck (published 1801) and Alfred Russel Wallace, who joined Darwin in making the first public statement of the theory of evolution by natural selection to the Linnean Society of London, in July 1858. Their joint papers were published later that year, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, *Evolution By Natural Selection*, CUP, 1958, p. 1.

¹³⁷ D.J. Mulvaney, ‘The Australian Aborigines 1606-1929: Opinion and fieldwork’, in Susan Janson and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *Through White Eyes*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, pp. 24-42.

destined to disappear'.¹³⁸ As these ideas could be applied to Darwin's 1859 evolutionary theories, they were reiterated and accepted as being scientifically valid. This conveniently served the interests of British pastoralists in Australia, where the acquisition of land was paramount. While there was 'sometimes a vague sentiment that the seizure [of land] was unjust ... this was not articulated in juridical terms'.¹³⁹ Mary McConnel, the most prosperous settler discussed in this thesis, embraced both sides of the discussion. Firmly established on a large pastoral station, she supported the progress of civilisation that entailed the 'improvement' of the land; yet she also expressed sympathy with Aborigines at their loss of country.

The question of the evolution of man was addressed by Darwin in *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871). This work dealt with the natural differences of brains and mental powers in man and apes, and summarised the points linking human beings to a general evolutionary scheme. American physician, Samuel George Morton, added his voice to the discussion with his comparisons of ape and human skulls, studies that Eliza Davies had read.

The popular nineteenth-century 'science' of phrenology was invoked to cast Aborigines into an inferior social and racial position. Phrenology associated perceived racial attributes with the shape of a person's skull, relying on the theory that specific parts of the brain were responsible for particular moral and intellectual characteristics. Proponents therefore took a person's physiognomy as an indication of intelligence and character.¹⁴⁰ Racial assumptions were often applied to Aborigines on this basis. Balfour had decreed that Aborigines' heads 'all much larger behind than in front, are certainly not such as a phrenologist would admire'. He loathed their 'low ... almost ... the *no* forehead ... the shaggy eyebrows protruding over and almost hiding the small keen eyes—the flabby nose ... the thick lips and the snow-like teeth, common to cannibals'. Even the sympathetic Mundy felt that the

¹³⁸ Mark Francis, 'Social Darwinism and the Construction of Institutionalised Racism in Australia', in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Number 50/51, 1996, pp. 90-105; Kay Anderson and Colin Perrin, "'The Miserablest People in the World": Race, Humanism and the Australian Aborigine', in *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 26-27; Butcher, 'Darwinism, Social Darwinism, and the Australian Aborigines', p. 374.

¹³⁹ Francis, 'Social Darwinism', p. 90.

¹⁴⁰ Phrenology was founded by the German, F.J. Gall, and introduced to English-speaking readers by George Combe in *Elements of Phrenology* (1824) and *The Constitution of Men* (1828), Reynolds, *Frontier*, 1996, pp. 113-15.

‘Australian cranium is exceedingly ill-shaped—the animals bumps largely preponderating over the intellectual’.¹⁴¹ Eliza Davies was also influenced by racial opinions based on phrenology.

Early Sydney artists, John Chapman, Richard Browne, the ‘Port Jackson Painter’, and the lithographer E. Piper presented stylised images of Aborigines with grotesquely wide mouths, sensuously thick lips, broad or hooked noses, bushy eyebrows, and unruly, woolly hair. The result was an ugly, bestial representation. Often ceremonially painted, with the bone through the base of the nose, holding boomerang, spear or waddy (wielded as weaponry, rather than depicted as useful tools of daily life), the Aborigines were stereotyped as ‘savages’.¹⁴² These images could have been understood later by the theory of phrenology. Called the ‘fashionable philosophy’,¹⁴³ phrenology influenced the racial views of Katherine Kirkland’s Scottish publisher, the evolutionist Robert Chambers.¹⁴⁴ The theory was popular in Australia between 1825 and 1850. Eliza Davies’ use of it in her 1881 United States publication indicates the strength of its influence throughout the century.

This stock of ideas and the racial theories, published and discussed throughout the nineteenth century, were available to the British middle-class Christian women whose works are investigated in this thesis. These selected women reflect some of these theories, as I will continue to show in this thesis. In the case of the three settlers (Katherine Kirkland, Mary McConnel and Rose Cowen), their representations were governed not by theories of Aboriginal debasement and extinction, but by the everyday realities of a vibrant race.

Attitudes to Landscape

One way in which Enlightenment ideas continued to find expression in Australia was in current theories about landscape, based on the idea that beauty and harmony in one’s physical surroundings were associated with the level of civilisation. Like Anthony

¹⁴¹ Balfour, *A Sketch of New South Wales*, pp. 7-8; Mundy, *Our Antipodes*, p. 219.

¹⁴² Bernard Smith investigates these images in *European Vision and the South Pacific* (1989) and *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, illustrations 96, 97, p. 93, p. 95.

¹⁴³ By missionary, L.E. Threlkeld, Reynolds, *Frontier*, p. 114.

¹⁴⁴ Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 44.

Trollope, who commented that, ‘It is taken for granted that Australia is ugly’,¹⁴⁵ several of my writers recorded their impressions of a strange, dreary or desolate land compared with the green fields of England. Barron Field, appointed New South Wales Supreme Court judge in 1817, exemplified this attitude when he criticised the ‘dry hardness’ and ‘cold olive-green’ of evergreen trees, which were so unlike deciduous vegetation that Field believed lent a picturesque variety through the annual seasons. While civilised spaces were depicted as happy, bright places of progress, the Australian landscape was seen as ugly and empty. Katherine Kirkland and Mary McConnel were two of the women who reflected these attitudes. As they ventured inland, and drew near to their future homes, however, they looked beyond the stereotype of the harsh, dry, ‘ugly’ countryside to describe pretty scenes, possibly in an effort to portray to their readers an ‘improved’ natural habitat that accorded with the idea of a more ‘civilised’ and therefore acceptable place for Britons to live.¹⁴⁶

Australia’s bare, barren land was tied to the concept of wild bodies inhabiting untamed spaces. The belief that landscapes and animal life (including humans) acted in a fixed relationship to each other was formulated in 1806 by Alexander Von Humboldt.¹⁴⁷ Proposing that nature in its noblest form could be found only in lush tropical landscapes, Humboldt reflected Rousseau’s noble savage ideology by associating physically beautiful, easygoing and relaxed South Pacific Islanders with their correspondingly luxuriant, colourful, exotic vegetation.¹⁴⁸ This concept extended J.R. Forster’s theory of climatic determinism, from which he argued that the power of harsh climates degraded native people from an ‘original happiness’. George Keate, a member of the Royal Society and the

¹⁴⁵ Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, G. Robertson, Melbourne, 1876; first published 1873, p. 204.

¹⁴⁶ Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin have identified a similar confusion about the Australian landscape, which some settlers saw as both ‘ancient, primitive and endemically resistant to progress’ but also ‘raw, unclaimed, unformed and full of promise’, Griffiths and Robin (eds), *Ecology & Empire*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ In *Ideen zu einer Physiognomik der Gewachse*. Baron Humboldt (1769-1859) travelled extensively, making geographical and ethnographical observations, Alexander Von Humboldt, *The Story of the Life and Travels of Alexander Von Humboldt*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, Edinburgh and New York, 1879, p. 17, p. 19; W. MacGillivray, *The Travels and Researches of Alexander Von Humboldt: Being a Condensed Narrative of his Journeys in the Equinoctial Regions of America, and in Asiatic Russia: – Together with Analyses of his More Important Investigations*, Harper & Brothers, New York, c. 1832, passim.

¹⁴⁸ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, pp. 203-4. According to Patty O’Brien’s thesis, Pacific Island women have carried the stereotype of ideal womanhood from the time of colonisation until the end of the twentieth century. Ideal womanhood incorporated the child, ‘the primitive’ and the desirable woman, living in a South Sea paradise, Patty O’Brien, ‘The Pacific Muse: Colonial Stereotypes of Indigenous Women in the Pacific’, PhD Thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney, 1998, p. 8; p. 1 of Synopsis, p.7, p. 5.

Society of Antiquaries, supported Forster's theory by suggesting that nobility in savagery decreased in proportion to the increased distance from the idealised tropics to reach the debased levels of barbarity and treachery.¹⁴⁹

If beautiful savages lived in beautiful landscapes, it followed that Australian Aborigines who lived in a 'wild', unpleasant place (and often far from the equator) were by association correspondingly ugly, bestial, uncontrolled and morally degraded. While women from Tahiti and Hawai'i were most usually depicted by travellers to the South Seas as beautiful, sexually alluring and often attractively adorned with flowers, Australia's Indigenous women often remained 'invisible' in early literary representation, or were regarded stereotypically as ugly and degenerate.¹⁵⁰ Combined with the idea of a wild landscape, often monotonous and devoid of vegetation, was the notion that the original inhabitants were people at the lowest level of humanity. Like 'undeveloped' marsupials and monotremes, Aborigines could be seen to be inferior, and doomed to fade away.¹⁵¹

A Bishop of Gloucester, Godfrey Goodman, and the writer and theologian John Donne projected the idea that nature had fallen from its state of primal beauty when man himself fell from grace. In Barron Field's opinion, Australian nature did not 'fall' but 'emerg'd at the first sinning'. He considered the kangaroo as a 'divine mistake' and that Australian Aborigines belonged to 'the degenerate Ethiopian character'.¹⁵² He believed that, unlike the South Sea Islanders, Australia's Indigenous people would never be civilised because civilisation needed to be associated with beauty and harmony. Similarly, the Australian landscape—ugly and empty, and so discordantly different from civilised England—was seen as awaiting redemption, like its wild inhabitants, from a state of economic, ecological and spiritual barrenness.

¹⁴⁹ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p.133.

¹⁵⁰ Margaret Jolly's investigation into the writings of the men who accompanied Cook on his three voyages to the South Pacific has identified contrasting tropes of South Sea womanhood. While beautiful women were depicted as inhabiting the eastern islands of Tahiti and Hawai'i, ugly, sexually unappealing, oppressed women were seen as living in the western islands that included Vanuatu, Cf. *James Cook and the Exploration of the Pacific*, Thames & Hudson, UK, 2009, pp. 98-102.

¹⁵¹ Griffiths and Robin (eds), *Ecology & Empire*, p. 3.

¹⁵² Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 240, p. 227-28; John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, CUP, Melbourne, 2002, p. 165.

Artists reflected these attitudes in their pictures. John Eyre, for example, painted the regions occupied by Aborigines as desolate wilderness, while towns were portrayed as civilised places of brightness and activity. In *View of Sydney from the West Side of the Cove*, the developing town of Sydney is neat and orderly and showered in bright light, whereas the surrounding landscape is dark, monotonous and undeveloped. A conventionalised group of Aboriginal people sits on the periphery of the town—outsiders looking in.¹⁵³

The artist Joseph Lycett put these concepts into words when he wrote in *Views in Australia* (London, 1824):

behold the gloomy grandeur of solitary woods and forests exchanged for the noise and bustle of thronged marts of commerce; while the dens of savage animals, and the hiding places of yet more savage men, have transformed into peaceful villages or cheerful towns.¹⁵⁴

Writers replicated the idea that wilderness was a moral testing ground of Biblical banishment into which settlers brought the progress of civilised society to a primitive race of savages. The poet Michael Massey Robinson portrayed the native landscape as a place of melancholy and the cultivated land as the source of social happiness.¹⁵⁵ Marcus Clarke, too, referred to the ‘weird melancholy’ of the Australian landscape.¹⁵⁶ According to Bernard Smith, this melancholy typified the moral gloom of pagan lands and was compared to scenes or descriptions of travelling settlers’ camps or camp fires that symbolised the progress of civilisation and the spread of British law and order to the untamed spaces.¹⁵⁷ Among my selected women writers, those who ventured inland either as new colonial arrivals or as pioneers to outback regions, expressed in their writing the feelings of exile and isolation as they left behind the vigour and safety of civilisation. The works of Emily Cowl and Katherine Kirkland express a dislocation brought about by strange, ‘uncivilised’

¹⁵³ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 218.

¹⁵⁴ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 237.

¹⁵⁵ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 203, p. 233. Robinson (1747-1826) had been a London attorney, convicted of attempted extortion. He became clerk to various judge advocates and magistrates; and recited birthday odes on the birthdays of George III and Queen Charlotte.

¹⁵⁶ Rosemary Foxton, ‘Reading Australia: Landscapes of Faith and Doubt in the Nineteenth Century’, in Livio Dobrez (ed.), *Identifying Australia in Postmodern Times*, Bibliotech, ANU, Canberra, 1994, p. 115, p. 116.

¹⁵⁷ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p.153, p. 251; Michael Ackland (ed.), *The Penguin Book of 19th Century Australian Literature*, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 13-14.

landscapes.

Reading Books

Literature played a significant part in influencing women's view of the world. As education became more freely available to women during the nineteenth century, reading became a popular pastime, fitting the utilitarian concepts of self-improvement and profitable instruction to the Enlightenment ideas of 'progress' and civilisation.¹⁵⁸ While the predominant evangelical social climate forbade theatre going, dancing, music halls or even card games, reading was encouraged as a means (together with prayer and moral purity) of attaining spiritual fulfilment.¹⁵⁹ Unable to participate in politics, business or financial administration, and excluded from the leisure pursuits of men—who in Britain engaged in such activities as hunting and drinking—middle-class women turned to reading books.¹⁶⁰ As reading flourished in Britain, public libraries increased in number. Within three Westminster parishes in London in 1838, there were also 38 circulating libraries.¹⁶¹

The most influential book was the Bible. It was supported by a vast quantity of religious tracts, books on spiritual guidance and assurance, moralistic tales, autobiographies and didactic fiction. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* were two of the most read books, introduced to children as part of their regular Sunday devotions.¹⁶²

Until 1830, non-fiction was favoured above classic fiction. As the trade in non-fiction further expanded, penny weekly magazines were one means by which women became consumers of information. Seen as a cheap method to educate the general public through the utilitarian motive to distribute wholesome and informative literature, they aimed to

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, p. 3, p. 9, p. 11, p. 169, p. 171. In the lower classes, literacy had increased with the opening of Sunday schools and the extension of elementary education.

¹⁵⁹ Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 86, p. 141, p. 99.

¹⁶⁰ Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 85; Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*, Penguin Books in association with Chatto & Windus, Mitcham, Victoria, 1963, p. 45.

¹⁶¹ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, Farrar Straus Giroux, New York, 1997, pp. 177-180; Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 217. Five of my selected writers were British-born.

¹⁶² Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 123, p. 99, p. 255, p. 258, pp. 104-5, p. 125, p. 127.

reach the ‘earnest but poor student’. Katherine Kirkland’s work, for example, was published in *Chambers’s Miscellany of Useful and Entertaining Tracts*, a utilitarian penny weekly magazine produced by Scottish brothers, William and Robert Chambers, whose democratic aim was to produce affordable literature for the working class. *Chambers’s Miscellany* was an ‘improving’ publication, filled with ‘useful’, ‘instructive’ and entertaining information, containing anecdotes of fruitful self-instruction, which the publishers hoped were of interest and value. Its average weekly sales between 1845 and 1847 of 80,000¹⁶³ indicate its popularity.

History and travel books were however the most popular forms of non-fiction, with tales of seafarers whose voyages dated back to the seventeenth century being widely read. Into this category sneaked Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, a book read almost as often as *Pilgrim’s Progress*.¹⁶⁴ The strength of the novel’s popularity is seen in the number of times the women in this thesis evoked Robinson Crusoe to describe their own feelings of exile as ‘shipwrecked’ Europeans cast into an uncivilised world. Evidence of its popularity is verified by an English Public Libraries Committee which found in 1849 that the three most frequently borrowed books in that year had been *Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe* and Cook’s *Voyages*.¹⁶⁵

Shipwreck and encounters with black ‘savages’ in an unknown and strange place were themes replicated by the writers of this thesis. The popular appeal of foreign adventure offered the reader a degree of vicarious excitement, while reinforcing the idea of a superior white Christian civilisation in conflict with uncivilised heathens. The first five women (in the case of Eliza Fraser, her chroniclers) understood the power that these narrative inclusions could wield in the telling of a story, in holding the attention of an audience (in the case of Emily Cowl) or in satisfying the demands of a publisher. This notion is absent from the work of the only Australian-born author, Rose Scott Cowen, who published in the mid-twentieth century.

¹⁶³ Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 390. *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* (1832) was similarly successful, leading sales in Manchester in 1851, Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 242, p. 280, pp. 332-339, pp. 351-52.

¹⁶⁴ Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 258, p. 126; Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1961, pp. 158-59.

¹⁶⁵ Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 220.

The Lure of Romantic Fiction

By 1840, novels had become a form of accepted reading matter. Because of strong evangelical influences, novelists continued to conform to the rigid moral expectation of public taste in order to find a market.¹⁶⁶ To instruct, while offering ‘wholesome’ and religiously pure themes, remained strict literary requirements. The romanticism of nineteenth-century English novels was therefore characterised by excessive sentimentality, influenced by the themes of charity, benevolence, and good will. These elements had informed the eighteenth-century works of Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Oliver Goldsmith and Laurence Sterne.¹⁶⁷ Nineteenth-century novels filled with excessive emotionalism included Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* (1838), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839) and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), all of which portrayed heightened sensibility to human suffering. William Thackeray and Thomas Hardy were other contributors to this genre. Occasional quotations by the writers in this thesis acknowledged their reading of some of these works.¹⁶⁸

Among the most popular themes in English romantic literature were unrequited love, true love involving a disharmony of race or class, conflict between ideals and circumstances, and providential escape from the hands of unsuitable suitors, evil doers (or savage heathens). This literary genre was characterised by pathetic accidents or occurrences, reliance on cliché, and shallow and exaggerated emotion from which the author extorted more feeling than a situation warranted. Sentimental feelings were dwelt upon for longer and more insistently than was necessary.¹⁶⁹ Sympathetically drawn women were often the heroines of romantic novels as in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), which included enforced captivity, and Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847).¹⁷⁰ Eliza Davies’ work reflects the strength of this influence.

¹⁶⁶ Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 124.

¹⁶⁷ Rousseau’s theory of the ‘noble savage’ had also encouraged the promotion of sentimental literary expression, Fred Kaplan, *Secret Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature*, Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 7, p. 143; Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870*, Yale University Press, New Haven; Oxford University Press, London, 1957, p. 274.

¹⁶⁸ Katherine Kirkland acknowledged her reading of Laurence Sterne by quoting from his novel, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768).

¹⁶⁹ Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, p. 274; Richard Altick, *Preface to Critical Reading*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1969, p. 169.

¹⁷⁰ Jenny Stringer (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English*, OUP, Oxford, New York, 1996, p. 578.

Between 1875 and 1914, a new generation of popular romance writers emerged to form the genre of the 'New Imperialism' adventure tales. H. Rider Haggard, Robert Louis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling were three writers of these 'ripping yarns'. Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) was a typical example. Robert Dixon has described these romantic adventures as 'a willed re-assertion of an imperial ideal on the wane' and declares that renewed vitality in the British race was most promising at the colonial frontier on the 'outskirts of Empire', where the 'machine is relatively impotent and the individual is strong'.¹⁷¹ Although this literary genre fed into the code of masculine identity and strength, Emily Cowl enlivened her text with elements of this sort of adventure story, with its connotations of race battles in a wilderness, where the hero emerges happy and safe from the black man's brutality and subterfuge.

Conclusion

Power resided in the colonisers, who were supported by the word of their God and motivated to obey God's law. The colonised Aborigines were generally seen to be degraded and inferior. As educated women, the writers in this thesis would have known the scientific theories and have read the popular historical and literary texts that reinforced these perceptions. This thesis will explore the effects of these social and literary influences on the attitudes towards Aborigines of six British women.

Specifically, the thesis will explore the degree to which the women complied with British social and racial attitudes associated with the tenets of Christian evangelicalism, progress and race hierarchy, or reassessed their views in the light of first-hand knowledge. It will trace the effect that colonial experiences exerted on racial perceptions. In particular, it will investigate changing perceptions in those women who gained first-hand experience of individual Indigenous people, including women whose knowledge extended over a long period of time. Finally, it will demonstrate which nineteenth-century social values remained steadfast over time and place, independent of colonial experience.

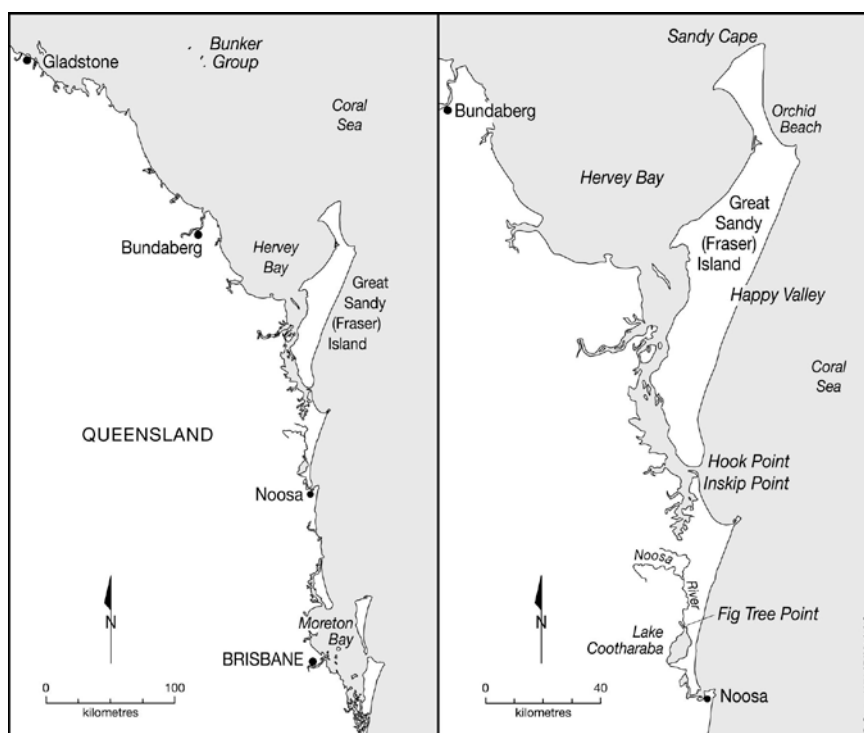
¹⁷¹ Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875-1914*, CUP, 1995, p. 62, pp. 2-3.

PART A

ADVENTURERS



Engraving of Eliza Fraser (John Curtis, *The Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, 1838.)



Map 2: Eliza Fraser

Influences: Early Perceptions of Aborigines

Eliza Fraser: ‘Through a Glass Darkly’

‘At the outset we promised to render the history subservient to the cause of morality, and we trust that we have performed our promise.’¹⁷²

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore in detail the story of Eliza Fraser in order to show the way in which cultural factors of bias and audience expectation worked in reshaping the narrative and depiction of Australia’s Indigenous people. As a famous, archetypal encounter between a white woman and Aborigines, the Fraser story was an early, powerful and influential tale which reveals how fear and prejudice entered colonial storytelling about the frontier. It was so well known, and so thoroughly worked over, that women writing later could not help but be influenced by it. The audiences of their books would also have heard of or read it. It was therefore important to the social and literary context of my women writers, who would have been well aware of its similar impact on their own readers. As my introductory chapter to the other five writers, Eliza’s story serves as a pivotal text around which the other representations in this thesis revolve or from which they diverge.

The analytical detail I bring to this chapter aims to establish an historical context within which Indigenous actions and reactions might be better understood and interpreted. By reconstructing events, I have endeavoured to present explanations

¹⁷² John Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle containing A Faithful Narrative of the Dreadful Sufferings of the Crew, and the Cruel Murder of Captain Fraser by the Savages. Also, The Horrible Barbarity of the Cannibals Inflicted upon The Captain’s Widow, Whose Unparalleled Sufferings are Stated by Herself, and Corroborated by the Other Survivors. To Which is Added, The Narrative of the Wreck of the Charles Eaton, in the Same Latitude*, George Virtue, London, 1838, p. 375.

for Indigenous behaviour against which the validity of the slanted reporting of later accounts may be assessed. The motivation of the myriad ‘interpretations’ after 1836 followed a particular form of religious distortion.

As an early example of colonial storytelling at work, particularly about white women and Aborigines, Eliza’s story encapsulated the dread of shipwreck and the frightening prospect of travellers falling victim to unknown, though presumably savage, peoples. This fear fostered a vigorous genre of captivity tales during the late eighteenth and early to middle nineteenth centuries. While usually based on fact, such narratives were written to suit a readership seeking vicarious adventure and often contained the religious motives of the author or publisher. Such was the popularity of the story of Eliza Fraser that her history has been refracted into a collage of tellings and re-tellings, of contradictions and conflicting interpretations, and through later appropriations into art and literature. It has been transposed from its origins as a story of survival from shipwreck to the status of myth and legend. My analysis of the story and its reinterpretations inform my later exploration of representations of colonial experience.

From 1836, when Eliza’s story begins, up to the late twentieth century, reconstructions have fitted and filled the expectation of the times. In nineteenth-century Britain and its colonial outposts, the backdrop to the dramatic reproductions was the perception that inhabitants of uncivilised lands were pagan savages. Even Eliza’s own brief accounts, although balanced and reasonable compared to later embellished reassessments, can be measured by nineteenth-century attitudes and prejudices.

In its simplest form, Eliza Fraser’s tale began with a shipwreck on 21 May 1836. The *Stirling Castle*, having just left Sydney en route to Singapore and beyond, struck a reef¹⁷³ off the north-eastern Australian coast. The ship’s captain, James Fraser (Eliza’s husband), Eliza, and the crew of about seventeen men were compelled to abandon ship. One group of survivors, who took to the ship’s

¹⁷³ Thought to be part of Swain Reefs at the southern end of the (later named) Barrier Reef.

longboat, comprised Captain Fraser, Eliza, the first officer, and eight crew members. After one month at sea, during which time Eliza gave birth to a child who subsequently drowned, the survivors landed on Great Sandy Island, now Fraser Island. Soon after landing, some members of the crew set off to walk to the penal settlement of Moreton Bay (Brisbane), taking with them all the firearms and provisions.¹⁷⁴ The stranded remainder was adopted into three different groups of the Ka'bi and Batjali (Butchala) people. Only eight of the *Stirling Castle* castaways were to survive. Eliza spent fifty-two days with the Ka'bi. She was rescued from the northern shores of the mainland Lake Cootharaba¹⁷⁵ on 17 August, and arrived in Moreton Bay on 22 August 1836. On 6 September 1836, after two weeks of recovery from debilitation and exposure, Eliza dictated an account of her ordeal to a clerk of Foster Fyans, captain of the 4th Regiment and commandant at Moreton Bay. The *Sydney Gazette* published another report on 18 October, 1836.¹⁷⁶

On her return to England, both Eliza and her second husband, Alexander John Greene, showed themselves to be in compliance with factual distortions, by capitalising on the publicity surrounding Eliza as a survivor of an extraordinary experience. In Moreton Bay, and in Sydney before her return to England on the ship captained by Greene, a sympathetic and curious public contributed money towards her welfare.¹⁷⁷ In London, the marketability of a sensational story

¹⁷⁴ Statements were also taken from John Baxter and Joseph Corralis. Lieutenant Otter, Captain Foster Fyans (the Moreton Bay Commandant) and John Graham, who rescued four of the survivors, also gave accounts of the part they played in the action. These accounts are found in the State Records Authority of NSW, SZ976, COD 183, and reproduced in Barry Dwyer and Neil Buchanan, *The Rescue of Eliza Fraser: 150th Anniversary Edition*, Eliza Fraser Commemorative Committee, Noosa, Queensland, 1986, pp. 26-44. I am following here the second officer John Baxter's report in Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, pp. 33-34. Various reports and reconstructions give varying details of periods of time and numbers of people, as well as conflicting accounts of events.

¹⁷⁵ Dwyer and Buchanan, supported by Elaine Brown, 'The Legend of Eliza Fraser – A Survey of The Sources' in *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Volume XV, No. 7, May 1994, p. 356, suggest that Eliza was found in the vicinity of Fig Tree Point.

¹⁷⁶ State Records Authority of NSW, SZ976, COD 183, reproduced in Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, pp. 35-36, p. 41.

¹⁷⁷ *Sydney Gazette*, 18 October 1836, p. 3, cited in Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 42, as 17 October. Eliza and Greene left Sydney on the *Mediterranean Packet* on 25 February 1837. They had been married on 3 February 1837. It is believed

plunged her into early deception. Falsely pleading a demoralised state of widowhood, destitution and cruel abuse, Eliza was assisted by the Lord Mayor of London, who organised a subscription campaign that resulted in the donation of £50 for Eliza, and £482 for her surviving children. Greene has been suspected as the instigator of further commercial manipulation by parading Eliza as an attraction, along with an embellished story, for 6d a look.¹⁷⁸ The sensational message promoted and extended in each re-telling, however, was of the cruelty of the barbaric savages and the ‘miraculous’ salvation of the civilised white woman.

The twentieth-century ‘revival’ of Eliza in literary form might be traced to the following texts: Michael Ondaatje, *The Man With Seven Toes* (1969), Michael Alexander, *Mrs Fraser On The Fatal Shore* (1971, 1976), André Brink, *An Instant in the Wind* (1976), Patrick White, *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976), in which a sexual liaison develops between Eliza and her convict rescuer, and Barry Dwyer and Neil Buchanan’s evidence-based interpretation, *The Rescue of Eliza Fraser* (1986). The David Williamson and Tim Burstall film, *The Rollicking Adventures of Eliza Fraser* (1976) and the book of the film, Kenneth Cook’s *Eliza Fraser* (1976), trade upon the enigma of Eliza’s sexuality. Unexplained sexual hints surrounding her experience provided artistic licence for titillation at a time when social relations between the sexes, and changing power relations between colonial and postcolonial people in the 1970s, allowed an interpretation which espoused sexual adventure, and the representation of an increased female sexual and social independence.¹⁷⁹ Elaine Brown’s *Cooloola Coast: Noosa to Fraser Island* (2000) provides a welcome historical assessment that goes a long way towards unravelling the myth.

that about £400 were collected, all of which amount was given to Eliza, Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 20, p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 20, p. 21. In about 1837, Henry Russell saw a woman in a London street, purporting to be Eliza, Henry Stuart Russell, *The Genesis of Queensland* (1888), Vintage Books, Toowoomba, 1989, p. 250. It may, however, have been one of the many ‘Eliza’ impostors who capitalised on her story.

¹⁷⁹ For a construction of literary works, I have used Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonisation: History as Social Memory*, CUP, 1997, endnote 75, p. 223; and Kay Schaffer, ‘The Eliza Fraser Story and Constructions of Gender, Race and Class in Australian Culture’, in *Hecate: Women/Australia/Theory* (Special Issue), Vol. 17, Number 1, St Lucia, Brisbane, Queensland, 1991, pp. 140-42. An early twentieth-century interpretation centred on the rescuer Robert Gibbings, *John Graham, Convict, 1824: An historical narrative* (1937), Brown, Watson Limited, London, 1961.

Sidney Nolan's series of Eliza Fraser paintings that stretched from 1947 to 1978 represented the iconic Eliza in relation to her landscape and, inevitably, to the male protagonists of the story. The theme of the 'wild white woman' was now used to fascinate and intrigue. In *Death of Captain Fraser* (1948), for example, Eliza stands next to her speared husband, and is depicted as having already partly descended into nature. Tanned on her upper torso and with feathers protruding from her blonde hair, she is halfway to being native, naked and alone in the stark landscape except for the last vestige of culture, her knee-length red stockings.¹⁸⁰

In the 1830s, however, Eliza's story was a text of Empire. I will examine two of these reconstructions to demonstrate the misrepresentations promulgated as reported details of fact.

Voyage and Shipwreck

The historical Eliza Fraser and her experiences can be gleaned from the meagre primary sources and the historical probes into her life and circumstances, most notably by Elaine Brown,¹⁸¹ and by Dwyer and Buchanan. Many details, however, are lost to time. She was born, Eliza Anne Slack, perhaps in Derbyshire, England, and she was literate, the signature on her dictated report showing a neat, flowing style. Sometime before 1821 she married James Fraser, a mariner.¹⁸² Lieutenant Otter, who led the rescue party in August 1836, referred to Eliza as a 38-year-old British woman.¹⁸³ Her childhood may have been spent in Ceylon (Sri

¹⁸⁰ *Death of Captain Fraser*, 1948, Enamel on Board, Foundation Collection, The Nolan Gallery, Canberra.

¹⁸¹ Elaine Brown, *Cooloolo Coast: Noosa to Fraser Island: The Aboriginal and settler histories of a unique environment*, UQP, St Lucia, 2000. Another valuable source is Brown, 'The Legend of Eliza Fraser – A Survey of The Sources', *JRHSQ*, Vol. XV, No. 7, May 1994, pp. 345-360. Numerous other twentieth-century commentators have endeavoured to unravel the inconsistencies, misconceptions and historical errors; cf. Yolanda Drummond, 'Progress of Eliza Fraser', in *JRHSQ*, Vol. XV, No. 1, February 1993, pp. 15-25.

¹⁸² Elaine Brown, 'Fraser, Eliza Anne (c.1798-1858?)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/fraser-eliza-anne-12929/text23361>, published in hardcopy 2005, accessed online 9 September 2014.

¹⁸³ Account by Otter sent to his family and published in *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, London, 17 September 1837, p. 3; Brown, *Cooloolo Coast*, p. 113.

Lanka). She lived at least part of her adult life, however, in Stromness on the Orkney Islands. Here, in the care of a Presbyterian minister, she left behind her three children, Jane (fifteen), James (eleven) and David (six) before accompanying James Fraser on his voyage to the Australian colonies. Her descendants believed that the Greenes emigrated to New Zealand and that Eliza died in Melbourne in a carriage accident.¹⁸⁴

The *Stirling Castle* left London on 22 October carrying passengers and a cargo of 'hard and soft goods, together with 900 barrels of Hodgen's pale ale' to Hobart, where it arrived on 22 March 1836.¹⁸⁵ The ship then proceeded to Sydney where most of the crew deserted. The remaining crew members were the First Mate, Charles Brown; the boatswain (and James Fraser's cousin) John Baxter, who was elevated to Second Mate; Edward Stone who became boatswain, and the ship's boy John Fraser, the nephew of Captain Fraser. Eleven or twelve new seamen had joined when the ship left Sydney on 15 May 1836.¹⁸⁶

Much has been made in secondary sources of Captain Fraser's ill health and middle age, factors that more recent commentators have brought forward as causes of his vulnerability in Indigenous society. Fifty-six years old, he was possibly suffering from a chronic gastric ulcer, for which he may have required a specialised diet. This has been purported to be the reason for Eliza's presence on board the *Stirling Castle*.¹⁸⁷ Fraser had previously sailed the *Stirling Castle* to Australia, leaving Greenock on 1 June 1831, when Reverend Dr John Dunmore Lang chartered the 350 tonne brig from Alan Ker and Company of Greenock to bring tradesmen to New South Wales to work on his 'Australian College', a proposed Presbyterian secondary school in Sydney. During this voyage, Fraser was accused of allowing pigs and poultry to run unrestricted around the deck. When killed, their flesh was found to be diseased and inedible. Not only were

¹⁸⁴ R.J.L. Adams, *Noosa and Gubbi Gubbi: The Land, the People, the Conflict*, Ultreya Publications, Tewantin, Queensland, 2000, p. 96; Brown, 'Fraser, Eliza Anne', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/fraser-eliza-anne-12929/text23361>, published in hardcopy 2005.

¹⁸⁵ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, p. 7.

¹⁸⁶ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, pp. 7-14.

¹⁸⁷ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, p. 9, p. 21, p. 35.

food supplies low and of poor quality, but also fresh water was so scarce that passengers refrained from using it for washing. When the ship reached Cape Town, the vessel was quarantined because of an outbreak of measles and scarlet fever amongst the passengers, prohibiting them from going ashore.¹⁸⁸ Fraser's reputation as a sea captain had been previously blemished by the wreck of the brig *Comet* in Torres Strait in 1830, a circumstance which, according to John Baxter, weighed heavily on Fraser's mind during the 1836 shipwreck. The *Stirling Castle* is also said to have collided with a vessel in the Thames in October 1835, before reaching open sea.¹⁸⁹

The period between the *Stirling Castle* shipwreck and the time when the Ka'bi took some of the survivors into their tribal society was marked by stress and hardship. As the *Stirling Castle* was breaking up in the sea, the crew was able to salvage the pinnace and the longboat; both however had leaks that had to be sealed before they could be made seaworthy. In the eventual attempt to launch them, they were again breached as the heavy seas dashed them against the wreck. Rations were scarce because the movement of ballast in the wreck had covered the provisions stored below decks, so that only those held on deck could be gathered for the sustenance of the castaways. These provisions were taken on board the larger longboat which, according to reports, held Fraser, Eliza, Brown, Robert Dayman, Robert Carey, Joseph Corralis, Henry Youlden, Robert Darge, William Elliott, John Fraser and Michael Doyle/Denny. Overloaded, it ran aground, increasing the leak as it was pulled free of the reef.¹⁹⁰ In the lighter pinnace were Baxter, Edward Stone (the boatswain) and five other crew members.

Details are confusing and hard to piece together. I have attempted it by incorporating Eliza and Baxter's first written recollections. After about a week at sea, the survivors landed on an unidentified island in search of water and food,

¹⁸⁸ D.W.A. Baker, *Days of Wrath: A life of John Dunmore Lang*, MUP, 1985, pp. 79-80, p. 84.

¹⁸⁹ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁹⁰ Michael Doyle and Michael Denny may have been the same man, Brown, *Cooloolo Coast*, p. 110.

and to make further repairs to the boats. While water was found, Eliza reported that no food was available.¹⁹¹ The boats were again launched and sailed for another two weeks until they arrived on what was thought to be an island of the Bunker Group, east of the present town of Gladstone. Here, they found oysters to eat. Water, however, was scarce. Eliza described her attempt to quench her own and her husband's thirst, adding a graphic example of the mutinous sentiments among some members of the crew. She explained that:

I contrived with great difficulty to procure a little water by saturating the sleeve of my gown and squeezing it into a bottle, when one of the crew named Henry Youlden came up and taking it from me, he drank it off saying he had as much need of it as me or the Captain; on my remonstrating with him he explained "damn you, you She Captain if you say much more I'll drown you."¹⁹²

Although Captain Fraser hoped to reach Moreton Bay without touching land, at the end of one week all the water had been consumed. Lasting longer was a quantity of brandy and thirteen gallons of beer. The ensuing drunkenness among some crew members encouraged mutinous self-confidence. After a further week at sea, when the occupants saw smoke on shore, 'the men [then] became very mutinous and ... Robert Darge and Robert Dayman told the Captain they would throw him overboard if he did not put in'. This account by Eliza is verified by Baxter, who adds that seamen Darge, Dayman, and also Youlden, had 'got drunk on board the Boat by force taking a jar of brandy' and had repeatedly threatened to drown Fraser. The reason attributed to Fraser's reluctance to land was that 'the blacks would murder them all'.¹⁹³ This is the first reference to the Aborigines, whose part in the process of events has been represented in various forms over the next 160 years.

When the boats did land, Edward Stone took command of the pinnace and set sail

¹⁹¹ John Baxter's report and 'Mrs Fraser's Narrative', State Records Authority of New South Wales, Ref. SZ976, COD 183, in Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 33, p. 35.

¹⁹² 'Mrs Fraser's Narrative', in Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 35.

¹⁹³ Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 35, p. 33.

with six of the youngest crewmen,¹⁹⁴ having exchanged Baxter for John Fraser. Stone planned to sail and row to Moreton Bay, 300 kilometres to the south. However, the men mistakenly bypassed Moreton Bay, coming ashore at the Tweed River in present-day northern New South Wales. The only survivor from this group was Robert Hodge, who was to be picked up by a passing ship at the Macleay River and taken to Sydney.

After another week at sea, on about 12 June, the longboat with the remaining castaways came to land on Great Sandy Island, 30 kilometres south of Sandy Cape, in the vicinity of the modern site, Orchid Beach. Some time after landing (Baxter cites one day; Eliza, ten days), Darge, Dayman, Youlden, Corralis, Elliot and Carey, started to walk towards Moreton Bay, taking with them Fraser's shotgun, pistol, muskets, ammunition, and some of his navigational instruments.¹⁹⁵ It was now impossible to launch the longboat. Alongside her unarmed male compatriots, Eliza realised that she was 'totally defenceless'.¹⁹⁶ Fraser, Eliza, Brown, Baxter and Doyle (the only crewman who remained loyal to his captain) began their own long walk south, starving, dehydrated, wet, cold and exhausted from lack of sleep after rowing and bailing out water from the boats. Eliza had had to cope with childbirth in a lifeboat, surrounded by men, including the crew, and the death of her child, perhaps in the water at the bottom of the boat. Despite these parlous and extraordinary circumstances, the focus of her three-month ordeal in later works is centred upon the mystique of the fifty-two days during which she lived among the Ka'bi.

¹⁹⁴ Eliza and Baxter's accounts differ in the timing of the parting of longboat and pinnacle. Baxter reported that the pinnacle was 'taken away against the Captain's orders', while the survivors were on 'Bunkers Islands'; Eliza's version is that it occurred after 'a week or ten days after leaving the Island'. As Baxter took part in the exchange of boat occupants, and as this exchange would have been difficult to perform at sea, Baxter's report seems to be the accurate one, Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 33, p. 35.

¹⁹⁵ Fraser Island stretches 120 kilometres along the eastern Queensland coast between present-day Bundaberg and Maryborough, 200 kilometres north of Moreton Bay. Of this group, Joseph Corralis, Robert Darge and Henry Youlden arrived at Moreton Bay on 8 August 1836; William Elliot (and Michael Doyle) drowned while attempting to swim to the mainland; Carey and Dayman were rescued by John Graham.

¹⁹⁶ Mrs Fraser's Narrative', Dwyer & Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 35.

As the bedraggled survivors trudged along the seemingly endless curve of beach, the distant vista of low hills on the mainland would have beguiled the mind, as it does today, into thinking that the coastline stretched uninterrupted towards the far-distant, unseen southern settlement and ‘civilisation’. Neither Captain James Cook in May 1770 nor Matthew Flinders in 1802 had been able to identify the land mass as an island. Cook called the northern tip a sandy cape, believing it to be part of a mainland peninsula. Flinders thought that the inlet between the mainland spur of Inskip Point, and Hook Point at the south of the island, was a lagoon, a misconception which persisted into his 1814 chart of the east coast.¹⁹⁷ The beach that the survivors trudged along was backed by rising ground covered with scrubby ‘wallum’ vegetation of casuarinas, tea-trees, banksias and grass trees (*Xanthorrhoeas*),¹⁹⁸ obscuring the possible dangers of the inland territory.

The glare from the sun reflecting from the white sand is intense, even in July, and would have been blinding for a woman from a far northern Scottish island. It was intense enough to give Eliza severe sunburn on her shoulders where, when rescued, her ‘tender skins hung in scales’.¹⁹⁹ That said, the weather can also be bleak, even ‘frostily cold’, in winter. In July, strong cool to cold winds blow, whipping up sand. Robert Darge reported that during his time on the

¹⁹⁷ Beaglehole (ed.), *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks 1768-1771*, Volume II, p. 64; Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australia; Undertaken for the Purpose of Completing the Discovery of that Vast Country, and Prosecuted in the Years 1801, 1802, and 1803, in His Majesty’s Ship The Investigator, and Subsequently in the Armed Vessel Porpoise and Cumberland Schooner with an Account of the Shipwreck of the Porpoise, Arrival of the Cumberland at Mauritius, and Imprisonment of the Commander During Six Years and a Half in That Island*, Vol. II, G. and W. Nicol, London, 1814, *Australiana Facsimile Editions* No. 37, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1966, pp. 6-7; M. Flinders, *Chart of Terra Australia, Sheet III, East coast [cartographic material]*, G. and W. Nicol, London, 1814.

¹⁹⁸ *Queensland Naturalist: Journal of the Queensland Naturalists’ Club*, Vol. 19, Nos 1-3, November 1968, ‘Fraser Island Number’, pp. 23-27; Brown, *Cooloola Coast*, p. 112.

¹⁹⁹ John Graham’s report, Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 31.

island, ‘we had sharp nights and very heavy dews and rains’.²⁰⁰ In mid-July 2005, overnight rain fell and the temperature dropped to 8 degrees Centigrade. Maximum temperatures in winter are about 20 degrees Centigrade. There were also numerous varieties of mosquitoes, sand flies and biting March flies on the island.²⁰¹ This is the setting on which the Eliza Fraser Story has flourished.



The long trek south, Fraser Island (Barbara Dawson, July 2005).

The harsh conditions afflicting the castaways from 21 May to 22 August 1836, when the eventual survivors reached Moreton Bay, have been consolidated into what J.S. Ryan called a farrago of ‘fiction, faction, fable and film’,²⁰² surrounding the surviving woman. James Fraser and Brown were to die during their residence with the Ka’bi. Doyle also died, apparently drowned when attempting to swim to the mainland. Eliza, Baxter, and Carey and Dayman (also living with Aborigines) were found by John Graham, who had been commissioned to bring Eliza and any other survivors to Moreton Bay.

The Ka’bi

²⁰⁰ Jules L. Tardent, ‘Fraser Island’, in *Queensland Geographical Journal*, (New Series), Vol. LII, Brisbane, Session 1947-1948, p. 81; Michael Alexander, *Mrs Fraser on the Fatal Shore*, Thomas Nelson Australia Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1981, p. 135.

²⁰¹ *Queensland Naturalist*, Vol. 19, pp. 47-50.

²⁰² J.S. Ryan, ‘The Several Fates of Eliza Fraser’, in *JRHSQ*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1983, p. 89. Although the Batjali people of the central region of Great Sandy Island may have taken in some of the men, I have followed secondary sources which refer to the people associated with Eliza Fraser as the Ka’bi.

The Indigenous people who adopted Eliza belonged to the larger Ka'bi group,²⁰³ whose country extended 280 kilometres from the region of present-day Bundaberg to Bribie Island, near Brisbane, and inland across 200 kilometres, to encompass an area of about 21,245 square kilometres. The tribes were subdivided into separate locality groups.²⁰⁴ The extent of the Indigenous population on Great Sandy Island is unknown. However, Cook had seen Aborigines in 1770 and named a northern part of the island Indian Head 'on account of the number of Camp Fires and Indians seen'. In 1802, Flinders too noted 50 Aborigines at the southern end of the island and observed that 'smokes arose from many parts'. In about 1860, when the Island was declared an Aboriginal Reserve, the estimated Indigenous population was 2,000 or 3,000. According to Ebenezer Thorne—a journalist who lived 'among the Newsa tribes' while cedar cutting at Kin Kin Creek from 1865 to 1867—two groups of Indigenous people, 'some hundreds in number', lived on the 'Newsa waters'. Extensive middens and the large numbers of artefacts found up to the 1960s in the nearby coastal regions and on Fraser Island itself indicate large populations of Aboriginal people. By 1897, however, there were only about 300 people who had either remained or who could be gathered together on the establishment of a mission.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ A name adopted in the twentieth century for these Indigenous people is 'Gubbi Gubbi', www.warriors.egympie.com.au/kabigubbi.ht

²⁰⁴ John Mathew, *Two Representative Tribes of Queensland: With an Inquiry concerning the Origin of the Australian Race*, T. Fisher Unwin, London and Leipsic (sic), 1910, pp. 67-68; F.J. Watson, 'Vocabularies of Four Representative Tribes of South Eastern Queensland', *Supplement to Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (Queensland)*, No. 34, Vol. XLVIII, Session 1943-1944, Brisbane, p. 4.

²⁰⁵ *Queensland Naturalist*, Vol. 19, p. 53, p. 58, p. 55; Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australia*, pp. 7-8; Alexander Meston, *Geographic History of Queensland*, Edmund Gregory, Government Printer, Brisbane, 1895, p. 127; Brown, *Cooloola Coast*, pp. 3-4; Tardent, 'Fraser Island', p. 91.



The soggy, boggy ground on the banks of the Noosa River near Fig Tree Point where Eliza Fraser is thought to have been found (Barbara Dawson, July 2005).

While food sources were plentiful in summer, they were often difficult to obtain during the winter months, the time when the *Stirling Castle* survivors had to be absorbed into the Indigenous groups. Freshwater was freely available because the land, consisting almost entirely of loose sand, allowed the rain to seep through onto impervious peat beds. This vast storage of water fed numerous lakes and freshwater swamps. Clear, permanent, fast-flowing streams also flow to the sea on both sides of the island, and freshwater springs bubble up as streams along the ocean frontage. While fish was a staple food, their availability was seasonal. According to a report by Darge, the Aborigines 'had to work severely to get fish and kangaroos'.²⁰⁶ Other factors could compromise hunting: when Graham found Baxter, for example, Baxter and members of his Indigenous group were starving

²⁰⁶ *Queensland Naturalist*, Vol. 19, p. 8; Tardent, 'Fraser Island', p. 83; Alexander, *Mrs Fraser On The Fatal Shore*, p. 135.

because the hunting men had left to fight a neighbouring tribe.²⁰⁷ Although Fraser Island is the home of a wide variety of native birds (another possible food source) these migrate northwards during the winter months. Both Eliza and Darge refer to the roots of ferns as the staple food, Darge stating that ‘We generally had enough of bungwa ... a kind of root of fern growing in swampy ground’.²⁰⁸ Eliza’s complaint that she had to locate and to dig up these ferns from the swampy ponds joined with her litany of hardships endured, and constituted the ‘cruelty’ of the Aborigines towards her.

Eliza’s Reports: ‘Cruel abuse’

While lacking the embellishments of Aboriginal barbarity found in the reconstructions, Eliza’s accounts of her experiences are replete with cultural misunderstanding.²⁰⁹ Her first account, dictated in Moreton Bay in early September 1836, reflected her continuing debilitated state from three months’ starvation and physical ordeals. On her return to the settlement, she was emaciated, exhausted, weather-beaten, sunburned and disorientated. Although gently bathed, tended and nursed for almost two weeks to a slight improvement in health by the ladies at the penal settlement, Eliza remained obsessed with Aboriginal ‘cruelty’ which corresponded with her indisposition from physical exposure, and exertion of a type to which a town-living woman would have been unaccustomed. This is evident in her emphasis on the forms of cruelty imposed on her, mainly relating to the imposition of heavy manual work and the lack of protection from the elements. Weakened and ill, Eliza’s lack of stamina had made her incapable of contributing to the tribal economy, and she suffered accordingly.

Her summarised observations, recorded ten days after her return to white society, also revealed the attitudes of a middle-class white woman, who has been asked by colonial government officials to tell her story. Her complaints about being

²⁰⁷ Graham’s report, Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 29.

²⁰⁸ *Queensland Naturalist*, Vol. 19, pp. 31-42; Alexander, *Mrs Fraser On The Fatal Shore*, p. 135.

²⁰⁹ Alan Atkinson has pointed out how mutual misunderstandings altered the humanitarian hope of Captain Arthur Phillip that relations with the Aborigines at Port Jackson in 1788 would be peaceful, Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: A History, volume two: Democracy*, OUP, Melbourne, 2004, pp. 145-167.

induced to become naked, to undertake daily tasks of Indigenous life, and to find and subsist on predominantly bush tucker encapsulated the affront to her respectability, as well as reflecting the repugnance felt by civilised people towards Indigenous cultures. The use of a male clerk as her amanuensis calls into question her feelings at revealing the humiliating details of nudity and menial work. As a nineteenth-century woman who fell amongst ‘savages’, and lost her baby, husband and clothes, she would have needed to protect her virtue on her return to her own society. Not only could these factors have been pertinent to her aggrieved tone, but they beg the question, too, as to whether the intermediary scribe had some influence over the choice of words and the tone ascribed to them. Whether the commandant’s clerk introduced his own emphasis to the report or not, the theme and tone in Eliza’s brief account present her ordeal in terms of a racial affront with which her audience could readily identify. In addition, her self-portrayal as a victim, powerless in protecting herself and her companions, would have helped allay any hint of impropriety that might taint her respectable womanhood.

Eliza’s initial record was the primary source from which nineteenth-century Britons interpreted and distorted the story. Racial attitudes, which included scientific theories of race, and evangelical sentiments that compared civilised white men and women to the black, pagan savage, found free rein in the story of Eliza Fraser. Ignorant of Aboriginal culture and society, these commentators capitalised on Eliza’s report, using it as the basis for a litany of vilification of Aboriginal Australians.

Unlike the various ‘cruelties’ that I will discuss in due course, the first encounter with the Ka’bi was tense but peaceful. Eliza stated that:

Directly we landed [on Great Sandy Island] the natives came down in crowds but were prevented at first from using any violence from the sight of our firearms. We procured some fish from them in exchange for articles of wearing apparel.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ ‘Mrs Fraser’s Narrative’, Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 35.

While acknowledging that the Aborigines provided food for the starving castaways, Eliza presupposed Aboriginal violence, which she thought had been curbed only by the sight of European weaponry. A further assumption of brutality occurred during the next meeting with Indigenous people when,

The next day we met with a numerous tribe of natives who, finding us unarmed, took everything from us with the exception of the clothes on our backs, beating us severely at the least resistance; on one of these natives we observed a piece of Female dress which led us to enquire if any white people had been there before us. To which they replied by signs to the effect as far as we understood them, that a man, woman and child had been wrecked there and massacred.²¹¹

These presuppositions of savagery set the scene for the exaggerated interpretations that were to follow. After this encounter, the stranded Europeans continued their walk along the beach '[hastening] day and night for two days without either food or water'. On the third day, thought to be in the vicinity of the present resort of Happy Valley, 50 kilometres south from Orchid Beach, they saw another group of Aborigines. Eliza described the meeting and subsequent events, in the following manner:

... we then fell in with another tribe who stripped us perfectly naked and forced us to follow them into their camp. We were now portioned off to different masters who employed us in carrying wood, water and bark, and treated us with the greatest cruelty. With the exception of a small portion of fish which we but very seldom got, all we had to subsist upon was a kind of Fern root which we were obliged to procure ourselves in the swamps.²¹²

The formal tone of the account again suggests a reworking, this time from colloquial speech to a version of prescribed conventional language. This raises the possibility that Eliza's primary account of her association with the Ka'bi has been transmuted into language chosen by the transcribing clerk. Whoever was in

²¹¹ 'Mrs Fraser's Narrative', Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 36.

²¹² 'Mrs Fraser's Narrative', Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 36.

control of the narrative style, the essence of the report is one filled with British assumptions.

The misapplied term ‘masters’, for example, demonstrates a class hierarchy, unconnected with Indigenous society. The apportioning to different ‘masters’ infers that the survivors were regarded as servants. This servile position is further evoked in Eliza’s interpretation that the white interlopers were starved of food, and forced to perform menial tasks. The English Master-Servant Act of 1823 had supported the rigid class distinctions that characterised the hierarchical society of nineteenth-century Britain. To place Aborigines in the position of masters is a curious overturning of the British assumption of Indigenous people as racially inferior. In doing so, it added to the perceived ‘insult’.

Twentieth-century anthropologists, Catherine and Ronald Berndt, however, have pointed out the differences between European and Australian Indigenous societies. They identified the cooperative nature of Aboriginal society, which they found depended on the ‘organisation of human resources’. The Berndts wrote that the autonomy of each societal group relied on the individual strengths of each person. In this grouping of ‘skilled, semi-independent operators in a co-operative network’, a lack of cooperation meant that ‘survival [was] a hazardous and chancy business’. Each individual was ‘dependant on others as those others depended on them’. The Berndts also observed that, because of ‘complex arrangements of co-operation, this balancing of tasks and responsibilities and areas of authority, were too subtle for most of the European newcomers to envisage, or grasp’.²¹³ Both Eliza’s reports, and the commentaries and reconstructions that followed, failed to take into account her own inability to reach these Indigenous social standards.

Furthermore, on Fraser Island, different contingencies applied in midwinter from

²¹³ Catherine H. Berndt and Ronald M. Berndt, *The Aboriginal Australians: the first pioneers*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1983, p. 81, p. 59, p. 42, p. 22; Catherine H. Berndt, ‘Aboriginal Women and the Notion of “The Marginal Man”’, in R. Berndt and C. Berndt (eds), *Aborigines of the West: Their Past and Their Present*, Revised Edition, UWA Press, Perth, 1980, p. 36.

those in summer. The absorption of the Europeans into different Indigenous groups suggests that the Aborigines chose to share the burden that extra members of the group would impose on the viability of their society. On the other hand, the menial work that the adopted members were expected to perform was seen as an insult to civilised Britons, who regarded themselves as superior to black races. Later writers expanded on this apparent relegation to slave conditions to malign, judge and attack the Aborigines for their brutality and ‘cruelty’. This apparent indication of their cruel intentions was embraced as another example of the savagery of black heathens.

The stripping naked of Eliza was a shocking concept for nineteenth-century British readers, perhaps the more so because for them clothing codes represented class respectability and racial identity. Proper dress was tied to British ideas of ‘civilisation’, as opposed to the lack of standards of savages, who presented themselves as black, naked bodies. However, John Graham, who had lived for six years amongst the Ka’bi as a runaway convict, knew of the Aborigines’ dislike of a clothed white man. As ‘Mootemu’, Graham had taken an Indigenous ‘wife’, ‘Mamba’, whose embodied spirit he claimed for Eliza in his successful attempt to return her to white society. Graham took into account Indigenous fear of clothed Europeans by ‘throwing off [his] Trousers’ before entering the Ka’bi campsite, in order ‘to make fresh friends’.²¹⁴

Paucity of food was cited by Eliza as another form of cruelty. During midwinter exigencies, if the Europeans were unable to support the group, although given the most menial jobs, their demand for food would seem unworthy. Eliza’s situation therefore represents a cyclic conundrum: her inability to perform the arduous tasks allotted her were beyond her reserves of strength, which could only be boosted by food and rest. Her inability to appreciate the requirements imposed on her as a member of the group was an example of her ignorance of the circumstances, for which a British sense of propriety held no meaning. Similarly, Indigenous misunderstanding, and ignorance of her past trials, meant that the

²¹⁴ Graham’s report, Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 31.

Aborigines were likely to have goaded her to perform more efficiently. For Eliza, who (unlike the Ka'bi) reported her side of the story, being assigned the demeaning tasks of a servant, and the further societal insult of disrobing in compliance with the cultural group, were perceived as emotional cruelties, in addition to the physical ones. She reported that:

During the whole of my detention among the natives I was treated with the greatest cruelty being obliged to fetch wood and water for them and constantly beaten when incapable of carrying the heavy loads they put upon me; exposed during the night to inclemency of the weather being hardly ever allowed to enter their huts even during heaviest rain.²¹⁵

As John Sinclair has pointed out, however, Eliza was 'required to do what any Aboriginal woman would do: dig roots, find food and firewood, and live a spartan existence'.²¹⁶

John Mathew has left us a picture of the Ka'bi as a lithe, fit people, with 'elastic tread and graceful bearing'. Mathew lived on his uncle's station in Ka'bi country for over six consecutive years up to 1872, when he was in such close and constant touch with them that 'the Kabi dialect became for him almost a second mother-tongue'. He continued to keep in contact with them until 1876, when he moved to Melbourne. During three months in 1884, he again visited them and in 1906 returned to conduct interviews. Mathew described the Ka'bi men as fairly short (about 166 cm) and, in proportion, the women 'rather tall'.²¹⁷ Physically, they were:

... light in the bone. The lower part of the limbs was usually fine. The thighs, much more rarely the calves of the legs, were well developed. The muscles of the back and breast were often prominent. In walking, the head was thrown well back.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 36.

²¹⁶ John Sinclair, *Fraser Island and Cooloola*, Weldon Publishing, Willoughby, NSW, 1990, p. 77.

²¹⁷ Mathew, *Two Representative Tribes*, p. 83, p. xiv, p. xxi, p. 73.

²¹⁸ Mathew, *Two Representative Tribes*, p. 73.

An 'eight years' resident' of Queensland wrote in 1876 that the Aborigines of the area were 'a fine race of men ... finely-formed and well-developed [with] a dignity of gesture, a firmness of tread, a litheness and gracefulness of motion'. He noted that their 'strength is very considerable'.²¹⁹ Compared with these strong, energetic people, with a physique suited to walking, the debilitated shipwreck survivors would have proved a liability to the Ka'bi as they moved through their marshy country, gathering wood and searching for the plants on which they subsisted.

Eliza's complaint that the staple food was a fern root, which she had to procure for herself, with only small portions of fish granted to her, opens several lines of analysis. In the first place, her middle-class European expectation of ample food supplies, readily available to curb her hunger, collides with the Aborigines' daily food-gathering methods. The small portion of fish allowed her also complies with Indigenous food intake, which depended on vegetables and fruits. Mathew confirmed that, when the Ka'bi ate meat, it was a 'rather irregular meal'.²²⁰ Furthermore, it is unclear whether the food supply for Eliza was the same for the European men. In colonial texts that refer to the social treatment of Aboriginal women, writers often mention that the women had only occasional access to meat. Eliza's need for food and rest to recover from her debilitation after her ordeals would have further compounded her plaintive account. Notwithstanding an attempt to analyse the reasons behind her report, the difficulty remains in explaining a text that may rely as much on the scribe as on Eliza's original rendition for the terms and attitudes expressed. Nevertheless, the reference to the emotive word 'cruelty' in Eliza's account has become the foundation stone for the Eliza Fraser 'industry' in which commentators around the world, including in Britain, North America and Australia, have reconstructed and reinterpreted Eliza's experiences within the context of the 'savage' treatment of a helpless white female.

²¹⁹ *The Queen of the Colonies; or, Queensland As I Know It. By An Eight Years' Resident*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, London, 1876, p. 308, p. 309.

²²⁰ Mathew, *Two Representative Tribes*, p. 85.

A second example of the misappropriation of values stems from the assumption that to be civilised entails protection from the weather. In this regard, Mathew's description of Ka'bi dwellings might cast light on why Eliza was denied shelter. He wrote that:

The ordinary style of house was a mere bark shelter. Three or four sheets of bark were set obliquely with the lower ends in a semicircle, on the ground, and the upper ends, overlapping, gathered together and supported by light saplings. This sufficed for a family. ... each [dwelling] had its own small fire in front. ... Grass was strewn on the floor for a bed. If rain threatened, a rut was dug round the back of the humpy to serve as a drain. The warriors' spears were stuck in the ground, ready to hand, at the side of the rude shelter.²²¹

If each family had its own shelter, Eliza's position in the group would have posed a problem. Who should take her in? Was she expected to fall back on her own devices and make her own shelter? As the Ka'bi considered white people to be 'ghosts from the world of Spirits',²²² her physical needs may have been unrecognised. Did she in fact need shelter? If the Ka'bi did perceive her as a living, human form, they were unlikely to have seen settlers' dwellings, and therefore would have been unable to perceive her needs. Perhaps, if she had complained, she might have been seen as ungrateful. She appears to have been left in an ambiguous situation, sometimes gaining shelter and sometimes, not.

Another part of Eliza's account which received the opprobrium of later commentators was the treatment of James Fraser and Charles Brown, both of whom were unable to keep up with the needs of the group, and who were to die during their time amongst the Ka'bi. Eliza's account states that:

In consequence of [the] hardships [of lack of food and heavy work] my husband soon became so much weakened as to be totally incapable of doing the work that was required of him, and being on one occasion unable through debility to carry a large log of wood one

²²¹ Mathew, *Two Representative Tribes*, p. 84.

²²² Graham's report, Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 30.

of the natives threw a spear at him which entered his shoulder a little below the blade-bone. Of this event he never recovered and being soon after seized with a spitting of blood he gradually pined away until his death which took place eight or nine days afterwards ... When he died they dragged him away by the legs and buried him.²²³

Similarly, Eliza offers the apparently shocking facts that:

The first mate Mr Brown having likewise become too weak to carry wood the natives burnt his legs and back in the most dreadful manner by rubbing them with firebrands. Three days after my husband's death one of the natives put Mr Brown and myself over to the mainland in a canoe – Mr Baxter the second mate being too weak to accompany us. Three or four days after we had crossed, Mr Brown died from the frightful injuries he had undergone. For some days he had been unable to walk as the flesh had fallen from his feet and the bones of his knees protruded through his skin. He was left without any sort of assistance and on one occasion when I endeavoured to take a few cockles to him, some of the natives came up, and after taking them from me, they knocked me down and dragged me along the ground by the arms and legs. After this I saw him no more.²²⁴

Brown's death, which Eliza initially stated she did not witness, has been dramatised in a second, sensational account, published in the *Sydney Gazette* on 18 October 1836. This report, presented to the public after Eliza's arrival in Sydney, relied on melodramatic 'quoted' dialogue and emotive language to lure the eye of the reader. In describing Brown's death, it has introduced the popular trope of cannibalism.²²⁵ In later reconstructions, the descriptive 'cannibal' becomes synonymous with 'Aborigine'. The changed emphasis, as early as October 1836, has also introduced a motive for the killing:

In eight days from this brutal affair [Captain Fraser's death] the same cannibals also killed Mr Brown, the chief officer, by holding firebrands to his legs, and so burning him upwards! The cause of their destroying Mr B., was in consequence of his showing some

²²³ 'Mrs Fraser's Narrative', Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 36.

²²⁴ 'Mrs Fraser's Narrative', Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 36.

²²⁵ Daniel Defoe had developed this idea in *Robinson Crusoe*, London, 1719.

In John Curtis's account, to be assessed later in this chapter, the event has been further distorted to become another example of the Aborigines' fiendish cruelty. In Curtis's version, after Brown is 'led forth to the slaughter', Eliza witnesses his being 'inhumanly tied to a stake, and a *slow fire* being placed under him, his body, after the most excruciating sufferings, was reduced to ashes!'. The *Edinburgh Evening Courant* printed a version in which the fire, lit by Eliza, had caused such contortions from Brown that his writhing legs formed his own grave in the soft sand. The report by Lieutenant Otter in *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, however, states impassively that the sores on Brown's legs caused him to lie in a helpless state on the ground, and he therefore 'starved to death'.²²⁷

Elaine Brown points out that Eliza indicated that the Ka'bi acted kindly towards Brown in the days before he died. They also offered extra fish to Fraser on the eve of his death, an action which Eliza regarded as treachery. Elaine Brown also suggests that one explanation for the application of heat to the ulcers on Brown's legs and back was to treat his condition, and not to harm or torment him.²²⁸ Eliza reported that Brown's legs were covered in ulcers, but believes that fire was the cause, not the cure. In nineteenth-century reports, however, these events have been universally viewed as acts of Aboriginal cruelty. In their prejudice towards Australian Aborigines, nineteenth-century writers presented Aboriginal actions as irrefutable evidence of Indigenous cruelty. Distorted accounts have been extrapolated from reported events to embrace the motivations and intention of 'brutality', 'savagery' and 'cannibalism'.

Instead of the exaggerated reconstructions that changed the versions of these

²²⁶ *Sydney Gazette*, 18 October, 1836, p. 3. This account was reproduced in *The Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 27 March 1837, p. 4.

²²⁷ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, p. 79, p. 80; *The Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 24 August 1837, p. 4; *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 17 September 1837, p. 3.

²²⁸ Brown, *Cooloola Coast*, p. 109; Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, p. 152, p. 150, p. 66. Curtis also wrote that, when the Europeans became numb and cramped with cold, the Aborigines showed them how to keep warm by holding their firebrands to the left side of their chest, Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, p. 66.

deaths to incorporate torture, torment and murder, Mathew offers a contrary picture of the Ka'bi. He contended that, 'On the whole, I would say they were a good-natured, kind and gentle people.' Darge, who lived with them, also reported that: 'I cannot call them a cruel people'. Nor did Hobhouse, Wheeler and Ginsberg find any evidence of brutal tendencies in a study for London University's School of Economics and Political Science. Based on secondary sources, their statistical appraisal indicated that quarrels amongst the Ka'bi were settled 'by a duel of endurance'. The authors did not 'hear of homicide, and enter them only upon the more doubtful list'.²²⁹

Furthermore, Graham's account of Eliza's rescue reveals the timid reaction of individual Ka'bi when they saw a white man. Graham's understanding of Ka'bi culture and behaviour allowed an insight into their reactions. These he recorded plainly and directly. In two separate interactions between Graham and Ka'bi people, Graham depicted the Aborigines' fear of the white man. Although he presented precise and extended details, these have been overlooked in later reconstructions of Eliza's story.

On his search for Eliza, for example, Graham encountered two Ka'bi women who 'were frightened at seeing me, but hearing me speak [the Ka'bi language] and seeing none but myself, came forward.' Graham added that he offered the women some bread and told them 'not to be frightened'. Further into his search, he met an Indigenous man and woman who were 'horror struck at my appearance and thinking I had more confederates they were making away saying they would bring plenty of men'. After accepting fish hooks and a piece of trouser material, this couple assisted Graham in finding Eliza. The detail that Aborigines carried Eliza to the waiting boat on Teewah Beach has also been overlooked. Furthermore, although Graham referred to his rescue of Baxter as being from 'the most brutal blacks along the coast', he may have decided in this instance to embellish his own

²²⁹ Mathew, *Two Representative Tribes*, p. 24; Alexander, *Mrs Fraser On The Fatal Shore*, p. 136; L.T. Hobhouse, G.C. Wheeler and M. Ginsberg, *The Material Culture and Social Institutions of the Simpler Peoples: An Essay in Correlation*, Chapman & Hall, London, 1915, p. 136. The latter study depended on anthropological reports from 'travellers, missionaries, explorers, and casual observers' and from ethnographers, *Material Culture*, p. 7, p. 8.

heroic deeds with the rhetoric that would more convincingly gain for him not only his freedom, but also a substantial reward.²³⁰

Eliza's report of her treatment at the hands of the Indigenous women has also been called into question. Her second account, published in the *Sydney Gazette*, in October 1836, as mentioned above, states that:

... Captain Fraser suggested giving themselves up quietly to the natives, as they were entirely defenceless, and, of course, already in their power. They had scarcely time to make the suggestions when several tribes came down upon them, one of whom immediately captured Captain Fraser, another tribe took Mr Brown, and a third Mr Baxter. The natives would not allow Mrs F. to go with either (sic) of them, and left her alone upon a sandy beach the whole of the day; and the next morning a number of old women came down to the beach, with some children – they gave Mrs Fraser to understand, that she must go with them and carry one of the children upon her shoulders, which Mrs Fraser of necessity complied with. Mrs Fraser states that she travelled many miles into the bush with these women and the child, and was frequently exhausted upon the road.²³¹

Apart from James Fraser's acquiescence to be taken in by the Aborigines (a point I shall refer to later), Eliza's treatment at the hands of the Ka'bi women can be interpreted from the perspective of Indigenous culture. Eliza made the point that she was forced to remain behind on the beach when the men were led away by Aboriginal men, having to wait until the Ka'bi women came to accept her on the following day. Eliza also reported that she had been prevented from any contact with either her husband or Brown, for at least three weeks, up to the time of Fraser's death. Elaine Brown's research into Ka'bi cultural practices has led her to believe that, during menstruation and after childbirth, Indigenous women remained separated from the men. When taken in by the Aborigines on about 26

²³⁰ Graham's report, Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, pp. 29-32.

²³¹ *Sydney Gazette*, 18 October 1836, p. 3. The editor in 1836 was ticket-of-leave convict, William Watt who, in February 1836, had married Ann Howe, proprietor and widow of former owner, Robert Howe, Sandy Blair, 'Howe, Ann (c.1802-1842)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/howe-ann-12994/text23487>, published in hardcopy 2005, accessed online 9 September 2014.

June, only about one month would have elapsed since Eliza had given birth. The stripping of Eliza's clothes would have revealed her physical state. By the time Graham reached her on 17 August, however, Eliza had joined the whole group, indicating that, about eleven weeks after childbirth, she was again socially acceptable in mixed company. This second report also refers to the task of caring for an Aboriginal infant which, in Eliza's post-partum state, most probably involved breast feeding, a detail not mentioned either by Eliza or by the male authors of the nineteenth-century reconstructed narratives. The Ka'bi, however, sending not only their women, but also a child to Eliza, appeared to be aware of her potential usefulness to the group. Eliza's further complaints of having salt sand thrown over her, and of having her body rubbed with charcoal, grease, resin and leaves are processes now known to be forms of cleansing, and of the Aborigines' means of protecting themselves from the elements.²³²

Eliza's accounts—the second more emotive than the first—led to interpretations that followed their own particular agenda.

Reconstructing the story

By 1840, a plethora of pamphlets, chapbooks, broadsheets and monographs had been published on the theme of Eliza Fraser.²³³ One pamphlet was *Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings, and Miraculous Escape of Mrs Eliza Fraser*, published in New York, in 1837.²³⁴ This version included an account, typically in the first person, reputedly submitted by Eliza in Liverpool, England, on 2 July 1837. According to Kay Schaffer, whose extensive research into the Eliza Fraser legend illuminates the many and varied

²³² *Sydney Gazette*, 1 February 1838, p. 2; also recorded in Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, pp. 43-44; Elaine Brown, *Cooloola Coast*, p. 107.

²³³ Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonisation*, p. 171. Included *The Shipwreck of Mrs Frazer (sic) and Loss of the Stirling Castle, On a Coral Reef in the South Pacific Ocean*, Dean and Munday, London, 1837.

²³⁴ *Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings, and Miraculous Escape of Mrs Eliza Fraser*, Charles S. Webb, New York, 1837.

interpretations,²³⁵ the North American text is located in the classic American captivity genre, in which the myth involved European colonists versus the Indians.²³⁶ Captivity narratives of the late eighteenth and early to middle nineteenth century abounded in stories of shipwreck survivors held captive, burned or murdered by cannibals. Others involved the forced captivity of Europeans by native Americans or other Indigenous peoples. The structure of these texts revolve around the symbolic confrontation of the binary opposites of white civilisation and black savagery, from which the white heroes and heroines miraculously escape.

Between 1830 and 1840, the mythological captivity tale, which was an enduring form of myth literature in America, was enjoying a revival. Eliza Fraser formed part of this renewal of interest, along with the republication of former popular narratives. In a society strongly influenced by Christian evangelism, the discourses were presented as Puritan tales of religious deliverance, embellished with English literary devices of melodrama, and the narrative elements of the sentimental novel and the psychological thriller. They followed early Puritan narratives in which the wilderness, inhabited by savage natives, was typically portrayed as the domain of sin that tested the faith of its God-fearing victims. The recurrent miraculous escape becomes analogous with redemptive salvation.

²³⁵ Includes Kay Schaffer, 'Australian Mythologies: The Eliza Fraser Story and Constructions of the Feminine in Patrick White's Novel *A Fringe of Leaves* and Sidney Nolan's "Eliza Fraser" paintings', in *Kunapipi*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Dangaroo Press, Aarhus, Denmark, 1989, pp. 1-15; Schaffer, 'Eliza Fraser's Trial by Media', in *Antipodes; A North American Journal of Australian Literature*, American Association of Australian Literary Studies, New York, Vol. 5, No. 2, December 1991, pp. 114-119; Schaffer, 'Captivity Narratives and the Idea of "Nation"', in Kate Darian-Smith, Roslyn Poignant, Kay Schaffer, *Captured Lives: Australian Captivity Narratives*, Working Paper in Australian Studies No. 85, Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1993; Schaffer, 'Colonizing Gender in Colonial Australia: The Eliza Fraser Story', in Gillian Rose and Alison Blunt (eds), *Writing, Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*, Guilford Press, New York, 1994, pp. 117-140; Schaffer, "'We are like Eliza": twentieth-century Australian responses to the Eliza Fraser saga', in Ian J. McNiven, Lynette Russell and Kay Schaffer, *Constructions of Colonialism: Perspectives on Eliza Fraser's Shipwreck*, Leicester University Press, London and New York, 1998, pp. 79-96; and the other Schaffer references in this chapter.

²³⁶ Schaffer, 'Captivity Narratives', pp. 6-7; Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1973, pp. 6-7, p. 26.

Intrinsic to the tales was the secular propaganda tract of good, white hero versus the treacherous native.²³⁷

In *Narrative of the Capture*, elements of melodrama abound, following the tradition of the Victorian literary romance genre. Eliza's complaints that she was 'held in bondage' and 'deprived of my liberty'²³⁸ imply a forced capture and imprisonment. This argues directly against her statement in the *Sydney Gazette* report of October 1836 that, when the Aborigines first approached the four (or five) survivors on the beach, Captain Fraser 'suggested giving themselves up quietly to the natives, as they were entirely defenceless'. The idea of enforced slavery, in the *Narrative of the Capture*, contradicted an earlier reference to the same event, in which Eliza 'stated' that, 'my husband suggested the propriety of our quietly surrendering ourselves prisoners to them, as we possessed not a single weapon with which to defend ourselves'.²³⁹

The 1837 American version of Eliza's release also displays a submission to dramatic effect. Her rescue by Graham (himself, a disputed rescuer in reconstructed narratives) follows a melodramatic convention, in which the use of exaggeration builds suspense and fear. Eliza is saved, for example, in the very instant that she is 'held fast by the savage' intent on taking her as his wife. Graham is 'attracted to the thicket by my moans and entreaties for mercy! ... caught me in his arms, and hurried me to the boat'.²⁴⁰ By such devices, historical fact has been submerged within the fictionalised expectations of the romantic genre.²⁴¹

To formulate the story for North American readers, literary terms and pictorial illustration in the *Narrative of the Capture* translate Eliza's story into an American context. In the illustrative sketches that precede the text, Indigenous

²³⁷ Schaffer, 'Captivity Narratives', p. 6.

²³⁸ *Narrative of the Capture, sufferings, and Miraculous Escape of Mrs Eliza Fraser*, p. 13, p. 16.

²³⁹ Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 41; *Narrative of the Capture*, p. 7.

²⁴⁰ *Narrative of the Capture*, pp. 19-20.

²⁴¹ Kay Schaffer's *In the Wake of First Contact: The Eliza Fraser Stories*, CUP, Melbourne, 1995, analyses and assesses the various versions of the story.

people wear full togas or skirts, ankle-high moccasins and feathered headdresses in the style of native Americans. Rather than the spears of Indigenous Australians, their weapons are bows and arrows. The 'Aborigines' depicted here wield the tomahawks of American Indians. Conical wigwams and the northern hemisphere trees that decorate the pictorial background, extend the reference to North America. In comparison to the savage indigenes, the Europeans are depicted fully-clothed as in other imperial representations. Eliza presents as a genteel British woman, with elaborate coiffure and exhibiting the restrained gestures of grief. Captain Fraser lies on the ground, with waist coat and jacket unruffled, apparently mortally wounded. Elements of North American interpretation have infiltrated the text. On a descriptive level, the Indigenous women are referred to as 'squaws'. Analysis of the text also reveals a tribal society dependent on a hierarchy of authority, the highest point of control being held by the chief—a societal structure characteristic of American Indians, but not known as a usual part of Australian Aboriginal culture.

The interpretation that the author of the New York publication chose to follow reveals contradictions in tone and message. On the one hand, the portrayal is an assessment of Eliza's cruel enslavement and great hardships at the hands of the 'wild and barbarous savage'. Eliza is reduced to 'inconceivable wretchedness' by 'barbarous treatment' that involved working 'like a beast of burden', walking long distances to obtain food and living in the open air. Her tribal fellows are described as 'remorseless demons' and their despicable housing arrangements become the means to censure the occupants: 'their habitations [are] but miserable hovels, fit only for those whose customs and habits degrade them to the level of the dumb beasts'.²⁴² The middle-class Protestant reverence for cleanliness and a repugnance for the dirtiness of uncivilised barbarians and their filthy habits are expressed in the American version, as they also were in Joseph Banks' eighteenth-century commentary.²⁴³

²⁴² *Narrative of the Capture*, p. 18, p. 13, p. 16, p. 15, p. 9.

²⁴³ Beaglehole, *The Endeavour Journal*, Vol. II, p. 112.

On the other hand, there is evidence of a dissolving of difference between the races in this text. Despite the depiction of ‘detestable wretches’ and ‘frightful looking savages’ inflicting cruelties, abuses and hardships upon Eliza,²⁴⁴ the idea of white-black relationship is introduced. Individual Aborigines are accorded character profiles, such as the irascible mother of the child forced upon Eliza for care.²⁴⁵ The uncle of this baby, however, is portrayed in a favourable light in the role of Eliza’s supporter, interposing to assist when her strength failed during a long trek, interceding to organise a meeting between Eliza and Captain Fraser after three-weeks’ separation, and even saving her from an infamous liaison with the tribal chief.²⁴⁶ His gallant behaviour as Eliza’s hero fits the role of the ‘noble savage’.

An honour duel, fought between Eliza’s benefactor and his superior, adds tension to the plot and incorporates another providential escape, prior to Eliza’s ultimate salvation. The climax of this episode is the death of Eliza’s benefactor, who was killed because of a ‘kind act of interference’ on her behalf.²⁴⁷ This man is depicted as:

... a much more independent spirit, and one to whom I feel myself much indebted for the protection that he afforded me at times when nearly sinking under severe pains, produced by blows inflicted upon my person by his infuriated sister! This man, although a savage, evidently possessed a better heart than many who claim a rank among a more humane and civilised race. The poor fellow was indeed deserving of a better fate, for it was ... in defence of me that he lost his life.²⁴⁸

The covert suggestion of intimacy that hints at an interracial relationship between Eliza and the Aboriginal man adds a strand of intrigue and titillation, within nineteenth-century moral constraints, which forbade direct reference to sexual

²⁴⁴ *Narrative of the Capture*, p. 9, p. 7, p. 17.

²⁴⁵ An account in *Sydney Gazette*, 1 February 1838, p. 2, had introduced this profile.

²⁴⁶ *Narrative of the Capture*, pp. 13-14, p. 15, p. 18.

²⁴⁷ *Narrative of the Capture*, p. 18. This episode may have been constructed around the initial report of Graham, who stated that a Ka’bi man, ‘Mothervane’, had laid claim to Eliza as his wife’s sister, Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 31.

²⁴⁸ *Narrative of the Capture*, p. 13.

liaison.

Perhaps it was in accordance with the American sense of Puritan morality that this reconstructed account included respect and restraint on the part of Aboriginal men towards Eliza while Captain Fraser remained alive. In this particular interpretation, during the weeks before her husband died, Eliza as a married woman 'neither experienced from or discovered any disposition on the part of the savages to subject my person to brutal insult'.²⁴⁹ This tone of moral rectitude transmitted a message of Christian morality, palatable to the American audience to whom the tale was directed. Not until the twentieth century, when an increased understanding of events from an Indigenous perspective has become part of the historiography of Aboriginal-settler interactions, has an explanation for Eliza's isolation²⁵⁰ been put forward.

Another conflicting element evident in the American publication is an incongruous account of empathy with Aboriginal behaviour and motive, alongside the descriptive terms of barbarity that emphasised brutality and bestial living conditions. The American reconstruction also included a denial of a prime cause of suffering, nominated by Eliza in her own 1836 accounts:

The fishing of the natives failing them, they began to suffer so much for the want of food ... and it is a remarkable fact, that in this, a time of the greatest scarcity of provisions, and when the savages could scarcely obtain for themselves a sufficient quantity to sustain life, and consequently, as might be expected, to me but a scanty pittance was allowed, yet I felt no extraordinary sensations of hunger or thirst! and did not so much suffer on account of the small quantity of food allowed me ... ²⁵¹

Throughout the American text, Eliza is attributed with the faith that God would

²⁴⁹ *Narrative of the Capture*, p. 17.

²⁵⁰ Based on Indigenous taboos relating to women and blood, Brown, *Cooloola Coast*, p. 107. Mary Douglas also refers to this form of pollution within Indigenous societies, in *Implicit meanings: Essays in anthropology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and Boston, 1975.

²⁵¹ *Narrative of the Capture*, p. 10.

rescue her from captivity. She makes daily prayerful supplication for deliverance and serves as testimony to God's miraculous intervention on behalf of the pious.²⁵² On her release, she becomes the mouthpiece of proper religious duty, giving thanks to Divine Providence. The religious message is underlined in a postscript: 'Mrs Fraser, the narrator, very justly attributes her miraculous escape to the interposition of a kind Providence, of which we believe no reasonable person can for a moment doubt.' A secondary voice interposes with moral justification: 'Can there be anyone ... doubt the superintendence of a particular Providence, operating by second causes?'.²⁵³

John Curtis's Version

In 1838, John Curtis wrote the official English account of Eliza Fraser's 'ordeal', *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle containing A Faithful Narrative of the Dreadful sufferings of the Crew, and the Cruel Murder of Captain Fraser by the Savages. Also, The Horrible Barbarity of the Cannibals Inflicted upon The Captain's Widow, Whose Unparalleled sufferings are Stated by Herself, and Corroborated by the Other Survivors*. Curtis, a London newspaperman and court reporter, who had never seen an Aborigine, was commissioned to write this narrative as a defence and apology for Eliza—as a justification of her cause, after her deception resulted in considerable charitable contributions being made to her. Its political aim was to save from embarrassment the Lord Mayor of London, who had opened the subscription campaign. Although Curtis attended the inquiry which investigated Eliza's claims of destitution, and from which he gained firsthand information from Eliza, Baxter and Darge about their experiences, his written version of events was dependent on the message he aimed to transmit. Out of Eliza's reports, and Baxter and Darge's testimonials, this armchair theorist created a 270-page narrative,²⁵⁴ motivated by Christian evangelicalism and the nineteenth-century utilitarian impulse to transmit useful knowledge.

²⁵² *Narrative of the Capture*, p. 22, p. 19.

²⁵³ *Narrative of the Capture*, pp. 21-22, p. 24.

²⁵⁴ This includes 242 pages of narrative that incorporates the reports of the survivors; Eliza's story covers 50 pages. An extra 29 pages of miscellaneous information are added at the conclusion of the book.

Curtis' reshaping, like the American version of the previous year, followed the imperial model of barbaric savages and their confrontation with civilised people. Eliza, as white woman, acts as the symbolic example of Christian civilisation in the stereotypical representation inherent in nineteenth-century first contact stories.²⁵⁵ The Aborigines (both male and female) are the pagan 'Other', symbolising brutality and savagery.

The fluid choice of narrative voices allows the construction of race to be manipulated through the contrived juxtaposition of reasoned and reasonable behaviour, and barbaric cruelty. One device used is generalisation, projected as evidence. Referring to cannibalism, for instance, Curtis states that:

Cannibalism, there is great reason to believe, has been a general custom among all nations in the early stages of civilization, and doubtless was brought about by the instinct of self-preservation operating through war and famine. In Otaheite a period of scarcity is down to the present day denominated a 'man-eating season,' and even among our run-away convicts or bush-rangers, we have reason to believe that cannibalism is by no means rare. It also existed in the Paumeteo islands, in the vicinity of Otaheite, previous to their conversion to Christianity; and it still exists in its full force in New Zealand.²⁵⁶

Curtis replicated the racial attitudes and descriptive terms used by former commentators of Australian Aborigines. Imitating Dampier, he refers to the Aborigines as the 'most miserable and savage race of mortals upon earth'. Similarly, following Banks's report, Curtis described Aboriginal nakedness, their lack of interest in the ornaments given to them and the distinction of their natural colour—whether 'chocolate' or 'black'.²⁵⁷ Depictions are invariably accompanied

²⁵⁵ Lynette Russell, "“Mere trifles and faint representations”: the representations of savage life offered by Eliza Fraser", in McNiven, Russell and Schaffer, *Constructions of Colonialism*, p. 60.

²⁵⁶ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, pp. 107-8. This excerpt is a direct (undisclosed) quote from Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales*, Vol. II, pp. 15-16.

²⁵⁷ Beaglehole, *The Endeavour Journal*, Vol. II, p. 124, p. 112.

by judgmental commentary. The tradition of body painting clearly proved to Curtis ‘that [the Aborigines] are not satisfied with the hue in which nature has arrayed them’. He considered the ‘unseemly gashes’, which ‘in their folly they consider ... add to their beauty’, to contribute to their natural hideousness. His description of the practice of wearing a bone through the nose is delivered with the derision of the culturally superior.²⁵⁸

Within the context of an established literature on Aboriginal primitive behaviour, Curtis’s evangelical motives were to convey a moral lesson to civilised Englishmen, and to encourage missionary work among the pagan Aborigines.²⁵⁹ His book was published one year after the founding of the British and Foreign Aboriginal Protection Society and coincided with the establishment of the Aboriginal Protection Society in Sydney.²⁶⁰ Within the same volume is found the *Narrative of the Melancholy Wreck of the Charles Eaton*, the publication of which had been made possible by the ‘kindness of the highly-respected Secretary of the London Missionary Society’.²⁶¹ In the late 1830s, John Dunmore Lang, minister of the Scots church, Sydney, was also urging on the establishment of a mission in the Moreton Bay region, to ensure the safety of future shipwrecked passengers.²⁶²

In keeping with the cultural code of evangelical Christianity, Curtis supported religious dogma by his use of Biblical quotation. It is through his own interpretation of Biblical text, however, that he formed a comparison of the ‘civilised’ with the ‘savage’. Curtis’s premise in *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle* is that: ‘Our history exhibits not only a detail of the barbarity of the heathen, but also the benevolence of the Christian’.²⁶³ This specific selection of text produced a distorted and sensational result. Quoting incongruent biblical references from the Old Testament, Curtis extrapolated that Aboriginal men are ‘blood-thirsty and

²⁵⁸ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, p. 366.

²⁵⁹ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, pp. i-ii; Schaffer, *Captivity Narratives*, pp. 9-10.

²⁶⁰ Schaffer, ‘Captivity Narratives’, p. 10; Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, p. 74.

²⁶¹ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, pp. 375-76.

²⁶² Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists*, p. 101. John Dunmore Lang later instigated an immigration scheme with the aim of improving the moral tone of the colony.

²⁶³ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, p. 373.

wicked ... whose tender mercies are cruelty, and whose habitations are polluted with blood'.²⁶⁴ They are 'demons in human form [who] employed every method which they could devise, to torture and annoy their miserable captives'. Curtis described Indigenous women as 'heartless brutes' with 'fierce, shrill yells'. Eliza is 'quoted' as asserting that Aborigines 'all delight in cruelty'.²⁶⁵ The religious tone of the text is emphasised by exhortations and supplications to God from the suffering protagonists. These distortions, embellishments and factual inaccuracies constitute a subjective and emotive attack on Australia's Indigenous people.

Another of Curtis' motivations was to promote the utilitarian code of dissemination of useful information, 'as in the present enlightened age, a volume without these adjuncts, would be read by few, and by none to permanent advantage'.²⁶⁶ He chose a narrative structure in which the retelling of Eliza's story became a form of instruction through the use of a series of multifarious voices. These included direct prose, debate, exhortation, exposition, scientific treatise, musings, excerpts of poetry, together with emotive pictorial illustrations.²⁶⁷ His extensive footnotes investigate such topics as emigration, navigation and the legal system, and extrapolate on ethnographical and geographical matters as a foundation for scientific truth. A reference to *Robinson Crusoe* leads to an examination of the historical basis of this iconic tale of shipwreck.²⁶⁸ Within the scientific and literary modes of presentation, Curtis nevertheless holds firm to evangelical principles, exhorting his readers to 'behold the mysterious dealings of the Supreme with his creature'.²⁶⁹

In support of his ethnographical approach, Curtis acknowledged as scientific fact

²⁶⁴ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, pp. 82-83; Proverbs XII, 10: 'A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel'; Lamentations IV, 14: 'They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments', Old Testament, King James version.

²⁶⁵ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, p. 78, p. 143, p. 156.

²⁶⁶ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, p. ii.

²⁶⁷ For an analysis of Curtis's work, cf. Schaffer, 'Captivity Narratives', pp. 9-10 and Schaffer, 'Eliza Fraser's Trial by Media', in *Antipodes*, December, 1991, pp. 114-119.

²⁶⁸ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, pp. ii-iii.

²⁶⁹ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, p. ii.

the Aborigines' natural inquisitiveness, intelligence, the ease with which they acquired knowledge of the English language and their ability to expertly read and write. He noted that, in hunting, Aborigines display 'great quickness of sight and sagacity'. Nevertheless, Curtis's racial assumption of the innate superiority of righteous Christian over uncivilised barbarian, and the ideas of evolutionary hierarchy found in current scientific thought, necessarily prevailed. Aboriginal 'quick and hurried movements and gestures' remain fixed in their likeness to 'the wild animals of the forest'.²⁷⁰ Aboriginal accomplishment could not bridge the difference between savage and civilised.

Conclusion

Distorted representations of Eliza's story in Australia replicated other British interpretations. On 1 February 1838, the *Sydney Gazette* published a racially slanted version, reputedly recounted by Eliza during her return voyage to England. It depicted enslavement, torture, callous murder and cannibalism. As with English and American translations, it evoked a vision of reality from within established nineteenth-century belief systems, dependent on religious dogma:

the cruelties practised upon [the survivors] by the savages of New South Wales, amongst whom they were thrown, and by whom the majority of the ship's crew have been enslaved in lowest bondage, and, in short, tortured to death by means at which the old Inquisition of Spain might blush. 'Truth is stranger than fiction', observes one of our poets, and there are circumstances related in the following narrative which no human imagination could depict; and yet Providence has willed that such extraordinary and romantic events should actually take place, as it were, to teach mortality that there are things in heaven and earth beyond the reach of human philosophy or anticipation.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ Curtis, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, pp. 114-15. Curtis's book was published two years after the 1831-36 expedition of the *Beagle*, on whose voyage Darwin extended his quasi-scientific enquiry into the nature of Indigenous people. Although Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was not published until 1859, speculations on the position of Indigenous people in God's Creation were commonplace in Western thought. The concept of the Great Chain of Being, which posited a hierarchical order of creation for all creatures great and small, encouraged a mindset of dominance by one species over others.

²⁷¹ *Sydney Gazette*, 1 February 1838, p. 2, cited in Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza*

While acknowledging the changed details in this account compared to Eliza's 1836 reports, the editor of the *Sydney Gazette*²⁷² nevertheless published the outlandish reconstruction, unqualified by censure or comment.

Such grossly distorted narratives, through which the Eliza Fraser Story flourished, reinforced a perception of Aborigines as barbarous subhumans, capable of heinous and unprovoked crimes against Europeans. In the multifarious versions of Eliza Fraser's story, Aboriginal people were relegated to the status of characters of fiction, in which the binary opposites of white and black were equated to good and evil.

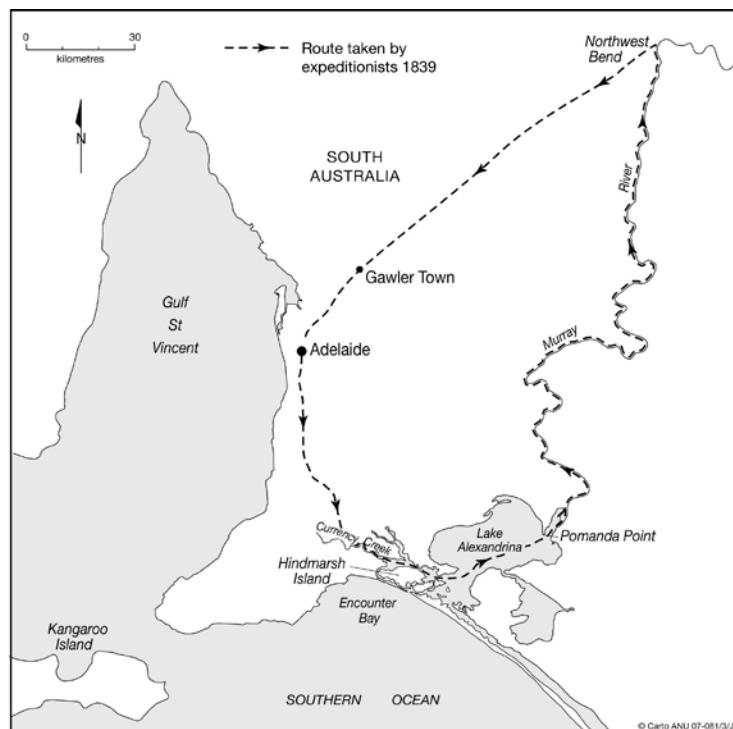
The observations and renditions of Aboriginal people through this dark lens of racism laid foundations for the impressions and stories recorded by the women who later wrote about their own experiences with Aborigines. From the background of such misrepresentations, I assess in the following chapters how five selected women writers dealt with their own impressions of Indigenous people. Depending on their circumstances and motivations, these writers either adopted the received perceptions to a varying extent, or partly or totally rejected them.

Fraser, p. 42.

²⁷² Former editor, William Watt, drowned in 1837; by 1838, the management of the paper had passed to Robert Charles Howe, stepson of former owner, Blair, 'Howe, Ann (c.1802-1842)', <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/howe-ann-12994/text23487>, published in hardcopy 2005.



Eliza Davies (Frontispiece, *Story of an Earnest Life*).



Map 3: Eliza Davies

3

Literary Excesses

Eliza Davies: Imagination and Fabrication

‘Oh what a tangled web we weave, When first we practise to deceive!’²⁷³

Introduction

Eliza Davies may not have consciously set out to deceive her audience. As a devoted reader of the works of Sir Walter Scott, she would however have undoubtedly read his words from the epic narrative poem, *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field*, written in 1808. Her own epic, 570-page work, *The Story of an Earnest Life: A Woman’s Adventures in Australia, and in Two Voyages around the World*,²⁷⁴ deals with her travels from Scotland to New South Wales and South Australia, her brief return to Scotland, her emigration to the United States of America, return to Australia and eventual settlement in the United States. Although the main theme of her autobiography is her religious journey, and particularly her mission for the Churches of Christ in Australia and America, my focus in this chapter is on the 48 pages that deal with her encounter with Aborigines in 1839, during a five-week expedition in South Australia with the explorer, Charles Sturt. In these pages, discretely different from the rest of her story, she exaggerates descriptions of Aborigines to fit what appears to be the expectation of her North American publisher and readers. My analysis of this section of her work relies on the comparison of other accounts of the expedition left by Sturt, Governor George Gawler and his 15-year-old daughter, Julia.

²⁷³ Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion*, Canto VI, 17.

²⁷⁴ Mrs Eliza Davies, *The Story of an Earnest Life: A Woman’s Adventures in Australia and in Two Voyages Around the World*, Central Book Concern, Cincinnati, 1881. Except when mentioning her early years, I refer to Eliza Davies as ‘Davies’ to avoid confusion with Eliza Fraser.

My analytical direction is again to explore the narrative according to its historical context and—particularly important to this text—the prevailing literary conventions. Davies was a resilient, competent and assertive woman, dedicated to achieving her lifelong evangelical aims. Her strong religious convictions, however, did not compromise her eye for a good story. She embellished her account of an inland adventure with melodramatic language which, like those who reconstructed Eliza Fraser's experiences, distorted images and appraisals of Aboriginal people to comply with audience acceptance. Well-travelled and well-read, Davies exuded an authorial confidence that added support to the authenticity of her literary decisions.

Davies' frontier adventure took place, like Eliza Fraser's, in the early years of colonisation. The section of Davies' work that deals with her encounter with Aborigines in South Australia is markedly different in style and tone from the rest of her autobiography. In this part of her story, she vilifies Aborigines in stereotypical terms of abuse, while in other sections she offers the voice of reason. My analysis of this work examines the kind of misrepresentation that reflected nineteenth-century racial attitudes. The extent of its continuation in other narratives underlies the argument of my following chapters.

In this chapter I will explore how Davies' depiction of Aborigines corresponded with North American perceptions of Indigenous people and I will discuss the racial attitudes and theories that influenced her work. I will also demonstrate how her melodramatic style, applied to the action and characters of this part of her story, creates the impression of a nineteenth-century fictional romance, rather than an historical narrative. To support an hypothesis that she has specifically chosen (or been asked) to present exaggerated descriptions of Aborigines in this section of her work, I include from other parts of her autobiography sympathetic or objective

representations of Aborigines.

The publication of *Story of an Earnest Life* in 1881, 40 years after the expedition, meant that Davies could incorporate into her portrayal of Aboriginal people the racial ideas relevant to the time, and also the place, of publication. Published in Cincinnati, a city which in 1881 boasted 210 churches for a population of 255,000,²⁷⁵ *Story of an Earnest Life* fitted the evangelical genre that flourished at the time. Among the Central Book Concern's other evangelical works was Joseph Martin's *The Voice of the Seven Thunders: Or Lectures on the Apocalypse* (1870). T.S. Arthur, *Woman to the Rescue. A Story of the New Crusade*, was an example of a fictional evangelical book published in Cincinnati in 1874.²⁷⁶ Cincinnati was also a centre for the Disciple society (forerunner of the Churches of Christ), to which Davies belonged.

Background

'a sad and lonely ... childhood'²⁷⁷

Born Eliza Arbuckle in Paisley, near Glasgow, in 1821, Davies was the first child of Matthew Arbuckle and Mary, born Smith. She was baptised on 11 February 1821 in the parish of Renfrew.²⁷⁸ Eliza was sent to school at a young age after the death of her father and her mother's precipitate remarriage. Rejected by her mother from this time, Eliza spent her happiest days in the mountains of the Western Highlands of Scotland during visits to the home of her nanny, Maggie Campbell. Her education in Scottish history, and English and Scottish literature was enriched by the sights and sounds of the Scottish highlands and the myths and legends told to her by

²⁷⁵ Henry A. and Mrs Kate B. Ford, *History of Cincinnati, Ohio, With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches*, L.A. Williams & Co., Cleveland, Ohio, 1881, p. 146; wikipedia.org/wiki/cincinnati

²⁷⁶ Joseph Lemuel Martin, *The Voice of the Seven Thunders: Or Lectures on the Apocalypse*, Central Book Concern, Chicago and Cincinnati, 1870; Timothy Shay Arthur, *Woman to the Rescue. A Story of the New Crusade*, J.M. Stoddart & Co., Queen City Publishing Co., Cincinnati, 1874.

²⁷⁷ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 50.

²⁷⁸ Barbara Ward, *A Lady in a Thousand: Eliza Davies, A Biography*, Wild & Woolley Pty Ltd, Glebe, New South Wales, 1994, p. 1.

Maggie. After her nanny's death, Eliza's loneliness was filled by reading novels, which 'charmed' her, 'and every one of Scott's heroines I admired and tried to imitate'.²⁷⁹

The influence also of the English classics is evident in Eliza's statement that, 'The sorrows of my childhood made me strangely thoughtful, and I was as much alone in my thoughts as was Robinson Crusoe on his island'.²⁸⁰ Eliza owned a large library of books, which were her treasured possessions throughout her travels. When admitted to Sydney Hospital with heat exhaustion in 1839, for example, she took her books with her, although patients were allowed few personal items. After leaving Adelaide in 1847 to escape from a violent marriage,²⁸¹ the now Eliza Davies was to apply her long education and her sharp mind to establish herself as a successful teacher. The sale of her library was used as a source of income whenever she was financially bereft between her teaching assignments in New South Wales and South Australia.

'I would turn from my earthly to my heavenly parent for comfort'²⁸²

Unhappiness and introspection turned the young Eliza Arbuckle to the comforting words of of the Bible, whose 'precious word ... taught [her] more than all [preachers] put together'.²⁸³ As a member of the Scottish Baptist Church in Paisley, she writes that she met Alexander and Jean Holmes who, with their two sons, were planning to emigrate to New South Wales. Taking 'quite an interest in' Eliza, the Holmes asked her to accompany them to Australia.²⁸⁴ They sailed from Greenock on 24 August 1838 aboard the 541-ton barque, *Portland*, arriving in Sydney on 18 December 1838.

²⁷⁹ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 27.

²⁸⁰ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 22.

²⁸¹ Copy of certificate of marriage to William Davies on 17 April 1840, Ward, *Lady in a Thousand*, p. 43.

²⁸² Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 67.

²⁸³ This reference applies to Churches of Christ teaching, which followed 'the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible', Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 37, p. 238.

²⁸⁴ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 47.

Details in the shipping records conflict with Davies' text. The *Portland* lists record the 17-year-old Eliza Arbuckle as 'Elisabeth Ardbuckle', a 'nursery-maid', aged '19y?'. Furthermore, although Eliza refers to the Holmes as her guardians, passenger records cite Eliza Ferguson, single woman, aged 26 years, milliner and dressmaker, as sailing 'under protection of Alexander Holmes'; and the Holmes are listed as lower-class 'farm servants', a detail left unmentioned by Eliza. Nor did she allude to her own lowly occupations until revealing herself as an established schoolteacher. Instead, she appears to have elevated herself to the position of protégée of those whom she cites as her employers. Another discrepancy arises in the shipping lists with the information that the Holmes lived at Kilmalcolm, which was 10 kilometres from Paisley, making their attendance at the Paisley Baptist church somewhat dubious. Perhaps Davies has traded her own working class status for the more genteel details enjoyed by Eliza Ferguson, notwithstanding the Holmes' own (undivulged) working-class status.²⁸⁵

It was nevertheless an indication of the strength of her religious conviction that, out of the other 252 mainly Protestant immigrants on board the *Portland*,²⁸⁶ 'Eliza Ardbuckle' alone chose 'Dissenter' as her religion. Dissenters, who included Wesleyan Methodists, some Presbyterians, the Independents, Congregationalists, Baptists and Quakers were nonconforming Christians who sought their own direct relationship with God, outside and at variance with the established tenets of the accepted state religion of the Church of England.²⁸⁷ The Holmes and Eliza Ferguson chose 'Baptist'.

²⁸⁵ *Index to Passengers to Sydney 1838-1842, Habart Samuel - Justus John*, Archives Authority of New South Wales, AO Reel 4; *Immigration Agents' Immigration Lists, April 1838-November 1841: Assisted Immigration*, NLA mfm N229, Archives Authority of NSW, Reel No. 2134.

²⁸⁶ *Sydney Herald*, 24 December 1838, pp. 2- 3.

²⁸⁷ Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797-1860*, OUP, Melbourne, 1978, p. ix.

‘to ... extend my mission’

Before dealing with Davies’ representation of Aboriginal people, it is necessary to provide a biographical sketch of her activities from 1840 until 1874—in Australia, on her return to Britain, and in the United States—as a means of differentiating the tone and substance between her chapter on the Aborigines and the rest of her story.

After a short, unhappy marriage, Davies returned to Scotland. It was here that her vocation as a devout member of the Churches of Christ was established. From the pulpit of her Baptist church in Paisley in August 1847, she heard the missionary message of the Reverend Alexander Campbell, who was visiting from the United States. A former Scot, in 1826 Campbell had preached his new Bible-based doctrine to the congregation of the Cincinnati Sycamore Street Baptist Church. In response, nearly the entire new and flourishing congregation joined with Campbell to form the ‘Disciple’ society (later the Church of Christ.)²⁸⁸ In 1847, Davies was similarly moved. Although planning to remain in Scotland for two years, inspired and encouraged by Campbell, she sailed for America after only three months, arriving in the United States in November 1847. Vowing to live a godly life and to extend the mission of the Church of Christ, her rhetorical question, ‘I was about to turn a new leaf in my life’s history, and what would be read there?’,²⁸⁹ sets the scene for her autobiography.

Residing with the Campbell family in Bethany, West Virginia, for the first nine months, she then worked for about five years until 1853 as associate principal and assistant matron at the Kentucky Female Orphan School in Midway. Before sailing to New South Wales at the request of her half-sister in 1857, Davies had also operated a private school in the home of Kentucky evangelist, John Gano, for his and several other children, the first independent position of her long teaching life. Her aim in returning to New South Wales was again couched in evangelical terms: to ‘teach and train my

²⁸⁸ Ford, *History of Cincinnati*, p. 167.

²⁸⁹ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 259.

sister's children, then bring in others, and so extend my mission'.²⁹⁰

This proselytising mission, strengthened and focused during her ten years in the United States, went hand-in-hand with her vocation as a teacher. Although originally hoping to open an orphans' school along similar lines to the Female Orphan School in Midway, Kentucky, Davies travelled 120 kilometres south of Sydney to Kiama, where in 1858 she established a school at Mount Pleasant²⁹¹ for the children of workers on the pastoral property 'Omega Retreat'. Before leaving America, she had accepted a commission from the Secretary of the American Bible Union to introduce the New Revision of the Bible to Australian colonists. Her mission was therefore to introduce to the residents of Kiama the American revised version of the Bible's New Testament, hoping that,

a little leaven of Christianity might leaven a large lump of the bigoted, ritualistic Episcopalians; the stiff and proud Presbyterians; the bitter, biting Methodists, and the liberal Independents, all of whom were represented in the beautiful town of Kiama.²⁹²

In Kiama, Davies formed a congregation of Primitive Christianity (Church of Christ), taught religion to her school students and went for long walks on Saturdays and in holidays to proselytise on behalf of the American Bible Society. A letter by Davies to the *Kiama Examiner* in January 1861 reveals the commitment and passion with which she embraced her cause. She wrote in support of a long article she had previously written, entitled *A Word for the Bible*, in which she reinforced her commitment to religious instruction for children. Except for some stringent editing, the content and tone of this

²⁹⁰ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 322.

²⁹¹ Davies coined this school 'Hurricane Hill' because of the winds, rains and storms that beset the wooden slab schoolhouse in 1860. The *Illawarra Mercury*, 3 August 1860, p. 2, p. 3, reported that the region had suffered wild storms, heavy rain and floods for the past six months.

²⁹² Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 354.

letter remain intact in its reproduction in her autobiography.²⁹³ In her zeal to promote an American published version of the King James Bible, she requested audiences with colonial governors. In about 1860, Davies met New South Wales Governor, Sir William Denison, who expressed sympathy for this revised version. In 1861, Davies also wrote to the South Australian Governor, Sir Richard McDonnell, asking for his patronage for the *New Translation*.

Appearing to be seeking out Christian companionship in Adelaide, where a Churches of Christ community had developed around New Zealand immigrant, Thomas Magarey,²⁹⁴ Davies sailed for South Australia in 1861. Alarmed to hear that her husband was still alive (although having bigamously remarried), she successfully filed for divorce, then fled back to 'the crime-stained'²⁹⁵ colony of New South Wales. Although craving the camaraderie of her American Christian friends, Davies' return to Kentucky was prevented by the commencement of hostilities in the American Civil War (1861-1865).

Davies again turned to teaching, establishing the Bethany School in the undeveloped bush of North Sydney.²⁹⁶ In 1862, North Sydney was a 'destitute and wicked' place where the 'people are so wicked, and the young people perishing for instruction, and plenty of wild children there'.

²⁹³ Compare *Kiama Examiner*, 22 January 1861, p. 2, with Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 402.

²⁹⁴ A.W. Stephenson, M.A., *Pioneering For Christian Unity in Australia and New Zealand: Being an Outline of the History of Churches of Christ in Australia and New Zealand and a Brief Study of their Teachings and Ideals*, The Austral Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd, Melbourne, 1940, pp. 19-20; H.R. Taylor, *The Story of a Century: A Record of the Churches of Christ Religious Movement in South Australia 1846-1946*, The Austral Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd, Melbourne, 1946, pp. 12-16.

²⁹⁵ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 103.

²⁹⁶ Although Barbara Ward suggested that the Naremburn Public School was the site of Davies' Bethany School, her later research identified Willoughby Public School at the correct location, Ward, *Lady in a Thousand*, Note 1, p. 118, citing *Naremburn Public School 1887-1987*, Management Development Publishers Pty Ltd for The Centenary Committee of the Naremburn Parents and Citizens Association, Sydney, 1987, p. 14; Personal communication with B. Ward, May 2006. A plaque in the pavement in Oakville Rd, Willoughby, acknowledges Davies' work.

Davies described the adults as 'low, ignorant, vicious and drunken, living by stealing. They were liars and swearers; the fear of God was not before their eyes, nor did they regard the laws of man'. Davies taught the children of this rough, criminal class of 'reprobates' from June 1862 to December 1869, introducing to them 'hymn singing, Bible reading and prayer meetings'.²⁹⁷ She also opened a night school for the profligate male and female youths, and ran a Sunday School, always mindful that the souls of parents could be reached through their children. Counted among her successes was a former student who gained a responsible government position, and two others who became teachers. Several of her former pupils forwarded letters of thanks prior to her eventual return to the United States on 9 May 1874.²⁹⁸ Davies cites one of these letters as testimony to the power of education and Christian teaching, extended through her talent in befriending wayward youths.

Her final teaching position was at the Bowden Public School in the Adelaide suburb of Hindmarsh, where she taught poor children of all denominations.²⁹⁹ The philanthropist George Fife Angas, who is said to have contributed £10,000 a year to religious and educational causes during his last years,³⁰⁰ converted a granary into a schoolhouse and provided a

²⁹⁷ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 435, p. 436, p. 440. Bethany National School became a public school on 1 January 1867 after the passing of the 'Public Schools Act, 1866', when William Wilkins was secretary of the Board of National Education and Henry Parkes was president of the New South Wales Council of Education, J. Fletcher and J. Burnswoods, *Government Schools of New South Wales Since 1848*, NSW Department of Education, Sydney, 1988, p. 9, pp. 218-19.

²⁹⁸ Although her autobiography ends in 1874, Davies died in Lexington on 27 March 1888, Ward, *Lady in a Thousand*, p. 128.

²⁹⁹ This appears, nevertheless, to be a Church of Christ school, A.W. Stephenson (ed.), *One Hundred Years: A Statement of the Development of the Development and Accomplishments of Churches of Christ in Australia*, The Austral Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd, Melbourne, 1946, p. 105; also H.R. Taylor, *The History of Churches of Christ in South Australia 1846-1959*, The Churches of Christ Evangelistic Union Incorporated, South Australia, Adelaide, n.d., p. 107.

³⁰⁰ George Fife Angas left an estate of £443,000, 'Angas, George Fife (1789-1879)', ADB, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/angas-george-fife-1707/text1855>, published in hardcopy 1966; Sally O'Neill, 'Angas, John Howard (1823-1904)', ADB, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/angas-john-howard-2890/text4141>, published in hardcopy 1969, accessed online 9 September 2014.

house for her use on the site of a former flour mill, owned by Thomas Magarey, who also provided financial support. In December 1872, the *South Australian Advertiser* reported that the ‘behaviour of the scholars, and their attainments in general knowledge reflected great credit upon Mrs Davies, the Superintendent of the school’.³⁰¹ This, then, is a précis of her life’s story, into which is wedged her ‘Exploring Expedition’ chapter.

In spite of the presiding evangelical theme elsewhere in the book, Davies’ chapter on the Aborigines differs distinctly from the remaining text. Although the London Missionary Society had encouraged women to introduce Christianity to the Aborigines,³⁰² Eliza Arbuckle did not extend her missionary zeal to the Indigenous people she met in South Australia. Her youth and subservient role within the exploring group, which included vice-regal and government officials, were two prohibitive factors. Another may have been the short duration of the trip. Furthermore, Davies did not embrace the mission of the Churches of Christ until her return to Scotland in 1847. Therefore reference to any evangelical outreach, whether actual or contrived, would have been chronologically misplaced within the autobiographical narrative.

Instead, like the commentators of Eliza Fraser, and of John Curtis in particular, Davies chose to present Australia’s Indigenous people as black savages, distinct and apart from civilised Britons, and far beyond the reach of Christian evangelism. This is despite the fact that, on her return voyage to America in 1874, Davies had witnessed Christian ‘savages’—Fijians who read the Bible and attended church. Davies wrote admiringly of the Fijians’ devoutness, their refusal to receive money for goods on Sundays, and their Christian generosity in donating the money earned from selling fruit, shells and cloth to the work of missionaries. She expressed her sympathy and regard, noting that:

³⁰¹ *South Australian Advertiser*, 16 December 1872, p. 3.

³⁰² ‘The London Missionary Society to the Missionaries at Sydney’, in Bladen (ed.), *Historical Records of New South Wales, Vol. III—Hunter 1796-1799*, pp. 731-32.

Our dress of different kinds was as strange to them as theirs to us would be, and why should these dusky sons of the Southern Seas be more devout, more sincere and more like true worshippers than some of us? I think in other things we could learn of them.

In contrast to her attitude to Australian Aborigines, she added her hope that ‘these simple, Christianized natives would never become civilized, if vice was the badge of civilization’.³⁰³ The heathen Australian Aborigines, however, were not accorded the same tolerance.

‘An Exploring Expedition’

In February 1839, ten weeks after arriving in New South Wales, Davies left for South Australia with Charles Sturt, his wife Charlotte, and their two infant sons. While Davies again (as with the Holmes) suggests that she travelled under the protection and patronage of the Sturts, who would be her ‘guardians [to] take care of [her] and provide for [her]’, and cites another woman as the nurse to the children, it is most probable that she was an employee, either servant or second nursemaid.³⁰⁴

Sturt’s exploration of the Darling and Murray Rivers in 1829 and 1830 had made him a well-known colonial figure. In 1838 he had been appointed Surveyor-General of South Australia by the Governor, George Gawler.³⁰⁵ When the family group sailed into Port Adelaide on 2 April 1839, less than three years had passed since Governor John Hindmarsh had proclaimed

³⁰³ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 558.

³⁰⁴ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 100-101. As the younger child, Charles, was only four-months-old, it is likely that two nursemaids were employed. The fact that the Holmes travelled inland without Eliza adds to the suggestion that they were a convenient conduit to mask her arrival details.

³⁰⁵ When Lieutenant Frome arrived from England with the commission of Surveyor-General in September 1839, Gawler offered Sturt the position of Assistant Commissioner in charge of the land office and immigrant labourers, R. Hetherington, ‘Gawler, George (1795-1869)’, *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gawler-george-2085/text2615>, published in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 9 September 2014.

South Australia a colony on 28 December 1836. Sturt wrote that there was ‘something dreary in sailing up the creek with dense and dark mangroves on either side, and no other object visible beyond them save the distant mountains’. Davies recorded that the low sand hills, on which Adelaide was located, ‘reflected the light and heat from the sun’. She reported the primitive settlement, where ‘the people live chiefly in tents, or under tarpaulins stretched on poles ... Others have huts built of mud and grass, others of rushes and brushwood’, and where ‘we have to walk through a dense forest, from one terrace to another, with here and there a frame or mud cottage as a landmark’. Even Government House was ‘only a little hut, constructed of mud put between laths, supported by uprights of native wood, and covered with thatch. It contained three rooms—a dining room, a reception-room, and a pantry ... Governor Gawler and lady slept in a tent’.³⁰⁶

In 1839, Sturt and Gawler were eager to promote rural settlement. Both had been early involved in the speculative land scheme, the South Australian Land Company (and from 1834, the South Australian Association), which was based on Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s idea of selling colonial land to potential settlers in England. Money from these sales was to finance an assisted emigration scheme. The dubious aim of the administrators-cum-land developers to lure British speculators to outlay capital prior to their arrival in the colony nevertheless resulted in the passing of the South Australian Colonization Act in Britain on 15 August 1834.³⁰⁷ Coined by Marcus Clarke as ‘The South Australian Bubble’,³⁰⁸ the scheme by 1840

³⁰⁶ Central Expedition, ii, p. 171, in Mrs Napier George Sturt, *Life of Charles Sturt, Sometime Capt, 39th Regt and Australian Explorer*, Smith, Elder, & Co., London, 1899, p. 182; Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 113-16. As part of Gawler’s ambitious building scheme, the first portion of a new vice-regal residence, costing nearly £10,000, was completed in 1840.

³⁰⁷ ‘An Act to empower His Majesty to erect South Australia into a British Province or Provinces and to provide for the Colonization and Government thereof, Anno 5, William 4’, an 1834 British Act of Parliament that opened South Australia to British colonisation, Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2002, pp. 28-32, discusses the shortcomings of this scheme.

³⁰⁸ Marcus Clarke, *Old Tales of a Young Country*, Mason, Firth, & McCutcheon,

had failed. Over-speculation in land resulted in the colony's financial collapse, which saw Gawler dismissed from office in 1841,³⁰⁹ and Sturt's embarking on an ambitious inland exploration to locate an inland sea in 1844. In November 1839, however, both men were bent on supporting their business enterprise by finding and opening up new land for settlement.

The exploratory party, led by Sturt and Gawler, left Adelaide on 22 November and returned on 28 December 1839. An undated manuscript identifies 20 members of the party that included eight sailors, one coxswain and two policemen.³¹⁰ Among those named were Lieutenant W.J.S. Pullen, Commander of Colonial Marine and Marine Surveyor in the Department of the Surveyor General; Arthur Gell, Assistant Private Secretary to the Governor; Lieutenant Henry Inman, Superintendent of Police; Henry Guy Bryan, younger son of the Reverend Guy Bryan of Woodham Walter, Essex, and 'living in' Gawler's family; and attendants, including Isaac Hearnshaw, John Craig and 'Williams'. Davies reports that there were 30 expeditionists, 'twelve marines and sixteen landmen'. Included in the group were Charlotte Sturt and Julia Gawler, whose participation is thought to have been the reason for the inclusion of the similarly-aged 'servant maid', Eliza Arbuckle.³¹¹

As seen in the details of her immigration, Davies endeavoured to disguise her low social status with stories and references that raised her position in the literary record. In her account of the expedition, she wrote as if she were an equal, if not at times superior in ingenuity and bravery, to her vice-regal companions. Perhaps because she is not yet the strong, energetic protagonist

Melbourne, 1871, pp. 157-166.

³⁰⁹ Hetherington, 'Gawler, George (1795-1869)', <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gawler-george-2085/text2615>, published in hardcopy 1966; Douglas Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia 1829-1857*, MUP, 1967, pp. 211-14.

³¹⁰ Expedition Beginnings and First Reports', in Charles Sturt, *The Mount Bryan Expedition 1839*, Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide, 1982, p. 11; *South Australian Register*, 28 December 1839, p. 4.

³¹¹ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 146; Sturt, *The Mount Bryan Expedition*, p. 11.

who controls the action throughout the other parts of her story, she chose to compensate for her subsidiary role in the 1839 tour with inflated accounts of her own importance. Although only a 'servant maid', she boldly claimed to have been the first white woman on the Murray—disputing Charlotte Sturt and Julia Gawler's right of precedence—because she was 'the width of myself nearer to the bows of the boat than they' when the whale boat entered the river from Lake Alexandrina.³¹²

The aims of the excursion into 'the interior' were formally expressed as the need 'to examine the land along the river, with the hope of finding fertile country in the northern interior; and also to determine the capabilities of river and lake for inland navigation'.³¹³ Davies confirmed these aims of finding land suitable for settlement, particularly in the unknown country beyond the Northwest Bend of the Murray. In what now is seen as imperialist jargon, Davies described the exploring party as 'carrying civilisation into the surrounding solitudes'. The reason for the inclusion in the party of Charlotte Sturt and Julia Gawler (who is thought to have taken the place of her mother)—and indeed of Eliza Arbuckle—seems to have been to allay fears that inland travel was unsafe for women. Davies underlined this idea with her statement that: 'Capitalists would not fear the savages when ladies had traversed the country in safety'.³¹⁴

³¹² Charlotte Sturt and Julia Gawler 'sat with their backs to the stern of the boat'; Gawler and Davies 'sat opposite to each other at the side of it', Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 128. The configuration (although a little different) of the three women in the watercolour, *Expedition going up the River December 1839*, in Sturt, *Mount Bryan Expedition*, frontispiece, may support Davies' claim.

³¹³ Mrs Napier Sturt, *Life of Charles Sturt*, p. 187.

³¹⁴ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 121, p. 146, p. 135.



Eliza Davies in boat, Aborigines left foreground (?J.M. Skipper, 'Extreme point at the junction of the Murray with Lake Alexandrina. Victoria the Lake in the distance. Expedition going up the River, December 1839', from a sketch by Governor Gawler).

The Narrinyeri (Ngarrindjeri) and Meru

The land around Lake Alexandrina and along the lower reaches of the Murray River belonged to six different Indigenous groups, each sustained within a small area because of the richness of fish and bird life³¹⁵ and the ready access to the river's water supply. Four clans belonged to the larger Narrinyeri language group, and two were known as the Meru. The territory from Currency Creek, where the tourists entered the lake, to the northern bank at the mouth of the Murray was Warki country. The Porta'ulun people lived on the western side of the Murray River, including Pomanda Point, the country of 'Tom', who travelled with the tourists and whom both Davies and Gawler refer to as a Pomanda man. Tom had joined the group to act as

³¹⁵ 'Local Action Planning Association Wetlands Management Study, Project Brief, March 1999', p. 19, at www.bblap.org.au

interpreter between ‘Encounter Bay Bob’, the colonists’ main interpreter, and the northern clans of the Jarildekald (Jeraldekeld), the Ngaralta, the Nganguruku and the Ngaiawang, the latter two being small Meru clans.³¹⁶ In spite of these numerous and diverse Indigenous societies, South Australia’s 1834 Settlement Act had referred to the the colony’s lands as ‘waste’ and ‘uninhabited’. This attitude of nullifying Indigenous presence may have influenced Davies’ choice of representation, in which Aboriginal people remained outside and largely superfluous to the activities of white settlers. Perhaps to reinforce the perception of a small population, and certainly to counter the idea of Aboriginal threat to future colonists, Gawler reported after the expedition that the Indigenous people were,

very thinly scattered on the banks of the Murray ... probably not more than three hundred of them, from Pomunda [Point] to the Great Bend, a distance of at least 120 miles [193 km.]. Captain Sturt imagines that a great mortality must have taken place since his journey in 1829.³¹⁷

Nevertheless, the climate of fear of Aborigines in 1839 was the premise upon which Davies constructed her tale. In 1831, Captain Collet Barker, a friend of Sturt, had been killed by Indigenous people at the mouth of the Murray River while conducting a survey of the area. Furthermore, one week before the expedition’s departure, the *South Australian Register* reported that ‘great numbers’ of Aborigines were gathering at the Murray and had ‘attacked’ a man taking supplies to an overlander. Also reported was the death of a property overseer who had been ‘murdered in a most brutal and barbarous manner by the blacks’. Although the writer of the article

³¹⁶ ‘Bob’ appears to have been a Ra:Mindjeri man, from the south around Encounter Bay. The language groups of the Jarildekald, Ngaralta, Porta’ulun, Warki were collectively known as the Narrinyeri, Norman B. Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1974, p. 212, pp. 214-15, pp. 217-19, and map; ‘Local Action Planning’, p. 12.

³¹⁷ ‘Governor Gawler’s Letter, Notes on the Country and Notes with Regard to the State of the Aborigines on the Murray, by His Excellency Governor Gawler’, in Sturt, *Mount Bryan Expedition 1839*, p. 38. Sturt had previously made contact with Aborigines living on the Murray during an exploration of the river in January and February 1830.

contended that the incident escalated from ‘the covetousness of the natives—not from any decided hostility to the whites, but from an avaricious desire to become possessed of their property’, he added that,

Parties ought, therefore, to be cautious in going among the natives in that district, taking care to afford them no inducement to commit depredations on property, and they will also do well not to put much confidence in them, however friendly their appearance may be, as they often obtain by treachery what they could not get otherwise.³¹⁸

Unlike Davies’ resort to stereotypes to depict Aborigines, Sturt, Gawler and Julia wrote controlled, objective accounts of their trip in the country, where mainly peaceful Aborigines presented no cause for alarm. Governor Gawler, in keeping with his aim to allay fears that might hamper settlement, expressed a high opinion of the Indigenous people he met, recording that they were:

lively, intelligent, good-tempered people—full of the general native sense of propriety—doubtful of the disposition of Europeans, of the extent of the powers of their warlike weapons, and consequently often timid. / They behaved ill on one occasion only, and the cause of their misconduct was injudicious treatment on our part. Some of them exhibiting great curiosity and intelligence were admitted freely among the luggage and allowed to handle different articles. The consequence was, that in the evening they were lurking about the camp, and a coat and some other trifling things disappeared. After this event the principle was acted on of not throwing temptation in their way or of admitting them to undue familiarity, and no men could have behaved better or have appeared more grateful for the presents they received.

Conceding the part played by white overlanders in inciting racial conflict,

³¹⁸ *South Australian Register*, 16 November 1839, pp. 4-5.

Gawler concluded that the ‘natives are neither a ferocious nor a warlike race. Europeans, reasonably armed, cool and cautious, have little to fear from the worst of them in the worst situations’.³¹⁹

Sturt, too, had reason to think kindly of the Indigenous people. In December 1828, Aborigines had assisted his progress along the Macquarie River in New South Wales. In 1830, Sturt wrote of his ‘friendly relations’ with the Aborigines that had acted as emissaries between one tribal group and the next to smooth his passage along the Murray River.³²⁰ His 1839 account, though imbued with a tone of his perceived racial superiority, similarly expressed admiration for the Porta’ulun people.

Davies, on the other hand, portrayed malignant, ugly, and dangerous Aborigines, a perception directly opposed to the view that Sturt and Gawler wished to impart. She hinted at cannibalistic practices and ascribed the cannibalistic murders of white men, women and children to one particular Aboriginal man whom she elected to vilify. The actual circumstances of the trip appear to reside somewhere between the two thematic approaches of safety and danger. In spite of Gawler’s brave face, 18-year-old aide-de-camp Henry Bryan disappeared while investigating the country north of the Murray’s north-west bend with Sturt, Gawler, Inman and Craig. Despite intensive tracking by the two Indigenous men on the tour, he was never to be found.³²¹

Heroine of a Romantic Novella?

By her own admission, Davies was devoted to romantic novels, in which the elements of fear, suspense, captivity and providential escape were

³¹⁹ ‘Governor Gawler’s Letter’, in Sturt, *Mount Bryan Expedition*, p. 39.

³²⁰ Flannery (ed.), *The Explorers*, p. 10; Mrs Napier Sturt, *Life of Charles Sturt*, p. 33.

³²¹ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 146-52; Letter from George Gawler to (his brother-in-law) Henry Cox, 20 December 1839, transcribed by Ernest Roe, volunteer at the State Library of South Australia 2007, D 3063(L), re the death of Henry Bryan, the son of Rev’d Guy Bryan, Rector of Woodham Walter, in Essex.

presented in exaggerated and melodramatic form. I have discussed the popularity of this literary genre in my previous chapter on Eliza Fraser. Hints of threatened sexual activity or abuse were also a frequent inclusion. Furthermore, before renouncing worldly pleasures for religion, Davies had enjoyed the ‘gaities’ and frivolities of ‘dancing, balls, concerts, theaters, fairs, [and] horse-racing’ which were the current ‘fashionable’ pursuits of 1830s’ Glasgow. She wrote that her ‘aesthetic sensibility’ was ‘cultured by the stage trappings’ of these activities. In her extensive use of dramatic asides and dialogue, she replicates the drama of the theatrical plays seen in her youth. Davies also admitted to being ‘so sensitive, so full of feeling’, and of having ‘too easily moved feelings’.³²² This tendency is evident in her frequent recourse to the expression of emotional behaviour and reactions.

The manner in which Davies chose to report her inclusion in Sturt’s expedition sets the scene for the melodramatic account that was to follow. She wrote that:

Captain Sturt told me that I was to take up my quarters at Government House until [the exploratory group] returned. At this arrangement I demurred.

“What! do you object to going to Government House?” I was asked.

“No,” I said; “but I would much rather go with you.”

“What! go among the savages and be killed and eaten by them? You would be a tempting little morsel for them.”

This was rather startling to be sure; but then I said:

“Captain Sturt, if you take me I know that you will take care of me, and not let them kill or eat me. I have faith in your protecting care, and I have no personal fear.”

“Well said, brave little girl; you shall go, as you are so courageous.”³²³

³²² Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 27, p. 305, p. 88.

³²³ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 121.

Her account of her initial encounter with Aborigines was similarly emotionally charged. Davies was the last to alight from the whaleboat, by which time a row of Porta'ulun men had gathered on the shores of Lake Alexandrina. She exclaims:

... what was my terror and horror to see on the margin of the lake, between the reeds and the water, on each side of the boat, a line of painted savages, armed with spears, waddies and towerangs. I screamed and cowered down in the boat.

“Oh, how can I land and get past them?” was my low, frightened cry.

Two gentlemen took my hands and said:

“Come, we will guard you.”³²⁴

Her feelings of fear and dislike triumph in spite of Sturt's reassurance that, ‘Eliza, you have nothing to fear from these savages, they will not hurt you; they have given you a right royal welcome. You are the first white creature with petticoats they ever saw’. Although flanked by ‘an avenue of [white] men’ on landing, she nevertheless reported that:

the yell that escaped from the throats of these nude savages was so terrific that my flying feet hardly ... touched the ground till I reached Captain Sturt's side. The savages were still yelling and beating on their towerangs with waddies. I had never seen savages, and their yells frightened me.³²⁵

Davies' exaggerated account is both verified and qualified by Sturt's report which, while confirming that the travellers were welcomed by ‘a tribe of natives who had purposely assembled, thirty-six in number’, states that,

They were fine men all of them, with a good and almost European

³²⁴ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 128-29. A towerang was a small bark shield.

³²⁵ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 129.

expression of countenance. They were extremely curious and unintentionally though perseveringly troublesome for some time. On the whole, however, they behaved extremely well.³²⁶

The diary entry of Julia Gawler, who had landed before the arrival of the large Indigenous group, merely reads: ‘Saw some natives, and one of the men started a kangaroo, but it hopped off, and we saw no more of it’. On the previous day, she had recorded the distant view of Aborigines, writing: ‘Saw some natives on Hindmarsh Island, and on the opposite shore. Bob made signs for them to come, but they would not’. Davies, on the other hand, does not allude to this event.

In an episode in which twenty ‘nude savages’ surrounded the girls in an ambush, Davies resorted to the kind of language characteristic of survival literature, which formed part of the nineteenth-century tradition of travel writing. These men were ‘glistening in grease and war paint, and armed with war weapons’.³²⁷ The ‘hideous sight’ of the naked men made her ‘faint and sick’ and (conveniently) unable to act upon Julia’s suggestion to run away. Instead, she gained inspiration from the source of salvation available to other maidens, whose adventures grace the pages of captivity narratives. For miraculous intervention, she appealed to God: ‘in that moment of utter helplessness and terror, I remembered that I had a Father in heaven, Almighty to save, whose arm could shield us’.³²⁸ In the same way as John Curtis portrayed Eliza Fraser’s pleas for salvation, Davies prays, and receives, God’s redemptive grace:

In a moment I felt that whatever befell us we were in His hands who doeth all things well. As I looked at the grinning, painted savages, I felt horrified at our helpless state, but I knew that if God did not permit these monsters to

³²⁶ ‘Captain Sturt’s Report’, in Sturt, *Mount Bryan Expedition*, p. 21.

³²⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 86; Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 138.

³²⁸ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 139.

harm us, a hair of our head would not be injured, but if God allowed them to kill us, we were still in his hands. I felt secure under His protecting care. I then had no fear, though we were only two helpless girls completely in the power of these painted demons. I felt also that God was very near to protect His poor helpless children.³²⁹

According to Glenda Riley, North American captivity narratives by women, especially those that included inferences of sexual mistreatment, appealed to a wide market from the time that they first appeared in the American colonial period.³³⁰ Davies' sexually-charged images of Aboriginal masculinity and her melodramatic asides suggest potential physical and sexual brutality as if, 'Life and death were in the balance'. Like a damsel in distress, she fears the (unspoken) worst:

Thoughts as quick as lightning flashes passed through my brain; first I feared being killed and eaten; then, O horror! I thought they might not kill us, but what would be a thousand times worse than death, they might carry us away and hide us.³³¹

Vicarious titillation and suspense vie oddly with Davies' description of what appears to be a group of innocuous, curious and good-natured Aborigines. She describes how:

... one of these panther-like monsters came close up to me (they had never seen any creatures like us before, and their curiosity was excited) and took my hand, pushed up my sleeve, and put his great horny hand and arm close to mine. His touch made my flesh creep. He then pushed my bonnet from my face, and put his face close to mine, and looked at my neck. The close proximity of his great jaws and gleaming teeth made me shiver, but when

³²⁹ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 139.

³³⁰ Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, USA, 1988, p. 10.

³³¹ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 139. This device was familiar to readers of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740).

he pulled the dress off my feet to look at them, I gave him a push which drove him from me staggering to a distance, and he nearly fell. This made all the uncouth savages relax and yell most hideously. While Julia and myself were being examined by two of these horrid men, all the others were grinning and looking on deeply interested in the investigation.³³²

Davies exaggerated the threat of captivity with the following grotesque depiction:

Had we attempted to run, or shown signs of fear, our destruction was certain. We were surrounded by these horrible-looking men, their mouths wide open, and their tongues hanging out of their huge jaws, as if they were ready to devour us, their eyes fixed and glowering at us with a most horrible gaze. They presented a horribly sickening sight; but when I drove the fellow from me, the scene changed from rapt attention to hideous gesticulation. The violence of their movements was awful. I dared not cover my eyes to shut out the sight.³³³

From this perceived danger, Davies emerged as heroine, advising and directing the subservient Julia. 'On an instant', Davies reports, 'I resolved on a bold step. It may cost me my life I thought, but something must be done'. Confidently ordering the Aborigines to sit on the ground, she cut with scissors a piece of hair from each man's beard or head. Then, bounding 'like two hunted kangaroos', the girls returned to camp where they divided the trophy between them, as 'a memento of our providential escape'.³³⁴ Whether this was a textually contrived or real event, salvation enabled Davies to express her thanks to God:

We had just had an escape from death with all its torturing details, and, oh,

³³² Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 139-40.

³³³ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 140.

³³⁴ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 142.

worse than death with all its horrors ... Life, death, eternity, bodily pain, and worse than all these, ten times told, were all presented to our senses ... My heart was full to overflowing with gratitude for our preservation. I thought of my orphaned state, and what would have become of me in the wilds of this great land, if I had not a kind, heavenly Father to protect me. O God, my refuge and defense in a perilous hour! I cried unto the Lord, and he heard my heart's cry, and saved me. It is a good thing to trust the Lord.³³⁵

Was this a girlish escapade, exaggerated for literary effect, or a totally invented story written to appeal to an eager North American readership and appease an evangelical publisher? Containing the ingredients of (near) captivity and escape, the episode fits into the folklore of other 'first-contact' experiences in nineteenth-century literature. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the 1837 American version of Eliza Fraser's rescue, *Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings, and Miraculous Escape of Mrs Eliza Fraser*, presented a particularly emotive version of escape. Popular nineteenth-century American novelist James Fenimore Cooper had also threaded the artistic constructs of captivity and escape into his novels,³³⁶ which dealt with realistic and symbolic representations of solitude and danger on the American frontier.

Julia made no reference to it. On the corresponding day, Julia's mind was absorbed with fear for her father's safety. Two days earlier, however, she had recorded: 'Saw plenty of natives in the camp. Very harmless and quiet'. Several days later, she wrote: 'Plenty of natives, very good tempered men showed their astonishment at every[thing] they saw by calling out 'yar''.³³⁷

Davies' confession that the two girls 'entered into a covenant', promising

³³⁵ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 141-42.

³³⁶ Cf. *The Pioneers* (1823), a part of *The Leatherstocking Saga*. Cooper was an influential writer whose literary career spanned the years from 1820 to 1850. His novels ran to many editions and reached a wide readership, being translated from the English versions into French and Italian.

³³⁷ 'Julia Gawler's Narrative', in Sturt, *Mount Bryan Expedition*, 2 December 1839, 30 November, 5 December, p. 42.

‘never to tell of our adventure as long as we remained in the colony’, conveniently provided a reason for Julia’s silence. Davies strove to emphasise the truth of her statement by offering an explanation for the pact: ‘why we did so, I can give no reasons. I doubt, if we had one at the time, but what was prompted by fear’,³³⁸ and fear of reprimand. If the events had any factual basis, they provided Davies with an exciting interlude which, in her later life, she embellished in order to denigrate the ‘grinning’, friendly Aborigines.

Corroboree

Another inclusion, not found in the other expeditionists’ reports, was a corroboree. Like nudity and boomerangs, corroborees were an essential element in Indigenous identity, as perceived and represented by Australian colonists and commentators, who incorporated into their writing their own impressions of the ritual. A corroboree is mentioned in relation to Eliza Fraser, who is said to have been the object of a future ceremonial dance, an occasion that was circumvented by her rescue.

Davies’ account is a mixture of factual details and what seems to be another conduit for emotive expressions of disgust and horror. She did nevertheless concede that the Aborigines held the corroboree to return ‘the civility by showing ... their war-dance’ after one of the tourists had played his flute. In analysing Davies’ interpretation of a corroboree, I looked at Meg Vivers’ hypothesis that colonial men and women described corroborees in different ways, in order to gauge whether Davies was an eyewitness to the dance. In describing a corroboree, Davies adopted what Meg Vivers believed were the terms and attitudes of male observers, who often described Aborigines as animal-like black savages. Vivers reiterates Simon Ryan’s idea that descriptions of Aborigines by explorers tended to be ‘compressed into signifiers’ that meant savagery and evil.³³⁹ She suggests that women sought

³³⁸ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 142.

³³⁹ Meg Vivers, ‘Dealing With Difference: Evidence of European Women in Early Contact History’, in *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 4, No. 2,

to bridge racial difference by the identification of shared female interests, such as reference to the care of babies during the ceremony. Vivers' example of a female report, attributed to Mary Bennett (born in 1881), was however Bennett's father's description of a corroboree that took place in 1866. It was Robert Christison, a humanitarian settler, who bridged racial difference by the use of domestic language, describing children asleep beside their mothers, and comparing the chanting of the women to the playing of violins.³⁴⁰

While Davies' portrayal of the corroboree preparation contained 'factual details', her only identification with Aboriginal women was to note their apparent absence:

[A corroboree] is seen to best advantage at night, so this was the time selected. Kangaroo skins were rolled up tight and placed before the old men and boys. I saw no women, though they are usually the musicians. A tattoo was beat on these skins with the fists for music for the dancers, who also chanted in time. Fires were lighted at regular distances in rows, four rows with four fires in each. These were the preliminaries.³⁴¹

In describing the ceremony itself, Davies excelled in the language of

October 2002, pp. 78-79, citing Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, CUP, Melbourne, 1996, p. 144.

³⁴⁰ Vivers, 'Dealing With Difference', p. 79; Bennett, *Christison of Lammermoor*, pp. 64-65. Vivers argument is perhaps weakened by examples of female accounts of corroborees that would fit Vivers' 'male' stereotype. Two come from vice-regal women: Harriet (Mrs Dominic) Daly, daughter of William Bloomfield Douglas, Government Resident of the Northern Territory of South Australia, and short-term resident of Palmerston (Darwin) in the early 1870s; she married 'Dominick (sic) Daniel Daly' in 1871, South Australian Marriage Certificate 143/13, Adelaide, 23 October 1871; and the Countess of Jersey, wife of the Governor of New South Wales, who visited Port Darwin in 1893. Both used clichés of wildness and savagery, Daly describing a 'weird' scene resembling an 'unearthly demoniacal orgie', and feathered headdresses of 'true barbaric fashion', Daly, *Digging, Squatting and Pioneering Life*, pp. 71-72; and the Countess of Jersey depicting a 'scene [which] might have come out of the infernal regions or of a Witches' Walpurgis Night', Margaret Elizabeth Leigh Child-Villiers Jersey (The Dowager Countess of Jersey), *Fifty-one Years of Victorian Life*, John Murray, London, 1922, p. 326.

³⁴¹ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 131.

savagery:

There were two parties of savages, one painted white, the other red. They were nude, with long white or red stripes down their arms and legs and across their ribs: their faces and heads painted with white and red ochre, were hideous. Spears, waddies and towerangs were their weapons (a waddy is a knotted club about twenty-four inches long; a towerang is a small bark shield). In this terrific garb the men were arranged on either side of the fires. One of each party advanced, a red one and a white one, toward each other, struck waddies, sang and gesticulated, and kept time to the music made on the skins. Another pair advanced, struck and crossed spears, then struck the towerangs. Another pair advanced and another, till all had entered the lists. Then was pandemonium let loose; nothing could be more horrible. The glittering eyes rolled around, showing little but the whites; their huge mouths were wide open, and their teeth were gleaming, and their big red tongues were hanging out. Their disgusting, hideous gestures; their skeleton-like bodies leaping over and around the fires with their terrific yells, are things never to be forgotten ... When they had finished their horrible fiendish dance, they marched up with the measured tramp of the warrior.³⁴²

The latter part of this account suggests plagiarism in the replication of the language and tone used in the New South Wales Surveyor-General, Major Thomas Mitchell's description of a corroboree, also observed during the 1830s. Mitchell, who explored the Murray and Darling Rivers in 1835 and 1836, recorded Aborigines',

hideous crouching postures, measured gestures, and low jumps, all to the tune of a wild song, with the fiendish glare of their countenances, at all times black, but now all eyes and teeth, seemed a fitter spectacle for

³⁴² Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 131-32.

In spite of her emotional depiction, Davies failed to acknowledge an emotional connection with the Aborigines. True to the demands of a melodrama, however, she expressed her own feelings as she stood ‘spell-bound with horror ... at the disgusting scene’.³⁴⁴

Miscegenation

Davies chose the scene of the corroboree to introduce the popular nineteenth-century literary theme of miscegenation. The idea of a sexual relationship between a white woman and a black man was also included in the American version of Eliza Fraser’s story. Cooper had developed this theme in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). Davies claimed that, during her travels on three continents, she received many proposals of ‘marriage’, three of them during the course of the inland tour. On the dark night of the corroboree, however, with the assembled groups—both black and white—gathered closely together, Davies ‘felt something grip [her] foot with a tight grasp [whereby she] screamed and staggered back’. She saw a ‘hideous’, ‘wriggling animal’ scurrying away and realised that it was Tom, ‘the lake savage’.³⁴⁵

On a following day, Tom stealthily and with waddy in hand (apparently) crept towards the unsuspecting Davies, bent on hitting her on the head and abducting her. This depicted brush with death was said to have been providentially circumvented when, by Davies’ account, Governor Gawler called to her, explaining that,

black Tommy has fallen in love with you, and wants you for a lubra, and has followed you .. without our knowing his intentions till just now. He has been

³⁴³ Thomas Livingston Mitchell, *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia: with Descriptions of the Recently Explored Region of Australia Felix and of the Present Colony of New South Wales*, Volume 1, Second edition, T. & W. Boone, London, 1839, pp. 247-48, in Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye*, p. 141.

³⁴⁴ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 132.

³⁴⁵ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 132.

to all the men in the camp, and asked them if you were their lubra or picaniny (sic), and as no one claimed you for wife or child, he thought his way was clear to knock you on the head with a waddy, and carry you away. He is a bold schemer ... Meanwhile you must never leave the tent without a guard ... Otherwise you might get a blow on the head ... and be carried away senseless, or, which would be more likely, a corpse; for the blow that would stun a black beauty would surely kill you ... your prompt answer to [my] call, perhaps, saved your life.

A tantalisingly slight indication of a basis of truth in this episode is Gawler's statement (although, again, quoted by Davies) that, 'we think [Tom] must have had some encouragement from the men, or he would not have gone so far; however, this will be looked into'. Unlike the relationship that developed between Hawkeye and Cora Munro in *The Last of the Mohicans*, however, Davies maintained her racial superiority by resorting to animalistic terminology to reject Tom, who 'glare[d] ... with a most horrible expression ... and patted me under the chin with his great black paw. Oh, what an odor!'.³⁴⁶

The Wild West?

Davies' portrayal of Australian colonisation complemented accounts of the American experience of nineteenth-century western expansion across the United States, particularly after 1862 when the Homestead Act had encouraged and formalised the process of settlement. The American 'wild west' became the stuff of folklore with the stories of hardship, endurance and threat of or actual attack by the Indians re-enacted in story and film well into the twentieth century. The use of northern hemisphere terminology to describe Australian Aborigines, such as 'wild men of the woods', 'fierce denizens of the woods', 'the fiercest savages that roamed the forests' and 'panther-like monsters',³⁴⁷ places Davies' antipodean

³⁴⁶ The above three quotes refer to Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 133.

³⁴⁷ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 129, p. 131, p. 139.

travels into a context understood by her late-nineteenth century American readers. In *Story of an Earnest Life*, she taps into the American fear of Indian attack at the frontier with similarly frightening depictions of Aborigines.

The strength of the North American racial prototype as a powerful and persuasive image in Australia can be seen in an account by Charles Sturt's daughter of an Aboriginal heroic act at the Murray-Darling junction in 1830. Charlotte Eyre Sturt recalled how she loved to hear tales of her father's explorations, and especially what she called the 'Noble Native' story, in which Sturt and his men were saved by the conciliatory action of an individual Aborigine, who interceded to prevent racial conflict. In an interview recorded in the 1920s, when she was 80 years old, however, the story had been transmuted into an American context. Charlotte referred to her father's 'canoeing' down the Murray, like a North American explorer. The Aborigines who, in Sturt's report 'held their spears quivering ready to hurl' were, in his daughter's account, ready to fire their arrows.³⁴⁸

Glenda Riley's study of American frontierswomen from 1825 to 1915 identified the ethnocentric biases and distorted perceptions that geared interpretations of American Indians. Conceding the influence of nineteenth-century American novelists on white women's perceptions, Riley found that the women saw Native Americans as 'savages', 'red devils' and 'blood-thirsty wretches'.³⁴⁹ In her study of diaries of women at the frontier between 1840 and 1880, Julie Roy Jeffrey similarly discovered that Native Americans were described at best as 'shiftless and curious', and at worst as 'treacherous, savage, and cruel'. The Indian Wars waged in Oregon from 1855 to 1858, during the time of Davies' first period of residence in America, were seen as an example of the so-called inferior race striking out

³⁴⁸ 'An Interview with Charles Sturt's Daughter; And a Story with Several Versions', in *The Henley and Grange Historical Society Journal*, Number 8, August 1987, pp. 21-22; Mrs Napier Sturt, *Life of Charles Sturt*, pp. 63-64.

³⁴⁹ Glenda Riley, *Women and Indians on the Frontier 1825-1915*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, USA, 1984, p. xv, p. 81, pp. 39-40.

in a deadly fashion against white settlers and their families. Rumours and fears of Indian attack in the state of Iowa continued well into the 1870s—the period during which Davies took up permanent residence in the United States. General Custer’s defeat at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876 had kept alive in the American consciousness the fighting capacity of warlike Indians.³⁵⁰

Lillian Schlissel’s study of the diaries of American women who were part of the Overland Trail migration from Iowa to California from 1840 to 1860 similarly revealed that the ‘Indians were universally feared’. The perception of barbarous Indians persisted despite the fact that Schlissel’s analysis of the diary entries show that the Native Americans were ‘only sporadically hostile during the most important years of emigration, and more or less continually the guides and purveyors of vital services to the emigrants’.³⁵¹ In *Frontier Women*, Jeffery referred to white women’s fear of Indians, especially males, while traversing the Oregon Trail.³⁵² Schlissel, too, cites a frontierswoman’s fear of Indian attack as she rode a slow horse that lagged behind the wagons on the Oregon Trail in 1851. Rebecca Ketcham recorded in her diary that:

I felt ... very much afraid. I had been told females were in great danger of being taken by the Indians because they think a high ransom will be paid for them. For myself I have no particular desire to go among the Indians in that way ... Well I thought it would be a very easy matter for them to knock me

³⁵⁰ Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880*, American Century Series, Hill and Wang, New York, 1979, p. 55. Custer’s Last Stand, when the Seventh Cavalry, led by George Armstrong Custer, met resounding defeat at the hands of the Sioux in the mountains of Montana, in June 1876, had decisive repercussions for the Sioux. In 1881, the remaining Sioux were moved to the Great Sioux Reservation, Robert M. Utley, *Custer and the Great Controversy: The Origin and Development of a Legend*, Westernlore Press, Los Angeles, USA, 1962, pp. 23-28, p. 85; Glenda Riley, *Frontierswomen: The Iowa Experience*, The Iowa State University Press, Ames, 1981, pp. 178-79.

³⁵¹ Lillian Schlissel, *Women’s Diaries of the Westward Journey*, Schocken Books, New York, 1992, p. 154.

³⁵² Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, p. 54, p. 55.

off and take my horse, if they did not care to take me.³⁵³

Davies picked up this concept of hazardous inland travel with its associated elements of hardship, trial, endurance and bedraggled appearance that characterised the writings of American pioneering women. She exaggerated the danger of her inland trek, a theme ingrained in the white American psyche from American frontier stories. When separating into four groups on the return to Adelaide, for example, Davies wrote melodramatically that:

I said farewell [to Miss Julia] with a feeling that we should meet no more on earth. I was realising what dying in a desert for want of water was. I was lifted upon the wagon more dead than alive, I had a raging headache. My brain seemed as if it were boiling ... I thought my moments were numbered. On all sides the desert—the hot, burning desert, the lonely, silent desert, the shining, waterless desert ... Silence, the most profound and death-like, reigned—a fit companion for such desolation. It was terrible. We journeyed on that day—a day never to be forgotten—heeding not the smiting sunlight, nor heat, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor fatigue, nor danger, thinking that death would soon release one at least of the gasping, weary wayfarers. The plain over which we were passing seemed interminable.³⁵⁴

Before safely reaching Adelaide, Davies had for good measure also distorted a threat to her honour. While expecting, ‘To die alone in the desert, far, far away from home!’, in temperatures cited at between 149 and 152 degrees Fahrenheit, she also considered becoming, ‘Lost! lost in a desert drear, alone with seven men’. These exclamations gave literary credence to the way she summed up her ordeal: ‘So ended this exploring expedition. It was a chapter of accidents and adventures from beginning to end.’³⁵⁵ Sturt, on the other hand, dispassionate in his optimism for future

³⁵³ Schlissel, *Women’s Diaries*, p. 100.

³⁵⁴ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 157.

³⁵⁵ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 158, p. 159, p. 165, p. 168. The *South Australian Register* capitalised on the party’s late return, reporting accounts of the ‘exhaustion’, ‘greatest extremity by want of provisions’, death of horses and fears that ‘the whole party [might] have perished from want long ere this, or that

inland settlement, observed that the only concession to inconvenience to the ladies of the party was that they ‘did not taste good water after leaving the Murray until their arrival at Gawler Town, although their wants in other respects were most kindly relieved [at pastoral stations along the route]’. He added that, ‘Had the excursion not terminated so fatally, it would have been enjoyed by all’.³⁵⁶

As in Curtis’s account of Eliza Fraser’s ‘ordeal’, Davies survives to give thanks to God. On her return to Adelaide, exhausted, unkempt, and apparently barely alive she,

realized the fulfillment (sic) of the promise, that came to me like an inspiration, when I was laid down in the desert to die for [bread and water]. There was neither bread sent down from heaven, nor water given from a smitten rock; but we were led the right way to the city of our habitation. My heart was full of gratitude. “It is a good thing to give thanks to God.”³⁵⁷

P.T. Barnum

Davies’ exaggerated portrayal of Aborigines for her American readers appeared to capitalise on the unknown nature of Australia’s Indigenous people and the mystique that they evoked. From the mid-nineteenth century, Northern Americans had been intrigued by the ideas of ‘missing links’. P.T. Barnum wrote in his autobiography that he wanted to present ‘all that is monstrous, scaly, strange and queer’. Among his exhibits were people with congenital abnormalities, such as ‘giants’, dwarfs (who might be presented as ‘fairies’), or grossly obese people.³⁵⁸

they may have fallen into the hands of the natives’; the report was subsequently amended on the tourists’ safe return, *South Australian Register*, 28 December 1839, p. 3.

³⁵⁶ ‘Captain Sturt’s Report’, in Sturt, *Mount Bryan Expedition*, p. 28.

³⁵⁷ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 168.

³⁵⁸ Jane R. Goodall, *Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwin: Out of the natural order*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, p. 21; Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2004, pp. 82-83; Harriet Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid*, pp. 148-153.

In the 1850s, Barnum's circuses that toured the United States often included a Native American. During the 1880s, when the travelling circus toured America and Europe, Australian Aborigines were among the exhibits, recruited for Barnum by the Irish-Canadian showman R.A. Cunningham, from the Queensland Palm Islands and nearby Hinchinbrook Island. During the 1883 season, nine Aborigines were featured in Barnum's Ethnological Congress of Strange Savage Tribes in circuses, fair grounds, dime museums and even zoos. Essential to public interest was the idea that these 'curiosities' were 'primal savages' who belonged to tribes from which more sophisticated societies had long before evolved. One of the popular tropes promoted by their exhibition was 'cannibalism', equated during the nineteenth century with 'savage', 'primitive' people.³⁵⁹ Part of the appeal of exhibiting Aborigines was the projection of the popular idea that their extinction was imminent—a concept also widely promulgated in Australia, notably by Daisy Bates in the twentieth-century *Passing of the Aborigines*.³⁶⁰ Davies' representation of Australian Aborigines pandered to the need of the American public for novelty and wonder with her first-hand experiences of a possible 'new species' of humankind from the exotic world of the antipodes.

Superimposing racial theories and attitudes

Between experience and publication, Davies had been exposed to attitudes and theories that had shaped her racial perceptions. One of these was the idea that anatomy and physiognomy were important elements in assessing different racial groups. After her return to the United States in 1874, she read Josiah Nott and George Gliddon's *Types of Mankind* (1857), which she described as 'a literary cenotaph to the memory of Dr Morton, the great anthropologist'. Consisting of treatises by Samuel Morton, and

³⁵⁹ In 1892, Cunningham was to persuade another eight Aboriginal people to return with him to North America, Poignant, *Professional Savages*, p. 1, pp. 3-4, p. 10; Riley, *Frontierswomen*, pp. 175-76.

³⁶⁰ Daisy Bates, *The Passing of the Aborigines: a Lifetime spent among the Natives of Australia*, John Murray, London, 1938.

contributions by polygenists, Nott and Gliddon, the book presented current scientific theories and expositions, purporting to explain differences in race. One paper by Morton was entitled 'On the Size of the Brain in Various Races and Families of Man'. Another, entitled 'On the Origin of the Human Species', assessed the influence of 'climate, locality, civilization, and other physical and moral agents, acting through long periods of time'. This treatise tested 'the rise of accidental varieties', introducing a tone of scientific investigation that had similarities to Darwin's later published evolutionary theories. Diagrams and sketches of a Roman head of Apollo, a 'Negro' and a 'Young Chimpanzee', placed adjacent to each other, graphically compared skull shapes, particularly of jaw and forehead. The inclusion of the chimpanzee skull plunged the comparison into the realm of hierarchical evolutionary theory.³⁶¹

Although the evolutionary ideas in *Types of Mankind* challenged Davies' Christian faith in the Creation story, she reassured her evangelical readers that, even though the,

narrow edge of the wedge of doubt made a scratch on my mind's surface. In God's strength, however, I roused, and read the work to the end. I discovered the aim of the authors, and escaped their coils, and I love the Bible better now than ever I did ... I was interested in it, and gained much valuable information, and I escaped from its infidelity unscathed.³⁶²

In spite of Davies' protestations, the influence of these theories can be found in her representation of Aborigines. On landing on the shores of Lake Alexandrina, Davies expounds on a single Porta'ulun man (the 'chief' of the tribe), who sat above her on a rock, 'in solitary grandeur' with a 'demon-

³⁶¹ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 317; Josiah Nott and George Gliddon, *Types of Mankind: or, Ethnological Researches, Based Upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races*, 8th edition, J.B. Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1857, p. 298, p. 305, p. 412, p. 411, p. 458.

³⁶² Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 317.

like ferocious countenance'. While other features of the landing were similarly reported in Davies and Julia's accounts, Davies alone extrapolates on the ominous presence of the lone Aborigine. She writes that he was:

a grim savage, with a shirt on and a white cockatoo's feather in his hair. He sat aloof, alike from his own tribe and the white invaders, watching with scowling brow and malignant eye their every act.³⁶³

In her depiction, Davies drew upon the ideas of the popular nineteenth-century theory of phrenology to create a caricature of savagery, evil, and ugliness. The emotive suggestion of cannibalism, which evokes Curtis's portrayal of the Wa'ki of Fraser Island, ascribed to the man a malignant intent. She reported that:

He had coarse, frizzy black hair, not wool, standing away from his head like a sombrero or mop; his forehead was so low that his hair and eyebrows nearly met, his head receded from front to back, so that his head behind was enormous in size; his eyes were large, black, deep-set, glittering and fierce, and overhung by beetling, shaggy brows; his nose large and flat; his mouth huge, with gleaming teeth; his lips thick and hanging ... he was a picture of ugliness that fascinated me, but when he moved his great glittering orbs from one side to the other ... and moved his thick lips, I felt sick, as if he were about to tear me to pieces and eat me.³⁶⁴

Davies extended the associated ideas of physiognomy and racial hierarchy to compare the physical attributes of Tom ('the ugliest savage of the tribe save its chief, who was monstrous'³⁶⁵) and Henry Bryan, whose imminent death adds to the poignancy of the profile. Bryan's idealised image, as fated victim of the 'wilderness', shines in contrast to the depiction of treacherous savagery inherent in Tom's black and ugly body:

³⁶³ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 129-30.

³⁶⁴ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 130.

³⁶⁵ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 134.

Here were two men between whom a greater contrast could hardly be presented. In their physical appearance they were as distant as the poles, both had black hair, black eyes and white teeth. Tom with beetling brows, deep-set, restless, crafty eyes, his black hair red with ochre, and teeth a great mouthful; and though he donned his four shirts after his descent from the tree, he looked every inch a hideous savage. Bryan with black hair waving over a broad, white, intellectual brow, nose slightly Roman, mouth well-formed and fascinating when wreathed in a smile, beautiful white teeth, eyes large, lustrous, speaking, sparkling, seemed to look into you while looking at you; a square chin, a tall, well-formed, athletic figure, handsome and noble ... handsome, hapless, gentlemanly young Bryan.³⁶⁶

In the same way as Curtis extrapolated to implicate the Wa'ki in pagan atrocities, Davies attributed to the Porta'ulun 'chief' deeds of moral depravity. In June or July 1840, the 136-ton brigantine *Maria* was shipwrecked somewhere off the coast of South Australia. Mystery still surrounds the fate of the 26 passengers and crew, who were thought to have survived the wreck, but to have been subsequently killed by the Milmenrura people.³⁶⁷ In relation to the investigation of the supposed massacre, Davies cites Lieutenant Pullen and also Encounter Bay Bob as members of the avenging party to hunt down the Aborigines and administer 'justice'. In spite of the fact that the solitary Aborigine man appeared to be a Porta'ulun man, he was cited by Davies as one of the 'two or three men' who were hanged under Gawler's orders at the apparent site of the murders without

³⁶⁶ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 145-46.

³⁶⁷ Oral traditional explanations from Indigenous descendants cite sexual advances towards Aboriginal women by the white men caused an escalation of violence that resulted in the deaths of the survivors. The exact location of the wreck has never been established but wreckage washed ashore along the beach of Lacedpede Bay suggests that the ship sank near the southern tip of the Coorong, www.abc.net.au/backyard/shipwrecks/sa/mariacreek.htm; Hetherington, 'Gawler, George (1795-1869)', <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gawler-george-2085/text2615>, published in hardcopy 1966. In Foster, Hosking and Nettelbeck, *Fatal Collisions*, the chapter 'Reconstructing the *Maria* Massacre' refers to the Aborigines as the Milmenrura, a clan of the Ngarrindjeri.

recourse to court proceedings, judge or jury. According to Davies, 'It took six men to hold him, so fierce and violent was he'. She also cited information from Bob that four victims (either shipwrecked or whalers), previously killed, had been eaten and 'five more were ready to be roasted and eaten' by the murderers. Her text recalls how she had previously so closely scanned this man's face and had incited her readers' imagination with the question, 'Who knows what his dark mind was cogitating, when he sat alone in his ugliness on the rock?'.³⁶⁸ These literary excesses appear to comply with the likely perceptions of her readers that Australian Aborigines were base 'savages'.

Before her return to Australia in 1857, Davies had also read Charles Darwin's *Journal of Researches*, in which he describes a visit to Sydney in January 1836. Travelling west to Bathurst via the Blue Mountains,³⁶⁹ Darwin described Aborigines he met on the way:

They were all partly clothed, and several could speak a little English: their countenances were good-humoured and pleasant, and they appeared far from being such utterly degraded beings as they have usually been represented. In their own arts they are admirable. A cap being fixed at thirty yards distance, they transfixed it with a spear, delivered by a throwing-stick with the rapidity of an arrow from the bow of a practised archer. In tracking animals or men they show most wonderful sagacity; and I heard of several of their remarks which manifested considerable acuteness.³⁷⁰

Despite muted admiration, Darwin decried their failure to 'cultivate the ground, or build houses and remain stationary, or even take the trouble of tending a flock of sheep when given to them'. His judgement was that, 'On

³⁶⁸ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 134, p. 135.

³⁶⁹ In about 1867, Davies visited the Blue Mountains, having been inspired by Darwin's description of the 'Weatherboard Falls'.

³⁷⁰ Charles Darwin, *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of H.M.S. "Beagle" Round the World*, Sixth Edition, Ward, Lock and Co., London, New York, and Melbourne, 1889, p. 315.

the whole they appear to me to stand some few degrees higher in the scale of civilization than the Fuegians'.³⁷¹

This was faint praise as, in December 1832 on board the *Beagle*, Darwin had described the people of Tierra del Fuego as 'untamed' savages who were 'wretched looking beings' with no proper clothing, no fit language and no decent homes. His opinion on Indigenous people was that, 'A wild man is a miserable animal', and noted in his diary of the Fuegians that:

I would not have believed how entire the difference between savage & civilized man is. – It is greater than between a wild & domesticated animal ... I believe if the world was searched, no lower grade of man could be found.³⁷²

Feeding the category confusion, expressed by Darwin and manipulated by Barnum, as to whether Indigenous people belonged to the supposed lowest form of humans or were at the highest level of apes, Davies included animalistic descriptors in her representation of Aborigines. In another of her idiosyncratic episodes, not mentioned by Julia, Sturt or Gawler, she compared Indigenous people to monkeys in compliance with the common nineteenth-century analogy of Aborigines with apes. She noted that some Aboriginal women,

... were uncouth looking creatures. They were hidden away in a nook in one of the cliffs, jabbering at a great rate, just like monkeys, which they very much resembled. They were hideously disgusting. We were afraid of them at first, but they did not offer to hurt us. I patted one of the monkey-

³⁷¹ Darwin, *Journal of Researches*, p. 315. Seventeenth-century British philosopher John Locke also considered that God's purpose for man was that he make use of the earth 'for the best advantage of life and convenience', *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapter II: 5, 25, (1690).

³⁷² Keynes, *Charles Darwin's Beagle Diary*, p. 122, p. 125. Quoted from *Diary*, 120-125, *Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, 1:306, 397, in Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin*, Michael Joseph Ltd, London, 1991, pp. 132-33.

like babies, and gained the favour of the mother right away. She grinned, and went through some antics, which were not the most graceful.³⁷³

Again, Bob and Tom's skills in tracking, which could 'follow a trail over a naked rock' were attributed by Davies to their possession of 'the instinct of hounds', 'the sight of a grayhound, and the scent of a bloodhound'.³⁷⁴

The purported low racial status of Aborigines was allied in Davies' descriptive analysis to ugliness and heathenism. The men from whom Davies and Julia 'providentially escaped', for example, were described as:

the worst looking of all the hideous savages of the Murray, or even of the earth. They belong to the lowest types of humanity. They have no idea of an overruling providence.³⁷⁵

Davies reinforced the association of civilisation and Christianity in her comparison of the colonists' 'high and holy purpose of worshipping the true God' with the idea of 'pagan' Aborigines. Again in language reminiscent of Curtis, Davies observed of the trip that, 'We were far away from the habitations of civilized men, in the midst of a wilderness, where the savage roamed in ignorance and moral debasement'. She developed the common nineteenth-century idea of 'wilderness' as an uncivilised, empty environment when she referred to 'the solitude of these spots [in inland Australia] forsaken and alone in their sterility, and weird in their silence'.³⁷⁶

A secondary voice intrudes

Among her distorted pictures of Aborigines, Davies also showed Aborigines to be helpful, cooperative and friendly. She revealed the

³⁷³ Davies also suggested infanticide, stating that 'The task of rearing their children is so severe, that they frequently destroy them as soon as they are born', Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 145.

³⁷⁴ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 152, p. 151.

³⁷⁵ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 142.

³⁷⁶ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 137, p. 146.

inclusiveness existing between black and white expeditionists with her description of the white men and ‘several savages, and our black Bob’ seated under a sail that had been stretched over the oars of a boat. Like Julia’s dispassionate account, which stated that, ‘[we] landed on the Great Western Headland where we saw a great quantity of blacks and breakfasted. Papa distributed fish hooks and biscuits among them’, Davies similarly reported that Gawler distributed blankets and shirts among the Aborigines, and showed them ‘the use of fishing line and hook’.³⁷⁷ Other examples within the narrative identify the Aboriginal tour members as interpreters, indispensable trackers, food finders during the final days of the trip and, in the case of Tom, an agile tree climber, an ability that may have been included to remind readers of the hypothesised link between humans and apes in Indigenous people.³⁷⁸

Davies also added details of Indigenous cultural life along the lines of the instructional aims of utilitarian literature, followed for example by Curtis in the *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*. Like Curtis, Davies incorporated ethnographical information, seemingly from secondary authorities, either within her narrative or in footnotes. On behalf of her North American readers, she outlined the (male) Aborigines’ reliance on hunting and fishing to gain food and detailed their expertise in throwing the boomerang, admiringly explaining that:

The dexterity and precision with which [the boomerang] is thrown by these Blacks is a marvel to the whites. They hurl it so as to strike the object at a distance of over one hundred yards, and it can be thrown so as to return to the thrower. They can make it describe a circle round a tree and strike a looker-on. This singular, simple-looking weapon is found only among the

³⁷⁷ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 129; ‘Julia Gawler’s Narrative’, in Sturt, *Mount Bryan Expedition*, 28 November, p. 41.

³⁷⁸ All these characteristics, as with the skill in boomerang throwing, were however accepted and well acknowledged Indigenous qualities, Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 132, p. 152, p. 156, p. 164.

Australians, and it has excited the wonder of all Europeans. It is no less strange than true, that white men have never learned to make or throw the boomerang, though they have made the attempt.³⁷⁹

Other ethnological details strove for a rational viewpoint. Accompanying Davies' own threat of betrothal was an explanation of Indigenous methods of courtship. Although conceding that there were different ways of obtaining wives in Indigenous societies, Davies nevertheless confined her analysis to the most popular nineteenth-century perception—the 'forcible abduction of a female'.³⁸⁰ She also offered two Indigenous forms of disposal of the dead (compared to Julia Gawler's one example): on matting on the top of two sticks, and 'burial' in a sitting position on the ground with a covering of tree branches.³⁸¹ Even Davies' emotive references to cannibalism, around which she posed the possibility that Bryan's 'grave was in the stomachs of the savages',³⁸² were qualified by her observation that:

Some authors say that the Australian blacks are not cannibals. I believe they were, in the days I speak of, not from actual observation, but from reading and hearing so much of the practice of cannibalism.³⁸³

Colonial writers often wrote about Aborigines in association with Australian flora and fauna. Davies was one of them. Her 'Exploring Expedition' chapter included descriptions of the typical bush fauna to inform and educate her North American readers on kangaroos, cockatoos, dingoes, centipedes and 'soldier ants'.

³⁷⁹ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 130-31.

³⁸⁰ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 133. Clara Aspinall, for instance, who gained meagre experience of Aborigines during colonial residence in Melbourne and the gold-mining town of Maryborough between 1858 and 1861, similarly recorded this violent method of gaining wives, Aspinall, *Three Years in Melbourne*, L. Booth, London, 1862, p. 143.

³⁸¹ 'Julia Gawler's Narrative', in Sturt, *Mount Bryan Expedition*, p. 142; Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 145.

³⁸² Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 152.

³⁸³ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 134.

In reference to Aborigines outside her 'Exploring Expedition' chapter, Davies adopted a still more measured, dispassionate voice, as if relying on hearsay or public opinion, which she faithfully recorded. Three observations reveal her objective tone, which tended to weigh support on the side of Aborigines. On the day that Davies arrived at Sydney on board the *Portland* in December 1838, seven³⁸⁴ white men were hanged for their part in killing twenty-eight Aboriginal men, women and children in the Myall Creek massacre.³⁸⁵ Davies reported that:

A famous day in the annals of crime was this day, in which we anchored in Port Jackson. A fearful tragedy was being enacted in the city about the time we were throwing out our anchor. Eight young men were thrust out of this world into eternity from the gallows. These men had made a quarrel with the blacks at Miall (sic) Creek, and had killed twenty-eight of them; for which barbarous crime they did not long escape the fearful doom that befell them. They hung all day for their own crimes, and as a warning for others to beware of committing such outrages.³⁸⁶

Decrying the murders, Davies appears to sympathise with the Aborigines. This was not the view of many of the correspondents, who added their voices to the associated controversy about the causes and manifestations of racial conflict. These comments graced the pages of the *Sydney Herald* for several months. Some letters written by landholders expressed the need for pastoralists to defend themselves, censured Aboriginal violence, and vehemently opposed what they considered to be an unjustified leniency towards Aborigines by the Governor. Others wrote about the invasion of Aboriginal land, cited other examples of murder of Aborigines by Europeans, and drew attention to government neglect in failing to provide food for Aborigines after dispossession.³⁸⁷ One letter, from a

³⁸⁴ Davies nominates the number as 'eight'.

³⁸⁵ Bill Rosser, 'Aboriginal History in the Classroom', in *History Workshop: a journal of socialist and feminist historians, Special Issue: Colonial and Post-Colonial History*, OUP, Scarborough, Great Britain, Issue 36, Autumn 1993, pp. 195-208.

³⁸⁶ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, pp. 85-86. The Aborigines received justice under Crown law officer, John Hubert Plunkett.

³⁸⁷ *The Sydney Herald*, 2 January 1839, p. 2; 11 January 1839, p. 2; 14 January

‘religious man’, writing from the ‘Hunter’s River’ to the editor of the *Colonist* on 19 December 1838, described the complicated web of blame and compliance that beset the minds of interested parties. This letter was republished in the *Sydney Herald* on 30 January 1839, six weeks after Davies’ disembarkation, and read:

The government were (sic) the first party who invaded this territory—in almost every settlement they have made, the government have destroyed the first inhabitants—the government encouraged British subjects to seize on the land which produced the natives (sic) subsistence—yea! the Treasury is to this day replenished by these violent encroachments on their rights ... [Murder of Aborigines] is the necessary consequence of repeated and long-continued aggressions, begun by the government, which now victimises its hereditary subjects for following them up.³⁸⁸

Davies’ sympathy for the Aborigines sits strangely with her grotesque depiction of them in her ‘Expedition’ chapter. In her second example, she wrote of ‘the aborigines, whose lands were being occupied by the white man’, assembling on the Government House grounds on Queen Victoria’s birthday, in order ‘to receive each a blanket’.³⁸⁹ And she referred to the suffering plight of Tasmanian Aborigines, describing how:

[free colonists and convicts in 1803] united to exterminate the wretched savages, by forming a line across the island, and swept all before them, killing and driving into the sea all those who had been masters of the land ere they took possession of it ...³⁹⁰

Conclusion

Later historians and biographers have acknowledged the value of *Story of an Earnest Life* as a primary source of information. Graham Chapman, historian of the Churches of Christ in Australia, cites Davies’ ‘incisive’ comments on the different types of Church of Christ congregations in the United States, on the

1839, p. 2; 22 February 1839, p. 2; 1 March 1839, p. 3; 8 April 1839, p. 2.

³⁸⁸ In *Sydney Herald*, 30 January 1839, p. 2.

³⁸⁹ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 174.

³⁹⁰ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 203.

development of Church of Christ communities in the Sydney suburb of Newtown, and in Kiama, New South Wales, and at Hindmarsh, South Australia, at a time when few other details were recorded.³⁹¹

Similarly, Edgar Beale, biographer of Charles Sturt, turned to Davies' account of Charlotte Sturt in his assessment of the happiness of Sturt's marriage. Davies, who had described Mrs Sturt as 'elegant in her manners, but sharp-featured', held Charlotte responsible for her own marital distress because of her determination, against Eliza's will, to have Eliza marry William Davies, a man who turned out to be violent and abusive. Beale has 'no qualms in accepting Eliza's veracity ... Her story is convincing, and is apparently based upon what must have been a voluminous diary'. He further adds that his own close knowledge of the Illawarra [Kiama] district complies with 'her facts on this part of her memoirs [which are] generally reliable'.³⁹² Michael Langley also turned to Davies' writing for biographical details of Charlotte Sturt, referred to her work as evidence that Sturt knew of his South Australian appointment prior to his departure from Sydney, and reiterated her descriptions of Sturt during the inland tour.³⁹³

Again, Sean Dawes alludes to Davies' report of zoologist John Gould's participation on the 1839 expeditionary tour, a contribution not included in other accounts of the expedition. Davies had written that Gould, who was a friend of Sturt, joined the group for part of the expedition and 'classified the birds, beasts and plants', which the expeditionists brought to him. It was in the retrieving of a bird for Gould that Tom displayed his tree-climbing prowess. Davies also wrote that Gould worked with 'Mr Strange, our

³⁹¹ Graeme Chapman, *No Other Foundation: A Documentary History of Churches of Christ in Australia 1846-1990, Volume I 1846-1864*, published by author, n.p., 1993, p. 21, p. 51, pp. 99-100; Graeme Chapman, *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism: A History of Churches of Christ in Australia*, Federal Literature Department of Churches of Christ in Australia, Melbourne, 1979, p. 17, p. 54.

³⁹² Edgar Beale, *Sturt, The Chipped Idol: A Study of Charles Sturt, Explorer*, SUP, 1979, p. 122 (citing Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 100), pp. 120-21.

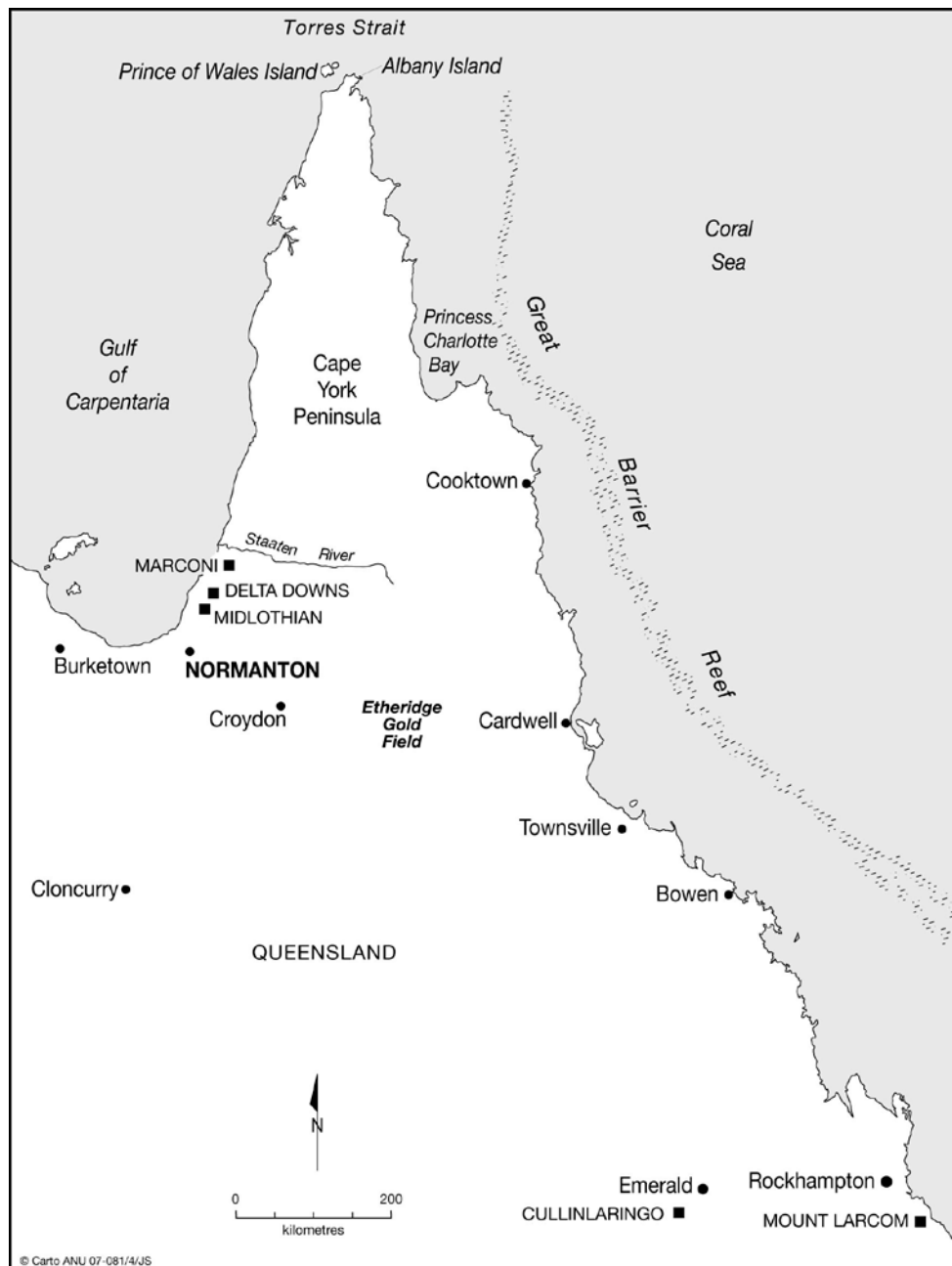
³⁹³ Michael Langley, *Sturt of the Murray: Father of Australian Exploration*, Rigby Limited, Adelaide, 1969, p. 178, p. 180, pp. 182-83.

naturalist, or rather our taxidermist, [who prepared] all the birds which Bob and Tom brought him'. According to Dawes, Gould's records and diaries have not been located, a circumstance that ensured the value of Davies' information on Gould's activities in his 1839 South Australian itinerary, from which few other details remain.³⁹⁴

A pertinent difference, however, between Davies' report of the inland tour and the records of Sturt, Gawler and Julia Gawler was that, in the 40 years that had elapsed before Davies' story was released to the public, the social and political restraints that had informed the contemporary accounts of 1839 no longer applied. By 1881, the South Australian 'Bubble' had burst and the harsh reality that the colony could not rely on pastoral, but must depend on mineral, wealth had long been established. Furthermore, fading memories of the Indigenous inhabitants, who had subsequently been subdued or displaced, allowed Davies to weave into her story an exciting account of these formerly 'fierce' Aborigines. For her North American readers, relying on Davies' interpretation, the veracity of events long past was essentially irrelevant. The free play of Davies' imagination, alongside details that formed the structural background of her life story, resulted in textual ambivalence, in which a factual account of Aborigines vied with a distorted depiction, heavily reliant of literary tropes. Perhaps Eliza Davies had adopted her own ending to the lines in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*: 'I cannot tell how the truth may be / I say the tale as 'twas said to me'. Under her penmanship, her South Australian story could well be summed up with the words:

³⁹⁴ Davies, *Story of an Earnest Life*, p. 145; Sean Dawes, 'John Gould: Travels and Faunal Collections in South Australia', in *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, Number 19, 1991, p. 88. Although no mention is made of Gould in the official reports of the exploration published in Sturt, *Mount Bryan Expedition*, pp. 11-18, according to Gould's entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Gould was in South Australia during 1839 and 'spent several weeks exploring the Murray scrubs, mainly in the company of Charles Sturt', A.H. Chisholm, 'Gould, John (1804-1881)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gould-john-2113/text2667>, published in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 9 September 2014.

‘I cannot tell how the truth may be / I say the tale as ‘twas [*told by*] me’!



Map 4: Emily Cowl

Queensland Frontier Adventure

Emily Cowl: Excitement and Humour

‘It was a race for life. If they reached the bluff first we were helpless’.³⁹⁵

Introduction

Just as Eliza Davies sought to entertain her North American readers with an exaggerated depiction of Aborigines, so Emily Cowl’s aim was to evoke the excitement of living amongst Indigenous Australians on the Queensland frontier in the 1870s. Initially presenting her tale to a Pioneers’ Club in Brisbane, her two lectures were published as *Some of My Experiences during a voyage to the Gulf of Carpentaria and three years’ residence at Normanton in the early Seventies* in about 1912.³⁹⁶ Her publisher, Besley & Pike Ltd, printed works into the mid-twentieth century on politically conservative topics such as the Australian (later Federal) Country Party and the 1935 Silver Jubilee celebrations of King George V. As well as substantial imperial works relating to World War I and missionary activities in Burma,³⁹⁷ publications on sea travel were also produced. It was in this genre that *Some of My Experiences* found its place.

Emily’s text is a complex mixture of stereotypes of Indigenous ‘savagery’ and enlightening pictures of Aborigines’ individualism and humanity. The backdrop to the action is the brutal frontier of colonial Queensland, with the menacing presence of the Native Police. Like Davies, however, Emily enlivened her text with the literary conventions of popular nineteenth-century novels. Although Emily presents a confused melee of messages, she is

³⁹⁵ Mrs T. Holder Cowl, *Some of My Experiences during a voyage to the Gulf of Carpentaria and three years’ residence at Normanton in the early Seventies*, Besley & Pike Ltd, Brisbane, n.d., p. 29.

³⁹⁶ Just prior to publication, Thomas and Emily Cowl celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. This date was 19 February 1912. As the Cows lived in Thorroldtown, now the north-eastern Brisbane suburb of Woolloowin, from 1888 to 1899, and from 1901-1905, the Pioneer Club at which Emily spoke, would appear to have been in Brisbane. In 1900, the Cows’ address was ‘Hyde Park, Townsville’, *Queensland Post Office Directories*.

³⁹⁷ Owen Wildman, *Queenslanders Who Fought in the Great War* (c.1920) and Gordon S. Seagrave, *Burma Surgeon Returns* (1946) are two examples. Beasley & Pike Holdings Ltd was registered as a public company in Queensland in 1957 as an envelope manufacturer and printer, *Jobson’s Year Book: Public Companies of Australia and New Zealand*, Jobson’s Financial Services Pty Ltd, Sydney, 1972.



Thomas and Emily Cowl, 'The Event of their Golden Wedding' (*Some of My Experiences*).

so firmly in control of her well worked-over material that her stories and her self-identity are projected with a keen and steady eye on effect. Her prime aim is to entertain her audience.

Unlike Eliza Fraser and Davies, Emily was a long-term colonial resident. As a town-dweller, however, she differs also from the three settlers who follow, by being removed from direct involvement with Aborigines. It is this circumstance that governs the direction of my argument concerning the qualities of her narrative.

Comprising 37 pages, Emily's text melds historical details relating to her voyage to northern Queensland and her three and a half years' residence in Normanton with her own version of Aboriginal behaviour, presented in thrilling escapades. These represent the Kurtjar³⁹⁸ as opportunistic, daring and fun-loving people, their light-heartedness often aimed at the newly arrived settlers. At the same time, Emily appears to take care to accommodate her audience, many of whom had pastoral connections, by incorporating in her text the presiding racial attitudes that Aborigines must be 'controlled' and white men and women protected from their depredations. The result is an ambivalent picture in which the innocuous Aborigines nevertheless earn the epithets, 'dangerous' and the euphemistic, 'mischievous'. Within this mixed presentation, Emily's own racial attitudes are difficult to discern, remaining masked behind her motivation to amuse and her care not to offend the supposed racial perceptions of her audience.

Emily also took pains to present herself as a respectable middle-class lady, of sober tastes and tidy habits. These middle-class values she struggled, but succeeded, to maintain in the harsh environment of far northern Queensland. In August 1871 she travelled to Normanton on the Norman River, 80 kilometres inland from the southern coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, after her husband Thomas Holder Cowl had been appointed manager of the

³⁹⁸ While the Kurtjar have been nominated in this chapter as the representative group in the Normanton region, six other Indigenous groups, including the Areba people, also lived in the area, Charles Bynoe, *Memories of Normanton: An Aboriginal Perspective*, Normanton State School, 1992, Author's Note, pp. 1-2.

Normanton telegraph station.³⁹⁹ A civil servant with the Queensland Electric Telegraph Service, and previously based in Toowoomba, Thomas was directed to establish a new branch station in Normanton, oversee the proposed connection through Normanton of a submarine cable from Java and, thereafter, to perform the important task of transmitting telegraphs from the wider world to the Australian colonies. Hoping to gain the contract, the Queensland government had approved the construction in June 1869 of an overland telegraph line that traversed Cape York Peninsula from Cardwell on Queensland's eastern coastline. It was opened, in preparation for the overseas connection, in January 1872. The subsequent decision, however, to connect the telegraph along the Port Darwin to Adelaide line, and not through Normanton,⁴⁰⁰ resulted in the Cows' move to Cooktown in March 1875.

Setting the Scene

Adventure was the primary theme of Emily's presentation. Her first talk dealt with the trip from Brisbane along the east coast of Queensland and around Cape York to Normanton. In this initial lecture, which formed the first section of her published work, she set the scene for her first-hand experiences with Aborigines. Revealing her knowledge of the literary tradition of captivity narratives, she referred to the legendary adventures of white men and women who had been castaways after shipwreck to trust their lot with the Indigenous peoples of the coastal regions.

Setting sail from Brisbane on 9 August 1871, the *Co untess of Belmore* finally gained favourable winds and a high tide that freed her from a Moreton Bay sandbank and propelled her into the open sea. On board with the Cows were other telegraph workers, some of them bound for Normanton. As the 60-ton schooner sailed north along the Queensland coast, she passed bays, inlets and towns, which Emily tracked and described. Precise details of dates, times and specific events (such as spectacular sunsets) suggest

³⁹⁹ 'Thomas Holder Cowl J.P., telegraph-station master, telegraph-station, Normanton', R.R. Whitworth Compiled Under the Authority of the Postmaster-General, *The Official Post Office Directory (Professional, Squatting, and Trade) of Queensland*, F.F. Bailliere, Brisbane, Sydney, 1874, p. 154.

⁴⁰⁰ For a discussion on the rivalry between Queensland and South Australia for the Overland Telegraph connection, cf. F.H. Bauer, *Historical Geography of White Settlement in Part of Northern Australia. Part 2: The Katherine - Darwin Region*, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Division of Land Research and Regional Survey, Divisional Report No. 64/1, Canberra, 1964, Appendix I, pp. 263-65.

Emily's reliance on intricate diary notes. Even landmarks passed during the night were granted elaborate description, evidence of later research. A secondary theme in this part of her story was the primitive nature of the coastal settlements compared with the progress of the ensuing 40 years. Here she weaves into her descriptions of the passing landscape the legends of shipwreck survivors who were taken in by and who lived among Aborigines in the various locations along the treacherous northern Queensland coast.

The peril of sea voyages was a theme that had captured the imagination of European writers at least since Daniel Defoe took the marooning of Alexander Selkirk on Juan Fernandez Island in the Pacific Ocean in 1704 and turned it into the story of *Robinson Crusoe*.⁴⁰¹ Emily evoked the danger of her own voyage, which took place before 'lighthouses, lightships, buoys and beacons mark[ed] the dangers all along the Inner Route between the Great Barrier Reef and the mainland'.⁴⁰² She described how the *Countess of Belmore* herself struck the coral reef and was freed only by the crew's pulling on ropes dropped over the side onto submerged rocks as the tide rose.

Nineteenth-century English newspapers and journals, such as the *Illustrated London News*, had contributed to the sensationalism of shipwreck by reporting in graphic detail the sinking of passenger ships en route to the colonies. Between 1847 and 1851, for example, 44 ships were wrecked on the transatlantic crossing, and 1,043 people were drowned, including 248 from the *Exmouth* and 176 from the *Ocean Monarch*, both in 1847.⁴⁰³ Australia's coastal waters were particularly treacherous to shipping. Between 1871 and 1911—the years between Emily's voyage and her presentation—143 ships sank off the Queensland coast. In March 1911, close to the time of Emily's lectures, the liner *Yongala* had disappeared without trace during a cyclone south of Townsville, on the same route taken by Emily in 1871. Because mystery and rumour surrounded the circumstances of the disappearance of the *Yongala* in the years after it vanished, details of this disaster were

⁴⁰¹ Selkirk requested to be put off the *Cinque Ports* after quarrelling with the captain and was rescued four years and four months later by William Dampier, Diana & Michael Preston, *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind*, p. 313.

⁴⁰² Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 6.

⁴⁰³ David Killingray, Margaret Lincoln and Nigel Rigby, *Maritime Empires: British Imperial Maritime Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, The Boydell Press in association with the National Maritime Museum, Suffolk, UK, 2004, p. 164.

likely to have been lingering in the minds of Emily's audience.⁴⁰⁴ Emily appears to capitalise on the intrigue surrounding missing boats and castaway passengers in the way she elaborated on this theme in this section of her narrative.

The association of shipwreck and the mystique of 'captivity' by 'savage' Aborigines was a particularly potent recipe for storytellers. The Eliza Fraser saga exemplifies its fascination. Eliza Davies encountered stormy seas in gales in the Irish Sea, in the Australian coastal waters, and when rounding Cape Horn during her return to Scotland in 1847, fearing shipwreck and, in her case, death in the watery depths. Emily Cowl incorporated the exotic mix of castaway and capture into her narrative with her own examples. She drew attention to the site between Bowen and Townsville where James Morrell lived for twenty years with the Jurn and Bindal people after shipwreck in 1846.⁴⁰⁵ She recounted the story of Frenchman, Narcisse Pierre Pelletier, who was shipwrecked as a 14-year-old cabin boy on board the *St Paul*, and rescued in October 1858 by members of the Makadamas at Princess Charlotte Bay on the far north coast. Pellatier lived for sixteen years with the Makadamas until forcibly 'rescued' by a seaman in 1875 and returned to France. He is believed, however, to have returned in about 1881 to live with the Makadamas, remaining with them until his death in the 1920s.⁴⁰⁶

Emily also recalled the fate of Barbara Thompson who was rescued after shipwreck by the Kaurareg people of Muralag (Prince of Wales Island, off the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula). In September 1844, William and Barbara Thompson, with three crew members, had set sail for Torres Strait in the *America*, a refitted cutter in an attempt to find and salvage the cargo of a wreck, known to one of the crew. The search was unsuccessful and the *America* was itself wrecked in December 1844 on its return voyage. Barbara, the only

⁴⁰⁴ The wreck was not discovered until 1977 when divers located it on the sea bed, Lance Paterson, *Wreck-ollections: Ships and Shipwrecks in Queensland Waters*, Volume 1, published by author, Caloundra, Queensland, 2003, pp. 186-87; Chris Halls, *Australia's Worst Shipwrecks*, Rigby Limited, Adelaide, 1978, pp. 126-29, pp. 136-37.

⁴⁰⁵ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 6. Henry Reynolds cites seventeen years, Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1990, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁶ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 9; Francis Murray, 'Perilous Passage', in *Holy Name Monthly: Official Organ of the Holy Name Society in Australia and New Zealand*, Volume XXXVIII, Number 9, October 1969, pp. 14-15; *The Sun*, Sydney, 5 August 1974, p. 14.

survivor, lived among the Kaurareg for almost five years.⁴⁰⁷ Her story has become part of Australian folklore replicating, although not surpassing, the tale of Eliza Fraser. Emily states that Thompson was ‘not ... molested or in any way harmed by the blacks. [The Kaurareg] had merely fed and looked after her, taking her with them as they moved from one hunting ground to another’.⁴⁰⁸ Apart from Emily’s report that after Pelletier’s rescue and assimilation into Makadamas society, ‘the rest of the crew were gradually killed and eaten by the natives’,⁴⁰⁹ Indigenous protection and nurturing were integral to each of the examples she presented.

In this first section of her work, Emily presents her conflicting messages. Along with the accounts of Indigenous care for needy white men and women, she nevertheless also endeavoured to portray the idea of fearsome, dangerous Aborigines who, during the time of the Cowl’s voyage in August and September 1871, were said to be lurking in the bushland along the Queensland coast. Emily builds up this picture by referring to the ‘numerous and hostile’ Aborigines ‘hiding in the scrubs’. She expressed to her audience her alarm that she would be ‘at the mercy of the blacks’ if the passengers were required to land. When the captain and crew went ashore to find firewood on Prince of Wales Island, Emily reported that they were ‘well armed, because the natives on the island were well known to be dangerous’.⁴¹⁰ This ambivalent assessment of Indigenous intent is characteristic of her attitude throughout her tale, similarly applied to the second part of her presentation that deals with her adventures in Normanton.

Into isolation and desolation

Emily and Thomas Cowl arrived in Normanton on 5 September 1871. An outpost of Empire, new and remote, Normanton had been declared a town in August 1868. Settlement

⁴⁰⁷ Barbara Thompson’s maiden name, ‘Crawford’, is the nominated term used by Emily Cowl, who has also heard her name as ‘Margaret’. Barbara Crawford had eloped, aged sixteen years, with seaman, William Thompson. In October 1849, Barbara was ‘rescued’ by the crew of the survey ship *H.M.S. Rattlesnake*, commanded by Captain Owen Stanley, from whom the account was handed down, Jordan Goodman, *The Rattlesnake: A Voyage of Discovery to the Coral Sea*, Faber and Faber, London, 2005, pp. 254-62; David R. 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*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra and Humanities Press Inc., New Jersey, USA, 1978, p. ix, p. 9, pp. 229-30.

⁴⁰⁸ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁰⁹ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 9.

⁴¹⁰ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 5, p. 8, p. 17, p. 14, p. 11.

was established as an alternative site for Burketown, 150 kilometres to the west, after an outbreak of fever, brought by boat from Java in 1866, had decimated that town's population. Building in Normanton began in May 1867 after William Landsborough had navigated the Norman River earlier that year. The town served as a depot for goods transported between the port and the cattle runs and mining ventures in its hinterland. The successes of the recently discovered, although ultimately short-lived, Etheridge Gold Field, 300 kilometres east of Normanton and the Cloncurry copper mines, 400 kilometres south of the town, had contributed to Normanton's growth during the 1860s and 1870s.

Although in October 1868, 43 purchasers of land at auction registered their address as Normanton, in 1871 there seemed to have been only seven residential dwellings, some unoccupied, and a few huts. According to Emily, the European population, including children, was about forty. The town consisted of one long, wide road (Landsborough Street) on which stood the Commercial Hotel, the Prince of Wales Hotel, the Court House and Police quarters, the Lands Office, the Land Commissioner's house, the Telegraph Office (with the Cows' house attached), and a general store. Residents included the inspector of police, two acting assistant police inspectors, a land agent, customs officer, postmaster, cattle brand inspector and telegraph officers, working under Thomas Cowl.⁴¹¹ Among these male officials, Emily was one of the few women in the town, a factor that she utilised to enhance the interest of her story.

Emily's descriptions of Normanton as 'almost beyond the pale of civilisation' and 'far, far away from the comforts of civilisation' evoked the isolation into which a respectable urban resident had been cast. She depicted it as a 'wild, unsettled' place with 'many hardships to be endured', manipulating its desolation and remoteness by inflating the distances from Cloncurry and Townsville.⁴¹² The themes of isolation and hardship tie into the idea of exile and wilderness, which in nineteenth-century literature were associated with the idea of Biblical banishment into which white settlers brought the progress of civilised society and British law.

⁴¹¹ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 20; *Normanton Centenary 1868-1968*, Normanton Centenary Committee, 1968, p. 5; *The Official Post Office Directory of Queensland*, 1871, p. 125.

⁴¹² Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 2, p. 31.

Her attitudes to landscape also comply with European perceptions of Australian scenery as barren and unattractive. While confirming the characteristic Northern Australian estuary country of 'low mangrove swamp and salt pans', Emily described the environment around Normanton as 'devoid of scenery' in contrast to the 'lovely scenery of Toowoomba'. She described the flat terrain as boggy and mosquito-infested in the wet season, and bleak and barren in the dry season, except for sporadic clumps of coarse spinifex.⁴¹³ Emily seemed to compare the sterility of Normanton with the civilised landscapes of the surrounding pastoral properties that had spread north from the Moreton Bay region from the 1830s. Originally unsuccessful sheep squattages, these properties had been converted to pasturing cattle, which were more suited to the wet conditions and to the lush grass that sprang up after the monsoonal rains. Unlike the raw surroundings of Normanton, these rich pastures had been for some time the homes of settlers, who had converted the native landscape into a pocket of British endeavour within the harsh outback scenery. The underlying themes of hardship, danger and isolation at Normanton came together in Emily's first image of the town: the funeral of a young woman who had died from the complications of childbirth because of the lack of medical care.⁴¹⁴ It was in this frontier existence that hazardous adventures were waiting to happen!

In Normanton during the 1870s, disease and death were close at hand. The Norman River was crocodile-infested and fevers were rife. Emily wrote that she was to suffer from intermittent malarial fever for seventeen years. The practical part she played in the civilising process was to bring into this inhospitable environment her medicine chest, along with her considerable resourcefulness, endurance and fortitude. She illustrated her success in medical emergencies with examples of her capable application of remedies and her overall expertise. Her intervention (unspecified by detail) in a case of threatened miscarriage, for instance, ensured that mother and baby were saved. This example—as well as the earlier reference to death in childbirth—reminded her audience of the tragedy that might befall women who ventured onto the desolate frontier of colonial Queensland.

⁴¹³ Marjorie Sullivan, 'Northern Australian Landscapes', in Peter Veth and Peter Hiscock (eds), *Studies in Anthropology and Archeology of Northern Australia, Tempus*, Volume 4, University of Queensland, 1996, pp. 4-5; Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 2, p. 18; *Normanton Centenary*, p. 5.

⁴¹⁴ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 21.

These two examples of the vulnerability of women of childbearing age tap into early twentieth-century anxieties concerning white women's place in the tropics. Nikki Henningham has examined public concern in the years following federation about the seeming inability of white women to live in tropical regions. Henningham draws attention to the relationship between the suitability of white women to reside in northern Queensland and the uncertainties of maintaining a racially superior 'White Australia' in the case of white women and children failing to survive in these climates.⁴¹⁵ Despite her succumbing to malaria, Emily leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that she is equal to men in robustness and enterprise, whatever her location.

Emily offered numerous examples of her skill and success in such emergencies as gun shot wounds, 'blood poisoning', typhoid fever and febrile convulsions. She declared that:

Almost everyone in the township was suffering from low remittent fever, dysentery, liver disorganisation, debility, etc. It soon became known that my husband and I had some skill in medicine, and success in prescribing for those maladies; also, a well stocked medicine chest. Subsequently we were called upon to attend men and women in their times of suffering and accidents, and natural causes. Some cases were very dangerous, and caused us much anxiety.⁴¹⁶

She tended to elevate her own ability at the expense of the other residents, observing that:

It was astonishing how ignorant the majority were with regard to medicine and the ordinary homely remedies for common ailments which all adults, especially married ones, are expected to be conversant with.⁴¹⁷

Tony Roberts both confirms and qualifies the Cows' medical skills. In *Frontier Justice*, Roberts relates that a traveller on his way to Normanton in November 1871 sustained multiple fractures to his collarbone after his horse bolted and dashed him against an overhanging branch. In agony, the horseman arrived in Normanton, where 'the Telegraph Master tried to set my bone but after six tries he gave up, telling me to go to the Bay (600

⁴¹⁵ Nikki Henningham, "'Hats off, Gentlemen, to Our Australian Mothers!'" Representations of White Femininity in North Queensland in the Early Twentieth Century', in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 32, Number 117, 2001, pp. 311-21.

⁴¹⁶ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 25.

⁴¹⁷ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 34.

miles)'.⁴¹⁸

To highlight the harsh environment of Normanton, and as a way to promote her public image, Emily referred to her previous genteel activities in Toowoomba where she enjoyed Christian fellowship in the company of her respectable female friends. Although both married and buried with Presbyterian Church rites, she taught in Church of England Sunday schools, recalling with pride the social success of some of her former pupils: 'Several who were then boys and girls in my classes are now prominent personages holding high and responsible positions in the social, public, and political life of our Commonwealth'.⁴¹⁹ The only Christian clergy to visit Normanton was a Catholic priest to whom Emily extended an ecumenical welcome. Otherwise, her Christian identity relied on the recounting of her past religious duties in Toowoomba. Together with wifely devotion, sobriety, cleanliness, and a Protestant work ethic, her allusions to religion project an image of a lady who has been cast out of a civilised environment into a wild frontier.

In spite of her public persona, Emily's beginnings were comparatively lowly. Born Emily Jane Ferguson in County Fermanagh, Ireland, in 1844,⁴²⁰ she was the daughter of a cashier. Thomas Cowl, born in Hull on 7 July 1843, appeared to have had similar working class connections. The son of a merchant, Thomas' occupation on marriage was registered as 'Purser'.⁴²¹ After Thomas' working life at telegraph stations in the coastal towns of Bowen and Townsville,⁴²² the Cows retired to their home, Cooyah, in Dickson Street,

⁴¹⁸ Margaret Reeves, *A Strange Bird on the Lagoon*, Boolarong Publications, Brisbane, 1985, p. 171; Tony Roberts, *Frontier Justice: A History of the Gulf Country to 1900*, UQP, 2005, p. 34.

⁴¹⁹ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 1. Two prominent Queenslanders, who were children in Toowoomba between 1868 and 1871, were Henry Littleton Groom (1859-1926), member of the Queensland Legislative Council for sixteen years, and his brother, (later Sir) Ernest Littleton Groom (1867-1936), member of the House of Representatives for Darling Downs, succeeding his father, William Henry Groom, D.B. Waterson, 'Groom, William Henry (1833-1901)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/groom-william-henry-3675/text5741>, published in hardcopy 1972, accessed online 9 September 2014.

⁴²⁰ Although Emily Cowl's marriage certificate states her age at marriage in Sydney in February 1862 as 22 years, her death certificate records that, on her death on 3 June 1925, she was 81 years of age, indicating that she married at 17 or 18. On her death certificate, her age at marriage is recorded as 18 years. Emily's birth year can be most closely identified as 1844. Thomas Cowl's stated age of 23 years on his marriage certificate was similarly inflated from his actual age of 18. He died on 24 January 1916, aged 73, New South Wales Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration, Marriage Certificate registration number 1862/000149; Queensland Death Certificates, 1925/B45859 and 1916/427; *The Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, (Founded in 1913), Vol. 1, No. 2, February 1916, p. 63.

⁴²¹ NSW BDM Registration, Marriage Certificate reg. no. 1862/000149.

⁴²² *Wise's Queensland Post Office Directory*, 1895 to 1900. Thomas Cowl retired in 1900. In 1913, he and

Thorroldtown, near Brisbane.

In 1903, when the Cows lived in Thorroldtown, the residents of Dickson Street were predominantly upper working-class. Along with two labourers and a 'carter', the majority comprised skilled tradesman: five carpenters, five painters, four butchers, and one each of the occupations of 'bootmaker' and 'tailor'. Female residents were largely committed to 'domestic duties'. There was one nurse and one midwife. Men working in the expanding administrative city of Brisbane, with which Thorroldtown was linked by rail, were represented in Dickson Street by a sharebroker, an insurance manager and a clerk. Thomas Cowl, 'civil servant', joined this category. In 1903, the Thorroldtown railway station was located further north of the current position in Dickson Street. This edifice still stands as a gracious, two-storied colonial residence, amongst the other spacious, weatherboard, mainly stilted, homes in the long, curving, leafy avenue that stretches along the railway line in the now northern Brisbane suburb of Woolloowin. By 1916, the Cows were living at Eagle Junction, Brisbane.⁴²³

Tying the text to history

In her representation of the wild, uncivilised existence in Normanton during the 1870s, Emily evoked a past time in Queensland's history. Her story, set before the Queensland Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld), (amended in 1901), harked back to the period before Indigenous people were settled on reserves in the manner practised in other British colonies, including North America and South Africa.⁴²⁴ In the early years of the twentieth century, Aborigines were rarely the topic of public concern, remaining out of sight and out of mind of city dwellers. The *Brisbane Courier* in 1905, for example, focused its attention on matters of the Australian Commonwealth, the British Empire, and news of the wider world, opened up by the electric telegraph.⁴²⁵ Emily

Emily lived at 'Balma Carra', Eagle Junction, Brisbane, *HSQJ*, Vol. 1, 1914, p. 11.

⁴²³ *Queensland Electoral Roll*, 1903. Personal observation; oral communication, Marie McCulloch, Research and Education Officer, Queensland Family History Society Inc., Bridge St, Albion; residents and storekeeper, Dickson Street, Woolloowin, July 2004; *HSQJ*, Vol. 1, No. 2, February 1916, p. 68. In 2004, several vacant allotments, on which stood large conifers and other exotic trees, indicated the sites of recently-demolished older residences.

⁴²⁴ *Queensland Government Gazette*, 16 December 1897, pp. 1387-1394. According to Edward Palmer, Aborigines were still living 'in their original state' on Cape York in 1903, and 'on some of the rivers flowing into the Gulf [were] still numerous', Edward Palmer, *Early Days in North Queensland* (1903), Queensland Classics edition, 1983, p. 214.

⁴²⁵ Based on research into the *Brisbane Courier*, January to May 1905.

revived this historical amnesia by projecting images of Indigenous people in their 'native' state. On her northerly voyage, for example, she depicted the 'uncivilised' Yadhagana people (of Albany Island on the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula) who were 'all quite naked, [with] not a stitch of clothing of any kind on men, women, or children'. She also assessed and categorised them in relation to other Australian Aborigines, without specifying her previous knowledge, writing that:

I was rather disappointed in their physique. I had been told that I would find them a much finer and more powerfully built race than those in the south. Those I saw were not so, but perhaps they were inferior specimens. They, however, seemed more intelligent and courageous.⁴²⁶

Emily's report hints at Social Darwinism which by the 1870s had spread from the scientific world to influence racial perceptions of the general public.⁴²⁷ It also suggests knowledge of Humboldt's theory of a fixed relationship between animal life and landscape, and of J.R. Forster's climatic determinism.

A founding member of the Royal Queensland Historical Society,⁴²⁸ Emily demonstrated her interest in her State's history by anchoring her presentation within historical detail. She tied her refusal to employ black women for household tasks to the exploitation and abuse of Indigenous girls and women in Normanton by white men, stating that:

I decided from the start not to have [Aboriginal women] about me. The way they were run in from their tribes, and the constant care necessary to keep them from contamination horrified and disgusted me.⁴²⁹

Whether this was an objection in principle, to protect Aboriginal women, or whether she wished to circumvent an interracial liaison involving white men, including perhaps her husband, is unclear. The exploitation of Aboriginal women in the Normanton area during the 1870s is nevertheless confirmed by official correspondence. In October 1874, letters

⁴²⁶ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 13. These views replicate those of Roderick Flanagan, *The Aborigines of Australia*, p. 13.

⁴²⁷ C.G. Henderson, Professor of History, Adelaide University, in a lecture to the 1911 Australian Association for the Advancement of Science Congress, in Reynolds, *Frontier*, pp. 115-16.

⁴²⁸ *HSQJ*, Vol. 1, p.11.

⁴²⁹ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 21.

from a station master, a police magistrate and two other members of the police force in Cloncurry reported to the Colonial Secretary that, from Normanton to Cloncurry, 'The stealing of gins and children from the blacks ... the running down and forcible detention of [them] ... is a matter of frequent occurrence'.⁴³⁰ Tony Roberts also found that in colonial Queensland there was a 'high incidence of rape, kidnapping and prostitution [of black women by white men], sometimes involving children as young as seven'.⁴³¹

Racial conflict forms the backdrop to Emily's story. The writers of *Creating A Nation* represent the frontier of white settlement in the Australian colonies as 'a place of fear and desire, of struggle and survival where indigenous people and colonisers came into contact, interacted and clashed'.⁴³² According to Raymond Evans, 'both sides [of the Queensland frontier] bristled with weaponry. The passions of fear, anxiety and vengeance were running high ... and European attitudes towards Aborigines as the hated and despised 'other' were intense'.⁴³³ G.S. Lang wrote in 1865 that in Queensland there was 'more destruction of the blacks in occupying new country than in any other colony'.⁴³⁴ Aborigines died violently from the time when settlers ventured inland from Moreton Bay in search of new country for grazing and agriculture in the 1830s and 1840s. In 1841, for example, over fifty Aborigines were poisoned by flour laced with strychnine on Kilcoy station in the upper Brisbane Valley—killings that added to Indigenous resentment towards the British, already developing after their 1836 contact with Eliza Fraser and the other *Stirling Castle* castaways on Great Sandy Island to the north-west.⁴³⁵

Edward Palmer acknowledged white aggression in his rationalisation in 1903 that:

⁴³⁰ Evans, Saunders, Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, 1993, p. 105, citing Police Magistrate Report (with inclusions), Cloncurry, to Col. Sec., 28 October 1874, in note 444, p. 141. Also cf. Reynolds, *Frontier*, p. 74. Reynolds cites the source of the correspondence as 'Normanton'.

⁴³¹ Roberts, *Frontier Justice*, p. 107, p. 108.

⁴³² Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath, Marian Quartly, *Creating A Nation*, McPhee Gribble Publishers, Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, 1994, p. 131.

⁴³³ Raymond Evans, 'Across the Queensland Frontier', in Bain Attwood & S.G. Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2003, p. 63.

⁴³⁴ Alison Palmer, *Colonial Genocide*, Crawford House, Adelaide, 2000, p. 45.

⁴³⁵ Evans, Saunders and Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, p. 49; A.T. Yarwood and M.J. Knowling, *Race Relations in Australia: A History*, Methuen Australia, North Ryde, NSW, 1982, p. 195. Elaine Brown refers to a 'tradition of resentment towards Eliza Fraser' passed down to Indigenous descendants of the Ka'bi who helped her, Brown, *Cooloolo Coast: Noosa to Fraser Island*, p. 118. In 2007, Kilcoy homestead was a dilapidated site.

The white pioneers were harder on the blacks in the way of reprisals when they were forced to deal with them for spearing their men or their cattle or horses even than the Native Police. But how were property and the lives of stockmen, shepherds, and prospectors in the north to be protected unless by some summary system of retribution by Native Police or bands of pioneers?⁴³⁶

The perception of Aboriginal violence, however, was highlighted in three separate killings of Europeans in colonial Queensland. At Mt Larcom in central Queensland, six pastoral workers were killed by the Daumbal in December 1855; in October 1857, eleven Europeans on the isolated Hornet Bank station, near Taroom on the upper Dawson River, were killed by the Yiman, the victims being the widowed Martha Fraser, her four daughters, three of her sons, a tutor and two shepherds; and in October 1861, nineteen settlers were murdered at Cullinlaringo station, south of Emerald.⁴³⁷ These murders were thought to have been vengeance killings that were nevertheless subsequently repaid tenfold. Evans has assessed that retribution for the loss of perhaps 40 European lives accounted for at least 500 Aboriginal deaths, including those of women and children. Aboriginal camps were attacked and whole tribes exterminated. The ethos of retributive violence moved north to the Cape York region where, in Normanton in 1867, ‘booze, guns and brawn were the social rule among the largely male settler populations’.⁴³⁸

Emily may have pitched her representation of Aborigines in response to an expectation that her listeners were sympathetic to the views of settlers like ‘Vindex’,⁴³⁹ who saw Aborigines as barbarous subhumans without ethics or compassion. Purporting to know ‘a little about’ racial conflict, this squatter from ‘the outlying districts of the north’ wrote to the *Brisbane Courier* in 1868 in defence of the Native Police, who also played a part in retributive attacks on the Kurtjar in Emily’s story at Normanton. Depicting Aborigines in

⁴³⁶ Palmer, *Early Days in North Queensland*, pp. 213-14. Emily cites the Palmers as people she knew in north Queensland, Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 23.

⁴³⁷ The only survivor was a son, Sylvester, aged about 14 years, D.J. Mulvaney, *Encounters in Place: Outsiders and Aboriginal Australians 1606-1985*, UQP, 1989, p. 95; John Molony, *The Native-Born: the First White Australians*, MUP, 2000, pp. 139-40.

⁴³⁸ Evans, ‘Across the Queensland frontier’, in Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, p. 64. Raymond Evans, ‘“Plenty Shoot ‘Em”: The Destruction of Aboriginal Societies along the Queensland Frontier’, in A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, Berghahn Books, New York, Oxford, 2004, p. 156; Tony Roberts reveals the extent of white violence in the Gulf Country in *Frontier Justice*, passim; Saunders and Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, p. 204.

⁴³⁹ Vindicator, avenger (Latin).

terms evocative of the brutal North American frontier, Vindex wrote that:

If a man sees a spotted jaguar ... prowling around his wigwam, he up's with his rifle and shoots him if he's a prudent man. Humane people may object, and say it did you no harm; but I reply, he would have done me harm on the first safe and eligible opportunity. So will the savage; he is, was, and always will be, the natural enemy of civilised man—fierce, relentless, and brutish, he will kill you if he can, and he waits and watches his opportunity.⁴⁴⁰

In a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* in January 1874, Charles Heydon, later a New South Wales supreme court judge and attorney-general, wrote of the euphemistic term, 'snipe-shooting', used to refer to the killing of Aborigines. He explained that:

Awkward words are always avoided you will notice. 'Shooting a snipe' sounds better than 'murdering a man'. But the blacks are never called men and women and children; 'myalls' and 'niggers' and 'gins' and 'picaninnies' seem further removed from humanity ... What right have 'myalls' to exist at all – mischievous vermin with their ignorance, and their barbarism, and their degradation and their black skins?⁴⁴¹

Emily was also to resort to euphemistic terms to describe the actions of the Native Police at Normanton in the 1870s.

Certainly, racial attitudes in nineteenth and early twentieth-century rural Queensland reflected the turbulent history of race relations in that colony. To build up her picture of perceived Indigenous savagery, Emily recounted the precautions taken by white settlers against Aboriginal attack, stating for instance that: 'All who left the town for the bush carried arms. It was not safe when travelling to camp alone'. She detailed how telegraph line repairmen worked in pairs for protection and how travellers venturing outside Normanton made a practice of sleeping some distance from their camp fire, so as to disguise their actual location at night.⁴⁴² Correspondence to the Colonial Secretary supports Emily's evidence. In 1874, officials based in Normanton wrote that it was 'positively

⁴⁴⁰ *The Brisbane Courier*, 21 February 1868, p. 2, quoted in Andrew Markus, *From the Barrel of a Gun: The Oppression of the Aborigines 1860-1900*, Victorian Historical Association, West Melbourne, 1974, p. 8.

⁴⁴¹ Evans, 'Across the Queensland Frontier', in Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁴² Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 29.

unsafe to be out of doors after nightfall unless provided with firearms'. There were also fears that Aborigines would burn the town. Roberts, too, provides examples of white men afraid to travel alone during the 1870s for fear of Aboriginal attack.⁴⁴³

Appeasing the audience

Emily's audience at the Pioneers' Club was likely to have consisted of people who considered themselves to be superior members of colonial society and superior especially to Aborigines. Pioneers' Clubs formed from ideas about national identity, which heightened during the 1880s. The concept of an Australian identity had begun around 1872 with the development a 'political training ground for the Australian-born', the Australian Natives Association. Indicative of growing nationalistic sentiments, its membership by 1886 had risen to over 4,000, in nearly 60 branches. This early national feeling incorporated the notions of an 'Australia for the Australians'⁴⁴⁴ and the exclusion from citizenship of 'aliens' such as the Chinese. The imperial attitude of white racial superiority necessarily prevented Indigenous people from being considered worthy of inclusion.⁴⁴⁵

During the 1880s and 1890s—the decades after Emily's Normanton experiences—Australian writers, artists and journalists forged a national style of expression that both reflected and advanced an awakening national pride. It was during these decades that Henry Lawson wrote his bush poems, the Heidelberg school of painters emerged, and the *Bulletin* magazine began publication.⁴⁴⁶ This was perhaps when 'the Australian people became 'fully conscious of their nationhood' as they moved in sentiment away from the old world, while retaining the vigour and idealism of an emerging independent British nation.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ Cited in Evans, Saunders, Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, p. 45; Henry Reynolds (ed.), *Race Relations in North Queensland*, James Cook University, Townsville, 1993, p. 49; Roberts, *Frontier Justice*, p. 34, p. 38.

⁴⁴⁴ Coined by an Australian Natives Association (ANA) member. The ANA, membership of which was confined to white Australians born in Australia, grew out of the Friendly Society of Victorian Natives, G.L. Buxton, '1870-90', in F.K. Crowley (ed.), *A New History of Australia*, William Heinemann Melbourne, 1977, pp. 204-5.

⁴⁴⁵ The term 'White Australia Policy' had been first enunciated in the Brisbane radical newspaper, the *Boomerang*, in 1888, Jacqui Donegan and Raymond Evans, 'Running Amok: The Normanton Race Riots of 1888 and the Genesis of White Australia', in Ffion Murphy (ed.), *The Show Girl and the Straw Man*, an issue of the *Journal of Australian Studies*, No. 71, UQP, St Lucia, Queensland, 2001, p. 98.

⁴⁴⁶ Geoffrey Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come: The Creative Spirit in Australia 1788-1972*, William Heinemann Australia Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1974, pp. 61-79.

⁴⁴⁷ R.A. Gollan, 'Nationalism, The Labour Movement and the Commonwealth, 1880-1900', in Gordon Greenwood (ed.), *Australia: A Social and Political History*, Angus & Robertson Publishers, Sydney, 1978,

Although Australian national identity had moved to some degree from the purely British prototype, it nevertheless remained firmly attached to the sense of being British-Australian.⁴⁴⁸ In this conceptual framework, Aborigines continued to remain as outsiders.

National pride and exclusiveness therefore went hand and hand, and the development of Pioneers' Clubs following the federation of the Australian colonies on 1 January 1901 epitomised this marriage. Some clubs were 'more exclusive' than others. Membership for the Australasian Pioneers' Club, formed in 1910, and founded by Douglas Hope Johnston, restricted its membership to male descendants of officers and men of the Naval, Military or Mercantile Marine, men of the Civil Establishment, landholders, and nominated explorers. Johnston held impeccable credentials, being the great-grandson of Colonel George Johnston, the first officer to land at Port Jackson in 1788. Membership from landholder descent required residence in New South Wales on or before 31 December 1810. In 1915, the categories were extended to include 'Officers and men under the command of Captain Cook during his expeditions to Australia', and a provision for Queensland residence on or before 31 December, 1849. The Club's motto 'Primi in Terras Australes' ('First Men in the Southern Lands') blatantly proclaimed white supremacy in its denial of Aboriginal presence or ownership of land prior to European settlement.⁴⁴⁹

The values of the Australasian Pioneers' Club were expressed in imperial terms:

The desire in perpetrating the names of the pioneers was that the Club would become the pioneer of a truly National Australasian spirit, founded upon a patriotic appreciation of the splendid courage, perseverance and endurance that added Australasia to the British Empire ...⁴⁵⁰

pp. 145-47.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. Helen Irving, *To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution*, CUP, Melbourne, 1999, pp. 100-18.

⁴⁴⁹ P.D. Lark and R. McKenzie, *A History of the Australasian Pioneers' Club, Sydney, 1910-1988*, Boolarong Publications for the Australasian Pioneers' Club, Sydney, Brisbane, 1988, p. 1, p. 3; *Memorandum of Association of the Australasian Pioneers' Club*, H.J. Gurd & Co., Sydney, 1915, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁵⁰ Lark and McKenzie, *A History of the Australasian Pioneers' Club*, p. 1. In more recent times, speakers to the Queensland branch of the Pioneers' Club of Australasia continued to expound an Australian nationalism dependent on the social eminence achieved by successful white men. In 1984, Sir Harry Gibbs, Chief Justice of Australia, spoke on Sir Samuel Griffith, first Chief Justice of Australia—'a learned Lawyer, a great Statesman, and a most distinguished Judge, who played such an important part in drafting the Commonwealth Constitution'. In his 1999 lecture, the Honourable Justice Ian Callinan, Judge of the High Court of Australia, evoked pride in Australian nationalism by confirming his audience as 'a group of people who are proud of their pioneer ancestry', Gibbs, Harry, Sir, *Sir Samuel Griffith: An Address to Members of the Australasian Pioneers' Club at the Queensland Annual Dinner, Queensland Club, 10 August 1984*, Boolarong

Emily's attitudes of separate racial identity and racial superiority found in the language and style of *Some of My Experiences* were likely to have been closely aligned to the supposed inherent values of her assembled audience.

The Pioneer Club that Emily Cowl addressed appears from her tone of reference to have consisted of female pioneers. An inclusive voice of mutual understanding with her audience, in relation to such feminine matters as a knowledge of female undergarments, the dangers of childbearing (although Emily herself was childless), and the foibles of husbands who knew nothing of the culinary arts, indicates a sharing, not only of cultural, but also of gender knowledge. She nevertheless adopted a 'Boy's Own' style of adventure writing, popular among men and women alike, to entertain her audience. This type of writing tapped into the nationalistic feelings of the patriotic citizens of the newly established Commonwealth of Australia.

'Exciting' Escapades

Emily's representation of her adventurous life in Normanton relies on four episodes with Aborigines. Three of these (maybe four) involve Kurtjar daredevilry; two demonstrate Indigenous sense of fun. The resultant conflicting portrayal from, on the one hand, Emily's concordance with perceptions of violent, dangerous Aborigines and, on the other, her aim to amuse her audience with humorous anecdotes, presents a confusing and dichotomous account.

In the first place, physically separated from the Kurtjar, and not reliant on them as workers, Emily represented them merely as nuisances who entered the town to pilfer 'buckets, tubs, pots, axes, tomahawks, clothes lines, anything portable'.⁴⁵¹ This observation complies with contemporary reports of the prevalence of Aboriginal looting in Normanton. A local official wrote in 1874, for example, that 'nearly every house in the town' had been

Publications, Brisbane, 1984, Foreword, p. 3; I.D.F. Callinan, 'People, Places and the Arts on Federation', Australasian Pioneers' Club, Brisbane, Queensland, 27 August 1999 @ http://www.hcourt.gov.au/speeches/callinanj/callinanj_Pioneer1.htm

⁴⁵¹ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 27.

robbed.⁴⁵²

Emily's first story tells of the theft of four 'ducks', hanging from the Cowls' veranda, awaiting a Sunday roasting. This occurred during the four to five months-long wet season, when food supplies ran low for blacks and whites. Ancestral memory and current research have established that the Kurtjar were largely coastal and river dwellers, heavily dependent on fishing. During the wet season, however, fishing became difficult because the Kurtjar were forced to move to higher ground away from the coast. Furthermore, after colonisation, competition with superior European weaponry in the hunt for available food increased their vulnerability to hunger and malnutrition.⁴⁵³ For white settlers, impassable roads meant that fresh provisions could not arrive. Under these circumstances, Thomas Cowl resorted to shooting wild birds for the table. Displaying an ethnocentric attitude typical of white settler discourse in which Aborigines were seen to encroach on spaces 'owned' by settlers, Emily recalled that:

On this occasion ... [we] reserved two pairs for ourselves and gave the rest away. I plucked and prepared ours ready for Sunday and hung them under the back verandah in a cool place in front of our bedroom window. We left the window open when we went to bed, trying to get the room cool. Soon after midnight, we were lying awake feeling half dead in the sultry heat; the moonlight was streaming in the window; we saw a blackfellow fully armed with spears, etc., make a grab at the ducks; the string with which they were tied did not break, so he quickly snapped (sic) the legs with his fingers, and made off with the ducks—leaving the feet only for us.⁴⁵⁴

Whilst the language of petty theft, the evocation of stealth, and the suspense of midnight lurking create an atmosphere of danger in Emily's retelling, the deed is nevertheless represented as having been performed quietly and innocuously. While her appraisal of the innocent encounter lacks any strong ideological message, her piquant details allow for various readings. Her matter-of-fact tone infers that she did not panic. Was she perhaps amused by the petty, non-threatening theft from which no harm eventuated? Or has she

⁴⁵² Evans, Saunders, Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, p. 45.

⁴⁵³ Bynoe, *Memories of Normanton*, pp. 1-2, p. 24.

⁴⁵⁴ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 27.

hidden her fear behind the facade of bravery that must triumph in the telling of the tale?

The return of the Kurtjar a few weeks later provided Emily with another story, which she used as her *piece de résistance*. This time, the scene of the crime was a dark night that concealed furtive black shapes. Emily evoked the moment with the immediacy of colloquial language and the tension of suppressed fear, recounting to her audience that:

We were in bed, my husband asleep, and there was no moon. Presently black forms appeared at the window. I awoke my husband and whispered to him not to move. The least motion in the curtains would have attracted the attention of the blacks who were armed with spears, and could easily have speared us where we were lying in bed. My clothes were on a sort of settee, placed under the window just as I had taken them off when retiring. We saw the blacks lean over the window-sill, take possession of all my clothes, and make off.⁴⁵⁵

Extending the story, into which she introduced her own benign reaction, she recalled that, when the Kurtjar were found:

They were wearing my things in a most grotesque and laughable way. One black fellow had on a certain garment of mine (no combinations in those days). I will leave to your imagination the result. Just fancy his black skin showing prominently—in the opening below the waist band of my white garment. A black gin had laced up my corsets and was wearing them on her head as a helmet and my stockings on her arms; another had on a skirt, another my bodice and no skirt, my chemise worn by another, and so on. This laughable description was given to my husband by the police officers.⁴⁵⁶

In describing the scenario, Emily challenged accepted social attitudes by discarding her projected sense of decorum in order to share with her female audience the otherwise risqué subjects of female undergarments and, especially, the idea of bare, black, male skin. Emily had elsewhere espoused a no-nonsense tone that reflected the English middle-class ideal of a serious person. In refusing Indigenous domestic help, she had been careful to reassure her

⁴⁵⁵ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 28.

⁴⁵⁶ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 28.

listeners that she had not forgotten the middle-class virtues of cleanliness and tidiness, by undertaking ‘all the household and domestic work myself. ... I had to cook, wash, iron, make the bread, keep the house clean and tidy, etc.–in fact do everything’.⁴⁵⁷ In her reference to intimate apparel, however, Emily appears to have eschewed respectability in the interest of a good story. Her sexual innuendo aims to titillate and maybe shock her audience, and suggests that ladylike propriety was relevant only while in mixed company.

Emily’s reference to a ‘certain garment’ applied to ‘drawers’, which had tubular legs and inside seams left open under the waist band. Chemises during the early 1870s were voluminous garments, made of calico, with a round, low neckline and a short front opening. As Emily intimated, the fashion in ladies’ underwear changed in the later 1870s. Firstly, the legs of drawers were shortened from a length ending below the knees and, in the late 1870s, chemises and drawers were replaced by one garment–combinations–which were designed to fit more easily beneath the sheath-like dresses which had come into vogue. Bodices remained tightly fitted, tucked and buttoned and served as upper-body underclothes.⁴⁵⁸

Nevertheless, mention of Indigenous ridicule of what Leigh Summers has described as ‘the garment par excellence in the construction and articulation of Victorian femininity’⁴⁵⁹ was an iconoclastic gesture. Emily’s humorous reaction to her stiff, tightly-boned corset, a symbol of nineteenth-century middle-class decency, being worn on the head of an Aboriginal woman runs counter to Richard Altick’s portrayal of a middle-class nineteenth-century lady, whom Altick suggests was typically ‘puritanically opposed to the vanities and frivolities of life, devoid of humour, and intolerant to others’ frivolity and indulgences’.⁴⁶⁰ This appeared to be the sort of image to which Emily had previously aspired in her text.

While Emily broke what was the current strict moral code of modesty by placing naked black bodies in her undergarments, she nevertheless drew the line between her own, clean white body and the contamination of unclean, black bodies. A tone of moral rectitude

⁴⁵⁷ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 21.

⁴⁵⁸ Leigh Summers, *Bound to Please*, passim; Anne Buck, *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories*, revised second edition, Ruth Bean Publishers, Bedford, England, 1984, pp. 89-90; De Courtais, *Women’s Headdress and Hairstyles*, p. 122.

⁴⁵⁹ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 213.

⁴⁶⁰ Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas*, p. 175. Although Emily Cowl’s talk took place outside the Victorian era, the attitudes continued well into the twentieth century.

returns in her declaration that, although the clothes were returned to her, they were ‘then useless to me.’⁴⁶¹ What Emily’s story demonstrates incidentally is that the layers of undergarments, including the corset, were worn by genteel colonial women, even in tropical climates.

Emily’s story joins a rich literature of colonial reports of Aboriginal response to English clothing, indicating the mutual interest or amazement that differences in clothing codes evoked. From 1788, when officers of Governor Arthur Phillip wished to endow Aboriginal women at Sydney Cove with gifts of beads and cloth, commentators have recorded Indigenous reaction, and been surprised by it. At Sydney, the young women ‘advanced in a state of high excitement’ and ‘laughed immoderately, although trembling at the same time’.⁴⁶² Eliza Fraser noted that, although she herself had been stripped of her clothing by Ka’bi women, another Aborigine seen on a previous day had been wearing a piece of European female clothing.⁴⁶³ The description of Janet Millett, wife of the Church of England chaplain at York, Western Australia from 1864 to 1868, comes closest to the sort of hilarity described by Emily when Aborigines saw pieces of British female costume. Explaining a Balardung man’s reaction to her strange hat, Janet wrote that:

At the sight of me, (Isaac) burst into a loud guffaw, the cause of which was explained by his mistress, who said that I was the only woman whom Isaac had ever seen in a black beaver riding-hat, of the shape commonly called in the colony a “bell topper” ... he continued to stare at me and my hat ... and to chuckle merrily to himself.⁴⁶⁴

Strangely, Emily appeared not to be offended by what seemed to be the Kurtjar people’s parody of English fashion. Other British commentators, secure in their own racial authority, have transferred ridicule to the fault of the Aborigines, who were seen as simple and fun-loving. C.L.A. Abbott, Administrator of the Northern Territory from 1937 to 1946, wrote in

⁴⁶¹ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 28.

⁴⁶² John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island*, John Stockdale, London, 1793, p. 56, in Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: A History, volume one: The Beginning*, OUP, Melbourne, 1997, p. 151.

⁴⁶³ ‘Mrs Fraser’s Narrative’, Dwyer and Buchanan, *Rescue of Eliza Fraser*, p. 36.

⁴⁶⁴ Mrs Edward Millett, *An Australian Parsonage or, The Settler and the Savage in Western Australia* (1872), Facsimile Edition, UWA, 1980, p. 87.

Australia's Frontier Province that, 'In dealing with the native it should never be forgotten that he is a childlike person. Small things amuse him and he has a particularly keen sense of the ridiculous'.⁴⁶⁵ Unfortunately for the Kurtjar, Emily deemed their actions to be criminal, in spite of her recognition of the humour in the incident.

Her third example of Aboriginal pilfering demonstrates the traits of high spirits and risk-taking, recognised in young men of all cultures and times. Emily described how some Kurtjar men entered her house while the Cows were entertaining friends:

... a party of men were sitting on my front verandah enjoying a smoke. I went inside to fetch something my husband asked for, and caught sight of a couple of black fellows in the half-hall, stealing the coats and hats hanging there. I raised the alarm and chase was given. The blacks were so closely pursued, they threw away what they had taken. They were all recovered, but the blacks got away.⁴⁶⁶

The uselessness of the garments to the Aborigines suggests that the Kurtjars' motivation was not theft but was driven by an exuberant burst of excitement to indulge in adventure and fun.

Regardless of the innocuous nature of these escapades, the first of which seemed to be prompted by hunger and opportunism, the latter two, high spirits, Emily wrote of them as crimes that deserved punishment. Following each event, Thomas Cowl ineptly chased the culprits. More successful were the Native Police, the armed and mounted Aboriginal policemen, led by European officers, who operated in the 'unsettled districts' against Indigenous peoples. As a self-governing British colony, Queensland had its own Native Police force, established under the guidance of the Commissioner of Police following the passing of the 1863 Queensland Police Act. Operating as a cheap form of law enforcement, it performed a similar role to various native mounted forces in African colonies and the native irregular cavalry in India. It had 'no powers of law enforcement or crime prevention except in the case of indigenous people, and it actively participated in dispersion and

⁴⁶⁵ C.L.A. Abbott, *Australia's Frontier Province*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney and London, 1950, p. 147.

⁴⁶⁶ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 28.

decimation'. Notorious in Queensland, the Native Police force was, according to the nineteenth-century historian, William Rusden, a 'machine for murder'.⁴⁶⁷ During the early 1870s, two detachments of Native Police were stationed at Normanton.

After the humorously depicted episodes of Aboriginal pilfering, Emily not only admits to supporting her husband's recourse to firearms, but she also states that she herself called for assistance from the nearby contingent of Native Police. After the Kurtjar escaped with the ducks, the Native Police 'drove the blacks away'. After they absconded with Emily's clothes, the police 'punished' them. These terms join a litany of nineteenth-century euphemisms to describe the murder of Aborigines, one of the most common of which was 'punishment'.⁴⁶⁸ Emily's reversion to a bland tone of explanation to describe these reactions indicates her confidence that she is complying with her audience's racial views. In depicting the part played by the Native Police, she may also have been motivated by a utilitarian urge to provide her audience with an accurate account of events.

Sitting strangely with white reaction to the Kurtjar in the above examples, however, is Emily's admission that Aborigines stole cast iron flanges, which were used to hold the iron telegraph poles in the ground. Ignorant of the function of the line as a form of white man's communication, the Kurtjar used the iron to construct axes by securing it to a handle with vines and adhesive tree resins. Telegraph wire was similarly removed and used as spear points or as a valuable commodity for bartering. With the removal of the flanges, however, the poles fell down, breaking the line.⁴⁶⁹ The recognition of Indigenous ingenuity that forestalled her husband's efforts to forge colonial progress in the north is a surprising inclusion. Her failure to mention retribution is perhaps stranger, although in these cases the culprits were unseen and unknown, and blame unsubstantiated, making 'arrests' difficult. Conversely, Emily's outrage after the petty thefts at her house may have been fuelled by the insult of an intrusion by Aborigines into the sacrosanct spaces of her home, whether

⁴⁶⁷ Jonathan Richards, 'Moreton Telegraph Station: 1902 The Native Police on Cape York Peninsula', Paper presented at the History of Crime, Policing and Punishment Conference, convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology in conjunction with Charles Sturt University, Canberra, 9-10 December 1999 @ website www.aic.gov.au/conferences/hcppp/richards/pdf, pp. 1-2; Roberts, *Frontier Justice*, p. 259.

⁴⁶⁸ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 28; Reynolds, *Frontier*, pp. 49-50.

⁴⁶⁹ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 33.

veranda, bedroom or hallway.

This ambivalence towards Aborigines is similarly apparent in regards to her report of the Yadhaigana people of Albany Island. In spite of her dispassionate ethnological assessment of them, Emily nevertheless represented them as friendly, calm and courteous when she met them as individuals. When she bartered a piece of tobacco for an Indigenous necklace, she praised the use of ‘pretty pieces of nautilus shell’. She admired the ‘beautifully made’ spears, purchased by the passengers as benign items of trade–transactions that denoted peaceful intent, not warfare. In similar fashion, she described an intricate outrigger canoe, with its grass matting sail and central wickerwork platform, implicitly appreciating Aboriginal ingenuity.⁴⁷⁰ She also recorded the generosity and cooperation of the Yadhaigana, who returned to the schooner in the evening with gifts of a turtle and fish, although failing to elaborate on whether the gesture may have emanated from courteous rites of welcome or reciprocal obligation rules.⁴⁷¹

H. Rider Haggard or the American West?

Emily’s final tale, her ‘most exciting experience’, shows her reliance on the ‘ripping yarns’ that formed part of New Imperialism writing, popular between 1875 and 1914. According to Robert Dixon, the aim of these stories was to encapsulate the idea of ‘regenerative violence on the colonial frontier’.⁴⁷² H. Rider Haggard was a prolific proponent of this style of writing and became the pre-eminently popular adventure story writer before 1914. In a list of books taken from a school library in a single term, published in *Longman’s Magazine* in 1895, Haggard ‘headed the list with sixty-six, exactly double the number of readings of Sir Walter Scott, who ranked third’.⁴⁷³ His writing had developed from personal experiences in southern Africa from the late 1870s until 1881, when ‘at night [he and his wife] slept with revolvers under their beds, horses saddled in the stables, and kaffirs posted on the hills to give warning of a possible incursion by the Boers.’⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷⁰ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, pp. 12-14.

⁴⁷¹ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 13. This action replicates the observation of Joseph Banks at Cooktown in 1770 when the Kuku-Yalanji people offered fish to the crew of the *Endeavour*, after a fish had accidentally been thrown to them, Beaglehole, *The Endeavour Journal*, Vol. II, p. 92.

⁴⁷² Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, p. 1.

⁴⁷³ No details of the name or location of the school are provided, H. Rider Haggard, *She: A History of Adventure* (1886), Macdonald & Co., London 1969, Introduction, p. xxi.

⁴⁷⁴ Haggard, *She*, Introduction, p. x.

Characteristically romantic adventures of vigorous manhood, novels of the New Imperialism incorporated a masculine code of adventure and vitality, as seen for example in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*.⁴⁷⁵ Other examples were stories by G.A. Henty and, in Australia, Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms*.⁴⁷⁶ In Emily's exciting tale of escape from pursuing Aborigines, she chose to take equal precedence in the action with her husband, both of them fitting the stereotype of ennobling and invigorating figures at the outpost of British empire and endeavour, in the mould of Haggard's and Henty's heroes.

The elements of the chase and split-second escape in this tale are also reminiscent of formulaic American Western adventures: Thomas and Emily Cowl flee for their lives just as American frontiersmen fled from Native Americans in stories of the Wild West. Emily appears also to have adopted the landscape associated with northern American stories of escape, with the incorporated craggy outcrops and, curving beneath them, a winding track on which white victims were open to Indigenous attack, and beyond which they raced to freedom.

Replicating Haggard's literary style, Emily builds suspense by the use of short, sharp sentences, and emotive expressions of panic. While Haggard's works are 'saga-like stories of adventure', Emily compressed her tale into a potted account, in which she nevertheless imitated the tone of Haggard's 'dramatic vitality' by resorting to the same literary devices of 'rapid narrative, abundant incident, fertility of invention, and a strong sense of dramatic effect'. She also appears to have incorporated into her story the romantic theme that is found in Haggard's books, necessarily condensing this aspect into a brief idyllic scene of carefree leisure enjoyed by husband and wife on a hot November day.⁴⁷⁷ The Cowls' cosy picnic, however, is shattered by Aboriginal 'attack' in a story in which Emily builds excitement from the first word until the denouement in the final sentence. It reads:

Suddenly my eye caught sight of several large rolly-pollies of grass moving on the opposite

⁴⁷⁵ Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, p. 62, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁶ Rolf Boldrewood (Thomas Alexander Browne), *Robbery Under Arms*, first published in serial form by the *Sydney Mail* in 1882; and in book form by Remington, London, 1888.

⁴⁷⁷ Haggard, *She*, p. xviii, p. xix, p. xii.

side of the river towards the bank. We watched them for a few moments, then my husband exclaimed. "By Jove, wife! There's something wrong there—they are rolling against the wind." "Yes," I said, "and look—what are those black objects not far from yonder bank? Look!—each roll stops on the bank and then another black object can be seen in the river. See!—the objects are coming nearer—they are blackfellows swimming this way, evidently to attack us in this lonely place." Quick as thought we threw everything into the buggy, caught the mare, got her harnessed up were jumping on board when the first black made his appearance on the bank, our side of the river, a few hundred yards away. Others soon joined him.

They took a short cut for the Bluff under which we must pass by a more circuitous route to avoid being bogged in the salt pans. It was a race for life. If they reached the bluff first we were helpless. They would be above us—could hide, shower their spears and heavy stones upon us. Quite a number of blacks; they ran their quickest; we lashed our mare until she galloped like fury, covered with white foam. We managed it. Got under the Bluff and passed, just as they began to ascend. We were safe.⁴⁷⁸

It is unclear how much, if any, of this episode is based on truth. Did Emily merely borrow a page from Haggard's books? Malcolm Elwin wrote in the introduction to *She* that the 'fanciful improbabilities of Haggard's romances derive[d] from the habit of imaginative speculation developed during his years in Africa'. Clara Sue Kidwell has discussed the creation of myths that have obscured the historical reality of the Native American women, Pocahontas (who 'saved' the life of John Smith, leader of the Jamestown colony), Sacagawea, the leader of the Lewis and Clark expedition, and Dona Marina (La Malinche), Cortés' mistress. According to Kidwell, American Indian women have been converted in literary reconstruction to the stereotypes of 'hot-blooded Indian princess, a la Pocahontas, or the stolid drudge, the Indian squaw plodding behind her man'. Kidwell points out, however, that these are 'not real people'.⁴⁷⁹ Like the distorted representations of Native American women, Emily's image of treacherous Aborigines appears to comply with Australian colonial settler values. The adoption of H. Rider Haggard-like prose further thrusts this episode away from factual representation into the realm of literary fabrication, strongly influenced by the genre of 'ripping yarns'.

⁴⁷⁸ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 29.

⁴⁷⁹ Haggard, *She*, p. vii; Clara Sue Kidwell, 'Indian Women as Cultural Mediators', in *Ethnohistory: The Official Journal of the American Society for Ethnohistory*, Vol. 39, Number 2, Spring 1992, p. 98.

Whether factual or exaggerated, the denouement of her story involves brutal retribution against the Kurtjar by the Native Police. According to Emily, these police contingents ‘punished [the Aborigines] severely—or rather, to use the correct phrase “dispersed” the tribe to which they belonged’. ‘Dispersal’ was another nineteenth-century euphemism for ‘murder’. Emily appears to have been striving to embrace the attitude of her audience with her statement that: ‘You will understand how troublesome and dangerous the blacks were in those days’.⁴⁸⁰

Ironically, Emily’s projection of the Kurtjar as dangerous and violent is unsubstantiated in the details put forward in her narrative. Despite her numerous literary devices that build suspense by implying the threat of attack, no injury or death of a white person is cited. The most vivid portrayal of Aboriginal malintent—the disruption of the peaceful picnic scene and subsequent pursuit—dissolved without any Indigenous attack against the Cows. Furthermore, the only injuries cited in *Some of My Experiences* are a gunshot wound to the hand of a white man, shooting at the Kurtjar, and leg injuries sustained by Thomas Cowl during his pursuit of the pilfering Aborigines in his bare feet, revolver in hand, and with an ill-placed log in his way.⁴⁸¹ Roberts’ research verifies low European mortality rates from Indigenous attacks. Whereas even the known murders of Aborigines in the Gulf Country were numbered in the hundreds, Roberts cites the deaths of Europeans by Aborigines from 1874 to 1901 to be 21. Moreover, none of these involved women or children.⁴⁸² Again, the unprovoked nature of the supposed potential attack on the Cows, while fitting the British perception of savage Indigenous behaviour, has been found by Roberts to be an element rarely seen in Indigenous culture.⁴⁸³

Kurtjar Point of View

In contrast to Emily’s exciting tales in which malignant Aborigines terrorised white settlers, two direct descendants of the Kurtjar present a different story. Kurtjar territory stretched

⁴⁸⁰ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 29. ‘Punished’ and ‘dispersed’ were common euphemisms for ‘murdered’. Further examples are proffered by Henry Reynolds, *Frontier*, pp. 48-50.

⁴⁸¹ Cowl, *Some of My Experiences*, p. 26, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁸² Roberts, *Frontier Justice*, pp. 263-64.

⁴⁸³ Roberts found that the majority of attacks on Europeans in the early years of contact resulted from the interference of white men with Aboriginal women, Roberts, *Frontier Justice*, p. 108.

from the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria to the Smithburne River in the south, to the Staaten River to the north, and inland as far as the present homesteads of Delta Downs and Macaroni Station.⁴⁸⁴ Normanton is situated on the southern boundary of this land.

Rolly Gilbert, who was born in about 1901, has conjured up a picture of Kurtjar traditional life. In 'Kurtjar Stories', he describes how the people relied on fishing, going on expeditions at night to catch barramundi and catfish, taking with them a long piece of ti-tree bark, lit at the end to act as a torch. The Kurtjar also speared sharks, using mullet for bait; and made fish traps ('lkeergh') by damming water courses. They hunted wallaby, turtles and goannas, speared fresh water crocodiles and caught birds, including ducks, geese and broilgas, using their dogs to startle the prey; and they collected pygmy goose eggs. Around the camp fire, they made a kind of damper ('maardich') by squeezing shark flesh together, and cooked yams, and water lily 'cakes'. A bamboo pipe was often handed around to be shared while the Kurtjar people waited for the food to be cooked.⁴⁸⁵

Collective ancestral memories compiled by Charles Bynoe in *Memories of Normanton* identify the pressures experienced by the Kurtjar after settlers began to compete with them for sources of freshwater near the coast. These sources were often the 'soaks' that had been dug by the Kurtjar for their own use, but had been taken over by the colonists. Gilbert, too, had referred to Indigenous hardship, recording that in the wet season their little shacks of bark ('dhaghirramp') and even their firewood were continually drenched. Privations, exemplified by the theft of Emily's soon-to-be-roasted ducks, became acute at the end of months of flood when food supplies were depleted and when all inhabitants, whether black or white, strove to survive in the landscape's boggy aftermath. Emily also provided an insight into Kurtjar need with her report that domestic fowls and pigs were popular targets for theft. Gilbert's statement on interracial relations, unheard by contemporary white men and women was that, 'We were unhappy because the white people were bad'.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Bynoe, *Memories of Normanton*, p. 1.

⁴⁸⁵ Rolly Gilbert, 'Fighting and Feasting', p. 39; 'Fishing and Hunting', pp. 47-48; 'Tea, Flour, and Tobacco', pp. 53-54; 'Night Fishing', pp. 56-59; 'Going after Birds', pp. 59-63; 'Off to the Station for Supplies', p. 63; 'Hunting Crocodile and Turtle', p. 69; 'Yam and Lily for Breakfast', pp. 71-72, in 'Life in the Bush', Melba Casey and Rolly Gilbert, 'Kurtjar Stories', School of Australian Linguistics, Darwin Institute of Technology, 1986.

⁴⁸⁶ Bynoe, *Memories of Normanton*, p. 2, p. 26; Gilbert, 'Off to the Station for Supplies', p. 66; Gilbert, 'Normanton in the Wet', 'Living with the White Man', in Casey and Gilbert, 'Kurtjar Stories', p. 91.

Indigenous memory confirms Emily's reference to the attacks made on their people by both settlers and the Native Police force. From his access to handed-down stories, Bynoe cites instances of Kurtjar expulsion from the hunting grounds and sources of freshwater by settler incursion. This period, beginning in the late 1860s, is remembered as the time of 'no good'. During it, hundreds of Kurtjar men, women and children were killed by Europeans. Sometimes, whole camps were massacred by the Native Police.⁴⁸⁷ Gilbert's 'The Massacre at Wamakee' provides a graphic account of white men's killing of Aboriginal men and children. Some of the women were taken by the white men only to be killed when signs of pregnancy became obvious. Any children who might have been born from these liaisons were killed at birth. Evidence of violent Aboriginal deaths in Roberts' *Frontier Justice* confirms Indigenous reports that show that the Gulf Country was a wild and dangerous place for Aborigines well into the twentieth century.⁴⁸⁸

Gilbert also assessed settlers by their generosity to the Kurtjar. Some 'good' white landholders handed out flour and sugar with which the Kurtjar made the white man's damper, refusing however to include the cream of tartar or bicarbonate of soda, suspecting that it might be poison. Tea, tobacco, axes, matches, fishing lines, knives, clothing, tents and blankets were other commodities handed out, often in exchange for a boy or a young woman. Sometimes the Kurtjar received food directly from station Aborigines who raided the home garden for watermelons and pumpkins.⁴⁸⁹

Emily, however, had no direct contact with the Kurtjar, considering them as outsiders that disturbed the town's peace, albeit at times amusingly. She was essentially a townswoman, venturing only occasionally outside the town's confined limits where, as she explained, she was likely to be at the mercy of threatening Aborigines.

Conclusion

⁴⁸⁷ Bynoe, *Memories of Normanton*, p. 2. The 'no good' times are cited by Rolly Gilbert in Bynoe, *Memories of Normanton*, p. 24.

⁴⁸⁸ Gilbert, 'The Massacre at Wamakee', 'Living with the White Man', in Casey and Gilbert, 'Kurtjar Stories', pp. 77-80; Roberts, *Frontier Justice*, pp. 1-2, pp. 232-33, p. 258, *passim*.

⁴⁸⁹ Gilbert, 'A Party for the Deceased', 'Tea, Flour, and Tobacco', 'Off to the Station for Supplies', in Casey and Gilbert, 'Kurtjar Stories', pp. 44-46, pp. 51-52, p. 64, pp. 66-67.

Like Eliza Davies, Emily Cowl presented her exciting experiences at the frontier about forty years after the events. While Davies' method of engaging her audience depended on exaggerated images of a 'different' type of humanity and the power of religious dogma, Emily endeavoured to entertain by recounting humorous stories and by adopting a style borrowed from the currently popular genre of thrilling adventure tales, set on colonial frontiers. One enduring literary trope included in both texts (imitating the archetypal Eliza Fraser story) was 'providential escape'. Apart from Emily's near-shipwreck and the imminent danger of crocodiles lurking unseen in the Norman River, her suspenseful race against death was depicted, as with Davies' miraculous salvation, as a lucky escape from fearsome Aborigines.

From the starting point of assumed racial difference, Emily Cowl endeavoured to build a story of a dangerous black-white frontier. Ironically, the need to enliven her text with humorous anecdotes led her to show Aboriginal people in the shared light of fun-loving, adventurous humanity. The resulting ambivalence presents to the reader the disquieting picture of settler violence aimed against frivolous and essentially harmless escapades, emanating from Indigenous high spirits and sense of fun. While Emily's own sense of humour could identify with the fun, she nevertheless compromised her tone in deference to the perceived expectations of her audience, and possibly her conservative publisher. To make her experiences palatable to her audience, Emily has deemed it wise to serve them on the imperial salvers of British superiority. The representation of Aboriginal people therefore vacillates between vivid examples of Indigenous risk-taking, ingenuity and sense of the ridiculous to stereotypical interpretations of their dangerous, savage habits, worthy of the white man's retribution.

Because Emily was a town resident, who had refused any contact with Indigenous people, she was unable to bridge the gap of interracial understanding that characterises the writing of the three women, whose work is investigated in the following chapters of this thesis. Emotionally distant as well as physically separated from the Kurtjar, she failed to accept them as people. Excluded from her day-to-day experiences, the Aborigines were seen essentially as unwelcome intruders who frequently encroached on what Emily perceived to be her own territory within the confines of Normanton. By way of contrast, Jane Bardsley,

a Normanton woman who lived on Midlothian station, north-east of Normanton, after her marriage to Thomas Atherton in 1895, interacted with Indigenous women on whom she relied for help in household tasks—a shared endeavour which developed into a friendly female relationship.⁴⁹⁰ Insulated and isolated from the Kurtjar, Emily's lack of identification with their plight pushed her empathy towards her audience.

The appeal of Emily's presentation, however, depended on the power of her exciting stories, which she was determined to portray. In spite of her attempts to impose a contrary interpretation, Emily's selected episodes provide insights into the relaxed attitude of the Kurtjar towards the white settlers in the Normanton region during the 1870s. Although the Kurtjar had been expelled from their land and were already experiencing the nutritional privations that were later to debilitate the race, Emily's chosen examples depict their non-violent actions and reactions in the face of colonisation. At least some of the Kurtjar could exhibit the hilarity of ridiculing British customs. Implicit in Emily's depiction is Aboriginal authority, vibrant despite the settlers' attempts to control Indigenous actions with retributive violence against apparently innocuous behaviour. In spite of the clear vision of easygoing, carefree Aborigines, the strength of the colonial discourse of dangerous Aborigines prevailed in Emily's story. As if to quash any misunderstanding in her contradictory presentation, she included a reference to her own encouragement of retribution against the 'troublesome' Aborigines.

In the examples of the works of the 'adventurers' in these first three chapters of my thesis, Aboriginal people remained largely locked within the stereotype of brutal savages. While Emily Cowl's writing reveals clear details of Indigenous humanity in their expression of a *joie de vivre*, she nevertheless could not move beyond the entrenched idea of racial difference. Because Emily had not met an individual Kurtjar man or woman, she was unable to refute the racial stereotype with personal knowledge, beyond being witness to the Indigenous escapades which she described. The difference in the perceptions of short-term sojourners (Eliza Fraser and Eliza Davies) and the town resident, Emily Cowl, and those of pastoral dwellers will be discussed in the following chapters of this thesis.

⁴⁹⁰ John Atherton Young (ed.), *Jane Bardsley's Outback Letterbook Across The Years, 1896-1936*, Angus & Robertson Publishers, North Ryde, NSW, 1987.

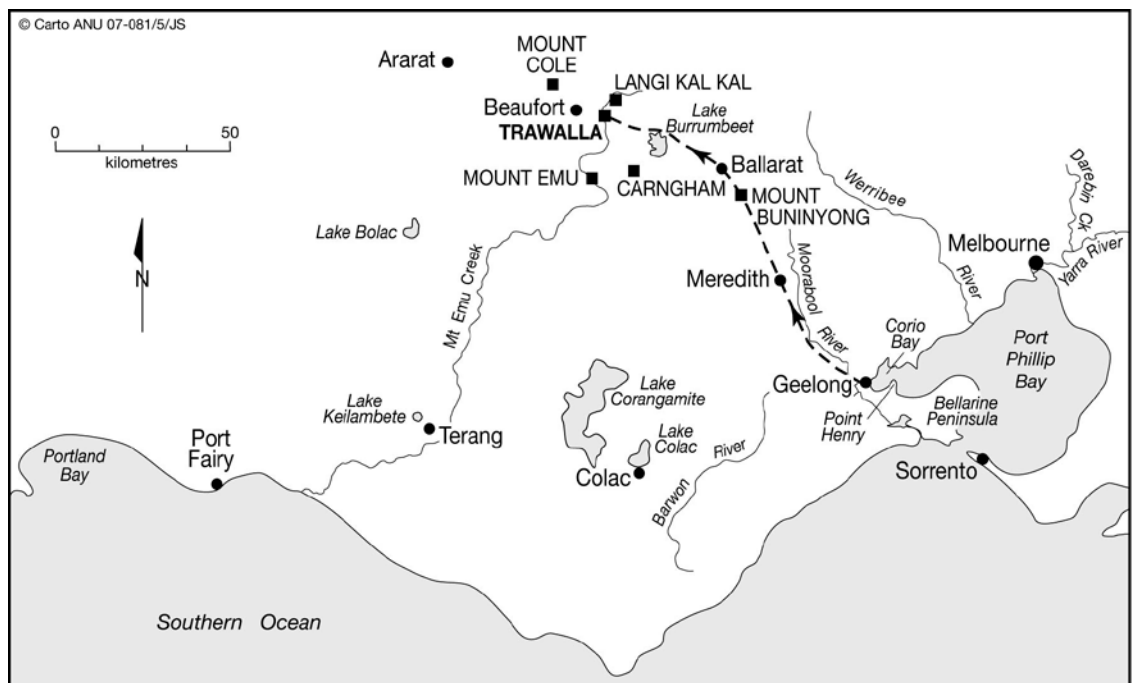
PART B

SETTLERS

CHANGING THE RACIAL LANDSCAPE



Katherine Hamilton, later Kirkland (J.K. Wilson, reproduced in
Hugh Anderson, *The Flowers of the Field*, 1969).



Map 5: Katherine Kirkland

An Early, Short-term Settler Katherine Kirkland: Silences

‘I put him in a basket and hung him at my side, as I had seen the native women
do’.⁴⁹¹

Introduction

As a settler from 1839 to 1841, Katherine Kirkland lived among Aboriginal people on the pastoral property, Trawalla, 35 kilometres west of Ballarat in the Western District of present day Victoria. Competent and courageous, she readily adapted to the demanding requirements of early settlement, intelligently assessing both the people and places of her new environment. Because she wrote before other female voices had added their interpretation of frontier life, Katherine would have been uncertain about how her impressions would be received by readers in Britain. She therefore shielded her opinions behind the silences that have become part of the historiography of racial conflict. In Katherine’s case, they were also associated with what appears to be a growing closeness with Indigenous women.

Arriving in the Port Phillip District via Van Diemen’s Land in January 1839, Katherine was to return to Britain in September 1841. In 1842, an account of her colonial experiences appeared anonymously as five serialised articles in William and Robert Chambers’s penny weekly magazine, *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* in volume XI, issued from 18 June and 16 July 1842 under the title, ‘Life in the Bush’.⁴⁹² In 1845, the complete text of ‘Life in the Bush’ was published in

⁴⁹¹ Katharine (sic) Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, published by Kenneth W. Mackenzie, “Trawalla”, Beaufort, Victoria, c.1995, pp. 15-16; reprinted from *Chambers’s Miscellany of Useful and Entertaining Tracts*, William and Robert Chambers, Edinburgh, Vol. 1, No. 8, printed in 1844.

⁴⁹² Correspondence to Professor Pike from John Kirkland Wilson, great-grandson of Katherine Kirkland, 7 December 1965, ‘Katherine Kirkland Biographical File’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* files, ANU Archives, Canberra.

Chambers's Miscellany of Useful and Entertaining Tracts.⁴⁹³ The basis of Katherine's commentary, which reported the day-to-day details of her colonial experiences, is believed to have been the correspondence with her mother.⁴⁹⁴ In 1995, *Life in the Bush* was published as a 32-page booklet by Kenneth Mackenzie, the then owner of Trawalla station.⁴⁹⁵ This chapter investigates the influences of lived experiences over racial dogma.

Katherine's residence in Australia was brief. While she was able to acknowledge for example Indigenous reaction to settler incursion, she nevertheless continued throughout her short stay to maintain her awareness of her superior status when relating to Aborigines. Her perception of what was respectable focused on the private space of her home. While Aborigines could draw close in a dilapidated wayside hut, they were excluded from her own (slab hut) domicile. That cultural boundary was not to be crossed, and she expressed disapproval that a neighbouring (male) settler allowed it.

In the hinterland of Port Phillip during the early 1840s, settlers and Aborigines alike were sorting out their roles and position in the emerging settler society. Katherine's reference to both 'wild' Aborigines and to the family groups that gravitated back to the Trawalla homestead site in a peaceful move to coexistence reflects this as yet unresolved relationship. Written in this period of historical transition, Katherine's text contains the silences of an author, reticent to reveal the contingencies (brutal and friendly) of frontier life.

While her adoption of the *nom de plume*, 'A Lady', was the accepted generic term for nineteenth-century female British writers, it also served to protect her anonymity within a text dealing tentatively with interracial relationships. It also distinguished her from her readership, a large percentage of the targeted audience being the British

⁴⁹³ *Chambers's Miscellany*, Vol. 1, No. 8. The date of the edition in which Katherine Kirkland's 'Life in the Bush' appeared is usually cited as 1845.

⁴⁹⁴ Information from Mrs Agnes Crossley, grand-daughter of Robert Hamilton, Hugh Anderson, *The Flowers of the Field: A History of Ripon Shire, Together with Mrs Kirkland's Life in the Bush from Chambers's Miscellany, 1845*, Hill of Content Publishing Co. Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1969, p. 187, note 1.

⁴⁹⁵ Kenneth Mackenzie's daughter, Fiona, was in 2007 the occupant of Trawalla.

working class. Katherine further guarded her authorial privacy by adopting the surname 'Thomson', before discarding the third-person voice for the immediacy of a first-person narration. While hiding her own and her husband's identity throughout her story, she nevertheless divulged the names of her daughter, brothers, neighbours and friends.

Like Eliza Davies and Emily Cowl, Katherine presented ambivalent messages about Aborigines. While Davies and Cowl wrote with particular motivations that slanted their representation of Indigenous people to fit audience expectations, Katherine appears to have been beset by a similar, but different, problem. Endeavouring to report her interesting everyday experiences as a newly arrived settler, she seems to be hiding from her British readers what appears to be a relationship, perhaps even her dependence, on the Aboriginal women with whom she coexisted on Trawalla. This is apparent from her hints at a relationship without going so far as an open acknowledgment. She is similarly silent on the role that violence played both prior to and possibly during her residence. While naturally reticent to implicate her menfolk in attacks on Aborigines, she chose to convert a potentially violent episode involving sheep-stealing to an example of Aboriginal skill and ingenuity.

On one level, Katherine viewed Aborigines from the perspective of a respectable middle-class British lady, a persona that she was bound to perpetrate for her authorial image. The only Aborigine she referred to by name or character portrayal was 'Tom', who had moved outside his tribal identity to enter the white Trawalla community as a labourer. Her attitude towards Tom as a worker that failed to rise to the social standards expected of him in a British master-servant relationship threw into relief the difference between her perception of the culturally superior settlers, imbued with the Protestant work ethic, and Aborigines. On another level, the text hints at a closer interracial relationship than the author is prepared to divulge. Katherine masks these parts of her story by resorting to generalisations or remaining silent on crucial details. She further displayed her confusion by, on the one hand, reiterating the racial stereotypes of Aboriginal ugliness, laziness and violence and, on the other, revealing an empathy with Indigenous culture and concerns.

From bustling Glasgow

Born Catherine Hamilton in Glasgow on 23 February 1808,⁴⁹⁶ Katherine was the second child of her family, a twin sister of Gilbert, and second eldest daughter of fourteen children. Her childhood and early adulthood were spent in Glasgow where, as the daughter of a merchant, her life was tied to the activities of a city that, during the first decades of the nineteenth century, exemplified the mercantile energy of the flourishing, industrial British economy. Reflecting the vitality of urban expansion, Glasgow's population had increased from 83,767 in 1801 to 274,324 by 1841.⁴⁹⁷ Civil service and civic enterprise were part of Katherine's family heritage, her paternal grandfather, Gilbert Hamilton, having been provost of Glasgow and instrumental in founding the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, a first in the British Isles.⁴⁹⁸

On 14 April 1835, Katherine married Kenneth William Kirkland, two years her junior, the youngest son of a family that owned a large Glasgow sugar refinery. Established by Kenneth's grandfather, John Kirkland, it was reputed to be the first sugar refinery in the British Isles.⁴⁹⁹ Before emigrating, Kenneth worked in the family business under the management of his eldest brother Alexander, twelve years his senior. Family testimony suggests that Alexander's overbearing and autocratic attitude towards Kenneth motivated his decision to emigrate.⁵⁰⁰

Travel had been part of both the Hamilton and Kirkland family history during the

⁴⁹⁶ Her birth was registered as 'Catherine', Eaves Walton & Stewart, Legal & Historical Research papers, in 'Kirkland Biog. File', ADB files, ANU Archives. Her death notice registers her name as 'Katharine'. Secondary sources and family members refer to either 'Katharine', or 'Katherine', the spelling that I have adopted. Also cf. Jean Hagger, 'Kirkland, Katherine (1808-1892)', ADB, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kirkland-katherine-2312/text2997>, published in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 9 September 2014.

⁴⁹⁷ Michael Pacione, *Glasgow: The Socio-spatial Development of the City*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, New York, Brisbane, Toronto, Singapore, 1995, p. 108.

⁴⁹⁸ Correspondence to Pike from Wilson, 7 December 1965, 'Kirkland Biog. File', ADB, ANU; 'Kirkland-Hamilton Genealogy' in 'Memorandum of Robert Hamilton', in Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 35.

⁴⁹⁹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 35. Family reports also suggest that Kenneth was the 'black sheep' of the family, Anderson, *Flowers of the Field*, p. 204, note 1.

⁵⁰⁰ Hagger, 'Kirkland, Katherine', <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kirkland-katherine-2312/text2997>, published in hardcopy 1967; Correspondence to Pike from Wilson, 7 December 1965, 'Kirkland Biog. File', ADB files, ANU Archives.

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Katherine's mother, Agnes, for example, was the daughter of Commander John Trokes of the Royal Navy; an uncle of Katherine had married a woman from Virginia; Kenneth Kirkland's maternal uncle was Sir Alexander Mackenzie, an explorer in Canada; and a paternal uncle, James Kirkland, had visited Australia. Apart from two of her brothers who accompanied her to the colony, another of her brothers, John, had also travelled to the Australian colonies.⁵⁰¹

Whatever the impetus to emigrate, Katherine and Kenneth Kirkland, their two-year-old daughter Agnes, the Hamilton brothers, James (21 years) and Robert (18 years), set sail from Greenock on the barque, *Renown*, on 8 June 1838. Accompanying the family were fellow Scots, Sandy and Mary Forrester, and a female servant, who was to remain in Hobart where they disembarked in mid-October. The others travelled north to Launceston, the four men including Forrester, who was later employed as shepherd on Trawalla, then sailing immediately to the mainland. Katherine, Agnes and Mary Forrester, who was (reluctantly) to act as Mary's servant, stayed at Talisker, a farm near Launceston, owned by the McLean family.⁵⁰² Here, Katherine 'gained some insight into dairy management and other branches of rural economy',⁵⁰³ in preparation for her future role as economic helpmate to her farming husband.

Kenneth Kirkland and the Hamilton brothers were among the earliest seekers of land in the Western District of Port Phillip. In October 1838, Kirkland and James Hamilton briefly held Mt Emu station, 20 kilometres to the south of Trawalla. In December 1838, they purchased 200 ewes and 20 wethers prior to their planned settlement at Trawalla. Later, in September 1839, Kenneth was to purchase some cattle in an accumulation of stock that grew to 20,000 sheep and 200 cattle. Young Robert Hamilton went to work as overseer at nearby Burrumbeet station.⁵⁰⁴ While

⁵⁰¹ Notes on family lineage 'Hamilton of Polkemnet', in 'Kirkland Biog. File', ADB files, ANU Archives; 'Kirkland-Hamilton Genealogy', in Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 35.

⁵⁰² P.L. Brown (ed.), *Clyde Company Papers, Volume II, 1836-40*, OUP, London, 1952, pp. 192-93. A passenger on the *Renown*, travelling from Greenock with the Kirklands, was a Miss McLean. The master of the *Renown* was Captain McLean.

⁵⁰³ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁴ R.V. Billis and A.S. Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, Second Edition, Stockland Press Pty Limited, Melbourne, 1974, p. 250; Brown (ed), *Clyde Company Papers, Vol. III*,

both the Kirklands and James Hamilton were to return to Britain, Robert remained and was to become a notable pioneer of the district.

To an unknown land

Katherine's acknowledgement that she was the 'first white woman who had ever been so far up the country'⁵⁰⁵ both heightened the appeal of her story and also meant that, as an early female chronicler of Australian colonial life, she could not refer to earlier accounts that might have served as a precedent for her own representation of interracial experiences.

In describing her arrival in Port Phillip Bay on the brig *Henry* on 21 January 1839,⁵⁰⁶ Katherine was on safe (and interesting) ground. She told how the *Henry* was forced to moor 400 metres from the low, sandy peninsula of Point Henry (known to the Wathaurong⁵⁰⁷ as Maloppio), on the southern coast of Port Phillip Bay, because a sandbank prevented vessels from approaching any closer to shore.⁵⁰⁸ In 1839 there was no pier. The means by which Katherine, Agnes and Mary reached land was firstly in a small boat, and then by being carried in the arms of their menfolk as they splashed through the shallow water offshore. The luggage was landed in the same way. It took two days for Kenneth—who had returned to Launceston to buy stock and supplies and to escort the women—with the help of friends to get all their possessions onshore. These included horses, goats, pigs, geese, ducks, hens, rabbits, a dray and all the equipment and provisions required for setting up an inland pastoral property. The

⁵⁰⁵ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 9. This claim is supported by a contributor in 1853 to Thomas Francis Bride's edition, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: A Series of Papers on the Early Occupation of the Colony, the Aborigines, Etc* (1898), Lloyd O'Neil Pty Ltd, South Yarra, Victoria, 1983, p. 182, that '[i]n 1839 the squatters in Portland Bay District were very limited in number, not exceeding a dozen'. Though not signed, Bride noted (p. 197) that the letter had 'evidently been written by Captain Foster Fyans'; and also by Isaac Hebb, who lived in the Western District from the time of his arrival as a one-year-old in 1853 until his death in 1939. Hebb's research found that, in 1839, there were only three squatters' wives residing in the area between Port Fairy and Colac, south of Trawalla: Mrs Alexander Dennis, Mrs Hugh Murray and Mrs Thomas Manifold, Isaac Hebb, *The History of Colac and District*, (first published in series in *Colac Herald*, 1888), The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1970, p. 60.

⁵⁰⁶ Alexander Romanov-Hughes (compiler), *Coastal Passengers to Port Phillip, 1839*, Romanov-Hughes, Melbourne (1983), Taradale, Victoria, 1995, NLA mcN 1351.

⁵⁰⁷ Also known as Watha wurrung or Wada wurrung, <http://www.greatoceanroad.org/geelong/heritage/koorihistory.asp>; Ian D. Clark, *Scars in the Landscape: A Register of Massacre Sites in Western Victoria, 1803-1859*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Report Series, Canberra, 1995, pp. 169-172.

⁵⁰⁸ Political agitation to remove the sandbar at the entrance of the harbour as a means of opening the port to shipping gained impetus in 1840 and 1841, *Port Phillip Herald*, 21 February 1840, p. 2; *Geelong Advertiser*, 28 November 1840, p. 2.

bullocks had been hoisted into the air and swung into the water, to be guided by boat to shore. The sheep were thrown overboard to either swim or sink.

The Kirklands joined a wave of Scottish immigrants who arrived in the Port Phillip Bay region during the later years of the 1830s, many of them, like the Kirklands, via Van Diemen's Land. In 1839, there were 1,664 such arrivals.⁵⁰⁹ In 1835, the first prospective settlers from Van Diemen's had moved to Port Phillip to take up sheep runs. The earliest to the Geelong area were Dr Alexander Thomson, George Russell (founder and manager of the Clyde Company) and David Fisher (later manager of the Derwent Company),⁵¹⁰ all of whom arrived in 1836. These men and their wives were to offer assistance to the Kirklands in examples of what Margaret Kiddle observed to be the development of the Australian tradition of outback hospitality, which in the early days evolved out of poor travelling conditions and lack of accommodation.⁵¹¹

In taking up land west of Ballarat, the Kirklands were part of what Ballarat teacher, writer and historian, Nathan Spielvogel, termed 'the Glasgow Invasion'.⁵¹² This network of west-coast Scots gathered at Point Henry to help the Kirklands disembark, load their own drays with the Kirklands' goods and act as their guides and protectors during the seven-day, 85-kilometre inland trek to Ballarat, and then beyond. Alexander and Colin Campbell, also former friends of the Kirklands, joined the group in 1840 when they set up Mount Cole station in the Ararat region, north-west of Trawalla.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁹ Robert Douglass Boys, *First Years at Port Phillip 1834-1842: Preceded by a Summary of Historical Events from 1768*, Second edition, Robertson & Mullens Ltd, Melbourne, 1959, p. 99.

⁵¹⁰ The Clyde Company was set up to organise finance for the establishment of pastoral properties in the hinterland of Port Phillip; the Derwent Company was formed from the earlier Port Phillip Association, Robert Henderson Croll, in collaboration with Roland R. Wettenhall, *Dr. Alexander Thomson: A Pioneer of Melbourne and Founder of Geelong*, Robertson & Mullens, Melbourne, 1937, p. 19; Walter Randolph Brownhill, *The History of Geelong and Corio Bay*, Wilks & Co. Limited, Melbourne, 1955, p. 9.

⁵¹¹ Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, p. 83. When shelter for the night was unavailable in the homesteads or huts of friends, Katherine and her daughter slept under the dray, in rain or under stars. The men slept in the open air around the campfire.

⁵¹² Nathan F. Spielvogel, 'When White Men First Looked on Ballarat', NLA MS 3776; Weston Bate, 'Spielvogel, Nathan Frederick (1874-1956)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/spielvogel-nathan-frederick-8607/text15033>, published in hardcopy 1990, accessed online 9 September 2014.

⁵¹³ Lorna L. Banfield, *Like The Ark: The Story of Ararat*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1955, p. 33.

‘The wilds of Australia’

After the intriguing details of her embarkation, how was Katherine to describe a place so different from a vibrant Glasgow that she had left behind? As other writers had done before her (and were to do well into the future), she fell back on the literary record to describe a landscape lacking the structures and visual cues of Western developed society. Well educated—believed to have attended boarding school until at least the age of nineteen⁵¹⁴—Katherine alluded in her text to the English classics. In this case, it was the concepts of barrenness, emptiness and loneliness in *Robinson Crusoe* that provided the literary construct on which she evoked the strangeness of her surroundings. The term ‘wildness’ was the mortar with which she held her impressions together. Beginning her commentary with the sentence, ‘The wilds of Australia present at this time some strange scenes’, she continued this theme to include the Aborigines. Reminiscent of Crusoe’s plight, she recalled that:

When landed, we looked like a party thrown on a desert island, the shore was so barren, and not a trace of human habitation to be seen, or any of the works of man. All was in a state of nature; and I kept looking round, expecting every moment to see some of the dreaded savages rushing upon us. I did not feel comfortable on account of the natives, I had heard such accounts of them in Van Diemen’s Land.⁵¹⁵

Katherine developed the idea of an uncivilised wilderness by depicting a ‘primeval solitude’ at Port Phillip, where settlers lived a ‘strange kind of life’ and, compared with genteel Glasgow, a ‘wild kind of existence’. To indicate that Aborigines would form part of her adventure, she added that: ‘Occasional adventures with the savage aborigines streak the loneliness of the picture with something like the hues of romance’.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ Correspondence to Pike from Wilson, 7 December 1965, ‘Kirkland Biog. File’, ADB files, ANU Archives. The length of her school attendance may have been because she attended a kind of ‘Finishing School’ to complete her education.

⁵¹⁵ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 3.

⁵¹⁶ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, pp. 1-2.

Geelong: nascent settlement

Ten kilometres from Point Henry was the tiny township of Geelong, where people lived in tents and rough shacks. Katherine described it as ‘consist[ing] of three buildings, all of them stores, where everything was sold at a most extravagant profit’. According to George Russell, there were no houses of any kind until 1838.⁵¹⁷ Early that year, several tents on the beach had acted as the settlement’s first store, selling station supplies and clothing. Officially declared a town on 26 October 1838, later that year when Robert Hamilton visited, Geelong had only one building—Strachan’s weatherboard general store—and the first four posts of a rough bush-style slab hut that was later to become Mack’s Hotel. Perhaps mindful of Puritan sensibilities, Katherine made no mention of the public house. She may, for similar reasons, have been unaware of its existence.

The Kirklands’ arrival predated the community’s development. In early 1839, the boundaries of settlement were not clearly defined and flocks of sheep grazed over the open land. Although the first sale of land—52 half-acre town allotments—took place in Sydney on 14 February 1839, land sales in the Geelong district itself were not held until December 1840. Also in 1840, John Pascoe Fawkner began publishing the *Geelong Advertiser*, the Rev’d Mr Love (Geelong’s first minister, Scots Church) organised tenders for the construction of a church building, the Pastoral and Agricultural Society was founded, and the Geelong Branch of the Port Phillip Steam Navigation Company began business to cater for the influx of immigrants from Van Diemen’s Land. Shipping services between Port Phillip and Launceston increased to twice monthly. In 1842 a Geelong branch of the Union Bank of Australia opened its doors for the first time.⁵¹⁸ In 1839, however, the entire population of Port Phillip, including the populous settlement of Melbourne, was 5,822. By 1841—the year that Katherine returned to Britain—the number of residents in Geelong had reached only

⁵¹⁷ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 4; Brownhill, *The History of Geelong*, p. 9; P.L. Brown (ed.), *The Narrative of George Russell of Golf Hill with Russellania and Selected Papers*, OUP, London, 1935, p. 170, p. 166; *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 December 1840, p. 2.

⁵¹⁸ *Kerr’s Melbourne Almanac and Port Phillip Directory for 1841: A Compendium of Useful and Accurate Information Connected with Port Phillip*, William Kerr, Melbourne, NLA mcn 326, No. 3, p. 173, p. 166, p. 180; *Kerr’s Melbourne and Port Phillip Almanac for 1842*, No. 4, p. 312, pp. 310-11.

454.⁵¹⁹ Nevertheless, when Katherine travelled through Geelong to Melbourne in 1841, she reported that so much progress had been made that the town had become ‘a large and thriving place’.⁵²⁰

Ugly landscape, ugly Aborigines?

Katherine’s first impressions of mainland Australian scenery compared unfavourably with her Scottish perception of the picturesque. She reported that:

The country seemed very scrubby and barren, and the trees so dark and ugly, that I was disappointed in the appearance of them. I had expected to see beautiful large trees, but I saw none to compare with the trees of my own country. My husband told me to have patience till I went further up the country; but, after three years in it, I am still of the same opinion.⁵²¹

Her northern European vision of landscape complied with earlier British commentators as she perhaps bent to reader, and possibly her publishers’, expectations. She described portions of the country between William Yuille’s Ballaarat⁵²² station and Trawalla as ‘very cold and bleak’.⁵²³

Within this supposed unattractive and alien environment roamed the Aborigines. The

⁵¹⁹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 33, p. 4; Brown (ed.), *Narrative of George Russell*, pp. 168-69; Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, p. 144.

⁵²⁰ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 28.

⁵²¹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 4.

⁵²² The station of William Cross Yuille and his cousin, Archibald Yuille. Katherine, now in the early months of pregnancy, was to stay at Ballaarat with Agnes and Mary Forrester for six weeks while the men built a hut for them at Trawalla. After William Yuille left the colony for New Zealand in 1840, Archibald held Ballaarat station until 1852, Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers*, p. 164, p. 170.

⁵²³ Katherine’s opinion of the countryside complies with another short-term immigrant from the far northern hemisphere. Mrs Archibald Campbell, whose husband was briefly Police Magistrate in 1853, in Beechworth, Victoria, decried Australia’s ‘brown and withered grass, and the miserable stunted trees’, comparing the ‘ragged, slovenly’ eucalypts and the ‘narrow-pointed leaves, hard and dry’ of casuarina trees with the ‘freshness of color and softness’ of deciduous trees. Mrs A. Campbell, *Rough and Smooth: Or, Ho! for an Australian Gold Field*, Hunter, Rose & Co., Quebec, 1865, p. 47, p. 121. Conversely, a colonial eye, open to pastoral opportunities, viewed the open grassland inland from Melbourne as ‘beautiful’ country, ‘grassy and luxuriant’, where ‘sheep, cattle, and horses, and indeed every animal ... thrives in an extraordinary manner’, Thomas Winter, probably writing in 1837, Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, p. 394.

entire territory from Point Henry, across the Bellarine Peninsula from Geelong north to the Werribee River, north-west to include Ballarat and Trawalla and south-east to Colac was Wathaurong land. Katherine's first reference to the Wathaurong was that they were 'very ugly and dirty', although she added her specific observations that, 'Some of them wore skins sewed together, and thrown over their shoulders; a few of them had some old clothes given them by the settlers; and some were naked'.⁵²⁴ Katherine's association between barren landscape and ugly Aborigines replicated Humboldt's hypothesis that typical landscapes attracted a similar type of inhabitant, bound together in a fixed relationship.⁵²⁵

As Katherine neared her future home, however, her views changed. She described some of the country west of Ballarat as 'the most beautiful I ever saw' and registered her optimism when she caught sight of:

our pretty little hut peeping through a cluster of trees. I cannot say how it was, but my heart beat with delight the first time I saw that place ... Mary [rejoined] "It's a bonny place, and my heart warms to it."⁵²⁶

Notwithstanding her expression of racial stereotypes, Katherine revealed from the beginning of her text that she accepted the presence of the Wathaurong. While representing Mary Forrester as mortally afraid of them during their inland trek, and as pleading with her husband to return to Scotland, Katherine expressed her differing view, writing that:

My servant Mary was very much afraid of the natives. She would scarcely move out of the hut, and was always crying and wishing herself at home. She said she was determined to make her husband send her home with the first money he made. She wondered why I did not think as she did. She would take comfort from no one, and was

⁵²⁴ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 4.

⁵²⁵ Harriet Daly, another well-educated woman, similarly reflected the conjunction of 'degraded' Aborigines and desolate (even though, in this case, beautiful) landscape on her arrival in Palmerston (now Darwin) in 1870, Daly, *Digging, Squatting and Pioneering Life*, pp. 43-44.

⁵²⁶ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 8.

quite sure she would be killed by the wild natives when she got up the country.⁵²⁷

Although Katherine offers no explanation, she noted that on arrival at Trawalla, ‘Mary ... had now got over her fear of the natives’,⁵²⁸ implying from her tone and term of reference a return to reason on the part of her servant.

Degraded Colonists?

To extend to her British readers the idea of the wildness and strangeness of the raw Australian environment, Katherine explained that civilised habits and appearances were likely to be quickly discarded in the colony. She noted that (male) ‘settlers pride themselves in dressing and looking as rough as possible’, citing as example the ‘scarcely recognis[able]’ George Yuille, who had recently emigrated from Scotland and who had met the Kirklands on their arrival. Katherine described him as,

such a strange figure. He had allowed his beard to grow to a great length; he wore very rough-looking clothes, and a broad black leather belt round his waist, with a brace of pistols stuck in it.⁵²⁹

Elaborating on the strangeness of colonial life, Katherine explained how:

Young men who once figured [in Britain] in quadrille parties, are [in the colony] seen driving cars and drays, or milking cows; while ladies, who once presided over a refined hospitality in some better part of a British city, are, in “the bush,” fain to cook victuals for their husband and his shepherds.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 4.

⁵²⁸ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 8.

⁵²⁹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 3. George Yuille was the brother of William, who had arrived in Port Phillip in February 1837 and taken up Ballaarat in March 1838, Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers*, p. 164, p. 170. As well as Yuille, other Glasgow friends that came to assist the Kirklands were James and John Donald, William Hamilton, and James and Thomas Baillie. All had established pastoral stations in the vicinity of Trawalla during 1839. The Baillie brothers’ property, Carngham, was situated 12 kilometres from Trawalla; the Donalds and William Hamilton were at Langi Kal Kal, six kilometres from Trawalla, on Mount Emu Creek, Brown (ed.), *Clyde Company Papers, Vol. II*, p. 192; Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 9.

⁵³⁰ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 1.

On the other hand, Katherine expressed an optimistic view of Australia, sketching the advantages of opportunity and egalitarianism by informing her audience that:

all is not hardship and vexation. Labour and exposure ... are attended with an excitement which prevents anything like low spirits, and, joined to the fine climate, tend to keep up a tone of health which few in civilised life ever enjoy. Then there is no eye of fashionable neighbour to look pityingly or quizzingly on the mean details of the mud-house and the life which passes within it. Above all, the star of hope is present, instructing how to bear with the present for the sake of the future.⁵³¹

Katherine was to return to the topic of health later in her text. In the mid-nineteenth century, the rise in population and an increase in tenement housing in the central area of Glasgow had led to fetid overcrowding and ill-health. Within her report of colonial hardship and disappointment, Katherine continued to commend Australia's 'delightful and healthful climate [which] compensates for many disagreeables which one has not been accustomed to.'⁵³²

Wild White Man: William Buckley

In 1835, just four years before Katherine's arrival, 'the wild white man', William Buckley, had returned to white society after living for 32 years with the Wathaurong. While publications of his experiences centred around Melbourne in the decades after Katherine's return to Britain,⁵³³ Buckley's story became so famous that Katherine would have undoubtedly heard about it at the time. A runaway convict, Buckley had absconded in 1803 while under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins,

⁵³¹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 1.

⁵³² Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 32.

⁵³³ Numerous commentaries on William Buckley were published during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The earliest publications include John Morgan, *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley: Thirty-Two Years a Wanderer Amongst the Aborigines of the Unexplored Country Round Port Phillip* (1852), ANU Press, Canberra, 1980; James Bonwick, *William Buckley: The Wild White Man, and his Port Phillip Black Friends*, George Nichols, Melbourne, 1856, (republished as *The Wild White Man and the Blacks of Victoria*, Fergusson & Moore, Melbourne, 1863); William T. Pyke, *Savage Life in Australia: the Story of William Buckley the Runaway Convict who Lived Thirty-two Years among the Blacks of Australia*, E.W. Cole, Melbourne, 1889. Also, cf. Charles Barrett, *White Blackfellows: The Strange Adventures of Europeans who Lived among Savages*, Hallcraft Publishing Co. Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1948, pp. 1-33; George Sutherland, *Sixteen Stories of Australian Exploration and Settlement*, James Ingram & Son, Melbourne, 1901[?], pp. 27-32.

who was in Sorrento on Port Phillip Bay for seven months before moving with his charges to Van Diemen's Land. In July 1835, Buckley made himself known to men of the Port Phillip Association, a group promoted by John Batman to investigate the suitability of land for pastoral activities.⁵³⁴

Unlike Defoe's Crusoe, who maintained his civilised habits and Christian values throughout 28 years of exile, the non-fictional Buckley discarded the affectations of civilisation when he lived with the Wathaurong. James Bonwick, a teacher and historian in Melbourne during the 1850s and 1860s, wrote that Buckley sank 'at once to the barbarian; he clad as a savage; he fed as a savage; he lived as a savage'.⁵³⁵ What was considered the degradation that resulted from living for over 30 years with Aborigines was encapsulated in Buckley's appearance as a long-haired, unshaven, dirty white man. Reflecting British racial and religious attitudes, Bonwick stated that, '[Buckley's] Christian birth and education became no incentives to the preservation of his own ideas of religion' and instead he 'preferred the dirty, lazy life of the barbarian'.⁵³⁶

The perception of Buckley's descent from civilised standards to those of Indigenous people was seen as an example of moral degradation, a judgment that reflected nineteenth-century ethnocentric attitudes, which tied the idea of 'civilisation' exclusively to European values and behaviour. According to Bonwick, 'Not one single elevating thought, not one moral sentiment, not one trifling element of civilization do [the Wathaurong] owe to [Buckley's] instructions or example'. John Fawcner, who had arrived in Melbourne in 1835, stated that the escaped convict 'fell to the level of the blacks, he did not by any means elevate or raise them, or instruct them in any manner'.⁵³⁷ Buckley had adopted the name 'Murrangurk', lost his native tongue, fought battles alongside the Wathaurong, taken Wathaurong wives and

⁵³⁴ Batman, a Launceston farmer, settled at Port Phillip in 1835 with his wife, Eliza, and their six daughters, Brown (ed.), *The Narrative of George Russell*, pp. 92-95.

⁵³⁵ Hugh Anderson (ed.), *Discovery & Settlement of Port Phillip: Being a History of the Country Now Called Victoria up to the Arrival of Mr Superintendent Latrobe, in October, 1939*, by James Bonwick, (1856), Red Rooster Press, 1999, p. 55.

⁵³⁶ Bonwick, *The Wild White Man and the Blacks of Victoria*, p. 3.

⁵³⁷ Anderson (ed.), *Discovery & Settlement of Port Phillip*, p. 55, p. 58.

embraced Indigenous ceremonial life.

Katherine seemed to express her disquiet at the potential of a white man to descend to Indigenous degradation as epitomised in Buckley, in her comment that,

I ... began to be a little disgusted and astonished at the dirty and uncomfortable way in which the settlers lived. They seemed quite at the mercy of their hut-keepers, eating what was placed before them out of dirty tin plates, and using a knife and fork *if* one could be found.⁵³⁸

Buckley's example and the propensity of white settlers to adopt uncouth habits may have forestalled Katherine from revealing elements of cross-cultural relationship in her own tale. Certainly, she took pains to demonstrate to her readers her maintenance of civilised behaviour and habits. The tension between her representations of the accepted picture of 'degraded' Aborigines and her guarded respect for them in hints and in general references to Indigenous assistance and ingenuity creates an ambivalence in her account that leaves the reader wishing her back to the twenty-first century to tell more.

Getting to know the Wathaurong?

Within the Wathaurong territorial name there is thought to have been from between 14 and 25 smaller clans,⁵³⁹ who traversed a wide area in groups of up to 100 in response to seasonal food sources, ceremonial obligations and trading relationships. On her 120 kilometre trek inland, Katherine reported several casual meetings with some of them. During her stay at David and Charlotte Fisher's farmhouse,⁵⁴⁰ situated on a hill near the Barwon River (a site now close to central Geelong), a group of Aborigines 'kept peeping in at the windows to see us, and were always hanging about the place'. Charlotte Fisher coined these people, '*civilised natives*'. Katherine's first encounter with an individual Aborigine occurred when she and Agnes went for a

⁵³⁸ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 6.

⁵³⁹ Cf. <http://www.yarrahealing.melb.catholic.edu.au/kulin/wathaurong.html>; <http://www.greatoceanroad.org/geelong/heritage/>koorihistory.asp; Clark, *Scars in the Landscape*, p. 169.

⁵⁴⁰ The Fishers' house was later referred to as 'the first house in Geelong worthy of the name', Brownhill, *The History of Geelong*, p. 69.

walk ‘in the bush’. She wrote that:

I was keeping a good look-out for snakes, and was just stepping over what I fancied, by a slight glance, to be a burnt log of wood, but a second look showed me my mistake; it was a native lying on the grass, grinning in my face with his large white teeth. I was rather afraid, but he looked rather good-tempered, and laughed. He seemed to (sic) lazy to move, so I gave him a nod, and walked on, well pleased he did not think it necessary to accompany me home.⁵⁴¹

The cumbersome mode of travel over rough tracks, the assemblage of animals and the Kirklands’ large entourage would have presented a conspicuous feature, moving slowly across the landscape. Forty kilometres from Geelong, while the Scots were resting in the vicinity of the present town of Meredith,⁵⁴² Indigenous family groups came to investigate Katherine and Agnes. Like the Kurtjars’ fascination with British women’s fashion at Normanton during the 1870s, the Wathaurong were intrigued with Katherine and Agnes’ clothing in the 1830s. Katherine recorded that:

Numbers of natives came this forenoon to see us. They examined my dress very attentively, and asked me the name of everything, which they tried to repeat after me. They were much amused with my little Agnes, and she was as much pleased with them. I wondered what her grandmamma would have thought, could she have seen her in the midst of a group of savages, and the life of the party. Whenever Agnes spoke, they all laughed aloud, and tried to imitate her voice; the *pickaninny leubra*’s dress was well examined. I put a little night-cap on a native baby, with which its mother was much pleased, and many a little black head was thrust out for one also.⁵⁴³

Impact of Clothing in Early Contact

Ladies travelling in the 1830s, particularly if they were new arrivals, dressed

⁵⁴¹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 4.

⁵⁴² The Kirklands stayed a night at George Russell’s station and also in a hut belonging to George Sutherland; the main road of the small township of Meredith is ‘Sutherland Street’.

⁵⁴³ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, pp. 5-6. The use of ‘pickaninny’ (also used by Eliza Davies) appears to be part of the lingua franca of the Empire. ‘Piccaninny’ referred to a Negro child in Negro pidgin English and stemmed from the Portuguese ‘pequenino’ (very little), *Macquarie Dictionary*, 1981.

formally. Although Katherine does not refer to her own clothes, other than as a curiosity to the Wathaurong, the writing of another new arrival attests to their formal nature. When Elizabeth Fenton (born Knox) journeyed in 1830 from Hobart to her new home in New Norfolk, in Van Diemen's Land, she lamented that her fashionable, black satin boots were ruined, because she was obliged to walk on rough, muddy roads.⁵⁴⁴ An indication of the adherence to proper procedure is found in a letter dated 26 January 1841 from Penelope Selby of the Station on the Yarra Yarra. When Penelope wrote to her sisters in England that, inside on hot days, she adapted her dress code to don a shift, cotton gown, stockings and shoes, it was news enough to be included in personal correspondence. She nevertheless reassured her family that, as the temperature cooled in the evening, she resumed full dress, with all her petticoats.⁵⁴⁵



Katherine Kirkland, 'In Her Later Years' (*Life in the Bush*, c.1995).

In 1851, Louisa Meredith's independent flouting of social rules of dress by wearing a 'jacket affair' and 'dowdy looking bonnet' when out riding was derided by Rosina Meredith (the half-sister of Louisa's husband, Charles) in a letter to her sister. Even

⁵⁴⁴ Mrs Fenton's *Tasmanian Journal 1829-1830*, Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide, 1986, p. 63.

⁵⁴⁵ Lucy Frost (ed.), *No Place for a Nervous Lady: Voices from the Australian Bush*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1984, p. 119.

colonial-born women were expected to dress formally in public. Louisa Atkinson, who was born in 1834 near Berrima in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales, wore practical, 'unfeminine' clothes in the bush, instead of conventional long skirts, a move from proper dress codes that scandalised the locals.⁵⁴⁶ As a newly arrived Scottish lady, Katherine would have been careful to maintain what Penny Russell has described as the 'display of gentility'. Keeping up appearances by 'genteel performance' was of paramount importance to middle-class women.⁵⁴⁷ In Katherine's case, attention to formal attire would have been imperative for a woman in the early stages of pregnancy. In *Life in the Bush*, a picture of Katherine shows that, in her later years, she still favoured the 1830s fashion of a high necked dress, and dressed her hair in the late Georgian style of corkscrew curls.

In the 1830s, the clothing of little girls replicated the elaborate fashion of their mothers. Often dressed in printed, woven or embroidered muslin, decorated with frilly hems and ribbon trimmings, girls usually wore also a pinafore over the top. Sometimes trousers were worn underneath, together with a petticoat. Like their mothers, they wore frilly caps or fussy bonnets. Shoes from the 1830s featured a bow on the centre front. Short ankle boots with side-buttoning or lacing might also have been worn by girls as young as Agnes.⁵⁴⁸

Katherine tells how the discomfort of the trip in an open bullock dray along bumpy tracks in the heat of summer took its toll on the overdressed, ill-prepared Scots:

The heat ... was very intense, and we had no shade. I could scarcely bare it; and before evening we had drunk all the water we had brought with us. I thought I should have died of thirst; and we were all suffering alike. Poor little Agnes cried much; at last we got her

⁵⁴⁶ Margaret Swann, 'Mrs. Meredith and Miss Atkinson, Writers and Naturalists', in *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, Vol. XV, Part 1, 1929, p. 18, cited in Patricia Clarke, *Pen Portraits: Women writers and journalists in the nineteenth century Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, p. 40; Rae Ellis, *Louisa Anne Meredith*, pp. 114-15.

⁵⁴⁷ Russell, 'A Wish of Distinction', pp. 58-59.

⁵⁴⁸ Phillis Cunnington & Anne Buck, *Children's Costume in England: From the Fourteenth to the end of the Nineteenth Century*, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1965, Plate 22, opposite p. 149; p. 163, pp. 166-67, p. 195, p. 198, p. 203.

to sleep and forget her wants. My husband was driving one of the drays, and was so thirsty, that when we came to a muddy hole of water on the path, which the dray had passed through, he lay down on the the ground and drank heartily. ... At last we came to [water-holes], and both people and animals took many a long drink, although the water was bad, and quite bitter from the reeds which grew in it.⁵⁴⁹

Katherine's portrayal of Indigenous curiosity in regards to Agnes matches an account by James C. Hamilton (no relation to Katherine), who arrived in Melbourne from Scotland as a five-year-old in 1841. His family settled on Lake Bringalbert and Ozenkadnook stations beyond the Glenelg River in the far west of the colony in 1846 when, 'There were a great many blacks round this part ... from the infant on its mother's breast to the extremely aged men and women'. Hamilton observed the Aboriginal fascination for white children, writing that: 'Numbers of them made their way in to the station to see the little white pickanninies, as they called us. They had never seen a white child before they saw us, so we were great curiosities.'⁵⁵⁰

On her return trip to Trawalla three months after the birth of her son in September 1839, Katherine recalled how the same Aborigines came to investigate her baby boy:

One morning I got into a little hut with the roof half off; it was empty, and I thought I could wash and dress my baby more comfortably than in the dray. I had not been long in the hut when we were surrounded by natives, all anxious to see what we were about. One or two of the women came into the hut, and touched the *pickaninny cooley*, as they called it: they seemed much amused at his different pieces of dress, and all the little black pickaninnies tried to cry like him.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 6. Taking into consideration the distance travelled and the description of the water source, the water holes were probably located in the present-day Williamson Creek.

⁵⁵⁰ <http://www.barwonbluff.com.au/koorie/History.htm>; J.C. Hamilton, *Pioneering Days in Western Victoria: A Narrative of Early Station Life*, n.p., n.d., p. 4.

⁵⁵¹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, pp. 13-14. Like 'piccaninny', 'cooley' also appears to have been part of the language of Empire. Probably a variant of the western Indian tribal name, 'koli', it was the Indian term for an unskilled native labourer and elsewhere, for a labourer employed for cheap service, and possibly a variation of the Tamil term 'kuli' for 'hire' or 'wages', *Macquarie Dictionary*.

Even in hot weather, the two-month-old Kenneth Kirkland was most probably encased in the layers of clothing recommended for British babies.⁵⁵² In the 1830s, a baby (male or female) wore during the day, an upper petticoat, wide flannel band wound around its abdomen and hips, a long frock with a low neck, short bodice and short puffed sleeves tied round with a ribbon and bow on the shoulder, flannel pants over the diaper napkins, and socks. Newborn babies were carried around in an extra square of flannel and may also have been draped in a fine knitted shawl. Babies wore, day and night, plain undercaps and decorative ‘outer’ caps.⁵⁵³ Over the cap was a silk-lined hood, with a rosette of satin ribbon in the front, for a girl, and on the left, if a boy.⁵⁵⁴

Aboriginal babies, by contrast, were simply carried around in the warm cloak of the mother, hanging at her shoulder. William Russell (1830-1914), the Chief Man of the Gundungorra of the Burragarong Valley, west of Sydney, recalled his mother’s ‘carrying me on her back cuddled down in a fold of her ‘possum rug folded across her shoulders, I felt quite safe and comfortable, as any young Burru (Kangaroo) in his mother’s pouch.’ By the 1870s, in the Braidwood area of New South Wales, the animal skin had been replaced by the blanket, but the same combination of cloak or blanket and maternal body heat sufficed to keep the baby warm, protected and comforted.⁵⁵⁵ Alice Duncan-Kemp noted that, in the warmer climate of Queensland’s Channel Country, newborn babies were carried in the mother’s coolamon or fish net, but still kept close to the maternal body, with the head rubbing against the mother’s

⁵⁵² Kirkland’s observation that little Kenneth was a ‘delicate baby’ but that, in the words of Laurence Sterne, ‘God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb’, reinforced her attention to warm clothing, Kirkland, ‘Life in the Bush’, p. 15. A basic layette in the early nineteenth-century, as stated in requirements for a newborn of ‘poor lying-in women’, consisted of four little shirts, four little caps, two frocks, two little bedgowns, two flannel blankets, two rollers, two pairs of ‘stays’ and flannel coats, two upper petticoats and twenty-four napkins, *The Lady’s Economical Assistant*, in Cunningham & Buck, *Children’s Costume in England*, p. 147.

⁵⁵³ *The Lady’s Economical Assistant*, in Cunningham & Buck, *Children’s Costume in England*, pp. 148-51.

⁵⁵⁴ Cunningham & Buck, *Children’s Costume in England*, pp. 148-50, p. 153.

⁵⁵⁵ The first reference is to baby carrying in the 1860s in the Shoalhaven region, Southern Highlands, NSW, in Louisa Atkinson, *Sydney Mail*, 19 September 1863, in Lawson, *Louisa Atkinson*, p. 53; William Russell, “Werriberrie”, *My Recollections* (1914), The Oaks Historical Society, Camden, NSW, 1991, p. 10; Mary Moore-Bentley (b. 1865), *Journey to Durran Durra 1852-1885: A Story of the Bentley Family and the Gold Rush Era*, Jeanne M. Bow, Connells Point, NSW, 1984, p. 19.

side or back.⁵⁵⁶ These differences honed mutual fascination.

Wathaurong Corroboree

Linguist and anthropologist, T.G.H. Strehlow, noted that Aborigines had been ‘trained from childhood to share what they possessed with others, and to co-operate with others in the expectation that others would in turn co-operate with them’. Near present-day Meredith, some 100 Wathaurong enacted for the Scots a traditional courteous welcome onto their land in the form of a corroboree, which Strehlow described as a form of expression realised ‘in deeds, not words’.⁵⁵⁷ Katherine’s close observation indicates that she had a ringside view of proceedings:

They had about twenty large fires lighted, around which were seated the women and children. The men had painted themselves, according to their own fancy, with red and white earth. They had bones, and bits of stones, and emu’s feathers, tied on their hair, and branches of trees tied on their ankles, which made a rushing noise when they danced. Their appearance was very wild, and when they danced, their gestures and attitudes were equally so. One old man stood before the dancers, and kept repeating some words very fast in a kind of time, whilst he beat together two sticks. The women never dance; their employment is to keep the fires burning bright; and some of them were beating sticks, and declaiming in concert with the old man.⁵⁵⁸

Afterwards, when the Wathaurong ‘were very anxious that we white people would show them how we coroberied’, George Yuille was nominated to reciprocate with a dance and to recite a ‘piece of poetry, using a great many gestures’. The expectation of the white man’s ritual performance supports what anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt, have identified as the importance of reciprocity in Aboriginal life. The Berndts found that responsibility for others formed the basis of group existence, and that reciprocity signified the willingness to cooperate and to extend mutual help. Catherine Berndt noted that: ‘One of the strengths of Aboriginal society was its

⁵⁵⁶ A.M. Duncan-Kemp, *Our Sandhill Country: Nature and Man in South-Western Queensland*, Angus & Robertson Limited, Sydney, 1933, p. 144.

⁵⁵⁷ T.G.H. Strehlow, *The Sustaining Ideals of Australian Aboriginal Societies*, The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1956, p. 20.

⁵⁵⁸ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 5.

emphasis on co-operation in all aspects of living—between persons and between groups, within a defined area where the intermeshing of rights and duties made up a rich social fabric’. Katherine recorded the Wathaurongs’ interest in Yuille’s performance, noting that they ‘watched ... most attentively, and seemed highly pleased’.⁵⁵⁹

While retaining the image of wildness, Katherine offered a sympathetic portrayal in her depiction of the role of family groups in the ceremony. Reflecting an empathy with Indigenous women absent in Eliza Davies’ portrayal, she mentioned the women and children before the men, and explained in detail the women’s ceremonial role.⁵⁶⁰ She wrote how the Scots graciously gave the Aborigines ‘some white money’ before politely ‘bidding them good night’,⁵⁶¹ an odd gesture which to modern readers highlights the ignorance and confusion of new arrivals towards Aborigines. Nevertheless, in spite of her interest in the individual role of performers, Katherine remains here a casual onlooker and objective raconteur of fascinating details. Because this racial encounter did not involve a close or cooperative relationship, Katherine’s report is a reiteration of a ‘reciprocal’ encounter, uncomplicated by further obligations. At Trawalla, it was a different story.

Trawalla: a shared home

Close contact between the local Moner balug clan and the Kirklands on the 40,000-acre Trawalla station was inevitable. Situated on the banks of Mount Emu Creek in its northern reaches, the homestead site was the prime location for both Indigenous gatherings and pastoral enterprise. Moner balug territory centred on Trawalla where the watercourses were a rich source of food. Middens of freshwater shells at the water’s edge indicated its importance as a focal point for Aborigines. Mount Emu

⁵⁵⁹ Catherine Berndt, ‘Aboriginal Women and the Notion of “The Marginal Man”’, in R. and C. Berndt (eds), *Aborigines of the West*, p. 35; Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 5.

⁵⁶⁰ Another example of female empathy from a pastoral dweller was Emily Skinner, who travelled from Melbourne to Beechworth in 1855. Although Skinner found that the corroboree noise of the Ngurelban (or Taungurong) at Longwood, near Euroa, was excessive and the dancing strange, she later spoke with some of the ‘poor women ... with their little piccaninies fastened on their backs’, Edward Duyker (ed.), *A Woman on the Goldfields: Recollections of Emily Skinner 1854-1878*, MUP, 1995, p. 45.

⁵⁶¹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 5.

Creek was also used by other Wathaurong clans as a north-south route for travelling to and from meetings and ceremonies.⁵⁶² The Indigenous meanings of Trawalla—‘flood’, ‘much rain’ and ‘wild water’—referred to the plentiful water sources from streams and waterholes on the site.⁵⁶³ Bailliere’s 1865 *Gazetteer* describes it as possessing ‘magnificent sites for reservoirs of an extensive character, the available water being pure and plentiful’.⁵⁶⁴ Spring-fed waterholes in the creek, one of which reaches a depth of six metres, continue to be perennial water sources. After rainfall, these waterholes join up to form a fast-flowing stream.⁵⁶⁵



Trawalla homestead (Barbara Dawson, August 2004).

Although the Aborigines were initially ‘turn[ed] away’ from the homestead, they continually returned, often in response to calls for help from the settlers. For example, after several days of attempts to find the body of a drowned new-chum in a nearby

⁵⁶² Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers*, p. 292. Robert Spreadborough & Hugh Anderson, *Victorian Squatters*, Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale, Victoria, 1983, p. 139, cite the original holding of 40,000 acres as an estimated area. Fiona Mackenzie, occupier of Trawalla in 2004 cited the property as 42,000 acres. From October to December 1838, Kenneth Kirkland and James Hamilton held the 40,000 acre property Mt. Emu, south of Trawalla, Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers*, p. 250; Jim Nunan, *Squatters & Soldiers: Trawalla 1839 - 1971*, The Back-To-Trawalla Committee for Trawalla School Centenary Celebrations, Trawalla, Victoria, 1971, p. 3.

⁵⁶³ Aldo Massola, *Aboriginal Place Names of south-east Australia and their meanings*, Lansdowne Press Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1968, p. 48; Banfield, *Like The Ark*, p. 189; R. Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria: with Notes Relating to the Habits of the Natives of other Parts of Australia and Tasmania*, Volume II, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1878, p. 192.

⁵⁶⁴ Bailliere’s *Victorian Gazetteer and Road Guide Containing the Most Recent and Accurate Information as to Every Place in the Colony*, Compiled by Robt. P. Whitworth, F.F. Bailliere, Melbourne, 1865, p. 386.

⁵⁶⁵ Personal communication from Fiona Mackenzie, Trawalla homestead, August 2004.

waterhole, Katherine reported that Moner balug divers retrieved the body immediately. Again, the services of an Aboriginal lad ‘who was famous for tracking’ were utilised when sheep were stolen from Trawalla.⁵⁶⁶ As time went on, the Moner balug camped at the homestead site for longer periods. Only Tom was allowed (and encouraged) to remain overnight, the Kirklands hoping that this ‘big boy’ would be ‘useful in finding stray animals’. They were to be disappointed, finding that he was ‘very lazy, but he was always obliged to chop wood or do some work, else he got nothing to eat; which we found to be the only way to make the natives active’.⁵⁶⁷

Katherine’s mention of the Moner balug focuses on the women and on food. When observing family groups, she reported that:

In the evening they meet at their *mi mi*; the men eat first, and whatever they choose to leave, the leubras and pickaninnies may eat afterward. Sometimes a very affectionate cooley may now and then, while he is eating, throw a bit to his leubra, as we should do to a dog, for which kindness she is very grateful.⁵⁶⁸

Again evoking the Protestant work ethic, Katherine reported that the Aboriginal men ‘make their leubras go about all day to dig for maranong, or find other kinds of food for them, while they amuse themselves by hanging about idle’.⁵⁶⁹

She closely observed Indigenous food and eating habits, noting that:

The natives will eat anything that comes in their way. I saw a woman take a piece of sheep-skin, singe the wool off, and then begin to eat it, giving her baby a piece of it also.

⁵⁶⁶ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 23, p. 19, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁶⁷ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 19.

⁵⁶⁸ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 14.

⁵⁶⁹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 19, p. 14. Murnn’yong was originally classified as *Microseris fosteri*. It is now known as *Microseris scapigera* in Victoria and *Microseris lanceolata* in New South Wales. Other botanical names have been used in the past. B. Gott has written widely on this staple indigenous food. Cf., for example, ‘Murnong–*Microseris scapigera*: A study of a staple food of Victorian Aborigines’, in *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, Number 2, 1983, pp. 2-18. I am indebted to Rupert Gerritsen for this reference. Michael Christie also identifies ‘mirr-n’yong’, or yam, as the Wathaurongs’ staple food, Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria*, p. 9.

Much to my surprise, they actually ate a large piece of the skin.⁵⁷⁰

Katherine had also seen that, ‘In some of the fresh-water ponds there are found immense quantities of muscles (sic), which the native women dive for’. Again, in reference to the feeding of their babies—a subject pertinent to Katherine—she observed that:

The women carry their children at their backs in a basket or bag; and when they suckle them, they generally put their breast under their arm; and I have seen them put it over their shoulder.⁵⁷¹

Isolation

While male networks were maintained through farm employees, and constant visits from neighbouring squatters or itinerant workers and travellers, women settlers were left unsustained and, to a large extent, uninitiated into the foreign land. As farms were taken up in the Western District no closer than five kilometres from another⁵⁷² (and separated by often boggy roads), white women were geographically separated from each other, meeting only when travelling between the larger settlements of Melbourne and Geelong and their isolated outposts. During Katherine’s two years’ residence at Trawalla, her contact with white women, besides Mary Forrester,⁵⁷³ occurred on only two occasions. The first was during her two-month residence in Melbourne after the birth of her son in September 1839 when,

The ladies in Melbourne seemed to consider me a kind of curiosity, from living so far up the country, and all seemed to have a great dread of leading such a life, and were surprised when I said I liked it ... I really felt at a loss upon what subjects to converse with ladies, as I had been so long accustomed only to gentlemen’s society; and in the bush, had heard little spoken of but sheep or cattle, horses, or of

⁵⁷⁰ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 19, p. 20.

⁵⁷¹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 14. Unlike the commentaries of Mary McConnel and Rose Cowen in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis, Katherine gave no hint about the role of Indigenous women in breastfeeding her baby.

⁵⁷² ‘Thomas Learmonth, writing from Buninyong in 1853, recalls that there was “a tacit understanding that no one was to take up a station nearer than three miles to another person”’, Croll, *Dr. Alexander Thomson*, p. 30.

⁵⁷³ Katherine made it clear that lack of companionship was from women of her own class. Domestic tension between Katherine and her ‘servant’ also suggests a strained relationship.

building huts.⁵⁷⁴

Returning home with her baby, she was accompanied by Celia Scott, with whom she had stayed in Melbourne during her confinement. Celia and her family ‘went along with us as far as their own station’, (now) Boninyong,⁵⁷⁵ where they were to live in tents until their hut was built. By 1840, Katherine had gained a neighbour, but she was 50 kilometres away.⁵⁷⁶

After more than a year at Trawalla, Katherine received a visit from Mrs Gibson who was on her way to establish a farm with her brother further inland. Katherine recorded that, ‘I was delighted to have the privilege of talking to a lady again’.⁵⁷⁷ Such was the rarity of a middle-class white woman to the eyes of three-year-old Agnes that her astonishment at ‘the sight of a “white leubra”, as she called her ... [took] away her speech; but she soon began to question her very closely as to where she came from, and whether there were any more like her in the country’.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁴ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 13. The ladies’ ‘dread’ would have increased if Katherine had told them how, nine months pregnant, she had had to cross the flooded Moorabool River by way of a mossy log spanning the river and ‘about twenty feet above the water: notches were cut in it for me to climb up and give me a firm footing, and I walked over, holding Mr. Reid’s hand ... My husband was too nervous to help me across—he thought his foot might slip’ (p. 12). George Read Junior, with whose family Katherine had spent the previous two nights, recorded the crossing in his diary, ‘The Diary of G.F. Read Junior, Thursday 5 September, 1839’, in Brown (ed.), *Clyde Company Papers, Vol. II*, p. 252. A permanent bridge was not constructed until 1859, Bettina M. Blackall, *Batesford and its Early Families*, published by author, Batesford, Victoria, 1991, p. 40.

⁵⁷⁵ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 13. Information from Celia Burnham (born Scott), great-great-granddaughter of Mrs Celia Scott. Celia Burnham is the current owner of Boninyong Station, 15 kilometres south-east of Ballarat. In 1839, the property name was ‘Mount Buninyong’, as opposed to the Clyde Company’s adjacent ‘Boninyong’, Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers*, p. 177, p. 248.

⁵⁷⁶ Andrew and Celia Scott arrived at Port Phillip in January 1839. They settled on 16,000 acres at Mount Buninyong after searching for suitable land to the west and north of Ballarat, Alexander Henderson (ed.), *Early Pioneer Families of Victoria and Riverina: A Genealogical and Biographical Record*, McCarron, Bird & Co., Melbourne, 1936, pp. 212-13; Celia Scott was ‘the first and for some time the only white women in the Buninyong locality’, Billis and Kenyon, *Pastures New*, p. 122. When Celia Scott helped Katherine in her move from Trawalla, the women were injured in a buggy accident, Celia dislocating her knee, Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, pp. 27-29.

⁵⁷⁷ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 21. Mrs Gibson’s ‘brother’ was most likely her husband, Matthew Gibson, who held land at Kenilworth on the Wannon River (1840-41) and on ‘Roseneath’, on the Glenelg River (1840-1843). At Roseneath, Mrs Gibson lived in a tent for 10 months ‘on the verge of the wilderness’, Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, note 18 p. 299, note 10 p. 170, p. 161.

⁵⁷⁸ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 21.

Feeding a family

Like other newly-arrived settler women, Katherine had to feed her family and the labourers and shepherds on Trawalla. She had to be prepared for travellers for whom the doors of hospitality were always open. Before she could establish her vegetable garden, dairy, poultry yard and piggery, Katherine's dependants were her husband, brother, daughter, baby son and at least four workers. Nourishment was vital to Katherine who arrived at Trawalla in the early months of pregnancy, and left when her son was less than eighteen-months-old. She had lost the services of her maid, who was likely to have had at least basic cooking skills, when this servant chose to remain in Hobart. Mary Forrester, Katherine was to learn, was 'very ignorant in cooking'.⁵⁷⁹

Although declaring on her arrival at Trawalla that, 'I did not know much of cooking myself', Katherine later displayed her enthusiasm for the culinary arts, exemplifying her philosophy that 'necessity makes one learn many things'.⁵⁸⁰ A vegetarian diet had become her speciality. She was later to publish *Vegetarian Cookery*, the sixth edition of which appeared in the 1860s. Along with vegetarian recipes for soups, pies, cakes and preserves, the book includes a 30-page introductory scientific treatise evaluating the nutritional benefits gained from a vegetable diet as a natural source of 'the proper Food of Man'.⁵⁸¹

Katherine was a resourceful and energetic woman. Described by Robert Hamilton as 'a good manager,'⁵⁸² she had established within eighteen months of pastoral settlement, a vegetable and fruit garden of potatoes, peas, gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries and currants.⁵⁸³ Except for the milking of her 20 cows, Katherine managed her dairy single-handedly, producing butter and cheese which, together with her poultry, sold on the Melbourne market. Her skills in economic management encompassed an astute knowledge of the fluctuating Melbourne market prices for

⁵⁷⁹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 9.

⁵⁸⁰ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 9.

⁵⁸¹ Katherine Kirkland, *Vegetarian Cookery, By a Lady, With an Introduction Explanatory of the Principles of Vegetarianism By the Late Jas Simpson Esq.*, The Sixth Edition, Fred. Pitman, London, 186-?.

⁵⁸² Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 37.

⁵⁸³ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 22.

food and other commodities.



Katherine Kirkland's dairy (Barbara Dawson, August 2004).

Nevertheless, Katherine's geographical isolation entailed separation from sources of information about how to maintain the healthy survival of herself and her family during the first months of settlement. Furthermore, pleasant as it must have been to have at least occasional contact with female friends, Katherine could not have gained from white women the kind of information she needed about types and sources of local bush tucker as it applied specifically to the regional landforms, waterways and vegetation of Trawalla. Only Moner balug women held this knowledge. Did her resourcefulness extend to the befriending of the Moner balug women?

Interracial Female Friendship?

Swapping recipes underlies many female friendships. While settlers could trade 'a piece of dress ... [or] a red pocket-handkerchief to tie round their necks' for Indigenous possum pelts and flying-fox skins,⁵⁸⁴ Katherine's need for Indigenous

⁵⁸⁴ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 14, p. 20.

‘recipes’ from Indigenous women’s knowledge of food supplies and preparation was a one-way process. Katherine, however, divulged this form of help only in hints. Without explaining how she knew such details, she informed her readers that the Aboriginal women dug up with long, pointed sticks, their staple food, maranong. Katherine had been pleased to use this white root for soup, describing it as ‘shaped like a carrot, but the taste is more like a turnip’. She had also tasted ‘manna’, which fell from eucalypts, identifying it as tasting like almond biscuits. Precise understanding that manna was available only at certain seasons of the year and could be gathered only before sunrise before it disappeared soon afterwards implies interracial ‘conversations’ in which the Moner balug explained, pointed out and took Katherine along with them to food sites at appropriate times for gathering.

Katherine’s admiration of Aboriginal food finding skills also points to a close relationship with the black women. She wrote that:

[The Aboriginal women] are also fond of a large grub found generally in the cherry and honeysuckle tree: they can tell, by knocking the tree with a stick, if any grubs are in it. When they knock the tree, they put their ear close to listen, and they open it with a tomahawk at the very spot the grubs are to be found.⁵⁸⁵

A gained knowledge of native foodstuffs was a solution to Katherine’s abhorrence of the settlers’ staple diet of ‘nothing but mutton, [black] tea, and damper three times a-day’.⁵⁸⁶ In order to show her readers ‘what good things we had in the bush’, she unashamedly revealed her 1841 New Year’s Day dinner menu, which incorporated Indigenous food into traditional British fare:

We had kangaroo-soup, roasted [wild] turkey well stuffed, a boiled leg of mutton, a parrot-pie, potatoes, and green peas; next, a plum pudding and strawberry-tart, with plenty of cream.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁵ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁸⁶ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 6.

⁵⁸⁷ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 23. The native turkey was a bustard, Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, p. 396.

Katherine also adopted Indigenous expertise in infant care. When Mary Forrester restricted her chores to washing or cooking (but never both together) and refused to help tend the children, Katherine copied the Aboriginal women's method of carrying a baby so that the hands remained free. While Katherine 'envied Mary sitting quietly in her own hut and sewing her own work', she got on with her chores in the dairy. 'If my baby would not sleep when I wanted him,' she wrote, 'I put him in a basket and hung him at my side, as I had seen the native women do'.⁵⁸⁸ Again, she did not elaborate on her source of knowledge. Just as there was no direct account of a food foraging trip, Katherine neither mentioned any Indigenous woman by name nor referred to direct communication with the women as a group.

Conflicting Appraisals of Race

As if to counteract the idea of close contact, Katherine underlined racial difference. Immediately after describing how Aboriginal women fed their babies, she added (albeit with some reservation) that:

When a black woman has a second child before the first can run about and take care of itself, it is said they eat the second one. I have been told this several times; but I am not certain if it is really the case, it is so unnatural; but it is well known they are cannibals, and I know they will not submit to anything that troubles them.⁵⁸⁹

As well as hints about the savage practices of infanticide and cannibalism, Katherine drew attention to the mystique of Aboriginal people who projected sometimes unfathomable (or easily misrepresented) intentions, writing that:

Sometimes the natives run like the emu, to deceive the white people; and they imitate them so well, that it is difficult, at a distance, to know them from a flock of emus. Occasionally they take a fancy to stand in such an attitude that you cannot, at a little distance, tell them from the burnt stump of a tree. I used often, when walking in the

⁵⁸⁸ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁸⁹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 14.

bush, to fancy a burnt stump was a native, and made myself believe I saw him move.⁵⁹⁰

Yet, she sympathised with Indigenous concerns about dwindling water sources. By reiterating the Aborigines' complaints partly in their own dialect, she here revealed direct cross-cultural communication through shared dialogue, writing that:

Many lakes, both salt and fresh, have dried up lately. The natives say it is the white people coming that drives away the water: they say, "Plenty mobeek long time, combarley white fellow mobeek gigot—in English, "Plenty water for a long time, but when the white people come, the water goes away."⁵⁹¹

Katherine also told her readers that she very much liked the 'native names' for rivers and landforms, declaring that, 'I think it a great pity to change them for English ones, as is often done'.⁵⁹² She also incorporated Indigenous terminology in her text, using for example 'tuan' to denote 'the flying squirrel', although including both terms on behalf of her British readers.

Her apparent closeness with Moner balug women, however, did not necessarily extend to Indigenous men. In an example of Indigenous male authority (and confidence in the absence of the white men), Katherine described how some Aborigines from a group of about 100 at that time at Trawalla came in when she was alone in her house:

[the Aborigines] examined all they saw very attentively, especially the pictures we had hanging on the walls. They were much taken with a likeness of my mother and laughed heartily at some black profiles; they said they were "black leubras." I told them to leave the hut, but they would not; and one, a very tall fellow, took the liberty of sitting down beside me on the sofa. I did not much like being alone with these gentry, so I rose to go

⁵⁹⁰ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 11.

⁵⁹¹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 8. A drought between 1837 and 1842 had precipitated water shortages, exacerbated by inroads of stock animals and the white man's injudicious use of precious water resources including the Bolac and Keilambete Lakes, oral communication from Roger Jones, CSIRO, Aspindale, Victoria. From 1839 to 1841, Lake Burrumbeet was completely dry, Anderson, *Flowers of the Field*, p. 182, note 8.

⁵⁹² Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 27.

to the door to call some one, but my tall friend took hold of my arm and made me sit down again; on which I cried out sufficiently loud to alarm my husband, who was building a hut behind. He came in and turned them out.⁵⁹³

Undercurrents of violence (a ‘silence’ to be discussed in due course) accompanied the resolution of this incident. Because the men ‘still kept hanging about the station’, Kirkland took his gun and shot some cockatoos flying overhead. Katherine’s literary resolution of a potentially conflictual situation was to return to the safe subject of food. She elaborated on this theme, recalling that:

Some of the natives ran and picked them up, and thrust them into some hot ashes, where they had lighted a fire, without even taking the feathers off. They were soon cooked in this way, and I believe ate very well.⁵⁹⁴

Allegiance to Middle-class Values: Always a Lady

Throughout her text, Katherine paid strict attention to projecting herself as a genteel British lady of good taste and character and who both appreciated and respected civilised standards despite her remote colonial location. Although residing in a slab hut, with one-inch gaps between the wooden boards that made up the walls, and initially without doors or windows,⁵⁹⁵ Katherine furnished her home with the refinements of Scottish gentility. One of the three rooms of her home was set aside as a ‘sitting room’ with a sofa and with family portraits decorating the walls.⁵⁹⁶

While not projecting her Christian beliefs as prominently as Eliza Davies and Mary McConnel (Chapter 6), Katherine nevertheless acknowledged religious observance as proper procedure. During the trip inland, she included details of public worship in the houses or woolsheds of the squatters who gave overnight accommodation. At Trawalla, Sunday services were offered but not enforced. She nevertheless reassured

⁵⁹³ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 20.

⁵⁹⁴ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 20.

⁵⁹⁵ Early windows often took the form of wooden shutters, before being replaced with glass panes.

⁵⁹⁶ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 3, p. 9, p. 20.

her readers that:

My husband or my brother read a sermon on Sunday; indeed we kept up the form of a religious service as near as we could. Generally all the servants joined us; but if they did not feel inclined of themselves to come, it was in vain to persuade them. I have sometimes seen our neighbours' servants come in also.⁵⁹⁷

In the above quote, Katherine identifies what K.S. Inglis has coined 'the spiritual destitution' of the 'lower orders' in mid-nineteenth-century England. In *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, Inglis quotes from the 1851 census report that most of the 'neglecters of the public ordinances of religion' belonged to 'the masses of our working population ... These are never or but seldom seen in our religious congregations'. Moreover, this was accepted knowledge in discussions on religion among believers.⁵⁹⁸ Katherine's discussion on the Trawalla workers' non-attendance at church was possibly a means of gently informing the middle-class Christians among her readers that working class indifference to religion unfortunately also applied to the Australian colony.

Katherine betrayed her own relaxed attitude towards Christianity in her recounting of an interchange between the Scotch clergyman from Melbourne and the Kirklands' bullock driver, as her weary group edged nearer to their new home at Trawalla. When the clergyman rebuked the bullocky for swearing at his bullocks, Katherine faithfully reported that the bullock driver 'told him that no one ever yet drove bullocks without swearing; it was the only way to make them go'.⁵⁹⁹ Her matter-of-fact account of her baby's christening in Melbourne offered details more attuned to the supposed historical interests of her readers than to those who were piously spiritual, when she related that:

Mr Clow christened our baby out of a basin which at one time belonged to the Barony church in Glasgow; it belonged to Mr Scott, whose grandfather had been minister of that church, and had got the

⁵⁹⁷ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 22.

⁵⁹⁸ K.S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, and University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1963, p. 1.

⁵⁹⁹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 7.

old basin when the church was repaired and a new one substituted.⁶⁰⁰

The inclusion of at least lip-service to the requirements of the Christian religion nevertheless established her authorial persona as a respectable Scotswoman in the eyes of those of her readers with strong religious convictions.

‘[O]ne of the two worst areas of racial violence in the colony’

Although violence is rarely mentioned in her text, Katherine was entering reputedly one of the two worst areas of racial violence in New South Wales during the late 1830s and early 1840s.⁶⁰¹ The earliest accounts of black-white contact at Port Phillip had included violent attack. In October 1803, one of Collins’s survey party shot dead two Indigenous men and wounded others on the northern shore of Corio Bay, the Wathaurong afterwards becoming ‘unfriendly’.⁶⁰² When Hamilton Hume and William Hovell traversed Wathaurong country in December 1824 at the end of their trek from Hume’s station north of Yass (300 kilometres south-west of Sydney), they too met with hostile Aborigines. Again, when the Henty family came to the Portland Bay region on the southern coast of eastern Australia in 1834, the Gunditjmarra took at least two months to approach. Noel Learmonth, whose forebears settled the area in 1842, assumed previous conflict as the cause for caution, observing that ‘the sealers and whalers of former years had no doubt driven the aborigines back from the locality’.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰⁰ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 13. The Reverend James Clow, a retired chaplain of the East India Company, officiated for the Melbourne Presbyterian Church from late 1837 until the arrival of the first minister Rev’d James Forbes, on 28 January 1838, *Kerr’s Melbourne Almanac and Port Phillip Directory for 1841*, p. 166; Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, p. 105.

⁶⁰¹ Jan Critchett, ‘Encounters in the Western District’, in Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, p. 52. The other main area of conflict is cited as the Liverpool Plains, north of Sydney. Although Critchett refers to the Portland Bay District of Port Phillip, this area roughly corresponds to the present Western District of Victoria.

⁶⁰² Clark, *Scars in the Landscape*, p. 173. Collins left Port Phillip in May 1804.

⁶⁰³ Henry Gyles Turner, *A History of the Colony of Victoria, From its Discovery to its Absorption into the Commonwealth of Australia in Two Volumes*, Volume I, A.D. 1797-1854 (1904), Heritage Publications, Melbourne, 1973, p. 59; Noel F. Learmonth, *The Portland Bay Settlement* (1934), Baulch Publications, Melbourne, 1983, p. 103. From 1802 to 1824, whalers and sealers are thought to have used Port Phillip Bay as temporary bases; in 1833 or 1834, a massacre of Aborigines by whalers is said to have taken place at the Convincing Ground, a site on the coast, Clark, *Scars on the Landscape*, p. 4.

From 1836, when the third exploratory expedition of Major (later Sir Thomas) Mitchell (Surveyor-General of New South Wales) opened up the Western District to pastoral pursuits, there were more fully enunciated reports of violent racial clashes in what Michael Cannon has called the ‘bloody confrontations’ of the early 1840s.⁶⁰⁴ Thomas Browne, who in 1842 drove cattle from Melbourne to Port Fairy, south-west of Trawalla, and from 1844 to 1858 ran the property, Squattlesea Mere in the Portland area, referred to ‘wrong-doing and violence, of maimed and slaughtered stock, of homicide and murder’.⁶⁰⁵ Stephen Roberts’ research into squatting in Australia concluded that in the Port Phillip region, ‘Seven or eight years of virtual terror set in after 1837 ... Practically every squatter had to reckon on the hostility of the natives’.⁶⁰⁶

In December 1840, the editor of the *Geelong Advertiser* expressed the bloody results of two cultures laying claim to the same territory:

The interests of the blacks and whites are directly at variance ... It is nonsense to say to the settlers, “Be kind to the poor blacks, we have injured them,” and such-like stuff. You might as well put a dozen cats into a room full of rats, and then tell them not to fight. You make them enemies and then wish them to be friends.

The aborigines require the unrestrained liberty of traversing the whole of their ancient possessions; while the settlers claim the undivided occupation of the richest tracts ... civilisation destroys the hunting fields of the aborigines. How, then, can they ever agree? Neither of them will change their dispositions or interests; they cross each other at every point. Continual animosities and outrages ensue; and hatred and revenge are engendered on both sides.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁴ Michael Cannon, *Who Killed the Koories? The true, terrible story of Australia’s founding years*, William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne, 1990, p. 85.

⁶⁰⁵ Browne (who later wrote under the pseudonym ‘Rolf Boldrewood’) had arrived with his family in Melbourne in 1840, aged 14, Rolf Boldrewood, *Old Melbourne Memories* (1884), William Heinemann Limited, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 54-55, p. xii; T. Inglis Moore, ‘Browne, Thomas Alexander [Rolf Boldrewood] (1826-1915)’, *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/browne-thomas-alexander-3085/text4563>, published in hardcopy 1969, accessed online 9 September 2014.

⁶⁰⁶ Stephen Roberts, *The Squatting Age in Australia, 1835-1847*, MUP, 1964, p. 333.

⁶⁰⁷ *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 December 1840, p. 2.

Violence was rife in 1839. Niel Black, a squatter on Glenormiston station, near present-day Terang, south of Trawalla, wrote that:

The best way [to procure a run] is to go outside and take up a new run, provided the conscience of the party is sufficiently seared to enable him without remorse to slaughter natives right and left. It is universally and distinctly understood that the chances are very small indeed of a person taking up a new run being able to maintain possession of his place and property without having recourse to such means – sometimes by wholesale ...

.⁶⁰⁸

On the southern reaches of Mount Emu Creek, 100 kilometres south-west of Trawalla, another squatter, Frederick Taylor, murdered between 35 and 40 men, women and children in 1839.⁶⁰⁹ According to Lorna Banfield, at least eleven Aborigines were shot between 1838 and 1841 in the Ararat district (west of Trawalla).⁶¹⁰ Peter Corris's ethnohistorical study has identified 159 Aboriginal deaths at the hands of Europeans before 1860 in present-day western Victoria.⁶¹¹

A prime cause of white aggression was the stealing of stores and animals or the spearing of livestock. In June 1837, the Yuilles, Russell, Henry Anderson and Joseph Sutherland shot at a large group of Wathaurong who had stolen clothing, bedding, provisions and livestock from Murgheboluc. Archibald Yuille is cited by George Augustus Robinson to have 'shot blacks'. Similar violations and settler reaction occurred at other Clyde Company stations in the Ballarat area between 1837 and 1839.⁶¹²

⁶⁰⁸ Diary entry of Niel Black, 9 December 1839, in Clark, *Scars in the Landscape*, p. 1.

⁶⁰⁹ Clark, *Scars in the Landscape*, p. 4, p. 105.

⁶¹⁰ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 34, p. 38; Banfield, *Like The Ark*, pp. 19-20.

⁶¹¹ Peter Corris, *Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria*, Occasional Papers in Aboriginal Studies No. 12, Ethnohistory Series No. 1, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1968, Appendix B, pp. 153-57.

⁶¹² Brown (ed.), *Narrative of George Russell*, p. 141, p. 143, p. 145. Murgheboluc was a collective name for a pre-1843 Ballarat locality (before definite runs evolved), where Russell and Yuille had interests, Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers*, p. 256; Ian D. Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, Volume One: 1 January 1839 - 30 September 1840*, Second Edition, Heritage Matters, Ballarat, Victoria, 2000, 11 February 1840, p. 156.

Already in 1837, settler fear of Aboriginal ‘attack’ had initiated requests for protection and resulted in Governor Bourke’s appointment of Captain Foster Fyans as Police Magistrate at Geelong. The number of Fyans’ support staff—consisting of a clerk of courts, three constables and twelve convicts—indicates the extent of racial discontent.⁶¹³ Also indicative of insecure race relations was the formation in London in 1836 of the Aborigines Protection Society, formed to lobby for legislative protection for Aborigines. Consequent to this action, the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate was created by the Colonial Office in January 1838.⁶¹⁴

By 1837, the frontier had reached the Ballarat area. George Russell, one of whose stations was Buninyong (Boninyong) near Ballarat, recorded that until 1838 most settlers chose to remain close to Geelong and Melbourne ‘for security against the outrages of the natives’. George Mercer, who reached the area in April 1838, stated that, ‘The Buninyong natives were occasionally troublesome, both in their own country and [beyond]’.⁶¹⁵ Between 1837 and 1839, Trawalla was at the frontier of black-white collision. Robert Hamilton noted that, a few months before Katherine’s arrival, ‘The natives were pretty numerous ... and did not seem too pleased’⁶¹⁶ when Yuille and Anderson attempted to settle a little south of Trawalla. A large grass fire, apparently lit by the Aborigines, frightened them and they withdrew with their sheep.⁶¹⁷ Hamilton also reported the ‘troublesome’ behaviour of the Wathaurong as the ‘mounted and armed’ settlers travelled through their country.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹³ Fergus Robinson and Barry York, *The Black Resistance: An introduction to the history of the Aborigines’ struggle against British Colonialism*, Widescope International Publishers Pty Ltd, Camberwell, Victoria, 1977, p. 30, p. 36. Although a Native Police Force was established in 1837, it was set up initially to find runaway convicts, Marie Hansen Fels, *Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District 1837-1853*, MUP, 1988, p. 7.

⁶¹⁴ Abandoned by 1850, the scheme—not only to protect but also to ‘assimilate, convert and civilise’ the Aborigines of Port Phillip—was deemed to have been largely a failure, A.G.L. Shaw, *A History of The Port Phillip District: Victoria Before Separation*, MUP, 1996, p. 143; Clark, *Scars in the Landscape*, p. 3.

⁶¹⁵ Brown (ed.), *Narrative of George Russell*, p. 161; Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, pp. 145-46.

⁶¹⁶ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 34.

⁶¹⁷ The reference in Hagger, ‘Kirkland, Katherine’ (<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kirkland-katherine-2312/text2997>) that ‘The previous owners of the selection [sic] had abandoned it through fear of the Aborigines’ may refer to this episode.

⁶¹⁸ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 34, p. 38.

While reports from the earliest settlers had estimated the Aboriginal population to be between 3,000 and 7,500 for the present State of Victoria, when the first official count was taken by the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in 1877, only 774 ‘natives of pure descent’ had survived, or 1,067 when including part-Indigenous people.⁶¹⁹ Correspondents to Bride’s *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* affirmed that by the early 1840s, the numbers of Aborigines had been very severely reduced and that by 1853 few remained on the pastoral lands of the Western District.⁶²⁰

Historians have located other contributing factors in Aboriginal depopulation, such as the diseases of measles, whooping cough, diphtheria, tuberculosis, influenza, and even the common cold, all of which proved fatal to a vulnerable Indigenous population. The introduction of venereal diseases was directly or indirectly detrimental.⁶²¹ In his synthesis of studies into the ‘doomed race’ hypothesis, Tim Rowse cites research that suggests that low birth rates among Indigenous women were due to a high incidence of syphilis and gonorrhoea at a time (before 1850) when the Aboriginal population in present-day Victoria may already have been reduced to 25-30 per cent.⁶²² Judy Campbell’s study into the role played by smallpox in Aboriginal deaths reveals the extent of, not only primary, but also secondary infections transmitted to Indigenous people who had not yet encountered the white man. People who were familiar with smallpox marks reported scars on Aborigines at Port Phillip Bay in 1803–30 years before European settlement had been established. Noel Butlin, while acknowledging the speculative aspects of evaluating the spread of

⁶¹⁹ *Aboriginals in Victoria*, Commonwealth Government Printing Unit, Melbourne, c. 1976, p. 3. Statistics from the first detailed Victorian census in Victorian Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, 1877-78, Vol. III, ‘Fourteenth Report’, Appendix X, p. 12, cited in Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists*, p. 16; Roberts, *Squatting Age in Australia*, p. 329.

⁶²⁰ Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, pp. 320-21.

⁶²¹ Jan Critchett, *Untold Stories: Memories and Lives of Victorian Kooris*, MUP, 1998, p. xx; N.G. Butlin, *Our Original Aggression: Aboriginal Populations of Southeastern Australia 1788-1850*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1983, pp. 57-58, p. 175.

⁶²² Tim Rowse, ‘Notes on the History of Aboriginal Population of Australia’, in Moses (ed.), *Genocide and Settler Society*, pp. 317-18. Although Rowse acknowledges depopulation of Indigenous people from 1788 to 1850, his argument is that, taking into consideration definitions of Aboriginality, the Indigenous population has recovered from 1895, and will continue to increase, due partly to marriage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

disease, supported the hypothesis that possible sources of smallpox could have been American whalers, a smallpox-stricken British ship, or even the Macassans from Indonesia. Butlin also suggested, however, that infection of the Aborigines with smallpox may have been a deliberate exterminating act.⁶²³

Michael Christie argues that disruption to Indigenous food supplies and dislocation of social and cultural life acted substantially to diminish the Aboriginal population.⁶²⁴ While F.B. Smith supports Christie's views, he extends the analysis into the decrease in Indigenous population to include expulsion from ancestral sites, dietary changes, alcoholism and 'the predominance of probably indigenous illnesses, rampaging amid concentration and despair'⁶²⁵ as possible causes of mortality. In 1846, William Westgarth thought that some of the causes of the already declining Aboriginal numbers were 'their own mutual wars ... the diseases and vices of European society', social disruption and infanticide. A contemporary of Westgarth, William Thomas, the assistant Protector of Aborigines in the Port Phillip Protectorate from 1838-1849, highlighted the 'dissipated habits' of Aborigines as a primary reason for population decline.⁶²⁶

Again, while Richard Broome argues that 'most deaths [on the Victorian frontier] were from the impact of diseases, malnutrition and psychic disruption from European invasion',⁶²⁷ other historians have highlighted the part played by European aggression, enacted via superior European weaponry. While encompassing other

⁶²³ Judy Campbell, *Invisible Invaders: Smallpox and Other Diseases in Aboriginal Australia 1780-1880*, MUP, 2002, p. 157. However, the face of William Buckley, who joined Wathaurong society in 1803, is described as 'very much marked by small-pox', Brown (ed.), *Narrative of George Russell*, p. 79; Butlin, *Our Original Aggression*, p. 58, p. 175. Cf. also, N.G. Butlin, 'Macassans and Aboriginal Smallpox: The "1789" and "1829" Epidemics', in *Working Papers in Economic History*, Working Paper No. 22, May 1984, ANU, Canberra, pp. 1-20.

⁶²⁴ Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835-86*, pp. 41-42, pp. 4-52 passim.

⁶²⁵ Barry Smith, 'The "History Wars" and Aboriginal Health', in *Australian Book Review*, No. 270, April 2005, p. 18.

⁶²⁶ William Westgarth, *A Report on the Condition, Capabilities and Prospects of the Australian Aborigines*, William Clarke, Melbourne, 1846, cited in Rowse, 'Notes on the History of Aboriginal Population of Australia', p. 313. Westgarth was a merchant, financier, politician and historian, Geoffrey Serle, 'Westgarth, William (1815-1889)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/westgarth-william-4830/text8057>, published in hardcopy 1976, accessed online 9 September 2014.

⁶²⁷ Richard Broome, 'The Statistics of Frontier Conflict', in Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, p. 95.

causes, violence is included in George Augustus Robinson's 1839 list of 'the evils accruing to the Aborigines by occupancy of their lands by the whites', namely, 'Disease of fatal character, hunger and distress, murder and rapine'.⁶²⁸ Fergus Robinson, Barry York and Jan Critchett have argued that the poisonings and violence of the 1830s and 1840s played a significant part in Aboriginal depopulation. Robinson and York concluded that 'by 1845 the Aborigines had suffered a devastating decimation of their numbers—a decline of more than fifty per cent—as a result of the British colonial aggression'.⁶²⁹

Not all contacts with the Wathaurong were confrontational. Although controversial in terms of racial manipulation and patronisation,⁶³⁰ negotiations for land 'purchase' at Indented Head, east of Geelong between Batman and the Wathaurong in 1835 resulted in a form of territorial contract. Some correspondents in Bride's 1853 *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* also revealed peaceful racial relations, as the frontier moved away from them to the west. For example, Alick Anderson (recorded as taking up Emu Creek station in 1840) stated that he was, 'Not troubled with blacks himself, but [there were] great complaints farther off'.⁶³¹ Banfield records that Colin Campbell was 'a great favourite with the natives. He studied their customs and read the Bible to them, and he thought they were worth educating'. Campbell also believed that '[Aboriginal people] are thoroughly human with just the same power for good and evil as other races ... What has been called treachery on their part might well have been called patriotism in our men'.⁶³² The Baillie brothers at Carngham, 12 kilometres from Trawalla, were also reportedly on friendly terms with the Wathaurong. Katherine's ambivalence towards Aborigines is evident in her attitude to the Baillies' leniency towards the Aborigines. She wrote that James Baillie was 'too

⁶²⁸ Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Volume One*, 21 April 1839, p. 31.

⁶²⁹ Jan Critchett, *Untold Stories*, p. 229; Robinson and York, *The Black Resistance*, p. 37.

⁶³⁰ Although Richard Broome suggests that Batman's 'performance was respectful of the [traditional] owners' (Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, Supported by La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2005, p. 10), Bain Attwood demonstrates the ephemeral nature of the contract, citing the statements of Rev'd Frank Engel (*The Land Rights of Australian Aborigines*, 1965) that Aborigines 'had no legal rights to land' and 'no treaties or contracts and no legal recognition of Aboriginal title to land', Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2003, p. 290, p. 292. Cf. Bain Attwood, with Helen Doyle, *Possession: Batman's Treaty and the Matter of History*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Victoria, 2009.

⁶³¹ Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, p. 321.

⁶³² Banfield, *Like The Ark*, p. 34.

kind to them, and gave them great encouragement in his own hut', allowing them to remain 'as long as they chose'.⁶³³

While Katherine maintained narrative silence on aggressive action against the Moner balug at Trawalla, pictorial and oral evidence point to her knowledge of violence. Her sketch on the title page of 'Life in the Bush' (*Chambers's Miscellany*, 1845) depicts in the foreground at Trawalla an armed settler aiming a rifle at a retreating Indigenous family group. One of the Aboriginal men turns towards the two settlers, spear poised for throwing. It seems unlikely that the publisher is deploying a cliché because the same drawing forms part of an illustrated map of the Kirklands' 1838 sea voyage to Australia, reproduced in the entry of Katherine's family, 'Hamilton of Polkemnet', in *Henderson's Australian Families*.⁶³⁴ Although this sort of evidence is difficult to interpret, the detail in slab huts, rooflines, fences and farm equipment suggests that the image depicts Trawalla and is not merely conventional. Violence at Trawalla is supported by anecdotal evidence attributed to Robert Hamilton, who is said to have told his grandchildren that, 'Because of his brother-in-law's treatment of aboriginals, he feared that his sister was exposed to danger'.⁶³⁵

How to represent a brutal frontier?

While Katherine omitted current instances of open black or white aggression, and glossed over reference to racial tension, her depiction of the armed escort of fellow Scots, who met the Kirklands and accompanied them inland, spoke graphically of the perception of danger from which the settler support system endeavoured to protect each new arrival. Kirkland and Hamilton automatically joined the force as extra recruits. It also showed how the settlers were ready to take the law into their own

⁶³³ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 20.

⁶³⁴ Alexander Henderson, *Henderson's Australian Families: A Genealogical and Biographical Record*, A. Henderson Publisher, Melbourne, 1941, p. 339, where Katherine's drawing illustrates a larger picture entitled, 'Course of the barque "Renown" from Greenock to Hobart Town, V.D.L. 1838'. In 'Life in the Bush', mountains have been sketched as background, perhaps as a form of graphic appeal for Scottish readers? In Mackenzie's 1995 edition of *Life in the Bush*, the aggressive foreground figures have been erased from the image on the title page.

⁶³⁵ Anderson, *Flowers of the Field*, p. 16. The dilemma of interpreting undocumented evidence is presented by the sight of round holes in the slab walls of an original outbuilding adjacent to Trawalla homestead. Do they silently attest to frontier conflict? Not large enough to sight a gun, were they auger holes made big enough for a gun barrel? On the other hand, if they are gun or bullet holes, to what historical time do they apply?

hands. The contingent that set off from Point Henry was a large group, operating under the precept of safety in numbers, and prepared for the worst:

We were a noisy party ... The spring-cart went first, then came the five drays, and all the gentlemen walking alongside, with the dogs running beside them. Most of the gentlemen had either pistols at their sides or a gun in their hands.⁶³⁶

The aura of danger implicit in this depiction fills the gaps left by Katherine's textual reticence.

Although Katherine avoided direct mention of a brutal frontier, she referred to it in indirect ways. In telling of the 'horror' she felt when she passed through the 'Murderer's Valley'⁶³⁷ (where a shepherd had been killed by Aborigines before the Kirklands' arrival), she hinted at past racial violence, without divulging details of racial conflict during her own time of settlement. In relation to current events, she pointed enigmatically to 'the occasional frights ... from natives, with whom it was no easy matter to be on good terms', before turning to the safer topic of troublesome dingoes.⁶³⁸ When she chose to elaborate on one of these 'frights', she emphasised the elements of danger and excitement that would appeal to a voyeuristic British readership's interest in nude savages and solitary women and children on an isolated colonial frontier. She wrote that, when she and Mary were alone with the children,

We [saw] seven wild natives run past our hut at a little distance, all naked, which gave us a great fright; I thought Mary was going into a fit. I got my pistol which I had hanging in my room, loaded; Mary then went for hers, and we walked up and down before the hut for about an hour.⁶³⁹

The ready recourse to weapons in this example reveals the ever-present threat of

⁶³⁶ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 3.

⁶³⁷ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 24.

⁶³⁸ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 18.

⁶³⁹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 18.

violence, with or without actual conflict.⁶⁴⁰ Although quiet on the reason, Katherine also referred in her text to the fact that ‘old settlers would give an enormous price for good fire-arms’.⁶⁴¹ Such comments however remain incidental to her colonial story, which revolved around her daily activities, some of which involved (what appeared to be) close and friendly contact with Aboriginal women.

Indigenous ‘attack’ without retribution?

Katherine showed that she was able to represent both sides of the frontier in her comment that: ‘In many instances the undue severities of the settlers lead to reprisals from the natives, who were apt to inflict vengeance in a very indiscriminate manner’.⁶⁴² In reporting a bushfire that raged for 60 kilometres along the track near Ballarat in 1839, she similarly failed to ascribe blame to the Aborigines, presenting the facts objectively:

The fires in the bush are often the work of the natives, to frighten the white men; and sometimes of the shepherds, to make the grass sprout afresh. A conflagration not unfrequently happens from someone shaking out a tobacco-pipe (for every one smokes); and at this season the grass is so dry, that it soon catches fire.⁶⁴³

Her account of the theft of sheep from Trawalla presents a confusing message. While Niel Black wrote that most settlers considered bullets to be the surest deterrent against sheep stealing,⁶⁴⁴ Katherine omitted any reference to retaliatory action. Furthermore, she made use of the event to highlight Indigenous skills and expertise.

⁶⁴⁰ Katherine’s defiant show of force replicates other accounts from outback locations, where female colonists, in anticipation of trouble, often dressed as men as they brandished their firearms and paraded outside their huts. Cf., for example, Ann King, *The Richmond River Experiences of Ann King: Later on Mrs T.N. Hollingworth, and now Mrs H. Dawe, believed to be the oldest living resident of the Richmond River*, D.S. Ford, Sydney, 1929, reprinted from 1st edition, the *Northern Star*, Lismore, 1918, p. 2 (unpaginated). Other narratives that refer to women’s ready access to guns are Mrs Abraham Wallace, (Matilda Hill), *Twelve Years’ Life in Australia: From 1859 to 1871*, ?South Australia, n.d., (p. 13); and Mary McMaugh, *Pioneering on the Upper Macleay. Peeps into the Past: The Days of Yore*, Chronicle Print, Wingham, NSW, 192-?, (p. 6).

⁶⁴¹ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 11.

⁶⁴² Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, pp. 20-21.

⁶⁴³ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 7.

⁶⁴⁴ Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria*, p. 40.

Some time in 1840 and (as Katherine is perhaps careful to observe) when Kirkland was 'at the settlement', 92 sheep went missing. James Hamilton, Trawalla workers and neighbouring landholders went in pursuit of them, Katherine reporting that:

At last, after fourteen days' riding, the sheep were found a hundred and forty miles [225 kilometres] from our station. My brother and his friends had almost given up thoughts of looking any longer for them; but they rode on about a mile farther, when they saw them in a hollow, surrounded by about a hundred natives. The men all hid themselves, having seen the party coming, and left the women and children, who ran about chattering, and hiding behind the rocks. The party rode down among them, and a singular scene met their view. The ground was strewn with heads of sheep and bits of mutton, and some of the sheep were as well cut up as if done by an English butcher; the skins were pegged out on the ground, and the fat collected in little twine bags, which the women make of the bark of a tree. Fifty live sheep were enclosed within a brush fence (James said it was the best brush fence he had seen in the country), but they were very thin, the natives being too lazy to take them out to feed. They were killing and eating them up as fast as they could.⁶⁴⁵

The story reported by Katherine hinted at racial conflict without providing details. Resting overnight with the sheep, the settlers kept a lookout in case the Wathaurong took 'aim at them, as they knew they were among the rocks, and very likely watching them, although they did not show themselves'. Katherine also recorded that the white men took away with them the spoils of the raid, their horses 'loaded with spears, tomahawks, waddies, and baskets, which they had taken from the natives'.⁶⁴⁶ What she chose to highlight of the return trip, however, was the agility of the young Aboriginal tracker:

The native boy mounted a horse, saying he would not walk a step; but as he mounted he

⁶⁴⁵ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 17. Did Katherine inflate Indigenous ingenuity? Colin Campbell who, with his brother Alexander, Sandy Forrester and the Indigenous boy, Charley, joined the pursuit, wrote that the sheep were found on the afternoon of the second day, Anderson, *Flowers of the Field*, pp. 16-17.

⁶⁴⁶ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, pp. 17-18.

slipped off again, and the horse started on; the little fellow caught hold of the tail, and allowed himself to be dragged on till he got a good firm hold, and then sprung on the horse's back. James said he never saw a cleverer piece of agility in a circus.⁶⁴⁷

Whether Katherine reiterated these accounts as told to her by Hamilton, and was ignorant of possible violent elements in the encounter, or whether a narrative decision of omission and addition was entirely her own, her account joins the genre of what Tom Griffiths has referred to as 'veiled' reports of frontier life.⁶⁴⁸

Contrasting with Katherine's bland account are the diary notes of Annie Baxter (later Dawbin), who wrote explicitly of the sort of retribution that followed Aboriginal harm to precious livestock. Just three years after Katherine had left the Western District in 1841, Annie and her husband Andrew, a former Lieutenant in the 50th Regiment, settled at Yambuck, near Port Fairy⁶⁴⁹ to the south-west of Trawalla. Armed with pistols, guns, a rifle and a sword, Annie herself and three men (Andrew was away) pursued the 'wretches' who had speared a cow (and possibly a bull). As the men opened fire at close range, Annie reported that: 'I closed my eyes, and said "Poor creatures, may God forgive us!'. Afterwards, 'the work of destruction' began: the 'burning of mia-mias—killing of puppies—breaking spears—& bottles; bags, rugs, everything pitched into the fire'. Like Hamilton, Annie pilfered bags, spears and kangaroo skins.⁶⁵⁰ While the Aborigines at Yambuck were 'punished' for spearing stock, were the Wathaurong merely to be praised for their skills in butchery, animal husbandry and handicraft after they stole what Colin Campbell reported as '100 valuable ewes',⁶⁵¹ half of which the Aborigines had already eaten?

A comparative analysis of Annie Baxter's private journal notes of 1846 and her 1873

⁶⁴⁷ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 18.

⁶⁴⁸ Cf. Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, pp. 106-109, pp. 113-15.

⁶⁴⁹ Browne, *Old Melbourne Memories*, p. 199, note p. 205.

⁶⁵⁰ Even this account is confusing because one of the men told Annie that there were only women and children visible, so allowed another member of the party to fire 'over their heads', Lucy Frost, *A face in the glass: The journal and life of Annie Baxter Dawbin*, William Heinemann Australia, Port Melbourne, Victoria, 1992, pp. 86-87, diary notes, 4 June 1846. Cf. also Jan Critchett, *A 'distant field of murder': Western District Frontiers 1834-1848*, MUP, 1992, p. 30.

⁶⁵¹ Anderson, *Flowers of the Field*, p. 16.

published version of events reveals the influences and constraints that may have persuaded Katherine to remain silent on retribution in her own published work. In 1873, Annie chose to racially polarise Aborigines and settlers: the former depicted as primitive, black wrongdoers, the latter their victims—the white protectors of civilised endeavour. To underline her stereotypes, she depicted the Aborigines as ‘demons’ with white and ochre-painted bodies covered only with small skins worn around their hips and waist, and living in unswept huts. Instead of revealing her own part in the killing of Aborigines, she included in her published version a peaceful reconciliation brokered between herself and an Aboriginal leader. Her portrayal of another raid against the Aborigines with neighbouring landholders (here, unlike in her journal, remaining unnamed) resulted in one ‘accidental’ shooting. Again, instead of admitting settler (and her own) involvement in attacks, Annie stated that a contingent of Native Police were ‘sent down to the Portland district, under the charge of a most efficient officer, who had the corps in excellent order and discipline and they frightened their sable brethren into better manners’.⁶⁵² Compared with the journal entry, this portrayal deflects guilt from the white man onto his agents, the Native Police, and is filled with the euphemisms for violence seen in Emily Cowl’s narrative. Katherine, however, appears to transmute (probable) unsavoury details on the frontier into a complimentary assessment of her co-inhabitants.

Publish or Penury?

The Kirklands were not to know that their foray into colonial farming corresponded with the start of a severe economic depression. Edward Curr, who in February 1841 began management of the family farm Wolfscrag, 120 kilometres north-east of Trawalla, wrote of the ‘ruinous conditions under which squatting was ... generally carried on’ in the time before and during the 1841 financial crash, explaining that:

... irrespective of ... the purchase money, the outgoing in wages, the purchase of horses, bullocks, rams and supplies exceeded my receipts on wool about £1000; against which there was to be placed a thousand lambs—worth, say a shilling a head—and the difference

⁶⁵² Mrs Andrew Baxter, *Memories of the Past: a Lady in Australia*, W.H. Williams, Melbourne, 1873, pp. 81-84.

in value, whatever it might have been, between the excellent country which I had taken up and the scrubby desert which I had abandoned. In addition ... I found, when I arrived in Melbourne with my clip of wool, that the depreciation which had occurred in station property since the date of my father's purchase [December 1840] was not less than *fifty per cent*. In fact, a stagnation of business was preceding the commercial storm which was about to burst, and the sins of reckless speculation, easy-going banking, champagne revels, and fast living were about to be atoned for by something very like the general insolvency of the community.⁶⁵³

Writing of 1840, Katherine confirmed that 'provisions were now exorbitant in price ... This advance of prices pressed very hard upon the settlers, so that we determined to have no unnecessary expense at the station'. At the same time, 'meat, butter and cheese, were unfortunately for the farmers, the only things which fell in price'.⁶⁵⁴ The 1841 *Votes and Proceedings* of Council report stated that, 'By the close of 1841, the commercial distress was worse, and observers spoke of a "state of distress and embarrassment, unparalleled within the memory of its oldest inhabitants" ... '.⁶⁵⁵ Drought exacerbated the hardship. Even the sons of baronet, Sir William Baillie, who in 1838 invested £4000 in the 30,000 acre Carngham station, were penniless by 1842. In 1843, James and Thomas Baillie sold their run at auction together with 3,500 sheep and all their farming equipment for £950.⁶⁵⁶

When, in early 1841, the Kirklands left Trawalla in the hands of James Hamilton,⁶⁵⁷ Katherine did not mention financial hardship, stating instead that:

We began to think that there were too many masters at one station; and my husband's relations at home had expressed their surprise that he did not leave the young men to

⁶⁵³ Wolfscrag, near the 'Major's line' and present-day Heathcote, was taken up by Curr's father in December 1840. Edward managed it briefly before moving to the Goulburn River area, E.M. Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*, p. viii, pp. 98-99.

⁶⁵⁴ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, pp. 15-16, p. 18.

⁶⁵⁵ Roberts, *The Squatting Age in Australia*, p. 191.

⁶⁵⁶ Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers*, p. 20, p. 188; Brown (ed.), *Narrative of George Russell*, p. 212.

⁶⁵⁷ Trawalla was sold by James Hamilton and H.B. Hassell to Adolphus Goldsmith in 1841, Anderson, *Flowers of the Field*, p. 20.

manage the station, and find something to do near town.⁶⁵⁸

The influence of Scottish relations, unfamiliar with colonial egalitarianism and concerned that Kirkland had turned to manual work, may have been a predisposing factor in the family's decision to move to a 40-acre agricultural farm on the Darebin Creek, north-west of Melbourne.⁶⁵⁹ The Kirklands moved again soon afterwards when Katherine developed a severe bronchial complaint following her efforts to control a fire break around their tents during a bushfire. On 19 July 1841, Katherine opened a short-lived 'Seminary for young ladies ... for a few boarders and a limited number of day scholars'⁶⁶⁰ in Melbourne, before closing it because of ill-health. Kirkland served as registrar of the Court of Requests for six months, and as a clerk of the Magistrates' Bench.⁶⁶¹ Following a 'severe and unexpected pecuniary disappointment from home', Katherine sailed for Britain with her children on 7 September 1841 aboard the barque, *Brilliant*.⁶⁶² In July 1842, Kirkland was declared insolvent and forced to sell his colonial estate. His friends raised money for his passage to Scotland where he returned in 1842, broken physically and financially.⁶⁶³

In Britain, Katherine turned to one of the few remunerated activities open to middle-class women in nineteenth-century Britain (particularly if they remained anonymous).⁶⁶⁴ A connection by marriage to the Chambers brothers may have smoothed her path to publication: Kenneth Kirkland's cousin, James Muir Dowie,

⁶⁵⁸ Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 24. 'Bulgana', 'First Days of Trawalla: A Scottish Invasion', in the *Australasian*, 28 November 1931, p. 4, suggests that a 'certain incompatibility of temperament led to a separation'.

⁶⁵⁹ Hagger, 'Kirkland, Katherine' (<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kirkland-katherine-2312/text2997>).

⁶⁶⁰ *Port Phillip Gazette*, 21 July 1841, p. 1.

⁶⁶¹ Hagger, 'Kirkland, Katherine', (<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kirkland-katherine-2312/text2997>); Brown (ed.), *Clyde Company Papers, Volume III*, p. 82; *Port Phillip Herald*, 12 November 1841, p. 3.

⁶⁶² Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, p. 32; *Port Phillip Gazette*, 8 September 1841, p. 2.

⁶⁶³ Hagger, 'Kirkland, Katherine', (<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kirkland-katherine-2312/text2997>); *Port Phillip Gazette*, 28 May 1842, p. 2; Correspondence from W.M. Bell to George Russell, 11 January 1842, in Brown (ed.), *Clyde Company Papers, Volume III*, pp. 166-67. Kenneth Kirkland is believed to have later emigrated to Canada, where he lived until his death. Katherine remained in Britain, where she died in 1892, Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁶⁴ Jane Austen, Emily, Anne and Charlotte Bronte, Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot) and the Australian writer, Ethel Florence (Henry Handel) Richardson are well-known examples.

had married Annie Chambers, the daughter of Robert Chambers. Or Robert's interest in evolutionary theory may have opened doors to Katherine's narrative because it dealt with Aborigines. In 1844, he had published anonymously the evolutionary treatise, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*.⁶⁶⁵ A wide readership through the popularity of *Chambers's Miscellany* between 1845 and 1847 was perhaps a reason for Katherine's circumspect appraisal of a violent frontier and for her veiled reference to interracial relationship.

Conclusion

Life in the Bush is a pivotal text in the history and historiography of interracial frontier relationships. Published in the period before Aborigines had established a position in colonial station life, it pinpoints a time when the emerging dichotomy of 'wild blacks' and 'station Aborigines' was still being played out at Trawalla.⁶⁶⁶ Katherine's narrative encapsulates the confusion of this changing social climate. Furthermore, as a trailblazer in the historiography of friendship between Indigenous and white women on Australia's raw frontier, Katherine—unable to foresee her readers' acceptance—was uncertain about how to represent an interracial relationship that involved Indigenous female help. Her place in the historiography of female frontier friendship emerges only by deciphering the meaning behind her omissions and by interpreting the textual hints. Unlike Katherine, women who later wrote of their inland experiences told of their delight in taking part in bush walks and food foraging trips with Aboriginal women and children. One was Katie Langloh Parker, who wrote of the Noongahburrah women, members of the larger Euahlayi group:

I shall never forget my rambles through the Bush with a retinue of natives. I learnt that every distinctive bit of nature—say a heap of white stones, the red mistletoe, the gnarled dark excrescences on the trees, and so on, each had its legend. How interesting the hearing of them made my bush life, and how it increased my sympathy for the natives and widened my Bush horizons.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁵ W. Chambers, *Story of A Long and Busy Life*, W. & R. Chambers, Edinburgh and London, 1882, p. 93; Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 44.

⁶⁶⁶ Charlotte Fisher's 1839 reference to 'civilised natives' earlier in this chapter demonstrates the resolution of this development around Geelong by 1839.

⁶⁶⁷ Marcie Muir, *My Bush Book: K. Langloh Parker's 1890s story of outback station life, Part Two: Based on the notebooks of an old-time squatter's wife 1879-1901*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1982, pp. 146-47. Others were: Ethel Hassell, *My Dusky Friends*; Connie Ellis, who lived

Katherine also seemed to be caught between the pull to reiterate the British preconceptions and stereotypes of colonial scenes and their Indigenous inhabitants as strange and wild, and a realisation when she lived among the Moner balug at Trawalla that these assumptions were misplaced. This tension infiltrates the text that both pays homage to British middle-class values while also displaying a need to fairly represent the Aboriginal people. As the period of writing corresponded with soaring imperial confidence, Australian colonists were apt to express their racial superiority without reservation. An example comes from the Rev'd A.J. Campbell, minister of St George's Presbyterian Church, Geelong, who wrote in 1862 of the white man's God-given right to cultivate the earth and to graze animals because, 'If the aborigines make no use either of the grass-covered surface or of the fertile soil, I think we are ... entitled to put our sheep on one, and our ploughs into the other'. In acknowledging that Aborigines had been 'poisoned, shot down, demoralized, and slain by drink and loathsome disease', Campbell accepted as inevitable that 'the white man's progress involves the black man's disappearance'.⁶⁶⁸ George Russell's assessment of Aboriginal deceit and unreliability (and with no reflection on the role of misunderstanding) when an Aboriginal lad failed to comply with Russell's order to deliver a letter, similarly reflected assumptions of white authority over Aborigines, who were expected to be obedient and useful under the control of a superior race.⁶⁶⁹

on stations in south-western Queensland from 1889, Constance Jane Ellis, *I Seek Adventure: an Autobiographical Account of Pioneering Experiences in Outback Queensland from 1889 to 1904*, Alternative Publishing Co-operative Ltd, Sydney, 1981; Jeannie Gunn, *The Little Black Princess: A True Tale of Life in the Never-Never Land* (1905), Alexander Moring Ltd, London; Melville and Mullen, Melbourne, 1906; and Alice Duncan-Kemp (Mooraberrie, in Queensland's Channel Country) in the early twentieth century. A.M. Duncan-Kemp's books include *Our Channel Country: Man and Nature in South-west Queensland*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1961, and *Where Strange Gods Call*, W.R. Smith & Paterson Pty Ltd, Brisbane, 1968. Also cf. K. Langloh Parker, *The Euahlayi Tribe: A Study of Aboriginal Life in Australia*, Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd, London, 1905, and Marcie Muir, 'Stow, Catherine Eliza Somerville (Katie) (1856-1940)', *ADB*, *NCB*, *ANU*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stow-catherine-eliza-katie-8691/text15205>, published in hardcopy 1990, accessed online 9 September 2014. For a discussion on this subject, cf. Barbara (Chambers) Dawson, 'Sisters under the skin? Friendship: Crossing the racial gulf', in *Crossings*, Vol. 7.3, Australian Studies Centre, University of Queensland, December 2002, e-journal: <http://asc.uq.edu.au/crossings>

⁶⁶⁸ 'A.J.C. of Geelong', in *The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record*, 1 December 1862, cited in Graeme M. Griffin, *They Came to Care: Pastoral Ministry in Colonial Australia*, Joint Board of Christian Education, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 83-85.

⁶⁶⁹ Brown (ed.), *Narrative of George Russell*, p. 147.

As a supportive wife who complied with the process of settlement, Katherine both reflected British attitudes, while seemingly qualifying and questioning them.

Katherine nevertheless revealed through her silences frontier complications associated with the mix of racial conflict and interracial friendship. Although it is clear that she was aware of actual clashes and the threat of violence, her silence on the subject replicates Tom Griffiths' observation that, on (and of) the frontier, 'murder could not be openly discussed'. Furthermore, her omissions demonstrate that the 'shifts in interpretation' that Chilla Bulbeck attached to the part played by memory in secondary reports of the frontier (as found in 'books ... docu-drama, national celebrations and monuments'⁶⁷⁰) could similarly apply to a primary source. Unlike Emily Cowl, who couched murder in euphemistic terms, Katherine slanted her interpretation of frontier violence by referring to it in general terms that did not specify the activities of her own family.

⁶⁷⁰ Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 106; Chilla Bulbeck, 'Aborigines, Memorials and the History of the Frontier', in John Rickard and Peter Spearritt (eds), *Packaging the Past? Public Histories*, Australian Historical Studies, MUP, 1991, p. 168.

To express her gratitude to the Moner balug women for generously sharing with her their vital dietary knowledge, Katherine lacked a preceding body of literature to which she might contribute her own experiences, and to which she might refer for ideas on how to express interracial closeness. Instead, she resorted to masked references. Her debt to Indigenous women is perhaps indirectly acknowledged in her recognition and acceptance of Aboriginal culture and in her empathy with Indigenous concerns. These sentiments are sometimes placed incongruously within her narrative, either incidentally or perhaps deliberately to avoid reference to (or to deflect attention from) the harsh reality of interracial clashes.

While choosing to hide an emerging relationship with Indigenous women and the realities of frontier conflict, Katherine nevertheless painted a vivid picture of the Wathaurongs' first contact reaction to British women and children. Her portrayal of their confident curiosity and friendliness not only opens a window onto their fascination with British clothing, but it also gives modern readers an insight into their opinion of Europeans. While Katherine's reports of interaction with the Wathaurong provided an exotic element for her nineteenth-century readers, by looking behind the frontier divide she has allowed to emerge illuminating glimpses of the Aborigines' image of the foreigners as a source of amusement.

A similar confidence is seen in Wathaurong pride, honour and cohesive identity, which Katherine described in their traditional welcoming ceremony. The corroboree's dramatic power reveals the Aborigines' sense of territorial authority in the early days of white settlement, before the rapid decline and demise of their social and cultural cohesion by the mid-1840s. By depicting their pride of land ownership in 1839 and 1840, Katherine's text has captured the last years of pre-colonial Indigenous hunter-gatherer society.

Katherine Kirkland's commentary of 1844 remains trapped within a larger story waiting to be told. As a forerunner in the genre of black-white frontier relationships, this early colonial text sets the scene for the interpretation of the accounts of other women from different inland locations and of different times. The narratives

discussed in the following two chapters of this thesis are by women who inhabit ground (geographically and culturally) on which the events of colonisation have determined that a different type of interracial relationship evolve. How that relationship was represented depended on the values and beliefs of the colonial 'beholders' and the way they chose to report the unfolding scene for publication. The works of Mary McConnel and Rose Scott Cowen have moved on and beyond the veiled references of *Life in the Bush* to present a 'clearer' picture of interracial relationship, albeit from their own points of view.



David and Mary McConnel (*Memories of Days long gone by*).



Map 6: Mary McConnel

Mary McConnel: Motivated by Paternalism and Evangelism

‘[T]he natives ... are being thoroughly well cared for, humanely and wisely treated’.⁶⁷¹

Introduction

Mary McConnel’s frontier was south-eastern Queensland, formerly the scene of brutal black-white conflict. By the time Mary wrote about Cressbrook, her husband’s property near Toogoolawah, 25 kilometres north of Esk and 200 kilometres north-west of Brisbane, the settlers had emerged the victors, to reign over a tamed environment of both people and landscape. Only hints of what occurred find their way into Mary’s narrative and these relate to the distant past. The frontier that Mary knew, when she came as the young wife of a successful landholder, was of a large settler establishment, consisting of a pastoral property with its resident Aboriginal helpers who apparently were working to assist the McConnells’ plans for a civilised and progressive enterprise.

The strength of Mary’s evangelical and civilising motives places her as a ‘good’ woman with the best of intentions. Her superior social standing, both in the early years from 1849 to 1878 of which she writes, and in her later years in the early twentieth century when her reminiscences were published, supports her assumptions of racial authority and the right of control over the Indigenous people she met. Even with hindsight, she rationalised her past actions without renegotiating her original intentions. Her attitudes place her in a wider imperial context whereby British women imagined women of other races as unfortunate and ‘helpless colonial subjects’ in need of saving.⁶⁷²

⁶⁷¹ Mary McConnel, *Memories of Days long gone by, By the Wife of an Australian Pioneer*, [M. McConnel, Brisbane?, 1905], p. 45. An alternative title on the spine is ‘Queensland Reminiscences 1848-1870’.

⁶⁷² Antoinette M. Burton, ‘The White Woman’s Burden: British Feminists and “The Indian Woman,” 1865-1915’, in Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (eds), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1992, p. 137.

In one particular, spectacular move, Mary displayed the imperviousness of her cultural confidence. In 1853, when she and her family returned to Britain for nine years, she authoritatively took with her an Aboriginal boy, Alpin Durundur, with the aim of educating, christianising and civilising him. The experiment, initially successful, ultimately failed. When Alpin wished to return to his people, having arrived in Brisbane in 1862, the McConnells put him on board a ship to send him back to England. He managed however to escape by swimming to shore.

Mary's memoir, *Memories of Days long gone by. By the Wife of an Australian Pioneer*,⁶⁷³ was written when the author, after a life of private good works and public service, was over 80 years old. Although ostensibly recording her experiences for her children,⁶⁷⁴ Mary's reference to 'my husband' and to her children in the third person suggests that she had in mind a wider audience. Within 58 pages of broadly chronological narrative, unstructured by chapters or headings, she covered details of her life at Cressbrook and, until 1853,⁶⁷⁵ at Bulimba—the property McConnel established in 1850 on the south side of the Brisbane River, 8 kilometres downstream from the settlement. To complement her reminiscences, Mary provided an excerpt from her 1877 diary and some historical notes on the origins of the names of geographical locations at Cressbrook. Showing her awareness of the interest in shipwreck tales (as well as the prevalence of them) she ended her narrative with a story of her providential escape after the steamer, *Queen of the Thames*, was shipwrecked at Cape Agulhas, southern Africa, on 18 March 1871⁶⁷⁶ on one of Mary's voyages to England. Her daughter, Mary Macleod Banks, born in England in 1861, published her own memoir *Memories of Pioneer Days in Queensland* in 1931, presenting a complementary and qualifying perspective of life at Cressbrook, where the author spent her childhood.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷³ The date of publication is tentative. The ML copy has an inscription by author, dated March 1909, 'David Cannon McConnel Biographical File', ADB files, ANU Archives.

⁶⁷⁴ Mary ended her narrative in 1878 because her children 'were acquainted with the subsequent years of my life, and my pen is not needed to recall them here', McConnel, *Memories*, p. 52.

⁶⁷⁵ Mary's first return to Britain was on 13 December 1853, 'Departure for Sydney of *Iron Prince* with passengers, Mr and Mrs D.C. McConnel, nurse and child', *Moreton Bay Courier*, 17 December 1853, p. 2.

⁶⁷⁶ I have used the date of the shipwreck cited in Clem Lack, 'Historic Bulimba House', in *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Bulletin*, No. 282, August 1970, p. 4.

⁶⁷⁷ Mary Macleod Banks, *Memories of Pioneer Days in Queensland*, Heath Cranton Limited, London, 1931. Attached to the first page of an NLA copy of *Memories of Days* is a 26 October 1921 letter from Mary Banks to a male recipient of her mother's book.

While Emily Cowl brought her medicine chest and Katherine Kirkland her tentative, elevated social standards, Mary had carried to the inland her firm intention to assist the Aborigines, whom she saw as being in need of ‘improvement’—an idea sustained in the nineteenth century by Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism. Mary hoped to achieve this aim through British example and Christian teaching. Kindly, energetic and sincere, she fitted the nineteenth-century paternalistic mould of patronisation and benevolence towards the ‘lower orders’, whether black or white.⁶⁷⁸ She possessed, in the words of Said, the ‘profound and ubiquitous power of [a] self-aggrandising authority’ to both ‘reinforce and justify’ her ends.⁶⁷⁹

Privileged by Background

Mary Macleod and David Cannon McConnel’s marriage on 25 April 1848 at Old Grey Friars’ Church, Edinburgh, brought together two genteel families. Born in Edinburgh on 4 January 1824,⁶⁸⁰ Mary was the daughter of Alexander Macleod, an inland revenue commissioner, and Katharine, born Rose. In Edinburgh, the family lived in the comfortable southern residential areas of Newington and Morningside and later, at Lauriston, north-west of the city. Mary had three older brothers, one of whom drowned as a child after falling through thin ice. Two other brothers and a sister had died, leaving her two older brothers, a younger brother, Walter, and a sister, eight years younger than Mary. Her eldest brother also died from an illness contracted during his service as naval medical officer in the Crimean War. An interest in health, particularly of children, remained with Mary throughout her life. Well-educated (her father set ‘a high value on education’), she was taught initially by a tutor, along with her then three older brothers. Later, she attended a ‘Ladies’ school’ and, with Walter, three years her junior, went to Henderson Academy where, ‘boys and girls were taught together’.⁶⁸¹

David McConnel, the eleventh child and fifth surviving son of a prosperous (Scottish)

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. D. Roberts, *Paternalism in Early Victorian England*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1979.

⁶⁷⁹ Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, pp. 86-87.

⁶⁸⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 10 January, 1910, p. 7.

⁶⁸¹ Mary Macleod, afterwards Mrs David C. McConnel of Cressbrook, Queensland, *Early Recollections*, n.p., n.d., pp. 1-3, pp. 6-7. This document appears to be a manuscript precursor to *Memories*.

Manchester millowner, gained a share of his father's fortune in 1839 at the age of 21.⁶⁸² In 1840 he emigrated to Sydney, travelling north and buying stock en route until he crossed into present-day Queensland via the Darling Downs. On 15 July 1841, he 'marked his trees' to lay claim to a 240 square mile section of the upper Brisbane River valley, naming this property 'Cressbrook' after his family's Derbyshire estate. By so doing, he gained the reputation of becoming the first settler to run sheep in the area.⁶⁸³

Two McConnel brothers joined David in running colonial rural properties. In 1842, David's younger brother, Frederic, and his third oldest surviving brother, John, entered into partnerships with him at Cressbrook. While Frederic was to return to Britain in 1845,⁶⁸⁴ John remained, taking over in 1862 the formerly joint-owned Durundur, 50 kilometres to the north-east, near the present town of Woodford.⁶⁸⁵ This move left David as sole owner of Cressbrook.

In 1847, David had left Cressbrook in the hands of John, and his English manager (Henry Mort) and returned to Britain where in Yorkshire he met Mary while she was visiting one of her brothers, a doctor in Ben Rhydding.⁶⁸⁶ Initially farming one of the Duke of Portland's properties in Nottinghamshire, David answered a pressing request by John to

⁶⁸² David McConnel was born on 14 October 1818 at the Polygon, a large estate built by his father James in 1804, 'McConnel Family Papers', microform no. 755399, State Library of Queensland, J.C.I. McConnel, 'The Lives of Frederic and John Anne McConnel', 1963, p. 12, p. 203. James owned a fine yarn spinning firm and in 1835 McConnel & Co. bought Cressbrook Mill for lace thread production and also the Cressbrook (UK) Estate, Maureen Allen, *Cressbrook*, published by author, Caldbeck, Cumbria, UK, 1996, unpaginated.

⁶⁸³ 'D.C. McConnel Biographical File', ADB files, ANU Archives. McConnel later discarded sheep in favour of cattle. He bought shorthorn cows from the Australian Agricultural Company and imported cows and bulls from England. His son, J.H. McConnel, was later to form a prize-winning Hereford stud. David McConnel implemented innovative land management practices, producing lucerne, oats, marigolds, turnips, arrowroot, vetches, barley sorghum and prairie grass for stock fodder, as well as wheat, corn, sweet potatoes, melons and pumpkins. In the 1870s, he introduced molasses as a cattle feed supplement, H.J. Gibbney, 'McConnel, David Cannon (1818-1885)', ADB, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcconnel-david-cannon-1234/text6367>, published in hardcopy 1974, accessed online 9 September 2014; *The Cressbrook Estate: The Property of Messrs J.H. McConnel & Son*, n.p., Sydney, ?1910, p. 4; Ruth S. Kerr, *Confidence & Tradition: A History of Esk Shire*, Council of the Shire of Esk, 1988, p. 4, p. 14. Cressbrook remains in the hands of Mary and David's descendants today.

⁶⁸⁴ 'The Lives of Frederic and John Anne McConnel', p. 12.

⁶⁸⁵ Durundur was earlier owned by the Archer family. Other properties associated with the McConnells were the cattle station, Crow's Nest, 40 kilometres south-west of Cressbrook, and Monsildale, on the upper Stanley River tributaries, north of Cressbrook, Kerr, *Confidence & Tradition*, p. 4; 'McConnel Family Papers', 'William McConnel of Knockdolian and his Descendants', p. 9.

⁶⁸⁶ Her older brother, William, who had set up a 'water cure' medical practice, Macleod, *Early Recollections*, written note, p. 6.

return to Cressbrook. He sailed with Mary on Rev'd Dr John Dunmore Lang's second chartered ship, the *Chasely*, arriving in Moreton Bay on 1 May 1849.⁶⁸⁷

McConnel seems to have answered a call from Dr Lang, who promoted the emigration of industrious, virtuous and God-fearing men and women in his aim to improve the moral tone of the colonies. Lang appealed specifically to Manchester industrialists to invest in the growth of cotton.⁶⁸⁸ In 1850 McConnel set about establishing the agricultural property Toogoolawah (later Bulimba), which he farmed until 1853.⁶⁸⁹ With his family background in cotton, McConnel would seem to have been a willing participant. The *Moreton Bay Courier* announced McConnel's intentions, writing on 1 September 1849 under the heading 'Agriculture':

We believe that Mr. David McConnel has it in contemplation to place his recently purchased allotments of land at Bulimba under cultivation as soon as they are cleared. As Mr. McConnel brought out from England a large supply of agricultural implements of the newest construction, and as the soil at Bulimba is a fine rich alluvium, the opportunity offers itself as fairly testing the growing capabilities of the land on the banks of the Brisbane.

The article specified cotton growing, explaining that:

⁶⁸⁷ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 3.

⁶⁸⁸ Baker, *Days of Wrath*, p. 271; McConnel, *Memories*, p. 5. From 1845 when Lang first visited Moreton Bay, he had been '[s]truck [by] the remarkable adaptation of the soil and climate for the growth of Cotton'. In 1860 his petition to the Queensland Legislative Assembly included the promotion of Moreton Bay as the 'great cotton field for the manufactures of England', Queensland Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, 1860, pp. 979-81. The following year Lang published *Queensland, Australia; A Highly Eligible Field For Emigration, and the Future Cotton-Field of Great Britain: with a Disquisition on The Origin, Manners, and Customs of the Aborigines*, Edward Stanford, London, 1861. This publication included the chapter, 'Cotton, The Future Staple of Queensland' (pp. 205-247).

⁶⁸⁹ On 1 August 1849, McConnel had purchased 173 acres (69 hectares). By February 1853, sale advertisements in the *Moreton Bay Courier* cited Toogoolawah as '220 acres of land, 180 of which are available for tillage', Rod Fisher, 'David Cannon McConnel's Second "Bump of Hope": Bulimba House and Farm 1849-1853', in *Brisbane: People, Places and Pageantry*, Papers No. 6, Brisbane History Group, 1987, p. 30; *Moreton Bay Courier*, 12 February 1853, p. 3. Its location on the southern bank facilitated travel to Cressbrook via Ipswich. The Yugarabul meaning of Toogoolawah was 'heart-shaped', from the shape of the promontory formed by the river on three sides. Toogoolawah was the name used by Mary, who also recognised that during the 1840s it had begun to be called Bulimba. The present town of Toogoolawah near Cressbrook was named by Mary's eldest son, James Henry (Harry) McConnel, after his birthplace on the Brisbane River. J.H. McConnel was manager of Cressbrook from about 1871 and became sole owner in 1908, *Cressbrook Estate*, p. 14; Jean Bull, *Historic Brisbane Stations*, A Queensland Country Life Publication, Brisbane, n.d., p. 15.

This opportunity too is fortunately made available in a quarter where there cannot be any financial difficulties in the way of its development, and, under such favourable circumstances, it is likely that the cotton tree will be cultivated, especially as the proximity of Bulimba to the coast gives it the advantage of the salt air, which is believed to be so valuable an agent in the growth of the finest cotton.⁶⁹⁰

Not only cotton but also wheat, barley, maize, oats, millet, sweet potatoes, lucerne and Italian rye grasses flourished in Bulimba's virgin soil which, when cleared of subtropical vegetation, drained and ploughed, allowed 'everything [to grow] like mushrooms'. A large poultry yard, a kitchen garden and orchard trees, including oranges and pineapples, and banana palms were planted. German immigrant families worked as 'vine dressers' on grape vines; and ornamental trees and shrubs surrounded the house.⁶⁹¹



Bulimba homestead, now located in the Brisbane suburb, Bulimba (Barbara Dawson, June 2006).

Between 1849 and her death in London on her eighty-sixth birthday in 1910, Mary had returned to Britain thirteen times. These trips included extended residence in England and Scotland from 1854 to 1862, 1871 to 1873, and between 1878 and 1881. In 1875, the

⁶⁹⁰ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 1 September 1849, p. 3.

⁶⁹¹ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 16 October 1852, p. 2, 11 December 1852, p. 3, 12 February 1853, p. 3; McConnel, *Memories*, p. 25.

McConnells bought Witton Manor, situated 10 kilometres upstream from Brisbane in the present-day suburb of Indooroopilly, where they lived until 1878. After McConnel died in England in 1885, Mary returned to Cressbrook. Both David and Mary are buried in Ipswich cemetery.

‘God’s hand [was] guiding me and it has governed my whole life’

Mary and David McConnel were Presbyterian Calvinists ‘imbued with principles of religious nonconformity, educational enlightenment and middle class culture aspiring towards gentility’.⁶⁹² Calvinism, which had enjoyed a revival during the 1820s and 1830s, split in 1843 between the Moderates and the Evangelicals. Mary’s direction followed the evangelical wing that formed the Free Church of Scotland of which her younger brother, the Rev’d Walter MacLeod, became a licentiate.⁶⁹³

Mary’s religious mission had begun early in life. At seventeen after reading ‘Doddridge’s Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul’, Mary underwent a spiritual conversion, experiencing ‘the preciousness of my Saviour and learn[ing] something of the power of the Holy Ghost’. According to Elizabeth Haldane, Calvinists ‘were to live in the world the sanctified life that only those first justified by Faith could live ... this meant a life of strenuous endeavour undertaken with the help of God, and thus advancing His Kingdom’. In Mary’s words, after her conversion ‘God’s hand [was] guiding me and it has governed my whole life’ as she endeavoured ‘by God’s help [to try] to live the life I could not speak of’.⁶⁹⁴

Unable, as she intimates, to realise her mission beyond distributing religious tracts and booklets while in Britain, she found opportunities for evangelism both on the *Chasely* and in the colony. When choosing in 1848 to accompany McConnel to Australia against her family’s wishes, she wrote:

⁶⁹² Fisher, ‘Bulimba House and Farm’, p. 30.

⁶⁹³ Baker, *Days of Wrath*, p. 167. From 1852 to 1853, Walter Macleod was minister of Park Presbyterian church, Moreton Bay, Macleod, *Early Recollections*, written note, p. 8.

⁶⁹⁴ Macleod, *Early Recollections*, p. 7; Elizabeth S. Haldane, *The Scotland of our Fathers: A Study of Scottish Life in the Nineteenth Century*, Alexander Maclehose & Co., London, 1933, p. 124; McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 21-22.

Surely I was helped. My subsequent life, I think, proves that my Father had chosen this way for His child. I was led to decide in favour of going; the cup was a bitter one, but it had its own drop of sweetness. I wrote to my dear parents telling them I could do nothing else, that they must let me go, commending me to the care of Him who would be as near to me on the wide waters and in that far-distant land as if I were by their side.⁶⁹⁵

Mary underlined her religious theme by recording the words of Dr Lang (minister of the Scots church, Sydney) before the migrants set sail:

I would like to put on record ... that the evening before sailing Dr. Lang came on board, met with his emigrants, and addressed them in a faithful, fatherly manner, reminding them of their responsibilities in making their home in a new land, and bidding them be true to their religious principles. They were all of one faith, and he trusted that brotherly-kindness would bind them together as fellow passengers. A hymn was sung; he then earnestly prayed for the safety of the ship and all on board. Before parting he shook hands with each, wishing them God-speed and a happy New Year.⁶⁹⁶

On the voyage out, Mary taught religion to the children on board, writing with pleasure that, later in Brisbane, a woman serving Mary in a baker's shop identified herself as a former pupil and reassured Mary that, 'I have never forgotten [your teaching]'.⁶⁹⁷

At Cressbrook, amidst the vastness and loneliness of the Australian landscape, Mary reflected upon her evangelistic vocation, recalling that:

The thought came to me, surely for some purpose I had come to this far-distant life? ... and I thought there was an open door for me; not at that time exactly in Cressbrook, but in the new land to which I had come.⁶⁹⁸

Textual reinforcements emphasise religious conviction. After having been knocked

⁶⁹⁵ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁹⁶ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 5-6. Don Baker notes that before the *Chasely* left London, the Emigration Agent, Lieutenant Lean, warned the passengers of the 'bane of the country, the detestable vice of intemperance', Baker, *Days of Wrath*, p. 271.

⁶⁹⁷ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 7.

⁶⁹⁸ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 21.

unconscious in a buggy accident in 1853, for example, Mary ‘praised our great Deliverer for His goodness during such imminent danger’.⁶⁹⁹ Similarly, during her first return trip to Britain, when rough weather at Cape Horn caused mountainous seas, she observed that, ‘One felt the mighty power of God – at the same time the protecting arm of the Father around us, and we were safe’. She attributed her safety after shipwreck to ‘God’s gracious hand’ and, when separated from family, thanked ‘our gracious Father and Protector for His care over us all when we were absent one from another.’⁷⁰⁰ On another occasion, she woke inexplicably to save her ill toddler in the night, a circumstance that she attributed to God as the provider of miracles, writing that:

Who but the Gracious God, the ever-watchful eye of our Father in Christ our Lord, gave this deliverance? To this day it is all very wonderful to me. Can I ever doubt the loving care of the unseen God? Never!⁷⁰¹

After recovery from a serious illness when an ulcer caused her leg to become gangrenous, threatening life and limb, she recalled that:

my heart was full of gratitude for all the dear Lord had done for me, bringing me safely through that long time of sore sickness and trial, I trust a better woman, with a heart alive to the sufferings of others.⁷⁰²

Wealth and Social Position

Representing her high social standing was important to Mary. Of the 38 passengers on the *Chasely*, she wrote that they were a ‘well-chosen, superior lot of emigrants’.⁷⁰³ The emigration agent confirmed this opinion calling them a ‘finer body of emigrants’ than had ever left London.⁷⁰⁴ Historian, Rosamond Siemon adds to this image, describing Lang’s chosen immigrants as ‘better educated, better dressed, and more soberly behaved’ than

⁶⁹⁹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 47, pp. 36-37.

⁷⁰⁰ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 34, p. 58, p. 39.

⁷⁰¹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 28.

⁷⁰² McConnel, *Memories*, p. 32.

⁷⁰³ Baker, *Days of Wrath*, p. 271; McConnel, *Memories*, p. 5.

⁷⁰⁴ Mary cites the departure date of the *Chasely* as 31 December 1848. According to Baker, it was 24 December 1848, Baker, *Days of Wrath*, p. 271.

many other colonists.⁷⁰⁵ Within this well-to-do group, however, the McConnells were especially privileged. Taking on board sheep, poultry and other ‘comforts’ for the 123-day voyage, they occupied a large saloon cabin that held:

[a] book-shelf well filled; (and) two swinging candle lamps gave a fair light. We had a large double sofa that shut up into a single one for the day, a tray on each of our chests of drawers that prevented things from slipping off, a table on the folding washstand, and comfortable chairs; a carpet made the cabin feel warm and comfortable.⁷⁰⁶

On arrival at Moreton Bay, Mary expressed her cultural shock, in words similar to those chosen by the women in the previous chapters of this thesis to describe their impressions. She wrote that:

What a dreary waste of water the bay looked! [The ‘Glass-house Mountains’] were the only features of interest that we saw in all the land, lying quite low, and covered with low-growthed vegetation ... It seemed really to me as if we had come to the end of the known world, and no other had dawned upon us ... What a dismal waterway it was! Neither sign of house nor hall, nor man, black or white. Mangroves the only vegetation visible.⁷⁰⁷

Glimpsing signs of civilisation around the Aboriginal mission station at Mount Zion improved her outlook.⁷⁰⁸ The twenty-five year old Mary described how:

Coming up the river all seemed brighter. There was a part cleared by German missionaries, where the grass was green and tempting. Impulsively I said, “Will you stop a few minutes and let me have a run?” The crew was much amused, but of course stopped. Taking the terriers

⁷⁰⁵ Baker, *Days of Wrath*, p. 260, p. 264; Rosamond Siemon, *The Mayne Inheritance: a gothic tale of murder, madness and scandal across the generations*, UQP, St Lucia, 2003, p. 34. In his unauthorised emigration scheme, Lang brought 590 people to Moreton Bay, 420 of them arriving in 1849.

⁷⁰⁶ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 6. As a former emigrant, McConnel brought with him two terrier dogs to help control the shipboard rats that ‘abound[ed] day and night’, McConnel, *Memories*, p. 7, p. 6.

⁷⁰⁷ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁰⁸ Prompted by Dr Lang, it was established by Germans in 1838 and situated on the northern bank of the Brisbane River at Nundah, 10 kilometres north of Brisbane and 3 kilometres north-west from Eagle Farm, ‘The Reverend Christopher Eipper Describes The German Mission’, in J.G. Steele, *Brisbane Town in Convict Days 1824-1842*, UQP, 1975, p. 281, p. 282; Gordon Greenwood (ed.) and John Laverty, *Brisbane 1859, 1959: A History of Local Government*, The Council of the City of Brisbane, 1959, p. 27.

with me we all had a good run, and I returned glowing with pleasure, my first run for nearly five months!⁷⁰⁹

Like Katherine Kirkland, Mary's adjustment to colonial society involved class and clothing. When Mary discovered that a *Moreton Bay Courier* reporter who interviewed her on arrival was a former convict, she recorded that, 'Truly my lot was cast in a strange place. I was gaining experience!'. When two men visited her in Brisbane, without calling cards and not wearing waistcoats, her surprised reaction was mediated through her maid who urged her not to meet these 'larky gentlemen'.⁷¹⁰

In May 1849, Brisbane was still very much a 'rough frontier town of rough men', many of them ex-convicts living and working under conditions 'where the solace of drinking their hard-earned wages was the only mind-easing outlet they had' and where 'drunken men were often robbed [and] [s]trangers with money came and went'. It was a man's world, with few women.⁷¹¹ Only seven years had elapsed since the Governor of New South Wales Sir George Gipps had announced (on 11 February 1842) that the formerly isolated penal settlement would be opened to the trading opportunities of free settlement. From 1824 when Moreton Bay was established, settlement had been forbidden within a 50-mile radius, retarding the development of Brisbane as a port and provisioning centre. The first land sale for Brisbane town allotments took place in Sydney on 14 July 1842. In 1846 the population was 950 and by 1851 it had reached only 2,103.⁷¹²

Although the New South Wales Government had begun to expend money on public works from 1846, Brisbane in 1849 was very much a town in the making. There was, for example, no store, and government building projects were not undertaken until Queensland became a separate colony in 1859. Streets were undefined, the layout of inner Brisbane not yet (until

⁷⁰⁹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 9.

⁷¹⁰ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 10, p. 13. Mary's maid was further suspicious of the men when they gave their names as Mr Bigge and Mr Little. Brothers, Frederic and Francis Bigge, had taken up Mt Brisbane, a property adjoining Cressbrook, in September 1841, Kerr, *Confidence & Tradition*, p. 6; Robert Little was a Brisbane solicitor and later, Crown Solicitor, McConnel, *Memories*, p. 45.

⁷¹¹ Siemon, *Mayne Inheritance*, pp. 7-8.

⁷¹² *Government Gazette*, 11 February 1842, in Steele, *Brisbane Town*, pp. 303-4. After the last convict ship arrived in Moreton Bay in April 1850, the British government actively encouraged free immigration, Greenwood and Laverty, *Brisbane 1859, 1959*, pp. 30-31, p. 36, p. 42, pp. 46-47.

1854) determined. Although roads inland had been ‘surveyed and labelled’, they were rutted bullock tracks that became impassable after rain. Few people owned a vehicle, the main means of transport being boat travel on the (unbridged) river. The Government Resident Captain John Wickham rode a horse to the settlement from his Breakfast Point residence, Newstead.⁷¹³ Notwithstanding, the McConnells had brought with them a four-seater Albert phaeton to carry a large amount of luggage, including Mary’s personal belongings, which consisted of ‘just such things as ladies in England travel with’. Settler reaction threw into relief Mary’s inappropriate expectations when a female friend enquired of her:

“What will you do with all these things?” [Mary] said, “I will require them when I travel.”

“Travel?” [her friend] said, “where will you travel to?” My reflections were not happy ones, and my heart sank.⁷¹⁴

After arrival, Mary was readily received into colonial society as a wealthy, middle-class lady, and wife of an established landholder. She herself assessed suitable friends and acquaintances by their respectability, often irrespective of wealth. Counted amongst her earliest friends were a retired army major and his wife, clergymen—both Presbyterian and ‘Episcopal’—solicitors, medical doctors and neighbouring squatters. She and McConnel also enjoyed social relations with Captain Wickham, the Queen’s representative for the Moreton Bay District, and they received hospitality from the first Commissioner of Crown Lands Dr Simpson, whose house Mary described as having ‘an air of refinement’.⁷¹⁵ In 1862, on the McConnells’ return to the colony, their first port of call was to (the temporary) Government House, where the first Governor of Queensland Sir George Bowen and his wife, Diamantina, lived. Mary was later to form close connections with vice-regal women when

⁷¹³ By 1849 ferry wharves and approaches had been repaired, the old female factory had been converted into a gaol, the Convict Hospital had become the General Hospital, and the Custom House had been built, Greenwood and Laverty, *Brisbane 1859, 1959*, p. 44, p. 38, p. 39. An early Brisbane shop, opened in Queen Street in late 1849, was the butchery of (later to be) notorious, Paddy Mayne (a murderer who used stolen money to advance his business), Siemon, *Mayne Inheritance*, p. 26, p. 34; McConnel, *Memories*, p. 12. Even in 1861, Brisbane ‘was not a very attractive city ... with unformed streets, atrociously kept shops, and houses few and far between’, W.R.O. Hill, *Forty-Five Years’ Experience in North Queensland*, H. Pole & Co, Brisbane, 1907, p. 20.

⁷¹⁴ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 10. In 1862, the McConnells brought from England two more vehicles to accommodate the travelling needs of a growing family and a retinue of employees.

⁷¹⁵ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 16.

they worked to support her efforts in establishing a hospital for children.⁷¹⁶

Mary threw her elevated status into focus with her stories of the crude accommodation offered in 1849 Brisbane. Of her initial lodgings at ‘Bowe’s Inn’, she wrote:

How shall I describe them? There were no ladies to travel, so it was useless to provide rooms not wanted. ... We were shown into a long bare dining-room, with a long table and many chairs. Several men were there, but left when we entered ... When we were told our rooms were ready I went in, and was going to shut the door when I found if I wished to do so I must put a chair against it, as there was neither handle, lock or bolt! Then I looked for a blind to the window, but it was innocent of such a luxury ... Other things were equally unpleasant; leave we must.⁷¹⁷

Her next residence, two rooms in a weatherboard cottage rented by John McConnel from James Swan, printer of the *Moreton Bay Courier*, was little better. They were:

sorry apartments, innocent of what could be called furniture [and where] everything seemed to have suffered from wear and bad usage—cups without handles, steel forks with missing prongs, no apology for the absence of cruets or any substitute, no glass, only pannikins, and oh! if they had been a bit brighter! ... It was all very rough, and I had not learned to take into consideration how hard it was for it to be otherwise—five hundred miles away from Sydney, irregular sailing vessel communication, a township with no “general store”—one does not get easily accustomed to such things.⁷¹⁸

When the McConnells moved to the south side of the Brisbane River, Mary described her house at Kangaroo Point with some affection, despite its roughness. Before the first land sales in December 1843, Kangaroo Point was known for its hotels and sly grog shops,

⁷¹⁶ Governors wives, Lady Musgrave and Lady Norman, and Lady O’Connell, wife of four times deputy to the Governor of Queensland, Mrs. David C. McConnel, *Our Children’s Hospital: A Story of Twenty-one Years 1876 to 1897*, Thomson Brothers, Brisbane, 1897, pp. 20-21, p. 23.

⁷¹⁷ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 10. Fisher identifies this inn as David Bow’s Victoria Hotel in Queen Street, in ‘Bulimba House and Farm’, p. 30. Also, Greenwood and Laverty, *Brisbane 1859, 1959*, pp. 31-32.

⁷¹⁸ Situated in George Street, near its intersection with Queen Street, McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 11-12.

patronised by seamen and timber workers. Later it was the site of boiling-down works, a slaughterhouse, tannery and workshops. By 1850, housing had increased and a ‘bustle and activity’ had reached the area.⁷¹⁹ Mary wrote of her rented cottage that:

The walls were weatherboards and unlined—the shingled roof ... of the sitting-room was so leaky, that when a shower came I had to place sundry utensils about to catch the rain drops, and so save my pretty things. And yet, how happy we were in that rough little place!⁷²⁰

Wayside accommodation en route to Cressbrook did not reach her expectations. At Wivenhoe Inn where the landlord and his wife ‘seemed quite respectable’, there was however no protection from ‘the talk of the bullock-drivers [which] became unbearable’.⁷²¹

Similarly, her first meal at Cressbrook, presided over by the overseer Alpin Cameron (‘a big, burly Scotsman’), was cause for amazement. The tin teapot was so huge it took two hands to lift it and the sugar was ‘as near being black as could be; the lumps *were* black’.⁷²² The meal took place in the common dining-room where:

Master and men shared alike. There was a huge “fat lamp” in the middle of the long table, not pleasant, but it gave a fairly good light. I cannot recollect the others that were at the table, but I know that I often sat down with 14 men, most of them travellers arriving at sundown, which there is never later than 7 o’clock. Cressbrook was on the main road. We often had pleasant people, but all men.⁷²³

Like Katherine Kirkland, Mary’s first impression of Australian inland landscape was also discouraging. Like Katherine again, however, she viewed the countryside in a more favourable light the closer she got to her future home, recalling that:

I thought the “bush” a dreary place. About eight miles from the head station my husband stopped and bade me “welcome to Cressbrook;” it was the boundary between that and the next

⁷¹⁹ Siemon, *Mayne Inheritance*, p. 3, p. 21; *Moreton Bay Courier*, 1 June 1850, p. 3.

⁷²⁰ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 13-14.

⁷²¹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 17. Situated 35 kilometres north of Ipswich, the landlord was Mr Smith, *Moreton Bay Courier*, 1 June 1850, p. 1.

⁷²² McConnel, *Memories*, p. 19.

⁷²³ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 19.

station, Mount Brisbane, but neither white man nor black did I see, nor hoof of stock, and it seemed to me all a myth, and I said so. My husband only laughed. As we neared the station the country became very pretty, and from the nature of the soil the road grew much better. The crossing of Cressbrook Creek was beautiful. The Moreton Bay myrtle was in flower and very abundant, red and in form like a bottle-brush among very light feathery foliage; but the banks were steep and the crossing difficult. Two and a half miles further on we came to a chain of lagoons.⁷²⁴

Mary wrote diplomatically of her opinion of what her daughter later described as the simple, 'plain' Cressbrook homestead. While Mary thought it 'a pretty neat cottage' and reassured her readers that, 'All had been done in and around the house to make it a home for gentlefolk',⁷²⁵ she nevertheless immediately undertook to feminise and gentrify the interior. This was partly achieved by covering an old sofa and cane chairs with unbleached grey linen, which she found in the storeroom, trimming them with twelve of her husband's crimson silk pocket-handkerchiefs, with the aim of improving the 'extreme bareness and shabbiness' of the sitting room. A large box (used as a seat) and two candle boxes (for stools), made by the station carpenter, were similarly treated. Outside, however, Mary was pleased to find an already established 'well-stocked garden with a grape-vine-walk down the middle of it'.⁷²⁶

⁷²⁴ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 18-19. In 2005, the open, slightly undulating country west of the homestead presented a typical Australian scene of dry, open grassland, now largely denuded of trees.

⁷²⁵ Banks, *Memories of Pioneer Days*, p. 13; McConnel, *Memories*, p. 19.

⁷²⁶ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 19, pp. 20-21. Both Emily Cowl and Katherine Kirkland had to establish their own gardens.



Cressbrook homestead, Aborigines left foreground (Conrad Martens 1852, reproduced in Susanna De Vries, *Strength of Spirit: Pioneering Women of Achievement from First Fleet to Federation*, 1995).

Mention of a person's social position and reference to the 'right' connections often found their way into Mary's narrative. Political representation of the male members of her family seemed important to her perception of social success. She included in her text the information, for example, that McConnel's uncle, Thomas Houldsworth, was the Member of Parliament for North Nottingham. McConnel was to become a Justice of the Peace, one of the first directors of the Brisbane branch of the Bank of New South Wales, a founder of the Moreton Bay Horticultural Society and a supporter of antitransportation and separation movements.⁷²⁷ He did not, however, enter Parliament. Mary cited many reasons why he 'respectfully declined the honour' of sitting on the Queensland Legislative Council, explaining that:

There was no easy way of getting to town in these days, no made roads, no bridges over rivers and gullies, so he would have to live in town while the House was sitting. He did not wish to be so long away from

⁷²⁷ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 4; Fisher, 'Bulimba House and Farm', pp. 37-38.

Cressbrook, especially as he had been an absentee for nearly eight years; and, again, it would not have suited my health, and he would not live alone in town, also he was troubled with deafness in one ear.⁷²⁸

The McConnells' wealth formed the subtext of the narrative. Building projects at Cressbrook and frequent trips to Britain were undertaken without reference to financial contingencies. Towards the end of the 1855 northern autumn,⁷²⁹ for example, Mary, David and their then three children travelled for one year through France, Italy, Switzerland and Germany, confining their travel to southern Europe during the winter. Accompanying them were McConnel's nephew, two nurses (Scottish and French) and their driver. In France, they hired a Swiss courier. Although Mary missed part of the family's tour of Italy by returning to Scotland when her brother died, she reported that she was to visit Italy on three other occasions. On the family's return to England, McConnel bought a house on two and a half acres of land at Tooting Common, south of London. It was then extended to accommodate the increasing number of children. The eldest son, Harry, was enrolled in a boarding school nearby.⁷³⁰

Mary's affluence and her privileged social position are reflected in her upper middle-class appearance. A picture of her as a young woman shows her soberly but ornately clothed in pleated and pin-tucked full-skirted dress. In a photograph taken at Cressbrook in 1887, the sweet-faced matriarch sits amid her family, dressed in the high-necked, long-sleeved garb of colonial respectability. Atop her head is a white cap.⁷³¹

⁷²⁸ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 45-46. Although none of her four sons entered Parliament, Henry Somerset, who married her daughter, Katharine, was a member of the Queensland State Parliament. John McConnel had become a member of the first Queensland Legislative Council in 1862, 'William McConnel of Knockdolian', p. 9; 'The Lives of Frederic and John Anne McConnel', p. 197.

⁷²⁹ Mary cites 'towards the close of 1856', but as her fifth child was born in February 1857, after a years' travel, the departure date seems more likely to have been 1855. As the first months of their trip were spent in southern France and Italy to escape the cold weather, it is most likely that they left Britain before the 1855-1856 winter, McConnel, *Memories*, p. 38.

⁷³⁰ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 38-41.

⁷³¹ Susanna de Vries-Evans, *Pioneer Women, Pioneer Land: Yesterday's Tall Poppies*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1987, p. 101.



Mary McConnel with her family at Cressbrook, c.1887 (John Oxley Library).

A Tamed Frontier?

Unlike Katherine Kirkland who entered a raw frontier, Mary arrived both at Moreton Bay and at Cressbrook after settlement had been established. By emphasising the set pattern of daily life followed by white mistress and her Indigenous workers at Cressbrook, Mary shows that at least by the 1860s black-white frontier conflicts had been worked out. By this time, some of the Dungibara⁷³² (members of the larger Waka Waka group) had adapted to colonisation by choosing to be ‘station Aborigines’, trading their labouring skills for the opportunity of remaining on their ancestral land along the banks of the Brisbane River. This symbiotic relationship, explored by historians such as Tim Rowse and Robert Foster, was one in which Aborigines ‘came to ... realise the value of good conduct’, as they learned to adapt to the settlers’ demands.⁷³³

Documentary evidence tells of the part that the McConnel brothers and their neighbours played in this racial ‘resolution’. According to A.J. McConnel of Durundur, David

⁷³² J.G. Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, UQP, St Lucia, 1983, p. 265.

⁷³³ A.J. McConnel, ‘Some Old Stations’, cited in Evans, Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, pp. 113-14; Tim Rowse’s *White Flour, White Power: From Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia* (1998) explores the relationship that evolved around the practice of rationing in Central Australia from the 1890s; cf. also Robert Foster, ‘Rations, coexistence, and the colonisation of Aboriginal labour in the South Australian pastoral industry, 1860-1911’, in *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 24, 2000.

McConnel and his neighbours had undertaken 'stern work'⁷³⁴ against the Waka during the 1840s and 1850s, joining forces for protection and constituting themselves into 'a court of justice to administer punishment'. Henry Mort supplied further evidence of David McConnel's conflictual attitude. In an 1844 letter he wrote that:

John and David McConnell (sic) argued that it is morally right for a Christian Nation to extirpate savages from their native soil in order that it may be peopled with a more intelligent and civilized race of human beings ... F [Frederick] McConnell and myself were of the opposite opinion.⁷³⁵

Frederic wrote an account of his 1844 role in the pursuit of Aborigines who had speared a shepherd and stolen sheep from William Graham's station, 20 kilometres from Cressbrook. Armed with a double-barrelled rifle and a brace of pistols, Graham, his partner James Ivory, Frederic, and accompanying dogs pursued the Aborigines and found them roasting one of the sheep. While the white men shot and injured at least one Aborigine, Frederic wrote ambiguously that, 'I had my pistol within a yard of a man's back. I could not make up my mind to fire at him, but followed him'. When the Aboriginal men fled, they left behind tools, spears and bags, which the white men pilfered. Frederic was to take back to Britain an axe that had an English blade, and a handle made by the Aborigines, as well as 'boomerangs and clubs, beautifully made'. Perhaps the Waka were appealing to Frederic to return their tools and weapons when they 'shouted and coo-ee'd' at him as he rode back to Cressbrook. Frederic, however, 'passed them at a trot, carrying home the spoil'.⁷³⁶

This account accords with 1841 reports in the *Moreton Bay Courier* of racial conflict in the Darling Downs and in the Lockyer Valley whenever Aborigines speared or stole sheep. The killing of over fifty Dallambara people who were fed poisoned flour at Evan and John MacKenzie's Kilcoy station (which shared a north-eastern boundary with Cressbrook) in

⁷³⁴ Evans, Saunders, Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, p. 113.

⁷³⁵ Letter from Henry Mort to his mother and sister, 28 January 1844, in Henry Reynolds, 'Frontier History After Mabo', in *Journal of Australian Studies*, *Australian Frontiers*, Number 49, 1996, p. 4.

⁷³⁶ 'Stories of Australian Bush Life, 1844. Experiences of the late Frederic McConnel', typed by his son and adhered to the back cover of *Memories*. McConnel had become, like many others, a collector of Aboriginal artefacts, this example indicating that his actions were in defiance of the owners of the objects.

1842 is a notorious example of southern Queensland atrocities. Some of the retributive onus was taken on by the Native Police in the early 1850s.⁷³⁷

Mary Banks confirmed violence (unspecified by time or place), writing that:

It was not till years after my childhood that I learnt of cruelties to the blacks, and I refused at first to believe it possible. This I know, that there were very many places where the natives were treated with kindness and affection, and that much of the harshness was due to ignorance and misunderstanding. But for actual cruelty, which unfortunately cannot be denied, no excuse is possible.⁷³⁸

Mary McConnel also referred to past instances of interracial violence. The reason for John McConnel's selling his first property, the cattle station Crow's Nest that he had acquired in 1842, was because: 'The "blacks" were very troublesome. He did not like being there'.⁷³⁹ Mary also observed that Edmund Uhr from Wivenhoe station was planning to move to town with his wife and daughter in 1849, because, '[His] brother had been murdered by the natives, and [the Aborigines] continued troublesome'. He had moved by June 1850. Of Cressbrook, she wrote that she knew that 'one or two of the [Aboriginal] men were treacherous, that they speared cattle, once an imported bull from England', although she absolved the men from blame because 'they had no idea of the value of the animal'.⁷⁴⁰

From Mary's text it would seem that the sort of interracial distrust and tensions of which Edward Curr wrote in the early days of settlement in the Port Phillip district had dissipated by the time Mary settled permanently on Cressbrook. Mary projected a peacemaking McConnel who 'set himself at once to make friends with [the Aborigines], and they soon got to like and trust him'. She nevertheless added enigmatically that, 'He never failed to do what he promised'.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁷ Steele, *Brisbane Town*, p. 299; McConnel, *Memories*, p. 18. John Uhr was speared at an outstation on the Brisbane River in December 1845, Kerr, *Confidence & Tradition*, p. 10. *Moreton Bay Courier*, 1 June 1850, p. 1, 29 June 1850, p. 4, 27 November 1852, p. 3, 4 December 1852, p. 3, 11 December 1852, p. 2.

⁷³⁸ Banks, *Memories of Pioneer Days*, pp. 42-43.

⁷³⁹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 11.

⁷⁴⁰ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 18, p. 43.

⁷⁴¹ Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*, pp. 59-60; McConnel, *Memories*, p. 43.

Aborigines at Toogoolawah (later, Bulimba)

Although Mary wrote mainly of the Dungibara at Cressbrook,⁷⁴² and particularly of the Dungibara women, she lived for extended periods from 1850 to 1853 at Bulimba. The peninsula on which the property was located was home to people of the Yugarabul language group. Tom Petrie, who arrived as a child in 1837, called them the Turrbal.⁷⁴³

Mary largely ignored the Turrbal in her reminiscences. She mentions them only twice: once in an indirect, derogatory analogy and, in the other example, as outsiders. The first instance was the association of the call of a kookaburra with the ‘derisive laugh [of] a black-fellow’.⁷⁴⁴ The context of the other reference was the South Brisbane Presbyterian church, which McConnel had built in 1850 for community use. When an Indigenous group gathered to witness the white man’s corroboree, they were ostracised because of their un-British behaviour. As in Eliza Davies’ story, the Aborigines were kept outside the welcoming embrace of Christianity. Mary’s need to christianise them could not encompass their inclusion into the white congregation. Not invited to join in, they were not even allowed to look on. Mary explained the settlers’ reaction to an unwelcome intrusion:

Before [the wooden church] was enclosed the natives or “blacks” as they were called, were much attracted to it. When they saw people going in and singing, etc., they said, “Goorrai! budgery corobery!” and when the sermon began one or two of the men gesticulated like the minister, upsetting him a good deal. It was very hot and the door was open. The disturbance was prevented from happening again.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴² Although not explaining her omission, Mary was busy at Bulimba: two sons were born there, the second, Alexander, born 20 September 1852, died 31 March 1853 when Mary herself was seriously ill with a leg infection. It also appears that, as she was to spend many years at Cressbrook, her relationships with the Dungibara made a greater impression on her.

⁷⁴³ Also known as Turrubal, Taraubul, Turrbul, Turubul, Turrabul and Toorbal, Constance Campbell Petrie, *Tom Petrie’s Reminiscences of Early Queensland* (1904), UQP, St Lucia, 1992, p. 4; F.J. Watson, ‘Vocabularies of Four Representative Tribes of South Eastern Queensland’, Supplement to *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia* (Queensland), No. 34, Vol. XLVIII, Session 1943-1944, Brisbane, p. 5. Clan names associated with the area are Coorpooroo, Jaggin, Jagera, and possibly Jukambe. The Gnaloongpin clan of the Turrbal tribe is thought to have occupied the northern area, Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways*, p. 131; John Godfrey (compiler), *History of Bulimba Creek*, Bulimba Creek Protection Society, 1998, at <http://www.rag.org.au/beps/history.htm>

⁷⁴⁴ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 14.

⁷⁴⁵ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 26. David McConnel was raised as a Unitarian, Fisher, ‘Bulimba House

During Mary's first years at Moreton Bay interracial conflict was still prevalent in the area. In 1837 German missionaries had decided to move from a northern site in Redcliffe to the less exposed Nundah, after being attacked by the very people they were hoping to convert. In December 1849, seven months after the McConnells' arrival, the Brisbane magistrate Dr Ballow sent out soldiers from the garrison after members of the Turrbal killed a number of Petrie's cattle. Some of the Aborigines were wounded by unauthorised retaliatory gunshots.⁷⁴⁶ In May 1850, the *Moreton Bay Courier* reported that Aborigines at the Logan River, south of Brisbane, had 'attacked a station ... and the hutkeeper narrowly escaped with his life'. The reporter added that, 'Notwithstanding every kind and conciliatory measure adopted towards the blacks in that part, they appear to be incorrigible'.⁷⁴⁷ In June 1850, readers were further informed that:

The blacks have been again at warlike feud during the past week, in the neighbourhood of Brisbane, and sufficient numbers of them have been marching about the town, armed with their spears and other offensive weapons, to have justified considerable alarm if the military had been withdrawn, as is threatened. We hear that one death has occurred in a late action between the savages.⁷⁴⁸

Assessed by early reports as 'almost civilised', the Turrbal practised ingenious and complex fishing techniques that relied on detailed understanding of the seasons and tidal flows of river and creeks. As well as hunting turtle and gathering shellfish, they cultivated kambi (*Nausitora queenslandica*; long white worms) that grew in piles of cut casuarina woods, heaped onto the swampy ground. Matthew Flinders remarked on the Turrbals' superior huts and fishing nets, and referred to Thomas Pamphlet's 1823 report that the women were treated humanely within their group.⁷⁴⁹

and Farm, p. 38.

⁷⁴⁶ Steele, *Brisbane Town*, p. 259; *Moreton Bay Courier*, 1 December 1849, p. 3.

⁷⁴⁷ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 8 June 1850, p. 3. In the 1860s there was the ominous presence of the Native Police headquarters near Sandgate, north of Brisbane, Stan Tutt, *Sunshine Coast Heritage*, Discovery Press, Sunshine Coast, Queensland, 1995 (citing A.J. McConnel), p. 113.

⁷⁴⁸ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 29 June 1850, p. 3.

⁷⁴⁹ J.G. Steele, *The Explorers of the Moreton Bay District 1770-1830*, UQP, St Lucia, 1983, p. 3; Steele, *Brisbane Town*, pp. 282-83; Lang, *Queensland*, p. 72.

To fill a void left by Mary, William Johnston, son of Bulimba gardener James, who had emigrated in 1850,⁷⁵⁰ wrote extensively about the Turrbal. German missionary, Christopher Eipper, had estimated their population in 1841 to be between 200 to 300,⁷⁵¹ and Johnston (born in 1849) referred to ‘great numbers’ on Bulimba. He also wrote that:

The aboriginals of Bulimba were not lovers of hard work, but they were very useful in burning off, and in gathering and husking maize. They always had their dilly bags handy, and put into them all the loose grains. One [woman], “Duradnah,” was employed a good deal in the house. She scrubbed the floor, and cleaned the boots—she always insisted on polishing the soles.⁷⁵²

While Fisher and Harrison inferred racial conflict with their suggestion that the recessed shutters at the bay windows of Bulimba House were a means ‘to keep the Aborigines at bay’,⁷⁵³ Johnston recalled peaceful coexistence with the Turrbal, who continued to hunt bandicoots and pademelons with their dogs and to fish from the river banks. He added that his father ‘got on well with them and was a great favourite of theirs’, being given the name ‘Kiwanan’. Some of the Turrbal made ‘a great display on meeting him, or even on seeing him from the other side of the river’. Johnston concluded that:

It is only right to say that the blacks of Bulimba were of a friendly nature, and always remembered those who had been kind to them, and to the last they could never do enough for the old farmers and their families.⁷⁵⁴

The continuation of corroborees perhaps indicates settler acceptance of Indigenous cultural practices in the area. According to Johnston, a large gathering involving 200 to 300 Aborigines occurred at Tingalpa near the Richmond Bridge to the south-east of Bulimba in

⁷⁵⁰ William was born in October 1849 on board their emigrant ship; his mother, Helen, was employed as Mary’s ‘nurse’ for a month after the birth of Harry in April 1850, when William’s cradle was set up in the Bulimba kitchen, McConnel, *Memories*, p. 24. Whether ‘nurse’ meant a nurse for Mary at and after the delivery of her baby, or a ‘nurse’ to breastfeed the infant is unclear. Cf. footnote 802.

⁷⁵¹ Lang had instigated the mission and secured the services of Eipper ‘to bring Christ to the Aborigines’, Hilary M. Carey, *Believing in Australia: A cultural history of religions*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996, p. 64.

⁷⁵² William Johnston, ‘Old Bulimba’, in *The Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 5, October 1918, p. 310.

⁷⁵³ Rod Fisher & Jennifer Harrison (compilers), *Eastern Suburbs Placenames Drive*, Brisbane History Group, 1990, p.8.

⁷⁵⁴ Johnston, ‘Old Bulimba’, pp. 310-11.

1872.⁷⁵⁵ Mary, however, shared no details of a relationship with the Turrbal. She confined her references to individual encounters with the Dungibara towards whom her proselytising efforts appear to fit more closely the evangelical theme of her narrative.

Paternalism: ‘my good husband the centre of all’

A primary focus of her descriptions of Bulimba and Cressbrook revolved around the Enlightenment ideals of order, harmony and progress. Both thriving enterprises, these properties resembled self-sufficient private towns, maintained and controlled by the McConnells in line with the organised, hierarchical structure intrinsic to the nineteenth-century concept of paternalism in British rural society. While McConnel was the ‘paternalist’ by definition, Mary similarly adopted the tenets of paternalism and encouraged their application.

At Bulimba, the McConnells’ high standing was reinforced by the grandeur of their home. The two-storeyed Bulimba House, built by the firm of Andrew Petrie,⁷⁵⁶ a former Superintendent of Works at Moreton Bay, was described in the *Moreton Bay Courier* as an Elizabethan-style ‘capacious mansion’. Known as the first stone house of the area, it was an imposing gentleman’s residence in a society where wealth, mostly invested in property, was the indicator of social worth and success and formed a contrast with Brisbane’s first private home, Newstead House (the precursor to Government House), built in 1846 on the northern river bank.⁷⁵⁷ Originally featuring shingled roof gables, Bulimba House is made of grey freestone from what was later called the Black Ball quarry⁷⁵⁸ at Queensport, and from local cedar. Strategically placed on sloping ground away from rising river levels, it faces north-west precisely 400 metres south and 400 metres east of the Brisbane River as it

⁷⁵⁵ Johnston, ‘Old Bulimba’, p. 310.

⁷⁵⁶ Petrie was a Scottish immigrant who arrived in New South Wales under the aegis of Dr Lang in 1831. He was employed on public buildings in Sydney, was dismissed for ‘misconduct’ (his humanitarian views on discipline), and moved to Moreton Bay where he designed and constructed public buildings. Petrie had begun private practice in 1842 after the closure of the convict settlement. Bulimba House was one of his first private commissions, Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century: A Biographical Dictionary*, Queensland Museum, Brisbane, 1994, pp. 141-42; Johnston, ‘Old Bulimba’, p. 305; Fisher, ‘Bulimba House and Farm’, p. 37.

⁷⁵⁷ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 1 June 1850, p. 3; Newstead House, built for Darling Downs farmer Patrick Leslie, is a long, low cottage of plastered brick. John Wickham bought Newstead from Leslie, who was his brother-in-law, Rosamond Siemon, *The Mayne Inheritance*, p. 42.

⁷⁵⁸ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 14-15; Lack, ‘Historic Bulimba House’, in *RHSQ Bulletin*, No. 282, p. 2.

coils around the promontory. Now located in a suburban street, it inhabits a residential block that has been denuded of original trees.⁷⁵⁹

Testament to progress, the Bulimba estate by the time of its sale in 1853 consisted of eight workers' cottages, brick outhouses including kitchen, laundry, storerooms, sheds, a carpenter's room, the smithy, stables, a coach-house, workrooms and a large, two-storeyed barn. Another cottage lay alongside a dairy, large enough to milk 50 cows. A boatshed stood near the wharf.⁷⁶⁰ The community grew to include an overseer (whose wife kept the poultry yard), workmen including the managers of the large herd of dairy cows, farm labourers who cleared and cultivated the land, a carpenter to make furniture, a coachman, a housemaid, an indoor servant and cook (husband and wife), and nurses to assist with the two babies born at Bulimba.⁷⁶¹

In the mould of his paternalistic father who had provided housing, Sunday schools and medical treatment for his workers at the Cressbrook (UK) cotton mill,⁷⁶² McConnel sold plots of Bulimba land on easy terms to selected workmen, who were 'worthy', hardworking men, as a way of encouraging success for respectable families. Taking regular payments from their wages to help them save, he also allowed the men time off work to clear their land and build their homes. One of the first to accept this offer was William Johnston's father, whose farm consisted of 70 acres adjoining Bulimba on the downstream side. Mary expressed McConnel's vicarious pride in James Johnston's progress after he built a sugar mill at nearby Tingalpa in 1871 (later moving it to Bulimba) and became a Member of Parliament in 1876. Mary wrote that, 'My husband not only rejoiced in, but helped on, the success of this honest, intelligent working man'.⁷⁶³ His son dutifully recorded the family's gratitude by describing McConnel as 'an excellent employer'.⁷⁶⁴ Mary summed up the co-

⁷⁵⁹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 24, p. 22; Fisher & Harrison, *Eastern Suburbs Placenames Drive*, p. 7, p. 8; Personal communication from July 2004 owner, Mrs Susie Griffiths. A flood in 1841 was one of the worst in settler experience.

⁷⁶⁰ Fisher, 'Bulimba House and Farm', p. 36.

⁷⁶¹ James Henry, born 18 April 1850 and Alexander Walter (1852-1853). Mary's other children were David Rose, born 11 August 1854; Katharine Rose, born 7 August 1855; William Macleod, born 2 February 1857; died 25 November 1857; Mary Macleod, born 2 February 1861; Eric Walter, born 11 March 1863; Edward John, born 29 May 1864. David, Katharine, William, and Mary were born in Britain. Eric was born at Cressbrook, and Edward, in Brisbane.

⁷⁶² Allen, *Cressbrook*, unpaginated.

⁷⁶³ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 22-24; Johnston, 'Old Bulimba', *HSQJ*, October 1918, p. 309.

⁷⁶⁴ Johnston, 'Old Bulimba', *HSQJ*, October 1918, p. 305.

dependence between landholding and working class when she recalled that:

Our people were very dependent on us, and it was in our power to help them. It was a delightful gratification to my husband to see his workpeople prospering. And they did prosper. To-day a good many of them, or their children, are filling important positions.⁷⁶⁵

As more families developed their own farms, Bulimba station exemplified the concept of civilised 'improvement'. 'Thus began', Mary had written, 'the thriving district now called Bulimba, my good husband the centre of all'.⁷⁶⁶

The cooperative working relationship between the McConnells and their former Bulimba employees continued into future generations, the second of which Mary was witnessing at the time of her writing. Dairy cows belonging to the descendants of Bulimba workers, for example, were supplying milk to the Condensed Milk Factory, which was established at Cressbrook by J.H. McConnel in 1898. Within this expansive sweep of progress, present and future, Mary found no place to include Bulimba's Aborigines.

The relationship between landholders and workers on Cressbrook in the 1860s was similarly run along paternalistic lines. The McConnells' duty was to guide and help their subordinates who, in turn, were expected to render to their benefactors conscientious service, be punctual, polite and show due deference to their master's authority.⁷⁶⁷ The Masters and Servants Act 1857 (NSW) formalised in law the already existing expectations of employer and dependant employees, defining as servants:

all agricultural and other laborers (sic) shepherds watchmen stockmen grooms all domestic and other servants artificers (sic) journeymen handicraftsmen gardeners vine dressers splitters fencers shearers sheepwashers reapers mowers haymakers hired and engaged in this Colony ...

⁷⁶⁵ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 28.

⁷⁶⁶ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 25.

⁷⁶⁷ Roberts, *Paternalism in Early Victorian England*, pp. 1-8. Colonial landholders extended their paternalistic care whether they lived on their properties or were absent owners. Cf. Barbara (Chambers) Dawson, 'Striking Out for Independence: Moves Towards Self-Determination and Self-Sufficiency on the Southern Monaro Property of Bibbenluke, 1861-1884', in *Labour History*, Number 79, November 2000, pp. 123-39; and Dawson, 'The end of pastoral paternalism: William Bradley of Bibbenluke and Robert Campbell of Duntroon', in *Canberra Historical Journal*, New Series No. 43, March 1999, pp. 20-28.

Aborigines were similarly expected to adapt and conform to the requirements of this social structure.

Built on a saddle between the Brisbane River and Cressbrook Creek, the original Cressbrook homestead was a long, low structure of two rooms and veranda made from ironbark and cedar cut from trees on the property. Facing north across rich river flats, it occupies the second site selected, after Aborigines are said to have advised McConnel that streams were known to meet and flood in that area.⁷⁶⁹ The kitchen, workmen's accommodation, shearing shed, storeroom, forge, barn, stables and a sheepwashing run were later additions. In prosperous times in the late nineteenth century, east and west wings of the already extended homestead, and a southern courtyard, were constructed. Other projects over time replaced wooden structures with more solid materials.⁷⁷⁰

When building up her picture of life at Cressbrook, Mary focused on the care she extended to the members of the large workforce. These included overseers, stockmen, butchers and labourers. The housemaid had again become Mary's maid, grooms were employed to accompany the family during their travel between Brisbane and Cressbrook, and nurses tended the children. When in 1862 wood splitters, sawyers, carpenters, builders and bricklayers and their families came to make house extensions, Mary took the opportunity to educate them, explaining how:

We improvised a schoolroom, got a respectable female teacher. We provided her rooms, food and firewood, with £10 a year, the children paying 6d. and 4d. weekly ... The children learned very well, the little girls learning to sew very neatly and make their samplers ... Then we began

⁷⁶⁸ 'An Act to regulate the Law between Masters and Servants', 20 Victoria No. 28, 11 March 1857, in *The Public General Statutes of New South Wales (1852-1862)*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1862, pp. 3081-84.

⁷⁶⁹ Rising water levels did not threaten the building until 1893. In 1901, however, a severe flood brought water almost a metre high up the walls of the earliest existing structure.

⁷⁷⁰ Sir Raphael Cilento, 'Cressbrook, Queensland', in *Historic Buildings of Australia: Volume One: Historic Homesteads of Australia*, Australian Council of National Trusts, Cassell Australia Limited, North Melbourne, 1969, pp. 165-168; Kerr, *Confidence & Tradition*, p. 4; 'McConnel Family Papers', Robert & Priscilla Banister, 'An Account of a visit to meet the McConnells of Queensland, January 1993', pp. 3-4.

to have a small library for the men. We fitted up a room [and] called it the Reading Room; we made it fairly comfortable, and put in a good cedar table with a drawer and chairs. There were pens, ink and paper, with a blotter. A good kerosine lamp was lit at sundown, and in winter a fire. Certain rules were pasted on the door. I am glad to say this privilege was valued, and made good use of.⁷⁷¹

The growing numbers of school-aged children on Cressbrook soon fitted the conditions required for a provisional school under the Queensland Education Act of 1860. These imitated New South Wales 1867 provisional schools requirements that there should be at least 15 children, but fewer than 25, and that parents or runholder should provide the building and furniture, while the government paid the teacher and supplied books and equipment. Mary explained that:

The conditions were that a school-house and house for the teacher should be provided by the applicants, also that the teacher should be provided with food, firewood, etc. All this was done, and as the teacher we had was a fairly good one, we made application for her; her certificates were accepted and continued for some years.⁷⁷²

When copper mining at nearby Sandy Creek resulted in the 1873 opening of a hotel at Mount Esk, and the subsequent development of the town of Esk, Cressbrook workers took the opportunity of buying surrounding blocks of land. In order to comply with the residence and improvement clauses of the Crown Lands Alienation Act 1860,⁷⁷³ Cressbrook employees joined their families in Esk at the weekend. The McConnells were later to apply for a public school for the growing number of children in this area.⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷¹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 48.

⁷⁷² McConnel, *Memories*, p. 49. Mary Banks reiterates that the provisional school was supported by a government grant 'to such stations as could prove they had the necessary number of children', Banks, *Memories of Pioneer Days*, p. 32; Fletcher and Burnswoods, *Government Schools of New South Wales Since 1848*, p. 18.

⁷⁷³ Kerr, *Confidence & Tradition*, p. 34. Details of the Queensland Land Act can be found in D.B. Waterson, *Squatter, Selector, and Storekeeper: A History of the Darling Downs, 1859-93*, SUP, 1968, p. 117.

⁷⁷⁴ For the education of their own children, the McConnells hired a governess, who accompanied them inland in 1862. Harry was educated by tutors at Cressbrook (one of them being Donald Cameron, later headmaster of Ipswich Boys' Grammar School), before attending Cambridge University for two years, McConnel, *Memories*, p. 46; Rupert Goodman, 'Cameron, Donald (1838-1916)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cameron-donald-3148/text4697>, published in hardcopy 1969, accessed online 9 September 2014; *Cressbrook Estate*, p. 14.

Mary was less energetic in her educating efforts at Bulimba. Although schools run by the Board of National Education had operated in New South Wales from 1848, and children in the Moreton Bay convict settlement had attended classes from the late 1820s, Mary highlighted their scarcity in 1850 with her comment that ‘one or two schools [existed], such as they were’. While not recalling ‘what was done for day-teaching’ at Bulimba, Mary surmised that, because the immigrants were all literate, ‘the elder taught the younger’.⁷⁷⁵

Mary’s evangelical mission

Mary’s Christian outreach began at Bulimba. To facilitate the attendance of either the Church of England or the ‘Independent’ minister then resident at Brisbane to conduct Sunday services at the homestead, McConnel bought a 7-kilometre strip of land from north Brisbane to a ferry-landing opposite Bulimba, fenced it on both sides, constructed a road, built stables for two horses, a coachhouse for a vehicle and a hut for a resident ferryman, who would row the clergyman across the river. Although rowers could take the McConnells to Brisbane for Sunday morning church services when the tide was incoming, the disadvantages of the trip were that, ‘it was a long pull, the river had many bends ... it was often very hot’ [and] only a few people could be accommodated.’ Mary noted appreciatively that the new arrangements ‘added greatly to [the McConnells’] comfort and convenience’ for services.⁷⁷⁶

At Bulimba homestead, Mary aimed her proselytising at the children, a practice encouraged in evangelical missions.⁷⁷⁷ She taught a large class of Sunday School girls, while McConnel taught the boys. As respectful children of Bulimba workers, they were ‘very regular in their attendance, prepared their lessons well, and were quiet and attentive’.⁷⁷⁸ Education was incorporated into religious instruction by having the older children read lessons to the McConnells.

⁷⁷⁵ Fletcher and Burnswoods, *Government Schools*, p. 18; Steele, *Brisbane Town*, pp. 330-31; McConnel, *Memories*, p. 25.

⁷⁷⁶ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 25.

⁷⁷⁷ Paul Sangster, *Pity My Simplicity: The Evangelical Revival and the Religious Education of Children 1738-1800*, The Epworth Press, London, 1963, p. 26.

⁷⁷⁸ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 25.

McConnel also provided for the spiritual needs of the wider community. As the McConnells' arrival had occurred soon after the period of penal settlement when religious practice and instruction had been neglected in the area, the Presbyterian minister, Rev'd Mowbray, urged McConnel to provide a church for the many Scots in South Brisbane. In June 1850, the *Moreton Bay Courier* noted that the 200-capacity wooden church in Grey Street was a 'commodious place of worship' nearing completion. McConnel was one of its first two elders.⁷⁷⁹

The main focus of Mary's educational and evangelistic aims, however, centred on Cressbrook, where she also spent the bulk of her colonial life. There, religious observance was strict, 'the Lord's Day [being] kept reverently [with a] complete cessation from labour'. During the early 1850s, McConnel had led a service on the Cottage veranda, Mary proudly reporting that, 'My dear husband ... used the Church of England service, and read very good sermons'. According to Ruth Kerr, historian of the Esk shire, the McConnells 'employed' a Presbyterian minister at Cressbrook in 1864. In later years, Mary attempted to establish a United Christian Church in a chapel built near the homestead, a plan that ultimately failed because the Church of England, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and Methodist clergymen (who took the service for one week in turn) argued against the teachings of the previous week.⁷⁸⁰ Whether the Aborigines attended any services is unknown.

As at Bulimba, Mary tried to reach the workers on Cressbrook through her Sunday School children, to whom she distributed *Good Works*, *Sunday Magazine* and *Sunday at Home*, and the Rev'd Dr (later Bishop) Ryle's 'famous Xmas tracts'. She 'took a good deal of pains in teaching the children to sing', and was gratified to hear 'the young voices singing the hymns they had learnt at school' when they joined their parents in a walk by the river on Sunday afternoons.⁷⁸¹

At Cressbrook, Mary also directed her evangelism towards the Dungibara. From the 1820s, Protestant evangelical mission stations had spread throughout the Pacific Islands from the Marquesas Islands to Papua, endorsed by an address in the House of Commons in 1834 to

⁷⁷⁹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 26; *Moreton Bay Courier*, 1 June 1850, p. 3.

⁷⁸⁰ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 20; Kerr, *Confidence & Tradition*, p. 216; Banks, *Memories of Pioneer Days*, p. 36.

⁷⁸¹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 21, p. 47, p. 48.

introduce Christianity to ‘colonial natives’.⁷⁸² Nineteenth-century Christian author and hymn writer, James Montgomery, believed that the best way to convert Aborigines was to follow Biblical text, writing: ‘The wisdom of man says, “First *civilize*, and then *Christianize* barbarians”; but ... The counsel of God is the reverse; “Go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles ... you will *civilize them by Christianizing them*”’. Evangelical clergy also urged this approach.⁷⁸³ Mary however favoured the combination of religious training and the introduction of British cultural standards. This was a similar method to that espoused by Alexander Collie, an early Western Australian settler, who wrote to his brother in 1831 that:

there is here an excellent field for the missionary. Young [Indigenous] boys could easily be accustomed to value the comforts of civilized life and thereby [have] our moral and religious habits instilled into them. Even the older might, I think, be readily educated.⁷⁸⁴

Like Collie, Mary directed her attention to Indigenous children.⁷⁸⁵ Her aim was to gradually separate ‘Topsy’ and ‘Clara’ (the daughters of Aboriginal women, Kitty and Polly) from their clan by arranging a room in the homestead where their clothes were kept, and where the girls were encouraged each morning to take a tepid bath. Although Mary had also hoped that they would sleep overnight in warm beds, she could not ‘wean them from going off to the camp at night to sleep by the camp-fire’. She did however teach them to read a little, to sew, and to repeat and sing ‘simple verses and hymns’, although she

⁷⁸² A. Grenfell Price, *White Settlers and Native Peoples: An Historical Study of Racial Contacts between English-speaking Whites and Aboriginal Peoples in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* (1950), Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1972, p. 122; Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, pp. 11-25; cf. also Anna Johnston, ‘Antipodean heathens: the London Missionary Society in Polynesia and Australia, 1800-50’, in Lynette Russell (ed.), *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies*, Manchester University Press, 2001, pp. 68-81; Alex Tyrrell, *A Sphere of Benevolence: The Life of Joseph Orton, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary (1795-1842)*, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, 1993; also, Diane Langmore, *Missionary Lives: Papua, 1874-1914*, Pacific Islands Monograph Series, No. 6, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1989.

⁷⁸³ Ian Douglas Maxwell, ‘Civilization or Christianity? The Scottish Debate on Mission Methods, 1750-1835’, in Brian Stanley (ed.), *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, USA, Cambridge, UK, 2001, p. 124, p. 123; Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, p. 267.

⁷⁸⁴ Quoted in Penelope Hetherington, *Settlers, Servants & Slaves: Aboriginal and European Children in Nineteenth-century Western Australia*, UWA Press, 2002, p. 115.

⁷⁸⁵ This was also the mission focus in the twentieth century, Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1995, p. 189.

despaired that, ‘when the tribe went on their nomadic excursions nothing would induce them to leave the little girls behind, so on their return all was to do over again’.⁷⁸⁶

Mary wrote humorously of her failed attempts to either christianise or ‘civilise’ the girls. Although Topsy (a little girl ‘full of mischief’) and Clara attended Sunday school, when the teacher told them God ‘loved them and wished them to be His very own children’, Topsy retorted, ‘Ah! Miss Shmit, suppose God love me like that, what for he make me black?’.⁷⁸⁷ In another story, Mary reported how a young woman visiting Cressbrook had asked to care for the girls. One day, however, she left them at the homestead while she went out riding. In her absence the girls found an excuse for having fun, Mary reporting that:

[Topsy and Clara] entered her room, ransacked her drawers, dressing themselves up in her clothes and putting on what trinkets they could find; while admiring themselves in the looking-glass they heard footsteps and scuttled under the bed! Of course the poor little culprits were soon found, but beyond a severe reprimand and a promise extracted that they would not do so again, nothing more was said about it, and certainly they kept their word.⁷⁸⁸

From Cressbrook the McConnells again saw to the building of a church for the local community. To commemorate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in April 1873, McConnel bought, cleared and fenced land in Esk for the 120-seat weatherboard Presbyterian church of St Andrew, which was consecrated on 2 February 1876. He also built a six-roomed cedar manse with kitchen. The church stands on the southern side of Redbank Creek near its junction with Sandy Creek. It now fronts the busy Brisbane Valley Highway, just south of the main town. It has ceased operating as a church.⁷⁸⁹ Harry McConnel followed in his parents’ tradition by building a chapel on Cressbrook in 1901 on the occasion of his own twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁶ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 44.

⁷⁸⁷ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 44-45. The German missionaries at Mount Zion had held school classes for Aboriginal children, with an emphasis on Scripture and prayer. Girls were also taught sewing, Steele, *Brisbane Town*, p. 335.

⁷⁸⁸ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 44-45.

⁷⁸⁹ Kerr, *Confidence & Tradition*, pp. 216-17. Personal observation, and information from local historians, Edna Butler and Alan Hayward, Esk Information Centre, July 2005.

⁷⁹⁰ *The Pastoralists’ Review*, Vol. XX, No. 11, 16 January 1911, p. 1217.

Christian Kanakas

While failing to convert any Aborigines on Cressbrook, Mary had more success in the Christian lives of eight Kanakas who worked on the property during the 1860s.⁷⁹¹ Mary wrote with pleasure of the benevolent care and Christian outreach she extended to these workers over three years. McConnel had magnanimously allowed them to choose the site for their cottage and encouraged their enterprise by fencing in an area for a garden. Mary took a 'deep interest' in the 'docile' South Sea Islanders who 'did not smoke' and frequently 'bathed' in the river. Most of those who came from 'Mari', however, were already Christian: 'One seemed to have oversight of the rest, he always said grace before eating, the others bending their heads'.⁷⁹² Mary supported their faith by buying for them 'copies of one or two of the Gospels in Mari language, also English testaments in good type, also copy-books and slates' to teach them to read. She described how:

In winter we had school at night, in summer at 5 a.m. on the veranda; their copies and sums were set the night before, my dear husband helping me. They arranged that in turn one should weekly stay away to prepare breakfast; work began in the heat at 6.30. It was a pleasant time, they teaching me Mari and I them English. They learned to repeat a good deal of Scripture in their own language, also the Lord's Prayer. They loved singing songs and hymns.⁷⁹³

According to Mary Banks, the Kanakas were 'gentle, happy-natured men [who] gave no trouble' and who were kind to the McConnel children, one of them taking the children for rides in a spring-cart when he drove around Cressbrook.⁷⁹⁴

McConnel acted benevolently towards the Kanakas as he had done at Bulimba, again overseeing these workers' finances. Their contractual agreement was payment of £6 a year, food, lodging, clothing, and their ship's passage to and from their homelands. When hawkers called at the station to try to persuade them to buy their wares, McConnel

⁷⁹¹ Kanakas (Pacific Island workers) were first imported into Queensland in 1863 to fill a manpower shortage after work by convicts ended and attempts to employ Aboriginal or Chinese people as shepherds failed, Greenwood and Lavery, *Brisbane 1859, 1959*, p. 46; B.H. Molesworth, 'Kanaka Labour in Queensland [1863-1871]', in *HSQJ*, Vol. 1, No. 3, August 1917, p. 140.

⁷⁹² McConnel, *Memories*, p. 49. The men's homeland may have been Maria Island, part of the Tubuai Islands, south of Tahiti.

⁷⁹³ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 49.

⁷⁹⁴ Banks, *Memories of Pioneer Days*, pp. 46-47.

‘explained ... how much better it would be if they saved their money to take home, so he got them each a Saving Bank Book, and they soon understood’. After extra work among the cattle, or for the special jobs of sheepwashing and shearing, McConnel paid them each 10 shillings, and ‘this they could spend as they liked’. To assist them, Mary ‘used generally to get them what they wanted when I went to Brisbane’.⁷⁹⁵

Friendship with the Dungibara?

How did the Aborigines at Cressbrook deal with the patronisation of a well-meaning master and mistress and the pressure they exerted on them to become ‘civilised’? And how did Mary, within the constraints of class, race and religion, choose to represent the Aboriginal women with whom she shared a physical closeness as they carried out their domestic chores in the homestead?

The messages on interracial relationship at Cressbrook are mixed, even from within the McConnel family. Mary Banks viewed her past through rose-coloured glasses, writing of a relationship of acceptance and cooperation in which the McConnells respected the Aborigines’ ‘rights to camp in the old haunts, to hunt kangaroos, opossum and fish, and to hold the Bunya-nut feast on the hills’, and the Dungibara in return ‘respected my father’s property’. ‘King Billy’ would carry Mary as a little girl on his shoulders over the river to the Aborigines’ camp, and bring her native berries to eat. When the family returned home after short visits to Ipswich, she reported that some of the Aborigines would clap their hands in welcome.⁷⁹⁶ She also noted that following the murders at Kilcoy station, the Dallambara vowed to kill any white man who travelled through their country. When McConnel planned to blaze a new trail eastward to Brisbane through Dallambara territory, having ignored the warnings of the Cressbrook Aborigines, Billy accompanied him, running beside McConnel’s horse. At the Indigenous land border, Billy assured McConnel

⁷⁹⁵ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 49-50.

⁷⁹⁶ Banks, *Memories of Pioneer Days*, p. 41, p. 44, p. 46. For the Waka Waka people, the bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) from the Bunya Bunya Mountains and foothills was a prolific source of a nutritious nut. Every three years when the crop was profuse, Aborigines are said to have gathered from the west as far as the Balonne River, north from the Dawson River valley, and south as far as Tweed Heads in New South Wales. During these corroborees, tribal boundaries were waived as groups feasted on the nuts. Contests of skill and bravery, including spear and boomerang throwing are reputed to have taken place. Elders are also said to have held consultations during these gatherings. In 1843, McConnel planted a bunya pine tree at the front of Cressbrook homestead. This was later known as ‘Grandfather’s Tree’. It survives to this day, Cilento, ‘Cressbrook’, in *Historic Buildings of Australia*, pp. 168-170.

safe passage by assigning him to the care of the Dallambara ‘chief’.⁷⁹⁷

Mary Banks evoked the idea of friendship, writing:

The coloured folk living about us were our friends. We spoke of them as ‘the blacks’. One woman, Kitty, came to scrub the kitchen and veranda floors; she said I was her dead baby girl ‘jumped up white,’ and treated me with every mark of affection. She had a keen sense of humour and we often laughed together. Her husband, Piggy, worked at odd jobs to earn pence for tobacco; Kitty also smoked and had her pipe, and they had rations from the station store. They camped with others of their tribe on the river bank near the station, speared fish for us, and walked about with their blankets over their shoulders, watching the strange doings of the white man.⁷⁹⁸

From the tone of her text, it is clear that Mary senior kept interracial ‘friendship’ rigidly contained within strict social boundaries. She underlined her own attitude by reiterating McConnel’s autocratic carrot and stick methods of control:

When the tribe behaved badly my husband would not allow them to come up to the head station, nor give them presents,—a shirt, or red pocket-handkerchief, tobacco or a pipe; when they did no work they got no rations.⁷⁹⁹

As with all the women previously dealt with in this thesis, Mary’s attitudes towards Aborigines stemmed from the assumption of their inferiority. This perception had been ratified by legislation, the New South Wales Licensed Publicans Act of 1838 for example having forbade the sale or gift of alcoholic drink to Aborigines. Similarly restrictive liquor laws were incorporated after 1859 into Queensland legislation that continued in like vein into the twentieth century. The New South Wales 1840 Aboriginal Fire Arms Regulational Act disallowed the use of firearms by either ‘Aboriginal natives and half-castes’ unless by special permission. The Queensland Elections Acts of 1872 and 1874 underlined

⁷⁹⁷ Banks, *Memories of Pioneer Days*, p. 42, p. 43. Banks states that a ‘chief’ was chosen from each tribe, ‘on account of his bravery’.

⁷⁹⁸ Banks, *Memories of Pioneer Days*, p. 41.

⁷⁹⁹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 43.

Aboriginal legal inferiority by including Indigenous Australians amongst those not entitled to vote unless possessors of property under British freehold title.⁸⁰⁰ Mary expressed her paternalistic superiority over Aborigines when she philosophised that, ‘A generation or two of wise, kind treatment would make a great change in them, but there were many hindrances, and the tribes would need to be broken up’.⁸⁰¹

The interracial relationship between mistress and subordinates therefore operated within carefully prescribed limits. The Dungibara women were allowed to enter the homestead only as workers and only after having complied with British cultural standards. In condoning the close relationship between her first-born child, who as a baby was ‘very fond’ of Long Kitty,⁸⁰² Mary told how she gave the Aboriginal woman ‘a comb and a loose red gown, and she would come up [from bathing in the river] very smart, with her hair parted’ in preparation for looking after Harry. This dictum that Aborigines comply with English working standards was to endure on outback stations into the twentieth century. In the late 1970s, Ann McGrath interviewed a white woman from the Northern Territory who recalled that Aboriginal women were required, ‘Every morning ... to wash, change their dresses, and comb their hair in the wash-house before starting work’—a form of domestic training seen as ‘an ideal means of “uplifting” the part-Aboriginal women, for it taught black women the observance of British white cultural norms and middle-class etiquette—at least while in the employers’ home’.⁸⁰³

⁸⁰⁰ John McCorquodale, *Aborigines and the Law: A Digest*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1987, pp. 19-20, p. 53.

⁸⁰¹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 44.

⁸⁰² McConnel, *Memories*, p. 44, p. 43. Aboriginal women cared for, and often reared white children, into at least the 1920s. Cf. McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground*, p. 26; Victoria Haskins, ‘Family Histories, Personal Narratives and Race Relations History in Australia’, in Patricia Clarke (ed.), *Canberra Historical Journal*, New Series No. 45, March 2000, pp. 25-29. In the process of exploring the relationship of black women with white babies, in their common role of nurse or nanny, I have found numerous examples of Indigenous women acting as wet nurses for white infants, cf., for example, Helen Gregory and W. Ross Johnston, *Women of the West*, Central Queensland University Press, Rockhampton, Queensland, 2004, p. 32. ANU, RSSS History 2007 PhD candidate, Christine Hansen states that her mother, Patricia Margaret Clark, born in 1928 in the Sydney suburb of Randwick, was breastfed by an Indigenous woman. This practice was also verified by Rosemary Eckel of Tambo, Queensland, great-niece of Rose Scott Cowen (Chapter 7). There is also a documented example of a white woman suckling an orphaned Aboriginal baby: after a massacre of Aborigines in the Macleay River region of northern New South Wales in 1843, Caroline McMaugh of Pee Dee Station was given a starving baby to feed, Geoffrey Blomfield, *Baal Belbora: The End of the Dancing*, Colonial Research Society, Armidale, 1992, p. 41.

⁸⁰³ Ann McGrath, *‘Born in the Cattle’: Aborigines in Cattle Country*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987, p. 66, p. 60; McConnel, *Memories*, p. 43.

Nevertheless, Mary sympathised with the Aborigines, whom she considered to be ‘much maligned’. She knew some of the Aboriginal women and girls well enough to individualise them, referring to them by their English monikers and describing their appearance and personalities, although keeping to such stereotypical terms as ‘very pretty’ and ‘affectionate’. Kitty, for example, ‘grew very fond of me and the children’. Mary mentioned Aboriginal men only in relation to their behaviour towards their wives, empathising with the women with her comments that ‘Piggie Nerang’ (Kitty’s husband) was ‘not worthy of her’; and that Polly, ‘another fine “gin”’, was ‘very cruelly used by her husband, she had her teeth knocked out; but she was a gentle creature’.⁸⁰⁴

Just as Mary included anecdotes about Topsy and Clara that showed that the girls had failed to take the civilising process seriously, she also made two other references that reveal the authority that the Dungibara women maintained in spite of Mary’s matriarchal attitude towards them. When Long Kitty emerged from the river, spruce and cleansed to British codes of practice, she would retort to Mary: “likit missus”[?]-and ask for the baby’. This sounds very much like a mischievous parody of the silliness of excessive English cleanliness. Mary also recorded Long Kitty’s pride of country as she stretched out her arms and asserted, ‘All this “yarmen” (land) belonging to me’. Although recording an Indigenous voice, Mary’s ethnocentricity nevertheless elicited her own response that, ‘It did seem hard to have it all taken from them, but it had to be. They cultivated nothing; they were no use on it’.⁸⁰⁵

In a story about Kitty (originally from Durundur⁸⁰⁶), the tussle for authority plays out in a complex interaction. While Mary places the Indigenous woman in the subservient position of a somewhat recalcitrant child, to be scolded, then forgiven, Kitty shows her authority in her ability to adapt to white attitudes and expectations in order to achieve her own ends.

⁸⁰⁴ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 43-44, p. 45.

⁸⁰⁵ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 43. Dr Lang expressed similar sentiments, asserting that there was ‘no fault in taking the land’ from Aborigines, Reynolds, *Frontier*, p. 171. Early settlers, such as E.M. Curr (1841-1851, present-day Victoria) and Robert Christison (central western Queensland, 1864-1910) also identified with Aboriginal concerns. Unlike Mary McConnel, however, they did not try to ‘christianise’ their station Aborigines, Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria* (1883); Bennett, *Christison of Lammermoor* (1927).

⁸⁰⁶ Durundur was a gathering point for three groups of Aborigines: Dungidau, the local people, Dallambara and Nalbo, of the mountain region, and Undanbi, the ‘saltwater’ people, Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways*, p. 256.

Mary reported that:

Once on my return from England I had bought a piece of red serge to make the native women winter dresses—a loose gown with short sleeves, coming down about half-way from the knee to the ankle. Kitty was very proud of hers, and begged me to allow her to go to Durundur to show it to her sister. It was the rule that when the tribe started on their expeditions they left their good clothes behind, generally wearing the opossum-rugs made by themselves. I gave her leave. By-and-by she returned minus the red serge gown; I said, “Kitty, where gown?” She said, “Missus, baal you be woola (don’t be angry), my sister bin say, ‘give it me gown, kind missus give you ‘nother,’ and I ben give it her.’” I pretended to be very angry. She said, “Poor sister baal (not) got it gown.” It was quite true what she said, so after a little I gave her another.⁸⁰⁷

It seems to a modern reader that Kitty had assessed and successfully manipulated Mary’s good intentions.

‘Civilising’ by Aboriginal Abduction

Mary carried her favoured civilising method (of separating children from tribal influences) to extremes when she decided to remove a seven-year-old Durundur Aboriginal boy, ‘Alpin Edward Durundur’, from his people and take him to Britain in 1853. ‘Found’ for the McConnells on Durundur station by Alpin Cameron, the lad ‘promised well’, Mary describing him as:

an average specimen, well-made, not good-looking, he had, like all Australian natives, nice hair, smooth and not coarse. He could not speak any English. Until he went on board ship he wore only a little shirt, but as the weather became cooler he was glad of more clothing, and he very readily adapted himself to the change of circumstances.⁸⁰⁸

Alpin’s feelings can be imagined only from the point of view of his actions and from the reaction he caused amongst those who saw him. On board ship, Mary reported that he was well behaved and ‘became quite a favourite’.⁸⁰⁹ In Yorkshire, in the way that Barnum’s

⁸⁰⁷ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 44.

⁸⁰⁸ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 41.

⁸⁰⁹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 41. Alpin fits Spivak’s example of a ‘native informant’ who acts ‘a part [he has] not chosen, in a script that has as its task to keep [him] silent and invisible’, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1999, p. 85.

human ‘exhibits’ were later received, he was regarded as a ‘seven days’ wonder’ and casual observers thought he was a young, black ‘devil’.⁸¹⁰ For those who knew him better, his disregard for the Sabbath (on which he went ‘bird-nesting’) earned him the reputation of being a ‘very naughty little boy’. During the McConnells’ yearlong tour of the Continent, Alpin remained with Mary’s sister and brother-in-law in Scotland where he had a ‘happy, healthful year’ and ‘grew intelligent’, and was ‘quite contented’. On the McConnells’ return, he lived with them in London, where Mary reported favourably on his intellectual success at weekday school, and his spiritual progress at Sunday school. By the end of another year, the minister of the local church wished to baptise him. Here he was given his English names, ‘Edward’ (the name of his schoolmaster) being the only one he himself chose.

During the nine years that Alpin spent in Britain, Mary could report that he remained ‘obedient and tractable’ and ‘honest and truthful’. She states, with some surprise, that, ‘I do not think it occurred to him to tell a lie’. Nor did he use ‘bad words’. As he reached adolescence, his appearance and stature ‘improved’. Rather than hiding his difference, Alpin showed pride in his ‘shiny, wavy black hair’. Mary wrote that ‘his chief extravagance was an occasional sixpence for hair oil’. After three years in London, the McConnells returned to Scotland. There Alpin continued his ‘excellent progress’ both at school and in sport.⁸¹¹

The way Alpin chose to spend his free time, however, gives a clearer insight into the perceived success of his ‘assimilation’. Mary records without illusion, that:

[Alpin] dearly loved all “spectacles”; a circus was his delight; he was never inside a theatre. We were not far from the Crystal Palace; he had a boy’s ticket, and it was his delight to spend Saturdays and holidays there. We often sent the nurses and children. He loved the Church of England service, never omitted a response, and would go three times to Church on Sunday, if there were three services. I do not mean to suppose it was only

⁸¹⁰ The morality play tradition had long conditioned audiences to the identification of ‘blackness’ with ‘the devil’. ‘Blackness’ in character as well as appearance signified to an evangelical Christian the need for redemptive intercession.

⁸¹¹ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 42, p. 41.

devotion that prompted him, but more love of “spectacle”.⁸¹²

When the McConnells returned to Queensland in 1862, the 16-year-old Alpin accompanied them. The McConnells rationalised that the trade of carpentry that Alpin had chosen to follow in Britain would be similarly available to him in Queensland, where they would also be able to give the adolescent Alpin their personal ‘watchful care’.⁸¹³ However, like Bennelong who escaped a five-months ‘captivity’ at Port Jackson in May 1790, Alpin tired of ‘civilisation’.⁸¹⁴

The denouement of Mary’s ten-year experiment with Alpin Durundur was pathetic. Like Bennelong, Alpin felt the pull to return to his own people. Although designated an orphan by Mary, Alpin was in fact part of what Anna Haebich has called the ‘overlapping circles of extended family [which] lie at the heart of the lives of most Aboriginal Australians’. Haebich writes of the networks of family relationships that Aborigines learn from an early age. From their deep cultural knowledge, they can identify who belongs to them, where they come from and how they should behave within a ‘wide universe of kin’.⁸¹⁵ In retrospect, Mary acknowledged that, ‘In truth we ought not to have taken him back to the scenes and people of his old savage life. We did it for the best, wishing to keep him under our own eyes’. Her account of Alpin’s escape contains her interpretation of his actions and her disappointed hopes. She recorded that:

he had so long enjoyed a civilised state that we thought he would not care to return to his old life, but the old scenes and his tribe who lionised him were too much for him, and he said one day, “I am tired of this sort of thing,” and became restless. So we thought it best to send him back to the Old Country, and my husband made good arrangements with a very nice kind captain to take him home in his ship. We did not tell Alpin till he was on board. I had packed his box, putting in little things I knew he would like. My husband took him to

⁸¹² McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 41-42. The Crystal Palace was built for the Great Exhibition of 1851.

⁸¹³ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 42.

⁸¹⁴ Bennelong was captured on orders from Governor Phillip in 1789. In December 1792, he sailed with Phillip to England where he was presented to George III. He returned home in 1795 with the second New South Wales Governor, John Hunter, after suffering from homesickness and the effects of the cold climate. Imeerawanyee, who had accompanied Bennelong, died in England, Graeme Aplin, S.G. Foster, Michael McKernan (eds), *Australians: A Historical Dictionary*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, p. 45.

⁸¹⁵ Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800-2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000, p. 13.

Brisbane the evening before the ship sailed, went on board with him, told him that he was going back to his friends who had been so kind to him, and that he would come back in two or three years, gave him half-a-sovereign and said good-bye, leaving him with the captain. But the same night he swam ashore, bought a tomahawk, and went into the far-away bush. He never came back, which was a grief to me.⁸¹⁶

Rather than accepting her failure to ‘civilise’ Alpin, Mary explained that she wrote at length about him, ‘to prove that they are not by any means so low down in the scale of the human race as they are generally supposed to be’.⁸¹⁷ In Britain, Alpin is said to have been ‘good-natured’, to have gradually ‘tamed-down’, and he had learned English. During the first three or four years, he had travelled with the McConnells as they moved ‘from place to place’ in England and Scotland, in an unsettled existence. At other times, he lived separate from them. Whether these conditions suited or upset Alpin, he had no choice but to accept them. Mary pointed out that the family treated him ‘in every way as we would were he a white boy’, without specifying qualifications in the relationship, or Alpin’s reaction to his circumstances, other than his apparent compliance. Although his safety after escaping is unsure, his actions showed that he was determined to turn his back on white society.

In her later years, Mary continued to espouse her evangelistic and paternalistic attitudes although slightly less stringently. She recorded that:

At last after long years of ill-usage the natives, such as are left, are being thoroughly well cared for, humanely and wisely treated, not by forcing them to cultivate habits, but by giving them a certain amount of liberty, teaching them to be a law-abiding people, above all seeking to win them for the Master. Away in the North, not far from Thursday Island, where the natives are comparatively numerous, there is splendid and successful work being done by the Moravian missionaries under the control of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.⁸¹⁸

⁸¹⁶ McConnel, *Memories*, pp. 42-43.

⁸¹⁷ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 43. Mary’s acknowledgement of Aboriginal humanity reflects the traditional Christian view that all humans were descended from Adam and Eve, (and were therefore candidates for salvation).

⁸¹⁸ McConnel, *Memories*, p. 45. During the nineteenth century, Moravian missions spread throughout the world. The missionaries at Nundah were Moravian, Maxwell, ‘Civilization or Christianity?’, pp. 133-34; *HSQJ*, Vol. 1, Part 2, February 1916, p. 64.

Conclusion

Class and race superiority are the themes underlying Mary's text. Operating within the clutch of her paternalistic and evangelical impulses to improve the Aboriginal people, what chance did Mary have of representing Indigenous people, unless in terms of their religious and civilising journey? While they were largely pawns in her endeavours, some of the Indigenous women do nevertheless push through her confined expectations to reveal their own feelings and aspirations. Mary generously gave voice to some of these expressions.

Unlike the newly arrived settler, Katherine Kirkland, Mary lived among Aborigines for extended periods of time. As she knew Aborigines as individuals, she does not resort to the racial stereotypes that the previously discussed women of this thesis were compelled to use. Similarly, although originally disenchanted with the Australian landscape, she had remained in Australia long enough to accept it as part of her colonial home. The process that enabled Mary to function happily in a place and with a people so different from familiar British prototypes was by grasping the opportunity that new ground with potential converts opened to her. This challenge, which forms the theme of her narrative, governed the way she perceived and represented the Aborigines.

Because the frontier of black-white confrontation had been earlier pushed north and west, Mary entered a racial environment in which settlers and Aborigines had adjusted themselves to their allotted place after the upheaval of initial contact. For this reason, Mary had no need to defer to Indigenous knowledge for her sustenance or livelihood as had been the case with Katherine Kirkland. By the time of her arrival, Cressbrook had already been 'civilised' with an established dwelling and English garden that precluded any need for Indigenous assistance. Bulimba's close proximity to Brisbane presented a similar scenario. Mary was also freed from the dilemma of guilt and friendship that swirled as an undercurrent in Katherine's account. Like Mary's contemporary, Emma Macpherson from the northern rivers district of New South Wales, who presented her husband as 'always [having] taken a great interest in [Aborigines], and been perhaps a little too liberal with them',⁸¹⁹ Mary ignored (or did not know) the role that violence had played in establishing

⁸¹⁹ Mrs Allan Macpherson's *My Experiences in Australia, Being Recollections of a Visit to the Australian Colonies in 1856-7. By a Lady*, J.F. Hope, London, 1860, p. 203. Like Mary McConnel, Emma Macpherson offered a justification for taking Aboriginal land, contending that 'in the interests of humanity and the cause of civilization and progress ... it was the especial hand of

settlement, promoting her husband as a benign master of men. Because she wrote her memoirs about 50 years after her experiences, when racial conflicts in southern Queensland were a distant memory, Mary was able to concentrate on her own benevolent role, which she as coloniser played in the civilising of the colonised. Her undisputed status enabled her to adopt the tone of a patronising mistress exerting (or endeavouring to exert) control over Indigenous underlings.

While there seems to be a sort of qualified friendship between Mary and for example, Long Kitty, Kitty and Polly, these Indigenous women had been literally appropriated into her 'superior' world as potential converts, both to Christianity and 'civilisation'. In both these spheres, the reader gets the impression that Mary made little progress. Only with the already Christian South Sea Islanders could she successfully extend her care and concern.

Mary's text reflects her high social status. Conscious of her position as the wife of a prosperous Queensland pioneer, Mary was at the time of her writing the matriarch of a large, successful family. From the early 1870s, Cressbrook was in the hands of J.H. McConnel, who was described as having continued 'most excellently the work of settlement and development begun by his father'. Like McConnel senior, he had assisted both his workers and the progress of the Esk region, including promoting the extension of the railway line to the township of Toogoolawah.⁸²⁰

Notable in her own right, Mary had become prominent in Brisbane society. Distressed by the many accidents and illnesses afflicting the children of immigrant families living near Witton Manor, she had set up a fund in 1876 to establish the Brisbane Hospital for Sick Children, which opened in temporary accommodation on 11 March 1878. In October 1883 with the support of government funds, it became a permanent hospital now known as the Royal Children's Hospital. Her Ladies Committee, formed in 1877, governed the hospital until 1924.⁸²¹ Secure in her identity, Mary reflects in her memoirs the sureness and control

Providence which, when the old world was [becoming too crowded] this fair new land [was found]', pp. 236-37. She also reported that her husband '[waged] a perpetual guerilla warfare with the wild tribes' when he was living in 'the far North-West', p. 231. Cf. S.G. Foster, *A Private Enterprise*, Pier 9, Murdock Books Australia, 2010.

⁸²⁰ Obituary, *HSQJ*, Volume 1, No. 1, 1914, p. 16.

⁸²¹ McConnel, *Our Children's Hospital*, pp. 12-18; John Pearn, *Steps Along the Path: Milestones in*

that a prestigious reputation promotes. On one level, her text is a proud celebration of her laudable efforts to assist people less fortunate than herself.

Mary was similarly secure in her adherence to Protestant evangelicalism which, in the second half of the nineteenth century, was the leading faith of active Christians.⁸²² Viewing the Dungibara as God's children awaiting redemption, her innate care for people was channelled through her Christian proselytism. Her religious zeal teamed with British notions of propriety to reach out to Indigenous people whom she felt beholden to civilise. Her apparently generous appraisal of Aboriginal people as higher in racial status than was usually assumed in British opinion may have been however a stereotypical belief among female evangelistic settlers. Christina Smith, for example, who had lived among the Booandik people of South Australia for 35 years as a lay missionary and teacher, wrote in similar vein to Mary that, 'It is a general opinion among Europeans that the aborigines ... are too low, intellectually and morally to be Christianised or civilised. [This is] entirely erroneous'.⁸²³ Mary's patronising attitude towards the Dungibara found similar expression in Smith's depiction of a Christian minister who 'was truly a father to the little black race, by whom he was greatly beloved, and watched over them with a parent's solicitude'.⁸²⁴ These descriptions beg the question: were the opinions of these Christian women associated with the idea that it would be an easy task to civilise the Aborigines?

Mary McConnel's writing reveals that she neatly fits the stereotype of M.E. McGuire's 'Good Fella Missus', whom McGuire depicts as an emigrant gentlewoman, a pioneer's wife, a kind mistress, a motherly figure who tends the sick and a 'literary woman enshrining herself in a position of benevolence and authority in race relations'. A first generation 'colonial mother', Mary also meets McGuire's description of a 'missionary seeking salvation for her black brethren'. Successive McConnel women could also be seen as fitting McGuire's putative mould: Mary Banks as the second generation 'Australia's

the history of the Royal Childrens's Hospital, Brisbane, Amphion Press, Brisbane, 1993, p. v.

⁸²² Carey, *Believing in Australia*, pp. 87-88.

⁸²³ Mrs James Smith, *The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines: A Sketch of their Habits, Customs, Legends, and Language; Also: An account of the efforts made by Mr. and Mrs. James Smith to Christianise and Civilise them*, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1880, p.33. Cf. Leith G. MacGillivray, 'Smith, Christina (1809?-1893)', *ADB*, *NCB*, *ANU*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/smith-christina-13198/text23895>, published in hardcopy 2005, accessed online 9 September 2014.

⁸²⁴ Smith, *The Booandik Tribe*, p. 45.

daughter' whose 'girlhood friends were Aborigines'; and anthropologist Ursula McConnel as the third generation 'modern urban woman of the twentieth century who ventures into unknown Australia as writer, artist or anthropologist'. As McGuire suggests should be done, I have endeavoured to dismantle Mary's 'hallowed status' as a 'Good Fella Missus',⁸²⁵ by investigating the context of her motives and by challenging her supposed unassailable superiority by representing Indigenous reactions that show that Aborigines remained largely unmoved by Mary's good intentions.

Unlike Indigenous women on Victorian missions between 1860 and 1886, as portrayed in Diane Barwick's, 'And the lubras are ladies now', the Dungibara women appeared to be largely impervious to Mary's efforts to civilise them. Nor could Mary record any successes in conversions to Christianity. While the mission women grasped the opportunity to improve their social position by increasing their religious status in white society—a move that increased their power in Aboriginal society as they assumed equal marital status with their menfolk⁸²⁶—the McConnells had locked the Dungibara into the position of menial workers under a dominant master and mistress. Within this mould, the Aborigines held firm to their own cultural identity.⁸²⁷

In spite of her strongly-held British attitudes, Mary's portrayal of Aboriginal women and girls is complex. Her sympathetic picture portraits reveal the humanity of individuals with distinct personalities and character. Mary represented Aboriginal women as strong, proud people, and recognised and acknowledged their independence as they resisted her efforts to enforce their subservience. She portrayed their fondness for white children and their easygoing acceptance of the McConnells who, after initial conflict, had been kind to them. She seemed to delight in recounting the mischievous escapades of the little girls despite her apparent lack of success in 'civilising' them. In empathising with Long Kitty's concerns for her country, she replicated some words in dialect. Although not rivalling her praise for the

⁸²⁵ M.E. McGuire, 'The Legend of the Good Fella Missus', in *Aboriginal History*, Volume 14, Nos 1-2, 1990, p. 124, p. 149. Anthropologist, Ursula McConnel, was J.H. McConnel's fifth daughter.

⁸²⁶ Barwick, 'And the lubras are ladies now', in Gale (ed.), *Woman's Role in Aboriginal Society*, pp. 51-63.

⁸²⁷ This finding complies with Ann McGrath's argument in *Born in the Cattle* that Aborigines on pastoral stations in the Northern Territory negotiated their own terms of adjustment. Also cf. Tim Rowse, 'Paternalism's Changing Reputation', in *Mankind*, Vol. 18, No. 2, August 1988, pp. 57-73.

‘wise and warm hearted women’ who supported and worked with her towards the success of the Brisbane Children’s Hospital,⁸²⁸ Mary’s appreciation of Indigenous women seems to similarly acknowledge the resilience, enterprise and good humour of females. This sympathetic recognition of the women did not encompass Aboriginal men, whom Mary merely names, and then only in reference to her disapproval of their behaviour or attitude towards their women. Although Alpin is given an extended portrayal, this appraisal is subsumed within his need to be ‘civilised’.

Despite her appreciation of black women, Mary maintained her racial distance, borne of her perceived higher social status. The cross-racial gender relationships at Cressbrook did not, for example, entail the type of ‘friendship’ described in the texts of Ethel Hassell, Katie Langloh Parker and Jeannie Gunn. Mary made no mention, for instance, of shared outings in the bush. Nor did Indigenous women enter her house except as workers, and then only after a ritual of cleansing and tidying in preparation for entering the white woman’s world. Little girls were permitted into the homestead only as, one suspects, possible future converts to civilised society. In contrast, Constance Ellis who was a British immigrant living on south-western Queensland stations from 1889 wrote of how two local Indigenous women ‘paid a formal call’ on the birth of her first child, producing ‘some cooked snake to tempt [her] appetite’ and often returned bringing with them ‘bright stones to rattle and bits of smooth bone to help cut [Malcolm’s] teeth.’⁸²⁹ While expressing an ambivalence between her desire to sympathise with the plight of the Dungibara and her regret over their loss of land, Mary tacitly condoned her complicity in that loss, accepting the validity of white authority that favoured settler motives over Aboriginal needs. Underlying her semblance of a ‘closeness’ with the Aborigines is the voice of an assumed cultural and racial superiority that precluded a too friendly social contact.

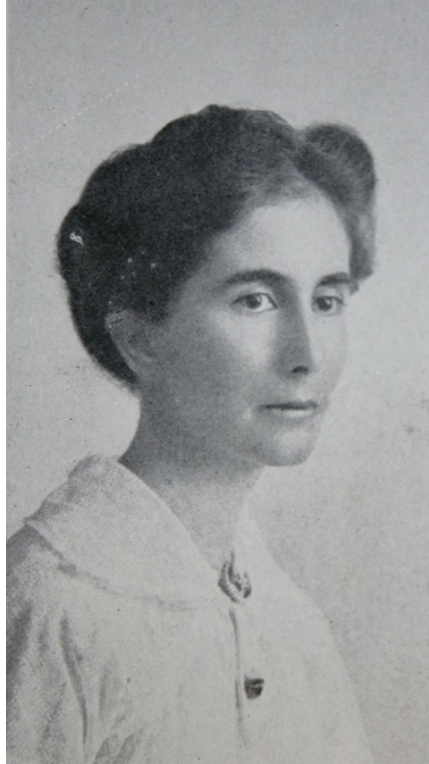
The thrust of Mary’s narrative remained religious conversion within the progress of civilisation. While apparently generously representing the characters and foibles of Indigenous people, her underlying message was the chasm of difference between the

⁸²⁸ McConnel, *Our Children’s Hospital*, p. 24.

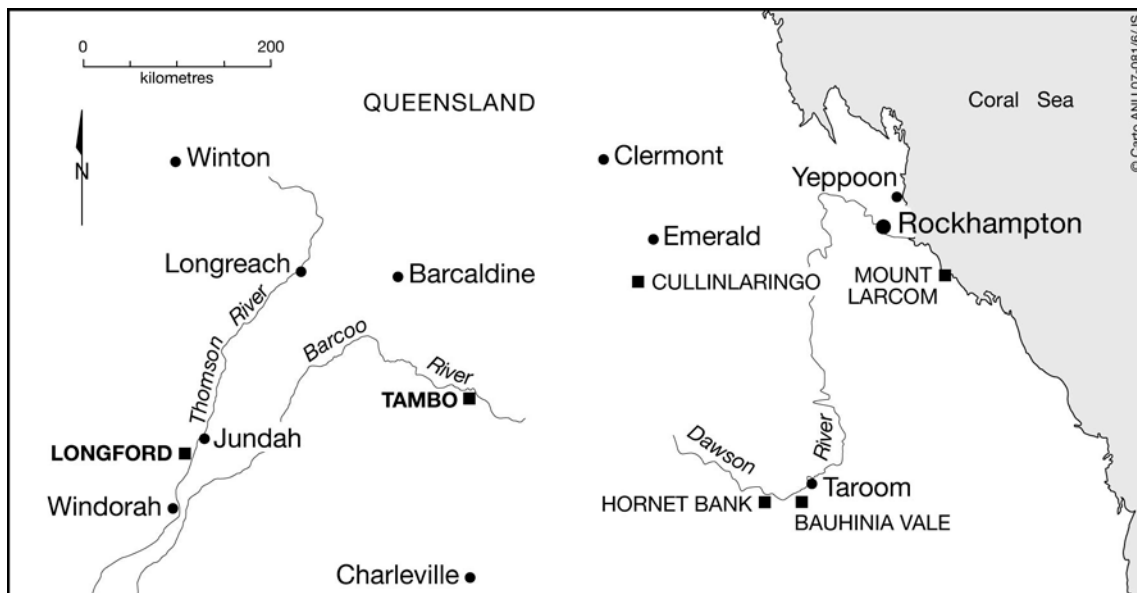
⁸²⁹ Malcolm Ellis, historical researcher, biographer, Macrossan lecturer, University of Queensland, and writer for the *Bulletin*, 1933-65. Constance Ellis, *I seek adventure*, p. 121. Cf. B.H. Fletcher, ‘Ellis, Malcolm Henry (1890-1969)’, *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ellis-malcolm-henry-10116/text17855>, published in hardcopy 1996, accessed online 9 September 2014.

civilised white mistress and her Aboriginal workers. While her anecdotes about them were humorous, their place in the narrative often served to compare the uncivilised with the acceptable codes of the civilised, and to underline that difference.

The ways in which an Australian-born woman reported and represented her relationship with Aborigines will be explored in the following chapter.



Rose Scott Cowen (Frontispiece, *Crossing Dry Creeks*).



Map 7: Rose Scott Cowen

Australian-born Settler

Rose Scott Cowen: Bridging the Racial Divide?

‘the white man is black in his character, and the black man is white’.⁸³⁰

Introduction

Rose Scott Cowen’s writing forms a contrast to the five previous writers. Not only was Rose Australian-born but she also wrote without the compulsion to impress or satisfy an audience with the right approach to issues of class identity or religious dogma. On the contrary, Rose Cowen, under the influence of her father Terrick Alfred Hamilton, rejected the British allegiance to ‘respectability’ and eschewed the associated idea of ‘keeping up appearances’. Differing from the women discussed previously in this thesis, Rose’s racial views, borne of direct experience, were free of stereotypes and clichés.

In 1961, Sydney’s Wentworth Press published her *Crossing Dry Creeks: 1879 to 1919*, a 190-page autobiography of unstructured, sometimes repetitious, anecdotal prose that loosely fitted the publisher’s ethos of supporting Australian authors (many of them women) writing on literary, historical and biographical subjects.⁸³¹ The metaphor in the title came from the western Queensland imagery of the disappointment and indeed, threat to life, when a thirsty traveller came to a dry creekbed that he had confidently expected would hold water. Having no option but to cross the dry creek, he would continue on his journey in the hope of finding water at the next crossing. ‘Crossing dry creeks’ therefore came to signify ‘every danger, every close shave; every physical and economic crisis’,⁸³² and all the droughts, floods, toil and hardship that Rose had survived in outback Queensland. She felt

⁸³⁰ Rose Scott Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks: 1879 to 1919*, The Wentworth Press, Sydney, 1961, p. 65.

⁸³¹ Henry Lawson, Hugh McCrae, James McAuley and Rosemary Dobson.

⁸³² Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, Prologue. Marie Mahood confirmed this meaning as ‘survival of any major unexpected challenge’ or ‘to tackle and overcome an extreme challenge in one’s life’, Marie Mahood, *The Last Dry Creek*, Central Queensland University Press, Rockhampton, 2005, p. vii; Mahood, *Legends of the Outback*, Central Queensland University Press, 2002, p. xii.

that this title encapsulated her life.

Rose Cowen enjoyed writing, as attested by the various manuscripts on her experiences and family history, located in Australian repositories.⁸³³ Although not directly expressing her need to write, she may however have identified with and wished to emulate her prominent aunt, feminist and social reformer, Rose Scott (after whom she was named⁸³⁴); after a lifetime of hardship in rural Queensland, she may have been trying to give relevance to a life which she saw as pertinent to Australia's rural history; or she may have merely wanted to put on record, at a time when she was 'within sight of the Styx', the story of the 'dangers and difficulties'⁸³⁵ she had faced in western Queensland. Her interest in history is evident, not only from her various writings, but also from the annotations of names and historical data added by her to the back of studio portraits of the Scott and Townsend families, housed in the State (Mitchell) Library of New South Wales. She also gave her compiled biographical notes on the Scott family, together with some correspondence dated 1856, to the Mitchell Library for photocopying in 1964.⁸³⁶

Rose's experiences included the everyday knowledge of Aborigines. Born Annie Rose Scott Hamilton on 24 April 1879, she spent her childhood among the Wadjalang people on the central western Queensland sheep station, Tambo. After her marriage the grazier William Leonard Cowen,⁸³⁷ Rose lived from 1907 to January 1919 on the Channel Country property, Longford. Here she formed a close relationship with a Coorooboolka woman, 'Minnie', who enters Rose's text as a strong and endearing personality. As Rose published

⁸³³ The MSS include 'Across Dry Creek Beds' (catalogued as 'Memoir'), 1967, John Oxley Library, Brisbane, OM. 71-23; 'Recollections of a bush woman, 1879 to 1900', n. d., N9, Noel Butlin Archives Centre; 'Details of my Family History', Newcastle and Region Public Library, Vertical files, 'S'; 'Notes of Reminiscences of Early Days on the Barcoo River', cited in Jan L'Estrange, *Belle of the Barcoo: Tambo: Genesis of Queensland's Central West*, published by author, Tambo, 1996, p. 98. Rose also refers to her 'Dawson Days'; and a poem of the murder of Richard Welford and his men (as told to her by 'Minnie') in the 'Aborigines Section of the University of Queensland', *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 112, p. 183. According to her granddaughter, Shirley McPherson, Rose Cowen also submitted poems to the *Bulletin*.

⁸³⁴ The name 'Rose' has been passed down to the third and fourth generations of Cowen women.

⁸³⁵ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, Prologue.

⁸³⁶ 'Scott family: mainly studio portraits of the Scott and Townsend families, ca. 1864-1886', State Library of NSW, Sydney, PXB 276; 'Scott family-papers, mainly being biographical notes on Helenus Scott's family, 1833-1964', SLNSW, MSS FM3/693.

⁸³⁷ Cowen also worked briefly as Tambo's overseer. Station overseers (superintendents) were often landholders' sons, who were gaining experience of property management before inheriting or buying their own station. They therefore held a position in society, equal to (or potentially, and aspiring to be, on the same level as) landholders.

her work in the mid-twentieth century, her representation of Minnie coincided with a time when the influence of nineteenth-century assumptions of white racial superiority were lessening and a consciousness of twentieth-century feminist imperatives was growing.



Farm buildings, Tambo station (Barbara Dawson, June 2006).

Rose admired the strength of women. During World War I she met many ‘very fine women’, who joined her in war service for the Red Cross. On holidays from Longford, she worked in the Red Cross kitchen in Brisbane and served teas to the wounded and ill soldiers in the Kangaroo Point Military Hospital. Her own strength was evident in her acceptance with Bill Cowen to take in an Englishman and a Queenslander from the First A.I.F., men whom the Red Cross had sent to Longford to help them recover from war wounds. She was a competent woman who was a Justice of the Peace, and who had travelled to South Africa where she had attended an (unspecified) lecture on the environment. She also attended a British Women’s Conference in London,⁸³⁸ an indication of her attachment to feminist ideas. An acceptance of a woman’s strength of character may have encouraged her, like Mary McConnel, to acknowledge this quality in an Indigenous

⁸³⁸ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 168, p. 179, p. 135, p. 174.

woman. Straightforward, even blunt, in her appraisal of people⁸³⁹ (whether black or white), Rose set down her opinions without preamble, qualification or prevarication.

An Elevated Pedigree

Despite her down-to-earth attitude towards people and places, Rose had a pedigree higher than any of the previously discussed women. Along her father's line, her connection with the English aristocracy can be traced through *Debrett's Peerage*. Her forebears had early connections with the Australian colonies and close associations with colonial men of influence. Her paternal great-great-grandfather, Sir Walter Farquhar, 1st Baronet, for example, was physician to the Prince of Wales; he was also a patron of John Macarthur, whose family maintained a friendship with the Hamiltons. New South Wales Colonial Secretary Sir Edward Deas Thomson was also counted as a friend. One of Terrick Hamilton's closest friends, however, was George Victor Drogo Montagu, Viscount Mandeville, the 8th Duke of Manchester, intimated by Rose to have been not a good influence on her father.⁸⁴⁰ Others included colonial identities such as Sir Francis Murphy, a former member of the Victorian Legislative Council and later the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and a landholder on the Ovens River; and business associates, Hon. John Stevenson and the Hon. Boyd Dunlop Morehead. The latter was premier of Queensland from 1888 to 1890.⁸⁴¹ These men, including the Duke of Manchester, had been visitors at Tambo.

Both Rose's grandfathers were pioneering landholders. Her paternal grandfather, Edward

⁸³⁹ It is thought that her son had tried to curtail circulation of *Crossing Dry Creeks* to prevent her outspoken opinions on local identities from being the subject of libel cases, personal communication from Shirley McPherson, January 2007. A letter from Walter W. Stone, editor of *Biblionews*, 3 July 1963 in NLA Ferguson copy of *Crossing Dry Creeks* confirms the suppression (until 1985), suggesting that Rose's frank appraisal of her father was the reason.

⁸⁴⁰ Margot Beever, 'Murphy, Sir Francis (1809–1891)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/murphy-sir-francis-4275/text6913>, published in hardcopy 1974; 'Davidson, Walter Stevenson (1785–1869)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/davidson-walter-stevenson-1960/text2361>, published in hardcopy 1966; M.E. Osborne, 'Thomson, Sir Edward Deas (1800–1879)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/thomson-sir-edward-deas-2732/text3855>, published in hardcopy 1967, all accessed online 9 September 2014; thePeerage.com, Person Page 13589, No. 135884 and No. 27474. Was the Duke of Manchester 'that evil genius of [Hamilton's] life who had been at Eton with him and whose "fag" he had been'?; Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 10, p. 14. In 1876, the Duke fuelled his reputation as a fortune-hunter by marrying Maria Consuelo Yznaga del Valle, a New York socialite. He died in 1892, aged 39.

⁸⁴¹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 10, p. 60; www.parliament.vic.gov.au; 'Morehead, Boyd Dunlop (1843–1905)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/morehead-boyd-dunlop-4240/text6845>, published in hardcopy 1974, accessed online 9 September 2014.

William Terrick Hamilton, had jointly purchased in 1839 (with his cousin, Henry George Hamilton, and a friend, George Clive) Collaroy, near Cassilis, 200 kilometres north-west of Newcastle. From 1857 to 1898, E.W.T. Hamilton was governor of the Australian Agricultural Co.⁸⁴² Her maternal grandfather, Helenus Scott, had settled in about 1822 with his brother Robert, on a combined large land grant, Glendon, on the Hunter River near Singleton, 50 kilometres north-west of Newcastle. Through her Scott connections, Rose was related to prominent Hunter Valley pastoral families, including the Merewethers, Selwyns, Shaws, Mitchells, Ranclauds and Wallaces.⁸⁴³

Like her mother's sister, Rose Scott, other Scott relations were prominent contributors to colonial culture and the arts. Rose Cowen's grandmother, the 'accomplished linguist and scholar' Sarah Scott (born Rusden), lived with Rose Scott at Lynton—a house described by Rose Cowen as one filled with books, paintings and objects d'art. Lynton, in Jersey Road in the present Sydney suburb of Woollahra, also served as the venue for Rose Scott's weekly salon where 'all the wit and brains' met. Among the various actors, actresses, writers, artists, lawyers, doctors, clergymen, scientists, naval and military men and politicians, whom the young Rose Hamilton met there, were the painter Sir John Longstaff and watercolourist and black-and-white artist B.E. Minns. Rose Scott's cousin, the book collector and benefactor David Scott Mitchell, who bequeathed to the Public Library of New South Wales his collection of books and maps, was a frequent visitor. Rose Cowen's great-uncle, Robert Scott, described as a man of 'superior education and acquirements', had previously made Glendon a cultural hub for artists, scientists, explorers and the clergy.⁸⁴⁴

Both sides of Rose's family were well represented by clergymen. These included two of her great-grandfathers. On her mother's side, the Rev'd George Keylock Rusden became first minister of St Peter's Church of England, East Maitland; on her father's side, the Venerable

⁸⁴² J.R. Robertson, 'Hamilton, Edward William Terrick (1809-1898)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hamilton-edward-william-terrick-455/text5801>, published in hardcopy 1972, accessed online 9 September 2014.

⁸⁴³ Nancy Gray, 'Scott, Helenus (1802-1879)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/scott-helenus-2851/text3673>, published in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 9 September 2014; *Newcastle Mining Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 24 July 1971, 'Descendant of Pioneers Dies', p. 4.

⁸⁴⁴ Judith Allen, 'Scott, Rose (1847-1925)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/scott-rose-8370/text14689>, published in hardcopy 1988; G.D. Richardson, 'Mitchell, David Scott (1836-1907)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mitchell-david-scott-4210/text6781>, published in hardcopy 1974, both accessed online 9 September 2014; Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 27-28, p. 89.

Anthony Hamilton was Archdeacon of Taunton and Rector of Loughton, Essex. The latter is thought to have been consultant to the Colonial Office on colonial ecclesiastical appointments. His father and his mother's father were also clergymen. Rose's paternal great-uncle, Walter Kerr Hamilton, was the Bishop of Salisbury from 1854-69.⁸⁴⁵ These connections had no significant influence on Rose's prosaic views on religion.

Rose's opinions about people of all races were influenced by her father who, as a high-spirited youth, had been sent out to the Australian colonies. Following an education at Cambridge, Terrick Hamilton had arrived in New South Wales to work as a jackeroo at Warrah⁸⁴⁶ station, near Quirindi. He married Alice Scott from nearby Glendon station in February 1878, and soon afterwards took over the management of Tambo station on the Barcoo River, 950 kilometres north-west of Brisbane and 200 kilometres north of Charleville.

The original 49 square mile (78.4 sq. km.) lease of Tambo station was held in 1861 by Charles Boydell Dutton and his brother, Archibald Francis. William George Bell, who had applied at the same time for the lease of the adjacent 44 square mile (70.4 sq. km.) Mt Pleasant run (in partnership with the Dutton brothers) had joined the Duttons in partnership in Tambo by 1876. On 21 April 1877, Thomas James Nankivell and Frederick Fanning of Melbourne⁸⁴⁷ bought the combined Tambo and Mt Pleasant stations, together with the stores and horses, and 40,000 sheep at 1 pound per head. Terrick Hamilton was a part-owner and from 1878, the manager. In 1890 with the assistance of the Bank of Australasia (of which Edward Hamilton was chairman), he became the sole owner.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁵ *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 24 July 1971, p. 4; Philip Mennell, *The Dictionary of Australasian Biography, Comprising Notices of Eminent Colonists from the Inauguration of Responsible Government down to the present time, 1855-1892*, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1892, p. 211; Personal communication, Pennie Pemberton, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU; Robertson, 'Hamilton, Edward William Terrick', <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hamilton-edward-william-terrick-455/text5801>, published in hardcopy 1972; thePeerage.com, Nos 135882, 37368, 135885.

⁸⁴⁶ Warrah was leased by Edward Hamilton in partnership with George Clive. According to Rose, her barrister uncle, Charles Gipps Hamilton, inherited a large part of his father's interest in the Australian Agricultural Co., which ran Warrah, Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 42.

⁸⁴⁷ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 2; Fanning Nankivell & Co. were importers of tea and sugar, and exporters of wool. The A.A. Co. had interests in Queensland sugar plantations and pastoral properties, H.J. Gibbney and Ann G. Smith (compilers and eds), *A Biographical Register 1788-1939: Notes from the name index of the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume II, L-Z*, ADB, ANU, Canberra, 1987, p. 133. According to Rose Scott Cowen's 'Recollections of a bush woman, 1879 to 1900', p. 2, Tambo Station was 'taken up in the 1860s by the Spencers of Mt. Abundance, Roma'.

⁸⁴⁸ The Duttons, from Bauhinia Downs, who owned the adjacent Nive Downs, sold Nive in 1866 before

Dispensing with 'class' expectations

Annie Rose was Alice and Terrick's first child, growing up on a property that only a few years before her 1879 birth had been described by the pioneering Durack family of Thylungra (300 kilometres south-west of Tambo) as being at the edge of 'a no-man's-land'.⁸⁴⁹ Taught by governesses, Rose's education included the study of ancient Greek and Roman literature, a knowledge that enters her text through occasional classical allusions. Sharing her father's love of horses, however, she favoured the roistering outdoor activities of station life. As a 'fearless bushwoman' with a 'natural' relationship with the bush, Rose in these respects fits M.E. McGuire's classification of the second generation pastoral woman as 'Australia's daughter'.⁸⁵⁰

As her father's 'inseparable companion', Rose rode daily with Terrick, mustering sheep, cattle and horses or checking the workings of artesian bores on outermost paddocks. She joined him in his hobby of blacksmithing, watched on while he fixed machinery in the boiler room, did the station accounts, the storekeeping and the press copying of all the business letters with him, and went along when he went fishing with his workmen. Although Rose realised that Hamilton was a man who 'never grew up, except physically',⁸⁵¹ he was her strongest childhood influence. Accompanying him on long buggy rides between sparsely situated outback towns, Rose was privy to the stories of his wild youthful escapades and yarns of his jackaroo days at Warrah, where the Aborigines were 'bad and numerous'.⁸⁵²

After her marriage to Bill Cowen on 5 May 1900,⁸⁵³ Rose went farming and dairying near

taking up permanent residence at Tambo with George Bell. For further information on leases and partnerships of the Tambo runs, cf. L'Estrange, *Belle of the Barcoo*, p. 15, p. 21, pp. 96-98; Judith Allen, *Rose Scott: Vision and Revision in Feminism*, OUP, 1994, p. 68.

⁸⁴⁹ Mary Durack, *Kings in Grass Castles*, Corgi Books, London, 1973, p. 80.

⁸⁵⁰ McGuire, 'The Legend of the Good Fella Missus', *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 14, Nos 1-2, 1990, p. 135.

⁸⁵¹ Family history remembers Terrick Hamilton as a drinker, gambler, womaniser and wastrel. Rose referred to his 'infidelities' and 'misdeeds as regards women' that created a 'dangerous mockery of a marriage' until Alice Hamilton divorced him when her six children had reached maturity, Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 14, p. 20, p. 10, p. 11, p. 40, p. 41; Allen, *Rose Scott*, p. 70, p. 174.

⁸⁵² Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 20, pp. 32-33, p. 11, p. 47, p. 40, p. 42.

⁸⁵³ Bill Cowen came from Inglewood, south-west of Warwick in south-eastern Queensland. His father had emigrated to Victoria, where he worked as a jackaroo on a property owned by the Von Stieglitz family, Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 108, p. 168.

Clifton, 50 kilometres south of Toowoomba in the Darling Downs. This was the first of her ‘dry creeks’. Later, at Bauhinia Vale on the Dawson River near Taroom during the droughts of 1901 and 1902, Rose likened mixed farming to the toil of ‘Sisyphus [who] so often nears the top of the hill of success only to be knocked back to the bottom again’. Deciding that ‘Sheep and cattle work were the only livings which appealed’ to them, the Cowens ‘[y]earn[ed] for the West’ where the country was ‘cleaner’ (free of prickly pear) and the people friendlier. In 1907, in partnership with W.J. Langmore, Cowen bought Longford, 25 kilometres south of Jundah on the Thomson River;⁸⁵⁴ in 1915, Longford carried 32,000 sheep and 120 head of cattle. In 1919, Cowen purchased (with Langmore) Mount Victoria, near Longreach, where the Cowens remained until about 1924; in 1925, Rose Cowen was the registered owner of Kendal No. 2 in the Longreach district, a property that ran 90 cattle and 4,300 sheep.⁸⁵⁵

After 40 years in western Queensland, where people became ‘inured to hardship and discomfort’, Rose was a self-confessed ‘bushie’ and a ‘godless creature’.⁸⁵⁶ A thin, wiry woman who did not suffer fools gladly, she expressed her opinions openly and directly. Perhaps because of Hamilton’s reputation as a hard-drinker,⁸⁵⁷ Rose accepted with equanimity the prevalence of drunkenness, and also of swearing which she accepted as normal behaviour among her outback acquaintances. She merely wrote down the ‘blank’ and ‘blankety’ of unpublishable obscenities as she noted that:

The men of that day were a wild roistering crowd, and what would not be permitted by public opinion today, was in order then. Men drank a lot more and there were always demi-johns of whisky and rum in the station homesteads. Owners and men drank heavily. I can remember that the strictly sober man was a remarkable person, just as now the drunkard is the one who is specially noticed. Men worked very hard in those days and

⁸⁵⁴ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 105, p. 109, p. 108, pp. 122-23. Longford, comprising 56,000 acres in the 1950s, was selected by Margaret Cannon and David Cannon, who sold it to Cowen and Langmore to buy the Commercial Hotel in Longreach, B.J. Rayment, *My Towri*, ‘Tabra Press’, Jundah, c.1971, p. 156. In 1918, Cowen and Langmore sold it to Steven and Jack Anning, reputedly for £50,000, vacating in January 1919, Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 190; Rayment, *My Towri*, p. 156.

⁸⁵⁵ *Australian Pastoral Directory* 1915, p. 181; 1919, p. 202. The Cowens had left Mount Victoria by 1925, *Australian Pastoral Directory* 1925, p. 225, p. 224. They later either owned or had equity in Swan Vale (Jundah), Duce Downs (Longreach) and Eden Downs (Dartmouth, east of Longreach), Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 113-17; G.W. Lilley, *Story of Lansdowne: The History of a Western Queensland Sheep Station*, The Lansdowne Pastoral Co. Ltd, Melbourne, 1973, p. 52. Bill Cowen died in 1935.

⁸⁵⁶ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 150, p. 123. Rose’s great-niece, Rosemary Eckel of Tambo, is in possession of Rose’s Bible.

⁸⁵⁷ Personal communication from Rosemary Eckel at Tambo, June 2006.

they needed a “pick-me-up” in the evenings, but when droughts and bad times were in control and men saw no way in which they could save their stock, and when they rode out on the run and saw them dying or dead in their thousands, they turned to the whisky bottle or wild excesses to give their tortured minds some relief.⁸⁵⁸

Rose’s method of assessing people was by her standards of moral integrity, honesty, ability to work hard and, perhaps especially, their good handling and kindness to horses. Having to endure heat, isolation and ‘sometimes the shortage of food when we were cut off from communication from the outer world’,⁸⁵⁹ Rose appreciated resilience in a person’s character. Because gender, social position and race were irrelevant to the capacity to cope, Rose’s Indigenous companions were among those she most admired during her years at Longford.⁸⁶⁰

‘The Boss was very definite that we should not be snobbish’

Rose’s closeness to her father was a strong factor in her discarding of class-driven attitudes. According to Rose, Hamilton—‘hospitable’ and ‘generous’ like other squatters—was ‘the only one who really regarded his men as fellow humans’. His generosity extended to financial support of the local hospital through the holding of community dances and cricket matches to raise funds, although this was also common practice among squatters. Hamilton nevertheless ‘thought very highly’ of his workers, paying them an extra 1 shilling a week, and assisting an overseer with tools and equipment when he took up his own selection.⁸⁶¹ During the 1891 shearers’ strike, Tambo’s shearing shed was left free of assault when others in the area were burnt down, Rose attributing this reprieve to her father’s high standing among his workers. Furthermore, when a large bushfire broke out, striking unionists returned voluntarily to Tambo to help fight it.⁸⁶²

⁸⁵⁸ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 14-15.

⁸⁵⁹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 164.

⁸⁶⁰ Rose Cowen spent her later years with her younger, unmarried son, Clive, at Yeppoon near Rockhampton where she died in July 1971, aged 92.

⁸⁶¹ This assistance, somewhat common among landholders, could be seen as a continuation in kind of the early English Victorian paternalism, practised by David and Mary McConnel. Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 41.

⁸⁶² The 1891 shearers’ strike started at Barcaldine, 200 kilometres north of Tambo. Landholder, Graham Lilley, judged the situation as ‘closer to actual civil war than any other happening in [Australia’s] history’. In the Tambo region, grassfires had been started on Minnie Downs and Langlo Downs, G.W. Lilley, *Lengthening Shadows: Memoirs of a Queensland Bushman and Queensland Historical Essays*, Clark & Mackay, Brisbane, 1977, p. 118, p. 124; Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 44-47, p. 41, p. 43.

Rose wrote of her father that:

The Boss was very definite that we should not be snobbish and that we should regard the men and the servants as fellow human beings which I think was the foundation of my deep interest in everybody and their life stories and problems.⁸⁶³

Rose was to apply this principle equally to settlers and Aborigines.

An important criterion by which Rose judged a person—irrespective of their class or race—revolved around his or her capacity for hard work. This standard was applied to all workers on Tambo—to the ‘black Malay’ or Chinese cooks, to the Chinese gardeners and the many Irish, Scottish and English immigrants. She particularly admired the ‘Remittance Men’ of the 1880s—‘[f]ine fellows’ who impressed the other workmen with their Greek and Latin quotations and classical allusions, ‘with only the one fault – drink’. By citing their example, Rose seized the opportunity to deplore English class attitudes that had motivated the young men’s expulsion to Australia after they had disgraced their families with ‘minor peccadilloes’. She directed her most scathing attack to the clergymen, who displayed a ‘narrow respectability beyond forgiveness’⁸⁶⁴ towards their sons. Rose also praised the kind, law-abiding, ‘hard-working’ German families whom she met both in the Darling Downs and near Longford, and among whom,

the women worked even harder than the men, and made use of everything, often turning out really wonderful needlework, knitting and crochet, making all their own jams, preserves and pickles and growing all their own vegetables. They deserved to get on and they did.⁸⁶⁵

On Tambo, some of the local Wadjalang people had remained on their land, where they worked in the shearing shed as fleece pickers and carriers of the wool from the classing table to the bales for pressing. One of the women, ‘Dinah’, was Rose’s nurse who, with her husband, ‘gentle old Harry’, were ‘king’ and ‘queen’ of their tribe.⁸⁶⁶ Rose reserved her

⁸⁶³ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 67.

⁸⁶⁴ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 130-31.

⁸⁶⁵ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 83. There is a similar reference on page 98.

⁸⁶⁶ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 2; Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*, p. 186. Colonial-born writers

judgement of the Wadjalang, accepting them as co-inhabitants from the time of her birth.

Social prestige was irrelevant to Rose's assessment of character. Instead she looked for a person's moral qualities even among the many misfits and eccentrics of the west. She reported that:

The Outback has so many of these failures, the wrecks that drift away from the civilization which has no time for the vice that is found out (unless it has wealth and position to gild it). They gradually work back and back into the Never-Never amongst a community who, living a hard life close to nature and therefore being more understanding and tolerant, accepts them for the good which is still in them.⁸⁶⁷

In a particular example of the type of dishonesty and hypocrisy she abhorred, Rose cited an unscrupulous Tambo publican who had become a warden at a Darling Downs church Rose attended. When she recognised him 'in an odor of sanctity' as the publican who had robbed and poisoned 'simple trusting men' on his way to wealth, she was so 'horrified and repulsed that I never went to [the church] again, arguing that no prayers of mine could ever reach Heaven in the company of such as he would offer up'.⁸⁶⁸

Rose assessed ministers of religion with the same criteria she applied to other people. She wrote explicitly, for example, of a 'fool of a clergyman' who allowed his two buggy horses to be drowned in a local waterhole. Her general opinion of them was that:

the clergy of that day [did not make] much headway with the Bush people. They were so very English, and so very patronising to the "heathen bush people" whom of course they believed had all descended from convicts and must be saved from the eternal damnation that was certainly the lot of all the convicts, men who in many cases had been transported for such paltry crimes as stealing a loaf of bread or poaching – my Father and Grandfathers all said these men on the whole were fine fellows and good and loyal workers.⁸⁶⁹

Rosa Praed, her sister-in-law, Mary Bundock (later Murray-Prior), Katie Langloh Parker (afterwards Catherine Stow), Sarah Price (later Conigrave) and Alice Duncan-Kemp also had black women as their nursemaids and formed close bonds with them. Rose Cowen's nephew, John Edward Hamilton (born 1917), although a Tambo town resident, had an Aboriginal wet nurse, adding to the evidence that Aboriginal 'nannies' breastfed white children, personal communication from John Hamilton's daughter, Rosemary Eckel.

⁸⁶⁷ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 130.

⁸⁶⁸ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 127.

⁸⁶⁹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 94.

The Hamiltons' domestic difficulties possibly contributed to Rose's disdain of the accoutrements of class. At Tambo, the family lived in 'frugal and often difficult' conditions,⁸⁷⁰ these circumstances of their straitened material wealth serving to close the cultural gap between settler and Aborigines as their living conditions approximated. The Hamiltons' lack of finery diminished the differences that would have existed between Aborigines and well-to-do settlers like the McConnells. The openness with which Rose wrote of her parents' house also differed from Mary McConnel's representation that aspired towards maintaining the 'genteel performance'. Rose openly admitted that in western Queensland:

it wasn't only in the poorer homes that ... makeshifts for furniture were used. Mother's dressing table was of two large cases on end with shelves in them and shelves in between, the top of rough timber holding them all together and the whole lot dressed or draped in pink glazed calico with a white muslin overcover which could be taken off and washed. The verandah chairs, squatter's chairs as they were called, were made of wood sawn and dressed on the place and where canvas should have been they had bullock hides, put on whilst green and shrunk on. The bedroom seats were boxes covered with cretonne, the hanging "cupboards" were merely a board shelf with wire hooks from it on which to [hang] clothes and covered with a curtain of cretonne. My washstand was a case, stood on end with a round hole cut out for the enamel basin to stand in, two shelves in it and covered with an oil cloth. Our dining room long table was of two pieces of red cedar which came up in the rough on the team, were planed on the place and mounted on a frame. Our beds were of iron or wood made on the place, no spring mattresses – our mattresses were of horse hair, which was wound and then teased and made up on the place, our pillows of feathers from the fowls, and also from the ducks and turkeys that we shot and brought home as a welcome change from the mutton all the year round except at shearing time when we killed bullocks.⁸⁷¹

'Making-do' meant that kangaroo, emu or dingo skins were used for mats. While house rooms were lit by kerosene lanterns, the workers relied on fat lamps to light their huts. Unlike the 'good' food offered at Lynton, the sugar at Tambo had in it the 'great dark lumps' that had amazed Mary McConnel in 1850 and which Rose and her siblings liked to call 'blackfellows toes'. The only dried fruit available were 'dark almost black, dried

⁸⁷⁰ This had to do with Hamilton's intemperance and indulgences, Allen, *Rose Scott*, pp. 70-71.

⁸⁷¹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 25.

apples'. The 'post and rails' tea was so named because of the coarse pieces of the plant which floated in it.⁸⁷² Despite lack of comforts, Rose assessed her childhood as 'happy go lucky and friendly' with workers and family members coming together without class distinction to share meals.⁸⁷³

From the perspective of her own straitened circumstances, Rose admired British settlers 'who had come upon hard times and lost their properties', yet remained unembittered and 'kept their ... culture.'⁸⁷⁴ If however this 'culture' depended too heavily on English respectability that upheld 'the customs of civilisation no matter how wild the bush', it became the target of her ridicule. She parodied, for example, a 'very dignified old Scotchwoman' who ordered one man to 'dress up every evening in a suit of her husband's old dress clothes' and wait on table.⁸⁷⁵

Rose's visit to her grandfather and aunts at Charters, Sunningdale, 8 kilometres south of Windsor, for an English 'coming out' year in 1895 was an opportunity for her to voice her democratic views. Disdainful of the stultified pomp and ceremony at the Hamilton establishment, where she had to contend with 'a crowd of servants who were quite different from any I had ever known', she mocked the formality of dinner parties where 'the order of precedence was so strict', with the most important person offered her grandfather's arm and then the decision made as to 'who should follow whom!'. In this 'awful stiff atmosphere', Rose 'ached and ached for the sunshine and the freedom of my bush home'. Similarly dismissive of English landscape, she considered the trees to be 'as prim and smug and correct as [the] people'.⁸⁷⁶

As in Australia, Rose was impressed by a person's character, not by his or her social position. Although she met the (later to become) Duke of Wellington and danced with the

⁸⁷² Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 15, p. 90.

⁸⁷³ Because there were no jackeroos on Tambo, Hamilton considering them 'more trouble than they were worth', there were no bachelor quarters where the men would normally take their meals, Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 74, pp. 29-30.

⁸⁷⁴ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 85.

⁸⁷⁵ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 37-38.

⁸⁷⁶ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 70-73. In spite of his colonial connections, Edward Hamilton embraced British attitudes of class and status, being described as a man who considered himself superior to 'members of the middle class and the lower orders', Robertson, 'Hamilton, Edward William Terrick', <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hamilton-edward-william-terrick-455/text5801>, published in hardcopy 1972.

Crown Prince of Siam, she was most impressed by Lord Strathcona ('Sir Donald Smith of Canada and the Canadian Pacific Railway fame'), who had 'no social graces but a very impressive sincerity'. On the other hand the 'Marquis of D.', with whom she danced at the Ascot Hunt Ball, was 'a vapid dopey sort of fellow who scandalised the society of the neighbourhood by becoming engaged to a girl outside the exalted circle ... she ... divorced him – a lifetime spent with such a brainless creature would have been unthinkable'. Well aware of the 'snobbishness of ... class', she was relieved when a proposal that she be 'presented at Court and have a London season' was quashed because Queen Victoria 'objected to having anyone younger [than 18] presented to her'.⁸⁷⁷

Rose was similarly unimpressed by piously religious people, and by English churches. Although she admired Westminster Abbey's King Henry VII Chapel, described as 'an exquisite thing packed with history', she wrote iconoclastically of the churches and cathedrals that:

the thing that impressed me most ... was the dark damp musty smell which I was amazed to find the English did not seem to notice. They seemed to have absorbed through all the years the odor of unwashed bodies and feet, and the dead who were in vaults under their floors or clustered thickly in the yards outside their walls. It certainly added to the awe! Especially if one added "ful" to the word.⁸⁷⁸

On her return to Australia, she was mortified at be privy to English attitudes towards Australians when two English riding companions, mistakenly regarding Rose as now ostensibly 'English', aimed rude remarks in loud, high voices at the people they were passing. 'These "ladies"', Rose wrote, 'so rubbed people's backs up that eventually they had to go back to England [with their] sharp insular corners'.⁸⁷⁹ Rose's attitude mimicked that of her father who, after his return to Britain in 1900 had been 'quite cured of any desire to see England and his people again' and was 'very glad to be back in Australia'.⁸⁸⁰ Her rejection of nineteenth-century British social values set her apart from the previous five writers, a factor that influenced her representations of class and race.

⁸⁷⁷ Rose's cousin was a goddaughter of Queen Victoria, Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 73, pp. 76-77.

⁸⁷⁸ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 76.

⁸⁷⁹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 84-85.

⁸⁸⁰ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 96.

'[M]y beloved West'

Rose's attitude to landscape also differed from those of the British-born authors in this thesis. Her love for country far surpassed that of iconic nationalist, Henry Lawson, who realistically depicted the unrelentingly flat western plains as the 'everlasting, maddening sameness of ... stunted trees'. Lawson wrote of:

Bush all round – bush with no horizon, for the country is flat. No ranges in the distance. The bush consists of stunted, rotten native apple trees. No undergrowth. Nothing to relieve the eye save the darker green of a few sheoaks which are sighing above the narrow, almost waterless creek.⁸⁸¹



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'My beloved West' (Barbara Dawson, June 2006).

For Rose, the land where she was born and lived for most of her life, was her 'beloved West'.⁸⁸² Tracing her affection from a childhood memory when camping in ranges north-west of Tambo, she remembered,

⁸⁸¹ From Lawson's short story, 'The Drover's Wife', in Leonard Cronin (ed.), *A Camp-Fire Yarn: Henry Lawson Complete Works 1885-1900*, Lansdowne, Sydney, 1988, p. 238; Sue Rowley, 'Imagination, Madness and Nation in Australian Bush Mythology', in Darian-Smith, Gunner and Nuttall (eds), *Text, Theory, Space*, p. 135.

⁸⁸² Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 60. Peter Read investigates settlers' sense of belonging to the land in *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*, CUP, 2000.

a marvellous view of the surrounding country, mostly scrub which seemed to be utterly silent, utterly lifeless and therefore full of awe. Like the conqueror who 'stood silent upon a peak in Darien' I felt the unknown pressing heavily upon me. And so many times in my life this feeling has recurred – a feeling of destiny for my land, and one of sadness and awe as well.⁸⁸³

Australian and Canadian pioneers, Alice Duncan-Kemp and Susan Allison, acknowledged Indigenous ownership of land, representing Aborigines and First Nation people as equal protagonists. Rose's feelings about the land on the other hand were anchored in her sympathetic feelings for her father. Judith Wright, whose father-like Rose's—took part in the brutal forces of colonisation, mourned Aboriginal deaths and dispossession.⁸⁸⁴ Rose however associated her 'eerie' attachment to the land with a sense of the 'hopelessness and despair' of British convicts and with the sad fate of the high-spirited young men who were 'packed out to Australia lest their wildness should disgrace the smugness and respectability of their English, Scotch and Irish families'.⁸⁸⁵ This sentiment echoes the circumstances of her father's banishment.

Rose's love of western Queensland also revolved around her memories of childhood freedom. Unlike many women who arrived as adults at a rural station, Rose was not bound within the limits of homestead or the garden that could act as a 'buffer zone between the confines of the house and the hazardous territory outside'.⁸⁸⁶ The young Rose led a carefree life riding her horse, climbing trees, birdnesting and chasing possums, 'kangaroo

⁸⁸³ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 78-79. The Heidelberg painters of the 1890s had depicted Australian colonial scenes realistically, directing Australian nationalistic feelings towards their natural surroundings.

⁸⁸⁴ Cf. Maggie Pickering, 'Looking through the Fawn-Skin Window: White Women's Sense of Place in the New Worlds of Australia and Canada', in *Australian Historical Studies Special Issue: Challenging Histories: Reflections on Australian History*, Vol. 33, Number 118, 2002, pp. 223-238, especially p. 231, p. 233-34. Pamela Lukin Watson, *Frontier Land and Pioneer Legends: How pastoralists gained Karuwalli land*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1998, p. 29. Duncan-Kemp was born on the Channel Country cattle station, Mooraberrie, in 1901; Susan Allison lived in British Columbia from the 1860s. Judith Wright, *The Cry for the Dead*, API Network, Perth, 1981, 2004, and *Born of the Conquerors: Selected Essays*, Aboriginal Press, Canberra, 1991.

⁸⁸⁵ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 79; Cowen, 'Recollections', p. 14.

⁸⁸⁶ Susan Hosking, "'I 'Ad To 'Ave Me Garden": A Perspective on Australian Women Gardeners', in *Meanjin: The Landscape Issue*, Vol. 47, No. 3, Spring 1988, p. 445. Cf. also Susan K. Martin, 'The Gender of Gardens: The Space of the Garden in Nineteenth-Century Australia', in Ruth Barcan and Ian Buchanan (eds), *Imagining Australian Space: Cultural Studies and Spatial Inquiry*, UWA Press, 1999, pp. 115-125; Katie Holmes, 'Diaries as Deshabille? The Diary of Una Falkiner: A Careful Dressing', in *Writing Lives: Feminist Biography and Autobiography*, *Australian Feminist Studies*, No. 16, 1992, p. 51.

rats' and wild cats. She led a 'harum scarum brood' of her four brothers and sister as they ran 'barefoot and free and were so adept at walking horseyard rails with our bare feet and clinging toes and at picking up articles with our toes as the abos. had taught us'.⁸⁸⁷ She recalled that:

As the eldest I led the others into mischief and scrapes and out again. Was I a girl? Phoooh, I was a healthy, wild bush child with a passionate interest in everything that led me to tag along behind the grown-ups in every excitement.⁸⁸⁸

Unrestrained by perceptions of ladylike behaviour, Rose owned a gun from the age of ten, when shooting became 'an excitement that I loved above everything'.⁸⁸⁹ She hunted kangaroos alone, with her father or with Tambo workers, having 'wild adventures', 'great runs and exciting kills'. A regular Sunday pastime was for 'whole parties of us all [to go] out kangaroo hunting [including] the nurse, the housemaid, sometimes the governess if she could condescend sufficiently to come out with such a mixed crowd, and all the unmarried men usually about 5 and 6 and sometimes some of the young fellows from the telegraph office in the township'. Wild turkeys and ducks were also her prey. Looking back, she remembered her bush life as 'the freedom of it, the camaraderie, the jokes and laughter that everyone shares, the gay irresponsible parties in the towns for races or show week'.⁸⁹⁰

Knowing the landscape well, she became a collector of local flora for Baron von Mueller's analyses.⁸⁹¹ Her appreciation of the beauty of her surroundings extended even to the semi-arid Channel Country. During the droughts of 1914 and 1915, this land was 'very terrible',

⁸⁸⁷ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 54, p. 48, p. 58. This quote holds the the only abbreviation of 'Aborigine' in the text.

⁸⁸⁸ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 10.

⁸⁸⁹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 55. During her married life, when she was left to fend for herself and her children while her husband and workers were absent, her gun came in handy to kill snakes and possums, and to threaten unwanted drunken visitors.

⁸⁹⁰ Tambo township was less than two kilometres from Tambo station. Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 1, p. 78, p. 93, p. 56, p. 92. A confident and skilled horsewoman, Rose won at horse shows in Charleville, Roma and Toowoomba in the late 1890s, when she gained a reputation as one of the best lady side-saddle riders in Australia, Lilley, *Story of Lansdowne*, fn. 2, p. 60. Rosemary Eckel now has Rose's seed pearl brooch, 'Bally', believed to have been made from the proceeds won in a competition with a horse of the same name.

⁸⁹¹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 59. Baron von Mueller was director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens (1857-1873) and government botanist, Deirdre Morris, 'Mueller, Sir Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich von [Baron von Mueller] (1825-1896)', *ADB*, NCB, ANU, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mueller-sir-ferdinand-jakob-heinrich-von-4266/text6893>, published in hardcopy 1974, accessed online 9 September 2014.

yet starkly picturesque. Rose described it as:

almost like a picture by Doré with despairing sheep, just skin and bone wandering hopelessly about looking for something to eat, and here and there the carcasses of dead animals all shimmering in the mirages and heat haze which magnified them into grotesque shapes.⁸⁹²

After rain, however, when the high Mitchell grass rippled in the breeze like a field of wheat, a different kind of beauty emerged. Rose depicted the country around Longford then as:

very beautiful ... and such quantities of flowers grew then – great patches of red, magenta, yellow and white pea, grey green bushes with beautiful big bell like flowers, the wild hop, the Desert Rose, and ... the gorgeous Sturts (sic) Desert Pea, and Parakalia with its charming little pink flower shaped like a buttercup. Most of the trees had cream or yellow flowers. There were great patches of a small grey green plant with a tiny white flower that gave a beautiful scent as the horses crushed it.⁸⁹³

Furthermore, her depth of understanding of the land drew from her an identification with the Aborigines when she wrote that:

The spring in which we saw Halley's Comet [1910] was an exquisite one, all sorts of sweet elusive alluring scents on the night breeze, one got the "walkabout" temptation that comes to the aborigines and could understand the urge to go somewhere to follow the breeze.⁸⁹⁴

‘People today may be horrified ... ‘

Of Queensland's racial conflict, described as 'the most troublesome frontier story of all the Australian colonies',⁸⁹⁵ Rose had her own stories. In reference to the Wadjalang people at Tambo, she related that:

⁸⁹² Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 160. Gustave Doré was a nineteenth-century French artist, noted for his illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, especially 'The Inferno'.

⁸⁹³ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 137, p. 160.

⁸⁹⁴ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 137. This association applied to Aborigines whom Rose knew (or had known) and not to a romanticised historical past.

⁸⁹⁵ Evans, "Plenty Shoot 'Em": The Destruction of Aboriginal Societies along the Queensland Frontier', in Moses (ed.), *Genocide and Settler Society*, p. 160.

The Boss told me that in the 70's when he first went to Tambo, there was a very large and sometimes cheeky tribe and therefore the Police, to ensure that they did not get out of hand, would select the cheekiest young men and take them out into the gidyea scrub at the back of the town – ostensibly horse hunting, but they were never seen again and of course the tribe guessed what had happened. People to-day may be shocked at these methods of making a country peaceable but they should remember that there were very few whites in comparison with the numerous aborigines and the wives of those whites, women and children, had to be protected against attack and murder whilst the men folk were out on the runs looking after their stock, and these killings which were few (unless in reprisals as in the case of the Cullinlaringo and Hornet Bank massacres by the aborigines) served through fear of the white man's swift punishment to make the country safe for settlement ... I admit that sometimes the reprisals went far beyond justice and developed into plain murder as was sometimes the case with the native police of whom some terrible stories are told.⁸⁹⁶

Rose's own early childhood memory of racial conflict related to a seemingly innocuous episode when drunk Wadjalang men crept up to the homestead to steal alcohol after their allotted supply had been consumed. Hamilton and two workmen took firearms and,

[j]ust to show them that the folks in the house would stand no nonsense, the Boss fired a couple of rifle shots in the direction of the noise – there was instantaneous silence and suddenly [one of the workers] remembered that his race horse was somewhere about those bushes and was frantic lest the stray bullets should have found him. In the morning the Boss went down to the camp with the shot gun and shot every one of the dogs to show the aborigines that he was ready to shoot them if necessary. The effect was most salutary, the blacks cleared out and never came back.⁸⁹⁷

The early life of Rosa Murray-Prior (later, novelist Mrs Campbell Praed), was similar to that of Rose Cowen. However, the way these women interpreted settler attacks on Aborigines differed. Although 28 years Rose's senior, and spending most of her married life in England, Praed lived her earliest years at Naraigin (later Hawkwood), which was only two days' ride from the central Queensland station, Hornet Bank. Here in 1857, when Rosa was only six years old, some Yiman killed eleven Europeans, eight of them members of the Fraser family. Thomas Murray-Prior, squatter and politician, had been a major

⁸⁹⁶ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 67-68; Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*, p. 186.

⁸⁹⁷ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 67. Intoxication appeared to have contributed to the Aboriginal raid. It may have also contributed to Hamilton's reaction.

organiser of retaliation against the Yiman.⁸⁹⁸ Terrick Hamilton had similarly joined raids following the 1861 Cullinlaringo murders of 19 settlers near Emerald, also in central Queensland. Like Rose Cowen, Praed relied in her writing on her father's stories, which merged with her own memories to form her attitudes to race relations.

Rose Cowen supported the colonists' argument for retribution, writing that:

People today may be horrified by the merciless punishment meted out to the blacks for murder but they should remember that the blacks were very numerous in those days and the whites very few and widely scattered. Therefore they used the black's (sic) own law of the death punishment for a death – which with the aborigines extended to the whole tribe by the other tribe – and their policy had to be adopted by the whites as the only one they would really understand. Only so could the opening up of the country be safe and successful. I noticed that the Dawson blacks were much better grown and developed than those I had known in my childhood at Tambo and they seemed inclined to be “cheeky” and had the reputation of being treacherous.⁸⁹⁹

Rose had seen the only survivor of the Hornet Bank massacre, Sylvester Fraser, who was droving cattle near Bauhinia Vale, and recalled that the 14-year-old boy had grown up with one purpose in this life—revenge:

And this he got by taking out a licence to kill a black which could be had in those days for a man's protection and he used the power it gave him over and over again until his name was terror to the blacks throughout the country.⁹⁰⁰

In spite of her graphic report of how Fraser indiscriminately killed any member of the Yiman people he saw—including a little Aboriginal boy who clung in terror to his white friend, and the maid of a Police Magistrate's wife, the girl begging for protection at the feet of her employer—Rose's identification remained firmly with the white man. She wrote that

⁸⁹⁸ Praed had left Australia in 1876 to live in England, returning only once in 1894-95, Patricia Clarke, *Rosa! Rosa! A Life of Rosa Praed, novelist and spiritualist*, MUP, 1999, pp. 15-17; Mrs Campbell Praed, *Australian Life Black and White*, Chapman and Hall Limited, London, 1885, pp. 27-28; Clarke, 'Turning Fact into Fiction: The 1857 Hornet Bank Massacre', in *MARGIN: Life and Letters of Early Australia*, No. 65, Mulini Press, Canberra, April, 2005, pp. 8-17.

⁸⁹⁹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 118.

⁹⁰⁰ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 121.

her 'heart ached for ... a lonely man bereft of his kin'.⁹⁰¹

Rose's dispassionate tone differs from Praed's ambivalent feelings about racial violence. Praed saw both sides of Queensland's brutal frontier, identifying quite strongly with the Aborigines when she observed that:

I could not understand why the innocent should suffer for the guilty ... There was treachery on both sides, and the Blacks had as good a right as the Whites to claim retribution for their wrongs.⁹⁰²

Praed had been influenced by her close experiences with Aborigines as a child. She had grown up with Indigenous playmates and, as an adolescent, had loved an Aboriginal youth, Ringo. She wrote from her home in England that:

I love the Blacks ... and truly, I think that the natives have not deserved their fate nor the evil that has been spoken of them. It was mainly the fault of the Whites that they learned treachery, and were incited to rapine and murder.⁹⁰³

Praed identified closely with Aborigines' motives. She showed her understanding of Yiman retaliation, for example, when she described how a squatter lured some Yiman to their deaths with the promise of a Christmas pudding, which he had laced with arsenic. 'It was soon after this', Praed wrote, 'and who shall wonder?—that the ... district became notorious as one in which the Blacks were dangerous, and where it was unadvisable to take up country'.⁹⁰⁴

Rose Cowen, on the other hand, adhered to the accepted processes and values of colonisation and rationalised the necessity of the white man's violent reaction to Aboriginal retaliation, writing that:

⁹⁰¹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 122.

⁹⁰² Praed, *Australian Life Black and White*, pp. 40-41.

⁹⁰³ Mrs Campbell Praed, *My Australian Girlhood: Sketches and Impressions of Bush Life*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1902, p. 4; Praed, *Australian Life Black and White*, pp. 33-34, reproduced almost word for word in *My Australian Girlhood*, pp. 65-66.

⁹⁰⁴ Praed, *Australian Life Black and White*, p. 43.

The question of whether the original inhabitants were justified in trying to destroy the invader is an age old one, going back beyond the occupation of Judea and if one condemns the white race for taking Australia from the aborigine one must go on to a condemnation of every race in the world, including the Danes and Norwegians and Saxons and Normans, Ghengis Khan and Atilla and Alexander who wept because there were no more worlds to conquer – Australia being then a terra incognita. It seems a law of nature that reptile, bird and beast and man must all prey on one another.⁹⁰⁵

Rose also seemed to ignore the part played by the white man in the disappearance of the Wadjalang from Tambo when she wrote that they ‘soon vanished’ because ‘being so near a township was most disastrous for them’.⁹⁰⁶ Whether she is referring to the availability of liquor, or to continuing white disregard for Aboriginal life and property, is unstated. Graham Lilley, manager of Tambo’s adjacent Lansdowne Station from 1943-1963, nevertheless attributed Indigenous disruption and degradation to the actions of settlers declaring that the ‘inexorable’ displacement of the Wadjalang people was due to:

dispossession ... occupation of the native’s hunting ground and his constant harassment and constriction by the white man ... their waterholes polluted by stock, their women violated, they melted away ... until by the 80’s they were huddled in squalid communities on the periphery of bush towns.⁹⁰⁷

Rose could identify a site at Juandah on the Dawson River where Aborigines had been driven into a waterhole and shot, necessitating a move to another homestead site because ‘the water was unfit for use’. Rose acknowledged that this massacre was part of reprisals after the Hornet Bank murders.⁹⁰⁸

‘[T]he white man is black in his character, and the black man is white’

⁹⁰⁵ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 68. Norwegian scientist, Karl Lumholtz, who lived in Queensland during the 1880s, related this current popular notion in similar terms, namely that: ‘it is an immutable law of nature that the strong will prey upon the weak’, Reynolds, *Frontier*, p. 123.

⁹⁰⁶ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 67. Rosemary Eckel told of her father’s remembering the shooting of Aboriginal men and their dogs in Tambo township in the 1920s, and the abduction of the Indigenous women. In 2006, there were many people of Aboriginal descent living and working in the town of Tambo.

⁹⁰⁷ Lilley, *Story of Lansdowne*, p. 51.

⁹⁰⁸ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 118. McFarlane, who lived in far south-western Queensland from 1925 to 1956, identified sites of Aboriginal massacres, one of them named ‘Massacre Sandhill’, E.H. McFarlane, *Land of Contrasts: Recollections*, n.p., Brisbane, second edition, 1996, p. 12. Pamela Watson’s research into the Karuwali, whose territory ranged south of Longford, found that the arrival of Patrick Durack, his brother-in-law, John Costello, and their families in 1868, sounded the Karuwalis’ death knell, Pamela Lukin Watson, ‘Passed Away? The Fate of the Karuwali’, in Moses (ed.), *Genocide and Settler Society*, pp. 174-193.

While supporting the principle and methods of colonisation, and accepting the reality of past violence, Rose applied her test of character equally to the white and black people she knew. This led her to commend individual Indigenous people and to applaud aspects of Aboriginal codes of practice while, at the same time, call into question some aspects of white behaviour and culture. Her writing is idiosyncratic and direct and her opinions do not comply with racialist stereotypes or formulae.

She recalled, for example, instances of white ‘depravity’ as when a cruel station owner stamped on Aborigines’ toes to make them sing in church. She depicted settler laziness, deceit and dishonesty; alcoholic women, drunken doctors, female cooks who were ‘very loose in their morals’; and ‘bad, flashy’ lady helps, one of whom murdered her newborn illegitimate child in the Longford homestead.⁹⁰⁹ On the other hand, she wrote of the help which Aboriginal youths gave to settlers, sometimes as expert horse groomers (a skill revered by Rose). She cited the story of how an Indigenous lad saved the life of a landholder suffering from scurvy by ‘boiling a plant and giving him the green mess and the water’. When a white man whose own ‘savagery was inflamed by doped grog’ left his daughter to die in the bush near Charleville after she had drunk her water bag dry, Rose told of how Aborigines ‘succoured’ the child and ‘delivered her safely back at Windorah’,⁹¹⁰ over 300 kilometres away.

In reference to Aboriginal laws, which she deemed ‘much more strict – and moral’ than the white man’s, Rose acknowledged her respect for the taboo that prevented Minnie (her Aboriginal helpmate at Longford) from even looking at a visiting tribal ‘brother’. This behaviour applied to the law that forbade sexual relationship with someone from the same clan. Rose also observed that:

⁹⁰⁹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 81, pp. 139-40, p. 151, pp. 134-35, p. 153, p. 65, pp. 129-30, pp. 146-47.

⁹¹⁰ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 63, p. 91, p. 85, p. 180. Rose suggests that the scurvy-curing plant was one with a blue flower, called ‘Scurvy plant’. Other examples of Indigenous people helping or protecting settlers are found in Wallace (Matilda Hill), *Twelve years’ life in Australia*, passim; Mrs James Foott, *Sketches of Life in the Bush: or, Ten Years in the Interior*, Gibbs, Shallard & Co., Sydney, 1872, p. 36, pp. 40-41; Mrs J. Fairfax (Sarah, born Price) Conigrave, *My reminiscences of the early days: Personal incidents on a Sheep and Cattle Run in South Australia*, Brokensha [sic] & Shaw Ltd, Perth, 1938, p. 27, p. 24; McMaugh, *Pioneering on the Upper Macleay*, p. 6; Hector Holthouse, *S’pose I Die: The Story of Evelyn Maunsell*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1973, pp. 57-58, p. 99.

In the early days in attacks on white settlers, the women were killed with their men by the aborigines but there was none of the wicked raping that was practised by the natives of other countries.⁹¹¹

Rose applauded the Indigenous custom of the father leaving mother and child for about a year after childbirth ‘to give the baby a chance’, the community sharing their food with the new mother. Reflecting that this was ‘[r]ather an example to the whites’, she added: ‘Indeed from what I knew of the morals of the people in ... bush townships I was often shamed to think that ... the aborigines in their wild state ... were far more virtuous’.⁹¹² She declaimed that:

really one feels that the white man is black in his character, and the black man is white, for the aborigine obeys his tribal laws and the white man flouts his and seeks every opportunity to secretly break them.⁹¹³

Her acceptance of individuals irrespective of their race meant that she introduced people into her narrative by describing their temperament or character before identifying their racial heritage. For example, a ‘joyous youngster [whom we] all liked ... immensely, he was so happy natured, so unaffected ... our ray of sunshine’ was ‘half Indian’. She similarly identified ‘George’ (a part-Aborigine) as a ‘fine strapping big man [employed] to break horses’, with one failing, ‘drink’, a trait which she observed was common to ‘most of the fine men in the bush’.⁹¹⁴

Allegiance to character, not race, saw her supporting George when a white cook, who was a staunch unionist, dedicated to the union’s dictum of ‘white Australia’, refused George’s entry into the Longford kitchen. George went to the Cowens with his concerns that, if excluded from the other working men, he was likely to lose his own union ticket. Rose chose to support George, reporting that:

I had to explain all this to [the cook], adding with a touch of malice “So you see Connors, he is your brother unionist”. Connors mopped his face with the tea towel he was using to dry up and exclaimed: “My God, to think I’d even have to put up with a nigger in my kitchen”. And this was his complaint all the time the men were

⁹¹¹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 184.

⁹¹² Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 184.

⁹¹³ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 65.

⁹¹⁴ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 155-56.

having their food! It speaks well for George that he never knocked him down.⁹¹⁵

When George died as a soldier in World War I, Rose wrote that ‘the West lost a really fine type of half-caste, generous, decent, honest and straight, and a splendid horseman’.⁹¹⁶ She extended her identification with people of mixed racial heritage, when she added that:

So often the half-caste seems to have the vices and weaknesses of both races and these are emphasised by the uncertainty of where they stand in the community – they belong to neither race; the whites looked down on them and the aborigines treated them as being outside the tribe. No wonder the poor fellows felt the injustice and became reckless, bitter and often bad.⁹¹⁷

Rose decried the ‘lordly and contemptuous attitude of the early British settlers’ who could have learned about the environment from the Aborigines. Referring specifically to 1916, she wrote that:

The tragic loss of life in the Clermont flood would never have taken place had the blacks’ warnings been heeded. They said “no camp here (when they saw houses being put up) big pfella flood come down, wash um away” and the same thing happened earlier in the St George districts in the early 60’s. The whites would not believe [what the blacks said] so they had most if not all of their flocks and herds swept away and drowned. The aborigines were so weather wise and had such a keen sense of smell that they could smell changes in the weather or a dust storm coming long before it appeared to us, or the smell of smoke, and being such keen observers of the habits and reactions of birds and animals they knew when a dry time was setting in and made their plans accordingly, hence their survival as tribes in such a waterless land. Their knowledge of the properties of plants and trees would have been of inestimable value to the new settlers had those contemptuous whites not been so sure that the black was a “poor ignorant creature”.⁹¹⁸

⁹¹⁵ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 155.

⁹¹⁶ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 155-56. Rose had acted upon George’s expressed dislike for military camp life and ‘all this damn saluting’, by writing to the camp commandant Colonel Flewell Smith, whom she knew, asking that George be considered for active service. George later thanked Rose for getting him ‘away from the camp into the real fighting’. He died in action in France. Research by Gary Oakley, Indigenous Liaison Officer, Australian War Memorial, suggests that ‘George’ may have been Pte George Robert Aitken (personal communication).

⁹¹⁷ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 156.

⁹¹⁸ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 136.

Rose conceded that without environmental knowledge, white men were ‘the products of a vaunted civilization that could not cope with the primitive in a show down with nature’. Indigenous knowledge, she argued, could have provided settlers with basic survival skills. She cited as example the Burke and Wills expeditionary disaster that occurred in country where ‘the waters teemed with fish, crayfish, mussels’, where there were ‘succulent red pigweed’, ‘great flocks of birds, and the seeds of the nardoo and grass’.⁹¹⁹

From her understanding of Indigenous people, Rose reported that while ‘the aborigine will laugh with you [he] hates to be laughed at. So we, and those early settlers, had to learn the hard way, by trial and error and disaster what the blacks could have warned us against’. Indigenous laughter, as the Aborigines enacted ‘for the rest of the tribe in mimicry and pantomime the incredible (to them) mistakes’ made by the white men was, according to Rose, ‘poetic justice’ for the settlers’ ‘woeful ignorance and blunders’.⁹²⁰

While not recording Aboriginal myths and legends to the extent of Katie Langloh Parker (with the Euahlayi or Yuwaalaraay people), Alice Duncan-Kemp (Karuwali, Marrula and Mitaka peoples) or Ethel Hassell (the Wiilman of south-western Western Australia), Rose nevertheless acknowledged the validity of Indigenous lore, writing that:

When I was a child people laughed at the aborigines for being afraid of bunyips or ‘debbil debbils’, refusing definitely to go near certain places – more especially permanent waterholes. They were dubbed “Silly frightened creatures”. Now ... we know that their ancestors had to really fight for existence with the huge and fearsome reptiles and animals that roamed the land, and the fear was deeply implanted in their whole beings by their legends and corroborees. Now that the land is becoming more settled we are finding the fossilised remains of some of these prehistoric monsters and where scientists are groping now to reconstruct those creatures and guess at their habits, the early settlers could have learnt so much at first hand from the aborigines, had they only shown their interest and sympathy.⁹²¹

My beloved [Minnie]: Friendship?

When describing Minnie as ‘my beloved old gin whom, with her husband “Tommy” we

⁹¹⁹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 136.

⁹²⁰ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 135-37. Rose repeats these sentiments on pp. 187-88.

⁹²¹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 188.

bought with the place',⁹²² Rose offers a picture of a close relationship with an Aboriginal person—one based on gender rather than race. While Minnie was seen as part of the Longford purchase agreement, her position imitated Rose's own self-evaluation of a rural wife, of whom she wrote that: 'Women in the farming districts don't occupy a very high place in the masculine community—being classed usually according to their degree of usefulness with the other animals'.⁹²³ As two women working together in trying circumstances in the early twentieth century, class and status were virtually erased.⁹²⁴

The burdensome domestic work at Longford centred on the cleaning and cooking. Rose wrote that after weekly dust storms 'one breathed dust, ate dust and slept in dust' and afterwards, 'dust was everywhere, in our eyes, our mouths, on our teeth, outlining our classic features on the pillow as we slept, going pouf pouf as we walked across the floors [and] on our food'. Cooking on an earthen kitchen floor was 'just like standing on hot bricks' in summer. After a storm, 'being lower than the outside, [it] would be awash' with water. Three times a day, Rose 'dish[ed] up... 3 sets of meals simultaneously', baked 'quantities of cake' and made puddings for 'the house, the kitchen and the blacks'. Every second day, she produced 'big batches' of bread and cooked the meat from a sheep. Almost immediately after she had cooked and served the Longford breakfasts, she was required twice a week to feed coach passengers travelling between Jundah and Windorah with a meal that included chops and scones. Located on the main north-south road, Longford had many other (hungry) callers, 'all unexpected'.⁹²⁵

Rose highlighted the domestic hardship when she described the Longford homestead as:

a dreadful building of unpainted galvanised iron roof and walls. and the uprights were of bush timber – I

⁹²² Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 124. After Tommy's death, Minnie's second 'husband' was his brother, Dick. Tommy and Dick were from northern Queensland near the Gulf of Carpentaria; Tommy ('a wonderful man with stock') had possibly some Malay heritage (p. 125). In quoting the now derogatory term 'gin', I am replicating Rose's choice of terminology, acceptable at the time of publication.

⁹²³ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 98.

⁹²⁴ Publications by Alice Duncan-Kemp, Katie Langloh Parker and Evelyn Maunsell, while also sympathetically depicting Aborigines, differ from Rose Cowen's narrative by maintaining the sense of authorial superiority.

⁹²⁵ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 135, p. 141, p. 165, p. 124, p. 185, p. 179. While the arrival of the motor car helped relieve the burden of isolation, Rose deplored the fact that, unlike during the horse era, she had little time to stoke up the fire and start cooking after she saw the approaching dust of a traveller's car (p. 179). Of the eleven years Rose was at Longford, she stayed for only two summers (p. 165).

barked these myself later on with a tomahawk and a butcher's knife and the loss of quite a lot of skin off my fingers. The three good sized rooms were unceiled and the cobwebs hung in festoons from the roof. The detached kitchen was also of iron throughout and had ... a kitchen range that I grew to hate with every smarting fibre of my being during the 11 years I was there. The chimneys had holes in them and when a westerly wind blew, the smoke poured into the kitchen from these holes and my eyes so often smarted and stung. It was a very small set-in range and as my husband employed a lot of men (4 jackeroos and one overseer in the house and six men in the kitchen and the two blacks in their camp) it was a fearful daily problem to get the food cooked.⁹²⁶

Hardship from extremes of climate adversely affected settlers, Rose observing that:

there were more droughts than good seasons, and the worry and misery of them is indelibly imprinted on my memory. The great heat when the hot wind seemed to sear one's skin and such a dry parching wind that one's lips cracked and one felt that a smile would be to split the skin of one's cheeks like perished parchment. Often the hot wind would come in savage gusts that made one instinctively feel that the Devil was opening and shutting the lid of Hell in order to get some fresh heat from the blazing sun ... It was hard to think aright and only those who had resources of the mind or were creatures of no intellect ... could endure years of it without becoming adversely affected. That is why so many people developed eccentricities in the Outback.⁹²⁷

While white domestic workers had proved unsatisfactory in these extreme conditions, Minnie was hard-working and dependable. Rose described the satisfactory working arrangement she shared with Minnie:

Life was much more peaceful when I did the cooking and Minnie did the heavier work. What made the work so much harder for both of us was that the galvanised iron walls having been put up horizontally instead of perpendicularly held the dust and had to be wiped down regularly once a week. We did a room a day. I climbed up on a chair placed on a table and Minnie did the lower part. Rubbing every corrugation by hand took a long time and I remember that once at the end of the week when everything was bright and shining we had a terrific dust storm in the night and all the corrugations were filled up again with dust. I came into the dining room when Minnie was surveying the walls with a look of utter disgust on her face. "Ah! Minnie! I

⁹²⁶ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 124.

⁹²⁷ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 137-38.

moaned “wha you think?” “I tink damn” she replied with great emphasis.⁹²⁸

Rose acknowledged her reliance on Minnie, likening their relationship to a friendship of mutual endeavour leavened by humour, admitting that:

I don’t think I could have survived that hard life and overwork if it had not been for Minnie who was both loyal and devoted and did all the heavy work, such as the washing and ironing, sweeping, scrubbing and washing up. We were very good friends and when I found she had such a keen sense of humour we had many laughs together.⁹²⁹

This cross-racial connection fits Sandra Lynch’s assessment of the concept of friendship with all its fluidity of meanings. According to Lynch, friendship can never be a ‘complete union’, but holds the ‘ambiguity and fragility of a relationship of connection that is predicated upon difference’.⁹³⁰

Minnie’s assistance also extended to outdoor jobs. She helped fight a bushfire,⁹³¹ joined in the chase of a marauding dingo, gathered cow dung for Rose and her two sons to burn in kerosene tins to keep the sandflies away, and gently watered and fed a tired, injured horse—a sure way of gaining Rose’s respect.⁹³²

On Longford, the two women supported and protected each other. When Rose was in charge during Cowen’s absence, she wielded her revolver and shotgun whenever drunk white men approached the station, while Minnie’s defence were her ‘two savage half bred

⁹²⁸ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 135.

⁹²⁹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 124-25.

⁹³⁰ Lynch, *Philosophy and Friendship*, p. 194.

⁹³¹ Fires were prevalent in 1918 after good rain in 1917-1918.

⁹³² Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 159, pp. 174-75, p. 189. Ann McGrath sought to find answers to the way Indigenous men and women agreed to perform, or rejected, certain tasks. From her research of twentieth-century cattle stations in the Northern Territory, McGrath has suggested that Indigenous women consented to the menial, daily tasks required by settlers because, ‘Women in Aboriginal society were relied upon to provide the most regular and consistent food supply. Their role of food gathering and hunting smaller animals was more routine and required more constant application compared with men’s hunting activities’. McGrath also found that Indigenous women often undertook the heavy jobs, such as wood chopping, hauling water in drums and repairing fences, McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, pp. 53-55. For other examples of settler perceptions of Aboriginal women as hard workers, cf. Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: A History, volume one*, p. 159, citing David Collins, captain of marines and first judge-advocate of New South Wales, and Governor John Hunter; Hassell, *My Dusky Friends*, p. 18; Duncan-Kemp, *Our Sandhill Country*, p. 189, pp. 118-19.

bull-dog-cattle dogs' that she used against unwanted visitors when the women were alone. When advised to keep away from a coach passenger visiting Longford, Rose and Minnie 'retired to the main house', watching events together through the window.⁹³³ Rose sided with Minnie and Dick during racial verbal abuse from Longford's American horse driver, who was 'loud mouthed [and] such a bully and like all bullies very cruel to the horses'. His behaviour 'used to distress [Minnie and Dick] and me very much'. Rose quoted Minnie's reaction to sum up her own feelings, Minnie retorting: 'You cruel brute! Good job if [the horse] kickem you!'. Rose added that 'it was with great joy one day that we saw the biter bit ... Minnie was so overjoyed at the terrific bump the Yank had got that she was chuckling gleefully and saying over and over again: "Good job! Good job!"'.

Two examples demonstrate Rose's care for Minnie. After Minnie was struck by wind-borne galvanised iron, Rose took her into the homestead to 'bind her wounds and reduce the lumps and give her a good strong nip of whisky to steady her'. Similarly, Rose rescued her from Dick's drunken abuse by taking her 'with me to sleep on the verandah outside my door'.⁹³⁴

Rose accepted Minnie as an individual, describing her without recourse to either conventional racial stereotypes or patronisation. Within her narrative, she revealed that Minnie weighed 15 stone (100 kg., compared with Rose's 38 kg.) and was susceptible to drunkenness, although 'very virtuous when the temptation was not at hand'. Rose admired Minnie's independent spirit, depicting her as:

a very independent old soul who strongly resented the attempts by cooks or lady helps to shunt all the unpleasant or heavy jobs on to her and would come snorting to me to tell me, "My word, tha' one lazy phella, wantem me do alla work; I gottem my own. I no askem t' do my work – you wantem tella the phella." And tellem I did for I hated such mean tricks.⁹³⁵

⁹³³ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 125, pp. 171-74, p. 124. During droughts, Cowen frequently left Longford in the hands of the 'ineffectual' overseer and Rose, while he checked on the sheep that had been sent out to feed along the roads; or camped with his jackeroos on a distant paddock. Rose then had to cope with the lambs and ewes and 'many scrubcutters'. Sometimes she was left alone to manage Longford without the men, Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 139-140, p. 171.

⁹³⁴ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, pp. 151-52, p. 141, p. 173.

⁹³⁵ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 117.

Rose's affection for Minnie is evident in her reference to her as '[t]hat silly old Minnie' and in the reiteration of some of her outraged replies to perceived injustices against her. When a jackeroo laughed at her predicament when she was caught in a dust storm, for example, Rose reported Minnie's retort that: 'I no more washem your clothes, no more iron em shirts, no more takem ticks off your dog. You bad pfella, I no likem!', Rose adding that 'between each threat there was a terrific snort'.⁹³⁶

Separated from her family and female kin in an isolated location, Rose sympathised with Minnie's similar plight. Minnie belonged to the Coorooboolka (Coorabulka) clan—Pitta Pitta people from the country near Boulia. After Pitta Pitta men killed the settler, Richard Welford, in 1872:

[Minnie] and her father and mother escaped into the country afterwards known as Connemara Station when the whites were exacting reprisals for the murders. They hid beside partly submerged logs in the waterholes in the daylight and fled by night ... and [Minnie] told me very graphically how terrified the blacks were and how they hid the fact that they were of the tribe who killed Welford. But every now and then they would meet ... and hold their corroboree of the flood and the snakes that drove them so far south ...⁹³⁷

Similarly, Rose grieved with Minnie when:

the Government had the silly idea of gathering all the aborigines to the coast on an island (where in that damp climate they promptly died) we had several come along on the coach. They were very frightened as they knew that each one who had been taken away never came back and therefore they must be going to their death. They wailed and talked with my old Minnie who wailed and jabbered back and told me afterwards about "thapore feller, he go longa island".⁹³⁸

⁹³⁶ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 175, pp. 140-41.

⁹³⁷ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 184. Mark Copland et al have identified the movement of Aborigines in far south-west Queensland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including of people from around Jundah north to the Longreach region, Mark Copland, Jonathan Richards and Andrew Walker, *One Hour More Daylight: A Historical Overview of Aboriginal Dispossession in Southern and Southwest Queensland*, The Social Justice Commission, Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba, 2006, p. 123. Unlike Minnie, many of these Aborigines were subsequently moved to missions and reserves.

⁹³⁸ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 124. This was most probably the Palm Island Aboriginal Settlement, located 65 kilometres north of Townsville. It was gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve on 20 June 1914, *Queensland Government Gazette*, 1914, Vol. CII, No. 50, p. 1621.

These freely expressed sentiments of identification with Minnie fit Lynch's definition of friendship that involves another individual's 'need, advantage, tastes and pleasures, commitment to notions of the good or commitment to moral and intellectual principles'. Rose's ability to 'put oneself imaginatively in the place of another, to imagine how a situation is experienced from the perspective of the other' showed that she had embraced Minnie's concerns, as a friend. Furthermore the relationship between Minnie and Rose lacked the ambiguity of 'friendships' motivated and manipulated through a need for social connections or political advantage that characterise some forms of friendship.⁹³⁹

Like Mary McConnel, Rose reported Indigenous autonomy and agency. Unlike Mary, Rose did not qualify her assessment with racial judgements. With an almost envious tone she reported that Minnie and Dick,

were very happy together and their laughter at night from their humpy was good to hear. I often wondered which of us whites they were taking off in that really brilliant mimicry of theirs which was not only of voice and inflection but also of gesture, walk and tilt of the head.⁹⁴⁰

Conclusion

'the impressions that one gets in one's childhood [are] very hard to erase'.⁹⁴¹

From early childhood, Rose lived with the complexities of interracial violence and friendship. On the one hand, she was compliant with the presiding settler mentality, reporting murders of Aborigines as a corollary of colonisation; on the other hand, she wrote openly of her friendship with Minnie in a way that emphasised female understanding and cooperation that crossed racial differences. The ambivalence in the conflicting messages is diffused by the direct, open style that reflected the author's pragmatic attitude to life.

Detesting 'that despicable fetish of the English, respectability',⁹⁴² Rose disregarded the concepts of status and class. In spite of brief references to her civilian war service and

⁹³⁹ Lynch, *Philosophy and Friendship*, p. 24, p. 187, p. 184; Janet Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980, p. 4.

⁹⁴⁰ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 125.

⁹⁴¹ Cowen, *Crossing Dry Creeks*, p. 33.

⁹⁴² Cowen, 'Recollections of a bush woman', p. 39.

suggestions of feminist activism, she does not project her own identity other than to present herself as an unpretentious bush woman who daily toiled to survive. While she worked to maintain British standards of cleanliness in a harsh environment, she praised Minnie's kindness and hard work in assisting her in the Herculean task.

Her attitude towards her Indigenous worker stands in marked contrast to the body of evidence that reveals what Jackie Huggins and Thom Blake have described as 'the gross inequality of female inter-relationships, and the dynamics of the oppression of black by white'.⁹⁴³ British-born Emma Macpherson serves as an example of a rural woman who applied to the Aborigines the master-servant ethic—with poor results. Emma recorded that:

We ... occasionally contrived to induce two of the native women to wash for us, but all services, though duly paid for, they looked on as so many favours conferred, and it is ... very difficult to retain a native in your service [because] you can never be sure of the day or the hour that they may not take to the woods and disappear.⁹⁴⁴

Minnie and Rose's relationship may have been exceptional. An English bride, Evelyn Maunsell at Mount Mulgrave station, Cape York Peninsula in 1912, was assisted in the household tasks by 'Old Maggie', who would also protect Evelyn by 'camp[ing] by [her] front door when the Boss was away'. Evelyn nevertheless reported patronisingly that, 'Native girls needed to be trained young if they were to be useful about the house'.⁹⁴⁵ Rose and Minnie's working partnership, however, is an example that challenges Myrna Tonkinson's thesis that on the frontier: 'The Whites considered themselves to be superior and, even when they conceded humanity to the Blacks, did not consider them worthy of friendship or other relationships based on equality'.⁹⁴⁶ Rose's representation of Minnie as

⁹⁴³ Huggins and Blake, 'Protection or Persecution? Gender Relations in the Era of Racial Segregation', in Saunders and Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia*, p. 54.

⁹⁴⁴ Mrs Allan Macpherson, *My Experiences in Australia*, p. 231.

⁹⁴⁵ Holthouse, *S'pose I Die*, p. 57, p. 87. Mount Mulgrave was on the Mitchell River, west of Cairns and north-east of Normanton. Ethel Hassell (in south-western Western Australia) understood Indigenous cause and effect, referring to Aborigines' 'keen sense of justice ... try to humbug a native your labour is in vain ... if they think they are not justly treated they quietly early one morning walk off', Hassell, *My Dusky Friends*, p. 84. Ann McGrath also noted that Aboriginal women on Northern Territory cattle stations resisted 'in numerous ways ... shirking ... disappearing, "sulking", doing shoddy work', McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, p. 53; Katie Parker similarly represented the 'laziness' of her three Noongahburrah 'black-but-comelys', Muir, *My Bush Book*, pp. 129-30.

⁹⁴⁶ Tonkinson, 'Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?', in *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 12, p. 28.

her confidante and friend lifts the Aboriginal woman's social position from the historical perception that Indigenous women were debased objects of white men's desire to a living image of a hard-working woman with resilience and a sense of humour—exactly the qualities that Rose attributed to herself.

While Rose acknowledged the part her father played in forming her views and beliefs, other social and familial influences were likely to have shaped her attitudes. Rose admired her aunt, Rose Scott, who had worked to obliterate class, creed and party politics in the advancement of women's lives.⁹⁴⁷ Scott had herself identified with Indigenous people in what Judith Allen has suggested was a repudiation of her uncle Robert Scott's and her father's 'racist pursuit of regional genocide'. In 1838, Robert had been removed from the magistracy after his 'injudicious and somewhat arrogant defence' of the Myall Creek murderers.⁹⁴⁸

After Rose Scott died in 1925, feminist activism continued in the years between the World Wars when 'the centre and outback as a new space for feminist attention' became significant places in which women could enact 'their own responsibilities as world women', and where 'white women activists promot[ed] Aboriginal women rights to selfhood and self-protection'.⁹⁴⁹ Marilyn Lake has described this period as the 'golden age of the woman citizen', when women such as Constance Cooke, Mary Bennett and Bessie Rischbieth all worked towards the equality of women—campaigns that included increased rights for Indigenous women. Anthropologist, Olive Pink, similarly brought to public attention the rights of Aboriginal women at this time.⁹⁵⁰ These influences were likely to have worked over time to transform the way Rose chose to write of her experiences in the

⁹⁴⁷ Personal communication from Shirley McPherson. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 April 1925, p. 14; Marian Fleming Harwood, 'Reminiscences of the late Miss Rose Scott as Founder, President, and Life-long Friend of The Peace Society New South Wales Branch', ?Peace Society, New South Wales Branch, ?Sydney, c. 1925, especially pp. 10-11.

⁹⁴⁸ Allen, *Rose Scott*, p. 176; Gray, 'Scott, Helenus', <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/scott-helenus-2851/text3673>, published in hardcopy 1967.

⁹⁴⁹ Alison Holland, 'The Campaign for Women Protectors: Gender, Race and Frontier Between the Wars', in *Australian Feminist Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 34, 2001, p. 28, citing Fiona Paisley's 'No Back Streets in the Bush: 1920s and 1930s Pro-Aboriginal White Women's Activism and the Trans-Australia Railway', in *Australian Feminist Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 25, 1997, p. 122, pp. 124-25.

⁹⁵⁰ Marilyn Lake, 'Feminist History as National History: Writing the Political History of Women', *Australian Historical Studies*, No. 106, 1996, p.166; Holland, 'Campaign for Women Protectors', pp. 30-33, p. 38; Julie Marcus, 'The Beauty, Simplicity and Honour of Truth: Olive Pink in the 1940s', in Julie Marcus (ed.), *First in their Field: Women and Australian Anthropology*, MUP, 1993, pp. 111-135.

middle years of the twentieth century. This was the period, too, when derogatory racial views about Aborigines were beginning to wane, with the lessening of the influencing force of social Darwinism.⁹⁵¹

Living and working alongside Indigenous Australians, however, had their own impact on white people's consciousness. A contemporary long-term resident of Jundah, B.J. Rayment, expressed sympathetic opinions similar to Rose's comments, sometimes using similar language. Having had Aboriginal playmates and workmates, Rayment asserted that 'there is not one per cent more bad black men than bad white men' and that '[m]ost of our condemnation of the black Australians is just an excuse to cover our rotten treatment of them'. He deplored the fact that 'we have developed this country to our own gain and to their cost of semi starvation and degradation [a fact which] is surely not right by Christian ways, but I am glad to think that at long last something worthwhile may be done for the survivors'. Deeming the British race, with its 'vaunted civilisation' as 'damned hypocritical', greedy and selfish, he added that, 'I hate to harp on these things but it is a great pity that we white people have such a superiority complex'.⁹⁵²

While settler women such as Katie Parker and Ethel Hassell wrote of the walks they took with Indigenous women on rural stations, and recorded the Aborigines' ancestral stories, Rose has contributed to discussions of female interracial relationships at the frontier with her depiction of Minnie as helpmate and friend. Minnie's work on Longford station replicates the 'devotion and loyalty' that Aboriginal women extended to settlers in far northern Australia, as Ernestine Hill explained in 1940 when she wrote that:

The part that the lubra has played in colonizing Australia is never acknowledged ... where the white man ventures alone, she is always the first to make friends ... Averse to bloodshed, she temporizes. / First to guide him to the secret waterholes ... Time and again her intervention with the tribe has saved his life. Time and again her whispered word of warning has put him on guard—'Badfella that one all right, him been lookout longa you!⁹⁵³

⁹⁵¹ Reynolds, *Frontier*, p. 118, p. 127.

⁹⁵² Rayment, *My Towri*, p. 129, p. 61, p. 174, p. 168, p. 177. *My Towri* was contemporary with *Crossing Dry Creeks*. Although Rayment published in c.1971, he wrote 'My Towri' in 1956.

⁹⁵³ Ernestine Hill, *The Great Australian Loneliness* (1940), Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1991, p. 333.

By representing Minnie's strength of character, Rose has added her voice to anthropological observations of the authority of Indigenous women.⁹⁵⁴

In *Crossing Dry Creeks*, Rose Cowen represented Aboriginal people not as stereotyped racial constructs but as individuals depicted without sentimentality or censure. She has also shown that, although a perception had grown from the mid-nineteenth century that the demise of Aborigines was inevitable,⁹⁵⁵ Indigenous people continued to be vital contributors to the development of Australia.

According to Hill, instances of Aborigines (particularly Aboriginal women) saving settlers were 'commonplace'. She cites the case of 'Jane' who saved the life of Alan McFarlane Giles in 1883, Hill, *Great Australian Loneliness*, pp. 334-35: Jane Isabella Watts, (born Giles, 1824-94) refers to the Indigenous woman as a 'black boy', in *Family Life in South Australia, Fifty-three Years Ago, Dating from October 1837*, W.K. Thomas & Co., Adelaide, 1890, Australiana Facsimile Editions No. 205, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1978, pp. 192-198. For examples of Indigenous women warning settlers of Aboriginal attack, cf. Louisa Meredith, *My Home in Tasmania*, Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide, 1979. First published as *My Home in Tasmania, during a residence of nine years*, John Murray, London, 1852, p. 82; Gideon Lang, *The Aborigines of Australia*, p. 33; Sarah Musgrave (1830-1931), *The Wayback*, Bland District Historical Society, West Wyalong, fifth ed., 1984. First published 1926, revised 1930, pp. 22-23.

⁹⁵⁴ Anthropologist Diane Bell similarly received information and assistance from Napurrula, an Indigenous woman who helped translate her audio-tapes, Diane Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, second edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, 'Dedication' and p. 27.

⁹⁵⁵ Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788-1993*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1994, p. 25. Markus suggests that contributing factors to the perception were the increased deaths of Aboriginal men and the increased number of Aboriginal babies fathered by white men. Russell McGregor's *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939*, MUP, Calton, Victoria, 1997, explores the ways in which evolutionary ideas consolidated the expectation that the Aboriginal race would become extinct. This premise underlies Daisy Bates's *The Passing of the Aborigines* (1938).

Conclusion

The strength of racial perceptions that cast Aboriginal people to a position of inferiority in comparison to white British subjects entered all six narratives. The degree to which the writers chose to express these attitudes or to introduce an alternative reading seemed to depend on the circumstances of their frontier experience. Those taken into account in the analysis are physical proximity of the author to Aborigines; length of time spent close to them; and the dependence on Aborigines, particularly the women, for assistance in the process of colonising inland areas. Other contributing factors were the strength of the writer's ideology that formulated opinions about, and motivated behaviour towards, Aborigines; the period in which their experiences took place and the influences acting upon the crafting of narratives published many years after the events.

In five of the narratives, a prominent influence was an awareness of audience acceptance or rejection, dependent on the views expressed in the writing. The forthright style of the sixth author Rose Scott Cowen showed her to be oblivious, even disdainful, of the reaction of her audience. She differed from the other writers in that she was Australian-born, and she published her work almost 50 years after the next most-recently published account. While drawing closer to Aboriginal people than had the other women, Rose nevertheless supported as just the white man's colonisation of Australia, even rationalising his resort to violence.

While the imbalance of power between white and black was generally maintained by settler men⁹⁵⁶ and women, in spite of their cultural prejudice five of my selected writers recounted Indigenous agency, even authority. Only Eliza Fraser's commentaries, and the many subsequent reconstructions by men who had never seen an Aborigine, held firm to the extreme views of white imperial and religious superiority that informed British racial attitudes. As previously explained, Eliza's 'saga' serves as an introduction against which the other texts can be assessed. Again, while the six authors refer to Aborigines as a group, all except for Eliza Fraser and the town-dweller Emily Cowl—who remained geographically

⁹⁵⁶ The dynamics of the male power structure at the frontier is a subject that has continued to interest historians. Cf., for example, Marilyn Lake, 'Frontier Feminism and the Marauding White Man: Australia 1890s to 1940s', in Ruth Roach Pierson and Nupur Chaudhuri (eds), *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race*, Indiana University Press, 1998, pp. 94-105.

distant from them—individualised Indigenous people.

For all the women, life at the Australian frontier was arduous, uncomfortable and often dangerous.⁹⁵⁷ Mary McConnel was the most protected from hardship. Her superior social position included the assistance of servants, both white and black, within a controlled and regulated frontier. Even she, however, suffered a serious road accident as she travelled in a buggy along unmade roads and rough terrain. On the rutted bullock tracks in Geelong's hinterland in 1841, Katherine Kirkland had suffered a similar fate.

Details of Katherine Kirkland's quickly constructed slab hut and Rose Cowen's corrugated iron house in the climatic extremes of the Channel Country highlight the way that these tough and resilient women adapted to the harsh rural conditions. Descriptions of the three settler women's house interiors and information on material culture add to the picture of what was available to colonial women and how they managed to create a home for themselves and their families in inland locations. Details of food provision, furniture, cooking and laundry facilities reveal the practicalities of domestic life on the frontier. The important matter of clothing, especially in the work of Katherine Kirkland, helps us to visualise (as well as sympathise) with the women, who were expected to wear heavy English clothing in a warm Australian climate. It is through the amusement in Indigenous eyes that their predicament comes to life, making nonsense of the photographs of incongruously and ludicrously overdressed middle-class ladies.

In spite of rough surroundings, all the authors were conscious to maintain (or, in the case of Eliza Fraser, conscious to have lost) a refined air of gentility and propriety. At the end of her trip inland, Eliza Davies was shocked to see in a mirror her dishevelled, shabby appearance. The women were not only conscious of maintaining their physical appearance. As Antoinette Burton has suggested, the nineteenth-century British woman was expected to be 'the moral guardian of the nation, the guarantor of British racial stability and the means of national-imperial redemption'.⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵⁷ Extended portrayals of women's lives in this thesis offer the sort of information that Judith Godden suggested was needed to refute the previous idealisation of women at the frontier, Judith Godden, 'A New Look at the Pioneer Woman', in *Hecate: A Woman's Interdisciplinary Journal*, Volume V, No. 2, 1979, p. 19.

⁹⁵⁸ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill & London, 1994, p. 59.

The success of the British empire had fostered a perception in its citizens of racial superiority, a belief reinforced by Christianity. The authors' sense of moral responsibility and 'moral superiority' entailed the preservation of the tenets of civilisation, from which their social attitudes arose. They felt bound to uphold their social responsibility, particularly in preserving the dignity of their homes. Important to their middle-class identity was to 'know their place' in society. A corollary of this was that others were expected to maintain their own allotted 'position' in a household. Aborigines who, ignorant of social mores, intruded unknowingly into Katherine Kirkland's hallowed female space, caused her confusion and fear from the shocking affront. Emily Cowl circumvented the problem by refusing to use Indigenous female help. Mary McConnel allowed entry into her home of Indigenous women and girls but only under her strictly prescribed conditions.

The strength of these attitudes of righteousness and superiority or, more pertinently, the extent to which the writers complied with them for the sake of their readers, directed their representations of Aborigines. The breaking down of these influences became more apparent in the narratives of the three settlers, who lived among Indigenous people and with whom they formed associations. As the British women became physically and emotionally closer to the Aboriginal people, the stereotypical epithets 'strange', 'wild' and 'ugly' (to describe both Aborigines *and* landscape) disappeared from the texts.

The order in which I dealt with these narratives represents the progressive casting away of the racial stereotypes employed in Eliza Fraser's story. Eliza Davies and Emily Cowl maintained them more diligently than the settlers, to whom Indigenous humanity became patently clear. Even the meagre contact with Aborigines of Davies and Cowl, however, influenced these women's racial perceptions. These two authors were nevertheless able to mask their opinions, borne of first-hand knowledge, by adopting the literary style and tone of popular fictional adventure tales, contemporary to the time of publication. Strongly mindful of their readership and less attached than were the pastoral settlers to individual Aborigines who might more convincingly have altered their racial perceptions, these two writers adhered to the stereotypes generated by racial prejudice.

An ambivalence in all the texts stems from the difficulties in interpreting everyday interracial contact. On the one hand, details of an interracial relationship would have been a fascinating novelty to readers. On the other hand, admission to a friendly association with Aborigines could have created problems in explaining to outsiders how this break in class and race codes could have possibly been allowed to occur. Katherine Kirkland's text indicates that an expression of gratitude was in order after what seems to have been kind assistance from Indigenous women in the matter of nutrition. Katherine, however, left the question of friendship with Aboriginal women unanswered—silences serving the author better than descriptions that might compromise her social position. Because Aborigines could not be 'placed' in the social order (or at least only as inferior people), Katherine could not write about a mutual coming-together without lowering her own status. The way to solve this dilemma was unknown to Katherine and she chose to leave the subject unexplained; as a 'lady', she could not countenance such a disclosure in a published work.

In Emily Cowl's case, the ambivalence in her views on Aborigines is similarly unresolved. To counteract the possibility of empathy with the Kurtjar, who seemed to share her own sense of humour, Emily appears to overact in her support of retributive violence. Eliza Davies, too, chose two approaches. In her concentrated portrayal of Aborigines, she resorted to exaggerated renditions of stereotypical heathen savages in a fashion similar to the choice made by Eliza Fraser's chroniclers. In sections of her book not dealing specifically with Aborigines, however, she presents a dispassionate, reasoned view of them. Mary McConnel's representations were less compromised. She kept firmly in place her own belief in the rectitude of her moral and racial superiority. Her close association with Indigenous women on Cressbrook revealed their personalities and concerns; and she gave an affectionate portrayal of the innocent, humorous pranks of the Indigenous little girls. However when individuals transgressed from her standards, she maintained her distance as a forgiving mistress, sometimes amused but always emotionally detached. Only Rose Cowen could embrace her appreciation and affection for her Indigenous helper and friend in an open celebration of Minnie's individual personality, expressed and enjoyed in their shared endeavours.

The tensions that came with writing about Indigenous people are therefore connected to the

social and racial prejudices that were particular to women. Five of the authors in this thesis grappled with this dilemma. Because of the strength of the two important social constraints of class consciousness and appropriate decorous behaviour, their representations of interracial relationship became fraught with confusion and uncertainty, boxed within stereotypes, or expressed through racial and religious certainties. The representations in the settlers' writing show that black women were similarly adjusting to their changed circumstances, including in the part they played in interracial female relationships.

The social prejudices of British women were likely to be different from men's because of differing labour relationships. As white women's close contact with Aborigines was in the domestic sphere, they were forced to accommodate them within their refined social world. This involved adapting in subtle practical and emotional ways not required in the working relationships of (black and white) men. The roles of the men on the frontier took place outside the home and were comparatively straightforward. In a man's working life, both races dressed similarly and performed together the same physically exacting, strenuous outdoor activities. They therefore approximated each others' social standing (at least temporarily) in ways which middle-class women, endeavouring to uphold the civilised standards of a home and family, could not. In the man's world, admiration for physical strength or technical expertise in manly endeavour crossed racial divisions, uncompromised by the social conventions of correct procedure. This male sharing of pursuits was more likely to close the gap between black and white than to produce the conflicts experienced by women. These conundrums had to be resolved (or left unstated) as women strove to find an acceptable way to tell their frontier tales. The first five authors of this thesis, mindful of the reception of their narratives, adapted their writing by adopting different measures to entertain or intrigue their readers within a socially and culturally acceptable framework.

Again, while the white women represented Aborigines as providers for needy travellers, individuals with an outrageous sense of humour, intense curiosity, proud attachment to land or as individual characters of depth and strength like Minnie, they remained attached to traditional prejudices that Aborigines were 'troublesome', 'treacherous', 'mischievous' or 'dangerous'. Expression of this underlying attitude adds to the complexity of these narratives that are operating on two levels of consciousness: first, that of an agreed

collusion of settler incursion onto Aboriginal land; and second, the recognition by the women of sympathetic traits in the character of Aborigines or their appreciation of acts of Indigenous assistance. This ambivalence operates in each text. Even hints of Indigenous assistance in Eliza Fraser's account can be added to the examples of complexity found in the other five representations. The interpretation of the degree to which the writers freed themselves from the stereotypes and clichés of accepted prejudices moves therefore from Eliza Fraser's confined representation to Rose Cowen's open acceptance of the humanity of Indigenous men and women. One significant difference between these two women was that Fraser's position was vulnerable whereas, 70 years later at the time of Cowen's experiences, the question of racial conquest had been decisively settled in the white woman's favour. The competence of black women in supporting and befriending women settlers was a significant contributing factor in the breaking down of the white women's established racial attitudes.

To deepen my exploration into interracial female relationships on the frontier, this thesis has endeavoured to ask: 'What is friendship?'. Definitions of friendship range from the concept of being 'on good terms' with another person, and 'not hostile', to the sort of relationships where there are feelings of affection or personal regard. Being 'favourably disposed', amicable and kind, and 'inclined to approve, help or support' are also defining qualities. Even in Plato's quest to define friendship in the Socratic dialogue *Lysis*, the notion remains unclear, the definition unresolved. Plato suggests however that, like Sandra Lynch's supposition in *Philosophy and Friendship*, friends need not necessarily be like one another. He nevertheless does concede that friendship arises out of human needs.

Plato also suggests that friendship entails a degree of interdependence. In most cases of documented black-white female friendships it is Aboriginal women who befriend the settler women. 'Friendship', so celebrated in colonial texts, seemed to entail a one-way process. The sorts of examples are replicated in this thesis: arriving ignorant and unsupported into a new environment in the case of Katherine Kirkland; in need of the kind of domestic female help to which she was accustomed, in the case of Mary McConnel; and desperate for assistance and some female companionship, in the case of Rose Cowen, it was the Indigenous women who filled all these women's needs. This concept turns on its head

Myrna Tonkinson's suggestion that white women maintained a superior attitude that precluded friendship with Aborigines. While settler women did feel superior to Aboriginal people, it was the authority and kindness of the Indigenous women who befriended the settlers that constituted friendship. Aborigines women reached out to encompass the white women's concerns.

Tonkinson's premise that white woman's superior attitude towards her black sisters prevented a close association based on equality fits the textual example of Mary McConnel. McConnel epitomises the sort of white woman who maintained her perceived superior status and viewed Aborigines as 'inferior' under the presiding prejudices. The notions that underlay her text were racial domination and the associated subordination. Within this scanario, Mary would not have been able to, and did not, concede or accept friendship.

While Katharine Kirkland's relationship with the Moner balug women remains an enigma, the so-called friendship of women (not included for analysis in this thesis) who shared bush walks and food-foraging trips with Indigenous women appears to be simply a euphemism, perpetuated in the writing of settler women. The implication in Helen Thomson's reference discussed in my Introduction that this 'shared, benign relationship' was a form of cross-cultural friendship can be seen as another example of unequal association, in which the agency for friendship lay solely with the black women. The settlers, lonely and perhaps bored, were accepted into a part of female Indigenous society and welcomed to join the Aboriginal women and children in their daily walks. In these texts, there is no indication that the 6Aboriginal women gained from the interaction, other than the 'advantage' of being able to stay on their land.

Only in the writing of Rose Cowen can we see an example of a 'friendship based on equality'. Rose and Minnie fit the criteria of friendship by being affable with each other and in extending to one another a sense of camaraderie. They empathised with each other's immediate concerns, recognised the other person's needs and actively supported them. By writing a poem about the plight of Minnie's escape from marauding white men, Rose extended her sympathy to the Indigenous woman's family. A contrary reading of what 'friendship' entailed can also be mooted: when Rose wrote of the laughter shared between

Minnie and her husband, she allowed for the possibility that the women's commitment to their friendship was unequal, existing primarily in the mind of the white woman. The presiding agency rested with the Aborigines as they mocked and mimicked their white acquaintances. Could they have shared a friendship with the race who had moved onto Indigenous land, and pursued and killed family members? Would they have been able to call representatives of this race of people 'friends'? Perhaps again in this case, the 'friendship' was one-sided.

Twentieth-century anthropologists have revealed that Indigenous women, bound to the concept of preservation of life, had an ongoing role as nurturers of people, relationships and land. Isobel White observed that: 'Openly and symbolically Aboriginal religion is concerned with life, all kinds of life, its creation, its maintenance, its paramount importance'. White cites W.E.H. Stanner that Aboriginal religion magnified life; and White confirmed that Aboriginal woman's 'belief system centres on life itself' through the females' life-giving powers, and that '[t]he most sacred myths and ceremonies are everywhere concerned with birth, death, rebirth and the paramount value of life.'⁹⁵⁹

Catherine Berndt's research also identified the 'life-sustaining and life-renewing' aspects of Indigenous female authority, which was reconfirmed over time in traditional songlines. Phyllis Kaberry, who lived with tribes in the Kimberley region of Western Australia during the 1930s, similarly found that: 'By virtue of her procreative, sexual, economic, and social functions, [an Aboriginal woman] claims certain privileges and fulfils certain duties to the community', and that her attitude is determined by tolerance and the desire for peace. Furthermore, 'when anger mounts high and threatens the peace, even safety of others in the camp, [Aboriginal women] take the initiative in stemming the disputes and temporarily establishing order again.'⁹⁶⁰

Again, Diane Bell reported that Aboriginal women were the nurturers of people,

⁹⁵⁹ Isobel M. White, 'Aboriginal women's status: a paradox resolved', in Fay Gale (ed.), *Women's Role in Aboriginal Society*, second edition, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1974, p. 40, p. 41, p. 45; W.E.H. Stanner, 'Religion, totemism and symbolism', in R. and C. Berndt, (eds), *Aboriginal Man in Australia*, p. 217.

⁹⁶⁰ Catherine and Ronald Berndt, *The Aboriginal Australians*, p. 62, p. 72; Catherine H. Berndt, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia*, Hermann et Cie, Paris, 1950, pp. 26-27; Phyllis M. Kaberry, *Aboriginal Woman: Sacred and Profane*, George Routledge and Sons Ltd, London, 1939, p. 277, p. 181.

relationships and land. On the basis of living six years with Aborigines, mostly in Central Australia, Bell found that Indigenous women ‘seek to resolve and to explore the conflicts and tensions which beset their communities’ and are especially interested in health and social harmony. In their ritual, ‘the major themes of land, love and health fuse in the nurturance motif’, which is ‘modelled on the Dreamtime experience, itself one all-creative force’. Their distinctive female contribution to their society was recognised and valued in the past when their roles of independence, responsibility, dignity and authority were critical to group survival—because the ritual themes of health, emotional management and resolution of conflict benefited not only women, but the whole society.⁹⁶¹ Rose Cowen revealed these qualities in her account of Minnie.

After colonisation, the depths of authority and solidarity of Indigenous women in traditional society had been largely eroded, because of settler attitudes that perceived Aboriginal women as worthy only of the lowly roles of domestic worker or subordinate sexual partner to white men. These attitudes were shaped by the hierarchical class structure and male social dominance of nineteenth-century British culture.⁹⁶²

The white women chosen for analysis in this thesis were all different. As individual women undergoing different experiences, they interpreted what they saw through the differing lenses of their beliefs. All the representations were governed to a greater or lesser extent by racial prejudices and audience expectations. The close analyses of the latter five texts reveal, however, that these female authors were people whose ‘ear begins to hear, and [whose] eye begins to see’.⁹⁶³ Rose Cowen, in particular, proffered an interpretation of

⁹⁶¹ Diane Bell, *Aboriginal Women and the Religious Experience*, The Young Australian Scholar Lecture Series, Number Three, Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Bedford Park, South Australia, 1982, pp. 2-4, p. 13.

⁹⁶² Cf., for example, Diane Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, second edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, p. 34, p. 164, p. 182, pp. 230-31, p. 249; Bell, *Aboriginal Women and the Religious Experience*, p. 6, p. 11, p. 14; Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, Number Sixteen, Johnson Reprint Corporation, London, 1968, p. 27; C. Berndt, ‘Aboriginal Women and the Notion of “The Marginal Man”’, in R. and C. Berndt (eds), *Aborigines of the West*, p. 37; Catherine H. Berndt, ‘Women and the “Secret Life”’, in Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt (eds), *Aboriginal Man in Australia: Essays in Honour of Emeritus Professor AP Elkin*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1965, p. 281; Bell’s 1970s fieldwork was carried out among the Kaytej women at Warrabri in the Northern Territory; the Berndts worked with peoples from South Australia, Western Australia and Arnhem Land. Cf. also Jane C. Goodale, *Tiwi Wives: A Study of the Women of Melville Island, North Australia*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1971, pp. 228-29.

⁹⁶³ From Emily Bronte’s *The Prisoner*, in Charlotte Bronte, *The Poems of Emily Jane Bronte and Anne*

Aborigines based on 'what is' rather than 'what appears to be'. In spite of Rose's British aristocratic connections, the factors that influenced her representation of Indigenous Australians were her Australian birth, her close, first-hand experiences with an Indigenous woman and the publication of her work in the mid-twentieth century, when imperial attitudes were weakening. Within this interpretation, racial differences disappear. What all the texts reveal, however, is the adaptation, authority and agency of the Indigenous people who inhabited these narratives.

Finally, as with all historical work, this thesis forms a testing ground from which further studies can evolve.

Abbreviations

A.A.	Australian Agricultural (Company)
ABC	Australian Broadcast Commission
ADB	Australian Dictionary of Biography
ADFA	Australian Defence Force Academy
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
A.I.F.	Australian Imperial Force
ANU	Australian National University
BDM	Births, Deaths, Marriages
CUP	Cambridge University Press
HSQJ	Historical Society of Queensland Journal
JRHSQ	Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland
ML	Mitchell Library
MUP	Melbourne University Press
NCB	National Centre of Biography
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSW	New South Wales
OUP	Oxford University Press
RHSQ	Royal Historical Society of Queensland
RSSS	Research School of Social Sciences
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales
SUP	Sydney University Press
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UQP	University of Queensland Press
UWA	University of Western Australia

Appendix A

The Works of the Women of this Thesis

Eliza Fraser

‘Mrs Fraser’s Narrative’, Archives Office of New South Wales, Ref. SZ976, COD 183, and reproduced in Barry Dwyer and Neil Buchanan, *The Rescue of Eliza Fraser: 150th Anniversary Edition*, Eliza Fraser Commemorative Committee, Noosa, Queensland, 1986. *Sydney Gazette*, 18 October 1836.

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Emily Cowl

Mrs T. Holder Cowl, *Some of My Experiences during a voyage to the Gulf of Carpentaria and three years’ residence at Normanton in the early Seventies*, Besley & Pike Ltd, Brisbane, n.d.

Katherine Kirkland

Katharine (sic) Kirkland, *Life in the Bush*, published by Kenneth W. Mackenzie, “Trawalla”, Beaufort, Victoria, c. 1995, pp. 15-16; reprinted from *Chambers’s Miscellany of Useful and Entertaining Tracts*, William and Robert Chambers, Edinburgh, Vol. 1, No. 8, printed in 1844.

Katherine Kirkland, *Vegetarian Cookery, By a Lady, With an Introduction Explanatory of the Principles of Vegetarianism By the Late Jas Simpson Esq.*, The Sixth Edition, Fred. Pitman, London, 186–?.

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Ellis, Constance Jane, *I Seek Adventure: an Autobiographical Account of Pioneering Experiences in Outback Queensland from 1889 to 1904*, Alternative Publishing Co-operative Ltd, Sydney, 1981.

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