

The ‘Proper Settler’ and the ‘Native Mind’: Flogging Scandals in the Northern Territory, 1919 and 1932¹

Ben Silverstein

In 1921, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom David Lloyd George proudly declared that the British Empire was distinguished by being ‘based not on force but on goodwill and a common understanding’.² This mythic imperial imagination took hold in the interwar years, rendering public exposures of colonial violence both anomalous and embarrassing. For this reason, when in 1932 the Australian overlander Francis Birtles provided disturbingly detailed allegations of the ‘inhuman treatment of natives in the North’ he sparked one of several scandals regarding violence perpetrated against Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory. Two such episodes—one incited by Birtles’ claims, the other by accusations against Paddy Cahill in 1919—are the subject of this chapter, which explores arguments about the propriety, or sometimes the utility, of such violence. These disputes, I argue, centred on the nature of the proper male settler and were transacted through the question of his relationships with Aboriginal people.

In the course of these Australian scandals many settlers argued, on the basis of their knowledge of the ‘native mind’, that violence was a privileged element of the proper relationship between settlers and Aboriginal people. They rationalised this violence through two claims which, despite their seeming contradiction, could coexist within the same analysis: the ‘native mind’ as equivalent to that of a white child, for whom beating was a necessary pedagogical tool; and the ‘native mind’ as structured by an ordered and sophisticated normative system within which violence was an essential and appropriate response to transgression. This ambivalent

knowledge structured the everyday, framing life for Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory.

Scholars of colonial violence have recently turned to study these everyday experiences, looking beyond the violence of conquest, rebellion and counter-insurgency to examine the intimate violence ‘central to the workings of empire’.³ Such studies locate colonial violence as more than merely transitional, punctuating the birth of a new order. Instead, an orientation towards the everyday brings to light the insidious shifting modalities of violence that Tracey Banivanua-Mar suggests were ‘essentially structural’ to colonialism.⁴ Histories of Australian colonial violence have tended to continue to focus on the frontier, tracing the massacres and ‘dispersals’ that remained central to Indigenous dispossession until at least the interwar period.⁵ And even when looking beyond colonial wars, many of these works have located the daily violence that, in part, constituted relationships between white settlers and Aboriginal people as the product of a frontier era. Some of this scholarship has reimagined the frontier concept in productively malleable and transgressive terms, describing sites of cross-cultural exchange and mobility.⁶ And the continued deployment of the ‘frontier’ to characterise spaces of violence both echoes a recurrent motif present in formal discussions of the Northern Territory until well into the twentieth century and registers the continuing massacres perpetrated there in the interwar period.⁷

In describing a frontier, though, the historian risks reproducing its logic. The frontier, as Deborah Bird Rose has pointed out, can be understood as a ‘Rolling Year Zero’, a time of conflict which is to be resolved by the emergence of a nation through the erasure or marginalisation of legible Aboriginal political life. The historical frontier was thus purposeful; its naming actively authorised an asymmetrical violence which inscribed a settler colonial

teleology on bodies and on land.⁸ As Patrick Wolfe noted in his discussion of dispossessing frontier violence in North America, relegating violence ‘behind the screen of the frontier’ locates it as the subject of regretful disavowal.⁹ Naming a frontier has an insulating effect, distancing its effects from the ongoing everyday. This is, to some extent, a problem avoided by descriptions of the frontier as a site of both war and cross-cultural exchange.¹⁰ But retaining the citation of the frontier sets extra-legal violence temporally apart from and prior to the nation, bracketing its manifestations and consigning them to a past now surpassed. Writing this history in 2017, as once again a Royal Commission sits in the Northern Territory to hear evidence of the abuse of Aboriginal children by ‘rogue’ correctional officers in youth detention centres, relegating extrajudicial violence against Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to a pre-national past, to the status of exception, appears unsustainable.¹¹

How, then, might we study the everyday violence to which Aboriginal people are and have been subject in Australia? How can we frame the mundane, the quotidian, the recurring and enduring distributions of force that are transformed but not concluded by assertions of sovereign completion? It has become almost a truism in histories of colonial violence to argue, like Jock McCulloch, that such a ‘history of violence is difficult to recover’ as the ‘people who used violence denied they did so and those who were subject to violence are often invisible in the archival record’.¹² Similarly, Florence Bernault and Jan-Georg Deutsch have attributed the disproportionate historical focus on subaltern uprisings and state practices of counter-insurgency to the ‘nature of historical sources’, which, in Africa at least, provide only ‘tenuous or isolated ... traces of individual acts and temporary outbursts’.¹³ But this does not render the study of everyday violence completely opaque. As Brett Shadle writes of Kenya, settlers in fact ‘rarely hesitated, in private or in public, to discuss their violence against Africans’. In Australia’s Northern Territory we do not find the same ‘outpouring of books, newspapers, and

personal reminiscences' that Shadle relies upon as his 'entre into the contexts and meanings of violence'.¹⁴ But nor is there a paucity of traces. Written and oral historians have documented the milieu of violence that suffused life on Northern Territory cattle stations in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁵ And settlers spoke regularly of their violence, in both critical and exculpatory forms, in newspapers and Royal Commissions, in letters and memoirs. In this chapter I explore the contours of their explication of violence by turning to scandal.

Studying scandals, Kirsten McKenzie has argued, 'allows us to trace the connection between the large politics of the state and the small politics of private life that made up the relations of colonial power'. Scandals are sites for the articulation of moralities, for discussions of norms and their transgression.¹⁶ Here we find scandals as occasions for debating the proper behaviour of the settler at a time when such norms were being reconfigured around the British Empire. Responses to scandal provide us with a revealing glimpse into vernacular understandings of violence and its unexceptional place in performing and maintaining social order. They render visible the ordinarily obscured undercurrents that ran through settler society; obscured not necessarily because they were objects of shame or guilt, but because they were so typical as to be unworthy of comment. Violence was, to so many settlers, unremarkable. It was only when forced to account for their practice that they ventured forth with discourses on the 'native mind', on Aboriginal people's comprehension and reception of physical force. But that the accusations against Cahill and by Birtles were sensationally republished, that they provoked widespread condemnation and debate, and that they were subject to official disavowal, suggests a wider disapproval for such violence. In this context, encapsulating settler violence as scandalous emphasised the singularity of abuse, instantiating distinctions between proper and transgressive settlers that distorted the colonial formation to insulate respectability from

impropriety.¹⁷ A distinction emerges between white men in the Northern Territory and those in the south, as the latter scrambled to distance themselves from the ‘outsiders’ up north.

Settlers disagreed about the utility and propriety of colonial violence, articulating justifications that countered the alleged imperial norm. This chapter traces this story through accusations made against Cahill in 1919–20, examining theories of the ‘native mind’ produced in the wake of his defence, and tracing responses to Birtles’ allegations in 1932. I argue that in settlers’ arguments about whether force could or should be deployed against Aboriginal workers, we find contests over the proper behaviour of the (usually) male settler. And we see in these debates two main positions: one that the settler should engage Aboriginal workers using his powers of persuasion only, that violence should be prohibited as unlawful or unjust; and the other that the settler should know how to practice violence, that he should understand the utility of an economy of force based on his intimate knowledge of what was termed the ‘native mind’. We find here an articulation of white manliness that was muscular but also knowing, demonstrated through his expertise in the proper regime of governing black labour.¹⁸ The vernacular knowledge of white men who drew authority from living with or alongside Aboriginal people uncannily resembled scientific conceptions then being produced by anthropologists and psychologists. Theirs was official knowledge, a recognition that troubled efforts to distance colonial violence from everyday life in the modern nation.

Flogging in paradise

Paddy Cahill had first made his way to the Northern Territory as a young man in 1883 when he was among the first to drive cattle in from Queensland. He spent much of the remainder of his life there, sometimes working as a stockman and station manager but best known as one of

the most successful buffalo hunters of the Top End. Shooting buffalo was a trade romanticised and celebrated for its wildness and masculinity—its performance of white mastery—and Cahill became an iconic settler of the Northern Territory.¹⁹ In 1909, he took up a lease at Oenpelli near the East Alligator River in Western Arnhem Land, an area to which he was no stranger. He knew the terrain and people well from his time shooting buffalo, and was possibly already incorporated into kin networks by virtue of his Yolngu son Paddy Cahill Jr (Neyingkul).²⁰ He built a homestead where he lived with his wife, Maria Pickford, and their son, Thomas Cahill, and they were joined for some years by his niece Ruby Mudford. Carl Warburton, a traveller who visited in 1921, described the homestead as a ‘large, rambling place covered with bright, flowering creepers, and surrounded by wonderful mango and other tropical fruit-trees’, and including a substantial library. To the *Northern Territory Times*, it was a ‘veritable paradise’.²¹

At Oenpelli, Cahill was a part—albeit an intruding part—of the Gunwinjgu community, employing a number of senior men and providing food, tobacco and medical assistance. Together they planted gardens of fruits and vegetables and sowed a range of cash crops, none of which was commercially sustainable at such a distance from markets. His one potentially commercially successful endeavour was in dairying, but the station more realistically was only able to produce for sustenance, an endeavour that itself was only financially sustainable so long as Cahill had access to unpaid and intensive Aboriginal labour.²² Between June and August of 1912 he hosted an extended visit from the anthropologist and then Chief Protector of Aboriginals Baldwin Spencer, with whom he was to become a frequent correspondent. Spencer was sufficiently impressed to recommend that Oenpelli be made an Aboriginal Reserve and Cahill a Protector of Aboriginals with the responsibility of training Aboriginal people in pastoralism and agriculture.²³

Though he was implicated in a number of massacres or incidents of violence in his earlier years in the Territory, by the time he stopped at Oenpelli Cahill was celebrated by other white settlers for his treatment of Aboriginal people.²⁴ Elsie Masson, a friend of Spencer's and an *au pair* in the Administrator of the Northern Territory John Gilruth's house in Darwin in 1913–14, described him as 'beginning in the right way ... the secret of Paddy Cahill's success lies in his unbounded influence over the natives and in his wonderful sympathy with their customs and beliefs'. And 'there is never a tinge of insolence on the part of the blacks. You feel that here they have found a true friend and protector'.²⁵ Gilruth agreed that at Oenpelli he had witnessed Aboriginal people 'becoming gradually acquainted with the best side of the white man's supremacy and discipline' and noted that 'no one knows the native more thoroughly ... nor views him more sympathetically' than Cahill.²⁶ This was also a popular view. An article in the *Adelaide Observer* claimed in 1919 that '[n]o one is better qualified to dilate upon the subject of the native than is Mr Cahill', and when he died in 1923 he was remembered in the *Northern Territory Times* as having 'understood the abos. probably as well as any man who ever set foot in the Northern Territory'. Cahill was, for settlers, a man whose approach to Aboriginal people should be emulated.²⁷

It therefore marked a spectacular, albeit fleeting, fall when at the Royal Commission he was called to account for the practice of punitive flogging at Oenpelli. The Royal Commission, presided over by Justice Norman Ewing, had been called to inquire into the administration of the Territory after the so-called 'Darwin Rebellion' of 1918 had prompted Gilruth's retreat to Melbourne.²⁸ Identifying Cahill as an ally of Gilruth, the Commission examined three incidents at Oenpelli, two perpetrated by Paddy and one by his son Thomas, questioning Cahill repeatedly as to whether his flogging constituted 'proper treatment' of Aboriginal people, taking an interest in violence as a sign of maladministration.²⁹

Flogging had been characterised as distasteful and degrading, at least in the case of white adult subjects, across the British Empire since the 1830s.³⁰ A century later, the turn against flogging had become even more strident. Martin Weiner has argued that in the early twentieth century the Colonial Office increasingly practiced an interventionist approach to the Empire and the Dominions in the interests of ‘justice between the races’, an approach influenced by colonial labour standards instituted by the then newly founded International Labour Organisation and the League of Nations.³¹ Reports of flogging tended to be the subject of scandal. The Oenpelli incidents, reported in newspapers around Australia, were no exception.³²

The first had taken place around 1912, when two 14-year-old Aboriginal workers, Butcher and Jimmy Ah You, escaped from the station. They were recaptured and brought back, at which point Cahill ordered one to tie up the other and thrash him with either a riding whip or a chain. When he finished, the boy who had been flogged was ordered to tie up his comrade and flog him in turn.³³ This was effective, Cahill declared, in preventing any further absconders. Questioned at the Royal Commission as to whether this punishment was an act of hardship or cruelty, Baldwin Spencer declared: ‘I think it shows great knowledge of native customs. It would appeal to the natives, and to the natives concerned. I would not object to that at all. ... That particular case showed Cahill’s knowledge of native customs, and probably it was the best thing he could have done.’³⁴ Violence, in other words, was a form of communication consonant with Aboriginal understanding, a way of conveying the message of white mastery. Asked at the Royal Commission if he wanted ‘to be Pooh Bah of Oenpelli’ Cahill responded, ‘Yes; that was quite right. I wished to have power over the natives.’³⁵ That power, he argued, must be capable of physical demonstration. As he wrote to Spencer in 1915: ‘If I had power to imprison

these chaps, for a little time, it would soon make them look foolish and take all the flashness out of them.’³⁶ This was physical force that performed and reconstituted a social order.

It was a moment of Aboriginal resistance to this order that provoked the other incident that occupied much of the Royal Commission’s time with Cahill. One evening in 1917, an Aboriginal man named Romula—who had worked for Cahill for some 25 years and who Masson had described as a ‘faithful black henchman’—laced butter in the homestead with strychnine.³⁷ The following morning, after breakfast, Mrs Cahill, the two Aboriginal kitchen-staff Marealmark and Topsy, a non-Aboriginal assistant Tom O’Brien and the Cahills’ dog were all stricken, though emetics saved the human sufferers. Cahill described setting off in a righteous rage to arrest Nulwoyo and Nipper, who he immediately blamed for the poison. Nulwoyo blamed Romula for putting the strychnine in the butter, so Cahill ‘at once got a chain and padlock and arrested Romula’. In his official correspondence, Cahill wrote, ‘I was almost mad at the time, and I do not rightly know what I did to Romula while putting the chain on him. You can imagine my feelings.’ In a private letter to Spencer, Cahill wrote that he ‘doubled up the chain and struck him on the head very hard; knocking him down. I at once fastened the chain on his neck and tied him up.’³⁸ Cahill then called to Ah You to come for treatment, as he too had been given bread and butter for breakfast. On being told that Ah You had buried the food rather than eating it, Cahill gave him ‘two or three good hits on the head and back, and chained him up’, before freeing him the next day after finding that while he might have been aware of the poisoning in advance, Ah You was not himself involved as a perpetrator.³⁹

This poisoning incident suggests that while Cahill had been celebrated by Northern Territory whites, for some Aboriginal people he was a less likable figure. Nipper, who Cahill identified as the ringleader, was an owner of the land on which Oenpelli was located, and carried himself

as a Gunwinjgu leader. Cahill complained to Spencer: ‘Nipper done as he liked among the other natives, ... there was no disputing his authority. ... I blame this man for all the trouble.’ The poisoning took place, Cahill wrote, after a meeting where the Aboriginal men had all agreed on the injustice of Cahill’s rules and decided collectively to poison him.⁴⁰ His narration suggests that an Aboriginal moral economy had been transgressed, that his authority had, for many Gunwinjgu men at least, become intolerably unlawful. The ever-fluctuating relationship between settler and Indigenous authorities constituted a fluid station environment in which struggles to impress meaning were enmeshed in a complex dialectic of force and interpretation.

Having identified the individuals personally responsible, Cahill gathered the men of Oenpelli together and asked them what had caused the unrest. They claimed, he reported, the problem stemmed from his ‘order that no fighting was allowed on the Station, and no man was to beat his [wife]. Any rows at the camp were to be refered [sic] to me and I would fix up matters.’ Romula’s personal disaffection stemmed from Cahill’s having given him ‘a good talking too’ [sic] after he beat his wife a week before the poisoning, telling ‘him that I would send him to gaol if he ever did such a thing again’. As Cahill told the Royal Commission, ‘I had stopped the natives hammering their wives. That is the whole of the trouble at Oenpelli.’⁴¹ Violence, in Cahill’s account, was an essential part of Aboriginal life, a privileged mode of instituting gendered authority and subordination, of producing and maintaining order. It was normalised and naturalised: it may be unlawful under settler law, but its abolition could not be countenanced.

Cahill wrote in his annual report for 1919, also published in the *Northern Territory Times*, that the problem had been one of interpretation. His prohibition of ‘hammering’ wives had led men to ‘the impression that their women were to be their bosses’, a conclusion of which Cahill

quickly disabused them. To resolve the situation he reinstated the right of Aboriginal men to beat their wives but asserted his own dominion: when Aboriginal husbands found their wives had become 'sulky or jealous' they were to bring them to Cahill who would arbitrate the dispute, either settling the matter with words of admonishment or authorising the 'husband [to] take a piece of leather, and give her a few strokes'. This, Cahill wrote, had settled the matter, sacrificing Aboriginal women's bodies in the interests of colonial order.⁴² Cahill's reasoned assertion of knowledge, obscuring the heightened emotions that attended his anguished attack on Romula, inscribed his violence as orderly and authoritative. He entrenched a hierarchy of force, articulating and naturalising violence inflicted by Aboriginal husbands on their wives but insinuating himself into an Aboriginal order by positioning himself at the apex of sovereign violence and arrogating the power to command beatings.

The gender order Cahill described was his model for a customary economy of violence that he insisted he understood as a result of long and intimate relationships with Aboriginal people. Just as husbands possessed dominion over wives, white men possessed dominion over 'natives'. And this dominion could best be manifested through performative violence that was naturalised as a part of Aboriginal life. As Paddy's son Tom declared in 1921, 'I have associated with men we would term murderers ... and found them apparently fine fellows. ... But why judge them from our standards?'⁴³ According to Aboriginal standards as he described them, violence was a part of the everyday, a functional way of regulating relationships and maintaining order. As Bernault has argued in a different context, in constituting the native customary as a space of violence, this 'doctrine naturalised, traditionalised and, to a large extent, patronised physical violence as a marker of racial difference'.⁴⁴ And it effected a diffuse distribution of sovereignty, empowering settlers to mete out force summarily, governing their

labour according to their own common sense calculations based on intimate knowledge of the 'native mind'.

Arrested development

In operationalising Aboriginal thought as his rationalisation for violence, Cahill participated in a debate on the distinction between the 'primitive' and the 'civilised' that embroiled settlers and travellers alongside anthropologists and psychologists. The line between scientific and vernacular knowledge at this time was blurred and porous. The early twentieth century marked the last years of an era in which 'the accounts of travellers, sailors, [and] missionaries', alongside pastoralists, police and other men on the spot were authoritative not as a result of their professional training but instead by virtue of their extended periods in intimate contact with people they named 'primitive'.⁴⁵ As Baldwin Spencer's career demonstrates, scientific knowledge drew much of its authority from its proximity to the vernacular: his key collaborator was the central Australian telegraph station master Frank Gillen.⁴⁶ In their anthropological texts, Spencer and Gillen referred regularly to the 'native mind', noting that '[i]n many respects the mind of the Australian native is like that of a child amongst ourselves'. Cahill understood the 'mentality of the Australian black' through a similar analogy. 'They have', Cahill told Warburton, 'the minds of children'.⁴⁷ Others in the Northern Territory shared this view, and it was becoming the norm across much of Australia. When the Melbourne newspaper the *Argus* editorialised in 1929 on the problem of 'people who have never dealt with natives' being 'thoroughly incompetent to deal with native problems' they located this incompetence in such individuals' persistence 'in regarding the native mind as adult instead of hopelessly infantile'.⁴⁸

By the late-1920s, the 'native mind' had become a major subject of investigation in the Northern Territory. Warwick Anderson has described the extraordinary scenes at Hermannsburg in central Australia, when in 1929 no fewer than three anthropological expeditions visited the Lutheran mission to assess 'primitive' psychology. The Arrernte people, on whose land the mission sat, had been subjects of Spencer and Gillen's research in the late nineteenth century and had continued to be subjects of intensive research since.⁴⁹ The neurologist Henry Kenneth Fry, a member of the Adelaide University anthropological expedition, performed a series of psychological tests on mostly listless and starving research subjects and concluded that 'their minds in spite of their primitive state of culture are cast in the same mould as our own'. In his conception, Aboriginal people had an underdeveloped mentality akin to an adolescent white man.⁵⁰ The University of Hawai'i psychologist and former Melbourne schoolteacher Stanley Porteous, funded by a grant from the Australian National Research Council, also likened the Aboriginal mentality to that of a white youth.⁵¹ Based on his research at Hermannsburg and in the course of another expedition to north-west Australia, he concluded that the physical brain capacity of an Aboriginal person was roughly equivalent to that of a thirteen-year-old white schoolboy, noting that other tests revealed that Aboriginal adults possessed a lower 'average mental age' of approximately twelve years (in the case of the Porteous maze test), or under six (in an 'auditory rote memory' test).⁵²

Considering the 'native mind' as equivalent to that of a white child was to have implications for the institution of corporal punishment. Paul Ocoock has argued that in Kenya at this time, white settlers argued that Africans were 'mentally underdeveloped and therefore must be punished like children'; since corporal punishment was deployed against the young in British juvenile justice and schooling it became an essential pedagogical tool available to settlers seeking to punish black workers.⁵³ But in Australia both amateurs and professionals conceived

of the 'native mind' as more than simply 'childlike', understanding it also as conditioned by what they came to consider a normative system of laws and customs within which violence was an active and essential social institution.

Following Porteous' central Australian research, the University of Hawai'i offered a fellowship to enable an Australian fieldworker to train under him in methods of racial psychological research. Nominated by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Ralph Piddington took up this position and, in Hawai'i, collected some of the comparative data that informed Porteous' book.⁵⁴ In 1931, he and his wife Marjorie followed in Porteous' footsteps and visited missions in north-west Australia to perform similar tests of mental capacity. Despite their conclusion that 'such tests ... are not suitable for application to aborigines who have had no schooling' and produced 'quantitative results ... of little value', Porteous used their data to conclude that while Aboriginal children developed much like white children, their mental development slowed, or ceased, around the age of ten.⁵⁵

The Reverend Theodore Webb, a Methodist missionary at Milingimbi in Arnhem Land, was to clarify this position in 1944. While it is 'true', he wrote, that the 'race mind of the aboriginal is childlike', it was distinct from the 'mind of a normal child [which] is ever expanding, developing, and absorbing fresh truth'. The Aboriginal 'race mind', by contrast, 'up to the point of its arrested development is simply crammed with a mass of beliefs and conceptions which are extremely difficult to eradicate or go beyond because of mental stagnation'. It was both full and 'static', and would remain neither developed nor developing.⁵⁶ Though 'childlike', this was not the mind of a child. Instead, it was the mind of a person who had emerged in what white thinkers understood as a fundamentally different Aboriginal community. It was for this reason that Cahill believed Aboriginal adults could become modern thinkers if 'only' he could

‘Get ’em young.’ Malcolm Ellis, the journalist who drove with Birtles from Sydney to Darwin in 1924, wrote that ‘generations of experience ... have tended to lead native thought ... out of the realm which most white people understand’.⁵⁷ Their ‘mass of beliefs and conceptions’ could only be comprehended by describing the native mind in a register of presence rather than absence, outlining a system of laws and customs within which physical violence was crucial.

The French anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl described what he termed ‘ordeals’, in which an Aboriginal man who had injured another in some form of transgression must himself in turn submit to injury, as central to Aboriginal culture. The offender here was not so much punished as he was compelled to subject himself to an ‘ordeal according to rule’. This ceremonial ritual, in which a restoration of lawful order followed as response to a transgression, was ‘indispensable’; it was an ‘expiation’.⁵⁸ Spencer agreed that corporeal violence must follow the transgression of custom to restore order and repair the well-being of the group.⁵⁹ Violence, in other words, was positioned by scientists as an essential element of the social institutions of Aboriginal society. It was a form of communication, of subjectivation, and of social order; its function could not be denied.⁶⁰ For both amateurs and professionals, this violence was interpreted through a conception of the ‘native mind’ that was contradictorily both ‘undeveloped’ and in a state of ‘arrested development’. As Claire Lowrie and Julia Martínez have demonstrated, for white women in Darwin at this time to treat Aboriginal men as childlike was to defuse their sexuality and power, rendering them appropriate domestic servants.⁶¹ For the white men who supervised their pastoral or agricultural work, as well as for anthropologists and psychologists, it emphasised Aboriginal men as both agents and recipients of violence. This manner of objectifying the ‘native mind’ as a product of ‘native culture’ articulated racialised difference, naturalising the ‘native’ body as both subject and object of violence.

On the need for unnecessary force

On 30 December 1931, Francis Birtles announced to the press that he was preparing a dossier of complaints regarding the brutal treatment of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, alleging ‘[w]holesale trafficking’ of women, ‘brutal assaults and murders by police and other white people, ... prominent men mixed up in an opium ring, which supplies the drug to natives, [and] black labour enslaved by means of methylated spirits, overproof rum and opium’.⁶² Details of these would be provided, he declared, in a statement he was preparing for the Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales to be passed on to the Federal Government.⁶³ The Minister declared he would investigate if further details were provided, and over the following weeks Birtles’ claims were repeated in newspapers across the country.⁶⁴

Birtles was a self-styled overlander and explorer, a celebrity best known for cycling around Australia several times, then crossing the continent in multiple directions in a motor car, before becoming the first person to drive from London to Melbourne in 1928.⁶⁵ Publicising his exploits through syndicated newspaper reports, books and films, Birtles enacted what Georgine Clarsen has described as a peculiarly settler colonial form of travel and mobility.⁶⁶ He was described in the Melbourne newspaper the *Argus* as a model white settler, a ‘typical Saxon, fair-skinned, fair-haired, blue-eyed, and emotionless. He is the personification of the spirit of adventure’. And he was not always renowned for his care for Aboriginal people, declaring in 1910 that ‘I had several brushes with them. ... I had two repeating rifles. Oh yes, I used them often’. As the *Argus* put it: ‘The blacks and Birtles are not friends.’⁶⁷ Whether true or not, such stories illustrated both the harshness and Birtles’ hard-fought domination of the country over which he moved. His shift after 1912 to the characteristic twentieth-century performance of driving a car—a symbol of modern technological mastery—through a Northern Territory

populated by allegedly pre-modern Aboriginal people, further entrenched his representation as an archetype of knowing and capable whiteness, winning the land through feats of exploration.⁶⁸

His accusations were given particular prominence by the **Labor-affiliated papers**, including *The Railroad*, the official newspaper of the Australian Railways Union. In a well-illustrated double page spread, Birtles presented moving stories of abuse. He wrote of Aboriginal children who had accidentally knocked over a pail of milk being ‘thrashed unmercifully with a pailing’ and of their mother being thrashed with chain and padlock. When that woman escaped the station with her children overnight, he wrote, she was chased and caught, thrashed and then tied to a horse, forcing her to run or be dragged back to the homestead. There she was beaten once more, manacled with government-issued handcuffs and chained around the ankles, and fastened to a post in the harness room. Birtles also wrote of driving a police constable to a cattle station where they found an Aboriginal man handcuffed around a veranda post at the homestead. At ‘the nearby kitchen door ... a white man [was] maliciously grinning at the captive. Without saying a word, the constable walked up, punched and kicked the helpless aboriginal, maltreated him until the victim, saying “Please boss,” slid down, a huddled-up mass to the earthen floor.’ Another man was ‘thrashed to endurance point’ for ‘cheeking the boss’.⁶⁹ The article detailed several other stories of brutality, each portraying the horrors of station life and many alluding to the officially sanctioned nature of that violence, whether perpetrated by a police constable or abetted by the use of police handcuffs.

These affecting stories—presenting the abuse of Aboriginal bodies in detailed accounts that indicate precisely who was at fault—spoke authoritatively for the sufferings of the wronged, engendering moral concern and action for those in need of aid.⁷⁰ There were clear villains in

Birtles' stories, and in clearly portraying the injustice of violence suffered by innocent children, protective mothers, and persecuted men he invited readers to identify Aboriginal victims as objects of both sympathy and pity. His humanitarian narrative drew on the specific repertoire of antislavery that Fiona Paisley has argued was accruing intensifying force across the British Empire in the years preceding the 1933 Centenary of Emancipation.⁷¹ And Birtles' accusations of slavery were supported in a widely circulated article published in *The World* titled 'Aborigines On Cattle Stations are in Slavery', which detailed an interview with Ralph Piddington. Piddington, whose mother Marion had been a founding member of the Racial Hygiene Association—to whom Birtles' had submitted his allegations—and remained a correspondent with the group, backed Birtles' claims of slavery, trafficking and flogging. He demanded that an inquiry be 'conducted by persons who understand the native mentality and are known and trusted by the natives'. And, 'knowing something of the native mind', he described this system of violence as 'evil in Northern Australia'.⁷²

Some northern settlers denied the veracity of Birtles' and Piddington's claims, ridiculing Birtles' capacity as an overlander while the **Minister** for Home Affairs declared his accusations unsubstantiated.⁷³ But many others instead accepted their veracity but refused to condemn such practices as 'evil' or 'atrocities'. Instead, they wrote letters or articles for newspapers around the country, claiming authority based on their intimate knowledge of Aboriginal people to explain the utility, or perhaps the necessity, of this violence. One former resident of the Northern Territory who had since moved to New South Wales, C. Graham, wrote in March to the Minister:

I have been up till recently for several years a resident of the Northern Territory and can certify that a lot of unnecessary ill-treatment and cruelty is meted out to the natives and immoral use is made of the native women by white men. But I also maintain that

natives need rather harsh and drastic treatment to keep them under control, otherwise the Northern Territory would not be safe for the white race, white women especially.⁷⁴ Beatings and sexual violence, Graham thus argued, were necessary to maintain social order, articulating a racialised logic of gendered sacrifice and security. This was violence that functioned as both communicative and performative, constituting the white male settler as sovereign, possessing and practicing a right to decide when and how to enact force on others. And that force was justified by reference to what the ‘natives need’. This was a view articulated by a number of letter-writers on a similar basis. Charles Gaunt, an old stockman who in earlier years had travelled extensively across the British Empire, wrote to the *Northern Standard* to note that the ‘general run of Territorians’ would respond to Birtles by cautioning him of the ‘weakness of being too lenient’. A settler would, by treating an Aboriginal person ‘as an equal’, betray ‘his ignorance in native matters’.⁷⁵

Similarly, the pastoralist Robert Macintyre wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* to complain about reports of ‘harsh treatment’ that ‘emanate from people who are non-residents in the north, and have never worked amongst the natives for any length of time’. It was not, he declared, harsh treatment that caused problems, but rather those non-residents and their defective understanding of the proper relations between white and black. ‘In my experience’, he went on, those:

sorts of people are the main cause of the troubles amongst the natives in the north, and I think station managers and Northern Territory police will bear me out in this. As a rule they treat the native as if he were a white man, and proceed to spoil them in every way possible. The native really considers them a joke, and proceeds to play them for all he can get. If these well-meaning people only worked amongst the natives, for, say,

twelve months, they might wake up and find that the permanent resident after all does understand the native mind.⁷⁶

Just as anthropologists of the same era would argue, the ‘native mind’ was knowable only by those who spent extended periods of time among Aboriginal people. But for the manly settler, this knowledge was represented as inciting a violence that was necessary in creating a society in which Aboriginal people would work. Permanent residents of the Territory, Macintyre wrote, ‘are considerably more respected by the aborigines than the casual visitors, most of whom the natives sum up as “plurry fools”’. Aboriginal people on stations ‘live quite contentedly under the supervision of the police and station managers. These men know their jobs, and, left alone, do it well.’⁷⁷

These letters do not detail violence explicitly but instead disclose a constellation of euphemisms which were understood by a northern settler community ‘on the basis of a fund of assumed knowledge’.⁷⁸ Their letters detail their iteration of settler common sense, articulating an economy of force based on knowledge of a ‘native mind’ that emerges here as an alibi for violence, a way of both legitimising force and displacing responsibility for it onto the nature of ‘native’ peoples.⁷⁹ For these protagonists, to become a proper settler was to acquire knowledge and thus to know when, and how, to perform violence. This force was articulated as necessary to order, to subjugate Aboriginal people, and to make them work. While a paucity of violence would disturb this order, too much force would have similar effect. As the explorer and writer Charles Conigrave declared, the ‘northern blackfellow is a pretty sophisticated individual these days, and it is wrong to suggest that a native would remain working for a buffalo hunter or any other employer who did not ... [treat him as] he was entitled to’.⁸⁰ These apologists for colonial violence argued that the white men of most Northern Territory stations

had found the right balance. They had created a situation where, as Macintyre argued, on ‘practically all stations peace and contentment remains’.⁸¹

Northern settler myths of peace and contentment were a counterpoint to southern and metropolitan fantasies of normalised goodwill that framed allegations of abuse as scandalous, transgressive and anomalous. But these moments instead disrupt the boundaries drawn between force and goodwill. The violence that was the stuff of scandal on the national stage was less evidence of aberrant breaches than it was a window into ingrained and endemic habits of rule.⁸² In these everyday instances we find functional violence that would discipline labour; though contingent and often rash or disorderly it was purposeful and justified by a conception of the ‘native mind’ that licensed, or beseeched, violence against the ‘native’ body. This was the official and scientific knowledge that underpinned the Australian national project of performing social order and claiming the Northern Territory for White Australia, a project from which southern and metropolitan critics would not resile. Though violence itself was scandalous, the knowledge its apologists produced retained legitimacy, even as mention of its implications was resisted by those who articulated their desire for a nation based on goodwill through a web of disavowal and self-justification.

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² David Lloyd George, ‘Opening Speech’, in *Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India: Summary of Proceedings and Documents* (London: Cmd. 1474, 1921), 15.

³ Matthew Carotenuto and Brett Shadle, 'Introduction: Toward a History of Violence in Colonial Kenya', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 45, no. 1 (2012): 4; Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

⁴ Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue: The Australian–Pacific Indentured Labour Trade* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 11.

⁵ See, for example, Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War* (Sydney: New South, 2013).

⁶ See, for example, Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous People and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

⁷ See, for example, C.L.A. Abbott, *Australia's Frontier Province* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1950).

⁸ Deborah Bird Rose, 'Hard Times: An Australian Study', in *Quicksands: Foundational Histories in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Klaus Neumann, Nicholas Thomas, and Hilary Ericksen (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999), 6; Julie Evans, 'Where Lawlessness is Law: The Settler-Colonial Frontier as a Legal Space of Violence', *Australian Feminist Law Review* 30 (2009).

⁹ Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 391–2.

¹⁰ Amanda Nettelbeck, 'Proximate Strangers and Familiar Antagonists: Violence on an Intimate Frontier', *Australian Historical Studies* 47 (2016): 210.

¹¹ Some instances of this violence were scandalously screened on national television in July 2016. Caro Meldrum-Hanna, Mary Fallon, Elise Worthington, 'Australia's Shame', *Four Corners*, ABC TV, 25 July 2016,

<<http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2016/07/25/4504895.htm>>. A Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory was announced the

morning after the report was screened, and enacted hearings between October 2016 and June 2017. Its final report, tabled in Parliament in November 2017, is exemplary in its scathing criticism of abuses and its simultaneous refusal to reject the necessity of the incarceration of, and use of force against, Indigenous children. *Report of the Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory* (Canberra: Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, 2017).

¹² Jock McCulloch, 'Empire and Violence, 1900–1939', in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 224.

¹³ Florence Bernault and Jan-Georg Deutsch, 'Control and Excess: Histories of Violence in Africa', *Africa* 85, no. 3 (2015): 385.

¹⁴ Brett Shadle, 'Settlers, Africans, and Inter-Personal Violence in Kenya, ca.1900–1920s', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 45, no. 1 (2012): 63.

¹⁵ Ann McGrath, *Born in the Cattle: Aborigines in Cattle Country* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 106–15; Deborah Bird Rose, *Hidden Histories: Black Stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1991), 24; Transcript of Interview with Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, April 1988, 4–5, Northern Territory Archives Service: NTRS 226, TS 501.

¹⁶ Kirsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 5, 9.

¹⁷ James Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 16; Nicholas Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 29–30. On other interwar scandals relating to violence against Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, see Fiona Paisley, 'Race Hysteria,

Darwin 1938', *Australian Feminist Studies* 16 (2001); Mark Finnane and Fiona Paisley, 'Police Violence and the Limits of Law on a Late Colonial Frontier: The "Borrooloola Case" in 1930s Australia', *Law and History Review* 28, no. 1 (2010).

¹⁸ See generally Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

¹⁹ A.B. (Banjo) Paterson, 'The Cycloon, Paddy Cahill and the G.R.', in *North of the Ten Commandments: A Collection of Northern Territory Literature*, ed. David Heaton (Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 214. See John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

²⁰ John Mulvaney, *Paddy Cahill of Oenpelli* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 37.

²¹ Carl Warburton, *Buffaloes* (Sydney: Consolidated Press, 1944), 119–20; 'Oenpelli: A Promising Country', *Northern Territory Times*, 30 March 1916, 15.

²² 'News & Notes', *Northern Territory Times*, 25 March 1915, 16; 'News & Notes', *Northern Territory Times*, 1 July 1915, 8.

²³ Cahill was appointed as Protector in August 1912, but the Reserve [Protector and Reserve are legal terms here and should be capitalised I think] was not formally proclaimed until 1922, a few months before he departed Oenpelli. Patrick Cahill to the Acting Chief Protector of Aboriginals, Report by the Protector of Aboriginals, Aboriginal Station Oenpelli, 16 January 1920, National Archives of Australia: A1, 1930/979; Baldwin Spencer, *Wanderings in Wild Australia* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1928), vol II, 741–858.

²⁴ Mulvaney, *Paddy Cahill of Oenpelli*, 7–9.

²⁵ Elsie R. Masson, *Untamed Territory: The Northern Territory of Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1915), 102–3.

²⁶ *Northern Territory of Australia: Report of the Administrator for the Years 1915–16 and 1916–17* (Melbourne: Government Printer, Cmd Paper No 31 of 1918), 14.

²⁷ ‘The Natives of the North’, *Observer*, 22 March 1919, 2; ‘The Bushman’s Gazette’, *Northern Territory Times*, 28 April 1925, 2. For later praise for Cahill, see Ernestine Hill, *The Territory: The Classic Saga of Australia’s Far North* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1951), 372; Tony Austin, ‘“Get ’em young”: Paddy Cahill and the Oenpelli “Industrial” Reserve’, *Journal of Northern Territory History* 1 (1990): 16.

²⁸ Alan Powell, *Far Country: A Short History of the Northern Territory* (Darwin: Charles Darwin University Press, 5th ed., 2009), 115–16.

²⁹ *Royal Commission on the Northern Territory: Minutes of Evidence* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1920), 212.

³⁰ Penelope Edmonds and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, ‘“The whip is a very contagious kind of thing”: Flogging and Humanitarian Reform in Penal Australia’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 17, no. 1 (2016).

³¹ Martin Weiner, *An Empire on Trial: Race, Murder and Justice under British Rule, 1870–1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18; David M. Anderson, ‘Punishment, Race and “The Raw Native”: Settler Society and Kenya’s Flogging Scandals, 1895–1930’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37, no. 3 (2011); Steven Pierce, ‘Punishment and the Political Body: Flogging and Colonialism in Northern Nigeria’, in *Discipline and the Other Body: Correction, Corporeality, Colonialism*, ed. Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

³² See, for example, ‘The Territory Inquiry. Further Revelations’, *Age*, 20 December 1919, 13; ‘Darwin Inquiry. Aborigines Sometimes Flogged’, *Daily Standard*, 20 December 1919, 4; ‘Darwin Scandals. The Flogging Episode’, *Advertiser*, 21 February 1920, 9.

³³ *Royal Commission on the Northern Territory*, 135, 152.

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- ³⁴ *Royal Commission on the Northern Territory* 350.
- ³⁵ *Royal Commission on the Northern Territory*, 145
- ³⁶ Cahill to Spencer, 11 March 1915 in Mulvaney, *Paddy Cahill of Oenpelli*, 106.
- ³⁷ Masson, *Untamed Territory*, 104.
- ³⁸ Cahill to H.E. Carey, 25 January 1917, NAA: A3, NT1917/427. Cahill to Spencer, 10 October 1917 in Mulvaney, *Paddy Cahill of Oenpelli*, 119.
- ³⁹ *Royal Commission on the Northern Territory*, 135.
- ⁴⁰ Cahill to Spencer, 10 October 1917 in Mulvaney, *Paddy Cahill of Oenpelli*, 120. See Sally K. May, *Collecting Cultures: Myth, Politics, and Collaboration in the 1948 Arnhem Land Expedition* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010), 170–4.
- ⁴¹ Cahill to Spencer, 10 October 1917 in Mulvaney, *Paddy Cahill of Oenpelli*, 120–1; *Royal Commission on the Northern Territory*, 145.
- ⁴² ‘Oenpelli Blacks. Gins Get a Few Strokes’, *Northern Territory Times*, 3 January 1920, 8.
- ⁴³ ‘Land of Promise’, *Observer*, 19 March 1921, 38.
- ⁴⁴ Florence Bernault, ‘The Shadow of Rule: Colonial Power and Modern Punishment in Africa’, in *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, ed. Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 81.
- ⁴⁵ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think (Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures)* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926), 30; George W. Stocking, *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology, 1888–1951* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 122–3.
- ⁴⁶ See John Mulvaney, Howard Morphy and Alison Petch, eds, ‘My Dear Spencer’: *The Letters of F.J. Gillen to Baldwin Spencer* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997); John Mulvaney with Alison Petch and Howard Morphy, eds, *From the Frontier: Outback Letters to Baldwin Spencer* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000). Compare with Martin Nakata, who argues that

quasi-scientific research at the turn of the twentieth century was authoritative for being found ‘in the vicinity of science’. Martin Nakata, *Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007), 195.

⁴⁷ Baldwin Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1899), 510; Warburton, *Buffaloes*, 122.

⁴⁸ ‘The Aborigine’, *Argus*, 21 January 1929, 6. For similar comments made in the Northern Territory see C. Price Conigrave, *North Australia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), 214.

Masson argued that the ‘blackfellow’s mind is that of an absolutely uneducated intelligent child’, implicitly rejecting Lévy-Bruhl’s argument that primitive minds were not undeveloped or childlike but were instead utterly different to European ones. Bronislaw Malinowski, who Masson met in 1916 and married in 1919, and who praised her book as ‘synthetic’, concurred with her position in his sharp critique of Lévy-Bruhl, arguing that primitive thought ought to be understood as akin to a ‘rudimentary stage’ in the development of ‘modern’ European thought. Masson, *An Untamed Territory*, 154; Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, 43–4, 105–38; Masson to Malinowski, 11 June 1916, in *The Story of a Marriage: The Letters of Bronislaw Malinowski and Elsie Masson, Volume I, 1916–20*, ed. Helena Wayne (London: Routledge, 1995), 2; Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion, and Other Essays* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1948), 8–9, 17.

⁴⁹ Warwick Anderson, ‘Hermannsburg, 1929: Turning Aboriginal “Primitives” into Modern Psychological Subjects’, *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences* 50, no. 2 (2014): 133. The ‘native mind’ was also an object of contested scientific knowledge elsewhere in the British Empire. See Diana Jeater, *Law, Language, and Science: The Invention of the ‘Native Mind’ in Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1930* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2006), 215–32.

⁵⁰ Anderson, ‘Hermannsburg’, 134–5.

⁵¹ Anderson, ‘Hermannsburg’, 137. The third expedition to Hermannsburg in 1929 was that of the Hungarian psychoanalyst Géza Róheim, who sought to test Sigmund Freud’s theories of totem and taboo (Anderson, ‘Hermannsburg’, 139–42).

⁵² Stanley D. Porteous, *The Psychology of a Primitive People: A Study of the Australian Aborigine* (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1931), 333, 362, 384.

⁵³ Paul Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age: The Politics of Manhood in Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017), 120; Mark Finnane, *Punishment in Australian Society* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), 113.

⁵⁴ Porteous, *The Psychology of a Primitive People*, x, 400–1.

⁵⁵ Marjorie Piddington and Ralph Piddington, ‘Report of Field Work in North-Western Australia’, *Oceania* 2, no. 3 (1932): 355–6, 358; S.D. Porteous, ‘Mentality of Australian Aborigines’, *Oceania* 3, no. 3 (1933): 31–2. See also Erik Linstrum, *Ruling Minds: Psychology in the British Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 99–109.

⁵⁶ T.T. Webb, *From Spears to Spades* (Melbourne: The Book Depot, 1944), 53.

⁵⁷ Warburton, *Buffaloes*, 125; M.H. Ellis, *The Long Lead: Across Australia by Motor-Car* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1927), 241.

⁵⁸ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923), 254, 256–7.

⁵⁹ Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 15, 68, 100, 128.

⁶⁰ For Ted Strehlow, an anthropologist and patrol officer in the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch, such force was privileged as an ‘effective ... show of ... authority’. But this was a ‘show’ that could only be effectively performed by those who had made a ‘careful study ... of the customs and rules of the ancient native code and of their ideas of morality’. Strehlow, 17 October 1936, quoted in Tim Rowse, ‘Strehlow’s Strap: Functionalism and

Historicism in a Colonial Ethnography’, in *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, ed. Bain Attwood and John Arnold (Melbourne: La Trobe University Press, 1992), 91–2.

⁶¹ See Julia Martínez and Claire Lowrie, ‘Colonial Constructions of Masculinity: Transforming Aboriginal Australian Men into “Houseboys”’, *Gender and History* 21, no. 2 (2009).

⁶² ‘Birtles’ Charges’, *Northern Standard*, 15 January 1932, 3.

⁶³ The Racial Hygiene Association wrote to the Ministers for Home Affairs, and Health and Works, and to the Prime Minister, and resolved to encourage members to attend the annual meeting of the Association for the Protection of Native Races. See Victor Roberts and Lillie E. Goodisson to C. W. Marr, 18 January 1932 and Goodisson to Archdale Parkhill, 24 February 1932, NAA: A1, 1937/3013; Racial Hygiene Association, Minutes of Meeting, 18 January, 29 February, 29 March 1932, State Library of New South Wales: MLMSS 3838/Box 01/Item 7; Annual Report of the Association for the Protection of Native Races Presented at the Twenty-first Annual Meeting held on April 21, 1932, University of Sydney Archives: Papers of the Association for the Protection of Native Races, S55/2.

⁶⁴ See, for example, ‘Condition of Natives’, *West Australian*, 1 January 1932, 6; ‘Northern Territory. Treatment of Blacks’, *Age*, January 5, 1932, 8; ‘Aborigines in Northern Territory’, *Daily Standard*, 5 January 1932, 9. Birtles also conveyed his allegations directly to Parkhill, to whom a deputation of the Association for the Protection of Native Races put similar criticisms. Birtles to Parkhill, 7 March 1932, NAA: A1, 1937/3013; ‘Aborigines. Federal Responsibility. Mr. Parkhill Sympathetic’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 March 1932, 10.

⁶⁵ See generally Warren Brown, *Francis Birtles: Australian Adventurer* (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2012).

⁶⁶ Georgine Clarsen, ‘Pedaling Power: Bicycles, Subjectivities and Landscapes in a Settler Colonial Society’, *Mobilities* 10, no. 5 (2015): 709.

⁶⁷ ‘From West to East’, *Argus*, 15 December 1910, 6.

⁶⁸ Victoria Haskins, ‘The Smoking Buggy’, in *Off the Beaten Track: A Journey Across the Nation* (Adelaide: History Trust of South Australia, 2008); Georgine Clarsen, ‘The 1928 MacRobertson Round Australia Expedition: Colonial Adventuring in the Twentieth Century’, in *Expedition into Empire: Exploratory Journeys and the Making of the Modern World*, ed. Martin Thomas (London: Routledge, 2014), 194.

⁶⁹ Francis Birtles, ‘Black Slave Labor in Australia. Scathing Indictment of Police Methods’, *Railroad*, 10 February 1932, 12–13.

⁷⁰ Thomas W. Laqueur, ‘Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative’, in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 179–80.

⁷¹ Fiona Paisley, ‘An Echo of Black Slavery: Emancipation, Forced Labour and Australia in 1933’, *Australian Historical Studies* 45 (2014). The illustration accompanying Birtles’ claims in *The Railroad* recalled images earlier published in both Arthur Vogan’s Queensland antislavery text *The Black Police: A Story of Modern Australia* and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s classic novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Birtles’ stories in were enveloped in the ‘canonical’ antislavery narrative through references to men who flogged Aboriginal people as ‘Simon Legrees’, and to a beaten Aboriginal man as ‘Uncle Tom’. Jane Lydon, *Photography, Humanitarianism, Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 59, 63–6.

⁷² ‘Aborigines On Cattle Stations are in Slavery: Anthropologist Piddington Backs World’s Probe Demand’, *World*, 14 January 1932, 7; ‘Sensational Abo. Slavery Story’, *Daily Standard*, 15 January 1932, 15.

⁷³ The Organiser, ‘The Bagman’s Gazette’, *Northern Standard*, 26 February 1932, 3; C. Price Conigrave, Letter to the Editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 March 1932, 5; ‘Prospector Michael’, Letter to the Editor, *Northern Standard*, 12 September 1933, 8; ‘No Outrages on Blacks, Says Parkhill’, *Northern Standard*, 5 April 1932, 6.

⁷⁴ C. Graham to Sydney Gardner, 4 March 1932, NAA: A1, 1937/3013.

⁷⁵ C.E. Gaunt, 'The Territory's Defence', *Northern Standard*, 16 February 1932, 3.

⁷⁶ R. Macintyre, Letter to the Editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1932, 5.

⁷⁷ Macintyre, Letter.

⁷⁸ McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies*, 28.

⁷⁹ Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁸⁰ 'Birtles Prejudiced, says C.P. Conigrave', *Northern Standard*, 5 February 1932, 7. Birtles' moment of sympathy was brief. In his 1935 memoir he wrote that 'if the white rulers govern the black people with a slack hand, big trouble will certainly come'. Francis Birtles, *Battle Fronts of the Outback* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), 17.

⁸¹ Macintyre, Letter.

⁸² Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, 12.