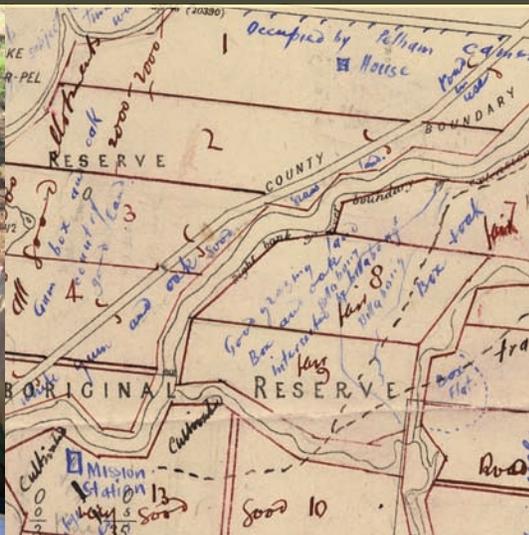
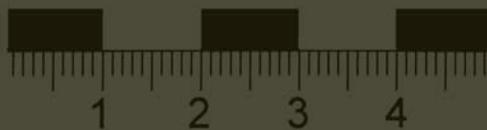




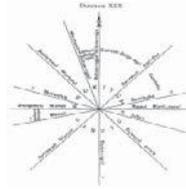
Fantastic Dreaming

The Archaeology of an Aboriginal Mission



JANE LYDON

Fantastic Dreaming



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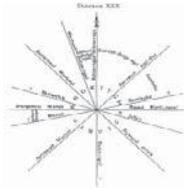
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Fantastic Dreaming

The Archaeology of an Aboriginal Mission

Jane Lydon



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For Isabel McBryde—in partial and delayed reciprocity

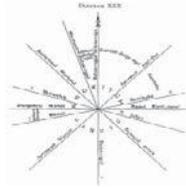
Australian Aborigines are not a primitive people but a people living in primitive conditions.

—Pastor Doug Nicholls, “Plea for Better Deal for Aborigines”

For if it is true that man is capable of everything horrible, it is also true that the horrible always engenders counterforces and that in most epochs of atrocious occurrences the great vital forces of the human soul reveal themselves: love and sacrifice, heroism in the service of conviction, and the ceaseless search for possibilities of a purer existence.

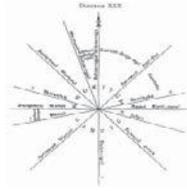
—Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The missionary F. W. Spiieseke later remembered that “it may appear like fantastic dreaming, but it seemed to us almost as if we could see in spirit, the rows of cottages, the church, the school, the fields and gardens and the poor Aboriginals flocking to hear the Word of Life.”¹

The future-oriented vision of the Moravian missionaries who founded Ebenezer in 1859 overlooked the eternal balance that was the foundation of Aboriginal life. Their “fantastic dreaming” of transformation and improvement fundamentally contrasted with the Dreaming of Aboriginal cosmology, an abiding sentient landscape created by totemic ancestors whose powers still animate people and place.

This book began as an archaeological project, aiming to explore the material and spatial dimensions of this momentous cultural encounter. Archaeology is often used as a metaphor for a past that is distant and divorced from the present. “Ruins” stand for the neglected and forgotten traces of another, alien country and its people. But the site of Ebenezer Mission in southeastern Australia has never been forgotten by Aboriginal people, descendants of the Wergaia language speakers who lived and lie buried there; today the site focuses memories about the past, as well as ideas about what the future might hold. Archaeological investigation of this place was conducted with descendants, who care about the results. This is rewarding for the researcher even as it presents difficulties of inclusion, voice, method, and interpretation.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In what follows, I am centrally concerned with cultural exchange and the potential of historical archaeology to reveal marginal, and especially Indigenous, experience. However, in telling the story of Ebenezer through its material remains, I came to realize the venerability of the Western ideas of culture and progress that governed the missionaries' agenda. It also became apparent that these ideas have continued to structure debates about Aboriginal people into the present. So in showing how certain aspects of the mission regime—namely, spatial politics and material culture—still influence policy making about Australia's Indigenous peoples, I have drawn upon the insights of disciplines such as history and anthropology and a wide range of sources, including images and interviews with the traditional owners of the Wimmera/Mallee region, comprising the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, and Jupagalk people. I have avoided overly academic or theoretical language in attempting to make this history accessible to a general audience and especially Aboriginal people. I see this as a courteous but also an ethically necessary approach.

This book is a case study, and my second about an Aboriginal reserve in Victoria. These places were important colonial "contact zones" that have sparked many histories—local, speculative, popular, and scholarly. As centers of Aboriginal life during the nineteenth century, they drew many curious whites to them; they were sites of long-term interaction between settlers and Indigenous peoples and of cultural transformation as well as of continuity. They offer compelling stories of their own, but also provide insights into broader themes and processes. I explore the nature of cross-cultural exchange at Ebenezer, a process with profound and concrete effects on the participants.

Ideas about Australian Aboriginal people are still dominated by tradition and the perceived exoticism of "remote" communities in northern Australia, although these represent only a quarter of the nation's Indigenous population. Those of the southeast, in Victoria known as Koories, were the first to be influenced by invasion and have suffered the worst effects of dispossession from country and attempts to change their culture. They have creatively accommodated these impacts, yet as a result are often considered to be inauthentic, not "real" Aboriginal people—even while such perceptions may be looked upon as irrelevant to traditional owners, who maintain a strongly felt identity and distinctive way of life. In spite of the work of a generation of theorists of material culture, who have

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demonstrated the complex role of objects within cultural exchange, this essentializing and assimilationist thinking also underpins archaeologists' neglect of evidence of Aboriginal appropriation of Western material culture, falling in between the categories of "traditional" and "historic" (that is, white settler) history. While Ebenezer is now an iconic heritage site, the urge to assimilate Australia's Indigenous people through domesticity and housing persists in current government policy.

As a white academic working with Aboriginal people, I am very aware of the sometimes incommensurable objectives of my research, destined to be measured chiefly in terms of publications, and those of the Aboriginal community, for whom such investigation might represent short-term employment, a sidelight on their family history, an interesting extracurricular entertainment, or even an inconvenient demand on their time. I am deeply grateful for the generosity and open-mindedness of the Aboriginal people who supported and participated in this project. I am especially grateful to Alan Burns, former Cultural Heritage representative at Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative, and Peter Kennedy at the Wotjobaluk Traditional Land Council, who represented these organizations during most of the project. I also thank Gail Harradine, Sandy Hodge, and the Barengi-Gadjin Land Council (BGLC) Governing Committee; the BGLC was established in 2005 as the prescribed body corporate under the Native Title Act 1993 and represents the five traditional owner groups of the Wimmera/Mallee region. I am very grateful to community participants Leon Burns, Shane Campbell, Brett Harrison, Jenny Beer, Eddie Kennedy, Susie Skurrie, Noeline Douglas, Chrissie Secombe, Matt Secombe, Kelly Britten, Nancy Harrison, and Rose Horner. For sharing their memories and views with me I thank Nancy Harrison, Rocky Harrison, Mark Dugay-Grist, Eleanor Bourke, Faye Marks, Hazel McDonald, Karen Marks, and Irene Marks. I also thank Dja Dja Wurrung elder Gary Murray for sharing his research with me.

I particularly thank the Australian Research Council, which funded the project under its Discovery scheme. I also wish to acknowledge the support of the Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies at Monash University, where I have carried out this project. Originally designed to run for three years, it doubled in length as I gave birth to two children along the way! I particularly thank Lynette Russell for her enthusiasm, generosity, and patience.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am also grateful to the State Library of Victoria for an honorary Creative Fellowship in 2004 that explored Moravian visual imagery, and to staff members Dianne Reilly, Shane Carmody, Des Cowley, Madeleine Say, Gerard Hayes, Jock Murphy, and Clare Williamson. I am grateful to Jeremy Smith, Andrew Jamieson, Jenny Dickens, Annie Muir, and Brandi Bugh at Heritage Victoria; Harry Webber, Mark Dugay-Grist, Julia Cusack, Richard Macneil, Brad Duncan, and Matthew Phelan at Aboriginal Affairs Victoria; Conservation Managers Jim Gard'ner and Tracey Avery at the National Trust of Australia (Victoria); Mrs. Chris Palmer at the Presbyterian Church of Victoria Archives; Mike Green, Melanie Raberts, and Mary Morris at Melbourne Museum; and Sebastian Gurciullo at the Public Records Office of Victoria.

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As a student at the Australian National University during the 1990s, I was fortunate to meet Professor Isabel McBryde, whose research combines rigorous archaeological investigation with skilled use of historical sources, and whose long-term interest in the social meanings of material culture, particularly in the process of exchange, anticipated more recent concerns within Australian archaeology. To this inspiring example of scholarship

has been joined her gentle but incisive encouragement. As my dedication indicates, I owe a great debt to Isabel's kindness over many years.

Archaeological fieldwork is always a team effort, and I am grateful to many who assisted in 2003 and 2006, especially Alasdair Brooks, Zvonkica Stanin, Michael Slack, Sam Wickman, Steve Brown, Ingereth Macfarlane, and Bruno David for their unstinting and expert help and unfailing good humor. For assistance in the field and lab I am also grateful to students Jeremy Ash, Selina Goldsmith, Emmeline Healey, Alex Hocking, Daniel James, Katie Kligerman, Jonathan Lushey, Mirani Lister, Julia Malloni, Fiona MacDougall, Aaron McGifford, Janine Major, Claire O'Neill, Demi Paps, Suzanne Pollock, Rose Tierney, Cherie Truman, Geoff Walton, and Sarah Whyte. Deep thanks go to our 2003 cook Enya Gannon.

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It is important to note that racist terms such as *half-caste* and *full blood* are unacceptable today. Although I reproduce these terms in historical context within quotations, and they are important expressions of contemporary ideas, I have retained quotation marks in every usage of these terms to indicate my own denial of them.

I am grateful for permission to reproduce portions of earlier publications, as follows:

Chapter 4 draws upon my "Fantastic Dreaming: Ebenezer Mission as Moravian Utopia and Wotjobaluk Responses," in *Making Space: Settler-Colonial Perspectives on Land, Place and Identity*, edited by P. Edmonds and T. Banivanua Mar (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2009) and

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Imagining the Moravian Mission: Space and Surveillance at the Former Ebenezer Mission, Victoria, South-Eastern Australia,” *Historical Archaeology* 43(1) (forthcoming 2010).

Chapter 5 draws upon an article originally published in 2005 as “Our Sense of Beauty’: Visuality, Space and Gender on Victoria’s Aboriginal Reserves, South-Eastern Australia,” *History and Anthropology* 16(2): 211–233.

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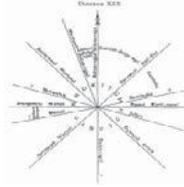
1. F. W. Spieseke, quoted in S. Robertson, *The Bell Sounds Pleasantly: Ebenezer Mission Station* (Doncaster, Victoria: Luther Rose Publications, 1992), 22.

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CHAPTER ONE
**“THEY COVET NOT MAGNIFICENT
HOUSES, HOUSHOLD-STUFF”**



In 1770, Captain Cook “discovered” Australia’s east coast and encountered Aboriginal people for the first time. In a famous and uncharacteristically romantic diary entry that has caused much subsequent debate, he mused:

From what I have seen of the Natives of New-Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon Earth, but in reality they are far more happy than we Europeans, being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary Conveniencies so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquillity which is not disturb'd by the Inequality of Condition: The Earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life, they covet not Magnificent Houses, Household-stuff, &c^a, they live in a warm and fine Climate and enjoy very wholesome Air, so that they have very little need of Clothing and this they seem to be fully sencible of, for many to whome we gave Cloth &c^a to, left it carlessly upon the Sea beach and in the woods as a thing they had no manner of use for. In short they seem'd to set no value on any thing we gave them, nor would they ever part with any thing of their own for any one article we could offer them; this in my opinion argues that they think themselves provided with all the necessaries of Life and that they have no superfluities.¹

Despite his appreciation, Cook had been instructed to make friends with the Indigenous peoples he encountered by inviting them “to Traffick”

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and by giving them presents, but this seeming Aboriginal indifference to commerce posed an unanticipated problem. Such puzzling and annoying behavior has proven difficult for whites to understand ever since. The importance of “Magnificent Houses, Houshold-stuff” to white settlers lay in their intimate association with fundamental principles of Western culture: notions of property and consumption, cultivation, rank, the organization of gender around the nuclear family, and its spatial expression through domesticity and the home. Lack of concern for these things provided an obvious target for missionaries, entrusted with the project of transforming Aboriginal people into civilized subjects, and so their inculcation became a primary technique of governance.

One hundred years after Cook’s observation, an engraving appeared in an illustrated newspaper showing the residents of an Aboriginal reserve in the colony of Victoria (known as Port Phillip until 1850) engaged in shopping. Their desire for European commodities was regarded as “evidence to some extent of the progress of civilization,” while this new state was contrasted with the condition of the “two specimens of aboriginal barbarism to be seen squatting in the foreground, content with a covering of kangaroo skins, and turning up their nose with scorn at the incomprehensible nature of the wants felt by the rising generation.”² For whites, the link between progress and consumption was self-evident, and the success of the missions was measurable through spatial order, cultivation, housing and domesticity, personal comportment, cleanliness, use of European material culture, and other visual and material practices.

Cook, of course, was wrong. Within Aboriginal tradition, material goods carried powerful social meanings, used to express identity and mediate relationships through complex forms of exchange. These Indigenous systems were misrecognized by the invaders, but “traffick” between black and white soon flourished, and Aboriginal people developed an acute awareness of the Western value of material culture in the new, cross-cultural world they were forced to live in. As invasion turned to settlement, they became participants in the Western economy, although their skills and involvement have often been obscured by a view of Aboriginal identity as traditional and exotic, marked by otherness.

This book explores the role of spatial politics and material culture in the process of missionization and traces the continuing salience of judgments about Aboriginal people’s housing and domesticity to relations



Figure 1.1. Engraving based on a photograph taken by photographer Fred Kruger, ‘Hawkers at the Aboriginal Station, Coranderrk.’ *Illustrated Australian News*, 10 Jul 1876, p. 107. (State Library of Victoria.)

between black and white in Australia. Focusing upon the archaeological investigation of Ebenezer Mission in southeastern Australia, the traditional country of the Wotjobaluk group of Wergaia language speakers, I examine how spatial organization, the consumption of Western goods, and especially the practices and bodily performances required by domesticity were deployed on missions and reserves as important methods of transforming Aboriginal people.

Evangelists concerned with Aboriginal transformation debated the relative importance of the twin goals of inculcating the gospel and the “arts of civilization,” drawing upon contemporary ideas about the potential for improvement through environment. However, missionaries’ origins within the European social order also powerfully shaped their ideals, as their attachment to material success at times undermined the contemporary opposition of sacred and secular. The innovative work of anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff applied this insight in exploring how missionaries introduced new notions of space, time, community,

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work, and personhood to the Tswana of Africa, in particular through “the shapes and connotations of built form and organized space.” However, the Comaroffs overplayed the efficacy of the concrete mission regime in transforming Indigenous values. Instead, a more nuanced approach grounded in archaeology and material evidence allows us to evaluate the effect of material structures on Indigenous subjects by charting transformation and continuity and the hybrid meanings that emerged through the cultural encounter.

Missionary attempts to settle Aboriginal people in Christian farming villages during the first half of the nineteenth century were judged to have failed. Their “failure” was regarded as evidence of Aboriginal incapacity—or else attributed to inferior methods of management. At Wybalenna, in Tasmania, archaeological investigation has revealed the tension between European managers’ goal of transforming Aboriginal people through creating a didactic material and moral environment and the Aboriginal peoples’ own objectives.

At Ebenezer Mission, founded by the Moravians in 1859, the conversion of Nathanael Pepper provided the first “missionary success among the Aborigines,” and Ebenezer became a model for Victoria’s reserve system. However, the Wergaia worldview contrasted with the Moravians’ utopian vision of transformation and uplift and the sense of progress that was central to Western thought; European observers failed to understand the social dimensions of what they perceived to be primitive Aboriginal material practices. Indigenous knowledge was place based and formed by a dynamic identification between ancestral precedent, place, and people. While responding inventively to colonization, Wergaia people maintained traditional relationships to kin and country, often invisibly resisting aspects of the missionary program through strategies of evasion and mobility.

After the mission closed in 1904, its residents remained the subject of white scientific and popular concern, and Aboriginal housing, domesticity, and the care of children continued to frame views of the “fringe” communities that formed nearby during the twentieth century. The Wergaia people’s persisting links to place and tradition were recognized in 2005 when they secured the first successful native title agreement in southeastern Australia. Today Ebenezer’s significance has only increased as the material remains of the mission focus a range of sometimes ambivalent descendant views and memories.

Ebenezer was one of the six government-managed reserves set aside for Victoria’s Aboriginal people during the second half of the nineteenth century. While some were not directly managed by missionaries, they shared fundamental goals and methods, so in discussing these places as a group I sometimes use the terms *mission* and *reserve* interchangeably, although I occasionally indicate more specific use of each term. I have focused on several aspects of the missions: first, they were intended to be environments in which the twin goals of conversion and “civilization” could be pursued. In some cases, the aim of civilization was conceived to be relatively unimportant, and missionaries focused on their Christian message. However, this was not the case with the places I review, nor, as I argue further, is it possible in practice to divide spiritual and secular goals. The missions intended to segregate the inmates from wider society, although usually with the aim of transforming them into citizens to be assimilated into mainstream society at some future time. As an institution, the mission was founded upon a perception of Indigenous peoples as being different from whites, although the apparent nature of this difference ranged from the biblical view that God has “made of one blood all nations of men” (Acts 17:26) to an increasingly biological understanding of racial difference during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The relationship between missions and imperialism has recently been questioned by historians who point out the resistance offered to missionization by many imperial officials and settlers and the critical attitude of many missionaries toward colonization.³ Nonetheless, Moravians and their British admirers acknowledged the important role missions played in pacifying Indigenous peoples and making them economically productive.⁴ Missionaries played a key part in white settlement in the Port Phillip District—both during its initial phase in the 1830s and 1840s, when humanitarians attempted to ameliorate the worst effects of invasion, and then over the second half of the nineteenth century in dealing with its longer-term effects—as I explore further. In a broader sense, Elizabeth Elbourne suggests that the humanitarian lobby at this time gave colonists a sense of moral authority and justified cultural dispossession on the grounds of uplift and redemption.

While my emphasis on the secular realm might seem to neglect the profound spiritual effects of evangelical Christianity, it is certainly not my intention to dismiss these or relegate them to a subordinate role.⁵

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However, my concern here is to explore the role of everyday material circumstances within the intercultural process of missionization, redressing the prominence given the sacred within contemporary missionary accounts and within much subsequent historiography. In addition, I seek to understand the less-known Indigenous perspective, conceiving Victoria's reserves as meeting places for people and memories over the past century and a half. While the missionaries and their work have come to be represented—rightly or wrongly—as agents of dispossession and repression, it must be acknowledged that in their own time and society they were seen as a counterforce to the evils of colonialism—embodying Auerbach's "great vital forces of the human soul."

The Arts of Civilization

It was not until several decades after the establishment of a penal colony at Sydney in 1788 that Britain's newly formed evangelical associations sent the first missionaries to work with the Indigenous inhabitants. The evangelical lobby argued that in order for colonists to atone for the damage they had done, it was important to introduce Christianity and "civilize" Aboriginal people. Their ideas about how to proceed were not fixed or confident, but uncertainly formed through a combination of theory and practical experience: contemporary ideas about progress and human difference were joined to observation of missionary achievements around the globe in seeming to offer principles for developing an experimental program for "civilizing" and Christianizing Australian Aboriginal people. One major precedent and inspiration was the example of the Moravian Church, which had been a powerful influence upon the British evangelical revival.⁶ The Moravians' fundamental commitment to the mission enterprise prompted the formation of the late eighteenth-century British societies, and many of its principles were adopted by British evangelicals.

At the turn of the eighteenth century, many subscribed to an ideal of human improvement and of inevitable progress toward civilization, grounded both in Christianity as well as Enlightenment theories. The Judaeo-Christian belief in a creator God who had made the world new formed part of a teleology with a strong sense of temporal and social movement that was specific to the Western tradition. British evangelicals drew from a range of ideas regarding human difference, notably the ideas

of several Scottish thinkers. While some, such as David Hume, believed that there were innate divisions among peoples, it was increasingly argued during the eighteenth century that climate determined social organization, and many, like James Beattie, argued that difference was simply due to the effect of environment.⁷ This emphasis on a shared origin (monogenism) was also fundamental to Christian teaching. While some were influenced by the biblical account of the “curse of Ham,” which provided a rationale for the seeming degradation of “primitive” peoples from an Edenic past, missionaries of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries mostly endorsed the ultimate commonality of mankind.⁸ Difference was understood in terms of a lack that could be remedied, and so evangelists tended to combine claims of difference with assertions of shared humanity, in arguing for both the need for the missionary enterprise as well as its ultimate viability.⁹

Yet how to proceed? Through a combination of theory and global precedent, administrators and settlers debated the most appropriate approach to take toward Australia’s Indigenous peoples. The British missionary societies were established around the time of Australia’s invasion in 1788 and lacked the Catholic tradition of missiology.¹⁰ During the Australian colonies’ first decades, evangelicals argued about whether to introduce the gospel first or to begin by attempting to “civilize” Indigenous people, a dilemma since termed the “Civilization/Christianization debate.”¹¹ During the eighteenth century the Scottish rationalist position, that conversion was possible only following a “rational” education infused by Christian principles, was particularly influential; thinkers such as George Hamilton argued that “philosophy and learning” was a necessary foundation for true understanding of the gospel. Yet from the mid-eighteenth century, most evangelical Christians believed that the palpable demonstration of God’s power should take priority.¹² This debate was shaped by concrete experience in various parts of the world, and notably David Brainerd’s account of working with the Native American Delaware people and reports of Moravian work in Greenland and later Labrador, where the gospel came first.¹³

In the Australian colonies in the period before the formulation of a colonial policy for Aboriginal protection, Samuel Marsden, the colonial head of the Church of England, was highly influential in the colony’s spiritual affairs. Marsden was a powerful advocate for the priority of teaching

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“the arts of civilization” in mission work. Thus he argued to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) when planning his New Zealand mission in 1808, visualizing a settlement that would exemplify European industry through its concrete, everyday operation:

Since nothing, in my opinion, can pave the way for the introduction of the Gospel but civilization, and that can only be accomplished among the heathen by arts, I would recommend that three mechanics be appointed to make the first attempt. . . . One of these men should be a carpenter, another a smith, and a third a twine-spinner. . . . Till their attention is gained, and moral and industrious habits are induced, little or no progress can be made in teaching them the Gospel.¹⁴

Marsden’s views were broadly consistent with the sequential understanding of social progress developed by the Franco-Scottish Enlightenment view of history. According to proponents of stadial theory, a key factor in social development was the “mode of subsistence,” characterizing the “four stages” of human development from hunting, through pasturage, agriculture, and finally to commerce. The reciprocal relationship between property and government was another key marker of progress, and the growth of social surplus was held to provide the means of development of towns, the arts, manufacture, and new social classes.¹⁵ Such theories of human difference assumed that all phenomena of social life were closely related: French thinker Henri de Saint-Simon argued, for example, that political, moral, and intellectual progress were inseparable from material progress, and that phases of material development corresponded to intellectual changes, with variations caused by race, climate, and political action.¹⁶ This conception of progress assumed that savagery was a stage shared by all mankind, although there were differing views about the effects of environmental stimulation upon development.

The important role of environment in shaping character became a widely accepted idea over the course of the eighteenth century, with the corollary that the education of children was one of the most powerful means of promoting progress and reason.¹⁷ Such ideas were linked to early forms of socialism, promoted during the early nineteenth century by Saint-Simon in France and Robert Owen in England, who advanced economic doctrines grounded in a vision of society in which social institutions dictated human misery and happiness. Owen had made his fortune in the

cotton trade and put his ideas into practice at New Lanark, Scotland, where he created a comfortable environment for his workers and opened the nation’s first nursery school and cooperative store in 1816.¹⁸ He argued that “any general character, from the best to the worst, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means,” and that education and institutions, not humankind itself, were responsible for its vices and virtues.¹⁹ Such experiments influenced the emergence of new forms of remedial architecture across Europe that were designed to mold behavior and habits through bodily performance.²⁰

In the 1820s the naval surgeon Peter Cunningham expressed this view in commenting of the Aboriginal people of New South Wales that “civilization depends more upon the circumstances in which man is placed than upon any innate impulse of his own.”²¹ While Britain’s establishment of a penal colony in Australia through the transportation of convicts was based on the older, very different principles of terror as punishment, the improving disciplines of the penitentiary also came to permeate transportation, for example, through the establishment of Port Arthur, Tasmania’s “gaol without walls,” and Macquarie’s program of moral improvement through buildings such as convict barracks.²² By the same token, civilization and its progress were measured in terms of material, and especially technological accomplishments, an association that only increased during the early nineteenth century with industrial achievements along the road of progress such as the spread of railway transport throughout Britain and the Great Exhibition of 1851.²³

Mechanic Missionaries

The contemporary missionary emphasis, exemplified by Marsden, upon replacing a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle with a settled way of life and creating an environment in which industry and the arts were taught as the basis for spiritual redemption can be understood in this broad intellectual context. However, such views can also be understood, in more immediate and personal terms, as an expression of the missionaries’ desire to improve upon the imperfect society they had left behind. This utopian tendency can be discerned in the Moravians’ tradition of religious settlement design, expressing the principles of their faith through spatial organization and grounded in their experience of persecution and displacement—as I

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explore further in chapter 4. In a similar way, Catherine Hall suggests that the dissenting ministers of Caribbean free villages countered their own sense of political and social marginality through plans for rural idylls that could never exist in compromised England.²⁴

Yet there is more to it than that. The social background of most missionaries in the Pacific at the turn of the eighteenth century governed their ideas about what Indigenous peoples should become in two important ways: first, in conflating attitudes toward and treatment of the lowest European class with “heathen” others, and second, as a source of ideas about civilization that centered upon the goal of respectability, a state that combined inner worth with outer appearance, measured by physical appearance.

Most evangelists of this period were drawn from the “mechanic” class, an emergent addition to the middle class, which, as Niel Gunson notes, “required a lower class which acted alternately as recruiting ground and place of contrast. This need for a lower class was part of the psychology of Evangelical missionaries who substituted the ‘poor heathen’ for the ‘lower orders.’”²⁵ Here Gunson identified a mechanism taken up more recently by postcolonial theorists concerned with representations of otherness who have explored the way that internal divisions within the European social order were defined in counterpoint to other cultures in the context of imperialism. Ann Stoler, for example, has explored the work of racial thinking in the making of European bourgeois identity, arguing that “the cultural accoutrements of bourgeois distinction were partially shaped through contrasts forged in the politics and language of race.” Outward appearance was interpreted in terms of inner properties, as “certain cultural competencies, sexual proclivities, psychological dispositions, and cultivated habits” defined the hidden fault lines “along which gendered assessments of class and racial membership were drawn.”²⁶

In Europe, the emergence of new social categories from the economic and social turmoil of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries assumed the underlying similarity of “race” and “class.”²⁷ So John Wesley used the language of savagery in writing of the poor of Yorkshire, not far from Marsden’s birthplace, “a wilder people I never saw in England. . . . The men, women and children filled the street as we rode along, and appeared just ready to devour us.”²⁸ Techniques of management such as schooling were widely urged as a means of ensuring social cohesion at home but

were also deployed in the colonies. Bell’s system of education, also known as the Madras System, for example, was widely used in Britain but was also employed by colonial administrators to educate Aboriginal people at Wybalenna in 1835, as I explore further below.²⁹ In this way attitudes toward the Indigenous peoples of Australia and the Pacific mirrored those toward the lower classes in Britain, defining both in terms of the primitive, as nomads and “savages” in need of education and Christianization.

The second way that missionaries’ origins determined their work in Australia was in their pursuit of respectability and worldly success—again defined against savagery, as historian Janet McCalman has pointed out: “When nineteenth century British people called someone ‘respectable’ they really meant that he or she was fully human or civilized.”³⁰ Respectability was an achievement that had become accessible to those with the character and industry to rise above their origins and entailed ideas about the right use of time and labor. For the new classes of the early Victorian period, material prosperity was perceived as a sign of godly favor and spiritual progress, and contemporaries defined status fundamentally “from the amount of property, either real or personal, possessed by individuals.”³¹ The new association between sacred and secular at this time was first noted by Max Weber, arguing that the moral justification of worldly success by particular forms of Protestantism set the scene for the emergence of capitalism. While focusing on Calvinism, Weber also noted the striking development of business acumen even among sects generally perceived as ‘otherworldly’ such as the Moravians, who channeled their material success into building religious townships.³² So Marsden, the son of a Yorkshire butcher and a former smithy’s apprentice, saw civilization less as “rational” education than as practical instruction in the “useful arts.” He brought a strong work ethic, acquired in childhood, to his colonial labors, advocating hard work as a way of avoiding temptation and acquiring prosperity—a desire that was only enhanced by the colonial environment’s overwhelming emphasis on material achievement.³³

The rise of consumerism among the lower and middle classes during the late eighteenth century also coincided with the development of the mass production of domestic goods such as ceramic tablewares, and these newly available goods were used to articulate status.³⁴ In this way material culture played an increasingly important role in creating modern subjectivity and in mediating between individual and group identity.³⁵ It was

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especially important as fixing meaning at a time of social instability and in new settler societies such as Australia, where social status was contested and uncertain.³⁶ A respectable appearance was created through a combination of demeanor, manners, clothing, personal possessions, and household; poverty and the lack of material “comforts” were often seen as symptoms of moral degradation rather than the *cause* of social problems.

New patterns of gender organization also shaped the new social distinctions, with the middle class now defined by separation of men’s and women’s spheres and the increased importance of the family’s role in socializing children. The domestic ideal was central to defining middle-class identity and power, but female consumption of home comforts such as tablewares and clothing also became important among the laboring poor.³⁷ Women expressed their status and a range of values such as privacy, comfort, modesty, morality, and taste through their home, in its arrangement of rooms and spaces and the furniture within them, and rituals of dining, washing, and sleeping.³⁸ In these ways missionaries’ culturally specific ideals of civilization drew upon a range of everyday goods and practices, embedding mission theory within habitus in the missionaries’ attempts to transform their charges.

The Two Objects

An important effect of the “Christianity/civilization” opposition was to deny these profoundly embodied, material aspects of contemporary concepts of progress and transformation. However, contemporaries often acknowledged the false dichotomy between belief and behavior, perceiving the fundamental importance of environment in effecting cultural change. When the Church Missionary Society appointed William Watson to Wellington Valley in 1831, it advised:

In connection with the preaching of the gospel, you will not overlook its intimate bearing on the moral habits of a people. One effect arising from its introduction to a country, is the “beating of the sword into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning-hook.” Seek then to apply it to the common occupations of life; instruct the natives in husbandry, in the erection of houses, and in the useful arts of life, and instead of waiting to civilize them before you instruct them in the truths of the gospel,

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or to convert them before you aim at the improvement of their temporal condition, let the two objects be pursued simultaneously.³⁹

By the mid-1830s it became common to argue that in practice the spiritual and practical aspects of transformation should proceed in tandem.⁴⁰ The important role of missionary wives in teaching and modeling Christian domesticity further blurred the distinction between sacred and secular, as their efforts were entirely directed toward this everyday domain. Within the household, the abstract distinction between spiritual and secular progress disappeared, and women’s domestic management became proof of missionary success.

Historians have tended to recapitulate rather than challenge the terms of the “civilization/Christianization” debate; however, as the anthropologists Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff have pointed out, contemporary assumptions of a mind/body split, grounded in a Western mind/body dualism, created a false opposition between these aims, which were in practice inseparable. During the 1980s a new interest in ethnographic history began to influence studies of the spread of Christianity, expressed variously as resolving the relationship between the sacred and the secular, religion and politics, and materialist and ideological perspectives, leading some to argue that it was not possible to draw a distinction between the religious and the secular in many social domains.⁴¹ Emphasizing performance and ritual, the Comaroffs commented with respect to South Africa that missionaries

knew instinctively what students of culture have only recently discovered: that the fundamental axioms of being are vested in routine mundanities; to use mission parlance, profound “inner” transformations could be achieved by working on the humble “outer” terrain of the body, dress, or subsistence production.⁴²

In this way they suggest that missionaries were a vital and consistent element in the colonial encounter, not in the institutional domain of “politics” but rather “in the subtle colonization, by the missionary, of Indigenous modes of perception and practice.”⁴³ By succeeding “in restructuring the native conceptual universe in important respects, he laid the ground for its integration into the industrial capitalist world.”⁴⁴ The Comaroffs acknowledged that “while the signs and practices instilled by

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the mission came to underpin the new order, they also exposed its contradictions, and gave rise to more than one language of protest.⁴⁵ However, at the same time they suggested that the missionaries' work resulted in "restructuring the native conceptual universe," that their influence "was pervasive, laying down the terms of colonial subjection," and that its result was not a wholesale commitment to Protestant ideology but "a subtle internalization of its categories and values."⁴⁶ Taking up Weber's notion of the "spirit of capitalism" as the hallmark of modernity and the basis for modern colonialism, the Comaroffs explored how this ethic spread outside Europe.

The Comaroffs' innovative analysis of the importance of everyday environment in attempts to transform Indigenous consciousness has been salutary; however, the mission regime's efficacy (or "hegemony") has often been overplayed.⁴⁷ While historians no longer uncritically accept missionaries' own narratives,⁴⁸ they have been less rigorous in considering representations expressed in concrete form such as settlement design, domestic environments, or material culture—evidence that may reveal the limits of the missionary program as well as Indigenous responses to it. My own study aims to evaluate the effect of material structures on Indigenous subjects without exaggerating the power of landscape, spatial organization, and material environment to determine worldview. An approach that explicitly seeks to understand the ways that such landscapes were tensioned and in process, contested and diverse, may prove useful, as I explore below through the example of Wybalenna, in Tasmania.⁴⁹

As the rich international scholarship in historical archaeology has shown in recent years, a wide array of sources and approaches is available for the study of past constructions of race, class, and gender. Such research has explored the construction of social categories through material culture and spatial relations in contexts of colonialism and slavery, for example, contextualized by a web of documents, images, ethnographies, and memories. As such work reveals, historical archaeology's juxtaposition of different sources and perspectives generates contestation and ambivalence.⁵⁰ Within Australian archaeology, such research gathered momentum from the early 1990s, exploring different aspects of colonial exchange between white settlers and Aboriginal people, as well as new means of investigation. Such innovations offer a wide range

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of sources and methods, freeing scholars from restrictive disciplinary orthodoxies at the same time as demanding a more rigorous use of resources.⁵¹ These ambiguities of exchange are exemplified at Wybalenna, where archaeological evidence has demonstrated the tension between European managers’ goal of transforming Aboriginal people through creating a didactic material and moral environment on the one hand, and Aboriginal objectives on the other.

“They Have No Wants”

In suggesting that missionaries knew instinctively of the importance of everyday routine and environment, the Comaroffs overlook the importance of Aboriginal peoples’ lack of “wants” in contemporary Australian debates—that is, their perceived disregard of material culture and property. As Cook’s comments in 1770 illustrate, Aboriginal indifference to “Magnificent houses, Houshold stuff” was usually interpreted as a sign of primitivism, as whites failed to understand the rich social meanings attached to forms of exchange and material goods within Indigenous tradition.

For Europeans, “the comforts of life” were the reward for work and, most importantly, cultivation. Influentially, John Locke had argued that property rights stemmed from the products of human labor, but particularly that rights to land lay in the work of improvement, in this way justifying the colonization of the northern Americas. He wrote:

There cannot be a clearer demonstration of any thing, than several nations of the *Americans* are of this, who are rich in land, and poor in all the comforts of life; whom nature having furnished as liberally as any other people, with the materials of plenty, *i.e.* a fruitful soil, apt to produce in abundance, what might serve for food, raiment, and delight; yet for *want of improving it by labour*, have not one hundredth part of the conveniences we enjoy: and a king of a large and fruitful territory there, feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day-labourer in *England*.⁵²

For Locke, a settled lifestyle generated the need to protect property, which was the basis for government; a subsistence lifestyle needed no such regulation.

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In the Australian context, as elsewhere, missionaries actively worked to inculcate a desire within the Aboriginal people for houses, clothing, goods, and other status symbols of Western society, in the expectation of transforming them into civilized subjects. By the same token they simultaneously tried to eradicate the traditional Aboriginal obligation to share, grounded in an extensive and elaborate kinship system. For missionaries and colonists seeking to transform Indigenous peoples, however, “wants” were not simply indices of civilization but were also instrumental in creating a relationship of exchange and control. They were a means, sometimes coercive, of inducing Aboriginal people to alter their behavior, for example, through labor, Christian observance, or domesticity. So, for example, at Wybalenna in 1832, Lieutenant William Darling explained how he withheld or offered tobacco to “foster an interest in civilization,” claiming by this means to be able to induce the women to wash their clothes, bake bread, clean out their huts, wear coats, and refrain from using ochre at scripture readings.⁵³

Specific to the Australian context, however, was the difficulty the early missionaries had in converting or “civilizing” Aboriginal people, a failure that challenged their assumptions of universal humanity and progress and was linked to the Aboriginal people’s indifference to European goods and property. Early attempts to convert and “civilize” Aboriginal people were judged failures, on the basis of an absence of conversions as well as a lack of interest in material goods and technologies.⁵⁴ These experiments also shaped general views of Aboriginal peoples’ capacity for improvement. The seemingly intractable Aboriginal posed a challenge to notions of shared humanity that some suggest contributed significantly to the emergence of evolutionism during the nineteenth century.⁵⁵

Samuel Marsden, for example, believed that because the Aborigines had “no wants” they were not susceptible to European civilization. Marsden was a potent force in deflecting missionary attention away from Aboriginal people and toward the Pacific islands, especially New Zealand, where Maori were interested in acquiring European technology.⁵⁶ Marsden’s pessimism was based upon his own failed experiments—from the 1790s he had taken Aboriginal boys into his home in an attempt to teach them and make them servants.⁵⁷ Although he had been advised by the London Missionary Society in 1810 that he should “contribute to the Civilization of the Heathen and thus prepare them for the reception of

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moral and religious instruction,” no Australian attempts were made until Marsden’s enemy, Governor Lachlan Macquarie, forced the issue.

“Failed” Experiments

These early attempts were not strictly missions, but nonetheless were designed and managed in accordance with current missionary methods, and religious instruction formed an integral element of their programs. In 1814 Macquarie embarked on an ambitious program of Aboriginal pacification that combined a school for Aboriginal children with the first grants of land to Aboriginal people for farming.⁵⁸ Macquarie’s Native Institution focused upon the education of children, in accordance with a proposal from the London Missionary Society’s William Shelley that canily rebutted Marsden’s pessimism (Shelley was no doubt aware of the antagonism that prevailed between Macquarie and Marsden) on the grounds of a shared humanity and environmental difference. “Notwithstanding the prejudices that many have against the probability of success in Civilizing the Natives of New South Wales, yet, if we consider that human nature is the same in every Clime, allowing for the difference in manners and Customs and variety of Circumstances in which they are placed, I think this opinion supported neither by theory or experience.”⁵⁹ Shelley detailed the practical—and gendered—learning to be imparted, writing:

In order to effect their improvement and civilization, let there be a Public Establishment Containing one Set of Apartments for boys, and another Separate Set for Girls; let them be taught reading, writing or religious instruction, the Boys, manual labour, agriculture, mechanical arts, etc., the Girls, sewing, knitting, spinning, or such useful employments as are suitable for them.⁶⁰

Assessments of the first, Parramatta, stage of the Native Institution (1814–1820) were hopeful, but by 1838 the “elopement” of its pupils and their resistance to adopting European ways led contemporaries to judge it as a failure.⁶¹ As one observer was later to conclude, the school failed because “you find it impossible to excite any want in them which you can gratify, and therefore they have no inducement to remain under a state of restraint, nor are they willing to leave their children.”⁶²

“Black Man’s Houses”

The tragic fate of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people at Australia’s first segregated and supervised Indigenous village, Wybalenna (“Black Man’s Houses”), on Flinders Island in Bass Strait, became an international symbol of failure. This artificial environment brought together a range of ideas circulating among British administrators and church figures, including the importance of segregating Aboriginal people in reserves remote from white settlement. While it was not established or managed by missionaries, religious instruction was a primary principle of the settlement, and Shelley’s work in the Pacific and in Sydney provided an important precedent.⁶³ Wybalenna’s landscape was contested by colonists and Indigenous residents, as archaeological investigation has made particularly clear.⁶⁴

Wybalenna was the place chosen by the British government to resettle the surviving Tasmanian Aboriginal people between 1833 and 1847. Frontier conflict had escalated following white settlement of Van Diemen’s Land in the 1820s, and in 1829 Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur appointed George Augustus Robinson to “conciliate” the Indigenous



Figure 1.2. Location map. (Drawn by Kara Rasmanis.)

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people. Robinson drew up a plan for an “Aboriginal village” designed to “ameliorate the aborigines of Van Diemen’s Land” through a combination of “Civilization” and “instruction in the principles of Christianity.” Based on his discussions with Arthur, Robinson outlined his plans for

civilization—to form a general establishment or native village. . . . The site should include fertility of soil, proximity to fresh water, contiguous to the shore and remote from settlers. . . . The establishment to form three sides of a quadrangle opening to the beach, the mission house to be situated at the upper end so as to command a view of the whole establishment, the married persons to occupy one side, the single persons the other side. . . . Each family to have a log hut covered with bark, the aborigines to assist in the erection of the same. . . . Each allotment to be fenced . . . as opportunity may occur to teach the children trades. . . . Dr Bell’s system to be adopted. . . . The formation of the establishment would appear to be of primary importance. The aborigines would be acquiring habits of industry.⁶⁵

By 1833 the surviving Tasmanian Aboriginal people had been forcibly removed to the remote Flinders Island. The first manager, Lieutenant William Darling, may be credited with the organization of the settlement into a farming village. Within a few months Darling had overseen the construction of houses and reported that the occupants were “very sensible of the comfort of them, and take great pains to keep them clean and in order.”⁶⁶ A strictly gendered routine of education and performance was instituted, but this was less successful. As historian N. J. B. Plomley pointed out, they “had been induced to leave their native land by a promise that all their wants would be supplied and they expected this undertaking to be honoured.” In July 1835 the manager Nickolls reported that they had “an ardent desire to become scholars like white men” in order to “write to their ‘Governor Father in Hobart Town’ . . . whom they are anxious to induce to remove them to their native land.”⁶⁷

The best known of a succession of managers, Robinson took charge of the settlement in 1835, intending to use this “artificial environment” to prove that the Aboriginal people wished to adopt Christianity and European civilization. Historian Lyndall Ryan notes that Robinson was more concerned with European manners than farming, and that “he thought that being an Englishman, albeit a black one, meant living in a house,

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eating 'civilized' food, keeping himself clean and tidy and giving up all his native customs."⁶⁸ Robinson made a range of key changes to the settlement in line with current missionary and official thinking, designed to transform the Aboriginal people into appropriately gendered and classed subjects through their physical environment and the establishment of a rigid daily routine. He made several practical improvements, such as a better food supply, protection for the Aboriginal residents from convicts (especially the women from sexual assault), and schooling.

The Market

Robinson's most original introduction to the Aboriginal community was a market. He noted that "the articles for sale consisted of sugar plums, fishing lines, crockery-ware, pipes, shirts, beads, marbles, belts, buckles, ornamented pipes. The goods sold were kangaroo skins." Robinson's elation was unrestrained as he rhapsodized:

This system is the most effective that has ever been put in practice to instruct these rude people in the value of property, to stimulate them to habits of industry, lead them to take care of property and what ultimately will render the land of their adoption a source of comfort, of happiness and freedom.

And he went on to describe how

after the sale closed the people all sat down to dinner at one table. I furnished them with knives, forks, dishes, plates and spoons for the occasion and they all made a hearty and comfortable repast. The king and his consort were at the head and the foot of the table. After dinner the sale recommenced and such as had skins for sale they were purchased from them. . . . At the conclusion of the day they took tea in the market square and then retired to their homes highly delighted with their day's diversion . . . such was the zest with which they entered into the spirit of the undertaking that before it concluded they became experienced barterers. When asked what they would have or buy they carefully surveyed the things for sale, and if asked whether they wanted such and such a thing they said no, I want that, and at the conclusion said they now liked money, they wanted money, and asked the officers and their

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wives whether they would give them money. They were told that they must get kangaroo skins etc. for sale and for which they would have money given them.⁶⁹

The Aboriginal people obtained money for buying goods at the market from the sale of mutton birds, sheep wool, skins, and crafts, as well as from payment for their labor. In May 1837 Robinson created a form of currency unique to the Aboriginal settlement, stamping British coins to restrict their use to the “natives.”⁷⁰ This small marketplace maintained Aboriginal segregation to a great extent and so cannot be judged to have incorporated the people directly into the global economy. Nonetheless, it doubtless equipped them with some understanding of how to proceed in the Western capitalist system and economy and allowed them to consume a range of European-made goods.

Home Management at Wybalenna

A builder by trade, Robinson also oversaw construction of a substantial L-shaped brick terrace and, by the end of October 1837, the Aboriginal people were moved in. Each house comprised a single room centered on a fireplace, with space for two beds, and was intended to house two married couples. Robinson was initially pleased with the results of his attempt to create new bodily routines and spatial relations between the residents through the terrace dwellings. He termed these sturdy and, for the period, well-built structures facing the chapel “The Natives Square,” and they expressed his own values of piety, settlement, and domesticity.

However, inspection of his settlement plan reveals that although the L-shaped terrace building forms two sides of a square, with the church forming its third corner, the other settlement buildings are distant, undermining the sense of a cohesive village. Any meaningful spatial relationship is confined to that between the Aboriginal people and the nearby church—the symbol of Christianity.

The distant officers’ quarters and children’s dormitory created a fragmented, open zone beyond which archaeologist Judy Birmingham notes, “the authority of the settlement faded, and that of . . . the Aborigines, increased.”⁷¹ In addition, housing two married couples within single-roomed dwellings undermined the prevailing European bourgeois emphasis

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upon privacy and the separation of public and private, and of male and female, spaces. Just as Robinson's account of his own success must be viewed with skepticism, his attempts to create a didactic landscape were similarly partial and crude.

The disjunction between Robinson's ideals and Aboriginal responses is clearly demonstrated by the archaeological investigation. This focused on five of the twenty terrace houses, aiming to explore how the Tasmanians responded to colonization. Birmingham's analysis drew upon a "dominant ideology" model that proposed the resistance by Indigenous people of unwelcome aspects of European culture such as Christianity and commercialism, and considered both colonial attempts to impose values upon the Aboriginal people, and the latter's survival through "a combination of adaptation and resistance." Interpretation focused upon European or Aboriginal "behavioural traits" such as housecleaning, sweeping, arrangement of household items, and use of European goods.⁷² Although acknowledging that the numerical occurrence of European consumer goods cannot be assumed to indicate levels of "ideological acceptance," Birmingham argues that Robinson's explicit use of material goods to civilize Aboriginal people through introducing aspects of the capitalist system, including payment for work, an island coinage, weekly market, and incentives such as tobacco, makes an association with commitment more plausible—for example, noting that in some cases residents paid for timber floorboards, which were more comfortable to their bare feet.

Unsurprisingly, Robinson's own account suggests a correlation between the appropriation of European artifacts and customs, noting in 1836 that "the natives continue to improve at home management. Several bought plates, cups and saucers at the market, and use them and keep them clean. They wish to earn money to buy 'luxuries' at the market. Hymn singing has replaced the corroboree."⁷³ However, a closer reading reveals that rather than the steady and irreversible acquisition of European culture Robinson hoped for, the Aboriginal people were incorporating new knowledge into traditional relationships and attitudes; some appropriated new ideas, while others did not, and many changed their minds. For example, in October 1837 Robinson reported that he had

visited Ajax at his dinner with two other natives whom he had invited; they belonged to the Big River tribe. I was much pleased to see Ajax

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using the knife and fork, and with much dexterity; he seemed to pride himself at his expertness.⁷⁴

As Birmingham notes, Ajax was a Ben Lomond man and was showing off his new skill to traditional Big River enemies. This was surely a case of deploying a new skill to gain status in a traditional relationship rather than proof of commitment to a European ideal.⁷⁵ Indeed, the passage continues: “The dinner consisted of boiled pork and cauliflower. Visited Queen Adelaide; she had returned to the settlement in a sickly state and wore constantly appended to her back, the seat of pain, the skull of her deceased infant.” This Aboriginal woman had maintained her belief in the healing powers of human relics, showing that despite the appropriation of European cutlery and manners, new ideas coexisted with old, and were incorporated into an Indigenous value system.⁷⁶

The progress of the Aboriginal women within their new homes was a particular focus of missionary observation. Their general appearance was inspected each morning by the catechist’s wife, Mrs. Clark, and their huts and windbreaks were examined “to check whether their grass-filled mattresses had been aired or washed, the floors and tables swept, and the crockery and cutlery cleaned.” They received rations from the store, cooked the midday meal, and attended sewing classes. On Fridays after dinner they washed their own and the men’s clothes and on Saturday made a second damper for Sunday.⁷⁷ In 1837 Robinson was pleased with their performance, noting that “the native women also have made proficiency in sewing. Their work, Mrs. Clark assures me, is fully equal and some superior to that of many white women.”⁷⁸ A few weeks later he commented that “the natives were washing their clothes today. I was much pleased with the neat and cleanly state of their houses, and the perfectly contented and happy state of the people.”⁷⁹

Indeed, some archaeological evidence for “commitment to European values” includes tea-drinking and decorative ceramic tablewares, and to a lesser extent, evidence for recreational pastimes such as smoking and marbles—items that would have been bought by the residents rather than distributed as rations.⁸⁰ Most powerfully, the overall pattern of material culture across the excavated terrace houses demonstrates that the occupants of one cottage (number 8), Neptune and Amelia, from the north and northwest coast of Tasmania, had experienced relatively more contact

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with Europeans, and had to an extent participated in Wybalenna's new regime. In their dwelling all categories of European goods were found, including "a significant component of prestige household goods as well as recreational ones," and Birmingham concludes that there is a "high presumption that the inhabitants of cottage 8 worked hard in order to purchase a range of European goods."⁸¹

However, there was a "massive discrepancy" between this household and the pattern at a neighboring cottage (number 7), where a traditional hunting and collecting lifestyle was maintained, rendering the house "essentially a substitute for windbreak or cave."⁸² The inhabitants of cottage 7 were from the west coast of Tasmania, having had little contact with Europeans; nor did they occupy the cottage for long: Queen Elizabeth and William Robinson both died within six months, and their cotenants Andrew and Sophie abandoned the dwelling in accordance with Aboriginal tradition. The animal (faunal) remains found in cottage 7 reflect this short-term occupation, including 127 wallabies, 19 pademelon, and a single wombat; this pattern was interpreted as representing more traditional hunting at an earlier stage of the settlement when larger game such as wombat was still available. In addition, cottage 7 lacked wooden floorboards and yielded very few fragments of European clay tobacco pipes and bottle glass. This pattern was supported by evidence for rubbish removal and sweeping within and in front of cottage 8, forming a strong contrast with evidence for several dogs, and massed middenlike food refuse filling the middle of the room in cottage 7. Further, at another cottage (number 11), although wooden floorboards were evidenced as well as bought items, an extensive deposit of faunal remains had been allowed to accumulate around the hearth, indicating traditional hearth-oriented activities.⁸³ Overall, the archaeological evidence showed that the cottages were used as "sheltered hearths" in traditional Aboriginal fashion, the focus for talking, lying down, sleeping, and eating.

Robinson left Wybalenna in August 1838, by which time he had abandoned his expectations of transforming the Aboriginal residents. As their health deteriorated, contemporary observers reported that "the Tasmanians, like the last of the Mohicans will pine away and be extinct."⁸⁴ As Russell McGregor notes, "The growth of an expectation of extinction correlated closely with declining faith in Aboriginal abilities to become civilised."⁸⁵ However, contemporary "experts" apportioned much of the

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blame for Wybalenna’s failure to Robinson’s inferior methods, and his brick terrace was singled out for particular censure in 1841, when inspectors commented:

Their habitations form two sides of a square, the houses being built attached to each other, and the whole rather resembling the residences of poverty to be found at the termination of alleys in thickly peopled manufacturing towns in the Mother Country than what might have been expected to have been provided with a view of creating in the breasts of these people a feeling of attachment to home.⁸⁶

They noted that the Aboriginal residents had “acquired but few ideas of individual property,” suggesting that

it surely would have been preferable that each man and wife should have had a separate cottage, with a small piece of ground around it, all they produced from which would have been their own—with perhaps pigs, goats, and poultry, for their fondness for dogs shows their disposition to attach themselves to animals.⁸⁷

In this way Robinson’s method, not the underlying rationale for Wybalenna, was judged deficient. Despite the rhetoric of equality, the inferior quality of their housing reveals the consignment of Aboriginal people to a lower class. The problem of substandard housing for Aboriginal people has become a persistent theme up to the present day and is both a real source of grievance for Aboriginal people and their allies, as well as an excuse for official evaluations that blame them for failing to measure up (see chapter 8).

The Aboriginal residents were removed to Oyster Cove, a former convict settlement, in 1848, and Ryan notes that by 1859, of the nine women still alive, Sophie was “constantly in tears,” another spoke only to her dog, while the rest suffered severe respiratory complaints.⁸⁸ In 1868 only three remained: William Lanney died in 1869, Mary Ann in 1871, and Truganini in 1876 in Hobart, and the Tasmanian Aboriginals were considered to have become extinct until descendants asserted their presence during the 1960s.

This is a sad story that weighs heavy on the heart. Today, the lessons of Wybalenna seem clear to us. Contemporaries blamed the managers’

failure to adequately demonstrate the superior comfort of European living, but we now see only the elementary injustice of removing Indigenous people from their homes and forcing them to adopt a new way of life.

Archaeology and Essentialism

As Wybalenna demonstrates, material evidence for Aboriginal settlements such as missions or reserves challenges the contemporary opposition of spiritual and secular by showing the significance of the physical environment they created. Such investigation also contests Western narratives of transformation and their conceptualization in terms of success or failure—a framework that recapitulates European missionaries' values without considering Indigenous responses to new ideas and practices—from rejection to forms of interest and participation. It also raises important methodological issues for archaeologists working in this field: while Birmingham's project constitutes a landmark in Australian historical archaeology, more recent approaches to the archaeology of cultural exchange have identified a methodological problem with categorizing artifacts (or practices) as "Aboriginal" or "European." Objects formed part of culturally contingent regimes of value that imbued them with meanings according to shifting and diverse contexts.

Aboriginal people responded to the new circumstances in which they found themselves in a range of ways. Often, especially during the early years, they rejected Western goods and customs, as the (west coast) occupants of cottage 7 so clearly did. European material culture was also absorbed into traditional social relationships—such as when Ajax showed off his new skill with a knife and fork to his Big River adversaries. It became a means of exchange between black and white. And, as Neptune and Amelia show, it was appropriated as a new dimension of a new world. When Indigenous people lived in houses and consumed Western goods, dressed in European clothes, worked for wages, and became participants in the capitalist economy, they were no less Aboriginal, despite the view of contemporary and later observers that they had become inauthentic. In addition to the (well-established) archaeological critique of this essentializing approach, the formulation that defines "real" Aboriginal people as static and unchanged and interprets transformation as a marker of inauthenticity has been too closely implicated in colonial oppression and

discrimination. Rather than assigning them an essential identity or value, I seek to understand how they functioned in processes of exchange, appropriation, and incorporation.

In the next chapter I outline traditional Wotjobaluk life at the time of the arrival of invaders, focusing on broad patterns of social organization, connections to land, and material culture. In drawing upon anthropological, historical, oral, and archaeological evidence for life in the Wimmera region, it has been necessary to consider how these different sources were shaped by contemporary frameworks—and how the disturbances of invasion had already begun to affect Aboriginal life at the time of actual encounter between black and white. In structuring this account around the arrival of white settlers I do not intend to present precolonial Aboriginal culture as “pristine” or static, but rather to provide a specific historical context for the arrival of the missionaries and their regime.

Chapter 3 explores the distinctive nature of the invasion of the Port Phillip district from 1835, a moment when humanitarians shaped colonial policy. Arguing for the need to atone for the ill effect upon Indigenous people, a range of initiatives was mounted during the decades of settlement, including the Port Phillip Protectorate, missions, and schools. In the meantime, accounts of the “land rush” to the Wimmera, reaching a peak in 1845, reveal a country at war. By mid-century, colonists acknowledged the desperate plight of the surviving Aboriginal people and declared the various humanitarian projects a complete failure. The Moravians, long admired by the British as model missionaries, were persuaded to make a fresh attempt, and while they, too, seemed at first to fail, the establishment of Ebenezer in 1859 was followed within a year by the first glorious proof of Aboriginal capacity for conversion and civilization with the baptism of Nathanael Pepper.

Chapter 4, “Fantastic Dreaming,” explores the disjunction between Moravian missionaries’ attempts to create an idealized didactic landscape that would inculcate order among the residents, and the actual complexity of Aboriginal-European cultural exchange. The missionary experience was complex, as these often young and idealistic people from the far side of the world tried to help Indigenous people according to their own beliefs. Rather than presenting an account of triumphant Christian progress—a story told then and now by recuperative missionary texts—this account

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explores the missionaries' uncertainties, difficulties, and sympathies for Aboriginal people.

Chapter 5 examines the ways that the Protestant evangelicals' worldview was fundamentally gendered and the enhanced patriarchal structure of the Australian mission that acted to infantilize the Indigenous people. While they were rarely mentioned in documentary sources, the missionaries' wives supervised the domestic sphere, where Indigenous women's domestic management became proof of missionary success. Many women successfully appropriated Western domestic practices, yet experienced contradictions between this ideology and the reality of their lives on the mission. To an extent, strategies of mobility and evasion allowed residents to escape the mission regime.

As chapter 6 explores, when Ebenezer closed, both its Aboriginal residents and the white landholders and townsfolk of the region were glad to maintain the system of segregation that the mission had policed, despite an official policy of assimilation. Settling at nearby Antwerp offered several advantages to the Aboriginal families living there, including the maintenance of ties to land and kin, privacy, and relative freedom from restraint—although these must be weighed against the very real problems caused by poverty and exclusion from mainstream society. The clash between bureaucratic and popular views of race relations left Aboriginal people in limbo—stranded in between white and black, modern and primitive, town and country. For whites the Antwerp camp was spatially and morally distant, in a continuance of the mission regime. However, this schema was amplified into a statewide system of segregation at Lake Tyers that for a period reversed assimilation, transferring many Victorian Aboriginal people to the state's southeast and effecting a demographic shift that has remained important within the Victorian Aboriginal community.

Chapter 7 takes up the story from the 1930s, a period of tremendous change in Aboriginal affairs, as new ideas about human rights circulated internationally and a range of local Aboriginal political organizations was formed. An official policy of assimilation was increasingly endorsed from the late 1930s, although its implementation was delayed until after the war. The 1930s and 1940s also saw the revitalization of a genre of urban slum imagery that came to be applied to rural Aboriginal camps by politicians, Aboriginal activists, and white social workers. These two currents: of demands for equal rights, and a welfare movement focused upon im-

proving environment as a means of social uplift, intersected in a discourse of Aboriginal camp reform that prompted an assimilatory public housing program. Through teaching Aboriginal people how to live in European homes, this program aimed to erase filth and disorder and “whiten” the residents. What is striking about this scheme is the continuity from the mission period of underlying assumptions about civilization and progress, the importance of environment, and specifically the role of the home as pedagogical tool. Whereas the assimilation era’s goal of absorbing Aboriginal people reversed the segregationist agenda of the missions, the centrality of the domestic environment as an instrument of civilization persisted. It is also important to note how the term *housing*, which primarily evokes the issues of architectural fabric and design, obscures the gendered and familial aspect of this program with its traditional emphasis upon female, and especially maternal, performance.

Chapter 8 shows that former missions and reserves continue to occupy an important place in Aboriginal memory, as sites of recent events, ancestral resting places, historical landmarks, and the focus of social action in the present. Mainstream perceptions of these places prior to the 1960s were predominantly shaped by a humanitarian framework that emphasized redemption, discipline, “success,” or “failure.” In 2005, the Wotjobaluk negotiated the first successful native title agreement in southeastern Australia, and this milestone marks a new phase in their history, as the community uses its past to construct a new vision of its future. In the context of a range of social disadvantages faced by Aboriginal communities across the country, the persistence of concerns with Aboriginal housing and domesticity show that the missions are still with us, in practice if not in spirit.

Notes

1. James Cook, quoted in Nicholas Thomas, *Discoveries: The Voyages of Captain Cook* (London: Penguin, Allen Lane, 2003), 128. See also Glyndwr Williams, “Reactions on Cook’s Voyage,” in *Seeing the First Australians*, ed. Ian Donaldson and Tamsin Donaldson (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985), 35–50. At this time, Cook was only a lieutenant but has become immortalized as “Captain Cook.”

2. “Hawkers at the Aboriginal Station, Coranderk,” *Illustrated Australian News*, 10 July 1876, 107.

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3. Norman Etherington, "Introduction," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. N. Etherington, The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1–18; Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002); Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008); Alan Lester, "Humanitarians and White Settlers in the Nineteenth Century," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. N. Etherington, The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64–85.

4. J. C. S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England, 1760–1800* (Rochester, N.Y.: Royal Historical Society/Boydell, 2001).

5. For studies that focus upon this realm, see especially Robert Kenny's recent book about Nathanael Pepper's conversion at Ebenezer: *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2007). Other accounts of Christianity and its Aboriginal reception include Peggy Brock, ed., *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); John W. Harris, *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope* (Sutherland, N.S.W.: Albatross Books, 1994); Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies* (Bedford Park, Australia: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1988).

6. Mason, *The Moravian Church*.

7. See Beattie's response to Hume, in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997), 34–37.

8. Of course, a great diversity of views underwrote this broad position, such as the Great Chain of Being theory: A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936); for a good overview of these ideas as they were applied in the Australian colonies, see John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 148–68; David Lambert and Alan Lester, "Geographies of Colonial Philanthropy," *Progress in Human Geography* 28(3) (2004): 320–41; Brian Stanley, "Christianity and Civilization in English Evangelical Mission Thought, 1792–1857," in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. and Curzon Press, 2001), 169–97.

9. Brian Stanley, *Christian Missions*, 72; Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 125–34.

10. J. Bollen, "English Missionary Societies and the Australian Aborigine," *Journal of Religious History* 9 (1977): 263–91.

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11. See, for example, Andrew F. Walls, “A Colonial Concordat: Two Views of Christianity and Civilization,” in *Church Society and Politics*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975); Andrew Porter, “Commerce and Christianity: The Rise and Fall of a Missionary Slogan,” *Historical Journal* 28 (1985): 609–10; Jean Woolmington, “The Civilization/Christianisation Debate and the Australian Aborigines,” *Aboriginal History* 10 (1986): 90–98; R. H. W. Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists: Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830s and 1840s* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1974), 62–67; Stanley, *Christian Missions*, 169–97.

12. For discussion of the influence of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, see Ian Douglas Maxwell, “Civilization or Christianity? The Scottish Debate on Mission Methods, 1750–1835,” in Stanley, *Christian Missions*, 123–40.

13. Jonathan Edwards, ed., *An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend David Brainerd* (1749); Mason, *The Moravian Church*, 17; Stanley, *Christian Missions*, 178–79.

14. Brian Stanley, *Christian Missions*, 185; see also J. R. Elder, ed., *Marsden’s Lieutenants* (Dunedin: Coulls Somerville Wilkie, 1934), 16; and in 1826 Marsden pessimistically told Archdeacon Scott that missions to the Aborigines were “almost an hopeless task” because “they have no wants, nor is it in our power to create any which will benefit them.” Marsden to Scott, 2 December 1826 (Threlkeld Correspondence, LMS Archives), cited in Woolmington, “The Civilization/Christianisation Debate,” 94.

15. R. L. Meek, “Smith, Turgot, and the ‘Four Stages’ Theory,” *History of Political Economy* 3(1) (1971): 10; see also R. L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976); G. W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 10–19. For a comprehensive overview of this intellectual milieu, see Ian J. McNiven and Lynette Russell, *Appropriated Pasts: Indigenous Peoples and the Colonial Culture of Archaeology* (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2005).

16. John Bagnell Bury, *The Idea of Progress* (Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 293.

17. For example, articulated by William Godwin’s “Enquiry concerning Political Justice” (1793), in Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, 224.

18. Robert Owen, *A New View of Society, or Essays on the Principle of the Formation of the Human Character, and the Application of the Principle to Practice* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1813).

19. Owen, *A New View of Society*.

20. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, translated by Richard Howard (London: Tavistock, 1967);

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Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991).

21. Peter Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales: Comprising Sketches of the Actual State of Society in that Colony; of Its Peculiar Advantages to Emigrants; of Its Topography, Natural History, &c. &c.* (London: Henry Colburn, 1827); R. McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997).

22. S. Devereaux, “In Place of Death: Transportation, Penal Practices and the English State, 1770–1830,” in *Qualities of Mercy: Justice, Punishment and Discretion*, ed. C. Strange (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), 52–76; John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 123–47.

23. “It is not easy for a new idea of the speculative order to penetrate and inform the general consciousness of a community until it has assumed some external and concrete embodiment or is recommended by some striking material evidence. . . . The spectacular results of the advance of science and mechanical technique brought home to the mind of the average man the conception of an indefinite increase of man’s power over nature as his brain penetrated her secrets. This evident material progress which has continued incessantly ever since has been a mainstay of the general belief in Progress which is prevalent today.” Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, 324; Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

24. Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830–1867* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 136–37. And see Elizabeth Elbourne, “The Flesh Made Word: Christianity, Modernity and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff,” *American Historical Review* 108(2) (2003): 10.

25. Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797–1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 31–32, 35. See also J. Woolmington, “‘Humble artisans’ and ‘untutored savages,’” *Journal of Australian Studies* 16 (1985): 51–60. As with many other aspects of British evangelicalism, the Moravians provided a precedent for this practice, having long advocated the use of missionaries with practical skills—for example, when Ignatius La Trobe advised the LMS on its Pacific venture in 1795: Mason, *The Moravian Church*, 149, 164–66; Adas also notes this “parvenu syndrome” with respect to the ambitions of many colonial administrators: *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 197.

26. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 8–11.

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27. Susan Thorne, “‘The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable’: Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. F. Cooper and A. Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 238–62; Asa Briggs, “The Language of ‘Class’ in Early Nineteenth-Century England,” reprinted in *History and Class: Essential Readings in Theory and Interpretation*, ed. R. S. Neale (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 2–39.

28. A. T. Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden: The Great Survivor* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 5; S. Thorne, “‘The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable’: Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain.”

29. David Solmon, ed., *The Practical Parts of Lancaster’s Improvements and Bell’s Experiments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932).

30. Janet McCalman, *Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900–1965* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984), 20.

31. Briggs, “The Language of ‘Class,’” 2–39.

32. For Weber, the emotional antirational elements of German Pietism as exemplified by the Moravian Church and its leaders somewhat countered the rationalism characteristic of Calvinistic forms of Christianity. However, as historian Gilliam Lindt Gollin has shown, in new places and times Moravian communities have taken up the prevailing rational economic ethic, undermining Weber’s thesis that religion prompted economic relationships, but demonstrating the interplay between these values in concrete historical context: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Los Angeles: Roxbury [1904–1905], 2002): chapter IV; Gilliam Lindt Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967); Jørgen Bøytler, “Moravian Values and Moravian Towns,” paper presented to Christiansfeld Initiative, The Founding Conference: Christiansfeld, Denmark, 2003.

33. Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden*, 5. Marsden had been sponsored by the El-land Society, a group of north country clerics who recruited poor men for the evangelical wing of the established church. Observers noted the social distance that prevailed between clergy and convicts, such as Captain Frank Irvine in 1821, who described “a repulsion very difficult to overcome,” with the exception of the Wesleyan ministers, who “associate with them on terms of familiarity and equality.” Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden*, 206–7.

34. Carol Shammas, *The PreIndustrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

35. Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 135. Karl Marx noted how “ownership” is used as a way to “preserve

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his personality and to distinguish himself from other men, as well as to relate to them” in “Excerpts from James Mill’s *Elements of Political Economy*,” cited in Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 267; Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners: The Civilizing Process: Volume I* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Norbert Elias, *Power and Civility: The Civilizing Process: Volume II* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

36. Penny Russell, *A Wish of Distinction* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 170–97; Mark Staniforth, *Material Culture and Consumer Society: Dependent Colonies in Colonial Australia* (New York: Springer, 2003).

37. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Linda Young, *Middle Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia, and Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 153; Neil McKendrick, “Home Demand and Economic Growth: A New View of the Role of Women and Children in the Industrial Revolution,” in *Historical Perspectives: Studies in English Thought and Society*, ed. Neil McKendrick (London: Europa, 1974), 172, 208.

38. Linda Young, *Middle Class Culture*, 153–94.

39. CMS to Revd and Mrs Watson, 7 October, 1831, “Aborigines: Australian Colonies,” British House of Commons Sessional Papers 34, No.627, 1844, 152, cited in John W. Harris, *One Blood*, 87.

40. Stanley, *Christian Missions*, 196; Jean Woolmington, “The Civilization/Christianisation Debate,” 90–98; Jessie Mitchell, “Flesh, Dreams and Spirit: Life on Aboriginal Mission Stations 1825–1850: A History of Cross-Cultural Connections” (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2005).

41. For an overview of this shift with respect to African religions, see Terence Ranger, “Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *African Studies Review* 29 (1986): 1–69.

42. Jean Comaroff, “Missionaries and Mechanical Clocks: An Essay on Religion and History in South Africa,” *Journal of Religion* 71(1) (1991): 11. And see Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa, Chicago and London* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 193.

43. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, “Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa,” *American Ethnologist* 13(1) (1986): 2.

44. Comaroff and Comaroff, “Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa,” 1–22.

45. Comaroff and Comaroff, “Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa,” 1–22.

46. Comaroff and Comaroff, “Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa,” 2, 11, 15.

47. Cf. Elbourne, “The Flesh Made Word,” 1–21.

48. See, for example, Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

49. See, for example, Barbara Bender and Margot Winer, eds., *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place* (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2001); W. Ashmore and A. B. Knapp, eds., *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); H. Burke, *Meaning and Ideology in Historical Archaeology* (New York: Plenum Press, Global Contributions to Historical Archaeology series, 1999); C. Tilley, “Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage,” *Journal of Material Culture*, Special issue: Landscape, Heritage and Identity, 11(1–2) (2006): 7–32.

50. This international literature includes Charles E. Orser, *The Archaeology of Race and Racialization in Historic America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); Charles E. Orser, *Race and Practice in Archaeological Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Charles E. Orser, ed., *Race and the Archaeology of Identity* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2001); Patricia E. Rubertone, “Matters of Inclusion: Historical Archaeology and Native Americans,” in *Special Issue, Current Perspectives on Global Historical Archaeology, World Archaeology Bulletin*, ed. Charles E. Orser (7): 77–86; Patricia E. Rubertone, “The Historical Archaeology of Native Americans,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29 (2000): 425–46; Patricia E. Rubertone, *Grave Undertakings: An Archaeology of Roger Williams and the Narragansett Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); Laurie A. Wilkie, *Creating Freedom: Material Culture and African American Identity at Oakley Plantation, Louisiana 1840–1950* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); James A. Delle, Stephen A. Mrozowski, and Robert Paynter, eds., *Lines That Divide: Historical Archaeologies of Race, Class, and Gender* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000).

51. For Australian work in this field, see especially Tim Murray, “The Childhood of William Lanne: Contact Archaeology and Aboriginality in Northwest Tasmania,” *Antiquity* 67 (1993): 504–19; Tim Murray, ed., *The Archaeology of Contact in Settler Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Tim Murray, “Contact Archaeology: Shared Histories? Shared Identities?” in *Sites: Nailing the Debate: Archaeology and Interpretation in Museums* (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 1996); A. F. Clarke and A. Paterson (eds.), *Case-Studies in Cross-Cultural Archaeology. Archaeology in Oceania* 38(2) (2003); Rodney Harrison, *Shared Landscapes: Archaeologies of Attachment and the Pastoral Industry in New South Wales* (University of New South Wales Press, 2004); Alistair G. Paterson, *The Lost Legions: Culture Contact in Central Australia* (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2008).

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52. John Locke, “1680–1690 Two Treatises of Government: Sect. 41,” in Peter Laslett, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 132.

53. Lyndall Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 178–79; James Backhouse, *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1843), 83. For removal, see Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: A Radical Re-examination of the Tasmanian Wars* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1995), 156; Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, xxviii.

54. See, for example, Hilary M. Carey, “Attempts and Attempts’: Responses to Failure in Pre- and Early Victorian Missions to the Australian Aborigines,” in *Mapping the Landscape: Essays in Australian and New Zealand Christianity: Festschrift in Honour of Ian Breward*, ed. Susan Emilsen and William W. Emilsen (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 45–61; “Writing on the Sand’: The First Missions to Aborigines in Eastern Australia,” in *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*, ed. T. Swain and D. Rose (Adelaide: Australian Association for the Study of Religions), 77–92. But for a recent evaluation that moves beyond the missionaries’ own framework, see Jessie Mitchell, “Flesh, Dreams and Spirit.”

55. See, for example, Kay Anderson, *Race and the Crisis of Humanism* (London: Routledge, 2007).

56. London Missionary Society Secretaries to Marsden, 19 March, 1810, Marsden papers ML MSS A 1955 4/9, cited in Woolmington, “The Civilization/Christianisation Debate,” 93; *Sydney Gazette*, 14 August, 1819, cited in Barry Bridges, “Aboriginal Education in Eastern Australia (NSW) 1788–1855,” *Australian Journal of Education* 12(3) (1968): 228–29; Rev. Samuel Marsden, “An Answer to Certain Calumnies . . .” (London, 1826), 67–68, cited in Bridges, “Aboriginal Education in Eastern Australia,” 229, n.20. For contemporary criticism of Marsden’s neglect of the Aborigines, see Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden*, 195.

57. And he reiterated these views many years later: BT Box 54 Missionary series, 1882, Rev. S. Marsden to Rev. D. Coates, 23 Feb, 1836, cited in Woolmington, “The Civilization/Christianisation Debate,” 93–94. Much later he recalled that “one of my boys, whom I attempted to civilize was taken from its mother’s breast, and brought up with my children for twelve years; but he retained his instinctive taste for native food; and he wanted that attachment to me and my family that we had just reason to look for.” Quoted in Rev. J. B. Marsden, *Life and Work of Samuel Marsden* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1913), 63.

58. Jane Lydon, “Men in Black,” in *Object Lessons: Archaeology and Heritage in Australia*, ed. Jane Lydon and Tracy Ireland (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2005), 201–24.

“THEY COVET NOT MAGNIFICENT HOUSES, HOUSHOLD-STUFF”

59. Shelley was closely connected to Marsden by marriage and friendship, yet his proposal reads as an explicit rejoinder to Marsden. Shelley to Macquarie, 8 April 1814, *Historical Records of Australia* (HRA), vol. 8, 370–71. And see J. Brook and J. L. Kohen, *The Parramatta Native Institution and the Black Town: A History* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1991), 55–57; Bridges, “Aboriginal Education in Eastern Australia,” 230–31.

60. Copy of a Report, by the late Major General Macquarie, on the Colony of New South Wales, to Earl Bathurs, dated London, 27 July 1822, c477, 5, para. 25: cited in Bridges, “Aboriginal Education in Eastern Australia,” 231.

61. In delivering Shelley’s funeral sermon in 1815, Marsden revealed that in his last days Shelley had expressed his disillusionment with the school and its wayward pupils and a desire to return to the Friendly Islands: Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden*, 189. Report from the Committee on the Aborigines Question NSW, 1838, Mrs. Shelley’s evidence, 54: see Bridges, “Aboriginal Education in Eastern Australia,” 231.

62. Archdeacon Broughton to Committee, Colonial Department 1836, *Minutes of Evidence before a Select Committee on Aborigines (on British Settlements)*, British Parliamentary Papers, in *Historical Records of Australia* (HRA), *Series I, Governors’ Despatches to and from England. 1788–1848*, ed. F. Watson, Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, Sydney, 1914–1925: 14.

63. Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 126, n. 2; 143.

64. Between 1969 and 1971, excavations were undertaken at Wybalenna under the direction of Judy Birmingham of the University of Sydney. The project was published in 1992, when a theoretical framework of domination and resistance had gained wide intellectual currency. Judy Birmingham, *Wybalenna: The Archaeology of Cultural Accommodation in Nineteenth Century Tasmania* (Sydney: Australian Society for Historical Archaeology, 1992), 15.

65. Robinson to Lieutenant-Governor, 14 April, 1829, in *Friendly Mission: The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson*, ed. N. J. B. Plomley (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966), 56–57. The *Colonial Times* of 1 Dec 1826 had urged the government to send the surviving Aboriginal people to King Island to be taught to farm, so that “by degrees, they will lose their roving disposition, and acquire some slight habits of industry, which is the first step of civilization.” Cited in N. J. B. Plomley, *Weep in Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement with the Flinders Island Journal of George Augustus Robinson, 1835–1839* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1987), 7.

66. Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 66.

67. Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 85. It is apparent from correspondence between Darling and Nickolls that the former insisted on religious instruction above all else.

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68. Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 183, and see Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 96.

69. 9 Aug 1836: Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 372.

70. “Distributed money to the natives. . . . The natives were highly pleased and delighted with the money.” 12 July 1836: Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 364.

71. Birmingham, *Wybalenna*, 178.

72. Birmingham contrasts the cottages “as a visual statement of Robinson’s ideological position” with “their contents, as ‘an indicator of the Aborigines’ reaction,” 180.

73. Robert Clark (catechist), Report of the Committee of the Aboriginal Schools, Sept–Nov 1836, prepared by Robert Clark the catechist, summarized in Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, n. 3, 7 December 1836, 668.

74. 10 Oct 1837: Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 490.

75. Archaeologists elsewhere have documented the stimulus given Indigenous competition by contact with new resources and ideas: see, for example, Scott Mitchell, “Guns or Barter? Indigenous Exchange Networks and the Mediation of Conflict in Post-Contact Western Arnhem Land,” in *The Archaeology of Difference: Negotiating Cross-Cultural Engagements in Oceania*, ed. Robin Torrence and Anne Clarke (London: Routledge, 2000), 182–214.

76. 10 Oct 1837: Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 490.

77. Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 184–85.

78. 4 Sept 1837: Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 477. See also the death of Milton, 10 Sept 1837: Clark ruled out name—lesson for all, 477.

79. Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 491.

80. Birmingham, *Wybalenna*, 182.

81. A combination that “supports a positive commitment to the dominant ideology.” Birmingham, *Wybalenna*, 183.

82. Birmingham, *Wybalenna*, 188.

83. Birmingham, *Wybalenna*, 183–84.

84. Quoted in Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 186. Robinson spoke confidently of his success and was believed for a while: for example, London’s Aborigines’ Protection Society 1839 Second Annual Report cites “actual improvement,” 13.

85. Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997), 13.

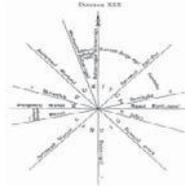
86. Report of Board of Enquiry into the Affairs of the Aboriginal Settlement, 10 June 1841 (CSO 8/11/266, 276–98), cited in Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, n. 31, 131.

87. Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 129.

88. Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 210.

CHAPTER TWO

ORIENTING THE WERGAIA



Ngaia yauarin? What Is Your Flesh?

When a Wotjobaluk person met a stranger, the first question asked was “*Ngaia yauarin?*” or “What is your flesh?” They were asking where in the social world someone belonged—that person’s place in the system of intermarrying classes (moieties) and totems that is characteristic of Aboriginal societies across Australia. The Wotjobaluk divided the whole universe, including humankind, into either *Gamutch* (black cockatoo) or *Krokitch* (white cockatoo). Within each of these classes were further subdivisions or “totems”—that is, a person’s spirit as embodied in an animal, plant or place, or mythical ancestor. Each of these claimed a particular ancestral home, or *mir*, to which they returned after death.¹

So two elderly Wotjobaluk men spent two hours laying out a map of this landscape with sticks on the ground, showing anthropologist Alfred Howitt in diagram form the space-names and directions of the totems and classes, “all fixed with reference to the rising sun” (figure 2.1). These determined the direction that a person faced when he or she was buried and governed social relationships that had a strongly spatial character—so that a person could speak “of some as being ‘nearer to him’ than others.”² Tommy, a Wotjobaluk man, explained to Howitt that he belonged to *ngauì*, or sun, the strongest totem within *Krokitch* from which the others “were reckoned up” or oriented. His *mir* was therefore *Krokitch-ngauì* (white cockatoo-sun), or sometimes he was called *ngauì-nga-gùlli*, “a man

DIAGRAM XXX

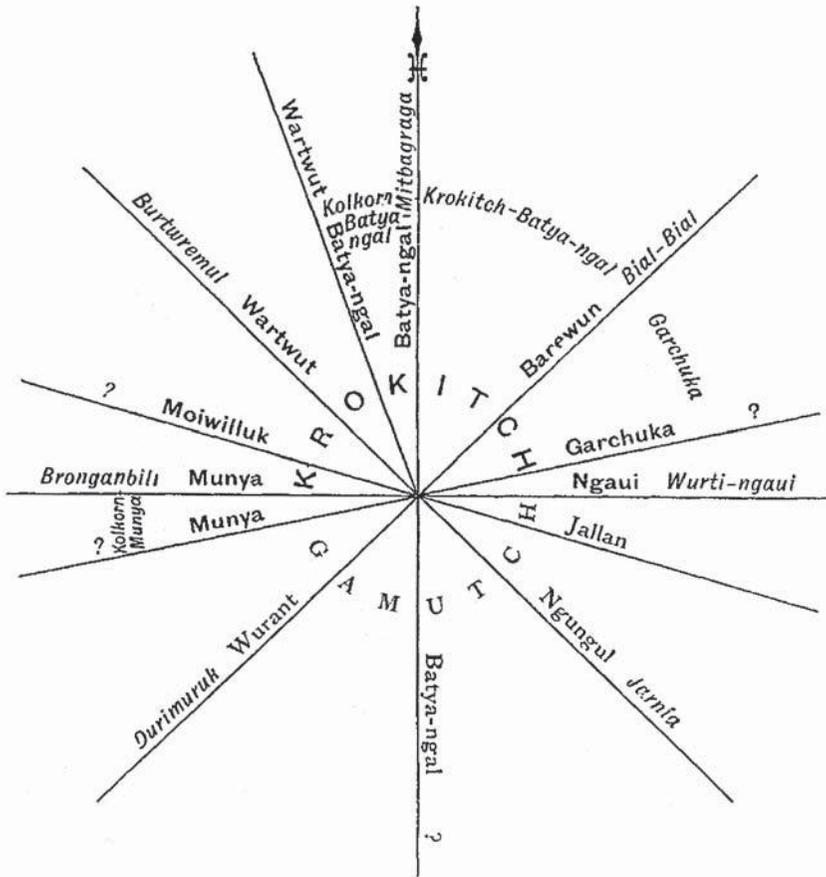


Figure 2.1. Wotjobaluk map showing the space-names and directions of the totems and classes. (From A. W. Howitt (1904), *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*. London and Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1996. figure XXX, p. 454.)

of the sun.” Tommy explained to Howitt that he inherited his name from his mother, and that when he died he would be given a new name, *wurti-ngauai*, which meant “behind the sun,” or “a shadow thrown by the sun behind the speaker.”³

The Wotjobaluk spoke an eastern dialect of the language Wergaia, and comprised a cluster of around twenty adjacent clans that lived in clearly defined areas.⁴ The Wergaia speakers occupied the lower Wimmera River from nearly as far south as Dimboola, north to include Lakes

Hindmarsh, Albacutya, and the Wimmera's termination in Pine Plains, east to the Richardson River, and west to the edge of the Mallee⁵ (figure 2.2). Clans, named matrilineal descent groups analogous in some ways to the clans of highland Scotland, were the basic unit of Wergaia society, sharing a historical, religious, and genealogical identity. Alliances across

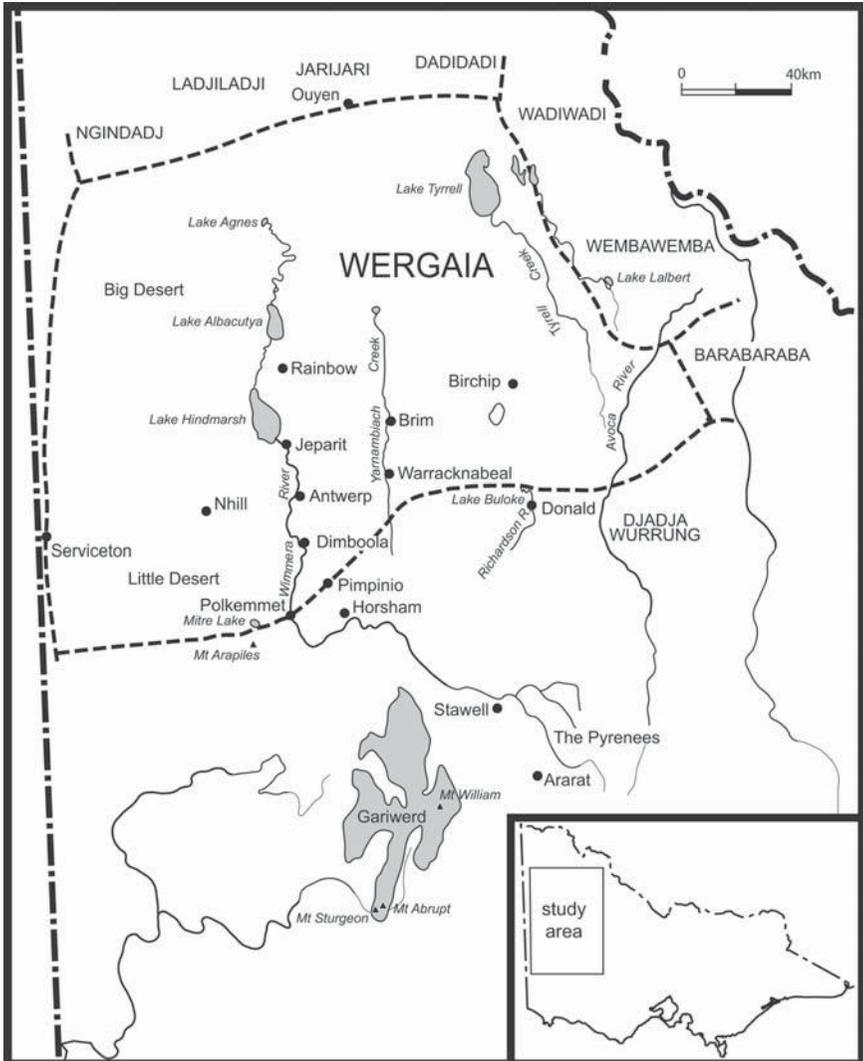


Figure 2.2. Wergaia territory and the Wimmera region. (Drawn by Kara Rasmánis.)

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these categories were the basis for different groupings for different purposes: for example, at larger meetings, members of a moiety would form teams for playing games regardless of their home country.⁶

These fragments of another way of life come to us through the work of nineteenth-century anthropologists such as Alfred Howitt, Robert Hamilton Mathews, and John Mathew, all of whom spoke to Wotjobaluk people who had been uprooted from their traditional way of life for some decades. These Indigenous men and women were scattered across the state, most living on the six Victorian stations. Some remained on traditional country, off the missions, like Mrs. McGinnis, living at Antwerp in 1909, where John Mathew talked to her and sketched her home (see chapter 6). Yet these men, concerned with the debates and theories of their own time, passed over much that was important to their “informants.”

Anthropologists of this period were oriented toward the past, seeing Aboriginal people in terms of what they were thought to have been. Their view of Aboriginal society was retrospective in two senses: first, international debates within the developing field of anthropology at this time were greatly concerned with the origins of social institutions such as marriage and the family, and the significance of Aboriginal social institutions as apparent evidence for an earlier stage of human development. Many were influenced by Darwin’s *Origin of Species* and assumed that the principles of natural selection could be applied to human society. The idea that Australian Aboriginal people represented the survival of humanity’s earliest stage aroused great interest. Second, they worked within a “salvage” paradigm premised upon the imminent disappearance of what they studied, seeking to record an already-disappeared past. This orientation contrasted with that of the missionaries, who saw Aboriginal people in terms of what they might become. Sometimes the anthropological goal of salvage clashed with the missionary goal of redemption, while neither view acknowledged the complex circumstances in which Aboriginal people actually lived or their experience of rapid, cross-cultural change.

Howitt became a disciple of American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan, who sought to identify the origin of systems of marriage and the family preserved within living societies.⁷ He applied Morgan’s theories in

arguing that Aboriginal people were historical survivals from the earliest stages of human development and that “these savages, having for so many ages been apart from other races of mankind, afford an unequalled example of the social institutions of a primitive people.” At a time when Aboriginal culture was seen as evidence for a “chrysalis” stage of human development, researchers such as Howitt argued that it was possible to trace the evolution of social institutions by identifying the customs of particular Aboriginal groups as specific stages along this journey. The elderly men he talked to gave some indication of internal change, such as in referring to *Batya-ngal* (pelican), which they said “was formerly a very strong *mir*,” and Howitt acknowledged this shift, writing that “some of the totems have advanced almost to the grade of sub-classes, and they have a markedly independent existence. The new features are the numerous groups of sub-totems attached to the classes *Gamutch* and *Krokitch* respectively.”⁸ However, he interpreted such evidence in terms of his evolutionary schema, with its reliance upon a notion of a linear progression preserving static cultural forms, rather than historical change. As more recent observers have pointed out, Howitt’s (Morgan-derived) approach was almost geological, believing that “the stratified evidences of pristine family, sexual and marriage forms were visible like fossils in a living society.”⁹ Even at the time, Morgan’s pseudo-archaeological method was controversial, and a range of colleagues pointed out that existing customs were better understood in terms of contemporary functions than as evidence for a previous existence.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Howitt’s work on the Wotjobaluk was drawn upon by prominent theorists such as James Frazer, Engels, and Durkheim, as well as influencing the following generation of Australian field researchers.¹¹

Despite his retrospective focus, Howitt employed a range of modern techniques to gather information, persuading Aboriginal people to reconstruct social action through self-consciously performative techniques of reenactment and citation.¹² In 1883 and 1884, for example, he used telegraph and railway to coordinate “corroborees” (ceremonies) that were truncated to fit his public service leave and were conducted partly in English, as one of the initiates didn’t speak the local language.¹³ Howitt’s relations with the Victorian missionaries were already strained, as his scientific interests

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in Aboriginal tradition impeded their aims of transformation (despite his long-term collaboration with the missionary Lorimer Fison). In 1880 he wrote in frustration:

After prodding a German missionary for about five years . . . I at last through writing to him in German managed to penetrate his stupidity. . . . He gave me some most important evidence the meaning of which he was utterly unconscious of—and then went on to say “It would take a long time and a sheet of paper to detail to you all these class names and their rules—and doubtless it would not be of interest to you.” It was these very class names and their rules that I have been hammering at for so long.¹⁴

The ceremonies Howitt instigated brought him into open conflict with the nearby missionaries at Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers, and the Moravian missionary Friedrich Hagenauer of Ramahyuck wrote testily, “It seems as if Mr Howitt is becoming a Black brother himself for verily these men here know nothing of what he collects, but they will always go for fun’s sake.” Hagenauer prevented further performances in 1885, 1886, and 1887.¹⁵

Howitt’s rival, Robert Hamilton Mathews, was less concerned with theory, content to produce the empirically detailed accounts that were of such interest outside Australia at this time. However, he was skeptical about Morgan-style evolutionism and instead sought to interpret Aboriginal society as the result of successive waves of migration.¹⁶ In this way he, too, explained different Aboriginal marriage and kinship systems in historical terms, as residues of the past.¹⁷ He corresponded with Rev. Bogisch at Ebenezer in 1898, who was discouraging, providing him with a few (inaccurate) totem names and noting that, “These are the only old ones I have here as the old people are dead, the remaining ones are half-castes. . . . It is difficult to find out the things correct now [*sic*], as the remaining ones remember them only from hearsay.”¹⁸ It appears, however, that Mathews visited the station and talked to Henry Fenton and his wife Kitty McLeod. He also went to Coranderrk around 1902, where he interviewed Ned McLellan (who told him detailed ancestral stories figuring the Brambrambult) along with Sergeant Major, William Barak, and Dick Richards of the Goulburn River, using the station as a kind of museum of relic culture. As he noted to himself in a list of things to do “In Victoria”:

“Get secret language anywhere it can be obtained. Initiation. Marriage—totems. Look out for Wirajuri—Watti Watti—L. Condah or Wimmera blacks at all stations.” Many Aboriginal people from across Victoria lived or spent time at Coranderrk, near Melbourne, which was consequently a magnet for scientists, photographers, and tourists throughout its life.¹⁹

The Presbyterian minister John Mathew visited the Wimmera-Mallee region in 1909 on church business and took the opportunity to visit Antwerp, where he spoke to “Benjamin Manton” (probably in fact Henry Fenton) and Mrs. McGinnis. Like Mathews, he was interested in the Wotjobaluk moiety system as surviving evidence for the multiple origins of the Aboriginal race, preserved in these distinct categories within Indigenous society. He was most excited when Manton told him that he could distinguish between *Gamutch* and *Krokitch* on the basis of their straight or curly hair, being, as he thought, evidence for biological difference.²⁰ He also spoke to Jackson Stewart in 1907 at Lake Condah, who told him about the “*Bram Bram Ngul*,” the two ancestral Bram brothers who lived in a cave near Naracoorte.²¹ At Coranderrk he spoke to Anthony Anderson and Ned McLennan.²²

None of these researchers included the names of their informants in their published accounts, despite the importance of individual lives as illustrations of their generalizing schemas. Anomalies were brushed over or omitted. These past-centered anthropological representations of Aboriginal culture were informed by Western preconceptions and values. Nonetheless, their accounts have ever since served as a basis for understanding and have been drawn upon in processes of cultural renewal and especially native title.

A deeper understanding of Aboriginal cosmologies and especially the land-based nature of Aboriginal knowledge has been a more recent development, the result of twentieth-century ethnographic research. While these studies have been undertaken far in time and place from the disrupted southeast first affected by white invasion, they have revealed principles and values that appear to have prevailed across the continent. In Aboriginal societies, the world was created by totemic ancestors (sometimes termed Dreamings), making places and people as they traveled the earth. The landscape is conscious and embodies the substance, powers, and traces of the ancestors. The personification of country inextricably combines kin relatedness with place.²³ People are united with

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ancestral power through ritual. By replicating ancestral travels and actions, recreating through dance and art (on the ground, on canvas, on bodies) the patterns written by ancestral beings on the earth, people open a connection between Dreamings and today.²⁴

For Aboriginal people, many features of the landscape may be actual ancestral powers, alive and conscious—including inscriptions such as rock art.²⁵ However, a sense of place and rights to place are not marked by physical signposts but through ancestral law. The meaning of ancestral places and their connection with people are read through kin and story ties that inscribe the place in the self and the self in the place. Hence Marcia Langton argues that personal identity is constituted as spatialized being—in other words, that being and place are constituted simultaneously as being-in-a-place.²⁶ In contrast to static Western conceptions of landscape, the ancestral presence inhabits a place as a body in action, and while “fixed in place, is extended through time.”²⁷

This identification constituted a mutual possession and belonging between land and people that entailed obligations to follow ancestral precedent by keeping stories and country alive, and by caring for country. In this living tradition, looking after country is a “supreme good,” and as anthropologist John Morton has noted, in its rhythmmed balance, Aboriginal religion has “no myth of a past or future Golden Age, no utopian vision, and no hint of an outcast devil.”²⁸

This view challenged the Judaeo-Christian notion of a supreme being who made the world, and it was totally alien to Western settlers, who simply dismissed it as “baby logic.” The pastoralist Peter Beveridge, for example, who settled near Swan Hill on the northern border of Wergaia country, commented in the 1880s that

when we endeavour to impress upon their savage minds that our Deity made the whole universe, and every animal on it, man included, they simply say: “Nothing of the kind; it is not so.” The world was never made by any being; it was not made at all. But if, as you say, one Supreme Being did make it, from whence came the *pimble* [earth or land] from which it was formed? If we make a fire, we must have wood to do it, as nothing is not combustible. . . . Before we make any of them [cloak, canoes, and other everyday objects], we must have the material to work upon.²⁹

The Aboriginal people argued that if such a being had made the world “out of nothing,” then “you would get him to make your houses and every other thing you need, instead of having to give um cheque to bushmen and carpenters, as we see you doing invariably.”³⁰ Beveridge commented in some frustration that

their logic is simple even to childishness, but notwithstanding this fact it is most difficult to combat (baby logic and accompanying cross-questioning have posed most men some time or other in their lives); in fact, it is impossible in many instances to do so.³¹

Given that Aboriginal relationships to country were premised upon the inalienability of land, entailing an eternal ecological balance and a cyclical temporal rhythm, Indigenous concepts of land ownership were difficult concepts for the invaders of this new territory to grasp—even if they wished to. For Europeans, property rights were considered to originate in the products of human labor, and rights to land in particular lay in its transformation through the work of improvement. Fundamental aspects of property ownership under Western law are the right to alienate land and the right to its exclusive use and enjoyment—both unthinkable within Aboriginal tradition.³² Most European settlers believed that Aboriginal people had no system of land ownership, although some noticed that such a relationship existed. Many, including the Moravian missionaries at Lake Boga during the 1850s, noted that Aboriginal people expected some recompense for use of their land.³³ Gradually, ethnographic fieldwork established that Aboriginal relations to country were based on descent, not residence, and did not include the exclusive use of the group’s territory by the group; common descent in the male line was merely one of numerous considerations determining residential associations.³⁴ Nonetheless, it was not until 1992 that the High Court of Australia recognized native title in handing down the Mabo decision, subsequently legislated as the Native Title Act 1993.

Wergaia Landscape: The River and the Mallee

In 1836 the explorer-surveyor Thomas Mitchell penetrated into the region later named Victoria and was delighted by what he saw: crossing the Wimmera River as it flowed strongly past the mountains of Gariwerd, he

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observed, “Every day we passed over land which for natural fertility and beauty could scarcely be surpassed; over streams of unfailing abundance and plains covered with the richest pasturage. Stately trees and majestic mountains adorned the ever-varying scenery of this region, the most southern of all Australia and the best.”³⁵ On July 18 he noted:

We fell in with a flowing stream, the water being deep and nearly as high as the banks. . . . The richness of the soil and the verdure near the river, as well as the natural beauty of the scenery could scarcely be surpassed in any country. The banks were in some places open and grassy and shaded by lofty yarra trees, in others mimosa bushes nodded over the eddying stream. . . . Some natives being heard on the opposite bank, Piper advanced towards them as cautiously as possible; but he could not prevail on them to come over, although he ascertained that the name of the river was the Wimmera.³⁶

An empty Arcadia, he spruiked its potential for colonization: “This territory, still for the most part in a state of nature, presents a fair blank sheet for any geographical arrangement whether of county divisions, lines of communication, or sites of towns.”³⁷ The existing inhabitants were seemingly invisible, intimated only by distant spires of camp smoke or by the camp litter they had left behind.

Given the rich food resources once offered by the region’s wetlands, it is not surprising that archaeological evidence for Wotjobaluk life shows a preponderance of campsites around water sources—and especially the Wimmera. Rising in the Pyrenees mountain range, the Wimmera flows through Jardwardjali territory, north through the open plains of Wotjobaluk country (the Middle Wimmera Basin) into Lake Hindmarsh—which in turn drains north through Outlet Creek into Lake Albacutya. As Mitchell noted in such lyrical terms, near Gariwerd (which he christened the Grampians) it resembled the well-defined, steep-banked streams of England, but as it turned north, its multiple shallow courses, which sometimes ceased altogether, became less admirable in European eyes. Reconstructions of the riverine ecosystem at this time depict a series of shallow intermittent rivulets linked to billabongs, lagoons, and reed-fringed marshes, following a finely balanced cycle that retained silts, filtered salts, replenished groundwater, and maintained environmental health.³⁸ When the pastoralists arrived

the creeks were then all fringed with reeds and rushes, undevoured by hungry cows and gaunt working bullocks. These reeds and rushes formed a beautiful edging to the dark solemn pools overhung by the water-loving gum-trees, where wild fowl abounded, as the plains did with quails and turkeys.³⁹

The invaders noticed many traces of Aboriginal use of the river's rich resources: settler Charles Hall, for example, remembered that "heaps of muscle [*sic*] shells were also found abounding on the banks, and old miamias where the earth around was strewed with the balls formed in the mouth when chewing the farinaceous matter out of the bulrush root."⁴⁰ The bulrush, or *kumpung*, was just one of the staples of the Aboriginal diet, its potatolike rhizomes eaten while its tough fibers were used for making nets. The vast array of available foods was sustained by Aboriginal resource management practices, including a fire regime and *murnong* (yam) harvesting.⁴¹ In the mid-nineteenth century, settler Peter Beveridge described the abundance of water resources available along the river systems, lakes, and wetlands, from the "palatable and nutritious" *kumpung*, the "sweet mawkish" tubers of the yellow water lily *lahoor*, to the green sow thistle, dandelion yam, and trefoil that grew on floodplains. He commented:

To see the *lyoores* [women] approaching the camp in the evenings, with each a great bundle of these green forage plants on her head, a stranger to their customs would imagine that they were providing the nightly fodder for a dairy of cows. They eat these herbs in a raw state by way of salad.⁴²

Many described "the festival of the Laap" held in February and March, when a drink was made from manna (an insect excretion on leaves), of which George Augustus Robinson noted, "It was like milldew, and sweet." At this gathering tribesmen gathered to settle disputes and negotiate matters of importance.⁴³ Beveridge also described the crayfish, caught by dragging nets along the bottom of lagoons:

The *lyoors* drag the lagoons for the delicious crayfish, which they catch by the pailful. These delicate little crustaceae are highly esteemed by the aborigines because of their piquant flavour, which we imagine to

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be entirely due to the fact of their eating them without other cleaning than the mere removal of the outer shell. These little things being in so much request, the *lyoors* devote a considerable portion of their time to catching them.⁴⁴

Colonizers altered this balance, introducing hard-hoofed sheep and cattle, clearing the plains, and building artificial channels and water storage to service their economic exploitation of the landscape. Among other effects, they gradually encouraged the river to flow in one clearly defined channel, losing many of the lagoons and wetland swamps that had supported abundant plant and animal life.

Europeans defined the Wimmera basin by contrast to the Mallee, the hottest, driest part of Victoria.⁴⁵ This region is characterized by the dominance of mallee eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus dumosa*), or “Mallee scrub,” and extends across the northwestern region of Victoria and across to South Australia. This flat, low-lying tract formed an inland sea during the Miocene era (around 23 to 5 million years before the present), into which the Darling, Murrumbidgee, and Murray Rivers flowed. When the sea receded, coastal dunes formed a system of parallel east-west dunes, while limestone was formed that is now present throughout the area. The ancient lakes systems began with Lake Hindmarsh, sometimes overflowing northward down the Outlet Creek Channel into Lake Albacutya and thus into the Wyperfeld lakes to terminate in Pine Plains. Soaks and waterholes rise from fresh groundwater west of Pine Plains, and these were probably abundant until European settlement cleared vegetation and allowed them to become silted up.⁴⁶ Most of the region’s other lakes, such as Lake Tyrrell and Raak Plains, were formed by saline groundwater discharge.⁴⁷

Whites described it in abject terms, as “disgusting,” “dismal,” or “barren,” reserving their admiration instead for the bushcraft required to survive it or exploit its resources.⁴⁸ Red ochre, for example, was obtained once a year from Charlotte Lake, a depression located “in the very barrenest portion of the barren Mallee Scrub”—a journey of great hardship that took ten days or more. Water conservation techniques included carrying water in wallaby-skin bags, but when this ran out, the Wergaia obtained “a supply of sweet and limpid water” from a mallee root called *weir*, which

could be drained, procuring three or four gallons from twenty to thirty feet of root.⁴⁹

But for the Wergaia, the landscape was given fundamental meaning by the exploits of famous ancestral powers such as the Brambrambult, two brothers who moved across the country shaping it and establishing laws for humankind. These stories were told and retold to white listeners such as anthropologist R. H. Mathews, who recorded the story of the making of the Wimmera River and the lakes it flowed into as part of a much longer, even epic, narrative. It began:

Duan, the flying-squirrel [sugar glider], followed a kangaroo from somewhere near Stawell, and it ran away northerly down the Wimmera River, forming the present watercourse. The kangaroo grazed a long time about Lake Hindmarsh, eating the grass quite bare, and formed the lake. It went on and grazed about Lake Albacutya where another lake was formed the same way. From there it traveled on to Lake Wonga, where it was overtaken and killed by Duan. While he was cooking the kangaroo, Wirnbullain, the tarantula, came up and commenced fighting with Duan. The latter was getting the worst of it and climbed up into a tree out of the way. Wirnbullain commenced gnawing the base of the tree, and cut it down with a few bites.⁵⁰

Archaeologist Annie Ross suggests that such stories demonstrate the integration of the Mallee with the land to the south—the middle Wimmera Basin in Wergaia country. In addition, while early observers such as Beveridge suggested that the Mallee was only occupied seasonally, the Bram brothers' account indicates the year-round occupation of the Mallee, supported by other observations made during the 1850s and archaeological surveys that show that the Mallee was occupied on a permanent basis.⁵¹ The most common indication of occupation in the Mallee is the surface campsite, comprising scatters of stone tools and hearths, with heat retainers and the remains of kangaroo bones, freshwater mussel shells, and emu eggshells. Stone comes from local quarries, most notably Mount Grey, where a stone circle suggests ceremonial gatherings.⁵² Scarred trees indicate use of bark for canoes, shields, and other implements.

Significantly, Ross linked the occupation of the Mallee to social change within Aboriginal society dating to the past few thousand years. Reconstructing the region's long-term environmental transformations,

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she demonstrated how after the retreat of the last glacier, during the Holocene period (the past ten thousand years), temperatures and rainfall were both higher than at present. Watercourses from the Wimmera to Pine Plain were full of water (with the northernmost in the Wirrengren Plain holding eleven meters of fresh water just prior to 7000 BP [before the present]). However, around five thousand to four thousand years ago, drier conditions returned. Ross found that the majority of archaeological sites do not date to the period of abundance, but rather increased ten-fold during the more recent arid period from around 4000 BP.⁵³ Ross explains this pattern in terms of the intensification of settlement across the southeast during this period as a result of increased social complexity, expressed in extensive trading networks, the availability of a greater diversity of exotic stone for making tools, and evidence for permanent villages in southwestern Victoria.⁵⁴ While sites in the northern part of the Mallee may have been occupied only in times of abundance or for short forays to collect resources, the southern part of the Mallee formed an integral part of the Wimmera region to its south, reflecting the movement of people northward along the river and long-term social relationships spanning the region.

Camp Litter and Cutting Edges

After Mitchell, that keen surveyor, crossed and named the Campaspe River in October 1836, he described how one of his party—Piper, an Aboriginal man from New South Wales—“found at an old native encampment a razor, and I had the satisfaction of reading on the blade the words ‘Old English’ in this wild region, still so remote from civilized man’s dominion!”⁵⁵ Mitchell’s enjoyment of this find stemmed from his equation of objects and identity, a view grounded both in contemporary theory about personal property as well as everyday cultural practice. The razor was a pleasing metaphor for the colonizing project itself, and he enjoyed the exotic bravado of this mundane domestic artifact traveling so far from home—penetrating so far ahead of his own expedition into the unknown, it had become an active agent of colonization.

Of course, Mitchell was himself on the cutting edge of exploration and encounter, yet over following years, white settlers’ assessments of Aboriginal people continued to be powerfully formed through Aborigi-

nal material culture. Colonizers observed the camp litter left behind as evidence for everyday life, and especially trade between Aboriginal groups—defined by contrast with the commerce of Western capitalism. For their part, Aboriginal people appropriated European material culture into traditional systems of exchange that were characterized by reciprocity and structured by relations to kin and country. The impact of Western technology and material culture upon Indigenous tradition has been examined by archaeologists, particularly in northern Australia, in exploring large-scale shifts in social organization. To a lesser extent, the role of material culture in mediating black-white relations during early phases of contact has also been noted, but there has been little archaeological interest in Aboriginal participation in Western economies and consumption. This absence reflects the conventional restriction of Australian historical archaeological research to the experience of white settlers and is linked to methodological problems such as identifying artifacts in such essentializing terms as “Indigenous” or “European.”

“Tradition”: Aboriginal Subsistence and Exchange

As white invaders traveled through Wergaia country, they were alert to the traces left behind by Aboriginal people, using their camp litter as a means of inferring Aboriginal lifestyle.⁵⁶ Elements of Aboriginal material culture that were most obvious included remains of hearths and rubbish heaps, burials in tumuli (mounds), and dwellings.⁵⁷ Certain themes emerge from these contemporary observations that have continued to dominate Western perceptions of Aboriginal housing and domesticity ever since. Houses were a marker of civilization for Western observers, who correlated the simplicity of these structures with a low stage of human development. Beveridge was typical in noting that

... there are neither castes nor grades amongst these people of any kind, all being equal in the matter of social status. This being so, there is not any cogent enough reason to cause one hut to be made more pretentious than another, as would undoubtedly be the case did gradations of rank obtain among them, nor do they possess any traditions tending to show that there ever existed a better, or indeed any other, order of architecture than the very primitive style which is now, and as far as can

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be ascertained, always has been followed by the whole of the tribes of the Australian Continent. They are a people who seem to have come to a standstill in some remote age.⁵⁸

In northwestern Victoria it was noted that housing usually took the form of ephemeral structures made of gum branches and bark.⁵⁹ Europeans did not understand that within Aboriginal tradition such constructions were usually designed for living around as much as in, and were designed to be abandoned, due to seasonal movement, rather than permanently occupied. Overcrowding was another criticism made of Aboriginal dwellings, which Beveridge blamed for an “absence of chastity,” to which he attributed “the promiscuous manner they have of huddling up together in their *loondthals*, and to the coarse, obscene, and lewd character of the stories in listening to which they spend so much of their time round the camp fires at night.”⁶⁰ As I explore over following chapters, “overcrowding” has continued to be a central target for attempts to transform Indigenous domestic organization, both on the missions and elsewhere, up to the present day.

Archaeologists have continued to use “camp litter” as a means of reconstructing past society in the region. Archaeological survey of the Wimmera between Horsham and Jeparit, where the river terminates (the Middle Wimmera basin), has, unsurprisingly, found that sites in this semi-arid environment are tightly focused around the river and lakes. Most campsites were located on sand dunes along the river and represented a single meal, with freshwater mussel the most common component. Most middens were associated with stone artifacts or burnt clay heat retainers, sometimes with glass or ceramic items of European manufacture.⁶¹ Like Ross’s review of the southern Mallee, evidence supports settlement of the Middle Wimmera from around 5,000 years ago through to the present (late Holocene).⁶²

In 2006, archaeological investigation of one such small shell midden took place across the river from what was to become Ebenezer Mission.⁶³ As part of the investigation of the mission landscape (see chapters 4 and 5), “River Road 2” was recorded in 2000 as a small, one-meter-long shell midden exposed on a lowland plain along the western bank of the Wimmera River, at a depth of twelve centimeters below the present ground level. It borders farmland to its immediate west and hugs

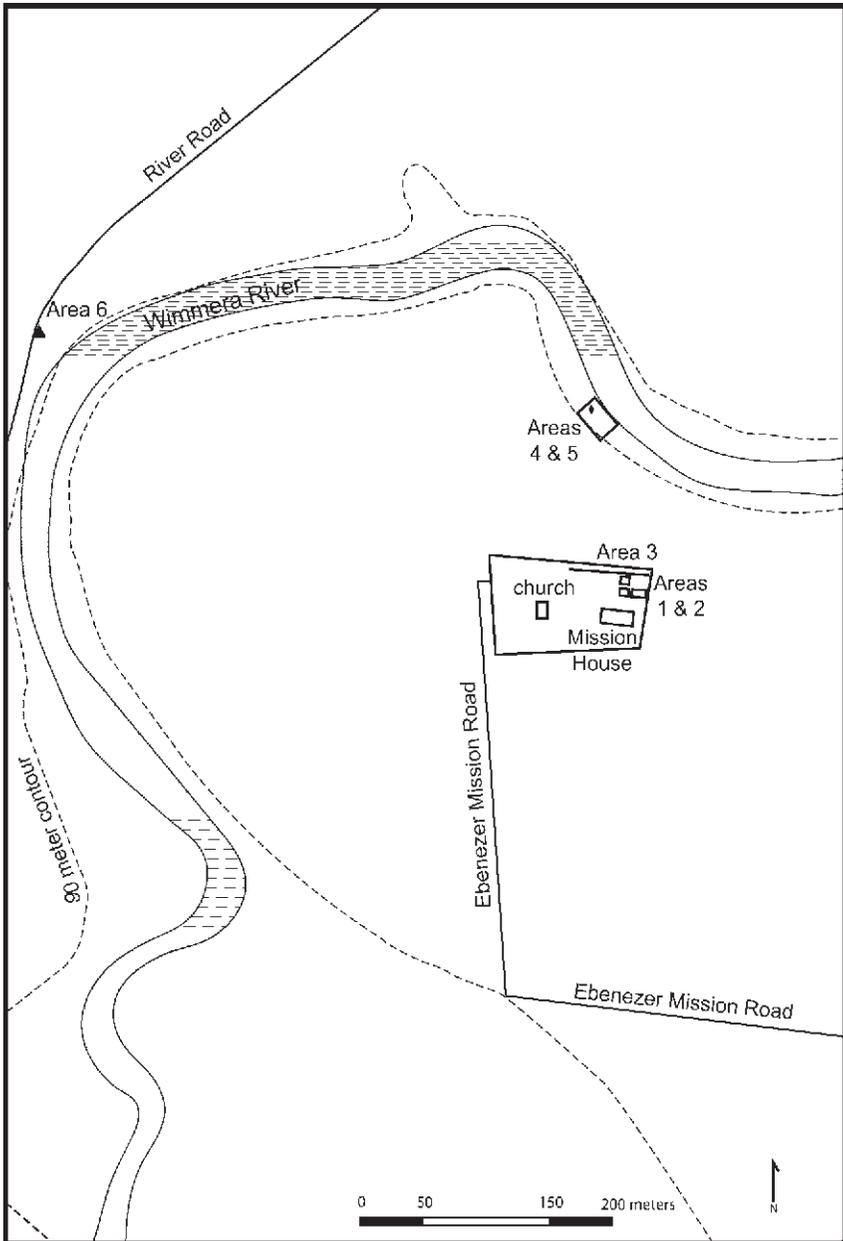


Figure 2.3. Location map showing archaeological areas around Ebenezer in 2003 and 2006. (Drawn by Kara Rasmanis.)

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natural creek-bordering (riverine) woodland along the river to its east. Investigation revealed that this feature represents a hearth that was used once, sometime between about four hundred and two hundred years ago, shortly before European settlement in the region and the establishment of Ebenezer Mission. The hearth represents a small fireplace, used for cooking; it contained a dozen mussel shells and a very small amount of meat from possibly a single rodent-sized animal. The people who made and used the hearth brought with them some quartz tools that they used to cut things with (such as cooked meat), or possibly to fix implements that they had with them (figure 2.4). The site lay exposed to the elements, and much of the charcoal and mussel shell was naturally fragmented and dispersed. As Bruno David points out, it is likely that the occupants of River Road 2 numbered between one and four people, perhaps a family group, or a hunting or foraging group temporarily stopping for a meal and to obtain water.⁶⁴

Aboriginal material culture also offered evidence for networks of trade and exchange. European observers defined this as “barter,” seeing it as

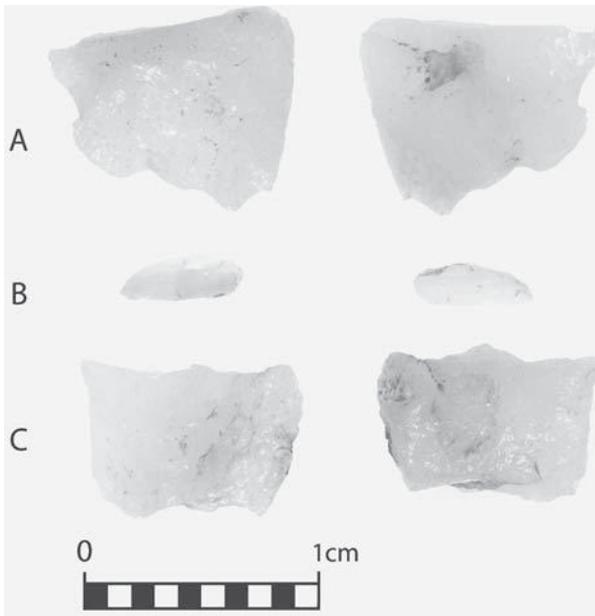


Figure 2.4. River Road 2 quartz tools. (Courtesy of Monash University.)

an early, primitive stage of human commerce in a sequence that reached its most fully developed form in modern capitalism.⁶⁵ By this time the capitalist economy had come to dominate the West, and it was customary for the means of production to be owned by private persons and operated for profit, while production, distribution, and value were all determined through the free market. Within the European social order, property was linked to status, and objects came to express their owner's identity—an association that was only enhanced with the rise of lower- and middle-class consumerism during the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ Indeed, Karl Marx's critique of capitalism, published in 1867, coined the ironic term *commodity fetishism* to liken the modern belief in the inherent meaning of commodities to a primitive superstition.⁶⁷ As Robert Brough Smyth wrote of the Victorian Aborigines a decade later:

Unlike the civilised and partially civilised people of the earth, the natives of Australia have not current tokens or representatives of value, exchangeable for other commodities, whereby commerce is facilitated, and settlements of account are made easy. They traffic only by exchanging one article for another. They barter with their neighbors; and it would seem that as regards the articles in which they deal, barter is as satisfactory to them as sale would be. They are astute in dealing with the whites, and it may be supposed that they exercise reasonable forethought and care when bargaining with their neighbors.⁶⁸

But Brough Smyth did not understand that *things* were just one element alongside the less tangible exchange of women, services, songs, names, and dances, and as more recent theorists of material culture have shown, may carry strong social meanings, deriving from the context of exchange, their source, or their ensuing biographies, during which those meanings might change radically.⁶⁹ Combining ethnographic research in northern Australia with archaeological evidence and the observations of settlers during the 1830s and 1840s, Isabel McBryde showed that traditional Aboriginal systems of exchange across southeastern Australia were determined as much by social as by economic requirements, and pointed to the importance of material culture in negotiating social relations.⁷⁰ So Robinson noted in 1845 that the wood of the Mallee was “famed among the Aborigines for making spears being flexible tenacious and hard,” and that these were exchanged during the festival of the Laap, “an occasion of great interest to

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the natives, when they assembled in large numbers to settle their disputes and adjust these matters connected with these tribes.”⁷¹ Such matters included arranging marriages—among the Wotjobaluk, elder brothers usually arranged their younger brothers’ marriages, having first established a relationship through the exchange of goods. This took place

most commonly at one of the great ceremonial, or festive gatherings at which the tribes which were allied by intermarriage assembled. At such gatherings, called the “*Jun*” [men’s council place], there was a place where the men assembled together, to consult. At such times, possible future marriages were much discussed and the course followed was this. When the time arrived that the people were about to return to their homes the principle headman lighted a fire at the *Jun*, around which all the men sat down promiscuously, most having things brought for barter. The Headman would commence by saying for instance “You can now exchange your things and make friends.” Before this the young men who are on the lookout for wives, will have made themselves acquainted with the girls who are disposable, and who are of that class with which theirs intermarries. Two such young men now seat themselves near each other, and on this announcement each hands to the other the things he wishes to exchange.⁷²

Using the example of greenstone quarried from the site of Mt. William, in Woiwurrung country, in south-central Victoria, to make axes, McBryde demonstrated that this material was exchanged widely across Victoria and New South Wales in patterns that reflect these goods’ social value: the Kulin confederacy, which owned and managed the quarry, exchanged Mt. William greenstone to the north and west despite the availability of functionally identical stone in these areas, while it was noticeably absent from the country of the Kurnai in Gippsland, their traditional enemies to the east⁷³ (figure 2.5, Victorian greenstone hafted axe).

While Howitt termed places such as Lake Hindmarsh “trading centres,” McBryde cautions against seeing these as primarily markets or routes traveled as “trade routes,” because “obviously inter-group meetings, which may or may not involve ceremonial, are important occasions for exchanges of many kinds. They provide the context for exchange, even if exchange is not a primary purpose for the gatherings,” and serve as “foci for the dissemination of ideas, of new materials and new items of material



Figure 2.5. Victorian greenstone hafted axe. (Melbourne Museum, X12211, provenanced to Victoria, acquired in 1903.)

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culture.”⁷⁴ So a desire for goods simply as a subsistence resource was rarely a dominant motivation, although expeditions were sometimes mounted to acquire materials such as reed stems for spear shafts, or quartz and fine-grained siliceous rock (chert). On one occasion, the Wotjobaluk sent word that they “were in want of stone for axes,” and this was brought to the next *Jun* from a quarry at Charlotte Plains, to the southeast, by its Dja Dja Wrung custodian Tenamet-javolich.⁷⁵ Evidence for the importance of gift giving on formal occasions indicates that certain items had special value—namely hatchet stone, possum-skin cloaks, and spears.

There is also extensive archaeological evidence for the exchange of stone through Wergaia country. A survey of the Middle Wimmera Basin (from Horsham to its termination at Jeparit) documented stone tools predominantly made of local quartz, obtainable throughout the area from outcrops, veins, pebbles in watercourses, and two quarries recorded near Stawell.⁷⁶ However, exotic materials (typically around 10 percent of site assemblages) include sandstone and fine-grained metasediments from the Grampians-Gariwerd region, basalt and rhyolite from 100 kilometers to the south and southwest, and chert and silcrete from the south coast of Victoria or the Mallee further north. As one would expect, these foreign materials were more carefully curated, tending to comprise retouched, ground, or utilized implements.⁷⁷ It represents the material residues of exchange networks between the Wergaia and their closely interlinked neighbors such as the Jadawadjali, especially to the south and southwest.

Such exchange is essential to the reproduction of cultures, as objects from strange or distant places mediate relationships and justify authority within groups. As Howitt noted:

Not only were articles which the people made themselves bartered, but also things which had some special value, and perhaps been brought from some distant place. Such an instance I heard of at one of these meetings many years ago. An ancient shield had been brought originally from the upper waters of the Murrumbidgee River, and was greatly valued because, as my informant said, “It had won many fights.” Yet it was exchanged, and carried away on its farther travels.⁷⁸

Western observers also recognized but failed to understand the high value placed on “sharing” in a traditional Aboriginal economy characterized

by reciprocity. Within small groups, sharing was an important means of defining social relationships, and instead of pricing goods or services in monetary terms, Aboriginal people measured value in terms of the usefulness of the help offered—what has been termed a “grammar of service.”⁷⁹ Sharing is a concept that relies on a conception of individual ownership, which had very different inflections within Western and Indigenous traditions. While many have observed the Aboriginal requirement to share, this has often been construed in Western terms as “generosity,” an altruistic unsolicited giving: for example, in 1881 James Dawson, a settler in Victoria’s Western District, noted how children were taught the importance of unselfishness in sharing food, commenting that “this custom is called *yuurka baawbaar*, meaning ‘exchange,’ and, to show the strict observance of it, and the punishment for its infringement, they tell a story of a mean fellow,” who was punished by death.⁸⁰ However, as anthropologist Nicolas Peterson points out, gifts are often made in response to direct demand, which in small-scale societies offers the advantages of avoiding making difficult decisions (about who to give to), places the onus on others, masks different evaluations of relationships, and provides excuses *not* to give. This “inertial” system therefore provides mechanisms to regulate sharing and to avoid excessive demands, recognizing the difficulties posed by delayed reciprocity, as time alters the value of relationships and goods.⁸¹ As I explore further, perceptions of Aboriginal generosity, hospitality, and sharing have often been blamed for failure to assimilate into a mainstream culture that values the acquisition of personal property and independence.

Appropriation

As white invasion proceeded, goods, disease, and information were rapidly transmitted across vast distances. In 1846, for example, George Windsor-Earl recorded of the encampment of Port Essington in the Northern Territory that Aboriginal people visiting from the interior spoke of “white people who dwelt in the country to the south, and who built houses of stone,” presumably referring to one of the new colonies of South Australia or New South Wales, on the opposite side of the continent.⁸² The Wergaia studied the invaders’ strange products, passed inland along trade networks, sometimes decades before they laid eyes on the people

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who had made them. The sight of the new humans, even though strangely colored, was less amazing than their physical traces, imprinted in the still-soft earth: Mitchell's dray, drawn by bullocks, and the flocks of sheep and cattle that accompanied them left tracks that remained visible for years, used by settlers as a guide into the "new" regions. One early settler in the Wimmera, Samuel Carter, later recalled that "they had seen the tracks of Major Mitchell's dray, and were very frightened as they could see no end to it. The wheel tracks they took for the footprints of the white men, and the bullock tracks for those of the white women."⁸³ With fresh insight, Robert Kenny argues that to people for whom the landscape was filled with meaning, a cosmology in which every animal, plant, and natural feature had its place in the order of things, it was not the strange men and women that sent shock waves through their lives, but rather the strange animals they brought with them. He asks:

What did the appearance in their midst of strange and unexpected species do to Wotjobaluk lore? . . . Imagine you have lived your life in a world where kangaroos, wallabies, emus, echidnas, possums, wombats, snakes, and lizards were the most visible things; where the biggest things that moved, other than humans—kangaroos and emus—were bipeds similar in size to humans. I do not wish to romanticize here, only to ask you to imagine the impact. Onto this ground enter bullocks, men on horseback, massive carts, and herds of sheep. A steer's mass is up to ten times that of a kangaroo. What could you think if all your life you had tracked soft-footed wallabies and bare-footed humans, and you suddenly found the tracks of iron-rimmed wheels and hard-hoofed oxen? The genre to turn to is science fiction: the Martians have landed.⁸⁴

The close relationship that evidently prevailed between these new people and their never-before-seen domesticated flocks was particularly threatening. Kenny suggests that the Wotjobaluk, watching the care that pastoralists took of their livestock, would have seen "humans cajoled by animals . . . servants of the sheep," and asks, "How could the Wotjobaluk not have believed that these animals were European 'totems' to which the settlers were mystically linked?"⁸⁵ This relationship would have been given deeper significance once Christianity was explained, with its fundamental symbolism of Christ as the lamb and God as shepherd of his flock.

Other physical traces of the invaders preceded their arrival, quickly exchanged far inside the frontier. Archaeologists concerned with contact have tended to frame this process in terms of its effects upon traditional Aboriginal culture, studying primarily Aboriginal appropriation of European goods and the large-scale transformation of Indigenous settlement patterns or exchange networks. The eager Aboriginal appropriation of metal axes became a leitmotif of the interest in Western goods. As I have noted, stone axes were essential to everyday life, and archaeological and documentary evidence has demonstrated the symbolic and social significance attached to certain quarries. In 1878, for example, Robert Brough Smyth wrote that “a man never leaves his encampment without his hatchet . . . a native could scarcely maintain existence in Australia if deprived of this implement.”⁸⁶ Peter Beveridge described the excitement caused by the appearance of metal axes:

The natives hailed the European tomahawk on its first introduction as the greatest boon which was ever conferred on their savage lot; and to hear, as we have done, an old aborigine, even at this day, describing the sensation caused by the appearance of the first amongst his tribe, is of the richest. The news of the appearance of this most wonderful weapon spread far and wide in a very short time, and great was the aboriginal muster in consequence. Friendly tribes from the remoter districts, flocked into the main camping ground, and single families from the furthestmost nooks and corners joined the crowd, all intent upon viewing this marvelous axe; and when it was produced to their astonished gaze, much ejaculation and clucking with the tongue ensued. Each one who had the pleasure of having it in his hand, with glistening eye and radiant countenance, said “*Tumoo Talko* [more good];” and each one who was permitted the privilege of testing its cutting powers, ejaculated “*Nga loorongandoo tumoo talko*” [and very much more good]. As a natural consequence, everyone wished to become the owner of this *Talko patchic* [good tomahawk], so that there came very nearly being a sanguinary conflict over the matter; indeed it was only a universal promise to loan it on every canoe-cutting occasion that kept the peace and good fellowship that had existed in these tribes for ever so many generations, from being summarily terminated on the spot.⁸⁷

The demand for this new and better axe prompted large-scale social change in Aboriginal societies. As Lauriston Sharp’s classic study of the

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Yir Yiront people of Cape York in northern Queensland demonstrated, the arrival of steel axes undermined older men's power and created a new dependence on white trading partners who imposed authority upon members of the group.⁸⁸ In this vein, archaeologists have documented a range of ways that introduced disease, technologies, and goods were appropriated into Aboriginal tradition in northern Australia, effecting large-scale changes in traditional social structures. Scott Mitchell, for example, has suggested that contact between the people of northwestern Arnhem Land and Macassan traders beginning in the eighteenth century, and followed by European settlement in the nineteenth century, prompted increased and diversified regional exchange networks. New goods became a means of resolving conflict caused by the impact of introduced diseases, particularly the dearth of women. Mitchell evaluates different explanations provided for the intensification of regional exchange in Arnhem Land following Macassan contact, and largely on the basis of archaeological evidence that exotic items were exchanged for "mundane" objects, he concludes that exchange intensified as a means of mediating disputes caused by gender imbalance.⁸⁹

While the evidence for cultural contact in southeastern Australia seems to reflect a similar dissemination of disease, information, and goods ahead of settlement as well as the appropriation of Western goods into traditional cultures, the rapidity of invasion simply did not allow time for Indigenous societies to adjust before dispossession was complete. Within a few years, Aboriginal people were irrevocably drawn into the capitalist economy. Aboriginal postcontact sites have been identified and analyzed chiefly in terms of Aboriginal use of exotic, European-made goods, such as flaked bottle glass artifacts.⁹⁰ However, as a result there has been a tendency to structure analysis around a distinction between traditional, "Aboriginal" material culture on the one hand, and historic, "European" goods on the other, with items such as worked bottle glass occupying a kind of hybrid status in between. As Rodney Harrison argues of the Kimberley in northwestern Australia, the value of metal items to long-term semisedentary Aboriginal pastoral workers makes categorization as "Aboriginal" or "European" meaningless.⁹¹ In the same way, a focus on "hybrid" objects may be useful in challenging interpretive essentialism in the present, but does not imply any such fluidity in use or in the identity of their former owners.⁹² Nonetheless, the Western tendency to interpret

material culture as an expression of a person's inner essence has persisted into the present, as archaeologists continue to assume that identity resides within the object rather than in its role within a network of social relationships. Clive Gamble points out that in some cases, "combinations of objects are believed, rather like perfume sprays, to exude 'essence of kingship.'"⁹³ Analysis continues to emphasize the appropriation of European materials into "traditional" culture and to define "Aboriginal" and "European" artifacts on the basis of their manufacture, in combination with other formal characteristics. Despite a well-established critique, this essentializing approach continues to structure interpretation, leading to a narrow and restrictive emphasis on what are seen as authentic objects.

Participation in the Western Economy

Following invasion, Wergaia speakers quickly began to participate in the Western economy. It cannot be assumed that such participation represented a wholesale shift in worldview—for example, some anthropological studies in northern Australia have noted the resistance of Aboriginal values to commoditization, as items such as cars or even money itself are incorporated into Aboriginal exchange systems. Basil Sansom explores how money that enters an Alice Springs camp no longer functions "in market terms as a generalized medium of exchange" but is instead subject to "evaluation in acts of help, helping and helping out. When this happens, dollar amounts lose their capacity to function as prices," as cash enters "a philosophy of voluntaristic social action in which giving and receiving is conceptualized as the rendering of services from one person to another."⁹⁴ In other words, money loses its neutrality and is valued according to how helpful it might be at a particular moment.

No doubt the Indigenous people incorporated new goods and ideas into traditional ways—for example, the Wergaia (*Djadjala* dialect) word for money was *lirinjug*, the same as that used for mussel shells or crayfish claws.⁹⁵ However, as Beveridge noted, "The advent of the civilized race gave to them tastes and wants which, until then, were altogether foreign to their nature."⁹⁶ The rapidity of invasion did force profound changes, which white observers interpreted as acculturation.

Initial exchanges between black and white probably represented diplomatic or formal rituals for Aboriginal people, although the meaning of

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the transaction may not have been shared by both parties: for example, Batman's Treaty with the Woiwurrung of Port Phillip in 1835 involved signing a contract that the white settlers understood to relinquish the land in exchange for a range of goods, including blankets, beads, and knives; by contrast, the Aboriginal participants may have thought they were conducting a Tanderrum ceremony to make the visitors welcome for a limited period.⁹⁷ But these traditional means of incorporating white settlers were soon discarded in favor of finding ways to subsist in a country whose resources they were denied. As in other colonies, they quickly developed a semicommercial trade with settlers, giving fish in exchange for bread or meat, or bringing firewood or water for clothes or bread. Instead of local expertise or reciprocity, they began to provide labor.⁹⁸ Aboriginal people in the southeast worked in most colonial industries, especially the fishery and pastoral industries, although they were often paid poorly or in rations, which weakened the incentive to work. As we now recognize, they worked hard and made a crucial contribution to the colonial economy. Although Aboriginal people were criticized for "laziness," these forms of casual itinerant labor suited their traditional notions of seasonal movement. These forms of exchange were structured by the power relations between the participants, and a dominant motive for colonists was to create dependence and control.⁹⁹

A relatively recent interest in the archaeology of contact has prompted a range of studies exploring the role of the material in cultural exchange, some addressing Aboriginal experience in southeastern Australia.¹⁰⁰ However, we still lack studies of Aboriginal participation in the Western economy and appropriation of new forms of material culture. European-made goods are still assumed by archaeologists to represent Western values, much as they were by white observers during the nineteenth century. As I explore over the following chapters, such views overlook the complex ways that Aboriginal people appropriated and deployed Western material culture while sustaining and transforming a strong sense of their Aboriginality.

Notes

1. Alfred William Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (facsimile edition, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2001; first published London: Mac-

millan, 1904), 454–55; Robert Hamilton Mathews also described these “spirit-lands,” which he termed *mi-yur*, and for which he provided compass readings: R. H. Mathews, “Ethnological Notes on the Aboriginal Tribes of New South Wales and Victoria,” *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, 38 (1904): 293. However, Wemba Wemba man Jackson Stewart from Swan Hill told John Mathew that some things were common to both, that the whole world wasn’t divided between the classes: Papers of John Mathew, AIATSIS MS 950 Series 8, folder 9. R. H. Mathews, “Ethnological Notes,” lists clans as if they are named groups that occupy specific areas—which Ian Clark questions but Peter Corris endorses. Ian Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800–1900*, Monash Publications in Geography No. 37 (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Press, 1990): 362; Peter Corris, *Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria*, Occasional Papers in Aboriginal Studies No. 12, Ethnohistory Series No. 1 (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1968): 42–43.

2. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, 453–55.

3. “Informant is ‘Tommy’ one of the Wotjoballuk.” Papers of A.W. Howitt, AIATSIS MS 69, Box 3, Folder 6, Paper 3.

4. Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans*, 353; L. Hercus, *The Languages of Victoria: A Late Survey, Part II.*, Australian Aboriginal Studies 17 (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1969).

5. The Wotjobaluk claimed the Mallee, Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, 55, 121; see also Robert Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. 1 (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1878), 39. For a detailed review, see Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans*, 351–52; Diane Barwick, “Mapping the Past: An Atlas of Victorian Clans 1835–1904, Part 1,” *Aboriginal History*, 8(1/2) (1984): 100–131. It must be noted, however, that Barengi Gadjin Land Council considers this map to be misleading, because it does not represent the traditional owners’ wider links to places outside the boundary shown (Gail Harradine, e-mail communication, 13 April 2009).

6. Howitt, Papers, LTL Ms. 9356, 1045/6 (a), cited in Ted Ryan, “Wergaia Worlds: A Study of Indigenous/European Cultural Contact in the Mallee Region of Northwest Victoria, 1870–1910” (honors thesis, Department of History, La Trobe University, 1999), 52.

7. W. E. H. Stanner, “Howitt, Alfred William (1830–1908),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 4, ed. Douglas Pike (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972), 432–35; Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*; Derek John Mulvaney, *The Australian Aborigines 1606–1929: Opinions and Field-work*, Parts 1 and 2 (London: Melbourne University Press, 1964), 1–56; Derek John Mulvaney, “The Ascent of Aboriginal Man: Howitt as Anthropologist,” in

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Mary Howitt Walker, *Come Wind, Come Weather: A Biography of Alfred Howitt* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1971) 285–312; Derek John Mulvaney, “The Anthropologist as Tribal Elder,” *Mankind* 7 (1970): 205–17.

8. Howitt used the Wotjobaluk as an example of how the “two-class system,” with female descent, had altered (contrasted with eight subclasses) in accordance with his view that they reflected different stages of development: Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, 120–22 (see also 453–54).

9. Stanner, “Howitt, Alfred William (1830–1908),” 434; Ian Keen, “The Anthropologist as Geologist: Howitt in Colonial Gippsland,” *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 11(1) (2000): 78–98. Howitt’s approach also focused on gender and marriage relations as key to understanding society as a whole. For discussion of this paradigm and Aboriginal data, see Henrika Kuklick, “Humanity in the Chrysalis Stage: Indigenous Australians in the Anthropological Imagination, 1899–1926,” *British Journal of the Historical Society* 39(4) (2006): 535–68.

10. Lester Richard Hiatt, *Arguments about Aborigines: Australia and the Evolution of Social Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 40–47.

11. Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion* (London, New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 173–84; James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 688; Emile Durkheim, *Incest: The Nature and Origin of the Taboo*, trans. Edward Sagarin (New York: Stuart, 1963).

12. As Elizabeth Edwards points out, this orientation requires the reenactment and citation of past social processes: Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 157–80.

13. For an account of Howitt’s activities, see Mulvaney, “The Ascent of Aboriginal Man,” and “The Anthropologist as Tribal Elder,” 205–17.

14. March 1880, cited in Walker, *Come Wind, Come Weather*, 233.

15. Mulvaney, “The Anthropologist as Tribal Elder,” 205–17.

16. As Martin Thomas’s research has shown, Mathews was excluded from the inner circles of Australian anthropology at this time, in part because of his challenge to their evolutionist approach: Martin Thomas, ed., *Culture in Translation: The Anthropological Legacy of R. H. Mathews* (Canberra: Australian National University EPress and Aboriginal History Inc., 2007), 91–92. See also A. P. Elkin, “R. H. Mathews: His Contribution to Aboriginal Studies: Parts I—III,” *Oceania* 46 (1975): 1–24, 126–52, 206–34.

17. Mathews corresponded with Shaw at Coranderrk in 1898, obtaining information about three men, including Ned McLennan, aged 48, Wimmera: Shaw to Mathews, 6 July 1898, R. H. Mathews, National Library of Australia

(NLA), MS 8006, Box 2, Series 2, Folder 9, Shaw File; Bogisch to Mathews, 8 August 1898 and 17 August 1898, Mathews, NLA MS 8006, Box 2, Series 2, Folder 9; Mathews, NLA Series 8, subseries 1, 448; John Mathew, Notebook, c.1906, AIATSIS MS 950, Series 8, Folder 11, 48–57; R. H. Mathews, “The Victorian Aborigines: Their Initiation Ceremonies and Divisional Systems,” *American Anthropologist* 11 (1898).

18. Bogisch to Mathews, 8 August 1898 and 17 August 1898: Mathews, NLA MS 8006, Box 2, Series 2, Folder 9.

19. R. H. Mathews, NLA MS 8006, Box 13, Series 8, subseries 2, 545, “In Victoria”; Jane Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

20. “. . . when he to my great surprise and delight took hold of some locks of his hair with his right hand and said ‘I’m . . . straight hair, other fellows are mokwar, curly hair.’” John Mathew, Papers, AIATSIS MS 950, Series 8, Folder 1. He published this theory in John Mathew, *Eaglehawk and Crow: A Study of the Australian Aborigines Including an Inquiry into Their Origin and a Survey of Australian Languages* (London: David Nutt; Melbourne: Melville, Mullen and Slade, 1899).

21. John Mathew, Papers, AIATSIS MS 950, Series 8, Folder 9, “Record of Visits to Home Mission Station, Wimmera-Mallee, 1909.” In the early 1900s Mathew was convenor of the Church’s Home Mission Committee, which was responsible for small remote rural parishes such as those in the Wimmera: see Malcolm Prentis, *Science, Race and Faith: A Life of John Mathew* (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1998), 143–44. Most of Mathew’s notebooks are written in brevi-script, his own personal shorthand, which remains undeciphered.

22. John Mathew, Notebook, c.1906, AIATSIS MS 950, Series 8, Folder 1.

23. John Bradley, “Landscapes of the Mind, Landscapes of the Spirit: Negotiating a Sentient Landscape,” in *Working on Country: Contemporary Indigenous Management of Australia’s Lands and Coastal Regions*, ed. R. Baker, J. Davies, and E. Young (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 295–307; Ian Keen, *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Ian Keen, “Ancestors, Magic, and Exchange in Yolngu Doctrines: Extensions of the Person in Time and Space,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12(3) (1989): 515–30. A similar personification of place is characteristic of Aranda and Warlpiri cosmology: Nancy D. Munn, “The Transformation of Subjects into Objects in Walbiri and Pitjantjatjara Myth,” in *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology*, ed. R. M. Berndt (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1970), 141–63; John Morton, “Sustaining Desire: A Structuralist Interpretation of Myth and Male Cult in Central Australia,” unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Australian National University, 1985.

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24. Franca Tamisari and J. Wallace, "Towards an Experiential Archaeology: From Site to Place through the Body," in *The Social Archaeology of Indigenous Societies: Essays on Aboriginal History*, ed. D. Bruno, I. McNiven, and B. Barker (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006), 204–23; John Morton, "Aboriginal Religion Today," in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, ed. S. Kleinert and M. Neale (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 15; Deborah Bird Rose, "The Power of Place," in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, 40–49; and see Deborah Bird Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness* (Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission, 1996).

25. Deborah Bird Rose, "The Power of Place."

26. Marcia Langton, "The Edge of the Sacred, the Edge of Death: Sensual Inscriptions," in *Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Place*, ed. B. David and M. Wilson (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 253–69 (255). And see Howard Morphy, "Landscape and the Reproduction of the Ancestral Past," in *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*, ed. E. Hirsch and M. O'Hanlon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Deborah Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human: Life and Land in an Aboriginal Australian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); L. Taylor, "The Sun Always Shines in Perth: A Post-Colonial Geography of Identity, Memory and Place," *Australian Geographical Studies* 38 (2000): 27–35.

27. Nancy Munn, "Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape," *Critical Inquiry* 22(3) (Spring 1996): 446–65.

28. John Morton, "Aboriginal Religion Today," in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, ed. S. Kleinert and M. Neale (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 15.

29. Peter Beveridge, *The Aborigines of Victoria and Riverina* (Melbourne: M. L. Hutchison, 1889), 94–95.

30. Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 94–95.

31. Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 98.

32. Although concepts of individual possessions were recognized: Edward Curr, for example, noted, "Rights of personal property are as much regarded within the tribes as amongst ourselves," and that Aboriginal people "allowed" women to own property even though they themselves belonged to their husband: "I have heard husbands ask permission of their wives to take something out of their bags." Edward M. Curr, *The Australian Race: Its Origin, Languages, Customs, Place of Landing in Australia, and the Routes by Which It Spread Itself over That Continent* (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1886), 66.

33. Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996), 39–42; Henry Reyn-

olds, *The Law of the Land* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1987), 73–74; Jessie Mitchell, “Country Belonging to Me’: Land and Labour on Aboriginal Missions and Protectorate Stations, 1830–1850,” *Eras*, edition 6, November 2004, www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras/edition_6/mitchellarticle.htm; F. Jensz, “Moravian Papers Project—Stage 2,” final report (Victorian Aboriginal Corporation of Languages, 2000), Item 199: “Since land round Lake Boga belonged to him he should receive food for nothing,” trans Jensz. Appendix 3: Instructions to missionaries.

34. See the discussion in Lester Richard Hiatt, *Arguments about Aborigines: Australia and the Evolution of Social Anthropology* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18.

35. Thomas Livingstone 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* (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1965 [1838]), 333.

36. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 333.

37. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 333.

38. For a reconstruction, see Robert Vincin, “What If There Was No River System?” (paper delivered to Murray-Darling Workshop, Wagga Wagga, September 1995), cited in Jill Tacon, “The River and the Town,” in *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, ed. Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University EPress, 2005), 1–19.

39. Charles Browning Hall, 6 September 1863, in T. F. Bride, ed., *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1969), 268.

40. Hall, 6 September 1863, 271.

41. Nelly Zola and Beth Gott, *Koorie Plants, Koorie People: Traditional Aboriginal Food, Fibre and Healing Plants of Victoria* (Melbourne: Koorie Heritage Trust, c.1992), 8–9; Beth Gott, “Cumbungi, Typha Species: A Staple Aboriginal Food in Southern Australia,” *Australian Aboriginal Studies* (1999): 6, 9–10; George Augustus Robinson, “Australia Felix—Report of a Journey of 1100 Miles to the Tribes of the N.W. and Western Interior,” 1845, Mitchell Library Manuscript Collection, 4.

42. Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 80–85.

43. Robinson, “Australia Felix,” 4; lerps are formed from the honeydew excreted by psyllids, tiny (5 mm) leaf sap-sucking invertebrates.

44. Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 83.

45. In 1906 it is believed Mildura reached 50.8°C (123.4°F) in temperature. January–February maximums average about 32°C (90°F), while the winter average is 16°C (60°F) with a minimum of 4°C (39°F) and very common frosts. The Mallee receives an average rainfall of 250 mm per year in the north to 350 mm in the south: P. May and R. L. K. Fullager, “Aboriginal Exploitation of the Southern Mallee,” *Victorian Archaeological Survey Records* 10 (1980): 152–72 (153).

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46. May and Fullager, "Aboriginal Exploitation of the Southern Mallee," 153–55; Annie Ross, "Holocene Environments and Prehistoric Site Patterning in the Victorian Mallee," *Archaeology in Oceania* 16 (1981): 145–54; Annie Ross, *Aboriginal Land Use in the Mallee District of North Western Victoria* (Land Conservation Council of Victoria, 1986), 12–13; L. Robin, *Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998), 8–9.

47. Phil Macumber, "The Influence of Groundwater Discharge on the Mallee Landscape," in *Aeolian Landscapes in the Semi-Arid Zone of South Eastern Australia*, ed. R. Storrier and M. E. Stannard (Australian Society of Soil Science, Riverina Branch, 1980), 67–84.

48. See, for example, E. J. Andrews, ed., *Stapylton with Major Mitchell's Australia Felix Expedition, 1836, Largely from the Journal of Granville William Chetwynd Stapylton* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1986), 139, 146; Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 97; A. S. Kenyon, *The Story of the Mallee: A History of the Victorian Mallee*, read before the Historical Society of Victoria, 18 March 1912 (Clayton: Wilkie & Co, reprinted 1982), 25; Robert Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. 1 (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1878), 33.

49. Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 27–28. See also Curr, *The Australian Race*, 83; Robinson, "Australia Felix."

50. R. H. Mathews, Papers, NLA, Notebooks, Series 3, Folder 4, Notebook 1, 135–36. It should be noted that in another version of this story, the kangaroo is not killed but keeps going into the Mallee Scrub: Gail Harradine, e-mail correspondence, 13 April 2009.

51. Robinson, "Australia Felix." Indeed, Beveridge noted that in the winter-time, "They make a common habit of trailing through the Mallee Scrub for hundreds of miles. They are extremely partial to these rambles, as they can be done with the utmost impunity—that is, they have no fear of meeting with hostile tribes during such journeyings." Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 27.

52. Ross, *Aboriginal Land Use*, 28. And see Ross, "Holocene Environments," 145–54.

53. Ross, *Aboriginal Land Use*, 39.

54. See contributions to Bruno David, Bryce Barker, and Ian J. McNiven, eds., *The Social Archaeology of Australian Indigenous Societies* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006) for a recent response to these ideas about intensification and social complexity first advanced in Australia by Harry Lourandos.

55. In 1849 in isolated country west of Wirrengren Plain, fun seeker J. W. Beilby saw old *mia-mias* on the edge of a well, with bones, shells, stone toma-

hawk—and “ragged odds and ends of British manufacture were visible.” J. W. Beilby in Kenyon, *The Story of the Mallee*, 27.

56. See, for example, Robinson, “Australia Felix,” 4.

57. See, for example, Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 32–34.

58. Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 104–5.

59. Although more substantial structures were also described: G. Krefft, “On the Vertebrated Animals of the Lower Murray and Darling, Their Habits, Economy, and Geographical Distribution,” *Trans. Phil. Soc. N.S.W.* (1862–1865) [1866]: 371; Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 194; Curr, *The Australian Race*, 97.

60. Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 24.

61. Archaeological Consulting Services, “The Wimmera River Cultural Heritage Study, Stage II: The Middle Wimmera Basin,” report prepared for Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative, 1998, 49–51.

62. Archaeological Consulting Services, “The Wimmera River Cultural Heritage Study”; see also Caroline Bird and David Frankel, *An Archaeology of Gariwerd: From Pleistocene to Holocene in Western Victoria* (St. Lucia: Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland, 2005); Caroline Bird, “Aboriginal Land Use in the Wimmera” (Land Conservation Council, 1984); Caroline Bird, “Aboriginal Sites in the Horsham Region,” *Victorian Archaeological Survey* (Melbourne: 1990); J. W. Rhoads and C. F. M. Bird, “An Archaeological Survey of the Southwest Wimmera” (unpublished report to Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 2000.)

63. This site was discovered and recorded by Vanessa Edmonds on 31 January 2000 and was referenced Wimmera River Midden 1 (WRM1) in Bruno David’s 2006 field notes and digital photographs. The midden is located on the Nhill 1:100,000 topographic map (sheet 7225) at Grid Coordinates 588152 E 5980656 N, on Map Quadrant 2. It has been allocated the site number 7225-274 by AAV in the Victoria Site Register. For a detailed account, see Bruno David, “River Road 2 midden: area 6,” in Jane Lydon, Bruno David, and Zvonkica Stanin, “Archaeological Investigation of the Former Ebenezer Mission, Victoria: Stage II” (Report prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Heritage Victoria, 2007): 58–69.

64. The absence of other known archaeological hearths in the immediate area indicates that the group of people using River Road 2 were probably by themselves rather than accompanied by others. Bruno David in Lydon, David, and Stanin, “Archaeological Investigation.”

65. The debate about barter and the origins of money was prominent in Western economic theory: “Introduction” in *Barter, Exchange and Value*, ed. Caroline Humphrey and Stephen Hugh-Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3. As archaeologist Isabel McBryde’s reconstructions of traditional

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Indigenous exchange across southeastern Australia have shown, however, contemporary accounts reflect a European concern with the economic or resource basis of exchange, while late nineteenth-century ethnographers such as Howitt emphasize the ceremonial nature of the intergroup gatherings at which it took place. Isabel McBryde, "Exchange in South Eastern Australia: An Ethnohistorical Perspective," *Aboriginal History* 8(2) (1984): 132–53.

66. Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 135.

67. Marx contrasted the object's seemingly inherent value with the labor that actually produced it and the consequent mediation of relationships through the medium of the market: Karl Marx, *Capital: The Process of Production of Capital* (first published 1867, first English edition: Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887). While he was referring to the alienation of commodities from labor, he also described the way that they took on their owner's identity, suggesting that "ownership" was used as a way to "preserve his personality and to distinguish himself from other men, as well as to relate to them." Karl Marx, *Excerpts from James Mill's Elements of Political Economy*, cited in Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984 [1979]), 267. Scholars continue to contrast the commodity and the gift, which is inalienable from the giver, and which creates indebtedness and reciprocity in exchange: see, for example, C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press, 1982) and Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 14–34. However, the distinction between class- and clan-based economies has proved less useful, because things are fluid in their meaning, moving through different "regimes of value" that are distinct or may overlap in the process of exchange: Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3–63.

68. Robert Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. 1 (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1878), 180.

69. See, for example, I. Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization in Process," in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Appadurai, 64–94; Appadurai, "Introduction," 3–63. For archaeological and ethnographic analysis of Aboriginal exchange systems, see W. E. H. Stanner, "Ceremonial Economics of the Mulluk Mulluk and Mandgella Tribes of the Daly River, North Australia: A Preliminary Paper," *Oceania* IV (2) (1933): 156–75; IV(4) (1934): 458–71; R. M. Berndt, "Ceremonial Exchange in Western Arnhem Land," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 7 (1951), 156–76; D. F. Thomson, *Economic Structure and*

the Ceremonial Exchange Cycle in Arnhem Land (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1949); F. Myers, "Place, Identity and Exchange in a Totemic System: Nurturance and the Process of Social Reproduction in Pintupi Society," in *Exchanging Products: Producing Exchange*, Oceania Monograph 43, ed. J. Fajans (Sydney: Oceania Publications, 1993), 33–57. H. Lourandos, "Aboriginal Spatial Organization and Population: Southwestern Victoria Reconsidered," *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania* 12 (1977): 202–25; D. J. Mulvaney, "The Chain of Connection," in *Tribes and Boundaries in Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Nicolas Peterson (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1976).

70. I. McBryde, "Exchange in Southeastern Australia: An Ethnohistorical Study," *Aboriginal History* 8(1–2) (1984b): 132–53 (151).

71. Robinson, "Australia Felix," 4. See also Edward Curr, "It is interesting to know, that the practice of barter exists among the Australians, and that it is common for one tribe to exchange with another, articles which their country produces in excess, for commodities which are not found in it." Curr, *The Australian Race*, 77–78.

72. Alfred William Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (facsimile of the first edition, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1996. First published London: Macmillan, 1904), 717; and see Howitt, AIATSIS box 5, folder 4, paper 5, notes on marriages; and Howitt, AIATSIS box 6, folder 3, paper 5, "Custom called Yutyuto."

73. The clarity of this boundary accords with the nineteenth-century observation that smallpox had not infected the Kurnai, although this introduced disease had ravaged Aboriginal societies all around them to the north and west. I. McBryde and G. Harrison, "Valued Good or Valuable Stone . . .," in *Archaeological Studies of Pacific Stone Resources*, ed. F. B. Leach and J. Davidson (Oxford: B.A.R. International Series 104, 1981), 183–208. Among her publications on this topic, see especially I. McBryde, "Kulin Greenstone Quarries: The Social Contexts of Production and Distribution for the Mt. William Site," *World Archaeology* 16(2) (1984a): 267–85.

74. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, 717–18; McBryde, "Exchange in Southeastern Australia," 142; and see Isabel McBryde, "Wil-im-ee Mooring: Or, Where Do Axes Come From?" *Mankind* 1(3) (1978): 354–82; and McBryde, "Kulin Greenstone Quarries."

75. McBryde, "Kulin Greenstone Quarries," 148; Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, 689–90.

76. Archaeological Consulting Services, "The Wimmera River Cultural Heritage Study," 44–45.

77. Archaeological Consulting Services, "The Wimmera River Cultural Heritage Study," 49–51. This pattern has also been observed along Yarriambiack

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Creek, at “Blackfellows Waterhole” in the Barrabool State Forest (2 km east of the junction between the Wimmera River and Yarriambiack Creek), and sites in northern Gariwerd such as Ngamadjidj, although not in the Upper Wimmera Basin toward its source in the Pyrenees: see Johan Kamminga and Mark Grist, “Yarriambiack Creek Aboriginal Heritage Study” (Report to Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 2000), 2; Anne McConnell, *Archaeological Site Investigation, Blackfellows Waterhole, Barrabool State Forest, Western Victoria* (Victoria Archaeological Survey, Ministry for Planning and Environment, 1985); Caroline Bird and David Frankel, “An Archaeology of Gariwerd: From Pleistocene to Holocene in Western Victoria,” *Tempus: Archaeology and Material Culture Studies in Anthropology* 8 (2005) (St. Lucia: University of Queensland, 2005); J. W. Rhoads and Caroline F. M. Bird, “An Archaeological Survey of the Southwest Wimmera” (unpublished report to Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 2000).

78. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, 719–20.

79. Basil Sansom, “A Grammar of Exchange,” in *Being Black: Aboriginal Culture*, ed. I. Keen (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988), 161.

80. James Dawson, *Australian Aborigines: The Languages and Customs of Several Tribes of Aborigines in the Western District of Victoria, Australia* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1881 [facsimile edition, Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1981]), 22–23.

81. Nicolas Peterson, “Demand Sharing: Reciprocity and the Pressure for Generosity among Foragers,” *American Anthropologist*, New Series 95(4) (Dec. 1993): 860–74.

82. George Windsor Earl, “On the Aboriginal Tribes of the Northern Coast of Australia,” *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 16 (1846): 248. See also Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1982), 7–29.

83. Samuel Carter, *Reminiscences of Early Days in the Wimmera* (Melbourne: Norman Bros., 1911), 13.

84. Robert Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming: Nathanael Pepper and the Ruptured World* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2007), 167.

85. Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming*, 173. And it should be noted that Christianity’s emphasis on one God in some senses paralleled the Indigenous belief in Bunjil the Creator: Gail Harradine, e-mail correspondence, 13 April 2009.

86. Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, 379.

87. Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 69–70.

88. Lauriston Sharp, “Steel Axes for Stone Age Australians,” in *Human Problems in Technological Change: A Casebook*, ed. Edward H. Spicer (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1952), 69–90.

89. Scott Mitchell, "Guns or Barter? Indigenous Exchange Networks and the Mediation of Conflict in Post-Contact Western Arnhem Land," in *The Archaeology of Difference: Negotiating Cross-Cultural Engagements in Oceania*, ed. Robin Torrence and Anne Clarke (London: Routledge, 2000), 182–214. See also A. F. Clarke, "Winds of Change: An Archaeology of Contact in the Groote Eylandt Archipelago, Northern Australia" (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1994); C. Schrire, "Ethnoarchaeological Models and Subsistence Behaviour in Arnhem Land," in *Models in Archaeology*, ed. D. L. Clarke (London: Methuen, 1972), 653–70; Donald Thomson, *Economic Structure and the Economic Exchange Cycle in Arnhem Land* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1949).

90. See, for example, Jim Allen, "Port Essington: The Historical Archaeology of a North Australian Nineteenth-Century Military Outpost," *Studies in Australasian Historical Archaeology* 1 (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2008); Jim Allen and Rhys Jones, "Oyster Cove: Archaeological Traces of the Last Tasmanians and Notes on the Criteria for the Authentication of Flaked Glass Artefacts," *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* 114 (1980): 225–33; Christine Williamson, "Finding Meaning in the Patterns: The Analysis of Material Culture from a Contact Site in Tasmania," in *After Captain Cook: The Archaeology of the Recent Indigenous Past in Australia*, ed. Rodney Harrison and Christine Williamson, *Archaeological Methods Series* 8 (Sydney: Sydney University Archaeological Computing Laboratory, 2002), 75–101.

91. Rodney Harrison, "Australia's Iron Age: Aboriginal Post-Contact Metal Artefacts from Old Lamboo Station, Southeast Kimberley, Western Australia," *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 20 (2002): 67–76; and see Rodney Harrison, *Shared Landscapes: Archaeologies of Attachment and the Pastoral Industry in New South Wales* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004); Rodney Harrison, "Archaeology and the Colonial Encounter: Kimberley Spear Points, Cultural Identity and Masculinity in the North of Australia," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2(3) (2000): 352–77.

92. Nicholas Thomas, "Technologies of Conversion: Cloth and Christianity in Polynesia," in *Hybridity and Its Discontents: Politics, Science, Culture*, ed. A. Brah and Annie E. Coombes (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 198–215.

93. Clive Gamble, *Archaeology: The Basics* (London/New York: Routledge, 2004), 10.

94. Grayson Gerrard, "Everyone Will Be Jealous for That Mutika," *Mankind* 19(2) (1989): 95–111; Basil Sansom, "A Grammar of Exchange," in *Being Black: Aboriginal Culture*, ed. I. Keen (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988), 159–60.

95. Luise Hercus, *The Languages of Victoria: A Late Survey*, Part II (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1969), 305.

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96. Beveridge, *The Aborigines*, 20.

97. Diane Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk* (Canberra: Aboriginal History Inc., 1998), 19; see also Fred Cahir, "Dallong—Possum Skin Rugs: A Study of an Inter-Cultural Trade Item in Victoria," *Provenance* 4 (September 2005); R. H. W. Reece, "Feasts and Blankets: The History of Some Early Attempts to Establish Relations with the Aborigines of New South Wales, 1814–1846," *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania* 1 (1967): 190–205; Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (Ringwood, Melbourne: Penguin, 1982), chapter 5.

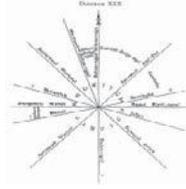
98. Isabel McBryde, "'Barter . . . Immediately Commenced to the Satisfaction of Both Parties': Cross-Cultural Exchange at Port Jackson, 1788–1828," in *The Archaeology of Difference: Negotiating Cross-Cultural Engagements in Oceania*, ed. Robin Torrence and Anne Clarke (London: Routledge, 2000), 256–61; Alan Pope, "Aboriginal Adaptation to Early Colonial Labour Markets: The South Australian Experience," *Labour History* 54 (1988): 1–15; Ann Curthoys and Clive Moore, "Working with the White People: An Historiographical Essay on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Labour," in *Aboriginal Workers*, ed. Ann McGrath and Kay Saunders, *Labour History* 69 (November 1995); Andrew Markus, "Talka Longa Mouth: Aborigines and the Labour Movement 1890–1970," in *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Working Class in Australia*, ed. Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1978).

99. Richard Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers," *Australian Historical Studies* 26(103) (1994): 202–20; Isabel McBryde, "Barter . . . Immediately Commerced," 238–77.

100. See contributions to *The Archaeology of Difference*, ed. Torrence and Clarke; Alistair G. Paterson, *The Lost Legions: Culture Contact in Central Australia* (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2008); Tim Murray, "The Childhood of William Lanne: Contact Archaeology and Aboriginality in Northwest Tasmania," *Antiquity* 67 (1993): 504–19; Tim Murray, ed., *The Archaeology of Contact in Settler Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Harrison, *Shared Landscapes: Archaeologies of Attachment and the Pastoral Industry in New South Wales*.

CHAPTER THREE

EBENEZER, FOR EXAMPLE



Sin and Redemption: A Humanitarian Invasion?

Rarely has invasion of a country taken place as quickly as the pastoral expansion into the Port Phillip District, beginning in 1835. The brutal struggle for land that ensued, however, took place during a decade when humanitarians strove to ameliorate the effects of invasion upon Indigenous peoples. While this influence was not typical of longer-term policy, the British evangelical lobby was able to apply the tactics of the recently successful campaign to abolish slavery to the treatment of Australian Aboriginal people. The evangelical critique framed colonization in terms of sin and redemption, as exemplified by the 1835–1836 Select Committee on Aborigines, where missionaries argued that it was important for colonists to redeem their misconduct toward Indigenous peoples by introducing Christianity and “civilizing” them. As Elizabeth Elbourne has pointed out, there is a basic paradox in the justification of British conquest through the language of liberalism and its simultaneous dependence on “violence, coercion and property theft” to extend its control.¹ As these two forces contended over the first decades of settlement in Port Phillip, Moravian missionaries assumed an important role.

Perhaps the most concrete outcome of the 1835–1836 inquiry was to establish “protectors” for the new colonies of South Australia and Victoria. The Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate (1838–1849) was a remarkable experiment: George Augustus Robinson, fresh from Wybalenna, was appointed Chief Protector of the Aborigines for the Port Phillip District,

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with four assistants. Among their instructions, the new protectors were told to “itinerate” with the Aboriginal people, to protect them from the white population, and if possible to encourage them to settle down, till the soil, and build themselves houses.² Each protector established a home-
stead on reserves of land.

Local attempts to civilize the Aboriginal people of Port Phillip began at this time, too. In 1836 the governor of New South Wales, Richard Bourke, devised a plan for “black villages,” with the advice of Justice Burton of the Supreme Court. Burton relied upon his earlier colonial experience in South Africa, where only the Moravians’ missions had succeeded, and following their precedent he emphasized the need for planned settlements and schooling.³ In 1837 Bourke appointed Church of England catechist George Langhorne to the “Village Mission” on the south bank of the Yarra, four miles from the town. Bourke’s ideas were also shaped by Owenism, a utopian socialist movement that shared several principles with the Moravians’ tradition, and he instructed Langhorne to allot

each native family a portion of land sufficient for its maintenance under proper culture; or if it shall be deemed more advisable that cultivation should be for common benefit, to allot a sufficient quantity for the village to be managed upon the system of Mr Owen’s establishment at Lanark.

Langhorne responded:

Your excellency’s suggestion of a plan on Mr Owen’s system would probably be more likely to succeed because being simple in its principle, it would be more readily understood by these people who may be said already to practice the system of a community of goods.⁴

By late 1837 he reported that they were building a dormitory-schoolroom, but the project foundered and closed in 1839.

In 1838, Buntingdale Mission was established by Wesleyan Missionary Society on the Barwon River, west of Geelong. The missionaries Francis Tuckfield and Benjamin Hurst reported that

the object of our mission is to induce the natives to abandon their erratic habits and settle near the Mission Establishment in order that we may

teach them the arts of civilized life, and that by the blessing of Almighty God they may become both theoretically and experimentally acquainted with the doctrines and duties and privileges of our most holy religion.⁵

As well as by its location among tribes antagonistic to each other, the mission was undermined by hostile white neighbors—who for example, paid Aboriginal residents tobacco to mimic the missionaries: “In this way were the poor wretched natives irretrievably weaned from common respect for their spiritual Mentors.”⁶ By 1846, some Aboriginal people continued to wander, living by begging and “on the offal of the settlers’ stations.”⁷ Other initiatives included the Native Police Corps and a school at Merri Creek (1841–1851), both based near Melbourne.⁸ However, by 1842, the colonial secretary (Stanley) was disposed to admit failure,⁹ and at the end of the decade government superintendent Charles Joseph La Trobe reviewed these efforts, all of which had received government support—and was emphatic in his condemnation, concluding that

the result of all this outlay may be stated in few words. Every one of these plans and arrangements for the benefit of the Aboriginal Native, with the exception of the last named, the Native Police, perhaps, has either completely failed, or shows at this date most undoubted signs of failure, in the attainment of the main objects aimed at.¹⁰

Specifically, the protectorate had “totally failed,” and he noted of Buntingdale that “not a single individual has been either Christianized or civilized.”¹¹ As historian Jessie Mitchell has recently argued, Aboriginal engagement with these new ideas was often more sustained than the missionaries’ narrow definitions allowed; nonetheless, in contemporary terms the first experiments in settling Aboriginal people in Christian farming villages had ended in “failure.”¹²

Land Rush

Meanwhile, in 1840 the land rush to the Wimmera began. Stock began to pass down from Sydney along the Major’s Line (the tracks of Mitchell’s expedition) and along the watercourses; from Mount Cole, near the Wimmera’s source in the Pyrenees, settlement gradually spread northward along the river from 1841, reaching Lake Hindmarsh around 1846¹³

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(figure 2.2). For a year, a savage guerrilla war was fought, but the Wergaia were decimated and driven from their traditional country. It was their first experience of invasion, but the white settlers had done this before and knew how it should go.¹⁴ Our understanding of this process comes from official records and also numerous eyewitness accounts and memoirs written by the white settlers, who, as Henry Reynolds notes, were remarkably frank in recording violence between black and white.¹⁵

Samuel Carter was nine years old when he came to Port Phillip with his father in 1842. They arranged with James Darlot to “take up a station for him,” driving four hundred head of cattle northward until they struck Mitchell’s wheel tracks, which they followed along the Wimmera to Longerenong, finally halting at North Brighton (known to the Wergaia as Dooen, or flying squirrel). Darlot and his friend Horatio Ellerman were only sixteen years old but were to become well known in the region as pioneers over the course of their lifetimes. An Aboriginal man called Callaghan was of their party and was able to communicate with the Wergaia, who gave them local information, including where to find good timber for building a house. Within a week, their hut was erected, and “it was planned in such a way that we could shoot from all sides through port-holes, with sliding doors. After firing, each port-hole could be closed at once by means of the sliding doors—thus preventing the blacks from throwing spears through.” They also built “a very high post, with pegs all the way to the top,” and Carter’s daily task was to climb this and keep a “strict look-out for natives. We always kept a double-barrelled gun by our side, to be ready at a minute’s notice if attacked.”¹⁶

Callaghan must have witnessed many ugly things. He told John Carfrae of Ledcourt, near the modern town of Dadswells Bridge, about a hut keeper and stockman at Mokepilly to the south (near Stawell) who had taken two Aboriginal women from their camp to their own huts and then gone and shot the men. Callaghan showed Carfrae where the bodies were buried, and “digging I found it to be too true.”¹⁷

Sheep stealing was a major source of conflict, as Aboriginal groups drove off large numbers into inaccessible areas, often breaking their legs to prevent their escaping. Wonwondah, on the Wimmera, was taken up in February 1844, with 3,300 sheep, but during the first year 1,300 were “lost by the blacks.”¹⁸ Carter described a confrontation with two hundred Aboriginal people: “Memory takes me back over the long years between,

and in a flash I can see again the whole scene before me, and feel the sickening dread which crept round my heart as I watched those natives swim across the river with their spears and waddies." They managed to placate the group with the intervention of a man called Jim Crow, whom they had once helped, and then escaped, although they were chased home for the last seven miles.¹⁹ He noted that "the squatters often formed parties to shoot down the blacks, as it was a fight for life in many cases. The natives never sought revenge, but would shoot down any poor fellow they came across, whether he had injured them or not."²⁰

Charles Hall remembered the relationship as "one of distrust and violence." Like many settlers, he attributed this to "the attempts of the blacks to steal sheep, or other property of value, from the settlers. These robberies were often accompanied with violence and murder, committed in the treacherous manner common to most savages. Such occurrences naturally led to reprisals, in which the superior arms and energy of the settlers and of their servants told with fatal effect upon the native race." He described several instances of such "reprisals," which "might often be observed by the explorer in the early days of the settlement of the colony." On one occasion, a shepherd

came up and entered into conversation with me. He held a carbine in place of a crook, and an old regulation pistol was stuck in his belt, instead of the more classical pastoral pipe—pastoral pursuits in Australia being attended, at this time, with circumstances more calculated to foster a spirit of war than one of music.²¹

The shepherd showed him the skeleton of an Aboriginal person shot through the back of the skull, exposed face down in a dry waterhole. Other evidence of violence included bones protruding from a rough burial or under logs, a servant's mutilated face, a collection of spears removed from cattle: "Every station had some tragic tale connected with this subject."²²

Robinson traveled through the Wimmera in April 1845, as the conflict neared its climax. As he noted in his journal: "Reasons for going to the Wimmera, heard that settlers flocking, Protector to proceed, at least to be there on account of Natives and whites and native dog."²³ While less frequently acknowledged by whites, it is clear that sex between white men and Aboriginal women was also a source of tension. Southwest of the

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Grampians, Robinson intervened in a dispute over an Aboriginal woman whom a shepherd had abducted.²⁴

He made sundry observations about the people he encountered, black and white, as well as the country he passed through. On Saturday, April 5, while at Wilson's run, he drew a "Native map" of the lower Wimmera (figure 3.1).²⁵ Digitally enhanced, it can be seen that this remarkable document recorded the spread of squatters' runs as far north as Baillie and Hamilton, northwest of the later town of Horsham. The dual annotation "Baillie and Hamilton/nattchabil" marks a deep stretch of the river that was obviously important to Aboriginal people as well as desired by settlers.²⁶ Robinson's double inscription of European and Wergaia systems of land ownership evokes the competing claims of that momentous year.

Farther north, all the landmarks are indigenous, such as the sand hills and heath of the Mallee, a "salt lake" (Mitre Lake), and a series of Wergaia names for places farther down the Wimmera, including the annotation "*Bunyut Bunnut*" in the location later chosen for the Moravian mission, Ebenezer—seemingly the first European mention of this important ceremonial ground. Robinson's "Native map" marks a moment and place graphically and precisely centered upon his own encounter with "Native lads" at Wilson's, but in a wider sense shows how Indigenous inscription of country was rapidly overwritten by the in-flowing settlers and their flocks.

Robinson's journal account evokes a country at war, with daily clashes during the time he was there. His censure of the settlers' behavior is the more striking given that he had seen it all before, in Tasmania and on the coast; his descriptions of the encounters between the settlers and the Indigenous people are shocking in their very matter-of-factness. In early April he reached Firebrace, where Darlot was in charge: "civil and hospitable. Said he never allowed Natives to stop. Said frightened Barney a Native, put pistol to his head at mountain out station. The Black clung to hut keeper. . . . Said people were against the evidence of Natives being legal because so many are implicated in killing Natives."²⁷ A few days later he arrived at Patterson's run near Dimboola, noting that "Mr Patterson said he had that day come upon a camp of Blacks, suddenly, where they had been killing Bayley's [Baillie's] and Hamilton's sheep, and he broke all their spears, shield, and burnt their skin bottles for holding water &c. They deserved it, he gave them a great fright—speared their dogs."²⁸ De-

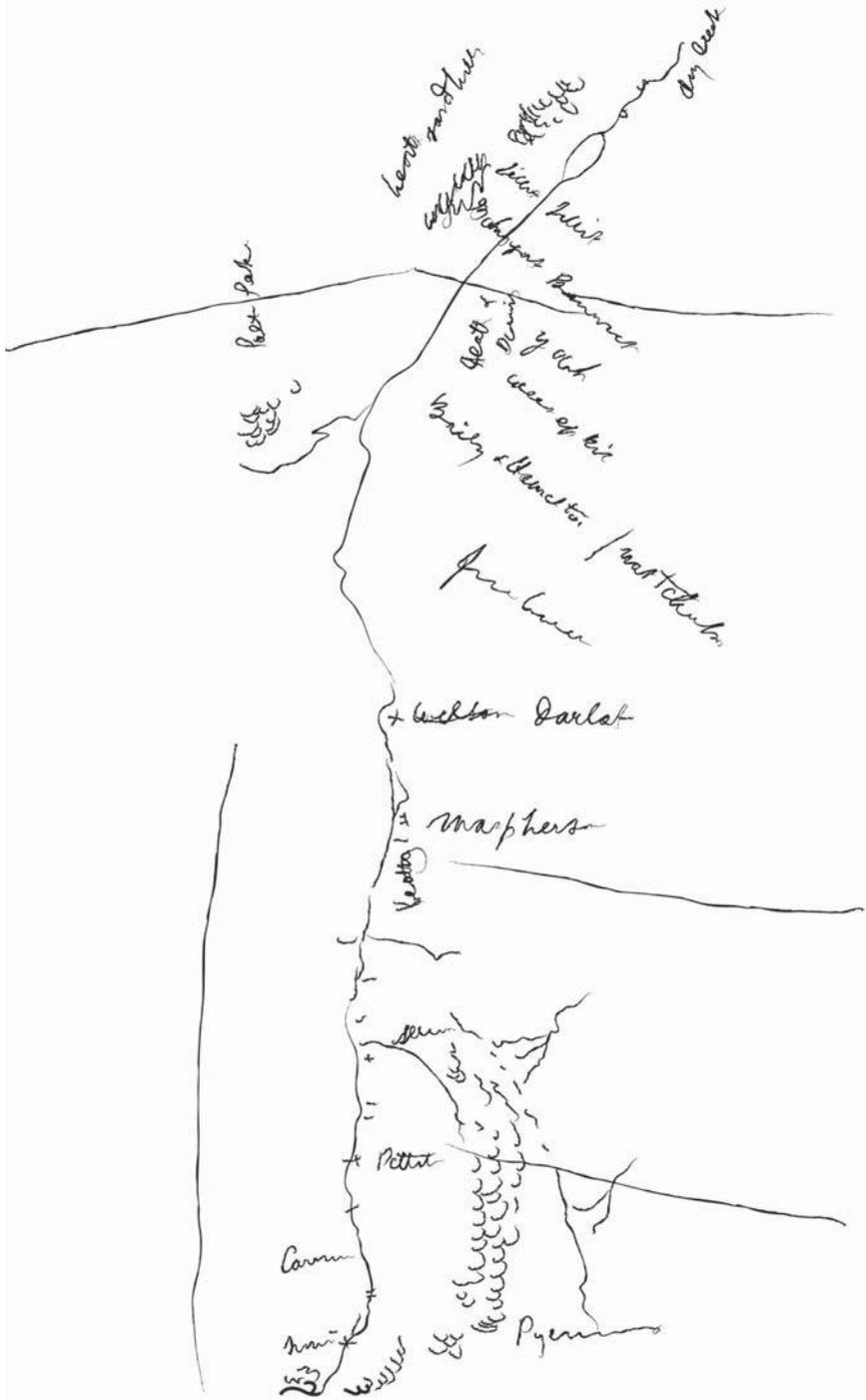


Figure 3.1. "Native map of river and stations" (Apr 1845). Volume 19 of the G. A. Robinson papers. G. A. Robinson's Port Phillip Protectorate Journal, 28 Sep 1844-24 Oct 1845. (Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales A 7040, Part 3, page 150.)

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spite his sympathy for the Indigenous people, it is clear where Robinson's loyalties ultimately lay.

They reached Lake Hindmarsh, home to many birds and surrounded by well-wooded, fine grazing country, where Robinson encountered a group of Wotjobaluk people who had never seen horses before. Robinson's party crashed a peaceful scene:

Two pm saw the Natives, they ran into reeds, dreadfully frightened. Came to a grave, quite fresh, on a rise by the river—had been done that morning, and a shelter or screen of boughs by side it, and a fire had been recently extinguished. . . . Passing the grave, came on their camp. Had roots roasting, and some shrimps in a shell basket, and muscles [mussels]. They had left their things. . . . At last two men, one old woman, and a child came out trembling. The two men were greatly diseased with syphilis, one could scarcely walk . . . found a young girl they [Patterson and Darlot] had chased under a prickly bush. Harry spoke to her and she came out, but the poor thing was much frightened.²⁹

Then they met a woman with two children, aged eleven and six, who “took shelter behind a tree.” Despite their fear, Robinson claimed that they had “Parted friends.”³⁰ His end-of-year report noted that, “They were informed that White men would occupy their country and treat them kindly. . . . I understood we were the first White they had personal communication with.”³¹

Robinson thought that those settlers who allowed the Aboriginal people to remain on their runs had been free of harassment of people or flocks.³² However, in May, as Robinson left, eleven squatters requested Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe to send “a strong detachment of the native police to repair without delay to the lower part of the River Wimmera, and remain during the winter.”³³ Captain Dana of the Native Police subsequently reported that Mt. Arapiles (Choorite) was the base for a kind of guerrilla warfare. In July 1845, Yanem Goona, the “ringleader of the natives,” was badly wounded and taken prisoner. He was tried for stealing sheep and sentenced to ten years' transportation. Judge Therry in summing up stated “that if this black was a member of the community where the sheep were found although he had no hand in the actual stealing or killing, yet as a member of that community was equally guilty.”³⁴ While this decision appears similar in reasoning to that of the Aboriginal

people of whom Carter claimed they “never sought revenge, but would shoot down any poor fellow they came across, whether he had injured them or not,” it nonetheless remains highly idiosyncratic in Western law. Perhaps the settlers were finally avenging themselves for the many “outrages” they had been unable to pursue legally.³⁵ Yanem Goona was sent to Norfolk Island via Tasmania. In 1853 local landowner Carfrae noted that

Old Billy Yanengoneh (spring from the earth) is at Norfolk Island, having been sent there for stealing 600 sheep belonging to Baillie and Hamilton, which were found with all their fore-legs broken to keep them from getting away. This black was seen at Norfolk Island, and whenever he mentioned the Grampians [Gariwerd] invariably cried from thought of home.³⁶

Robinson’s report for the year noted the many clashes, and the “perilous and truly pitiable” situation of the Aboriginal people, “every spot where water and grass is met with being occupied.”³⁷ Local settlers were less sympathetic, merely noting of the conflict that “the natives during the first years were extremely troublesome and dangerous.”³⁸ By late 1845 the conflict began to die down, and “after the first year’s occupation, the demeanor of the natives was generally friendly to the settlers. On many of the stations their services were of great value in looking for strayed horses, and especially sheep. Several of them have shepherded for eight and ten months at a time, and were the best shepherds in the district. . . . They were also useful in pointing out the waterholes.”³⁹

Early in 1847 the rush reached the less desirable Mallee country, and the Murray River frontage to the north was almost completely taken up.⁴⁰ By the end of the 1840s, the Wergaia—like most Victorian Aboriginal people—had become economically dependent upon Europeans, begging or performing casual labor in exchange for flour, meat, tea, sugar, and tobacco.⁴¹ In 1849 an inquiry concluded that the condition of the Indigenous people was becoming worse and recorded the unanimous opinion that none could be called Christians. The government was reluctant to spend money on any new scheme, and Protector William Thomas became almost the sole responsible official over the following decade.⁴² By mid-century the reality of frontier violence had thoroughly overridden more abstract humanitarian principles.

“The Indefatigable Moravian Missionaries”

Into this war-torn country were sent two Moravian missionaries, the Rev. Andreas Tæger and Brother Friedrich Wilhelm Spieseke, arriving in Melbourne in February 1850. The Moravian Church was a Protestant evangelical denomination centered on the belief that it had been chosen by God to spread His message throughout the world. Originating in Moravia, a province of what is now the Czech Republic, in the early fifteenth century, its founder, Jan Hus, preached church reform, suffered excommunication, and in 1415 was burned at the stake. His followers established the Moravian Church (later known as the *Unitas Fratrum*) in 1457, eventually finding refuge from persecution on the Saxony estate of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf in 1722. Here they established their headquarters, Herrnhut, developing into a dynamic community that attracted people from throughout Europe. A revival in 1727 convinced the Herrnhuters that God had renewed the church of the *Unitas Fratrum* in their midst, and within a few years, Moravians had founded communities and mission stations all over the world.⁴³ By the mid-eighteenth century, they had influenced the course of English protestant evangelicalism, and by the century’s end, new British missionary societies were established that modeled themselves upon the Moravian example.⁴⁴

In Australia, the Moravians were assigned a particularly privileged role in official attempts to protect the Aboriginal people of the Port Phillip District that has only recently come to be recognized by historians.⁴⁵ From the early 1830s various attempts had been made to persuade the Moravian Church to establish a mission to the natives of New Holland, given its long and global experience. The British-sponsored Moravian Labrador mission, for example, had shown the British that missions were useful colonizing tools, assisting by pacifying the Indigenous population, potentially providing a docile labor force, and opening up the land to economic opportunities. Genadendal at the Cape of Good Hope was another influential example of evangelism fulfilling an important civil purpose in pacifying the local peoples.⁴⁶

But perhaps the key factor in their eventual acceptance of these invitations was the influential presence of Charles Joseph La Trobe as superintendent of Port Phillip from 1839 (and lieutenant governor 1851–1854), who, as the London branch reported to the elders at Herrnhut, “had

himself expressed a wish that Missionaries should be sent to the tribes frequenting the neighbourhood of Port Phillip.⁴⁷ When an Australian fund was established in 1844 to “go to the most remote, unfavourable, and neglected parts of the surface of the earth,” a group of young Moravians was motivated to form an Australian Association to pray for “these poor outcasts of the great human family.”⁴⁸ Charles Joseph was a member of the British Moravian Church’s most prominent family, his grandfather Benjamin and then his father Christian Ignatius having been leaders of the church, and at this time his brother Peter its secretary—thus coordinating all Moravian missions in British territory.⁴⁹ The governor had even set aside land at Lake Boga in readiness for use for the Indigenous population, and in 1848 it was decided to commence work in the colony. Robert Kenny suggests that the arrival of the Moravians just as the protectorate was abandoned was no coincidence, La Trobe making this decision in the anticipation of what he considered to be a far more effective strategy for Indigenous outreach.⁵⁰

Täeger and Spieseke selected a site at Lake Boga, near Swan Hill, in 1851, one of the first inland missions. Despite a stay of five years, they didn’t convert a single Aboriginal person. Among a range of difficulties, they encountered opposition from neighboring whites, and when gold was discovered in central Victoria a major route to the fields ran through the mission. The young missionaries disgraced themselves by fleeing home in 1856 without permission from the Moravian elders at Herrnhut.⁵¹ This episode seemed to confirm all pessimistic views about Aboriginal people and their capacity for change.

But the Moravians did not accept defeat once God had shown them His will. Spieseke and his colleague, Friedrich Augustus Hagenauer, were sent to reestablish themselves, this time at a site near Lake Hindmarsh, in northwestern Victoria. They named it Ebenezer, “rock of the Lord.”

Pepper, the First Australian Convert

The Ebenezer site was one of three offered to the Moravians in 1859 in the Wimmera region, considered at that time to be sufficiently remote from white settlement to avoid the problems experienced at Lake Boga, Buntingdale, and other places.⁵² The area around Ebenezer was known to the Wergaia speakers as *Banji-bunag* or *Bunyut Bunnut* and occupied a

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shallow grassy ridge encircled by the Wimmera River, approximately one square mile in extent.⁵³ The group upon whose land Ebenezer was established was called the Wotjobaluk, for whom the site was an important ceremonial ground.⁵⁴ When Hagenauer arrived, he noted the devastation that nearly twenty years of white settlement had caused to Wergaia society, observing that “where the land is good there are no blacks, or the few remaining are in the deepest submersion and are close to dying out.”⁵⁵

By the late 1850s humanitarian concern prompted an inquiry that recommended setting aside reserves of land to be overseen by missionaries.⁵⁶ In 1860 the Central Board for the Protection of the Aborigines (“the Board”) was created to manage six Aboriginal stations designed to protect and “civilize” the surviving Indigenous people: as well as Ebenezer (often known as Lake Hindmarsh), over the following years Coranderrk, Ramahyuck, Lake Tyers, Framlingham, and Lake Condah were also established (figure 1.2). Depots for distributing rations were also maintained outside the reserves, however, catering to those who were able or who chose to stay on traditional country.

Ebenezer was the model for the board’s program of creating settled Aboriginal farming villages. The baptism of Nathanael Pepper in August 1860 offered the first glorious proof that Aboriginal people were capable of conversion, and he became a celebrity in evangelical circles, representing a giant milestone for missionaries.⁵⁷ The story of Pepper’s conversion was told and retold, following his internal, spiritual progress in great detail and emphasizing his agony, doubt, and then tremendous relief and joy. Conversion was usually understood as a sudden, deeply felt revelation that wrought profound personal transformation; it marked a personal renewal and the forgiveness of sins through Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Central to Moravian piety was an individual’s surrender to Christ due to the emotional impact of his suffering and death. Such accounts were characteristic of the popular genre of spiritual autobiography or conversion narratives that proliferated from the late eighteenth century in England, popularized by the published diaries of evangelical leaders such as George Whitefield and John Wesley.⁵⁸ Later, the Church drew an explicit parallel with the story of its famous Greenland mission, noting that Pepper’s conversion occurred only after “five years of literally ‘laboring, night and day, with tears,’ on the part of the two Moravian Missionaries, who, for the Love of Christ, had exiled themselves from Europe to those barren shores, and

it was now by the same story of the Cross that Pepper the first Australian convert was aroused.”⁵⁹

The Wotjobaluk people’s immediate colonial experience also played a part in Pepper’s conversion. A decade before Ebenezer was established, during a punitive expedition in the area, a little Aboriginal boy had been orphaned by the shooting of his mother. Eventually making his way to Melbourne, he was taken into the household of the Reverend Lloyd Chase and became a Christian. Now known as “Willie Wimmera,” he was taken on a visit to England but became ill and died there, professing his desire to convert his people. His tragic story was published by Chase in pamphlet form as a narrative of redemption and was subsequently read aloud to a group of Wotjobaluk boys, including Pepper, who immediately recognized the protagonist as their near kin and among whom it prompted tremendous shock and emotion. The missionaries’ acknowledgment of the wrong done to Willie and his people and their belief that Christianity offered a means of transcendence and healing became a powerful means of communication between them.⁶⁰

As the board noted, the Moravian mission “afford[ed] an example from which most useful lessons can be drawn. . . . One of the young men under [Spieseke’s] care, who lately visited Melbourne, showed by his conduct and conversation that the Aborigines under favourable circumstances are capable of acquiring the habits of civilization.”⁶¹ It was generally acknowledged that a person’s inner state was observable through her or his outer form, as the Moravian *Missionsblatt* editor wrote of the Aboriginal “heathen” in 1878:

Through experience it is a confirmed fact, that education, and above all Christian education, exerts substantial influence on the outward appearance of a person, composure, and facial features, so that one can assume that by the converted Blacks this effect has also already well occurred. It cannot be denied that the representation of the wild Australians in photographs does not please our sense of beauty.⁶²

So an iconic representation of the neatly-suited, well-brushed Nathanael as an educated, dignified Christian circulated in scientific and popular contexts to the end of the century as proof of this landmark event and as a symbol of Aboriginal capacity more broadly⁶³ (figure 3.2). News of



Figure 3.2. Nathanael Pepper. (Engraving, from Robert Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria: With Notes Relating to the Habits of the Natives of Other Parts of Australia and Tasmania*, Vol. I, 1878, pp. 9–10.)

Pepper's conversion had clearly not reached English clergyman Charles Kingsley by 1863, when he made his controversial remarks on the subject:

The Black People of Australia, exactly the same race as the African Negro, cannot take in the gospel. . . . All attempts to bring them to a knowledge of the true God have as yet failed utterly. . . . Poor brutes in human shape . . . they must perish off the face of the earth like brute beasts.⁶⁴

Kingsley's comments were received with great indignation by those familiar with the Moravians' work in Victoria.⁶⁵ In this way the Moravians provided a model for colonial administration.⁶⁶

During the 1860s, the reserves' first decade, ideas about Victoria's Aboriginal people were still relatively fluid. Using images and accounts of their success at Ebenezer and Coranderrk as evidence, the humanitarian lobby argued for the essential humanity and teachability of their flock, seeking to prove their progress toward civilization in opposition to those who argued for their fundamental difference on racial grounds. Photographers exhibited these new civilizing experiments to an urban audience via commercial albums and the colony's illustrated newspapers.⁶⁷ Framed by humanitarian rhetoric, such views express a sympathetic curiosity, emphasizing the newly imposed order created within these settlements, and their managers' attainments in converting Aboriginal people to Christianity and teaching them European habits of work and domesticity.

Archaeological evidence confirms that Ebenezer offered the Wergaia a refuge from the worst effects of invasion. Surveys of the lower Wimmera indicate that the river's importance to Aboriginal people only increased following white settlement, in a pattern that suggests a contraction from the region's wetlands to the river itself as a result of clearing and agriculture.⁶⁸ More than half the sites recorded along the Wimmera between Natimuk and Jeparit date to the colonial period, and most of these are scarred trees made with steel axes—a practice which continued throughout the twentieth century, according to the late Wotjobaluk elder Uncle Jack Kennedy (personal communication). More than 20 percent of the sites are scatters of stone artifacts and freshwater shell middens containing European-made materials.⁶⁹ Such a shift resulted from the destruction of former wetland habitats, the pressure of white settlers actively driving away the Aboriginal people, and the attraction of the new resources offered by missionaries.

Ironically, by defining the fringes of major watercourses as "Crown" land, reserved for public use and so protected from private exploitation, colonizers created a refuge to which Aboriginal people resorted in their time of hardship. As an aerial view of the site taken in 1989 graphically reveals (figure 3.3), only these linear islands of natural bush have survived within the western cadastral system. A particularly high density of

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postcontact sites within a six-kilometer radius of the mission, almost all on the Wimmera River and its anabranch Datchak Creek, indicates intensified use of the area following Ebenezer's establishment, pointing to the continuation and transformation of traditional customs.⁷⁰ In 2006, for example, Wotjobaluk elder Nancy Harrison described how the river offered a private space for her ancestors and how “most of the women would go out on the river bank and have their babies—that’s what my grandmother did. . . . They didn’t want the white people touching them—touching the babies.”⁷¹ Even today the narrow fringe of bush along the river remains a refuge from the glaring ploughed paddocks; its meandering bends, reedy sandbanks, and shelving margins screen visitors to Ebenezer who wander down here, away from the manicured heritage complex that stands exposed on higher ground. The shelter of the riverbanks offers seclusion and privacy: sitting unobserved in the shade by the quiet water, it is easy to watch the settlement and its activities, reversing the gaze of the missionaries. As the following chapters investigate, Ebenezer became



Figure 3.3. Aerial view, 1989. The remains of the former settlement can be seen to the left/east of a twentieth-century farm complex. (Aerial photo of area of Ebenezer Mission near Dimboola in northwestern Victoria, 1989 [Mapsheets Photography 7225, run 5, film 4243, frame 185]. This map is Copyright © Crown [State of Victoria]. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of the Surveyor-General, Victoria. Land Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria.)

a place of intense cultural exchange, as missionaries pursued their utopian goal of transforming the Wergaia people, and they responded creatively, yet retained many aspects of their distinctive way of life.

Notes

1. Elizabeth Elbourne, "The Sin of the Settler: The 1835–36 Select Committee on Aborigines and Debates over Virtue and Conquest," in *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* (Winter 2003): 24, muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v004/4.3elbourne.html (accessed 11 Sep 2008).

2. Glenelg to Gipps, 31 Jan 1838, *Historical Records of Australia (HRA)* 1914–1925, vol. I, xix (Sydney: Commonwealth Parliament), 252–54. See also Jessie Mitchell, "Flesh, Dreams and Spirit: Life on Aboriginal Mission Stations 1825–1850: A History of Cross-Cultural Connections" (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2005).

3. Burton noted, "Let the missionary institutions at the Cape witness, which all (except those of the Moravians) miserably languished." Burton to Bourke, 22 Nov 1835, *Historical Records of Victoria (HRV)*, vol. 2A (Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office), 155.

4. Instructions to Langhorne: Colonial Secretary draft memorandum, 9 Dec 1836, *HRV*, 2A: 161–62.

5. Hurst to La Trobe, 28 Apr 1840, cited in Peter Corris, *Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria*, Occasional Papers in Aboriginal Studies no. 12, Ethnohistory Series no. 1 (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1968), 73; see also C. A. McCallum, "Tuckfield, Francis (1808–1865)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 2 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967), 540–41.

6. Corris, *Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria*, 78.

7. Cited in Corris, *Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria*, 76.

8. See Marie Fels, *Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District 1837–1853* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988); I. Clark and T. Heydon, *A Bend in the Yarra: A History of the Merri Creek Protectorate Station and Merri Creek Aboriginal School 1841–1851* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004).

9. Stanley wrote to Governor Gipps that "it seems impossible any longer to deny that the efforts, which have hitherto been made for the civilization of the Aborigines, have been unavailing; that no real progress has yet been affected; and that there is no reasonable ground to expect from them greater success in future."

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He concluded: "I have grave doubts about the wisdom or propriety of continuing the Missions any longer." Stanley to Gipps, 20 Dec 1842, *HRA* I, XXII, 436–37. Presumably Stanley was referring to attempts that included Macquarie's Native Institution in 1814, followed by the 1821–1826 Wesleyan Mission to Sydney, 1824–1842 London Missionary Society's Lake Macquarie, 1830–1842 Church Missionary Society's Wellington Valley (all in the present state of New South Wales), 1835–1847 Wybalenna on Flinders Island, and 1836 Church of England Middle Swan Native Mission.

10. La Trobe to Colonial Secretary, 18 Nov 1848, cited in Henry Reynolds, *Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 192.

11. La Trobe to Colonial Secretary, 18 Nov 1848, cited in Reynolds, *Dispossession*, 192. And for an overview of the protectorate's failure, see M. F. Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–86* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1979), 107–35.

12. Historians have tended to retain this framework in assessing the reasons for "failure"—see, for example, J. Ferry, "The Failure of New South Wales Missions to the Aborigines before 1845," *Aboriginal History* 3(1) (1979): 25–36; Hilary M. Carey, "'Attempts and Attempts': Responses to Failure in Pre- and Early Victorian Missions to the Australian Aborigines," in *Mapping the Landscape: Essays in Australian and New Zealand Christianity*, Festschrift in Honour of Ian Breward, ed. Susan Emilsen and William W. Emilsen (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 45–61. However, as Jessie Mitchell points out, this verdict accepts the missionaries' narrow definition of conversion, excluding alternative Indigenous understandings: Jessie Mitchell, "Can These Dry Bones Live? Conversion and Worship on Aboriginal Missions and Protectorate Stations, 1830–1850" (paper given to the First Biennial Trans-Tasman Missionary History Conference, 2004), rspas.anu.edu.au/pah/TransTas Parliament, Historical Records (9 Sep 2008); Jessie Mitchell, "Flesh, Dreams and Spirit: Life on Aboriginal Mission Stations, 1825–1850: A History of Cross-Cultural Connections" (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2005).

13. Colin Campbell, in T. F. Bride, ed., *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* (Melbourne, 1898; repr., Melbourne: Heinemann 1969), 316, 357–60.

14. Barry Thomson, "Squatting in the Wimmera 1843–1883" (1999), home.vicnet.net.au/~wvahs/Squatters.htm. For an analysis of this "civil war" in western Victoria, including many examples from the Wimmera, see Corris, *Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria*, 153–57. M. F. Christie, however, points out that violence and resistance characterized invasion throughout the colony, not just in the west and northwest. For the history of frontier clashes in western Victoria, see especially Ian D. Clark, *Scars in the Landscape: A Register of Massacre Sites*

in *Western Victoria 1803–1859* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1995); Jan Critchett, *A Distant Field of Murder: Western District Frontiers 1834–1848* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1990).

15. Henry Reynolds, “The Written Record,” in *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, ed. Bain Attwood and S. G. Foster (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2003), 79–87.

16. Samuel Carter, *Reminiscences of Early Days in the Wimmera* (Melbourne: Norman Bros., 1911), 15. A sixteen-year-old Ellerman was also of the party, and his immediate reaction when they encountered Aboriginal people was to raise his gun: “Mr Ellerman pointed his gun at them, and one black got behind the other. He wished to fire, as his gun was only loaded with small shot; but we would not let him, thinking it was best to try and get on friendly terms with the natives,” 12–13. In October 1845 Carter took up his own cattle run at Brim Springs, acquiring extensive holdings in the region. He was active in water management, becoming foundation commissioner of the Wimmera United Waterworks Trust in 1882, and remained a commissioner until 1892: L. J. Blake, “Carter, Charles (1797–1875),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 3 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969), 362–363.

17. Thomas Francis Bride, ed., *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: Being a Series of Papers on the Early Occupation of the Colony, the Aborigines, etc., Addressed by Victorian Pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph La Trobe, Esq., Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Victoria* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1969), 322. This collection, first published in 1898, comprises correspondence from settlers in 1853–1854 responding to a request from La Trobe for information.

18. Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, 320, 321.

19. Carter, *Reminiscences*, 20.

20. Carter, *Reminiscences*, 15.

21. Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, 269–71.

22. Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, 269–71.

23. Ian. D. Clark, ed., *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate*, vol. 4, January 1844–October 1845: Wimmera District and Mt Gambier (Melbourne: Heritage Matters, 1998–2000): 269. Aboriginal dogs were a great source of concern to settlers on account of their sheep, and one exclaimed to Robinson as they came across a group of Aboriginal people, “Oh see the dogs, 12 dogs’ said he, as though these poor people could live without dogs,” 23 Apr 1845: Clark, *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, 282.

24. In this case the woman concerned may have agreed to the arrangement without her husband’s approval: Clark, *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, 281–82. Robinson also tried to find out more about the shooting of an Aboriginal man, Jem Crow, in October 1844: see Barry Patton, “‘Unequal Justice’: Colonial

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Law and the Shooting of Jim Crow,” *Provenance*, 5 Sep 2006, www.prov.vic.gov.au/provenance/no5/UnequalJusticePrint.asp (accessed 9 Sep 2008).

25. Robinson’s entry for the day notes of his time at Wilson’s: “One Native youth shepherding sheep. Two others were at Wilson. Name of Mt Aripilis: Choorite. These Native lads had seen me at Boyd’s [Benjamin Boyd at “Led-court”]. Got a copy of a Native map of river and stations.” Clark, *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, 272. On this map he noted the following landmarks and squatters’ names from south to north along the river: Irwin, Cameron, Pettit’s, Allen, Macpherson’s, Darlot, Wilson, Firebrace, Bailie, and Hamilton/Natchebil, Weeripkil, [?]York or Yah, Bunyut Bunnut, and [?]Jillit Jillit, as well as “salt lake” (Mitre Lake), “sand and heath,” the outline of Lake Albacutya and its continuation north through Outlet Creek, and roughly scribbled mountain ranges to indicate the Pyrenees and Mount Arapiles. I am very grateful to Liam Brady and Kara Rasmanis for their assistance in digitally enhancing this map.

26. Of this Wergaia name, linguist Luise Hercus comments, “That has got to be *ngatye-pil*—‘ngatye-having’ (ie full of little fellows) *ngatye* being of course those ‘little fellows.’” Luise Hercus, e-mail correspondence, 31 Aug 2008.

27. Clark, *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, 273.

28. Clark, *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, 274.

29. Clark, *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, 275.

30. Clark, *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, 275–76.

31. George Augustus Robinson, “Australia Felix—Report of a Journey of 1100 Miles to the Tribes of the N.W. and Western Interior” (1845, Mitchell Library Manuscript Collection), 7.

32. Clark, *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, 278.

33. Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–86*, 66–67.

34. J. Sadlier, “The Early Days of the Victorian Police Force,” *Victorian Historical Magazine* 1 (1911): 73–79; Fels, *Good Men and True*, 151–53; Therry, cited in Clark, *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, 244.

35. Carter, *Reminiscences*, 15. Edward Curr also noted that “one of the laws of tribal life is what is called common responsibility. . . . Thus, if a man murder one of another tribe, the tribe to which the murdered man belonged will hold every member of the murderer’s tribe responsible, and take vengeance on the first of them on which it can lay hands.” Edward M. Curr, *The Australian Race: Its Origin, Languages, Customs, Place of Landing in Australia, and the Routes by Which It Spread Itself over That Continent* (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1886), 70; Corris, *Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria*, 103–9.

36. Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, 322.

37. Robinson, “Australia Felix,” 9.

38. “Old Pioneer,” *Dimboola Banner*, 14 Jan 1898: 3 and 6 July 1883: 3.

39. William Taylor, "Longerenong," in Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, 311.

40. Colin Campbell, in Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, 316, 354, 357–60.

41. "The Moravian Mission in Australia, 1848–1879," Presbyterian Church of Victoria Archives, Melbourne, 16; Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–86*, 63.

42. New South Wales Select Committee on Aborigines and the Protectorate, "Replies to a Circular Letter." *NSW Votes and Proceedings*, Legislative Council 1849: 13, 15–16, 30. For an overview of these developments, see Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–86*.

43. For accounts of the Moravians, see especially J. C. S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England 1760–1800* (Rochester, N.Y.: The Royal Historical Society, The Boydell Press, 2001), 24; Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England 1728–1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); J. E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Missions* (London: Moravians Publications Office, 1923); E. Langton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Story of the First International Protestant Church* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956); for studies of Moravians in Australia, see especially William Howell Edwards, *Moravian Aboriginal Missions in Australia 1850–1919* (Adelaide: Uniting Church Historical Society [South Australia], 1999); Felicity Jensz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station in North-Western Victoria: A German Perspective" (master's thesis, University of Melbourne, 2008); Robert Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming: Nathanael Pepper and the Ruptured World* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2007); Robert Kenny, "La Trobe, Lake Boga and the 'Enemy of Souls': The First Moravian Mission in Australia," *La Trobe Journal* 71 (2003): 97–113.

44. Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England 1728–1760*. From 1760 onward, see Mason, *The Moravian Church*.

45. As Felicity Jensz argues, it is important to understand the distinctive cultural orientation of the Moravian missionaries in Australia, rather than subsuming them into an Anglo-Celtic category of colonizers. As well as the language barriers that have prevented earlier work in this area, Jensz suggests that the German perspective on this cultural process was obscured in part because of World Wars I and II: Jensz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station," 5.

46. Mason, *The Moravian Church*, 34, 41. Mason notes that the Moravians themselves argued that missions were in the national interest because conversion brought in its wake the adoption of Western values: 189–91; "The Moravian Mission in Australia, 1848–1879," 2.

47. Kenny, "La Trobe, Lake Boga and the 'Enemy of Souls.'"

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48. *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren*, 19 (London: The Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel among the Heathen, 1849), 156.

49. In January 1839 he was appointed superintendent of the Port Phillip District, at that time a new and rapidly developing dependency of New South Wales, under Governor Gipps. The Australian Colonies Government Act of 1850 gave Victoria its own representative government, and in January 1851, La Trobe was appointed lieutenant governor. See Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: The Making of a Governor* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2006).

50. Kenny, "La Trobe, Lake Boga and the 'Enemy of Souls,'" 97–113. See also John Mason, "Benjamin and Christian Ignatius La Trobe in the Moravian Church," *La Trobe Journal* 71 (2003): 17–27.

51. *Periodical Accounts*, 22, 204. Felicity Jensz, "Ohne Neid (Without Jealousy): Moravian Missionaries' Ideas of Land Ownership in Colonial Victoria" [online], in *Rethinking Colonial Histories: New and Alternative Approaches*, ed. Penelope Edmonds and Samuel Furphy (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing, 2006), 219–231.

52. "The Moravian Mission in Australia, 1848–1879," 24.

53. *Banji-bunag* or *Banju-bunan* is recorded as the name of the area around Ebenezer by Luise Hercus, *The Languages of Victoria: A Late Survey*, Australian Aboriginal Studies 17, part II (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1969), 280; *Bunyut Bunnut* is the name recorded by Robinson's 1845 "Native map" (figure 3.1); R. H. Mathews recorded its name as "Banyubonity": *Papers of Robert Hamilton Mathews*, NLA, MS 8006, notebooks, series 3, folder 4, notebook 1, 150.

54. A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2001): 54; Ian D. Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800–1900*, Monash Publications in Geography, no. 37 (Melbourne: Monash University, 1990): 336–62.

55. Hagenauer to Reichel, 11 Nov 1860, in Jensz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station," Appendix 4.

56. Victoria Parliament, Legislative Council, Select Committee on the Aborigines, "Report of the Victorian Select Committee on Aborigines, 1858–9" (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1859). Also in early 1859, a coalition of Taungerong and Woiwurrung people had obtained another reserve, but they were twice moved on by white neighbors, eventually establishing Coranderk, near Melbourne, in 1863: Diane Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderk*, Aboriginal History Monograph 5 (Canberra: Aboriginal History Inc., 1998): 39–53.

57. "Notice of a public meeting, held at St. Paul's school-room, Melbourne, together with a copy of correspondence read thereat," in *Missionary Success among*

the Aborigines (Melbourne: Wm. Goodhugh and Sons, 1860; reprinted from the *Christian Times*, 3 Mar 1860): 4–5; for a detailed exploration of this event in the context of contemporary ideas and arguments, see Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming*.

58. For discussion of evangelicalism and conversion, see D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), especially 5–10. But Nathanael's struggle seems less typical of Moravian quietism, which rejected preconversion struggle according to their doctrine of "stillness": D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162–65.

59. "The Moravian Mission in Australia, 1848–1879," 38–39.

60. Rev. Lloyd Chase, *A Short Memoir of William Wimmera: An Australian Boy, Who Sailed from Melbourne, April 1, 1851; Died at Reading, March 10, 1852* (Cambridge, 1853); for analysis, see especially Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming*. Local landowner Horatio Ellerman is often held to have killed Willie's mother, but he subsequently repented and became a strong supporter of the mission.

61. *Third Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria* (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1864), 6.

62. The Editor, *Missionsblatt*, 1878: 7, cited in Jensz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station," 147.

63. See, for example, Robert Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria: With Notes Relating to the Habits of the Natives of Other Parts of Australia and Tasmania*, vol. 1 (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1878), 9–10.

64. Charles Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, Sermon XLI (London: Macmillan, 1880), 414–17. The Presbyterian *Monthly and Messenger* commented in 1886: "Twenty three years ago, Scientific men—yes, even Christian men, like Charles Kingsley—were denying that our poor aborigines had a soul." *Monthly and Messenger*, 6 Feb 1886, cited in J. Harris, *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope* (Sutherland, New South Wales: Albatross Books, 1994), 152–55.

65. For example, on 3 Feb 1888, Rev John L. Paton, Missionary, New Hebrides, South Sea Islands, wrote in the Ramahyuck Visitors Book: "The spiritual instruction and the deep interest taken in the present and eternal welfare is also most gratifying, and attended with good results, in having many of them so to fear and serve God as to prove how premature and false Kingsley's statements were, that 'the Aborigines of Australia were too stupid to understand the gospel: poor brutes in human shape they perish like brute beasts.' I have not addressed a more attentive and sympathetic congregation." Papers of Friedrich Augustus

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Hagenauer (1829–1909), MS9556 State Library of Victoria, Visitors Book, Ramahyuck; and see John G. Paton, *Autobiography*, ed. J. Paton (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 263–65.

66. In New South Wales, for example, despite missionary activity in the southwest Murray region, no official interest was shown in the Indigenous population after the 1850s, and government policy continued on an ad hoc basis until appointment of a protector in 1882. Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972* (St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin in association with Black Books, 1996), 75–89; Ann Curthoys, “Good Christians and Useful Workers: Aborigines, Church and State in NSW 1870–1883,” in *What Rough Beast? The State and Social Order in Australian History*, ed. Sydney Labour History Group (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 35

67. Jane Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 33–72.

68. Archaeological Consulting Services, “The Wimmera River Cultural Heritage Study, Stage II: The Middle Wimmera Basin,” report prepared for Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative, 1998, 51.

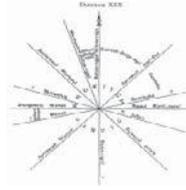
69. Archaeological Consulting Services, “The Wimmera River Cultural Heritage Study,” 51.

70. One survey recorded 246 sites within a six-kilometer radius around the mission: Bryce Raworth and David Rhodes, “An Archaeological and Architectural Report on the Ebenezer Mission Station,” report to Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 1998, 10–12. Several sites indicate ongoing land use through prehistoric, 1840s, and mission periods. An earlier review of documented sites noted 302 sites including scarred trees, mounds, surface scatters, isolated artifacts, and burials in a broader area: Caroline Bird, “Aboriginal Sites in the Horsham Region,” *Victoria Archaeological Survey* (Melbourne, 1990), 22.

71. Nancy Harrison, interview with Jane Lydon, 13 Oct 2006.

CHAPTER FOUR

SPACE, POWER, AND THE MISSION-HOUSE



The Moravian Utopian Tradition

The missionary Friedrich Spieseke later remembered that “it may appear like fantastic dreaming, but it seemed to us almost as if we could see in spirit, the rows of cottages, the church, the school, the fields and gardens and the poor Aboriginals flocking to hear the Word of Life.”¹ Like the surveyor Thomas Mitchell two decades before them, the missionaries imagined what this place might become, seeking to recreate it in the godly image of Moravian settlements around the world. At Ebenezer, the Moravians’ achievement in converting the colony’s first Aboriginal person, Nathanael Pepper, was widely celebrated, and the incorporation of a range of spatial and visual practices into Australian missionization can be closely linked to the admired Moravian example.

The Moravians brought with them preconceptions of how to create an environment that would teach Aboriginal people how to live and behave like Europeans—a culturally specific imagined geography that privileged observation and spatial order. They had a long tradition of expressing the principles of faith through the design of their settlements, in a utopian vision shaped by the experience of persecution and displacement. Over the eighteenth century, the construction of a series of planned European congregation towns, or *Ortsgemein*, provided the model for settlements built by the Moravian Diaspora around the globe. Ebenezer’s founder Spieseke himself came from the archetypal Gnadenburg, a town that spawned many new world imitations.²

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The *Ortsgemein* were characterized by a central open square, grid street pattern, and homes adjoined by work yards and gardens. The square was dominated by the church, or *Gemein Haus*, which was placed along one side. The overall effect was of openness, expressing the “outward-directed mission” of the doctrine of Diaspora that allowed members to travel and establish communities across the globe.³ The Moravian emphasis on unity was expressed through the trope of family, imposed upon the community as a whole. The “choir system” categorized the community as single men and single women of different ages, married couples, widows, and widowers—social divisions that were expressed spatially through distinct living and working quarters.⁴ This principle was allied to the custom of pooling resources, or “community of goods,” as every member of the community worked for all: this pre-Marxist communism the English Moravian visitor to Herrnhut, James Henry, termed the “village system . . . bringing together a community of people, whose whole life and pursuits, trades, occupations, professions, pleasures, pastimes, were all to be regulated and characterized by one religious impulse.”⁵ Schooling, including for girls, was another fundamental Moravian principle.

Landscapes of Transformation

Scholars across several disciplines have drawn attention to the privileged status assigned visual and spatial forms of knowledge in the Western intellectual tradition.⁶ A range of feminist and postcolonialist critics have shown that this imagined topography has been complicit with colonialism, implicated in constructing racial, class, and gender hierarchies. Certain visual conventions, such as the perspectival representation of landscape, spatially and temporally distanced the object of vision; the “other,” as object of knowledge, was rendered separate, distinct, and preferably distant from the knower. In addition, the important role of environment in shaping character became a widely accepted idea over the course of the eighteenth century and prompted the emergence of new forms of remedial planning that sought to reform its inhabitants’ lives. This development is most famously associated with the shift, outlined by Foucault, from punishment and exhortation through spectacle to the creation of a sense of personal responsibility by means of surveillance and discipline. The new disciplinary architecture was intended to impose corrective technologies

of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgment upon the inmates, in which transgression was judged only as it was seen.⁷ While Bentham's panopticon is usually cited as the emblem of this new paradigm, particularly in the Australian colonies, where it has been seen as the model for a range of penal institutions,⁸ Foucault also examined Samuel Tuke's asylum, shaped by Quaker ideals of family, work, and self-restraint.

The example provided by such religious communities also inspired British figures such as utopian socialist Robert Owen and the emerging cooperative movements. The Moravians' ordered approach to town planning at a time when this was almost unknown contributed to the creation of a number of distinctive sites around the world, including the British Moravian centers of Fulneck (Yorkshire, established 1744) and Fairfield (Droylsden, England, established 1785), which provided living examples of successful ideal communities.⁹ It has even been suggested that Moravians from Yorkshire joined David Dale's "model village" of New Lanark, directly influencing Owen's subsequent program of utopian settlements in Britain and the United States despite his general opposition to religion.¹⁰ In addition, as I have noted, Moravian influence upon the emerging British evangelical movements of the late eighteenth century was considerable, and their missionary activities in particular inspired the new British missionary societies.¹¹

The planned mission environment perhaps reached its acme in the Moravian missionary Friedrich Hagenauer's design for Ramahyuck, which he established in 1863, just a few years after helping to found Ebenezer. Eight years after the mission was established he wrote to the Reverend W. E. Morris that he intended to form

a regular plan or system of operation . . . a general Station plan which forms the centre of the whole and into which fall the parts, from the Mission house, the School house, and native houses and finally the order of every individual black from the old man down to the child, so that each one knows his place and work.¹²

The Foucauldian resonance of this scheme did not escape historian Bain Attwood, who showed how this "machinery" was designed to inculcate a new sense of time and space within the Aboriginal residents. Here Attwood echoed the approach of anthropologists Jean and John

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Comaroff, who argued for the ways that missionaries introduced new notions of space, time, community, work, and personhood to the Tswana of Africa, in particular through “the shapes and connotations of built form and organized space.”¹³ The Comaroffs’ evocative account described how the distribution and external marking of buildings distinguished the sacred from the secular, the public from the private, while the spatial organization of activities among church, schoolroom, printing press, and fields was governed by European divisions of time and labor. Their European furnishings implied “a new order of ‘needs’ that hitched these communities irrevocably to the commodity market.”¹⁴ While the Comaroffs’ approach has been very influential, showing how Indigenous peoples were transformed through agriculture, social institutions such as the monogamous household, and especially money and material consumption, their analysis has tended to overplay the hegemonic power missionaries were able to impose on Indigenous societies, as I discussed in chapter 1.

Nonetheless, throughout the reserves’ operation, missionaries and other officials carefully represented settlements such as Ebenezer and Ramahyuck in ways that argued for their efficient management, the residents’ conversion to Christianity, and their successful adoption of Western culture, all expressed in the orderly appearance of their physical setting.¹⁵

“Lovely Built Houses”

Officially, the Moravian Church was an influential proponent of the “gospel first” view, advising the London Missionary Society in 1795 to choose missionaries with practical skills rather than learning, because “mere civilization and improvement in various arts is not our immediate object, but the conversion of the heathens’ heart to God.”¹⁶ They were admired by contemporaries for their simplicity and their sacrifice of material comforts.¹⁷ However, despite this doctrine, in practice the missionaries’ own cultural values structured the environment and everyday life of the missions. In counterpoint to the spiritual journey represented by Nathanael Pepper’s conversion narrative, the missionaries’ voluminous diaries, letters, and reports show that they also ranked his secular accomplishments highly, tracing his slow but encouraging signs of interest in European culture, such as the hut Pepper and his brother Boney built on the station

over its early months.¹⁸ As Spieseke reported in 1861, Pepper had “fully appreciated the doctrines of Christianity. He is christianised and enlightened. . . . He has built a hut which he inhabits, and in rainy seasons the poor houseless Aborigines find there shelter and warmth.”¹⁹ Around 1879 the Church again reported its progress in worldly terms, noting that

the results have been eminently satisfactory for although . . . the race is still rapidly decreasing . . . the condition of the Aborigines has greatly improved and they may be expected to rise still further in the social scale. The race which not very many years ago was looked upon as utterly and hopelessly debased is now pronounced to be not only capable of civilisation but to a large extent actually civilised for those of the Blacks (amounting to about half the number now remaining in Victoria) who have been successfully gathered into settlements dwell in houses, are decently clad, and have adopted with considerable regularity the employments of civilised people . . . whereas formerly they knew no such things as family-life now they live with wife and children whom they support by their own labour.²⁰

The missionaries themselves expressed sometimes contradictory views. Hagenauer unequivocally emphasized spiritual over material progress, for example, writing in 1863 that “we have often come across pious Christians who confuse Europeanisation with Christianisation. They believe that a person who does not live a European lifestyle cannot be a true Christian!”²¹ Conversely, however, he was harsh in his judgment of traditional life as a marker of “depravity,” as his definition of the Aboriginal “camp” indicates:

The blacks there don’t have, as opposed to almost all other savage peoples, houses or huts or villages, in which they live together, rather only camps or camp places, where each family at the most builds a roof made of leaves . . . what is more, they lie down on the bare earth in the open, as long as it pleases them to stay there. From this one may ascertain on what a low level they are, the most wretched and deprived of all the heathens.²²

When they arrived in 1859 the desperate material needs of the Wergaia were obvious to the missionaries, and Hagenauer acknowledged their “desire, which is understandably for the time being only one for food,

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clothing, and a home, but could perhaps be a preparation to make the heart more receptive for the gospel and the longing for salvation, which is only found in Jesus.”²³ Similarly, Spieseke noted that

there are about 12 Aborigines that are staying at this place, in great physical and mental misery. Fast help is needed. They are now excited about the arrival of our things from the city, for they hope to receive presents. The begging doesn't cease. How will we be able to assist these hungry and naked people in the long run? When we wish to tell them something about the evangelical message, the constant answer is: give me something to eat, give me clothes.²⁴

Unlike Hagenauer, Spieseke urged “civilizing” alongside spiritual instruction, arguing that “the acceptance of the gospel has made it possible for them to become more civilized. All of the baptized, except for one, live . . . in lovely built houses. And even this one, who has out of necessity lived until now in the camp, will soon have his house finished.”²⁵

The Moravians believed in the principle of working for one's bread, although practicing “community of goods” (pooling their resources). When the missionaries first arrived in Australia it had been suggested that they should travel from station to station provided with “gifts of sugar, flour and tea,” as the protectors had. They rejected this proposal because “they wished from the outset to make the natives understand that the comforts of life would only be attained by labour.” In asking for donations from home of “various articles, such as clothing, razors, fish hooks, etc for the mission on Lake Boga, they were always careful to explain they did not intend to give these things to the Blacks unless in return for work done by them.”²⁶ This belief clashed with the attitude of traditional owners at Lake Boga, who had a strong sense of their rights, one man telling the Moravians that “since the land round Lake Boga belonged to him he should receive food for nothing.”²⁷ The missionaries described how every day “after solemn prayer, [they] commenced work with axes” alongside the Aboriginal people.²⁸ In 1870 Spieseke explained why they allowed movement on and off the station for work:

This exterior side is now concerning us more than we anticipated at the beginning of the mission. The gospel that we taught in the Church and at school instructs Christians to eat their own bread. It is then for our

people somewhat oppressive that they should live from the charity of foodstuffs and clothing, which they receive from the government and one cannot be surprised when they occasionally say: What do I have here, I would like some money, not only flour and sugar, if I go to a sheep station I get 12 shillings a week and enough bread, meat, etc.²⁹

And by 1885 Hagenauer, too, had come to acknowledge that “the secular work at the station, which really occupied very much time for ourselves, is of the greatest importance for the people.”³⁰ Visiting Moravian missionary Heinrich Meissel was in no doubt of the importance of adopting European material culture and especially housing, writing that “the houses of the blacks are very good for them. . . . Most of the blacks have been presented with blankets, table covers, curtains, crockery and cutlery, all of which are kept with respect. Every evening the blacks receive their food and supplies from the missionaries for the next day.”³¹

The (Moral) High Ground: The Mission-House

Some have continued to emphasize the efficacy of Aboriginal stations as carceral institutions, and the capacity of spatial organization and landscape to shape human behavior and legitimate power relationships. However, postcolonial analysis has shifted our attention to the instability of the settlers’ own accounts and the multiplicity of colonial viewpoints.³² Just as Foucault’s approach has been criticized for exaggerating the efficacy of inscriptive bodily practices, the power of environment to determine subjectivity, and the oppressive rather than communicative aspects of vision, it has been shown that life within European institutions often provided opportunities for Aboriginal people to maintain or even elaborate aspects of tradition.³³ Rather than assuming any subject’s experience to be determined by spatial frameworks, more recent approaches argue for a concept of “many social spaces negotiated within one geographical place and time.”³⁴ Although power is spatialized, space is also constituted *within* social relations, and therefore assumes dynamic and multiple forms. Within the Australian colonies, particularly, the social order was constantly created anew and was always subject to uncertainty, instability, and challenge.

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Investigation of the concrete, material circumstances that prevailed at Ebenezer reveals both the missionaries' and the Indigenous experience in a less mediated fashion than written accounts, testifying not only to the Moravian "civilizing" program but also to the creative ways the Aboriginal residents found to evade or disregard surveillance. Certain aspects of this built environment followed Moravian precedents, complementing visual and textual representations: buildings symbolizing the settlement's core values were constructed along the top of a shallow ridge, with the church on the highest ground and its tower pointing toward the heavens to symbolize God's glory, alongside the mission-house, girls' dormitory, and school. Social categories defined according to gender, age, and marital status (the "choir system") were embodied in distinct living and sleeping spaces and practices within the settlement.

However, other features of the settlement testify to the missionaries' adaptation to new, colonial circumstances as well as the limitations of their regime. A 1904 surveyor's plan (figure 4.1) produced at the end of the mission's life hints at these disjunctions: for example, Moravians intended to erect huts to "form three sides of a square," facing inward toward the church and missionaries' house, but it is apparent that this vision was never realized and that the west side of the settlement always remained open.³⁵ This plan also points to the dominant location of the mission-house along the north side of the square, marking a departure from Moravian models in displacing the church from its central position.³⁶

Archaeological investigation of the former mission-house in 2003 confirmed its enhanced role within the mission's operation. Excavation aimed initially to define the structure of the house and its former role. The mission-house (figure 4.2) was the first limestone rubble building constructed on the station, in June 1860. The Reverends Spieseke and Hagenauer noted:

We have begun the erection of a dwelling-house of limestone, of which we have plenty at our place. The mason-work is done by a man engaged for the purpose, but all the wood-work we have undertaken to do ourselves. The place of worship we have to finish ourselves too. Our hands are full.³⁷

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Figure 4.2. Samuel Hartley Roberts, “Moravian Mission House Blacks Station, Dimboola, Feb 19, 85,” watercolor (H93.456/2) (La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria).

Prior to excavation it was known that the mission-house was home to the successive missionaries supervising the settlement and their families, as well as some Aboriginal people; married Aboriginal couples, such as Phillip and Rebecca Pepper, occupied two rooms.³⁸ Some details of the building materials and techniques were also available. The missionaries used local limestone to construct the ten-roomed building, divided into small apartments. The house was symmetrical in design, with three chimneys and a large central doorway, two side doors, five large symmetrically placed multipaned windows, and a shingled roof.³⁹

Description of the construction of the church in 1875 offers some indication of how the earlier building may have been built. For the church, all the men were employed in getting the stone for construction; the interior was plastered cement, with a red pine floor, while the ceiling was made of tongue and groove and painted a lead color. The plastering and other work was done by Aboriginal people.⁴⁰ For the church, lime for building and whitewashing was burned on the station, and a saw-pit was

constructed and timber produced by the Aboriginal men.⁴¹ It is not known precisely when the mission house was dismantled, though Wotjobaluk elder Uncle Jack Kennedy, now passed away, remembered seeing it during the 1930s, and an aerial view of 1946 shows it to have been dismantled by that date.

Two large excavation areas targeting the northeastern and western portions of the mission-house were opened up, exposing its fullest surviving extent to the northeast and southwest, and allowing reconstruction of its basic plan and many specific features (figure 4.3). Despite damage to the site caused in part by a National Trust “junior working bee” in 1972, substantial evidence for the construction and demolition of the building was recovered.⁴² Five main rooms were defined, with evidence for enclosed annexes at each end. A detailed picture of the construction and life of the annex against the east and northeastern sides of the 1860 house was obtained. In 1882 and 1885 images (figures 4.2 and 4.4), an annex is shown extending along both the eastern and western sides of the mission-house, providing a *terminus ante quem* for the annex of around 1882. Additions to the annex included modern conveniences such as concrete flooring and a brick base for a copper.

Significantly, the pattern of construction and additions—such as the addition of a laundry/bathroom annex on the northeast corner—indicates that the missionaries chose to extend their communal household rather than construct new buildings, confirming that the mission-house was the settlement’s principal building throughout its operation. The limestone church, constructed in 1874–1875, was sited on the ridge’s highest point, to symbolize God’s glory, and it was given greater prominence in representations of the settlement.⁴³ It was a less substantial building in real estate terms, in 1904 being valued at only fifty pounds, where the mission-house was assessed at one hundred pounds. Although the mission-house received least mention in contemporary records of all the settlement’s buildings,⁴⁴ the archaeological evidence indicates that it was the symbolic and functional heart of the settlement, home to both missionaries and some of the Aboriginal residents.

This shift from Moravian precedent marks the enhanced spiritual and practical importance of the missionary’s role as overseer, guide, and father of the community in the Australian field. At Ebenezer the mission-house became the settlement’s public face and the site of the “hospitality” for

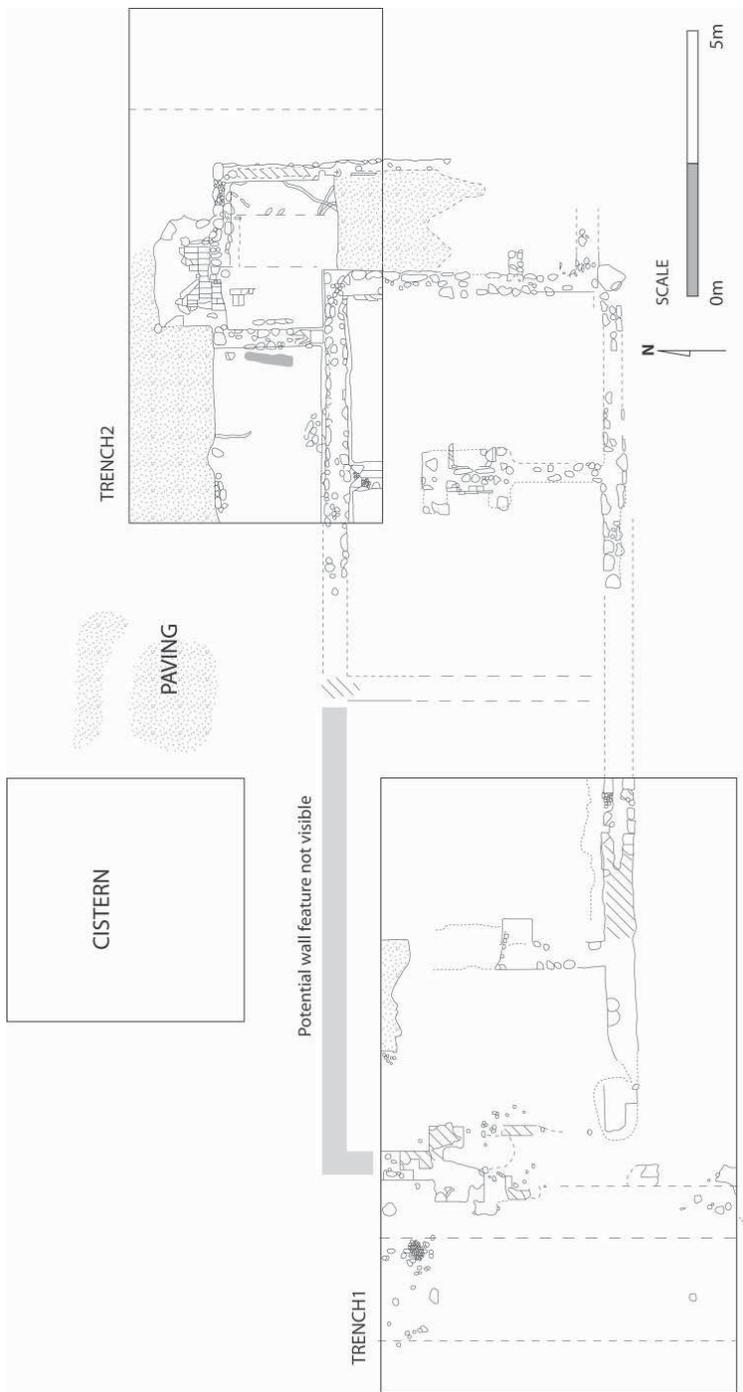


Figure 4.3. Plan of mission-house excavation areas, 2003.



Figure 4.4. “MISSION STATION, DIMBOOLA,” *Illustrated Australian News* 1882:36. (La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.)

which the missionaries were known—and in this respect a substitute for the inn that had been a feature of the *Ortsgemein*. Its commanding aspect, located along the top of a ridge and dominating the central public space, was intended to allow the missionaries to monitor the Aboriginal residents and their movements among their dwellings, communal buildings such as the church and school, and the wider landscape. This arrangement symbolized the missionaries’ paternalistic relationship with the Aboriginal residents, positioning the former as watchful guardians whose benign discipline was sanctioned by God.

As I explore in the next chapter, the mission-house also served as an “object lesson”—a concrete example of a Christian, “civilized” household occupied by the extended church family, with husband, wife, and children enacting their roles within the setting of European domesticity, before their Aboriginal audience. The notion of family was central to Moravian theology and everyday life, and the archaeological evidence for the residents’ lifestyle reflected the habits and tastes of European bourgeois domesticity—including diet, recreation, household furnishings, personal

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grooming, and comportment. Through the material structures of family life, the missionaries sought to impose new ideas of order and time discipline upon the residents.

In these concrete and visual ways, the Moravians were successful in creating key elements of a European landscape and lifestyle within an alien environment. Their seeming achievement of fundamental goals in the colonial program of transforming Aboriginal people was recognized by contemporaries, as measured in the appearance of the settlement and the comportment of its residents. The representation of the mission—even in such concrete and embodied forms as revealed by the archaeological investigation—must not, however, be understood solely on the missionaries' own terms. Although the evidence demonstrates that they successfully controlled aspects of the material and social function of the mission-house, these attainments must be seen in the context of instabilities that discredit their claims to successful governance and delineate the limits of their regime.

The Limits of Colonialism

The missionaries were undermined by their own uncertainties as well as by Aboriginal opposition and evasion, founded in a very different cultural orientation. In the years before white settlement spread to this remote corner of the colony, the traditional owners saw no need to settle on the reserve or adopt European customs. Personal diaries of the newly arrived German Moravian missionaries at Ebenezer Mission during the early 1860s reveal that their lives were fraught with anxiety and self-doubt, if not despair, as they struggled with putting doctrine into practice: even after Pepper's conversion, three years after Ebenezer was established, Spieseke wrote, "It seems as though we will not be successful in forming a comparatively large congregation from this deeply sunken people."⁴⁵ Even after they gained a more secure foothold, it is clear that Ebenezer focused a range of very different meanings for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. While the disciplinary regime of the reserves established some parameters for social relations, it did not fully determine them: they must be understood rather in terms of the heterogeneous, multiple experiences of differently positioned Indigenous subjects. The missionaries' Western visual regime overlooked or denied disjunctions with the Aboriginal residents' profoundly different cultural orientation, in which vision was sub-

ordinated to aurality, and in which collective forms of personhood took precedence over the individual, allowing for the persistence of tradition and the evasion of control in the pursuit of Aboriginal objectives. Aboriginal residents maintained sometimes unrecognized forms of collective identity, or practices such as a camp lifestyle.⁴⁶ During the 1880s, Aboriginal people who had continued to lead a traditional way of life decided to settle at the station, living in *mia mias* and pursuing a range of traditional activities, although also taking advantage of the mission's resources. In 1881 it was reported that

latterly the remnants of some of the Wimmera tribes have come to the station to take up their residence here. They are all old people, and several of them are blind. Having lived in camps all their lifetime, they have come to consider those primitive, and to our notions, most uncomfortable structures the very abodes of bliss, and cannot by any means be induced to live in one of the comfortable cottages on the station. Their friends here, however, try to make them as comfortable as possible under the circumstances.⁴⁷

At Ebenezer there is evidence that Aboriginal people evaded scrutiny through movement and concealment, escaping or undermining the spatial apparatus of the reserves. They deployed strategies of mobility and evasion to pursue their own objectives, played out across different levels and scales of colonial space.

Despite establishment of the six reserves, for example, up to half the colony's Indigenous population was able to live elsewhere or moved in and out of these communities, instead choosing to work for European employers or to receive rations from honorary correspondents' depots.⁴⁸ Unlike Aboriginal people in Victoria's more settled southern fringe, those in the northwest remained mobile and dispersed, moving on and off Ebenezer for work with relative ease. Such freedom was frustrating for the missionaries—for example, Spiieseke reported in July 1871 that

I endeavoured to get the Aborigines to remain as much as possible at the Mission Station at Ebenezer during the season. . . . They occasionally take a few weeks or months, as the case may be, here for a change. There is only one man here for the last six weeks, Sandy; he informs me that about eight are coming to remain for some time.⁴⁹

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In this sparsely settled area Aboriginal labor was a useful resource for pastoralists, and men worked as shepherds, shearers, stockmen, and casual laborers, while women worked as servants, sometimes establishing long-lasting relationships with particular pastoralist families. Some men were able to lease farming land—such as Pelham Cameron.⁵⁰ Others chose to live in camps in traditional country, utilizing traditional food sources where possible—such as along the Murray and Darling Rivers—and some supplemented their income through fishing, shooting, and begging.⁵¹ As I explore in the next chapter, women were a particular focus for scrutiny but deployed a range of strategies of mobility and evasion.

The settlement fluctuated in size from around 67 in 1876 to 101 in 1882, as many came and went as they wished.⁵² As for all the Victorian stations, the passing of the 1886 Aborigines Protection Law Amendment Act, requiring that all Aboriginal people of part-European parentage and their spouses must leave the reserves, effectively marked the beginning of the end for Ebenezer. By 1890 only thirty-five residents remained, and in October 1900 the board returned all land along the west side of the Wimmera to the Lands Department. The mission was closed in 1904, when the Lake Hindmarsh Act threw open the reserve for license, lease, or perpetual lease, and many residents moved to the nearby Antwerp Aboriginal Reserve.⁵³

The evidence for the settlement created at Ebenezer expresses Spieseke's "fantastic dreaming"—the missionaries' future-oriented ideal of transformation and redemption embodied in a planned Christian settlement intended to reform its residents. But it also betrays the very different agenda of the Wergaia speakers, concerned to evade restriction and maintain aspects of their distinctive lifestyle, including movement across traditional country. The Moravians' long, global, and respected tradition of evangelizing provided them with an influential model for establishing Aboriginal settlements, centered upon embodied and spatial practices designed to teach residents how to live like Europeans. Their program was particularly congenial to British colonizers familiar with the collectivist utopian ideas prompted by industrialization and the labor movement. At Ebenezer, this program was successfully inaugurated, as demonstrated by evidence for the settlement's design and for the enhanced function of the mission-house. The preeminence of the mission-house in the Australian

colonies marked a departure from Moravian precedent, symbolizing the enhanced authority of the missionaries and their successful recreation of a European landscape and way of life. Viewing this household within the wider context of the mission's operations, however, suggests the limits of the Moravians' program, marked by the missionaries' uncertainties, their ongoing battle to maintain control over the residents, the relative mobility and freedom of many residents, and the maintenance as well as the transformation of traditional culture around Ebenezer. In sum, without denying the sometimes harsh restriction of Aboriginal peoples' rights entailed by the mission regime, it is important to view the missionaries' accounts of their work alongside evidence for the persistence of a very different Aboriginal orientation.

Notes

1. F. W. Spieseke, quoted in S. Robertson, *The Bell Sounds Pleasantly: Ebenezer Mission Station* (Doncaster, Victoria: Luther Rose Publications, 1992), 22.

2. Herrnhag, the second settlement commenced in 1738, was, unlike Herrnhut, based on a plan and became the model for future settlements; Niesky and Gnadenburg provided immediate precedents for planning: Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728–1760* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 137; Christopher E. Hendricks, "Building 'Villages of the Lord': The Birth and Development of the Moravian Congregation Town," paper presented to the Symposium *German Moravians in the Atlantic World* at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, April 2002. However, such settlements were not uniform—Fulneck, for example, was a notable exception, being constructed on a series of terraces carved into a Yorkshire hillside: Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England*, 137–40, 149–50; Ron Southern, "Going Home: The Moravian Settlement of Fulneck, 1750–1760" (PhD dissertation, School of Archaeological and Historical Studies, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, 1997); Ron Southern, "Strangers Below: An Archaeology of Distinctions in an Eighteenth-Century Religious Community," in *Archaeologies of the British: Explorations of Identity in Great Britain and Its Colonies 1600–1945*, ed. Susan Lawrence (London: Routledge, 2003), 87–101.

3. Hendricks, "Building 'Villages of the Lord'"; Manfred Büttner, "Religion and Geography," *Numen* 21 (1974): 163–96.

4. James Henry, *Sketches of Moravian Life and Character* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1859), 41.

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5. Henry, *Sketches of Moravian Life and Character*, 39.

6. Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York: Knopf, 1988); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991); Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, "Introduction: Women's Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies," in *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*, ed. Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (New York: Guilford Press, 1994), 1–25. As Johannes Fabian argues, this "visualism" equated the "knowable with that which can be visualized, and logic with orderly arrangements of pieces of knowledge in space." Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 116.

7. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Tavistock, 1967); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991).

8. Michal Bosworth, *Convict Fremantle: A Place of Promise and Punishment* (Crawley, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 2004); J. S. Kerr, *Design for Convicts: An Account of Design for Convict Establishments in the Australian Colonies during the Transportation Era* (Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1984); I. Brand, *Penal Peninsula: Port Arthur and Its Outstations 1827–1898* (West Moonah, Tasmania: Jason Publications, 1978).

9. Currently a "serial transboundary transcontinental nomination" of a number of settlements to the UNESCO World Heritage List is in progress, including Christiansfeld, Zeist (Holland), Bethlehem (United States), Elim (South Africa) and Gracehill (United Kingdom): www.gracehillvillage.org/Index.asp?id=39 (accessed 12 Sep 2008); Southern, "Going Home: The Moravian Settlement of Fulneck, 1750–1760"; Ron Southern, "Strangers Below."

10. This possibility was raised by Élie Halévy in *Birth of Methodism in England*, trans. Bernard Semmel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971). More recently, a general influence upon Owen has been suggested: see, for example, Yaacov Oved, *Two Hundred Years of American Communes*, trans. Hannah Lash (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 109.

11. J. C. S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England 1760–1800* (Rochester, NY: The Royal Historical Society/Boydell, 2001), 16; D. Schattschneider, "William Carey, Modern Missions and the Moravian Influence," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22(1) (1998): 9; William Howell Edwards, *Moravian Aboriginal Missions in Australia 1850–1919* (Adelaide: Uniting Church Historical Society [South Australia], 1999), 31.

12. 27 Apr, Hagenauer, Letterbook 1865–1872, cited in Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 8.

13. J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, "Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa," *American Ethnologist* 13(1) (1986): 2; Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff,

Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 12.

14. Comaroff and Comaroff, "Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa," 1–22.

15. For a study of this process of visual representation, see Jane Lydon, "Watched Over by the Indefatigable Moravian Missionaries': Colonialism and Photography at Ebenezer and Ramahyuck," *La Trobe Journal* 76 (2005).

16. Mason, *The Moravian Church*, 164–65.

17. "Also we, as Lutherans, must concede: it is truly an uplifting picture [to see] their great simplicity and their willingness to sacrifice [material goods]." *Der Australische Germanbote* (ACB) (Australian Lutheran German-Language Journal) (1879): 12, 185, cited in Felicity Jenz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station in North-Western Victoria: A German Perspective" (master's thesis, University of Melbourne, 1999), 70.

18. "Missionary Success among the Aborigines" (Melbourne: Wm. Goodhugh and Sons, 1860, reprinted from the *Christian Times*, 3 Mar 1860); "The Moravian Mission in Australia, 1848–1879," Presbyterian Church of Victoria Archives, Melbourne, 43.

19. Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria (BPA), *First Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria* (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1861), 5.

20. "The Moravian Mission in Australia, 1848–1879," 1.

21. *Der Australische Christianbote* (ACB) (Australian Lutheran German-Language Journal) (1863): 7, 26, cited in Jenz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station in North-Western Victoria," 77.

22. *Missionsblatt aus der Brüdergemeine* (MB) (Mission Journal of the Moravian Mission), cited in Jenz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station in North-Western Victoria," 62.

23. Hagenauer, in MB (1859): 6, 114, cited in Jenz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station in North-Western Victoria," 63.

24. Spieseke, in MB (1859): 6, 113.

25. Spieseke, ACB (1865): 5, 20. In 1867 he wrote, "I support those who say these things should go hand in hand." ACB (1867): 11, 43, cited in Jenz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station in North-Western Victoria," 76.

26. "The Moravian Mission in Australia, 1848–1879," 6.

27. Item 199, "Since land round Lake Boga belonged to him he should receive food for nothing." In Appendix 3 (instructions to missionaries). Felicity Jenz, trans., "Moravian Papers Project—Stage 2. Final report" (Victorian Aboriginal Corporation of Languages, 2000) (manuscript in author's possession).

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28. "Facts Relating to the Moravian Mission." First Paper, 1860, State Library of Victoria Rare Books, Melbourne, 10 Jan 1859: "After solemn prayer, commenced work with axes, &c., on the site of the present mission station. Each succeeding day, work was done there, preceded by prayer." 4 Jun, Pepper and "two others soon commenced and finished a rough bark hut for their own use. This they have ever since occupied, furnished as it was with three beds, a table and a fireplace," 5.

29. MB (1870): 9, 221, cited in Jenz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station in North-Western Victoria," 64.

30. "And although the labour could never be judged according to white men, still, according to the strength of the blacks, I must say that good progress has been made, as the buildings, the gardens, and fields will show at the strictest inspection." Papers of Friedrich Augustus Hagenauer (1829–1909), State Library of Victoria, MS9556, small notebook wrapped in brown paper; "Aboriginal Mission Station, Ramahyuck, Report for 1885: Mission Work among the Aborigines of This Country."

31. Meissel's daybook/diary, 22 Dec 1864, cited in Jenz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station in North-Western Victoria," 124–25.

32. John Noyes, *Colonial Space: Spatiality in the Discourse of German South West Africa 1884–1915* (Philadelphia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1992); Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

33. For criticism of Foucault's monologic, monolithic conception of modernity as defined by social control and total surveillance, see, for example, Jay Martin, "In the Empire of the Gaze: Foucault and the Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. D. C. Hoy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 175–204. For a more detailed analysis of indigeneity and the mission landscape, see Jane Lydon, "'Watched over by the Indefatigable Moravian Missionaries,'" 10–17. For studies that have cast doubt on the effectiveness of institutional control, see, for example, David Trigger, *Whitefella Comin': Aboriginal Responses to Colonialism in Northern Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Tim Rowse, *After Mabo: Interpreting Indigenous Traditions* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), 34–41; Scott L'Oste-Brown and Luke Godwin, with Gordon Henry, Ted Mitchell, and Vera Tyson, *Living under the Act: Taroom Aboriginal Reserve 1911–1927* (Brisbane: Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage, 1995).

34. Sara Mills, "Gender and Colonial Space," in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 692–719 (693).

35. Robert Gillespie, MP, quoted in Robertson, *The Bell Sounds Pleasantly*, 44–45; *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren* (London: The Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel Among the Heathen, 1849).

36. The settlement at Ramahyuck apparently also assumed this form, the large mission-house taking pride of place along the central side of its central square and relegating the church to a spatially lesser role as one of a row of public buildings to one side: see reconstruction in Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 12.

37. Melbourne Association in Aid of the Moravian Mission to the Aborigines of Australia (MAAMMAA), *Further Facts Relating to the Moravian Mission in Australia* (Melbourne: Wm. Goodhugh, 1861), 6.

38. Marie Fels, *Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District 1837–1853* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 20; MAAMMAA, *Further Facts Relating to the Moravian Mission in Australia* (1866), 5.

39. In 1864 an attached room was used as the girls' sleeping room: Board for the Protection of Aborigines (BPA), *Report of the Central Board* (1864), 6. At this time the bailiff described it as $86 \times 45 \times 9$ feet ($26.21 \times 13.71 \times 2.8$ meters), made of limestone rubble with a double roof of bark and iron, pine flooring, and a hessian ceiling. It had a double verandah, which was floored and in fair repair, and a cellar measuring $12 \times 6 \times 8$ feet ($3.65 \times 1.82 \times 2.43$ meters).

40. BPA, *Report of the Central Board* (1875), 5.

41. BPA, *Report of the Central Board* (1877), 9–10.

42. Jane Lydon with Alasdair Brooks and Zvonkica Stanin, "Archaeological Investigations at the Mission-House, Ebenezer Mission" (report prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Heritage Victoria, Monash University, Melbourne, 2004); Jane Lydon, "Archaeological Investigations at the Mission-House, Ebenezer Mission" (community report, Monash University, Melbourne, 2004).

43. BPA, *Report of the Central Board* (1874), 7.

44. Fels, *Good Men and True*, 20.

45. *Der Australische Christenbote* 1862: 11, 62, cited in Felicity Jensz, "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station in North-Western Victoria: A German Perspective" (master's thesis, University of Melbourne, 1999), 75. Ron Southern also explores the grief and uncertainty created by the Moravians' frontier mission experience: "Martyrs and Messengers: Benjamin Franklin and the American Frontier, the Moravians and the Nature of Reason," in *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies*, ed. Lynette Russell (Manchester University Press, 2001), 82–97.

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46. Jane Lydon, "Seeing Each Other: Colonial Photography in Nineteenth-Century Victoria," in *Archaeologies of the British: Explorations of Identity in Great Britain and Its Colonies 1600–1945*, ed. Susan Lawrence (London: One World Archaeology Series, Routledge, 2003), 174–90.

47. BPA, *Report of the Central Board* (1881), 10. The following year, many mission residents were sick, and the board noted that "the old people, in their (to our notions, at least) most uncomfortable *mia mias* appear to be the healthiest and hardiest after all." BPA, *Report of the Central Board* (1882), 10. By 1884, Bogisch mentioned that there were lots of old people on station, four totally blind, commenting: "These old people are always cheerful, happy and contented. They prefer to live in *mia mias*, and as that style of residence, with plenty of fresh air, and occasionally plenty of smoke, evidently suits them much better than living in houses, I do not trouble them to give it up. Our Christianised people take a loving interest in these old and afflicted ones, and kindly attend to all their wants." BPA, *Report of the Central Board* (1884), 13.

48. Jan Penney, "Victorian Honorary Correspondent Supply Depots: Final Report" (Report to Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 1997).

49. BPA, *Report of the Central Board* (1871), 21.

50. When the mission closed, he was granted a residence license under the Land Act (Mallee) 1901. For Pelham Cameron's story, see PROV, "Lands Guide."

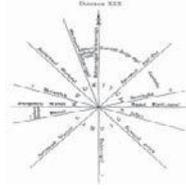
51. Women such as Agnes Edwards ("Queen Aggie") of Swan Hill and Augusta "Minnie" Logan-Nicholls, née Robinson, lived their lives beyond the purview of white managers: Jan Penney, "Encounters on the River: Aborigines and Europeans in the Murray Valley 1820–1920" (PhD dissertation, Department of History, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, 1989); Gary Murray (Wryker Milloo), "Sacred to the Memory of Augusta: The Lake Hindmarsh Clothing Distribution Book 1882–1903" (manuscript in author's possession, 2003).

52. BPA, *Report of the Central Board* (1876), 2; (1882), 2.

53. Marie Hansen Fels, *A History of the Ebenezer Mission* (Melbourne: Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 1998), 9–10.

CHAPTER FIVE

“ALL THESE LITTLE THINGS”: MATERIAL CULTURE AND DOMESTICITY



I asked several if they liked better to live in the huts than in the mia-mia; they said that they would not like to live in the mia-mia again. In several of the huts the occupiers have shown a good deal of taste in the well-arranged crockery and other household things.¹

John Green, Inspector of Aborigines, 1874

The Protestant evangelicals' worldview was fundamentally gendered, shaping Aboriginal peoples' encounter with Christianity. The emergence of the middle class in nineteenth-century Europe was underpinned by the ideology of separate spheres, making women the spiritual guardians of the household. This role was linked to their enhanced power as consumers, and consumption became a female domain.² The Moravian Church, like all contemporary religions, conceptualized religious and secular authority in male terms, while women were largely confined to bearing and rearing children. However, its views of the appropriate roles of men and women were given a unique inflection, assigning particular importance to a conception of the family as a theological as well as a secular model for social relationships, applied to the community as a whole.³ The entire congregation was seen as a family, with the church governing body as father. Members were assigned to "choirs" according to age, sex, and marital status, making up the congregation "family."⁴

As I explore, this approach enhanced the patriarchal structure of the Australian mission, with the effect of infantilizing the Indigenous people.

While they were rarely mentioned in documentary sources, the missionaries' wives supervised the domestic sphere, where the abstract distinction between spiritual and secular progress disappeared, and Indigenous women's domestic management became proof of missionary success. While the missionaries encouraged the creation of nuclear families, a more communal understanding of the family as an organizing principle was the basis for "collecting" children and incorporating young Aboriginal people into group forms of domesticity. In assessing the distinctiveness of the Moravian tradition, however, it must be remembered that church leaders instructed their missionaries to follow local colonial laws and customs.⁵ In any case, many aspects of Moravian tradition, including its notions of gender organization, overlapped substantially with British values. Other Moravian practices proved congenial to Aboriginal traditions. This complex cultural process of exchange was mediated through social institutions such as marriage, child rearing, and domesticity.⁶

Gender and Colonization

Many historians have pointed out how the colonization of Australia was shaped by the invaders' conceptions of gender—that is, their organization of culture around what they perceived to be basic differences between men and women. In southern Australia during the first half of the nineteenth century, Western criticism of Aboriginal social organization, and especially the place of women, was used as a means to justify intervention by missionaries. At a time when a society's treatment of women was considered a measure of its civilization, Western scientific and religious racial theories coincided in defining the Indigenous female sphere as degraded. European colonists represented Aboriginal women as being under great subjection to men in the domains of sexuality, work in reproduction, labor, and the distribution of resources, ignoring evidence for women's status within their own society.⁷

In addition, the often coercive sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women by white settlers played a major role in Indigenous dispossession in the Port Phillip District, a process of great concern to missionaries. Due in part to its contemporary concealment, this central cause of conflict has also been obscured from modern view, as the ugly extremes of physical brutality were omitted from white textual accounts or masked

by euphemisms such as “unspeakable” or “too horrible to be described.”⁸ Nonetheless, a central theme of settlers’ accounts during these early years was the representation of Aboriginal women as sexual objects, while venereal disease had infected two-thirds of the Aboriginal population of Port Phillip by 1840.⁹ As many have noted, the tradition of using sexual intercourse to create diplomatic ties was misunderstood by settlers and worked against Aboriginal women.¹⁰ Missionaries acknowledged the Aboriginal women’s plight and their own helplessness to intervene, but even these relatively sympathetic observers attributed this exploitation to the inability of Aboriginal women to manage their own sexuality.

“Proper Employment”: Gender and Mission Life

On the reserves, the colonial administration attempted to reorganize Aboriginal gender arrangements through spatial and material practices. A primary objective of the reserve system was to prevent sexual relations between white men and Aboriginal women and to replace traditional customs, such as bestowal, with Christian marriage. Many historians have pointed out the specificity of missionaries’ experience across Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific, as they accommodated their approach to specific colonial circumstances.¹¹

Certain features of Ebenezer’s organization were distinctively Moravian, especially the important role of gender. The “renewed” theology developed under the Moravian leader Zinzendorf in the 1730s took the father-son relationship between God and Christ, as understood within the trinity, as the model for all relationships, both spiritual and earthly. Zinzendorf saw God as father, the holy spirit as mother, and Christ as son; he taught that all souls (*animae*) were female and that every human would eventually return to his or her female state. The bond between Christ and the souls of believers was conceived as marriage, in which Christ was the bridegroom and the believer was the bride.¹² For Moravians, therefore, the family held multiple and overlapping meanings.

The choir system was allied to the custom of pooling resources, or community of goods, as each member contributed what he or she could, and all shared according to need in an early form of socialism.¹³ The Moravian emphasis on communal organization and the important educational and economic function of the choirs sometimes undermined the

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place of the biological family, for example, when children were removed from their mothers to the care of a nursery.¹⁴ However, the dormitory system (instituted at Herrnhut for each “choir”) was not always strictly enforced, and children were often brought up within nuclear families.

In 1861 the new Board for the Protection of the Aborigines announced its intention of establishing a school for “all neglected Aboriginal children and half-castes.” Late in 1861, Moravian Brother Job Francis arrived to teach the children and within a month reported that he had sixteen children attending school.¹⁵ The reserves were to be segregated and the residents’ movement closely controlled, and the board recommended that the governor decide “as to the disposal of orphan and deserted children.”¹⁶ “Collecting” children in these categories became board policy, and at Ebenezer initially the girls slept in two rooms attached to the mission-house, and the boys in a room attached to the three-roomed schoolhouse.¹⁷ Such segregation within a children’s “choir” followed standard Moravian practice.

The board was always deeply concerned for the moral situation of Aboriginal women and argued that the plight of young girls was an important reason to pass a protection bill. It claimed that “they hang on the outskirts of civilization, a disgrace to the colony, and a standing rebuke to those who profess to care for decency and to be offended by the constant exhibition of immorality and vice.”¹⁸ As a result of these concerns, the dormitory was built around 1870, as noted in the 1871 BPA report, which records the existence of the kitchen and a separate stone “Native girls’ dwelling house.”¹⁹ The dormitory was a substantial stone building, divided into a day room and a sleeping room with eight “single iron bedsteads.” The girls were locked in at night. A stone schoolroom was completed in 1874 (figure 5.1).²⁰

The single adults’ choirs could contribute greatly to the community, and it has often been noted of the Moravian’s European and American communities that women had relatively greater opportunities than were generally available. Nonetheless, most Moravian women married and worked in the home, and the marriage bond remained fundamentally hierarchical in nature, as the congregation was advised:

The husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ of the Gemeine [congregation]; and just as Christ loves the Gemeine, so he should love,

nourish and care for his wife. . . . He must treat her with understanding, in order to give her respect as the weaker part, and to show her love, sincerity and patience in accordance with Christ.²¹

Marriage was the basis of the community as well as a basic technique of missionizing, and in 1861, as soon as Ebenezer was established, two Moravian sisters traveled from Germany to marry the missionaries: Christina Fricke married Spieseke on 29 May 1861, and Louise Knobloch married Hagenauer on 15 June 1861.²² These arranged marriages between strangers were echoed in the wedding of Nathanael Pepper and a mission-educated Nyungar woman named Rachel, brought from Albany, Western Australia, in 1863. While the missionaries' wives receive little mention in documentary records, they must be credited with a considerable share of the labor of the mission, particularly within the home. As I have suggested, the distinction between evangelizing and civilizing became blurred in mission practice, and this was especially so for missionary wives, who had no formal evangelizing role yet oversaw the domestic sphere.²³

On the mission, women such as Christina Spieseke and Louise Hagenauer played an important part in teaching Aboriginal women through concrete example, modeling Christian family life in their own everyday



Figure 5.1. Schoolhouse, Ebenezer, after 1874. (Werner collection.)

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performance as wives, mothers, and housekeepers.²⁴ At Ebenezer, Aboriginal women were taught Western methods of cooking, cleaning, sewing, and caring for children. Men worked in the garden and orchard and at building and shepherding the station's sheep. In 1866, for example, "the males were engaged during the day in cutting down trees, clearing the land, and fencing; and the females were properly employed in their huts at home."²⁵ In 1869 Inspector Green reported that "there are thirteen small plots all within one enclosure; each plot belongs to a man and his wife. The men dig the ground, and the women afterwards attend to it, watering it and keeping it clean."²⁶ When the girls left school, they began a "course of training by the missionaries' wives in all manner of household work," while the boys were taught carpentry, stonemasonry, and gardening by the missionaries.²⁷

European ideas of gender also governed the missionaries' perception of Indigenous people as degraded or "deeply sunken." The Moravians shared contemporary ideas about civilization and savagery and were doubly critical of Indigenous women. For example, visiting Moravian Heinrich Meissel noted in 1864 that

the blacks seem to be quite different from how they were described to me and also how I imagined them to be. Instead of being badly or only half clothed, or even naked I saw, to my amazement, that they walk around very cleanly (most of the blacks) with pretty, black and well-cut hair, which had been carefully combed, big really splendid beards, high foreheads and deep set eyes. The females are very ugly, with the exception of the half-whites.²⁸

His general approval of the men jarred with his condemnation of the women, revealed to be merely an (inferior) appendage to the genuine "blacks." Meissel's emphasis on personal appearance was typical, assessing civilization and moral standing through a range of material and visual signs. Indeed, the editor of *Missionsblatt*, the Moravian Church's German-language monthly periodical published in Herrnhut, wrote in 1878:

Through experience it is a confirmed fact, that education, and above all Christian education, exerts substantial influence on the outward appearance of a person, composure, and facial features, so that one can assume that by the converted Blacks this effect has also already well occurred.

It cannot be denied that the representation of the wild Australians in photographs does not please our sense of beauty.²⁹

“Civilized Merchandise”: Material Culture and Consumption

In this way, the missionaries represented the Victorian reserves as successful “civilizing experiments,” emphasizing the progress made by the residents. In particular, their perceived success in controlling Aboriginal women’s sexuality prompted a radical transformation in the value attached to this social domain: material and visual evidence of women’s respectable comportment as wives and mothers and their recreation of the domestic environment became an index of progress, offering proof of successful redemption. As I have suggested, the fundamental link between civilization and the consumption of European material goods expressed in the engraving, “Hawkers at the Aboriginal Station, Coranderrk” (figure 1.1), defined European perceptions of evolution as embodied in the consumption of European commodities. The accompanying article suggested that it afforded “evidence to some extent of the progress of civilization among the aborigines settled in that locality.” The hawker’s visit to Coranderrk aroused great interest among “the youthful population of the aboriginal settlement,” as the women considered the “gown pieces offered for their inspection” and the young men examined “moleskins and billycocks.” This new interest in shopping was defined against the “scorn” for the “incomprehensible nature of the wants felt by the rising generation,” shown by the older people in traditional dress.³⁰

For European observers, the appearance of the reserves and their residents served as proof that these people had changed. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, idealizing panoramic views of the reserves sought to emphasize a shared humanity and the tractability of Aboriginal people through demonstrating their success in adopting European culture, living as Christians, and cultivating the land. Such images captured the missionaries’ vision, emphasizing the community’s reorganization along European gender lines. At Coranderrk Aboriginal Station near Melbourne, Charles Walter produced a commercial album, whose title, “Australian Aborigines Under Civilization,” reveals its aim to show Aboriginal people undergoing transformation. Moving from a panorama of the productive,

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orderly settlement, in which the schoolroom and manager's neat residence are prominently featured, it probes systematically into the community, revealing important aspects of the new life the residents were leading. Here, family groups identified according to the male heads of households—such as on page 3, showing “Harry's Residence,” “Werry's Residence,” “Malcolm's Residence,” and “Tommy Hobson's Residence”—stand before neat slab huts, accompanied by the fatherly preacher, John Green (figure 5.2).

At Ebenezer, the Moravians' emphasis upon “lovely built houses” marked their importance as the space of the family. While European-style housing represented technological superiority and symbolized comfort and refinement, these values were grounded in notions of the moral and economic importance of home. Domestic space was a particular focus for scrutiny, and Aboriginal women's personal comportment and consumption were regarded as evidence for their degree of civilization. Women were expected to keep their homes clean, to be good housewives, prepared for inspection at any time. In 1869 one official, Brough Smyth, described his astonishment at the progress made at Ebenezer. Entering the huts occupied by the married people, he was gratified “to see so many marks of the change produced by domestication.” He noted that the men were suitably absent, away at work in the fields or on the station, and the women “were occupied in little offices in their homes.” He described their apparent evolution in terms of the material domestic environment Aboriginal women had created:

Objects indicating some taste and some pride in the appearance of their dwellings were not few. Their native baskets were hung up against the walls, the walls were here and there ornamented with pictures, their rugs and clothing were arranged in order, and their fires tidily kept. All these little things serve to astonish those who are acquainted with the habits and feelings of the Aborigines.³¹

For the missionaries, the homes created by Aboriginal people symbolized their obedience to the Christian values of religious devotion and hard work, as well as their commitment to the patriarchal family. The family expressed the apparently natural and nonviolent affiliation between father and children *within* the Aboriginal community, as well as constructing this relationship between the Aborigines and their manager. As Ann Mc-

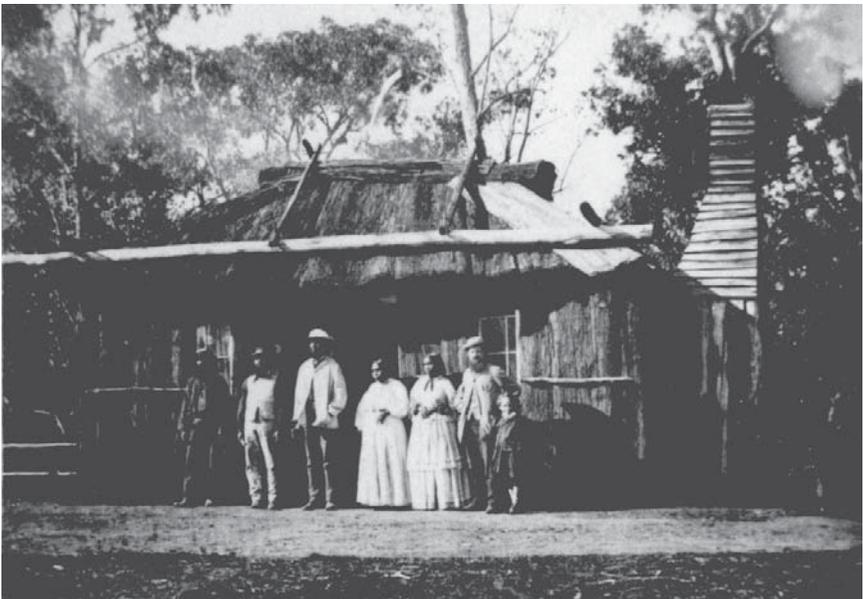


Figure 5.2. Charles Walter photograph, "Harry's Residence," "Werry's Residence," "Malcolm's Residence," and "Tommy Hobson's residence" (page 3 [H13881/6-9], album "Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation," LTA 807. La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria).

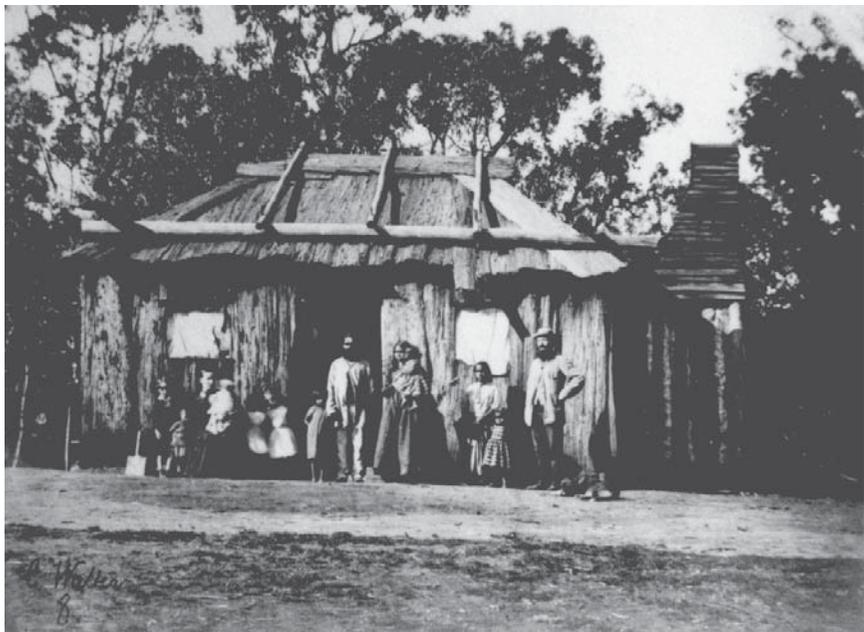


Figure 5.2. (Continued)

Clintock reminds us, domesticity is both a *space* and a *relationship of power*: from around this, the evolutionist trope of the family of man became a widely used metaphor, contradictorily offering a single genesis narrative on a global scale, while at the same time becoming an institution void of history.³² Naturalizing hierarchy within unity, the family image came to be seen as an integral element of historical progress; for missionaries, Aboriginal people were part of this family by virtue of their conformance to civilized practices, but at the same time, as a race they were positioned as children. Managers' representations therefore showed the Indigenous population successfully being remade in the image of a European social order, marked by the appropriation of "natural" gender roles in a spatial regime structured by a division between public and private, with ascription of the private sphere to women.

Archaeological Evidence

Archaeological remains recovered from Ebenezer's mission-house, kitchen, and dormitory areas revealed something of the domestic lifestyle led by missionaries and Aboriginal people over the second half of the nineteenth century.³³ In addition, on the riverbank closest to the mission complex, a rubbish dump was excavated that contained items related to occupation of the mission (figure 2.3).³⁴ As I have explored, evidence for the spatial arrangement of the settlement buildings and the physical remains of the mission-house indicate its enhanced and pivotal role at Ebenezer. The nature of the archaeological evidence does not permit identification of individual owners, nor fine-grained comparison among groups or households within the mission, restricting analysis to broad conclusions about the community's lifestyle as a whole.

In any case, evidence for the spatial and functional relationships of the mission-house, dormitory, and kitchen suggests that, despite the ideal of small family homes, life at Ebenezer retained a strongly communal flavor, facilitated by the Moravians' emphasis on the extended congregational family. The missionaries' families and selected Aboriginal couples occupied apartments within the mission-house, and the girls slept in rooms attached to the mission-house until a dormitory was completed in 1872.³⁵ Aboriginal boys and young men occupied a three-roomed building until the schoolhouse was completed in 1873; in 1874 a stone "children's

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house” was completed, with an Aboriginal woman serving as its cook and housekeeper.³⁶ By 1871, the settlement comprised thirty-three buildings, including a church, schoolhouse, store, tool shop and cart shed, harness room (all log), stone mission dwelling-house, kitchen, “Native girls’ dwelling-house,” a fowl house, and twenty “dwellings of natives,” with three more under construction. These arrangements replicated the Moravian choir system, instituting communal living arrangements in the central area for certain categories of the population (children, selected Aboriginal people, and the missionaries), with the nuclear households located farther away, around the eastern and southern perimeters of the settlement.

Overall, the archaeological evidence indicates the mission’s integration into local, predominantly British, markets and practices rather than a peculiarly Moravian way of life. A relative lack of domestic and personal items suggests that nonessential European goods were scarce commodities at Ebenezer.³⁷

Initially we wondered whether there would be evidence for distinctively Moravian practices, given that several studies have demonstrated the special character of self-contained Moravian settlements around the world, created by the evangelist brethren as the material expression of “Christ’s grace operating in the world.” Archaeological investigation of the settlement of Wachau in North Carolina, for example, revealed highly specific ceramic forms used in Lovefeasts, the Moravian ritual of fellowship.³⁸ In a foreign British colony, the Moravians at Ebenezer took comfort from the presence of other German immigrants, especially Lutherans.³⁹ At first, their lack of English must have been difficult, although Aboriginal men such as the Peppers, who had life-long familiarity with the language, may have been able to help them.⁴⁰ After the 1869 Land Grant Act, the Wimmera in particular attracted many German immigrants, which gave the missionaries great cheer:

When they turn up in great numbers to buy their needs our neighbouring town, Dimboola, gives the impression of being a German town. . . . One can receive a warm and heartfelt handshake here as in dear Germany and they don’t neglect to offer us urgent invitations to visit them.⁴¹

However, only a few ceramic fragments appear to depart from the British stoneware tradition, and these may be either German-made or from the German-tradition stoneware of South Australia.⁴²

The assemblage reflects systems of European domesticity. Evidence was recovered for diet, personal possessions, domestic goods, and recreation, and was broadly typical of contemporary colonial sites across Victoria.⁴³ The bones (faunal remains) recovered reflect standard butchery patterns and dietary and economic choices indicating that the settlement's inhabitants relied predominantly upon introduced animals such as chicken and sheep. Butchery marks on the bone indicate a mix of primary and secondary processing—that is, division of the carcass as well as preparation for cooking.⁴⁴ This was confirmed by the presence of chicken gizzard stones, or gastroliths, made of glass and ceramic fragments (figure 5.3). Gastroliths are stones swallowed by birds such as chickens and emus that stay in their digestive tract to help pulverize food.⁴⁵ As a source of meat and eggs, chickens would have played an important role in this small self-sufficient community. Evidence of on-site meat butchery was also present on sheep and rabbit bones: rabbits were introduced to Victoria around 1858 and continue to flourish. Evidence for use of native fauna such as kangaroo and opossum was noticeably absent.



Figure 5.3. Gastroliths (glass).

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Slate pencil and board fragments may be related to teaching or to more generalized use (figure 5.4). Toys, in the form of six porcelain doll fragments, were also recovered, reflecting the ways that girls were introduced to domesticity through play (figure 5.5).⁴⁶

While glass vessels were recycled, the excavated examples were mostly used for storing food and drink.⁴⁷ Some of these items challenge the missionaries' accounts of their own success in managing Aboriginal people. For example, alcohol bottles excavated from the riverbank were unlikely to have been sanctioned by the Moravians, given their opposition to drink, and it is possible that alcohol was consumed by residents against the missionaries' wishes. In 1881, for example, it was noted that elderly Wergaia people had recently camped at the station, and there were two "cases of insanity" brought on by "intemperance."⁴⁸ The glass bottles from the rub-



Figure 5.4. Slate pencil and board fragments.

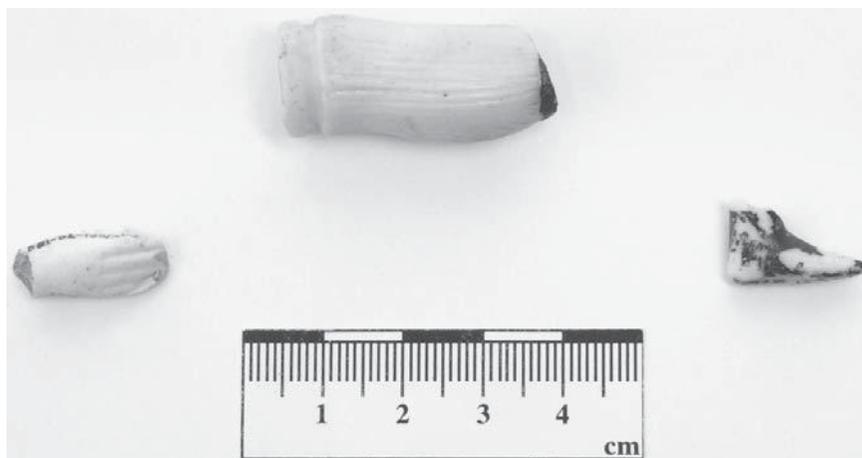


Figure 5.5. Porcelain doll fragments.

bish dump dated to the period of mission occupation were predominantly alcohol-related forms, comprising Ricketts-type “beer” and “wine” bottles and champagne-type bottles (figure 5.6). Again, “Chamberlain’s Cough Remedy” bottles were also recovered, an American brand available from around 1881 to the twentieth century (figure 5.7). This evidence for the use of Western medicine offers a grim reminder of the prevalence of introduced diseases such as tuberculosis. Also found were a “Nuttall and Co.” bottle that dates between 1872 and 1913, and a “Holbrook and Co.” sauce bottle (figure 5.8) that dates from c. 1880 to the early twentieth century.

Domestic and personal items and clothing-related artifacts included buttons, fasteners, and beads (figure 5.9). These mass-produced, non-descript items were used and reused on clothing and reflect global networks



Figure 5.6. Champagne-type bottle (glass vessel 9).



Figure 5.7. “Chamberlain’s Cough Remedy” bottle.

of trade. For example, mother of pearl (nacre/shell) buttons were usually made in Europe until the end of the nineteenth century, and the illustrated example was probably used for a man’s shirt or pajamas. The buttons marked “Best Ring Edge” and “Excelsior” were both used on men’s trousers, to close the fly or attach suspenders, and are generally considered to relate to work wear. The fourth button, marked with a “fouled anchor,” is a type used on naval uniform jackets, but these are also found very widely and, like other buttons, were heavily reused.⁴⁹

Fragments of two white ball clay smoking pipes were found, one of which was marked, reading “Baltic” and “yac[ht]er.” Scottish manufacturers mass-produced such pipes, which dominated the Australian market in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ They were distributed as rations, and tobacco addiction would have been an incentive to conform to the mission regime.

The range of ceramics is relatively small, but the range of forms and decorations is characteristic of Victorian sites for the period, reflecting standard European dining practices.⁵¹ Crockery was one of the new mass-produced consumer goods now accessible to ordinary people across the British Empire. Most of the assemblage is whiteware, the standard



Figure 5.8. Holbrook and Co. bottle (vessel 42).

refined white-bodied earthenware that dominated production in Britain's Staffordshire potteries from the early nineteenth century onward. These occur in plate, cup, and saucer forms, and include transfer-printed decorative schemes, such as the Asiatic Pheasant and Willow patterns (figures 5.10 and 5.11); these *chinoiserie* schemes were originally inspired by superior, expensive, and exotic Chinese originals, but, domesticated by British



Figure 5.9. Buttons.

potters, they became tremendously popular throughout the anglophone world. By 1880 the airy and affordable Asiatic Pheasant had become the most common dinnerware pattern of the Victorian era.

Also noted were banded vessels and Berlin Swirl white granite cups (figure 5.12). The rest of the assemblage consists of porcelain (soft- and



Figure 5.10. Blue transfer-printed Willow pattern plate. (Heritage Victoria Collection.)

hard-paste bone china), stoneware, and a standard black-glazed buff earthenware teapot fragment. The rubbish dump ceramic assemblage conforms to this pattern, also including an ointment jar (figure 5.13), decorated cups and saucers (figure 5.14), plates, and household forms such as jugs.⁵²

Several items seemingly made for the American market accentuate the mission's incorporation into a global economy. For example, a Berlin Swirl pattern white granite cup is a British-made American-market commodity that may relate to the disruption in North American trade caused by the American Civil War of 1861 to 1865; Alasdair Brooks suggests that such wares may indicate that British merchants compensated for the loss of the American market by dumping these goods in other markets, such as Australia.⁵³ Other notable ceramics included an Adams Tunstall plate dated to between 1896 and 1914 (figure 5.15) and a plate tentatively



Figure 5.11. Blue transfer-printed Asiatic Pheasant pattern plate. (Heritage Victoria Collection.)

identified as Welsh-made and dated to between 1856 and 1859 (figure 5.16).⁵⁴ A fragment of a decorative turkey figurine was identified.

This evidence must be understood in the context of the mixed economy that prevailed on Victorian's Aboriginal reserves, integrating rationing with work in the colonial labor market. The board supplied basic supplies to the six stations as well as to honorary correspondents' depots, and Aboriginal people supplemented these goods through their individual earnings. This arrangement falls somewhere in between the exclusive rationing relationship and the nineteenth-century consumer revolution that made a



Figure 5.12. Berlin Swirl white granite cup.

wide variety of shopping experiences available to city-dwellers.⁵⁵ As I have shown (see chapter 2), following invasion, Wergaia people quickly began to participate in the Western cash economy, while a range of occupations and tasks were available during the first decades of settlement that were precluded by the system of rationing instituted on the reserves.⁵⁶

The board's first report quoted Spieseke's advice that the Aboriginal people should be issued with "flour, sugar, tea, tobacco, blankets and clothing for both sexes; and in order to induce them to settle down and lead a civilized life, they should be aided in the making of a comfortable home by giving them article and materials essential to it. . . . As to the mode of distribution, in their present state, it must be given to them daily, otherwise if they had all at once they would the next day be without anything."⁵⁷

In the first year (1861), the following goods were given out to the people at Ebenezer, presumably in accordance with the missionaries' assessment of need or merit: twenty-four pairs of moleskin "trousers," three pairs of blue blankets, twelve pairs of middle-sized shoes, twenty-four straw hats, three sets of camp kettles, twenty-four "pannicans," one chest



Figure 5.13. Ointment jar.



Figure 5.14. Whiteware cup, banded pink and gilt, c.1860 onward (vessel 1).

of tea, two hundredweight of rice, fifty pounds of tobacco, and ten bags of sugar. In December a further distribution was made of one chest of tea, one hundredweight of rice, three bags of sugar, and ten hundredweight of flour. In February 1861: four tons of flour, ten hundredweight of sugar, one hundred pounds of tea, one hundred pounds of tobacco, four hundred pounds of rice, four hundred pounds of peas, twelve bottles of castor oil, two gross pipes, two hundred pounds of soap, one hundred pairs of blankets, eight dozen twill shirts, six dozen flannel jackets, six dozen moleskin trousers, six dozen “trousers” for boys, one hundred yards of calico, one



Figure 5.15. “Adams Tunstall” plate (vessel 3).

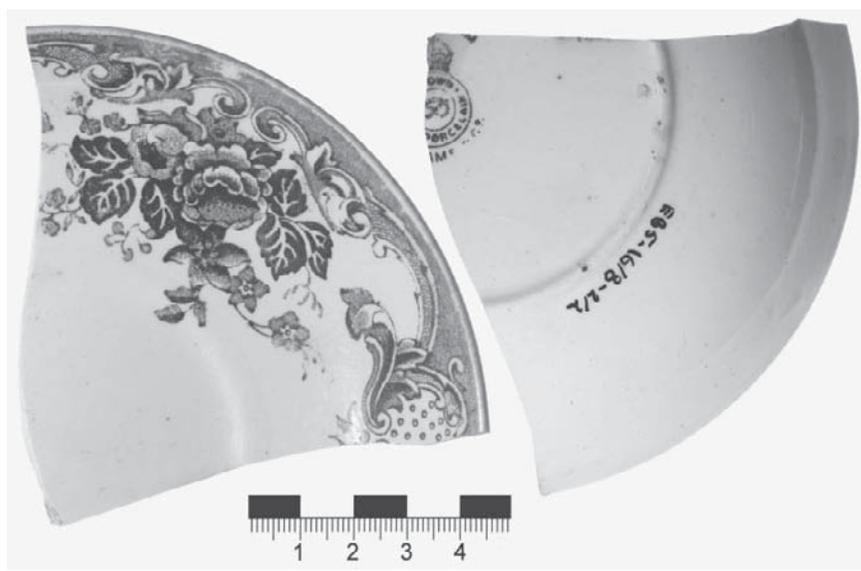


Figure 5.16. Part of the mark text reads, “crown semi-porcelain,” and “W. [_]iams”: this may be W. Williams of the Ynysmeudw Pottery in Wales, in which case the dates are c. 1856–1859.

hundred yards of print for dresses, three dozen bonnets, eight dozen caps, two dozen straw hats, six dozen leather belts, one pound of white thread, one pound of black thread, eight dozen pocket knives, five dozen tomahawks, eight dozen looking glasses, ten dozen “pannicans,” thirty camp kettles, eight dozen pairs of shoes, five dozen tin plates, eight tin spoons, five packets of large needles, five dozen comforters, one hundred yards of flannel, one dozen pairs of scissors, four dozen linen summer coats, and one medicine chest, with directions. In June 1861: four tons of flour, twenty-four women’s dresses, fifty leather belts, 150 cotton handkerchiefs, and thirty-six chemises or women’s shirts.⁵⁸ Prominent in the ration lists were foodstuffs and items to assist with clothing and cleanliness, such as looking glasses.⁵⁹

As Tim Rowse has argued, rationing was a powerful social technology applied to assimilating Aboriginal people. In central Australia, communal feeding of standardized portions in dining rooms to Aboriginal people was a means of replacing Indigenous distribution and sharing practices and inducing them to adopt the same way of life as the colonists. Archaeological evidence for the reorganization of Aboriginal camps around Killalpaninna Mission in South Australia also suggests that traditional economies were quickly altered by dependence on new resources.⁶⁰ In southeastern Australia, too, rationing has been blamed for preventing Aboriginal participation in the colonial economy and creating dependence.⁶¹

Despite their advocacy of rations as an inducement to a sedentary life, this tendency was also deplored by the Moravian missionaries, and Spieseke explained in 1870 that the Aboriginal people found it “somewhat oppressive that they should live from the charity of foodstuffs and clothing, which they receive from the government,” and sympathized with their desire to work for wages on the district’s stations (ranches).⁶² They suggested that instead of the board sending slops (cheap clothing), “it would be a better plan to send up the different kinds of clothing in the piece, to be made up by the women on the station.”⁶³ Control over rations became a means of inculcating thrift and discipline and was an incentive to obedience. Similarly, Spieseke distributed the money earned by Ebenezer’s flock of sheep as wages, which enhanced his authority, so that those employed on the station

were not only enabled to buy necessaries such as iron bedsteads, chairs, clothes, &c., but even luxuries, such as rocking-chairs, saddles, &c. One

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man is the owner of 3 horses, 3 head of cattle, a springcart, harness, saddles and bridles, &c; his wife has a sewing-machine, and there is a good supply of crockery, &c., in the house. Others are likewise pretty well off.⁶⁴

Such prosperity was remarkable, however, given that Ebenezer was situated in marginal farming country, and from the 1870s onward, the residents continually campaigned to increase its size through further grants of land.⁶⁵ The 1880s depression was aggravated in the Wimmera by rabbit plagues, wild dogs, and wheat rust, so it is not surprising that luxury material goods were scarce: even in Melbourne, historian Beverly Kingston suggests, economic uncertainty discouraged household consumption during this decade.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, many Ebenezer men worked in the nearby Bosisto's eucalyptus oil refinery, which allowed them to buy their own rations, as well as "purchasing furniture (including sewing machines) [and] clothes."⁶⁷ The evidence suggests that residents had the means to participate in the Western consumer revolution, even if not to the extent available to city dwellers.

Deserted Huts

But how did Aboriginal people regard these items? To an extent, the changed material circumstances of the Wergaia can be understood as an expression of new habits, tastes, and ideas. The archaeological evidence suggests that some chose to accept the missionaries' new resources and to adopt domestic and other European practices.

Household ceramics in particular have been explored by Australian archaeologists concerned with domesticity, who have linked patterning in decoration, ware, and form to the expression of consumer taste and social status. The elaborately decorated teawares and tablewares used for nineteenth-century European rituals of tea drinking and dining are generally understood to reflect women's choices as the head of the household and primary domestic consumer. They are often seen to express feminine aspirations to the values of respectability, beauty, order, and domestic comfort. Susan Lawrence, for example, has shown that decorative ceramics, despite their weight and fragility, were cherished by women seeking to construct a quiet and orderly home amidst the turmoil

of the Victorian goldfields.⁶⁸ In urban contexts such as Sydney's Rocks, loosely matched table settings asserted the respectability of an 1860s boardinghouse run by a vulnerable single woman.⁶⁹

Of particular relevance is Angela Middleton's study of Te Puna Mission in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, which has shown how Hannah King, wife of a missionary of the Church Missionary Society, reproduced the social values of England in this early nineteenth-century outpost. The idyllic English pastoral landscapes that decorated the export wares recovered through archaeological investigation evoked a "calm and prosperous rural Britain" that was indeed unattainably distant from these consumers.⁷⁰ The excavated fragments match intact vessels now on display in historic museums, which were evidently treasured and preserved by Hannah King's descendants. Matched services of toilet set, tea set, and tablewares were noted, although, as Middleton points out, the overall archaeological assemblage indicates austerity and poverty. In addition, King came from the lower class and was ostracized by the more genteel wives of the local expatriate mission community. For women such as Hannah King, precious domestic furnishings such as ceramics may have served as a means of reproducing the British ideals they wished to teach Indigenous people.⁷¹

Certainly missionaries and managers on Victoria's reserves interpreted the Aboriginal residents' acquisition of ceramics and other household furnishings as evidence for their commitment to Western values of respectability and civilization. Inspector John Green's comments in 1874 were typical:

I asked several if they liked better to live in the huts than in the mia-mia; they said that they would not like to live in the mia-mia again. In several of the huts the occupiers have shown a good deal of taste in the well-arranged crockery and other household things.⁷²

However, in this same report Green also noted that "two huts are quite deserted; it appears someone has died in each one of them." The retention of traditional funerary observances casts doubt upon managers' conceptions of cultural change, pointing toward the distinctive use Aboriginal people may make of Western material culture—in this case, discarding it when polluted.

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There are other examples of the maintenance of tradition alongside new ways: in 1875 it was noted that “the Aboriginals still appear to be fond of hunting, fishing, and shooting.”⁷³ As I have noted, archaeological surveys record an intensification of use of the region’s waterways, and especially the banks of the Wimmera near Ebenezer, following the mission’s establishment. The missionaries noted the movement of the Wergaia on and off the reserve, as some continued to camp on traditional country, and in 1881 recorded that

latterly the remnants of some of the Wimmera tribes have come to the station to take up their residence here. They are all old people, and several of them are blind. Having lived in camps all their lifetime, they have come to consider those primitive, and to our notions, most uncomfortable structures the very abodes of bliss, and cannot by any means be induced to live in one of the comfortable cottages on the station.⁷⁴

The manufacture of stone tools also continued, as indicated by examples found during excavation throughout the occupation phases. These are mostly made of local milky quartz, and the presence of cores and flakes suggests some on-site tool manufacture (figure 5.17). The evidence is consistent with early accounts of local toolmaking practices, as well as more recent archaeological studies in the region.⁷⁵ As archaeologists have often noted, new materials such as glass and metal were quickly appropriated into traditional tool forms. In 1864 Meissel described how

the big Dr Charly, Hardy etc sat prudently and made spears; they placed a glass fragment on the front part, and cemented it with a pure substance similar to gum. . . . The glass fragment they hit from the under part of a bottle and bit it into shape with their teeth. I would not have believed that one could work with glass in such a fashion, had I not seen it myself.⁷⁶

Essentialism and Material Culture

Within a decade, Ebenezer was a flourishing village of tidy homes run by house-proud women, arrayed around the solid stone settlement buildings and focused upon the missionaries’ own communal household. However, alongside and often out of sight, traditional customs were

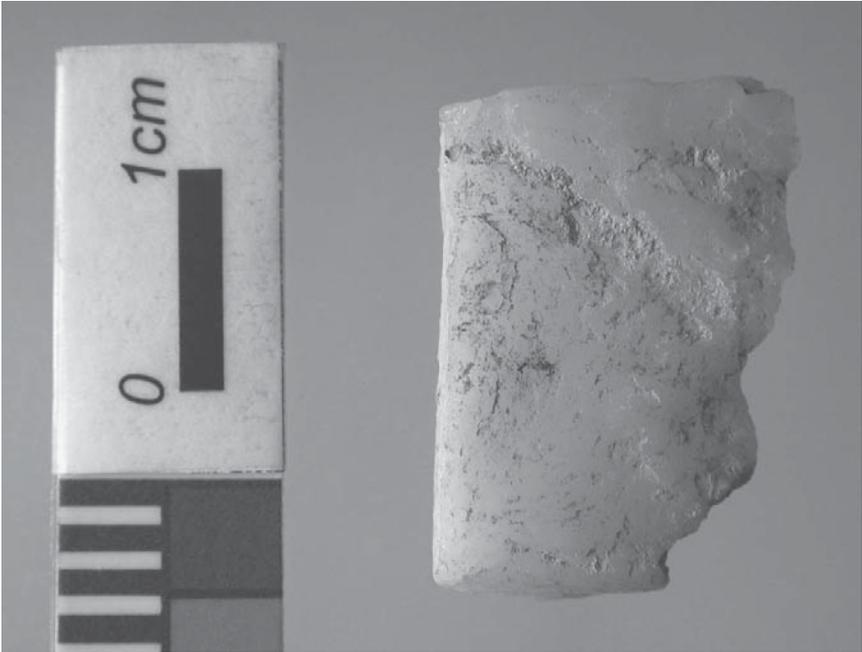


Figure 5.17. Stone tool, mission settlement.

maintained, such as the abandonment of houses after a death, hunting, and the manufacture of traditional tools. For archaeologists, the preceding overview may seem banal—too “unremarkable” (in the words of our ceramics specialist) to warrant much attention. However, several aspects of the assemblage are significant. First, artifacts customarily classified by archaeologists as “European” dominate the assemblage but represent use by a mainly Aboriginal community that has continued to practice many traditional customs and beliefs into the present. While Moravian missionaries supervised the residents and were pleased with their adoption of European material culture, Aboriginal people reject the notion that such adaptation undermines their Aboriginality. Such ideas stem from the colonial opposition between Indigenous people as either static, unchanged, and authentic *or* altered and inauthentic—a formulation used to constrain their choices and limit their claims to land and other rights.⁷⁷ As archaeologists have often pointed out, classification systems that define artifacts as either “Aboriginal” or “non-Aboriginal” mask the presence and activity of Indigenous people, for whom such distinctions were meaningless.⁷⁸

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Such analysis retains currency, despite a well-established critique of this essentializing approach to artifacts as identity and of a notion of cultural exchange and transformation as acculturation.⁷⁹ Specifically, analysis of evidence for Aboriginal missions has tended to be structured by this opposition, dismissing the European artifacts as somehow un-Aboriginal, invisible in their banality. As theorists of “whiteness” have pointed out, the naturalization of this social category has acted to normalize and privilege non-Indigenous identity; whiteness is taken for granted, while Indigenous experience is denigrated.⁸⁰ Descendants, however, express a keen interest in the everyday items used by residents as evidence for Indigenous experience (see also chapter 8).

Black and White Women

Despite their successful appropriation of aspects of Western domesticity, a fundamental contradiction emerged between the European bourgeois ideal and its actualization on the reserves. Although colonizers represented the domestic sphere as a private familial haven, Aboriginal women were expected to continuously open their homes to inspection and surveillance. In 1873, for example, the board’s annual report noted of Ebenezer that “Elizabeth’s hut is improved in appearance since last visit, and is more tidy. The dwellings of Margaret, Susan, and some others are clean, well-kept, and tidy.”⁸¹ Other comments could be more critical.

This discrepancy was also a source of tension between black and white women, who generally carried out domestic monitoring. The daily routine choreographed by the missionaries’ wives involved the transgression of supposedly private Aboriginal domestic space. For example, at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, where tension between managers and the politically active residents constituted a “rebellion” over the last decades of the nineteenth century, one woman complained of such scrutiny by the manager’s wife: “She would send out one of her daughters to watch us, like watching for a mouse . . . if she knew that any visitors were coming up to this station, she would be on the look-out to see that all was clean, and also the big room, and the little children would be made to put on their best dresses.”⁸² In one tragic case at Coranderrk, a young couple was forbidden to marry because no separate house was available for them to occupy. The woman became pregnant, and the manager’s wife was subse-

quently accused of inducing her miscarriage.⁸³ Where some scholars have argued for alliances between women on the reserves, more recent critique by Aboriginal scholars has revealed their often incommensurable objectives.⁸⁴

Class

Class differences represented another inconsistency between managers' avowed goal of civilization—and especially the missionaries' rhetoric of shared humanity—and their actual program, which was designed to produce a colonial working class of servants and casual laborers.⁸⁵ As the board's first report explained, its plan was to establish a school to teach the Aboriginal children "useful occupations, so as to have fitted them for employment as servants."⁸⁶ Similarly, the supposed civilization of the residents was always qualified, assuming a basic inferiority: "I am happy to report that much progress has been made on this station, which begins to assume the appearance of a second-rate village."⁸⁷ This double standard continued to be applied to Aboriginal housing over the following century, as I explore in the following chapters.

Social categories across the metropolis and the colonies were interdependent, as ideas about race, class, and gender were developed in global counterpoint; the equation of British working classes with foreign "heathens" established a common language for evangelists of the early nineteenth century working at home and abroad.⁸⁸ Susan Thorne argues that at this time, "'race' and 'class' were not yet the antithetical or even discrete axes of identity that they have since become," but instead were assumed by contemporaries to share an underlying similarity that confirmed the subordination of both.⁸⁹ While notions of biological difference became increasingly powerful over the second half of the nineteenth century, such distinctions and conflation are most clearly evident in visual representations of women on the reserves, expressed through the subjects' comportment and dress. For example, a family album held by descendants of missionary Paul Bogisch and his wife Amelie, who managed Ebenezer Mission between 1877 and Bogisch's death in 1902, provides a poignant contrast between portraits of their daughter Frieda and an unknown young Aboriginal woman (figures 5.18 and 5.19).



Figure 5.18. Herbert's Studio, Stawell, portrait of Frieda Bogisch, Whitehead Family Album. (Private collection.)



Figure 5.19. “Nellie Pepper,” Ebenezer Mission, Whitehead Family Album. (Private collection.)

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We know a lot about Frieda (1878–1937), the Bogisch’s first daughter, who was extensively documented in images and genealogies that are treasured by her descendants. She was sent to Germany for education in 1888, aged ten (with her brother Gerhard, aged eight), before returning to Ebenezer and marrying a local man. On her return she was photographed at Herbert’s Studio, Stawell, and here she reclines in an informal pose, wearing a sophisticated costume that includes jewelry, an elaborate hat, and a posy. By contrast, the Aboriginal woman is plainly dressed, serious, and stands holding a chair outside a cottage. The reverse of her portrait, a *carte-de-visite*, reads “Organist in Aboriginal Church,” but her identity is unknown. The contrast between the recumbent white woman, waiting to be served, and the Aboriginal woman, readying an empty chair, seemingly ready to serve, exemplifies how views of racial difference were also inflected by notions of class and gender that assigned each young woman her place in the social hierarchy: the privileged, European-educated missionary’s daughter is portrayed here with various material signs of refinement and leisure, while the severely presented Aboriginal woman stands as an anonymous exemplar of her race.⁹⁰ As Jane Simonsen argues of Native American women, in these ways middle-class white women transformed domesticity “from a sign of gender subordination to a pillar of race and class privilege.”⁹¹

In sum, the actual experiences of Aboriginal women within the reimagined Western social order of the reserves exposed a range of contradictions within the supposedly “natural” organization of European gender relations. For Aboriginal women, the supposed haven of the private sphere was never the private refuge it was represented to be, rather being constantly open to inspection and discipline by managers. Similarly, despite the rhetoric of a shared humanity, Indigenous people were expected to occupy the lowest socioeconomic rung in the colonial hierarchy—limitations expressed in the embodied and material dimensions of their lives. In 1886 the board adopted an assimilation policy that defined “half-castes” as non-Aboriginal and expelled them from the reserves. The aging remnant were subject to an increasingly authoritarian regime imposed upon the reserves over the rest of the century, in which women’s lives were especially closely monitored.⁹²

Mobility and Evasion

However, the Western visual/spatial regime of the reserves in a sense “overlooked” the different cultural orientation of Aboriginal people: beyond the purview of idealizing Western visions of Aboriginality, Indigenous people evaded scrutiny through strategies of mobility, evasion, and concealment. Aboriginal notions of power, meaning, and knowledge shaped their responses to the mission environment. Connections to kin and place were maintained throughout the mission era, sometimes assisted by misrecognition and evasion. As I have argued elsewhere, Aboriginal tradition did not readily absorb the self-mastery of panoptical control, perhaps explaining the persistence of traditions surrounding kinship relations and collective identity, which remained invisible to white managers.⁹³

Different cultural understandings of the station’s social and physical landscape therefore coexisted, and there is evidence that Aboriginal people continued their own practices within the mission landscape: for example, the bush remained a private Aboriginal domain. Some retained practices such as a camp lifestyle or more covert taboos. This differential cultural orientation must be weighed against the increasing restrictions imposed upon residents’ lives toward the end of the nineteenth century. The disciplinary spatiovisual regimes of the reserves established some parameters for the negotiation of social relations, but it did not fully determine them: they can also be understood in terms of the heterogeneous, multiple experiences of differently positioned Indigenous subjects.

While women were confined to the “home,” their experience is difficult to recover: in particular, the importance attached by Europeans to the domestic sphere as a visible marker of civilization has been understood both as a sign of the increased status of women on the reserves, as well as of its diminution.⁹⁴ Instead, Francesca Merlan points out the difficulties in positing an earlier, precolonial independence, particularly in view of regional variation, asking rather, “how women’s behaviour is to be related to structural properties of the social system”—that is, at what level is women’s independence to be located?⁹⁵ Where inscriptive models of bodily and spatial experience emphasize the processes by which power

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relations are mapped on the body as a surface for visible display, overlooking lived experience and corporeality, there is evidence that women deployed strategies of mobility and evasion to pursue their own objectives, played out across different levels and scales of colonial space.⁹⁶

For example, up to half of Victoria's Indigenous population was able to live off the reserves, choosing to work for European employers or receive rations from honorary correspondents' depots.⁹⁷ Aboriginal people in northwestern Victoria were relatively mobile and dispersed, moving on and off Ebenezer for work with relative ease. In 1871, for example, the board reported that there were eighty residents at Ebenezer, but "there is still a large number of Aborigines not directly under the control of the Board. These are living near the homes of the settlers in various parts of the colony. They labor occasionally; some are employed as stock-riders, some as shearers, and a few are living with the whites as domestic servants."⁹⁸ They were also allowed "summer and winter holidays."⁹⁹ However, the board gradually tightened its control, noting that a large number were "still unreclaimed, many of whom are supplied with rations, blankets and slops, whom it is very desirable to bring under direct supervision of the Board."¹⁰⁰ Aboriginal labor was common in the sparsely settled areas, where it was a useful resource for pastoralists, and men worked as shepherds, shearers, stockmen, and casual laborers, while women worked as servants, sometimes establishing long-lasting relationships with particular pastoralist families. Some chose to live in camps in traditional country, utilizing traditional food sources where possible—such as along the Murray and Darling Rivers—and some supplemented their income and diet through fishing, shooting, and begging. The actual experiences of Aboriginal women exemplify this negotiation of diverse social spaces.

The life of Augusta "Minnie" Logan-Nicholls illustrates this process, as Dja Dja Wurrung elder Gary Murray's research has shown. Murray's great-great-great grandmother Augusta raised her son Herbert with de facto husband Robert (Bobbie) Nichol until her death in 1886. Augusta took the name Nichol from 1882, but Augusta and Bobbie were forced to live in separate houses at Ebenezer, despite repeated requests that they be allowed to marry. As a result, while they chose to live on the mission at certain times, they also moved off it for periods in order to achieve freedom from its restrictions. Around 1879 they went to live on nearby Towanninnie Station, where they worked for the Finley family, who

wrote to the board on their behalf, again urging that they be given permission to marry. During this time at Towanninnie their son was educated with the Finley's own children by their governess.¹⁰¹ Bobbie worked as a shearer, requiring that he travel great distances away from Augusta and her son, and in 1881 she returned to Ebenezer for a while. Participation in the Western labor market and good relations with local station owners allowed some freedom from the constraints of reserve life.

Other women, such as Agnes Edwards ("Queen Aggie") and Eleanor Stewart of Swan Hill, lived their lives beyond the purview of white managers, their independence construed as a link with a disappearing culture. Edwards lived on the rich resources of the mid-Murray region, gradually relying more heavily on ration distribution as she aged, but she was able to remain on traditional country throughout her life.¹⁰² These women's lives were characterized by mobility and a degree of independence that defines some of the limitations of the European reserve system. Without denying the very real constraints imposed upon the Aboriginal people of Victoria, nor the harsh restriction of women's rights in particular, it is important to acknowledge that Aboriginal cultural orientation, grounded in relations to kin and country, persisted in practices "overlooked" by Western settlers.

Conclusion

For colonists, a society's treatment of women was a yardstick of its civilization, and missionization was justified by representations of Aboriginal gender relations and practices as disorderly and savage. Central to the missionaries' vision for the Aboriginal people of Victoria was a reformed gender and class order that would appropriately locate the Indigenous population within modern settler society. White observers focused upon women and the domestic sphere as an index of civilization, praising the apparent progress they had made in terms of personal comportment and domestic consumption. Historians differ in their assessment of the effects of this transformation for women: some argue that their status improved on the reserves, while others suggest that it worsened. Despite the use of European domesticity as a tool of control and change, it must be acknowledged that Aboriginal people chose to accommodate new circumstances and became active participants in colonial society and economy. However, fundamental contradictions are apparent for women caught between the

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missionaries' ideals of redemption and uplift and the colonial requirement to produce a docile labor force. For Aboriginal women themselves, their role in reproducing the European social order—structured by the “natural” family, their association with “private” space, and menial labor roles—exposed a range of contradictions. In the context of a regime that became increasingly authoritarian over the late nineteenth century, women's lives especially were closely monitored, but at the same time, traditional practices persisted, and many Indigenous women simply chose to leave.

Notes

1. Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria (BPA), *Report of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria 7th (1871)–31st (1895)*. (Melbourne: John Ferres, 1871–1895), 1874. *Tenth report*, 6.

2. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain: 1640–1990* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

3. Marion W. Gray, *Productive Men, Reproductive Women: The Agrarian Household and the Emergence of Separate Spheres during the German Enlightenment* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000); Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey, eds., *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (London: University College of London Press, 1996).

4. James Henry, *Sketches of Moravian Life and Character* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1859), 41.

5. Felicity Jensz, “Imperial Critics: Moravian Missionaries in the British Colonial World,” in *Evangelists of Empire? Missionaries in Colonial History*, ed. Amanda Barry, Joanna Cruickshank, Andrew Brown-May, and Patricia Grimshaw (History Conference and Seminar Series 18, School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, 2008), 187–97.

6. A substantial literature now addresses gender and missions, including Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood, and Shirley Ardener, eds., *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Providence, R.I., and Oxford: Berg, 1993); Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire*, Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004);

Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, eds., *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002); Lee Wallace, "A House Is Not a Home: Gender, Space and Marquesan Encounter, 1833–34," *The Journal of Pacific History* 40(3) (2005): 265–88.

7. Although there are important regional differences in the content and form of traditional gender organization across Australia, a range of studies has revealed the distinctive nature of Aboriginal women's domain: see, for example, Francesca Merlan, "Gender in Aboriginal Society: A Review," in *Social Anthropology and Australian Aboriginal Studies*, ed. R. M. Berndt and R. Tonkinson (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988), 15–76; Diane Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming* (Sydney: McPhee Gribble/Allen & Unwin, 1983); Peggy Brock, ed., *Women's Rites and Sites: Aboriginal Women's Cultural Knowledge* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989); Phyllis Kaberry, ed., *Aboriginal Woman: Sacred and Profane* (London: Routledge, 1989); Marcia Langton, "Grandmother's Law, Company Business and Succession in Aboriginal Land Tenure Systems," in *Traditional Aboriginal Society*, ed. W. H. Edwards (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1998).

8. Cited in T. Scanlon, "Pure and Clean and True to Christ: Black Women and White Missionaries in the North," *Hecate* 7(1–2) (1986): 82–105; Annette Hamilton, "Bond-Slaves of Satan: Women and the Missionary Dilemma," in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 236–58. In a rare and shocking instance of frankness, Protector Augustus Robinson described overhearing two very young Aboriginal girls reciting obscenities to each other that evidently reflected their sexual experiences at white men's hands: Patricia Grimshaw and Andrew May, "Inducements to the Strong to Be Cruel to the Weak: Authoritative White Colonial Male Voices and the Construction of Gender in Koori Society," in *Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought*, ed. A. Burns and N. Grieve (Melbourne and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 98.

9. R. Broome, *Aboriginal Australians: Black Response to White Dominance* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 58; P. O'Brien, "The Gaze of the Ghosts," in *Maps, Dreams, History: Race and Representation in Australia*, Sydney Studies in History No. 8, ed. J. Kociumbas (Sydney: Department of History, University of Sydney, 1998), 339; Grimshaw and May, "Inducements to the Strong to Be Cruel to the Weak," 356.

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10. Merlan, "Gender in Aboriginal Society: A Review," 15–76; see also M. A. Jebb and A. Haebich, "Across the Great Divide: Gender Relations on Australian Frontiers," in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. K. Saunders and R. Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 20–41.

11. Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, eds., *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999). Some historians have argued that the domestic vocation so vigorously pursued in the Pacific was a response to the radically different patterns of Polynesian gender and sexuality manifested in kinship structures and household relations: Wallace, "A House Is Not a Home: Gender, Space and Marquesan Encounter, 1833–34"; Margaret Jolly, "'To Save the Girls for Brighter and Better Lives': Presbyterian Missions and Women in the South of Vanuatu, 1848–1870," *Journal of Pacific History* 26(1) (1991): 27–48; and Angela Middleton, "Silent Voices, Hidden Lives: Archaeology, Class and Gender in the CMS Missions, Bay of Islands, New Zealand, 1814–1845," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 11(1) (Mar 2007): 1–31.

12. Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England 1728–60* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 132–36.

13. Henry, *Sketches of Moravian Life and Character*, 39.

14. In some Moravian settlements, such as Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, choir organization was strictly practiced. Gollin argues that Moravians perceived the family as threatening to the welfare of larger society and strove to limit its influence, seeing the choir system as a surrogate family: Gillian Lindt Gollin, "Family Surrogates in Colonial America: The Moravian Experiment," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 31(4) (Nov 1969): 650–58. See also Craig D. Atwood, *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004); Johanna Miller Lewis, "Equality Deferred, Opportunity Pursued: The Sisters of Wachovia," in *Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader*, ed. Christie Farnham (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 74–88.

15. *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren*, 24 (London: The Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel among the Heathen, 1862), 371.

16. Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria (CBACV), *First Report* (1861), 11.

17. In 1869 Board Inspector John Green recommended that Ebenezer missionary Hartmann should collect all children as far as Carrs Plains (near Stawell, east of the Grampians): CBACV, *Sixth Report* (1869), 14.

18. CBACV, *Fourth Report* (1866), 17.
19. BPA, Seventh Report, 1871, 16 (appended to the 1871 report as An Act to Provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria: Appendix X. 11 Nov 1869. Regulation: (V.) Custody of children.)
20. Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria (BPA), *Eighth Report* (1872), 17; BPA, *Ninth Report* (1873), 12–13; BPA, *Tenth Report* (1874), 7; elder Jack Kennedy quoted in Marie Hansen Fels, *A History of the Ebenezer Mission* (Melbourne: Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 1998), 22.
21. Johanna Miller Lewis, “Equality Deferred, Opportunity Pursued: The Sisters of Wachovia,” in *Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader*, ed. Christie Farnham (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 78–79.
22. *Periodical Accounts* 24 (1862), 371.
23. Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty*; Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997), 69.
24. For discussion of the sometimes intimate relationships between missionary families and Victorian Aboriginal people in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Jessie Mitchell, “‘The Nucleus of Civilisation’: Gender, Race and Australian Missionary Families, 1825–1855,” in *Evangelists of Empire? Missionaries in Colonial History*, ed. Amanda Barry, Joanna Cruickshank, Andrew Brown-May, and Patricia Grimshaw (History Conference and Seminar Series 18, School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, 2008, 103–114); and see Diane Langmore, *Missionary Lives: Papua, 1874–1914* (Honolulu: Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 65–88.
25. CBACV, *Fifth Report of the Central Board* (1866), 4.
26. CBACV, *Sixth Report of the Central Board* (1869), 14.
27. BPA, *Thirteenth Report* (1877), 9; BPA, *Sixteenth Report* (1880), 6.
28. 6 Dec 1864, Meissel’s daybook/diary, in “The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station in North-Western Victoria: A German Perspective,” trans. Felicity Jensz (honors thesis, University of Melbourne, 1999), 122.
29. The Editor, *Missionsblatt*, 1878: 7, 147, in “The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station,” trans. Jensz, 47. For a longer discussion of visualism and Aboriginal missions, see Jane Lydon, “‘Our sense of beauty’: Visuality, Space and Gender on Victoria’s Aboriginal Reserves, South-Eastern Australia,” *History and Anthropology* 16(2): 211–33.
30. *Illustrated Australian News*, 10 Jul 1876, 107.
31. BPA, *Sixth Report*, Appendix II: Report of Brough Smyth. And see, for example, BPA, *Fourth Report*, 5. In the BPA, *Fifth Report* (1866), it was noted that “I have never seen, in Australia, this sort of houses cleaner or more comfortable. Two of their houses are scrubbed every Sunday,” 7; BPA, *Eleventh Report* (1875), 5.

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32. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 45.

33. In general, in the former settlement area around the surviving buildings, postmission clearing activities appear to have dispersed material relating to the mission occupation. Ceramics and glass were scarce and very fragmentary in areas 1 and 2. Artifact analysis demonstrated that the range of kitchen/dormitory finds duplicate the pattern established by the mission-house assemblage. For a detailed account of the archaeological results, see Jane Lydon, "Archaeological Investigations at the Mission-House, Ebenezer Mission," community report, 2004; Jane Lydon, Alasdair Brooks, and Zvonkica Stanin, "Archaeological Investigations at the Mission-House, Ebenezer Mission," report prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Heritage Victoria, 2004; Jane Lydon, Bruno David, and Zvonkica Stanin, "Archaeological Investigation of the Former Ebenezer Mission, Victoria: Stage II," report prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Heritage Victoria, 2007; Jane Lydon, "Archaeological Investigation of the Former Ebenezer Mission, Victoria: Stage II," community report, 2007.

34. It contains material relating to the period the mission was occupied, which is likely to have been discarded by the residents and reburied at a later date. Although this material was redeposited here after the mission closed, as indicated by twentieth-century material found within it, many of its contents were linked to occupation of the mission on the basis of date and the mission's remote and isolated location, which makes secondary deposit from any distance improbable.

35. CBACV, *Fourth Report of the Central Board* (1864); CBACV, *Fifth Report* (1866), 7; CBACV, *Sixth Report* (1869); BPA, *Eighth Report* (1872), 17.

36. BPA, *Tenth Report* (1874), 7. For a comprehensive summary of the building program at Ebenezer, see Fels, *A History of the Ebenezer Mission*.

37. Although souveniring and maintenance of the site since the 1960s is probably also a factor. Eighty percent of the almost 15,000 artifacts were architectural, and another 14 percent were charcoal fragments doubtless relating to the building's demolition, with a remnant of only 6 percent comprising domestic artifacts.

38. See, for example, Ron Southern, "Going Home: The Moravian Settlement of Fulneck, 1750–1760" (PhD thesis, School of Archaeological and Historical Studies, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, 1997), 113; Ron Southern, "Strangers Below: An Archaeology of Distinctions in an Eighteenth-Century Religious Community," in *Archaeologies of the British: Explorations of Identity in Great Britain and Its Colonies 1600–1945*, ed. Susan Lawrence (London: Routledge, 2003), 87–101; Daniel B. Thorp, *The Moravian Community in Colonial North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Stanley South, *Historical Archaeology in Wachovia: Ex-*

cavating Eighteenth Century Bethabara and Moravian Pottery (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004).

39. Although Germany was not formally unified until 1871, already by mid-century the German states were economically and to an extent culturally united. Thomas A. Darragh and Robert N. Wuchatsch, *From Hamburg to Hobsons Bay: German Immigration to Port Phillip (Australia Felix) 1848–51* (Melbourne: The authors in association with the Wendish Heritage Society, 1999), 25–31; Nicholas Vazsonyi, *Searching for Common Ground: German National Identity 1750–1871* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999).

40. Phillip Pepper and Tess de Araugo, *You Are What You Make Yourself to Be: The Story of a Victorian Aboriginal Family 1842–1980* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1980), 15.

41. *Missionsblatt*, 1877, 5, 169, in “The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station,” trans. Jenz, 147.

42. Lydon, Brooks, and Stanin, “Archaeological Investigations at the Mission-House, Ebenezer Mission.” The question of links to this South Australian German ceramic tradition demands further attention.

43. Lydon, Brooks, and Stanin, “Archaeological Investigations at the Mission-House, Ebenezer Mission,” 52–55; Alasdair Brooks, *An Archaeological Guide to British Ceramics in Australia 1788–1901* (Sydney: The Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology; Melbourne: Archaeology Program, La Trobe University, 2005).

44. In area 3 the faunal remains were characterized by elements from domestic species such as sheep, and represent cranial, foot, and body fragments. This pattern—where an almost complete range of animal parts is present within a deposit—is typical of primary processing sites and probably relates to the slaughter of sheep nearby, a practice well documented for the mission period. Butchery marks are present exclusively on sheep, distributed throughout the area 3 faunal assemblage. Shallow cut marks, representing secondary butchery patterns such as the preparation of bone for cooking, are present mostly on long bones and ribs. Chops are noted on vertebra, typical of halving the carcass: Jane Lydon, Bruno David, and Zvonkica Stanin, “Archaeological Investigation of the Former Ebenezer Mission, Victoria: Stage II,” report prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Heritage Victoria, 2007, 74.

45. The use of Western-manufactured materials appears novel. Archaeologically, in Australia, gastroliths from bustards (*Eupodotis australis*) have been identified by Aboriginal people in the Great Sandy Desert in Western Australia; pebbles and white chalcedony Aboriginal artifacts were noted to have been polished in this way, “as if in a gem tumbler.” Identification was based on the irregular form and small size of the objects, unlikely to have been reworked by

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humans, and most importantly, their very finely polished or etched surfaces: Scott Cane, "Bustard Gastroliths in the Archaeological Record," *Australian Archaeology* 14 (1982): 26.

46. Jane Eva Baxter, *The Archaeology of Childhood: Children, Gender and Material Culture* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2005); Laurie A. Wilkie, "Not Merely Child's Play: Creating a Historical Archaeology of Children and Childhood," in *Children and Material Culture*, ed. J. Sofaer Derevenski (London: Routledge, 2000), 100–113.

47. The mission-house assemblage comprised sixty-one fragments of glass in total, approximately forty-nine (or 80 percent) representing nonmedicinal bottle glass. Some items were dated, including bottle fragments from around the 1880s typically used for storing carbonated liquids, and a salad oil bottle. Two were embossed: "JA[. . .]" and "EST[ABLI]SHED." These include a partially melted club-sauce type bottle stopper marked "Holbook and Co.," a fragment of a larger green jar stopper, and two fragments of a possible paneled-body drinking tumbler. No glass tableware other than this potential tumbler was recovered. In the central settlement area bottles were far more numerous than ceramics, suggesting either that bottle use was closely associated with the kitchen area and/or that glass vessels were more popular or easier to acquire. Sixty-four fragments of vessel glass were recovered from the kitchen, representing 58 percent of the mission settlement areas' vessel glass, identified as kitchen related and pharmaceutical related.

48. BPA, *Seventeenth Report* (1881), 10.

49. Nadia Iacono, "Former Ebenezer Mission Site: Button Report" (manuscript in author's possession, 2008), 1. Similar examples have been found at many Australian sites spanning the period 1840–1900.

50. Denis Gojak and Iain Stuart, "The Potential for the Archaeological Study of Clay Tobacco Pipes from Australian Sites," *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 17 (1999): 38–49.

51. Ceramics represented slightly under 0.5 percent of the total number of artifacts. In the nineteenth century, Staffordshire became the main location of ceramics production as increasing mechanization took place: Brooks, *An Archaeological Guide to British Ceramics in Australia 1788–1901*.

52. Over two-thirds of the kitchen-related ceramics recovered during the 2006 fieldwork (102 fragments of 145, or 70 percent) were found in the areas 4 and 5 surface scatter and rubbish pit. A combined minimum vessel count was undertaken for areas 1–5. A minimum of twenty vessels were identified, of which twelve (60 percent) are whiteware, three (15 percent) are bone china, and one each are hard-paste porcelain, white granite, and stoneware.

53. Brooks, *An Archaeological Guide to British Ceramics in Australia 1788–1901*, 57–60.

54. Lydon, Brooks, and Stanin, "Archaeological Investigations at the Mission-House, Ebenezer Mission," 52–55.

55. Penny Crook, "Shopping and Historical Archaeology: Exploring the Contexts of Urban Consumption," *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 18 (2000): 17–28.

56. For an overview, see Richard Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers," *Australian Historical Studies* 26(103) (1994): 202–20.

57. CBACV, *First Report* (1861).

58. CBACV, *First Report* (1861).

59. CBACV, *Second Report* (1862).

60. Tim Rowse, *White Flour, White Power: From Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Judy Birmingham, "Resistance, Creolization or Optimal Foraging at Killalpaninna Mission, South Australia," in *The Archaeology of Difference: Negotiating Cross-Cultural Engagements in Oceania*, ed. Robin Torrence and Anne Clark (London: Routledge, 2000), 360–404.

61. Alan Pope, "Aboriginal Adaptation to Early Colonial Labour Markets: The South Australian Experience," *Labour History* 54 (1988): 1–15.

62. *Missionsblatt* (1870): 9, 221, in "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station," trans. Jenzs, 64.

63. The rations were supplied by Mr. Lloyd, storekeeper of Dimboola: BPA, *Twelfth Report* (1876), Appendix III: Report by E. M. Curr (member of board) and Ogilvie (general inspector).

64. BPA, *Thirteenth Report* (1877), 9; on Spieseke's authority, see BPA, *Twelfth Report* (1876), 8.

65. For an account of their campaign, see Ted Ryan, "Wergaia Worlds: A Study of Indigenous/European Cultural Contact in the Mallee Region of North-West Victoria, 1870–1910" (honors thesis, Department of History, La Trobe University, 1999).

66. Beverly Kingston, *Basket, Bag and Trolley: A History of Shopping in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 38.

67. BPA, *Nineteenth Report* (1884), 14; BPA, *Thirteenth Report* (1877), 6.

68. Susan Lawrence, *Dolly's Creek: An Archaeology of a Victorian Goldfields Community* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000). Lawrence also argues that these values can represent masculine affirmation of middle-class identity in all-male environments such as whaling stations: S. Lawrence, "The Role of Material Culture in Australasian Historical Archaeology," *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 16 (1998): 8–15.

69. Jane Lydon, "Boarding Houses in the Rocks: Mrs Ann Lewis' Privy, 1865," *Public History Review* (1995): 73–88.

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70. Alasdair Brooks argues for the nostalgic, arcadian meaning of these decorative schemes: "Building Jerusalem: Transfer-Printed Finewares and the Creation of British Identity," in *The Familiar Past? Archaeologies of Later Historical Britain*, ed. Sarah Tarlow and Susie West (London: Routledge, 1999), 51–64.

71. Angela Middleton, "Silent Voices, Hidden Lives: Archaeology, Class and Gender in the CMS Missions, Bay of Islands, New Zealand, 1814–1845," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 11(1) (Mar 2007): 1–31.

72. BPA, *Tenth Report* (1874): Green, 13–18 Jun 1874, 6–7.

73. BPA, *Eleventh Report* (1875), 17.

74. BPA, *Seventeenth Report* (1881), 10.

75. See analysis by Zvonkica Stanin, in Lydon, David, and Stanin, "Archaeological Investigation of the Former Ebenezer Mission, Victoria: Stage II," 70–73. For an overview of evidence for the region's stone tools, see Johan Kamminga and Mark Grist, "Yarriambiack Creek Aboriginal Heritage Study" (report to Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 2000), 107–118; Christine Williamson, "An Archaeological Investigation of an Historical Artefact Scatter, Ebenezer Mission, North West Victoria" (report prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative, 1999), 20.

76. Meissel's daybook/diary 12 Feb 1863, in "The Moravian-Run Ebenezer Mission Station," trans. Jenzs, 133.

77. This critique has a long anthropological history. In the Australian context, see especially Jeremy Beckett, *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988); Diane Barwick, "Writing Aboriginal History: Comments on a Book and Its Reviewers," *Canberra Anthropology* 4(2) (1981): 83–84; for an extended review, see James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). In the archaeological context, see Sarah Colley and Anne Bickford, "Real' Aborigines and 'Real' Archaeology: Aboriginal Places and Australian Historical Archaeology," *World Archaeological Bulletin* 7 (1996): 5–21.

78. See, for example, Rodney Harrison, *Shared Landscapes: Archaeologies of Attachment and the Pastoral Industry in New South Wales* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004); Nathan Wolski, "All's Not Quiet on the Western Front—Rethinking Resistance and Frontiers in Aboriginal Historiography," in *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies*, ed. Lynette Russell (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001).

79. Sian Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); Bruno David, "Indigenous Rights and the Mutability of Culture," in *Boundary Writing: An Exploration of Race, Culture and Gender Binaries in Contemporary Australia*, ed. Lynette Russell

(Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 122–48; Patricia E. Rubertone, “The Historical Archaeology of Native Americans,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29 (2000): 425–46; Patricia E. Rubertone, *Grave Undertakings: An Archaeology of Roger Williams and the Narragansett Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

80. For a recent overview, see Jane Carey, Leigh Boucher, and Katherine El-linghaus, eds., *Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the Construction of an Identity* (online) (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing in association with the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne, 2007).

81. BPA, *Ninth Report* (1873), 13.

82. Evidence of Miss Eda Brangy: “Coranderrk Aboriginal Station,” *Report of the Board appointed to enquire into, and report upon, the present condition and management of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, together with the minutes of evidence, presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency’s Command* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1882), 69; for Coranderrk’s “rebellion” over some decades, see Diane Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*. Aboriginal History Monograph 5. Canberra: Aboriginal History, 1998.

83. This incident prompted a police investigation and conclusively ended Strickland’s management of the station: National Archives of Australia (NAA): B313/1, Item 193.

84. Jackie Huggins, “A Contemporary View of Aboriginal Women’s Relationship to the White Women’s Movement,” in *Australian Women: Contemporary Women’s Thought*, ed. N. Grieve and A. Burns (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 70–79; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2000).

85. See, for example, the arguments advanced by Rev. Hagenauer: “Notes of a Missionary Journey to North Queensland, 1885,” in “Aboriginal Mission Station, Ramahyuck, Report for 1885: Mission work among the Aborigines of this country,” in the papers of Friedrich Augustus Hagenauer (1829–1909), MS9556, Manuscript Collection, State Library of Victoria.

86. CBACV, *First Report* (1861), 11.

87. BPA, *Ninth Report* (1873), 15.

88. F. Cooper and A. Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Catherine Hall, “Introduction: Thinking the Postcolonial, Thinking the Empire,” in *Cultures of Empire: A Reader*, ed. Catherine Hall (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1–33; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

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89. S. Thorne, “‘The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable’: Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. F. Cooper and A. Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 238–62 (247–48).

90. Social differences of this kind do not, of course, reflect the personal attitudes and relationships of individuals such as Frieda Bogisch—as her descendant John Whitehead’s research has demonstrated, Frieda maintained close and lifelong relationships with Aboriginal residents of Ebenezer, also valued by her descendants. John Whitehead also suggests that this woman might be Eleanor (Nellie) Pepper, who served as organist at Ebenezer and whose biography I note in chapter 8.

91. Jane E. Simonsen, *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860–1919* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 6.

92. Patricia Grimshaw, “Faith, Missionary Life, and the Family,” in *Gender and Empire*, The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 260–280; Patricia Grimshaw and E. Nelson, “Empire, ‘the Civilising Mission’ and Indigenous Christian Women in Colonial Victoria,” *Australian Feminist Studies*, Special Issue on Comparative History 16(36) (2001): 295–309. The Moravians, however, sometimes encouraged independence: “One man has left, with his family, for the Murray, to select land. Although this is a loss to the station, it is gratifying to think that the training received here thus enables him to start a life of independence.” BPA, *Fourteenth Report* (1878), 10. Board policy gradually tightened control over movement.

93. Lydon, “Seeing Each Other”; Jane Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

94. Diane Barwick, “And the Lubras Are Ladies Now,” in *Woman’s Role in Aboriginal Society*, ed. F. Gale (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1974), 51–63 (56); Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 45.

95. Francesca Merlan, “Gender in Aboriginal Society: A Review,” in *Social Anthropology and Australian Aboriginal Studies*, ed. R. M. Berndt and R. Tonkinson (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988), 15–76 (29–32).

96. Lynn Meskell, *Archaeologies of Social Life: Age, Sex, Class et cetera in Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

97. There were forty-nine of these in 1869, but only twelve by 1880: Jan Penney, “Victorian Honorary Correspondent Supply Depots: Final Report” (Report to Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 1997).

98. BPA, *Seventh Report* (1871), 1.

99. “The natives, as a rule, have been well behaved and contented. . . . They have again been allowed their usual summer and winter holidays, and much enjoyed them.” BPA, *Fifteenth Report* (1879), 10.

100. BPA, *Twelfth Report* (1876).

101. See, for example, Gary Murray (Wryker Milloo), “Sacred to the Memory of Augusta: The Lake Hindmarsh Clothing Distribution Book 1882–1903” (manuscript in author’s possession, 2003), 25.

102. Jan Penney, “Queen Aggie: The Last of Her Tribe,” in *Double Time: Women in Victoria—150 Years*, ed. M. Lake and F. Kelly (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1985), 102; Simon Flagg and Sebastian Gurciullo, *Footprints: The Journey of Lucy and Percy Pepper* (North Melbourne: Public Record Office Victoria; Canberra Business Centre, A.C.T.: National Archives of Australia, 2008).

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After the mission closed, its residents joined this community, but the board would supply provisions to only the remaining so-called full-bloods, leading to sickness and want.² As a consequence, the white townspeople of Dimboola and the district took action, lobbying the state government to provide housing and rations and overriding legal and bureaucratic barriers to assistance. Yet alongside this sympathy lay the desire to maintain an informal system of apartheid, managed through a racialized politics of space.

By the turn of the twentieth century the perception that Aboriginal people were becoming extinct appeared to be borne out by Victoria's declining Aboriginal population, and managers predicted the imminent "finalization" of the reserves. The Ebenezer land grant was revoked in 1904, making the land available for selection by colonists.³ Choosing to remain on traditional country, many Aboriginal people camped along the Wimmera at nearby Antwerp and later at Dimboola. For Wotjobaluk people, life at Antwerp, despite its hardship, permitted a degree of freedom from official white scrutiny and control, as well as the maintenance of ties to family and to traditional country. As I have noted, no more than half the Wergaia had ever lived at Ebenezer.

There have been very different views of the "fringe camps" that Aboriginal people have formed across Australia. Their material circumstances were frequently harsh, especially for women laboring to care for children and the household. This has been interpreted by some white observers as evidence for Aboriginal incapacity and moral failure, becoming a rationale for imposed reform. Others have recognized that such conditions are the result of Aboriginal disadvantage and poverty and its underlying causes, such as racism and poor education and employment opportunities. The views of Aboriginal people themselves have less frequently been heard, yet as I explore in the following chapter, these range from celebrating the freedom and community of camp life to resentment of the sometimes dangerously impoverished environments they and their children have endured.

Studies of life in the camps (still common in northern Australia) move between these opposed positions of condemnation of the physical conditions and acknowledgment of their distinctively Aboriginal organization and value. The camps of the towns of Alice Springs and Darwin,

in the Northern Territory, for example, have sometimes been described as a defiant, primarily political, act of escape from authority, rather than a symptom of a de-tribalized or decayed way of life.⁴ Basil Sansom's study of the camps of Darwin notes their maintenance of cultural tradition but argues that "camps of fringe-dwelling mobs are attractive because of the freedom they represent to people who in most contexts would have to subordinate their doings to imposed controls . . . people who adopt camping style make the Darwin fringe over to Blackfella business."⁵

However, in the southeast during the early twentieth century, Aboriginal people had less choice, as closure of the reserves expelled them from their homes and white exclusion from towns and many public places forced them into the margins, often rubbish tips or floodplains. In New South Wales the Aborigines Protection Board began to close down reserves after 1909, instigating a cycle of "expulsion" from reserves and settlement in camps, which prompted confrontation with local whites, and their removal all over again. Such spatial practices produced social distance, making rural Australia a highly segregated landscape. Aboriginal people were caught between official goals of assimilating "half-castes" and local rejection, inflamed whenever the Aboriginal community became too large or visible.⁶

In Victoria, too, there was also conflict between the board's desire to assimilate "half-castes" (policed by its secretary, the Moravian missionary, the Rev. Friedrich Augustus Hagenauer) and local objections to the camps. The Antwerp settlement did not provoke the violent hostility that forced New South Wales campers to move and move again, and this can be attributed largely to its invisibility and remoteness from white settlement, in a continuation of the mission's function of segregation; there is evidence that for the first half of the twentieth century both black and white were satisfied to live apart. Nonetheless, whites saw the camps as unhealthy and unsightly, and while some local people attempted to assist the residents, and especially their children, others saw them as a disgrace that reflected upon their own moral and social standing. Viewed from within white townships, the communities that inhabited the fringes were characterized by disorder, want, overcrowding, and impermanence, marking a deeper threat to Western values centered upon property ownership and the nuclear family. From the establishment of the Antwerp camp in 1904, observers began to focus on the threat of disease and vice, continuing

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a long tradition of representing Aboriginal people as improvident and primitive, as demonstrated by their domestic environment.

For Aboriginal people themselves, Antwerp was hardly a “fringe” camp. It lay on traditional country, at a long-established camping place on Datchak Creek, an anabranch of the Wimmera that ensured permanent water and access to seasonal wetlands. Halfway between the nearest white centers at Dimboola and Jeparit, it was out of sight of the road (figure 2.2).

Wergaia people were already camping on the banks of the Wimmera River near the mission station when it closed in 1904. There was intense competition for this land, indicated by many anxious letters from local white would-be farmers to the Department of Lands. In these ill-spelt, smudged, pleading letters (often numerous versions from the same person), there is a strong sense of the struggle confronting poor whites. One of the most persistent was Carl Frederick Nuske, who wrote:

Dear Sir, I write to ask you if you were to grant me permission to build a small house on . . . the river as I have a family of 7 children and I am waiting for the Mission Station to be thrown open for selection. I have nowhere to pitch my tent and if you were to grant me permission I only want to stop on it until the mission is thrown open . . . and there being a school near it would suit me for a time. . . .⁷

Nuske and his family were to remain at Antwerp, alongside the Aboriginal residents.⁸ Suggestions that some of the mission land should be set aside for the former residents were ignored, and the Department of Lands drew up plans for a small township to be known as Antwerp after a local pastoral run (figure 6.1).⁹ It considered that

this is particularly nice land for town allotments, high + dry, timbered with oak and pine and box . . . the back part to the Billabong being low box flat and in which there are some deep permanent water holes across to the River . . . the billabong at the back of the township is dry excepting some large water holes and can be crossed almost anywhere.¹⁰

Their detailed survey shows the close relationship between the mission and the camp at Antwerp, connected by a track along the river. It records a mix of mallee, gum, box, and oak trees, and the braided watercourses

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having provided for the few remaining blacks,” it saw “no objection to the half-casts [being] allowed to occupy the township site.”¹⁴

Very quickly it became apparent that tuberculosis was rife. While this disease had been a long-standing problem on the mission, now it came to public attention. Over a few months, Robert Kinnear’s thirteen-year-old daughter Ella, Mrs. Harry Fenton, and her infant son all died of “consumption.”¹⁵ The Dimboola Shire Council attempted to hold the board responsible, but in accordance with its assimilation policy since 1886, the board insisted on the fundamental difference between “full-blooded” and “half-caste” people, suggesting that the latter should turn to local handouts. In July 1905, for example, the board’s secretary, Hagenauer, explained to the local chemist that he would be reimbursed for medicine supplied only to the “full-blood” Kinnears and the Fentons: “For the others, who are halfcastes, the Board cannot pay . . . as a matter of humanity, I feel sympathy in the case, but the charity of the white population should assist in such cases.”¹⁶ Rations, including tobacco and sugar, were distributed every fourteen days to the “Blacks” only, and Hagenauer refused Robert Harrison’s request for clothing and supplies “because money voted by parliament is only for the Blacks,” admonishing him, “you knew, when you married that you could not get any Government [meat] supplies and it is not in my power to break the law.”¹⁷ Hagenauer’s overriding concern was to avoid transgressing racial boundaries, in accordance with Victoria’s official Aboriginal policy.

On Sunday, 19 November 1905, Mrs. Harry Fenton, who had been ill for some months, died of tuberculosis. Hagenauer had written sanctimoniously to Harry Fenton:

It was with much sorrow that I heard from Mr [Constable] Coffee and the doctor of Dimboola that your poor wife has been so ill, and is not expected to live many days. I am also sorry that you would not listen to my invitation to move to one of the stations, but of course, that cannot now be helped. I trust that the doctor’s medicines will relieve the poor sufferer during her great pain, and that if God wants to take her away, to obtain everlasting comfort though our lord Jesus Christ.¹⁸

The circumstances of her death prompted a wave of concern. The health officer of the shire of Dimboola, Dr. J. H. Ivey Ingham, reported the “filthy and insanitary conditions under which the blacks at Antwerp are

living,” and criticized the board, which “holds themselves responsible for the care of the pure-blooded blacks, but refuse to provide in any way for the half-castes,” recommending that “those responsible for the care of these unfortunate people, be requested to see that they are properly housed, as in their present condition they are not only a menace to the health of themselves, but also to the health of the whites of the surrounding district.”¹⁹ The *Dimboola Banner* placed the Aboriginal community’s plight into a larger context of colonial displacement and abuse, deploring the closing of the mission, which had injured the

poor wretches, to whom the country legitimately belongs. . . . What has caused their extinction and degeneration? There is only one answer. They have been cruelly and unmercifully crushed by servants, police, &c, men who were in no way fitted for their positions, men who were deeply saturated with every known vice, who abused and prostituted the authority given them. . . . Now we, who are reaping the benefit of the early atrocities, committed, and sanctioned by law, have the opportunity of making some little amends for past misdeeds. Here, right in our midst, are a mere handful or remnant of the descendants of those unfortunate natives.²⁰

The council decided to put the case before the premier and called for a public meeting to remedy “a cruel injustice.”²¹ Councillor James Menzies argued for the need to “draw attention to a state of affairs which should not exist in a Christian community, and it concerned the half-caste as well as the pure black.” Drawing upon the language of Ivey Ingham’s report, he declared, “The present conditions are a menace to the public health.” Menzies was a Jeparit storekeeper whose son Robert Gordon Menzies was later Australia’s longest-serving prime minister. He was a Dimboola shire councillor between 1898 and 1912 and then member for Lowan between 1911 and 1920, and served as lay preacher in the Jeparit Methodist Church. He is described by those who knew him as powerful, energetic, and quick tempered—but also warm, religious, compassionate, and “intemperately generous, going any distance to do a good turn.”²²

Although we lack the extensive documentation given to his famous (and temperamentally very different) son, James Menzies’s determination to reform the Antwerp community is apparent from his pursuit of the issue for over fifteen years. For locals such as Menzies, the distinction

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between “half-caste” and “full blood” was irrelevant, a view that had more in common with Aboriginal perspectives than the biological distinctions endorsed by policy and scientific thought of the time, exemplified by Hagenauer; such attitudes, born of local knowledge and observation of the community, were to prompt a radical, if short-lived, shift in assimilation policy.

Hagenauer’s reaction to Mrs. Fenton’s death was to blame the local council for conditions in the camp. Chief among his concerns was the maintenance of racial distinctions, deploring the mix of black and white in this hybrid community. He renewed his attempts to persuade the “full blooded” Kinnears and Fentons to go to Lake Tyers, and tried to send several of the “halfcaste” children to their mother, Mrs. McGuinness (McGinnis), at Goyura.²³ He inspected the camp with Constable Coffee of Dimboola and condemned the “dirty and filthy conditions of the camps”:

Regarding the great gathering of these people which includes only one pure Aboriginal, who had left his home on the old mission station and lives in the camp for the sake of company. No other black man lives with the halfcastes but one white man named Pinkey, who is married to a halfcaste young woman, a daughter of Robert and Rose Kennedy, the whole gathering as a sort of community, is certainly against the Act of Parliament passed in 1886 for the merging of the halfcaste with the general population of the colony. For the sake of the health of these people, the law should be carried out to merge with the general population, but instead of that even white men married halfcaste girls and lived in the camp.²⁴

Hagenauer also criticized those residents who were striking for higher wages from Bosisto’s Antwerp Oil Factory, arguing that “the camp should be closed and burned and able men and women earn their living.”²⁵ In 1906 the distillery shut, however, removing an important source of employment for the community.

A few months later the council again debated the camp’s future, and Menzies rejected Hagenauer’s prediction that the community would “disintegrate.” Local residents lobbied for land and materials for housing, but the Department of Lands reiterated its *laissez-faire* policy. Some locals were happy for the Aboriginal community to remain segregated from

their own, Councillor Borgelt suggesting that “the aboriginals should live in separate communities, the same as the Hindoos and Chinese.”²⁶

“A Good, Plain, Corrugated Iron Structure”

Here matters were allowed to rest for another six years—until local agitation by the Dimboola Progress Association prompted Menzies, now member for Lowan, to take the matter up again. In November 1913 the Rev. J. C. Jennison, Methodist minister of Noradjuha, drew the attention of the association to conditions at Antwerp, and a deputation, which included some of the Aboriginal people themselves, persuaded Menzies to raise the matter in the legislative assembly. Menzies suggested that Chief Secretary Murray should grant them a small reserve, and assist “with the erection of small tenements. They did not wish to be any further charge than that upon the public funds.” Murray responded warmly.²⁷ In mid-1914 the Antwerp residents, including Robert Kinnear, Mrs Kennedy and her daughter, and two others, informed Murray that

there were seven families, numbering forty-five persons altogether, including children, and they wished the Government to provide for them seven dwelling-places on land in the Antwerp reserve, on each side of the river; also free rations and permission to be allowed to bury their dead in Antwerp cemetery without paying a fee.²⁸

Everyone considered this a reasonable proposition, and it was presented to the chief secretary.²⁹ Murray agreed that the camp that had by now formed at Dimboola be removed to Antwerp and suitable houses built, and that the “half-castes” should “be brought under the provisions of the legislation dealing with aborigines.”³⁰ This scheme marked a reversal of Victoria’s assimilation policy, which specifically excluded “half-castes” and sought to absorb them into the broader population. However, before it could be carried out, World War I began, deflecting public attention. During the interregnum the board was unsupervised, and by 1916 it had been reconstituted by the chief secretary to comprise those members of Parliament in whose districts Aboriginal reserves or depots lay—including James Menzies.³¹

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In November 1914, the Progress Association found that the “children of the aborigines were starving owing to the want of bread,” and sent Murray the telegram demanding instant action. He instructed the local shopkeeper, Dreher, to supply rations.³² A few weeks later, however, it was found that “twenty-two of the children had not a bit to eat on that day, and, as far as was known, would not get anything until Monday.” It appeared that the shopkeeper Dreher had been uncertain of being paid.

Members of the association were highly indignant (“to think that twenty-two children should be left in a starving condition in a country like this is simply shocking”), one reporting that a Mr. Avery of Antwerp had “just killed a couple of sheep and sent them over to them.” Dreher was censured, one member noting that “if he had taken a broader view, and had filled them up, it would have been better. That is what he (Mr. Wright) would have done. (Hear, hear).”³³ Murray arranged for the Antwerp community to receive rations “until further notice.”³⁴ The residents faced not only scarcity of local work, but laws against traditional hunting: in 1913 Robert Kinnear was prosecuted for having killed thirty-four opossums, eaten their carcasses, and sold the skins to a storekeeper at Jeparit. Kinnear’s defense was that he thought he was entitled to kill native game and he didn’t like mutton—nor did he have any money to buy alternative supplies. Kinnear attributed the “extinction of his race to their having to eat ‘civilized’ food.” The magistrate noted that Aboriginal people had been banned from hunting since 1896 but dismissed the case. Kinnear’s status as the “last of his race”—later monumentalized by painter Percy Leason in his series of that title—may have given him special dispensation.³⁵

Despite their outrage, the most overt sign of tension between black and white during these years were regular references to the Antwerp children being ostracized from the local school, based on health grounds—the most visible symptom of a racialized politics of space and a reluctance to relinquish the segregation that had been managed by Ebenezer. Aboriginal children were seen as pitiful and unredeemable, defined by primitivism rather than potential. In 1902, Aboriginal children attending Antwerp had been turned away to the mission school instead. In 1909, overcrowding at the Antwerp state school again resulted in pressure on the Aboriginal children to leave.³⁶ In late 1915, a year after they had been found starving, no housing had been supplied, and the local health officer reported that the children were living in conditions “so unsanitary and deplorable in

other respects” that he had forbidden them to attend school. Murray again promised action.³⁷ In Parliament on Christmas Eve 1915, James Menzies protested the lack of progress, noting that children suffering from syphilis and “other troubles” were prevented by parents of local children from attending the state school. Like the missionaries before him, Menzies thought that better housing was the solution, declaring, “It is a standing disgrace. . . . I think the whole thing could be cleaned up to some degree if a good, plain corrugated iron structure was provided.”³⁸

In March 1916, Menzies again pressed the chief secretary, now Donald McLeod (MP for Daylesford), but McLeod was reluctant to accept responsibility, “as the carrying out of the promises had been delayed for so long,” instead promising to come up for yet another inspection.³⁹ Local agitation continued, with the Aboriginal residents making frequent complaints about their rations.⁴⁰ In October the Antwerp children were still not going to school, on the order of the Dimboola health officer.⁴¹ As this extended campaign to improve the Antwerp settlement indicates, better housing was considered the solution to all its problems.

The Lake Tyers “Concentration” Scheme: “A Paradise for Aborigines”?

In July 1916 the Aboriginal residents of Antwerp wrote to the Dimboola Progressive Association asking why C. F. and C. E. Nuske were going to be leased a portion of the reserve, when they understood that it had been set aside for their use. They complained that if this portion were alienated, they would not be able to pitch their tents on high ground when the river flooded. The association secretary, Wright, telegraphed a protest to Menzies, who reported that the question of the “natives” residence was receiving careful attention with a view to putting it “upon a stable foundation.” The association agreed that it was strange that the department would lease part of the reserve so soon after the chief secretary’s visit, and “one member thought that it was mean for any person to apply for it.” The meeting resolved to write to the minister asking that no more be alienated and that the remnant be reserved for the Aboriginal people.⁴²

The proposed lease was the first indication that the state government had already decided to jettison the plan to support the community at Antwerp, in favor of “concentrating” Victorian Aboriginal people at Lake

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Tyers. At Christmas 1916 the board sent extra rations of currants, raisins, and peel to the Antwerp people “with the Season’s greetings,” perhaps hoping to soften the news that rations would be discontinued within a few months.⁴³

James Menzies and Chief Secretary McLeod were architects of a major reorientation in Aboriginal policy at this time, reversing the board’s long-term movement toward assimilation. It is tempting to speculate that Menzies’s personal experience with the Antwerp community shaped his ideas about improving conditions for Aboriginal people—but at a remove from white settlement, and under supervision, in a return to the reserve system. In their campaign on behalf of the Antwerp community, Menzies and local white sympathizers, such as the Dimboola Progress Association, had focused upon the camp’s material circumstances and the threat it posed to public health.

In addition, in arguing for the need for intervention, Menzies and the state government increasingly drew upon welfare discourse, explicitly comparing the camps with the slums of Melbourne and Sydney. For example, McLeod, Menzies, and members of the board’s committee conducted an inspection of the reserve and depot system throughout Victoria in June 1917. McLeod commented that “a great waste of effort had been going on and that the best efforts could only be attained by concentration in one settlement.”⁴⁴ Menzies’s report stated that the “management of the Aborigines and Half-Castes throughout the State of Victoria . . . could not be worse,”⁴⁵ and noted that

at Coranderk the appearance of the Cottages resembled slum tenements; in some cases lacking almost everything calculated to bring comfort to the occupants. These tenements were in some cases neither wind nor rain proof. In two cases W. C.’s were conspicuous by their absence and in others unduly conspicuous by their presence. The bedding was scant and wretched as almost any slum tenement I have visited.⁴⁶

Menzies may well have visited Melbourne’s or Sydney’s slums, by this time the focus of welfare reform in both cities. Certainly he would have been familiar with Melbourne’s “slummer” journalism, which had from the late 1870s represented this urban domain as a “separate moral universe,” whose vices and improvidence violated middle-class values of fam-

ily and property. Nineteenth-century observers likened the slum dwellers to primitive savages leading a nomadic existence in an urban “jungle,” unable to participate in modernity.⁴⁷ At the same time, as I have argued, Aboriginal people on the reserves had been assigned to the working class. Conflating “problem populations” in these terms allowed ideas about underprivileged or “fallen” people to circulate across social categories of class, race, and gender, and sanctioned the application of common techniques of governance.⁴⁸

Representing the camps as dirty and immoral and their residents as helpless and primitive justified the government’s decision to move all Aboriginal people to Lake Tyers due to its isolation.⁴⁹ The board proposed extensive improvements to Lake Tyers to transform it into an Aboriginal-themed tourist park. These included new dwellings, roads, a sporting oval, “extensive plantations of native trees only,” and “pleasant walks for the residents and the many visitors who will flock to the enlarged native settlement.” It recommended that one area should “be reserved for the erection of light structures where afternoon tea might be served to visitors and where the produce of the natives would be exposed to sale, such as baskets, weapons, or other articles . . . such as honey, essences, flowers.”⁵⁰ The board intended to sell and lease the other reserves to pay for “industrial centres where trades could be taught” at Lake Tyers, “civilizing the natives by inculcating habits which they have no opportunity of forming now.”⁵¹

James Menzies and the board secretary visited Antwerp again in 1918 to explain the proposal to the community, numbering about eighty, and to “ascertain their opinions.” According to the *Banner*, “all of them, excepting three of the oldest families, signified their approval of the board’s proposition. The unwilling ones expressed a desire to remain in the vicinity of ‘the home of their ancestors,’ not caring even to try their fortunes for a period on any other hunting ground removed from their own.”⁵²

A more sympathetic view was taken by *Banner* journalist David Macmillan around September 1919, arguing that the residents were entitled to support as the maltreated, original inhabitants of the land.⁵³ Macmillan’s photographs from this visit show three well-dressed Europeans in warm coats and hats, striding through the camp, peering inquisitively into the tents and huts. To a modern viewer, the contrast between their thick

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warm clothes and the barefoot camp children signals the large divide between inspectors and inspected. The journalist noted how colonists had displaced Aboriginal people and drew a direct analogy with missions to overseas “heathen”:

To say they are receiving justice and fair treatment at the hands of the Government is a travesty on justice. The many scenes are appalling. We pride, as white people, ourselves on our Christianity, our charity and our benevolence, and in fulfilling those attributes of our faith will subscribe money by the thousands of pounds to provide mission stations among the heathens of the Pacific islands, the New Guinea Natives, and go preach the gospel of God to the Chinese, while here at our very door we have the offspring of those whom our forebears wronged, living—no, God, it is not living, it is but existing from hand to mouth, in scant clothing, and under the worst of conditions.⁵⁴

This impassioned analysis was combined with a more prosaic account of the material circumstances of the settlement, listing seventy inhabitants (of which thirty-nine were under twenty years of age) and giving a detailed description of each household recorded in the five photographs (figures 6.2 and 6.3) and its means of support. At this time, households were still defined by their male heads; as breadwinners, their occupations and wages are primary referents, while their wives, whose labor created the domestic environment, generally remained anonymous. For example, Macmillan wrote:

Then we have Norman Marks and his domicile. In a bag tent, 9×6ft, the mother, father, and seven children do their sleeping, while a fire glows at the door. In harvest time, Marks earns £2.10s per week, but the harvest has spent itself in three or four weeks. And at very odd times casual work is done at chaff-cutting, the remuneration being from 5s. to 7s. per day. He had done no work for months.⁵⁵

Last, and by no means least, we interviewed the Cameron’s, the couple being well over 60 years of age. A good deal of comfort and privacy abounds here under the very primitive of conditions, and signs are not wanting of the copyist of the white man’s home. Cameron is respected for his work and demeanour, as are the Kinnears and Alf Marks, and is fortunate in faring better, his average earnings being 1 pound per week. Mrs Cameron also does her part, and amongst not a few farmers is recognized as a good cook.⁵⁶



Figure 6.2. “Norman Marks,” Wotjobaluk. (Photographer: David Macmillan. Koorie Heritage Trust Collection. Unit number 82/2, Antwerp Aboriginal camp.)



Figure 6.3. “Cameron,” Wotjobaluk. (Photographer: David Macmillan. Koorie Heritage Trust Collection. Unit number 82/2, Antwerp Aboriginal camp.)

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While the male residents were able to find some work in shearing, threshing, rabbiting, digging rabbit burrows on contract, chaff cutting, and general farmwork, this was insufficient to provide a basic living wage. They were forced to live on a diet of “Dry bread and tea for breakfast, dinner and tea, with occasional rabbit,” yet Macmillan commented admiringly on the community’s dignity and self-reliance, as well as its attachment to place, noting that

with all this poverty and hunger they will not go a-begging, they will buy, even though it only be a penny worth at a time. They are by no means an ignorant class, for they all speak English, some of them being very fair writers. It is gawling [*sic*] to them that the little children are ostracized from the Antwerp State School. . . . The majority are very dissatisfied with their condition, but in every case are not favourable to transference to Lake Tyers, which they say is too cold, and is rampant with the gambling evil . . . [they] would like to be near Lake Hindmarsh.⁵⁷

In October an appeal was made for clothes for the children, and a few weeks later a dignified response appeared:

Dear Sir, We desire to render our sincere thanks through the columns of your valuable paper, to all who assisted in any way in getting up and giving the parcels and their contents, which were so freely sent to us. We can assure the donors the gifts were appreciated, and we use this opportunity of heartily thanking all concerned, Yours gratefully, Harrison Bros., Mr R. Kinnear and Family, Mrs Kennedy and Sons, Marks Bros, Mr Pinkey, Mr Cameron, Mrs Stevens, Mrs D Kennedy.⁵⁸

Notwithstanding this local support, Menzies reported that thirteen cottages would be built at Lake Tyers by the end of February 1920 for the residents of Antwerp who had agreed to go.⁵⁹ The board closed down all other reserves and Aboriginal people continued to be moved to Lake Tyers until 1922.⁶⁰ In 1926 there were only “two aborigines and six half-castes” still living at Antwerp.⁶¹

When Ebenezer closed, it seems that the Wergaia residents, as well as their white neighbors, were glad to maintain the system of segregation

that the mission had policed, despite an official policy of assimilation. Competition for land denied most of the mission people their own blocks, but settling at Antwerp offered several advantages, including the maintenance of ties to land and kin, privacy, and relative freedom from restraint—although these must be weighed against the very real problems caused by poverty and exclusion. The clash between bureaucratic and popular views of Aboriginal people’s capabilities emerges from the spatial politics of these first decades of the twentieth century, leaving Aboriginal people stranded in between white and black, modern and primitive, town and country. Like the missionaries before them, local white observers argued for intervention on the basis of disorder and incapacity—in the words of one visitor, they seemed “totally unable to fend for themselves,” judging their poor material circumstances as evidence for incapacity rather than a result of poverty and discrimination.⁶² As on the mission, the Aboriginal community was assessed in terms of its mimicry of white domesticity, as “copyists” of “the white man’s home,” and the solution to their privation was to provide better housing—such as Menzies’s “good, plain, corrugated iron structure.” They made repeated attempts to secure land and housing over these decades. Local people were relatively sympathetic to Aboriginal needs and supported their proposal to remain a separate community, distant from white settlement and on traditional country, in a continuance of the mission regime. Politicians such as James Menzies, however, amplified this scheme into a statewide system of segregation at Lake Tyers that for a time reversed assimilation, transferring many Victorian Aboriginal people to the state’s southeast and effecting a demographic shift that continues to structure the Victorian Aboriginal community today.

Notes

1. *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 13 Nov 1914, 2.
2. It is important to note that terms such as *half-caste* and *full blood* are unacceptable today. Although I reproduce these terms in historical context, and they are important expressions of contemporary ideas, I have retained quotation marks in my usage of these terms to indicate my own rejection of them.
3. Marie Hansen Fels, *A History of the Ebenezer Mission* (Melbourne: Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 1998), 9.

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4. Jeff Collmann, *Fringe-Dwellers and Welfare: The Aboriginal Response to Bureaucracy* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988), 3. For a view that sees camp life as symptom of a cycle of marginalization and disadvantage, in which “poor housing hinders the raising of the level of income and education which would enable the acquisition of better housing,” see D. Drakakis-Smith, “Alice through the Looking Glass: Marginalisation in the Aboriginal Town Camps of Alice Springs,” in *Environment and Planning A* 12 (1980): 427–48, (446). For a recent review that focuses on the architectural and spatial qualities of “fringe settlements” as an expression of Indigenous identity, see Paul Memmott, *Gunyah, Goondie & Wurley: The Aboriginal Architecture of Australia* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2007).

5. Basil Sansom, *The Camp at Wallaby Cross: Aboriginal Fringe Dwellers in Darwin* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1980), 10. See also Stephanie Smith, “The Tin Camps: Self-constructed Housing on the Goodooga Reserve, New South Wales, 1970–96,” in *Settlement: A History of Australian Indigenous Housing*, ed. Peter Read (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2000), 179–98.

6. P. Read, “Breaking Up the Camps Entirely: The Dispersal Policy in Wiradjuri Country 1909–1929,” *Aboriginal History* 8(1) (1984): 45–55; Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972* (St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin in association with Black Books, 1996), 267–69. For studies of the spatial politics of race, see Denis R. Byrne, “Nervous Landscapes: Race and Space in Australia,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 3(2) (2003): 169–93; Gillian Cowlishaw, *Blackfellas, Whitefellas, and the Hidden Injuries of Race* (Malden, Mass., and Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell, 2004).

7. Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 242, Crown Reserves Correspondence, Unit 306 (1904–1961), file C25897, Letter from C. F. Nuske, 30 Jul 1904; P8484.

8. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 242, Crown Reserves Correspondence, Unit 306 (1904–1961), file C28639, Correspondence with C. F. Nuske, 1912.

9. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 242, Crown Reserves Correspondence, Unit 467, file C15330, Secretary for Lands, Melbourne, from (illegible), 10 Apr 1904; PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 242, Crown Reserves Correspondence, Unit 306, file C55663; C27523, Police report, Dimboola Station, 23 Jan 1905.

10. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 242, Crown Reserves Correspondence, Unit 306, P8484, Nov 1904, Subdivision designs.

11. G. A. Robinson, “Australia Felix—Report of a Journey of 1100 Miles to the Tribes of the N.W. and Western Interior,” 1845 (Mitchell Library Manuscript Collection, 4, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney), 4; Luise Hercus, *The Languages of Victoria: A Late Survey*, Part II (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1969); in 1913 it was recorded that Antwerp’s Aboriginal name was “Guyonweight”: recorded by “St. D’A” in “Pioneers of the Wimmera,” *Dimboola Banner*, 1 Apr 1913, 3.

12. When the mission closed he was granted a residence license under the Land Act (Mallee) 1901. His improvements included a four-room house, out-buildings, fencing, and cultivation: PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 5357 Land Selection and Correspondence Files, Unit 2551, Selection File 311/217H Allotment 47 Parish of Banu-Bonyit; he also held land at Allotment 17 of Section A; VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 440 Land Selection and Occupation Files, Unit 1634, Selection File 701/217 Allotment 17 Section A Parish of Katyil. For Pelham Cameron’s story, see PROV, “Lands Guide.”

13. Fels, *A History of the Ebenezer Mission*, 10–11.

14. PROV, VPRS 10309, P0001, Unit 1: Board for the Protection of Aborigines (BPA), Secretary Letterbook: 1905–1906, 58.

15. *Dimboola Banner*, Thurs 31 Aug 1905; PROV, VPRS 10309, P0001, Unit 1: BPA Secretary Letterbook: 1905–1906, 29, 58.

16. PROV, VPRS 10309, P0001, Unit 1: BPA Secretary Letterbook: 1905–1906: 19 Jul 1905, 14.

17. PROV, VPRS 10309, P0001, Unit 1: BPA Secretary Letterbook: 1905–1906: 29 Sep 1905, 43; PROV, VPRS 10309, P0001, Unit 1: BPA Secretary Letterbook: 1905–1906: 2 Aug 1905, 20.

18. PROV, VPRS 10309, P0001, Unit 1: BPA Secretary Letterbook: 1905–1906, 10, 17, 20 Nov, 74; Henry Fenton’s father, Teddy Fenton, died in April 1905: *Dimboola Banner*, Thurs 13 Apr 1905, 2.

19. *Dimboola Banner*, Thurs 21 Dec 1905, 2.

20. *Dimboola Banner*, 23 Nov 1905, 2.

21. “Our Aborigines—An Inhuman Policy,” *Dimboola Banner*, Thurs 23 Nov 1905, 2.

22. Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies’ Forgotten People* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 165–66. His son, Robert Menzies, was later to speak dismissively of the Wergaia people he encountered as a child, betraying “a certain discomfort with the subject and irritation with those who regard it as interesting or important”—an attitude that Judith Brett suggests was emblematic of white Australia’s “drawing tight of the boundaries of the home and the self, and the

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harshness toward others and the determined self-reliance typical of white settlers,” despite their knowledge of the misery caused to Aboriginal people.

23. PROV, BPA Secretary Letterbook: 1905–1906, 24 Nov 1905; *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 31 Jan 1913, 3: Item in Antwerp column re. Elderly Aboriginal woman Mrs. M’Ginness; see also Tues 4 Feb 1913, 2.

24. “I have no doubt of the kind and charitable wishes of the Shire Council of Dimboola but if these wishes should be carried out, houses would have to be erected and a manager appointed to keep them under proper control to which these halfcastes would never consent. In case of several families Constable Coffee proposed that they should live near Dimboola so that their children could be looked after and sent to school with the town children . . . The one halfcaste woman spoke to me that she would gladly leave the camp and live with her family in a house in Dimboola, to which this Board, I feel sure, would gladly help. In regard the statement that Henry Fenton, formerly of the Mission Station, the only full blood Aboriginal in the camp I can only say that he left his house and went to the camp, but he has always received his clothes and rations from the Board.” PROV, BPA Secretary Letterbook: 1905–1906, 21 Dec 1905, 106–8.

25. PROV, BPA Secretary Letterbook: 1905–1906, 20–21 Dec 1905, 106–8.

26. Rev. James Rogers and Mr. John Cooksley of Dimboola had approached the Department of Lands and Survey for land and materials for housing, but the response was that “the Dept . . . offers no objection to the occupation by the halfcastes referred to of any of the available frontage lands. They are now occupying such lands, and it is not proposed to interfere with them.” *Dimboola Banner*, 1 Feb 1906, 2; “Discussion on Aboriginal Encampment,” *Dimboola Banner*, 22 Feb 1906, 3.

27. “The Local Half-Castes,” *Dimboola Banner*, 25 Nov 1913, 3; *Dimboola Banner*, 27 Mar 1914, 2.

28. “The Local Aborigines,” *Dimboola Banner*, 31 Jul 1914, 3.

29. “The Local Aborigines,” *Dimboola Banner*, 31 Jul 1914, 3; *Dimboola Banner*, Tues Sep 15 1914, 2.

30. *Dimboola Banner*, Friday 18 Sep 1914, 3.

31. Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 206–7; *Argus* 23 (Mar 1916, 20 Apr 1916).

32. *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 13 Nov 1914, 2.

33. *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 11 Dec 1914, 2; *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 13 Nov 1914, 2.

34. *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 18 Dec 1914, 2.

35. “Charge Against An Aboriginal of Killing Opossums,” *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 27 Jun 1913, 2–3. Kinnear was eighty-three in 1934 when Leason visited Antwerp to paint him. Percy Leason Papers, MS 8636, Manuscript Collection,

State Library of Victoria, Melbourne; Kinnear died in January 1937: “Obituary: Mr Robert Kinnear,” *Dimboola Banner*, 7 Jan 1937, 4.

36. “Antwerp: A Ramble through the Township,” *Dimboola Banner*, Thurs 12 Mar 1908, 2; “Antwerp School Trouble,” Thurs 18 Feb 1909, 2.

37. *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 3 Sept 1915, 3.

38. *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 24 Dec 1915, 3. In January 1916 it was reported that the stations’ management was in question and that McLeod, the new chief secretary, was likely to inspect them: *Dimboola Banner*, 7 Jan 1916, 2.

39. *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 10 Mar 1916, 3.

40. *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 19 May 1916, 2; see, for example, “R. Kinnear, Antwerp, to Ditchburn, Secretary, Board, 29 Aug 1916”: PROV, VA 515 Board for the Protection of Aborigines, VPRS 1694/P0, Correspondence Files, Unit 2.

41. PROV, VPRS 10309, P0001, Unit 1, BPA Secretary Letterbook: 1916–1917. In December the chairman of the Dimboola Progress Association drove the state-school inspector to Antwerp to “investigate the condition of the local half-caste children.” *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 22 Dec 1916, 2.

42. *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 28 July 1916, 3.

43. PROV, VPRS 10309, P0001, Unit 1, BPA Secretary Letterbook: 1916–1917, Letter no. 652, 18 Dec 1916; Letter no. 43 17/123, 7 Feb 1917.

44. *Argus*, 6 Jul 1917.

45. Remarks of Mr. Menzies with Reference to Proposed Amendment of the Present Management of the Aborigines in Victoria, 5 Jun 1917, PROV, VA 515 Board for the Protection of Aborigines, VPRS 1694/P0, Correspondence Files, Unit 2.

46. Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria (BPA), *Minutes* (1917), 243; and BPA, *Annual Report*, 49th (1922), 3. [N.B.: The board had reported annually from its inception in the 1860s until 1912; from that date, the board issued no reports until 1921.]

47. Graeme Davison, “Introduction,” in *The Outcasts of Melbourne: Essays in Social History*, ed. Graeme Davison, David Dunstan, and Chris McConville (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 1–28; Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1978), 237; Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (New York: Dover, 1968); Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 131.

48. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995); Robert van Krieken, “Assimilation and Liberal Government,” in *Contesting Assimilation*, ed. Tim Rowse (Perth: API Network, 2005), 39–48.

49. BPA, *Minutes* (1917), 243; and BPA, *Annual Report*, 49th (1922), 3.

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50. PROV, VA 515 Board for the Protection of Aborigines, VPRS 1694/P0, Correspondence Files, Unit 2. To BPA, Received 16 May 1918; There were eighty people already living at Lake Tyers, which was described as “a paradise for aborigines,” and it was intended to move the state’s 270 remaining Aboriginal people; “Aborigines ‘Paradise,’” *Dimboola Banner*, 17 May 1918; “Drawing the Color-line,” *Dimboola Banner*, 19 May 1918.

51. In this resurgence of the reserves’ segregationism, it cited the example of Point McLeay, South Australia, where the Aboriginal residents worked the farm and made it self-supporting, seemingly forgetful of Victoria’s own former reserve system. Victorian Parliamentary Legislative Assembly, *Victorian Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, 18 Dec 1919, vol. 154, 3663–64.

52. “Government Care for the Aborigines,” *Dimboola Banner*, 29 Apr 1918. And see *Dimboola Banner*, 3 May 1918, focusing on the overcrowding and immorality (the “illegitimate” children) evident at the “haphazard” camp.

53. *Dimboola Banner*, 12 Sep 1919, 4. The eight prints (five different images and three duplicates; the duplicates repeat inked captions in biro) were donated by Mrs. Dorothy Hewat of Morwell in 2002 and are now held by the Koorie Heritage Trust. Mrs. Hewat’s father, David Macmillan, worked for the *Dimboola Banner* for only eighteen months in 1918–1919, helping date the images.

54. *Dimboola Banner*, 12 Sep 1919, 4.

55. *Dimboola Banner*, 12 Sep 1919, 4. While the images did not appear in the *Banner*, they evidently served as a mnemonic for his text, scribbled notes on their reverse corresponding with each account.

56. *Dimboola Banner*, 12 Sep 1919, 4. On the reverse of the photo is written “Camerons. /The shed to the left is occupied by sons and grandson.”

57. *Dimboola Banner*, 12 Sep 1919, 4.

58. “An Appeal,” *Dimboola Banner*, Fri 10 Oct 1919, 3; “An Appeal,” Fri 24 Oct 1919, 3; “Gifts to the Blacks,” Fri 7 Nov 1919.

59. Victorian Parliamentary Legislative Assembly, *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, 18 Dec 1919, vol. 154, 3663–64.

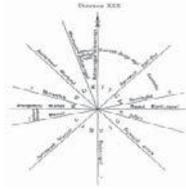
60. See Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800*, 206–9, for a summary; Colin Bourke, “Land Rights: A Victorian Perspective,” in *Aborigines, Land and Land Rights*, ed. N. Peterson and M. Langton (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1983), 250–55.

61. “Aborigines and Liquor,” *Dimboola Chronicle*, 28 Oct 1926, 4.

62. *Dimboola Banner*, Tues 15 Sep 1914, 2.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE OUTSKIRTS OF CIVILIZATION



Aboriginal Demands: “A Humble Home”?

The 1930s was a decade of tremendous change in Aboriginal affairs; new ideas about human rights circulated internationally, and a range of Aboriginal political organizations were formed—by both black and white campaigners. An official policy of assimilation was increasingly endorsed from the late 1930s, although its implementation was delayed until after the war. The 1930s and 1940s also saw the emergence of a welfare movement focused upon improving the domestic environment as a means of social uplift, prompting the revitalization of a genre of urban slum imagery that came to be applied to rural Aboriginal camps by politicians, Aboriginal activists, and white social workers. These two currents—demands for equal rights, and a focus on domesticity centered upon child and maternal health—intersected in a discourse of Aboriginal camp reform that led to an assimilatory public housing program during the 1950s.

From the 1940s local organizations, such as country branches of the Save the Children Fund, developed sympathetic relations with a number of Aboriginal communities, focused on domestic improvement and maternal performance. At the same time a public rhetoric of submersion and marginality was used to argue for Aboriginal “uplift” and a vision of assimilation that would transform Aboriginal people and effect their absorption into the mainstream community, primarily through teaching Aboriginal people how to live in European homes. What is striking

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about this scheme is the continuity from the mission period of underlying assumptions about civilization and progress, and the gendered organization of the home as a means of instruction and assimilation. Although the assimilation era's goal of "absorbing" Aboriginal people reversed the segregationist agenda of the missions, the domestic environment with its emphasis on Aboriginal women's performance remained the central instrument of "civilization." However, while Aboriginal people wanted better living conditions, especially women working to care for children and run homes, they were not prepared to relinquish their own values in order to do so.

The Antwerp community remained the focus of the district's Aboriginal settlement during the 1930s by mutual black and white consent; indeed, it was expected that Aboriginal people should live at the "Mission Station at Antwerp," as it was still sometimes termed.¹ During the Depression (1929–1932) another camp settlement was established at Dimboola on the southwest side of the Wimmera River—later known as "the Billa-bong"—that was shared by Aboriginal and European families. This later expanded to include "the Common" on the opposite bank. In 1937 the shire health inspector described six "shacks," constructed from old iron, canvas, and bagging, lined with canvas and paper, and with earthen floors covered with linoleum; and eleven "camps" made from old iron, tents, and bagging. He spoke approvingly of the former, five occupied by Europeans and one by Mrs. Alf Marks Senior, noting, "About these shacks there is an air of neatness and cleanliness with the little flower gardens to further beautify [them]." Although the settlement was illegal under the 1928 Health Act, it would be difficult to abolish because, "What is to become of these people?"²

From the late 1930s, conditions within the Antwerp and Dimboola camps were again drawn to public attention—but this time by Aboriginal activists demanding equal rights. In March 1940 the Australian Aborigines League (AAL) presented a petition to the premier, Albert Dunstan, during a visit to Dimboola, on behalf of the "half-caste Aborigines of Antwerp," that protested the "terrible housing conditions under which we live." The group was especially concerned about the future of its children.³ The AAL, founded in 1936 by Aboriginal activist William Cooper, was one of the most prominent of a range of organizations at this time. It

advocated a concept of equal rights in the pursuit of Aboriginal “uplift to the full culture of the British race,” an approach that can be understood in the context of increasing international debate about human rights in the interwar period.⁴ At the same time, however, the AAL worked to preserve “special features of Aboriginal culture” and argued for a concept of special, Indigenous rights on the basis that Aboriginal people were the nation’s first people, and that the government had an obligation to protect them grounded in the historical experience of invasion and dispossession. Cooper insisted on a distinctively Aboriginal perspective he termed “thinking black,” in a vision of “the two races, side by side yet distinct.”⁵ Nonetheless, at this time Aboriginal activists were forced to work within a colonial framework that required Aboriginal people to show that they were capable of achievement in white terms, especially as measured by creating furnished modern households indistinguishable from those of whites.

Cooper had campaigned before on the issue of better housing for Aboriginal people. In 1938 he condemned the poor conditions prevailing within Aboriginal communities: “While every authority is talking of removing slums, slums are being built at Cummeroogunja [in New South Wales]. While the papers are talking housing reform, the natives are to get hovels.”⁶ Cooper invoked the rhetoric of slum reform not to condemn or objectify the residents, but rather to censure the officials who sanctioned such conditions; he demanded the same resources that were given to whites.

A number of families were living at Dimboola in 1940, but the majority (fifty-four people) lived at Antwerp, in “huts of rusty iron, bags, rags, and anything which can be made to serve as a shelter.”⁷ The camp occupied about forty acres but was not visible from the highway, and nobody else used the land. The matter was taken up by Arthur Burdeu, secretary of the Aborigines’ Uplift Society (AUS), who wrote to the secretary for lands that conditions at Antwerp were “found to be so shocking, so totally unfit for human beings” that they proposed to “erect new homes” on crown land to replace the “hovels” already there.⁸ Burdeu was also president and co-founder with Cooper of the AAL. In 1941 the acting surveyor general agreed to grant permissive occupancy to the AUS for one acre so that “a humble home of three rooms of wood and iron” could be built and occupied by “a selected family,” who could fence the area and “keep a cow and maintain a vegetable garden.” It drew up a subdivision plan (figure 7.1).⁹

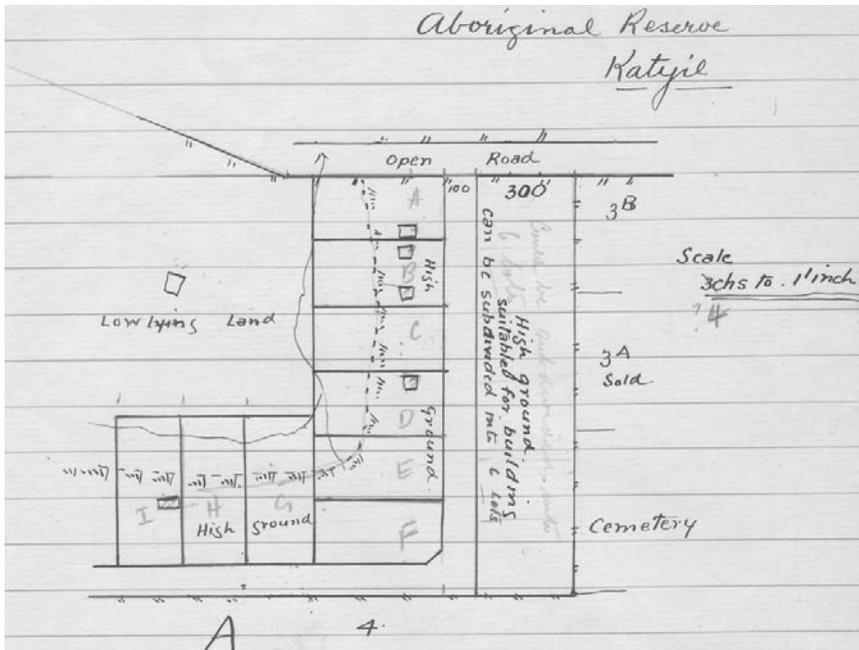


Figure 7.1. Aboriginal reserve, Katjil, 15 Jan 1941. (PROV, VPRS 242, Crown Reserves Correspondence, Unit 306 (1904-1961), C55663. Reproduced with the permission of the Keeper of Public Records, Public Record Office Victoria, Australia.)

This project followed the precedent of the Framlingham Farm Scheme of a few years before at an Aboriginal reserve in the state’s southwest. It had been promoted by idealistic local white humanitarians, including Burdeu; however, it did not involve the Aboriginal residents themselves and subsequently failed.¹⁰ Burdeu proposed to improve Antwerp’s “humpies” by adding rooms, galvanized roofs with gutters and water tank, glass windows, and washable tar floors, with a fenced area for a kitchen garden.¹¹ The society paid the rent of ten shillings per year for the permissive occupancy until 1947, but there is no indication that the proposed house was ever built—although similar small homes were erected by other local organizations. This initiative presaged a range of improvement schemes for Antwerp and Dimboola’s Aboriginal people that pivoted upon better housing.

A “New Deal” for Aborigines

In 1937 the Native Welfare Conference of all Australian states and territories adopted a policy of assimilation, but its implementation was postponed during the war (1939–1945). In 1939 John McEwan, Commonwealth Government Minister for the Interior, announced a “New Deal” for Aborigines, the “raising of their status . . . to the ordinary rights of citizenship,” with the purpose of converting them to a “settled life.” This initiative referenced the sequence of programs that U.S. president F. D. Roosevelt initiated between 1933 and 1938 to provide relief and reform the economy during the Great Depression.¹² In a vision that was radical for the time, the Australian “New Deal” initiative sought to “uplift” and transform Aboriginal people into full citizens who might be absorbed into mainstream white society. Recent analysis of the range of ideas and approaches termed “assimilation” has revealed their heterogeneity and contestation, but assimilation has since come to stand for acculturation and the attempted extinguishment of Aboriginal culture.¹³ Aboriginal critics of this policy pointed out that citizenship was conditional upon becoming the same as whites, and objected to the emphasis on individual rights and responsibilities at the expense of collective “uplift.”¹⁴ Paul Hasluck revived assimilation as a national policy when he became minister for territory in 1951.

In the early 1950s the Aboriginal population of Victoria was around 1,300, of which 1,000 lived in camp settlements.¹⁵ In June 1955 the Liberal Country Party (later the Liberal Party), under the leadership of Henry Edward Bolte, won government and quickly introduced legislative reforms aimed at improving living standards for Aboriginal people in the state through a housing program. As historian Corinne Manning notes:

Although Aboriginal housing needs were tiny at less than one per cent of the State’s housing demand, the “Aboriginal problem” became a dominant political issue, due to the power of “otherness” that Aboriginal fringe camps occupied in the popular mind.¹⁶

Accounts of assimilation during this period have mostly attended to political debate and policy, including the activism of black and white campaigners, and the “expert” views of those such as the anthropologist A. P. Elkin. However, the fortunes of the Wotjobaluk community during these

decades reveals the significance of local relationships forged between black and white, particularly those between Aboriginal people and rural networks of welfare workers, structured by white concern with the material aspects of domesticity. In addition, the circulation of popular ideas about Aboriginality and race relations through visual media reveals the ways that assimilationist ideals of equality and unity were thwarted by the policy's discriminatory implementation, shaped by local spatial politics.¹⁷

“Half Castes in Native ‘Slums’”

From the late 1940s, coverage by the major newspapers marked the emergence of a new popular discourse focusing on Aboriginal camps. This genre echoed the established visual imagery and language of urban housing reform, already familiar from decades of campaigning on behalf of working-class “slum” residents but undergoing revitalization in Melbourne at just this time.¹⁸ In March 1948 the visit of a Melbourne police-woman prompted widespread attention to conditions at Dimboola (figure 7.2). The *Age*, for example, reported:

Half Castes in Native “Slums”: Allegations that 30 half caste aborigines were living in squalor and animal-like conditions on the banks of the Wimmera River, at Dimboola, were made by police yesterday. Police said that they were disgusted by the apparent apathy toward the half-caste population, which lived in squalor, neglect and filth. Dwellings were humpies made of flattened kerosene tins, along the bank of the river. Some were made of bags, and in most cases bags were used as blankets. Rags were used to clothe the men, women and children. Many of the children had told them they did not like going to school because they were called “niggers” by the white children. Not far away were the clean and comfortable houses of the whites, who seemed unaware of these conditions.¹⁹

The camp was described as “The Black Man’s Camp Pell,” home to the “forgotten natives of Dimboola”: a reference to Melbourne’s notorious transit-station for those displaced by the Victoria Housing Commission’s slum reclamation program.²⁰ In these accounts the problem of Aboriginal disadvantage was framed in terms of distance between black and white and the white community’s indifference—circumstances that were only



Figure 7.2. “Half Castes at Dimboola Live Like This.” (Sun, 19 March 1948, 8–9.)

starting to be perceived as unacceptable. According to policewoman Brown, of Russell Street, residents were enduring “cave man conditions of filth, ignorance and neglect.”

Visual evidence of conditions within the camps drew upon a much older “slum” genre of representing the urban poor that had first emerged in mid-nineteenth-century London. Sympathy combined with titillation, as slums become a tourist attraction as well as the focus of middle-class reform; as Graeme Davison suggests, middle-class representations of these sites reaffirmed the dominant ethos of suburban respectability.²¹ By the early twentieth century many world cities had adopted a more

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scientific approach toward housing reform; however, the Great Depression brought slum clearance and construction of new workers' housing to a halt. By the mid-1930s Melbourne was in a housing crisis, prompting a campaign driven by a coalition of social reformers, planners, the labor movement, and the press. Slum crusader Oswald Barnett made effective use of photography and even films in his battle to demolish the slums and erect subsidized government housing. In 1946, Father Gerard Tucker, founder of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, commissioned a group of Melbourne filmmakers to make three films exposing the poverty and squalor in which many of Melbourne's working class lived.²² Barnett and his allies subscribed to the basic principle of the urban reform tradition, correlating the physical condition of housing with the social characteristics of the residents.

Framing the Aboriginal camps as slums worked in several ways. The irrefutable yet diffuse meaning of the photographic image was deployed to "prove" reformers' arguments about social conditions made by the accompanying text. As Tony Birch has shown, for example, Barnett's photos of inner Melbourne at this time were characteristically cited to demonize women, advocate the rescue of children, and promote the ideal family.²³

These accounts also produced meanings specific to the Aboriginal subjects, emphasizing their difference and showing the camps as another world, characterized by transience, disorder, and primitivism. As I have noted, slum discourse conflated poverty with savagery, contrasting these outcast populations with modernity and progress.²⁴ Such images defined the camps in terms of the flimsy material state of "humpies," seeing them as the *cause* of socially undesirable traits such as overcrowding, "sharing," drinking, and disease. Although over the course of his research Barnett came to the conclusion that environment was not a symptom of character but rather of poverty, home environment remained a key indication of moral status, and the conflation of setting and character remained a potent visual device.²⁵ The Koorie leader Pastor Doug Nicholls attempted to point out this crucial distinction between cause and effect in his slogan, "Australian Aborigines are not a primitive people but a people living in primitive conditions."²⁶ The enduring Western association between settled life, property, and civilization cast campers as primitive nomads, while the very term *camp* implied that these were temporary dwellings for a wandering people.

The irony is, of course, that archival records reveal individuals' and families' continuing occupation of Antwerp and Dimboola throughout the twentieth century. While the material elements of their homes may have been "flimsy" and replaced or modified over time, the emphasis placed by white observers on physical fabric blinded them to the long-term, if intangible, attachment of residents to these places.

Newspaper accounts also constructed a spatial relationship between black and white, representing the residents as socially and morally distant from middle-class white society and creating a racial boundary between townfolk and campers.²⁷ The camps were located on the edge of white townships, and it was clear that they also occupied a marginal place in the social order, segregated from white society. Where middle-class visitors "descended" into urban slums, white observers of the camps ventured outward, beyond the pale, into the empty space beyond the town boundaries. At a time when ideas of equality and equal rights were gaining ground, such distance, attributed by campaigners to white neglect, "forgetfulness," or ignorance, became a powerful spur to reform.

In May 1955 the Dimboola settlement comprised eight households, scattered along both sides of the Wimmera River. Those around the Billa-bong were spaced around the central allotments owned by whites (figure 7.3). A few of these households, such as that of Mr. L. D. Marks (Lester Marks Harradine), "who is single but lives with his mother [in fact, his great aunt, Clara Marks, a daughter of Pelham Cameron]" and who was "building a home in the Township of Dimboola which is almost completed," held permissive occupations granted by the Lands Department, allowing them to pay a small yearly fee for legal residence on Crown land. This system facilitated close scrutiny by the government, which compiled detailed files and plans recording the residents' locations, standards of hygiene, employment, and other personal information, although such documents never recorded all the people living in such settlements. Inspector Faux commented that the Aboriginal residents lived

under adverse conditions, but most of the above have local employment. Male members being employed by the railways and women in local cafes, hotels and hospital, this being that they have to live locally on Crown Land because they find difficulty in procuring houses in the

1920s and 1950s a network of feminist activists such as Mary Bennett and Bessie Rischbieth, and organizations such as the Australian Federation of Women Voters, participated in international debates about Aboriginal rights and issues and were an influential force upon government and experts at home in Australia.³⁰ While organizations such as the Country Women's Association (CWA) and the Save the Children Fund (SCF), which emerged during the interwar period to assist women and children, were also in touch with international developments in this sphere, by contrast their activities were channeled through rural grassroots networks with a strong local community focus.³¹

The SCF was established to send food, clothing, and medical care to children in central Europe after World War I. Its founder, Eglantyne Jebb, drafted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1923, which was adopted by the League of Nations in 1924 and ratified by the United Nations in 1954. By the mid-1950s it had an active global program and was taken up by sympathizers in Australian country towns as a means of helping Aboriginal children. A Victorian branch was founded in 1944, and in 1952 Sister Melba Turner was the first SCF welfare officer to work with the "dark children of Victoria" at Mooroopna and Shepparton, where the SCF took credit for prompting the first successful Aboriginal rehousing project at Swan Hill's "Model Reserve." Here, local police Sergeant A. H. Feldtmann raised money for the Native Children's Centre and two new homes in 1953—an initiative that aroused widespread interest and approval.³² The SCF supported Victorian field officers in Dimboola, Robinvale, Orbost, and Swan Hill during the 1950s and was active in drawing attention to local needs, including better housing "for the parents of the dark children in its care." By the end of 1955 (its first year) the Dimboola SCF had raised £591, held twelve meetings, and built a welfare hut and two small family homes.³³ The small-scale initiatives mounted by the SCF and other rural organizations such as Apex Clubs and the CWA stemmed from a local tradition of aid that had existed since the closure of the missions. These initiatives grew from local knowledge and relationships, providing policy makers with concrete examples that influenced Victoria's assimilatory transitional housing policies.

In February 1954 Miss Constance Barling (later Brown) began work as an SCF field officer at Dimboola, running a preschool group and welfare center and organizing after-school activities, a social evening for

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teenagers once a week, daily school lunches, jumble sales, a Christmas treat, and a visit to the Lord Mayor's camp at Portsea. Over the next twelve years, Barling's became a persistent voice in the local community, and her work was widely praised by contemporaries.³⁴ She was nicknamed "Sugar" or "Sug" for short, "because (as one boy told me) I was so sour!" Barling developed relatively intimate, everyday relationships with Aboriginal people that gave her expert status in speaking about local conditions—and was even influential in formulating state Aboriginal policy. The personal relationships that she developed with the Aboriginal children were unusual for the time, and she later recalled the distance that prevailed between black and white, which she attributed to the hostility of some townspeople to the Aboriginal community: "It was as though there were two communities there, and I was in the middle. But I had developed a very strong attachment to the aborigines, and was never in any doubt as to where my loyalties lay."³⁵ Her intermediary position in some ways echoed that of the missionaries, teaching the children and their mothers domestic skills and so reinforcing the structural relationship between white supervisors and Aboriginal pupils. However, she was also able to refute the stereotypes and prejudices of many whites. "Sug" is still remembered by the children she worked with, now adults, as their primary contact with white society. In 2008, Wotjobaluk elder Irene Harrison remembered going to the SCF Centre as a child and commented, "She was beautiful, Sug."³⁶

Barling's reminiscences of these days poignantly convey the era's informal system of segregation, and especially the children's everyday experiences of prejudice. Many Aboriginal children avoided school, for example: "Absenteeism was rife; any excuse served and no-one cared. The children had to fight as they were called niggers, which they hated."³⁷ She took the kids to a Lord Mayor's camp at Portsea in 1955, and the superintendent,

speaking to the whole camp, said (in reference to our own group) "I know what kind of places you all come from; I've seen the humpies. . . ." and from the start the children were segregated. We could only assume it was because he had not liked what he had seen in the humpies, though the people were decent and basically responsible.³⁸

She also described how the children “preferred to swim in the river apart from the ‘gabba’ [whites]; they were very self-conscious about their color, even if they were only a healthy shade of brown. They were very good swimmers.” When walking along the street, the children “would hang their heads,” but after she helped with washing their hair they “now smiled and greeted the ‘gabba.’” Barling commented of the camps that “the families lived quite near the main street but were out of sight in their dwellings.” However, once the SCF had built three “bush houses” nearer to the main street, “You could hear a man roar when he was drunk,” and “The children were often terrified at night,” and had to be taken elsewhere.³⁹ In these accounts of everyday segregation and discrimination, Barling’s memories overlap substantially with those of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Memories: “Hard but Happy Times”?

What did Aboriginal people think of the camps? It is clear that many had no choice about living in them. Indigenous activists condemned their conditions and worked hard for their replacement by modern houses. For example, in 1985 the Aboriginal Advancement League described how

loneliness, despair and desperate need drove many to band together on the fringes of country towns, in river beds, rubbish tips and scrub. Alcohol provided temporary relief for some and plunged others into a downward spiral of addiction, poverty, and sometimes, self-disgust. Normal hygiene measures were impossible to maintain when home was an abandoned car body, a hessian, cardboard and corrugated iron lean-to, or an unplumbed fruit-picker’s hut. For many Victorian Aborigines, poor health or an early grave were the inevitable price of the “free” life away from Aboriginal stations.⁴⁰

For women, especially, responsible for caring for children and maintaining standards of domestic order and hygiene, the camps were places of arduous work performed without basic amenities. Historian Corinne Manning interviewed one former resident of Rumbalara, who told her:

I remember the day we come . . . to Rumba. Mum was standing there at the sink, she starts to turn the tap on and she burst out crying because

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all of her life she's carted water from the river in a bucket. . . . She was thirty-odd then when she came up to Rumbalara.⁴¹

However, while many Aboriginal people were eager to move into the new housing estates, they nonetheless maintained traditional family ties, a sense of their Aboriginality, and communal camp practices such as outdoor story-telling sessions and drinking parties.⁴² Many former residents pass on positive memories. Of the settlement at Daish's paddock at Mooropna, Beatrice Atkinson said, "We had no social services or anything. It was hard but happy times. Everyone shared, whether you were short of an onion or whatever, you could sit down and talk."⁴³

Today's Wergaia elders were children when they lived at Antwerp or the Billabong and the Common at Dimboola, and they have generally happy memories of playing games, swimming in the river, and helping their mothers with jobs such as cooking and collecting firewood. Irene Marks, who was only seven when she lived at Antwerp, recalls, "We used to wash by the water-hole, do the washing, had a copper on the tub and what-not, scrub up the clothes." Hazel MacDonald lived on the Common at Dimboola, which was quite far from other houses, but "when the circus used to come to town that's where the tent was put up and you had all these animals around your house." Irene, Faye Marks, and Hazel are three of nineteen children born to their mother, Lillian Marks. Sometimes they would steal fruit by moonlight, "never took a lot but just enough to fill us," and an elderly white neighbor called McLennan, who also lived on the Common, used to bake lamingtons for them.

Hazel and her brother Alan were the youngest children, and she remembers moving into Dimboola with her parents during the 1960s, after the older children had grown up and left home. She had never watched television or used electricity before, having done her homework by candlelight or what was called a slush-light, "where you put the rag in some dripping [animal fat] . . . and you light it up." She got her first bicycle then, too, where previously "my toys were . . . sardine tins . . . we tied a string and just . . . drag it through the sand . . . that was our car and we'd put the string on and away we go." Hazel was fascinated by her sister Shirley's home in town and its "mod cons," especially running water from a tap, "whereas down at home we had to put the copper on to get hot water."⁴⁴

Aspects of this lifestyle were no doubt the same as for poor white families, but others were distinctively Aboriginal.

They had little to do with the white community except for social events organized by Barling, such as dinner with white families on Friday nights and trips to Ballarat and Geelong during the holidays, where they stayed with host families. Some of these contacts developed into long-term ties: Hazel didn't want to go to Dimboola High School, for example, because she was concerned about dealing with the boys there, so she stayed with her host family at Geelong and went to the local girls' high school.

Another view comes from Daryl Tonkin, on whose land Jackson's Track was established, a more secluded Aboriginal camp settlement in Gippsland, in southeastern Victoria. Tonkin used to visit Dimboola with his Aboriginal wife, Euphemia Mullett, in the 1940s and 1950s. He remembered the fun of going hunting in the Little Desert, south of the camp. But he also remembered the Dimboola camps as places of surveillance:

Those old fellows were looking for freedom to live as they wished . . . away from the prying eyes of whitefellas. It was harder for them to be free on the river because they were close to town, in plain view with nothing to protect their privacy. The Welfare was on the prowl everyday for no reason at all. They would come with the police. . . . Dimboola felt more like a prison camp than anything else to me.

In the context of assimilatory child removal policies, many moved to Jackson's Track for the safety of their children—or, like the Marks and Harrison families, sent their children there.⁴⁵ Constance Barling later noted that moving into town resulted in “increased supervision from the Board and the local police,” with the consequence that children were removed, and the authorities enforced the rule of one family per dwelling.⁴⁶ But Wayne Marks remembered of Dimboola that

it was just like another neighborhood here. There was always someone around. The houses were built out of bark, wood-chip really, what you could find. But I mean for humpies they were bloody deadly. I mean to live in. I mean you'd be amazed. The cooking essentials and beds sort of thing. You went inside you were in sort of a flat of some kind . . . it was

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unreal. Bare necessities but comfortable. Kero lamps, candles, whatever. Sometimes you had the blaze of a fire inside. Beautiful darkness.⁴⁷

In recent years some Aboriginal people have returned to these places for periods of time. Elderly men return to the Billabong or Antwerp in their later years, for example (see chapter 8), and Karen Marks lived in a hut at the Billabong between 1998 and 2000. It was private, and “it was hot in summer time but cold in winter. Always had a fire going.” Faye Marks added, “And dirt floors, no lino or things like that.” She swept it out with a broom and used rainwater, but it was hard to keep food fresh, and eventually the difficult conditions prompted her to move into a house in Dimboola.

Nancy Harrison was born in 1941 and grew up at Antwerp with her parents Barbara (nee Kennedy) and Athol Harrison, who moved there in 1939 to work on the railway. On her mother’s side she traces descent “back to the old cricketer” Jungunjinanuke (also known as Dick-a-Dick), who toured Britain as part of an all-Aboriginal team in 1868.⁴⁸ She remembers her Kennedy and Marks uncles taking her to Ebenezer to go fishing “in the old horse and buggy” for the first time when she was about seven or eight years old. Nancy also used to stay with her Auntie Lallie (Lillian Harrison) down at the Billabong at Dimboola.

Although Antwerp was sited in a fairly extensive tract of bush, traditional stories were told to ensure that the children never went too far away from home, invoking the Wergaia wild black (*goolum goolum*) or *nudja nudja* figures. Nancy remembers that

we never dared venture [far] . . . because of the *goolum goolum*, and also there’s a hollow tree, a big hollow tree [that marked the limit], there’s this little, there’s like a hairy man—and if you ever see the Addams Family, the little hairy Cousin It [laughter], that’s what I imagine, this little he’s called a *nudja nudja*. If you ran, he’d take you away if you were by yourself. One time there at Antwerp on the reserve somehow or other my dad got a little three-wheeled bike, and my older brother and I were playing with it and he wouldn’t let me have a go, so I got a switch off a branch, and I came back and I went *wback* across his face and as I did that my mum saw me! She went inside and got the strap and she chased me—I kept running, running, running until I saw this big hollow tree. I would not go past it—because I’d done something bad, so I sat down

and bawled me eyes out—but I still got my three whacks! [laughter] But I never went past that tree.⁴⁹

Exclusion from the white community and a form of spatial apartheid enhanced a sense of identity as Aboriginal and the importance of family and community.⁵⁰ Nancy started school when she was four, taken by her father in a horse and cart, taught by the same “dear old lady teacher,” Miss Kuhne, who had taught her mother before her. Nancy remembers, “It was good in some ways but we were like, is that the right word? Alienated or isolated from the white people. We were okay at school with them, the kids were okay at school.” Some of them, however, were “a bit uppity” and there were fights, but then a new teacher came, and “he said, ‘If you are going to fight,’ he said ‘fight with words.’”⁵¹

Nancy vividly remembers how social distance was maintained from day to day: for example, “We used to go to the picture theatre, but . . . all the little black fellas always sat on our own in one little area in the picture theatre.” She doesn’t remember this being formally policed, but they simply felt that there “was safety in numbers.” When I asked whether she had always been aware of her Aboriginal heritage, she responded:

Always yeah. I used to be ashamed of it too. At school I wouldn’t go swimming, yet I could swim. I learnt to swim when I was five or six years old. But I didn’t have any bathers, that’s why I couldn’t go swimming. We used to swim in the nuddy out at Antwerp, away from [people]. And then I started high school and still didn’t have a pair of bathers . . . this girl she was swimming [in competition], she lived at Antwerp too, and I thought to myself, oh my God, I can beat her in swimming. I was heart-broken, she was just dog paddling in the water. That’s where I was ashamed of my colour.

Although poverty was an excuse, Nancy’s self-consciousness also stopped her joining in.⁵²

Cosmopolitanism in the 1940s

Despite its concern with local affairs, the SCF retained its international links: meetings opened with a recital of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, followed by reports of work conducted in places such as Korea,

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Greece, India, and Pakistan.⁵³ In 1948, learning from the experiences of World War II, the United Nations had inserted two new introductory clauses to the original 1924 declaration that recognized the needs of non-white children and the importance of the family, drawing the attention of white Australians toward Aboriginal children as objects of concern.⁵⁴

The SCF also worked with Aboriginal organizations and leaders: in February 1955 the Dimboola SCF invited W. T. (Bill) Onus, president of the Australian Aborigines League, to visit.⁵⁵ In May, Onus addressed Dimboola's Empire Youth Rally in a speech that was characteristic of the period: he demanded equal rights with whites, pointed out the unfairness of Aboriginal peoples' exclusion from white privileges, underlined his people's Indigenous status, and glanced toward international opinion.⁵⁶ Vividly constructing a correspondence between black and white, Onus detailed the AAL's demands for federal representation and commented on Prime Minister Robert Menzies's rejection of them with typical humor:

He has an unhappy knack of measuring people by his own particular yard-stick and if we divested him of his clothing and put him in the Northern Territory with nothing but a spear and a boomerang in his hand, he would be a very sorry fellow.

He warned that "while you are looking at aborigines and measuring him up in your standards he might be doing the same to you and seeing how you measure up." Onus also referred to the way that Aboriginal people were "not accepted in the general community at all" but were "living on the outskirts of civilization" and directly contrasted this treatment with the contribution of his "fellow coloured brethren" who had "laid down their lives in the Middle East and on the Kokoda Trail." He pointed out that Australia's treatment of its Aboriginal people had become a matter for international censure, stating that

a great deal of publicity has gone around the world about the Australian aborigine and a lot more will follow throughout the length and breadth of Australia. Many people looked with disgust on the Australian attitude toward a minor population.⁵⁷

He concluded his speech with a display of boomerang throwing. Onus adroitly linked local needs to larger ideas through the discourse of equal

rights, but also through claims to a distinctive Aboriginal identity. Such performances were effective—for example, on the strength of this event the local Country Party candidate was persuaded to support special housing loans for Aboriginal people.⁵⁸ In this way Aboriginal activists seized upon new global networks, playing on local sensitivity to international opinion.

The McLean Report: “Among the Trees on the River Banks”

The campaign to improve Aboriginal housing conditions, driven by a coalition of welfare reformers and Aboriginal organizations, can also be seen in the international context of decolonization and a new interest in human rights. This new awareness generated such intense popular concern that the new Bolte government was prompted to appoint retired magistrate Charles McLean to survey Victorian Aboriginal communities between 1956 and 1957.⁵⁹ McLean’s report endorsed the Liberal government’s new agenda, confirming the perception that Aboriginal people lived in some of the state’s worst housing, and instigated the creation of an Aborigines Welfare Board (under the Aborigines Act 1957) and a housing reform program. McLean argued that “the only ultimate solution of the ‘aboriginal problem,’ as it now exists in this State, lies in the social, cultural and economic integration of the remainder of the race into the general community”; he advocated “the social and economic uplift of the aborigines throughout the State, to the end that they may take their place in the ordinary life of the community.”⁶⁰ McLean acknowledged that one of the major “barriers to absorption” was “racial and colour-prejudice” and “the psychological effect of their environment, with a consciousness of being regarded as outcasts in the community.”⁶¹ However, for McLean, as for most white observers, the central problem was poor housing, causing him to draw a direct analogy with existing white welfare programs in arguing that

it will be recognized that the problem is, in essence, one of slum abolition, a project on which governments are already incurring considerable expenditure, and there is ample precedent in Victoria in the operations of the Housing commission.⁶²

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From the mid-1950s the new transitional housing approach became the basis of Aboriginal housing policies across the country. At Dimboola and Antwerp, local community groups had built small basic houses for a few Aboriginal families, such as Mrs. Hood and her family at Antwerp, and a timber and iron, two-bedroom house for the family of Mr. Gordon Marks in Dimboola.⁶³ These local initiatives helped shape the ideas of the proponents of transitional housing. In this scheme, Aboriginal people would be moved through progressively more modern houses as they were “taught” to live in them “properly.”⁶⁴

This program was overseen by J. H. (Harry) Davey, Slum Research Officer for the Housing Commission and representative of the new Aborigines Welfare Board. Davey brought to the board extensive experience as Barnett’s assistant in the slums of Melbourne during the 1940s, where he helped administer prototypical slum reclamation and transitional housing programs.⁶⁵ These were applied directly to Aboriginal programs, for example, in recommending that Aboriginal people needed “rehabilitation similar to that undertaken by the Brotherhood of St Laurence with white families from Camp Pell in the decanting centre at East Preston before placing them in new houses.”⁶⁶ Officials such as Davey and Philip Felton also argued that the assimilation of Aboriginal people was directly analogous with assistance programs for new immigrants and overseas nations, such as the Colombo plan.⁶⁷ Davey also stressed the importance of educating children and commented that “the effect of decent housing on children taken from slums in Melbourne’s inner suburbs and re-housed by the Commission in its earliest estates was remarkable and it will be no less effective on the youngster taken from the river bank whatever his colour.”⁶⁸ Davey noted that the “youngsters are keen” on the schooling and kindergarten offered by the SCF.⁶⁹

In 1956 the Victorian state government was already planning such a program, explaining that building

substandard houses for natives on the Wimmera flats was intended to prepare them for eventually living in the town amongst the white people. This preparation will probably take some time but when they are ready it will be necessary to find some land in the town for them.⁷⁰

Davey cited the work of the SCF at Dimboola to support his argument for transitional housing, arguing that “families cannot be transplanted

straight from their shacks on the river banks to Housing Commission houses . . . small cottages such as I saw at Dimboola should be provided as sort of transitory houses in which they can be trained to live in better surroundings.”⁷¹ He stated that “houses on a somewhat cheaper design” than the Housing Commission usually built were needed and claimed that this is what Aboriginal women wanted:

To obtain the view-point of those most interested in the problem—the aboriginal women themselves—I questioned a large number. . . . The majority of the women would prefer a small house and this view is supported by those who work among them. Most would like houses in the places where they now live—among the trees on the river banks and not in the adjacent towns. Apart from the rental involved, the standard Commission home is too great a step from what they have been used to and too big for their limited capital to equip and furnish. A surprising number stressed the need for an adequate water supply and pointed out how impossible it was to cater for baths and washing with bucket service.⁷²

Davey also described the adaptation of European-style housing to suit a distinctive Aboriginal lifestyle—such as the rejection of beds in favor of sleeping on the floor near the fire for warmth, the “walkabout” habit, and a preference for cooking over open fires.⁷³ Like others before him, and in contradiction of newspaper accounts, he also reported that circumstances were not always so terrible in the camps:

Living under these primitive conditions it could not be expected that the standard of housekeeping and cleanliness of the average aboriginal housewife would be high, but it was heartening to find many exceptions where the camps and surroundings were kept neat and tidy with small gardens; where youngsters were attending school regularly and teenagers were in regular employment.⁷⁴

However, despite the appearance of consultation, the board deliberately worked to eradicate “undesirable” aspects of Aboriginal lifestyle through house design. For example, in 1960 it argued that it had designed bedrooms smaller than specified by the building code, although providing generous living space with all standard amenities, as “a deterrent to the

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aboriginal habit of providing for visitors which in the Board's opinion is the basic cause of failure of any housing scheme for aborigines."⁷⁵ At the inception of this program McLean had singled out the Aboriginal custom of "sharing" for condemnation in a classic restatement of the Western Enlightenment view of the importance of property and individualism:

Arising, no doubt, from the traditions of their tribal days, the habit of "sharing" is very deeply rooted among them. For offences involving dishonesty, they compare very favourably with an equal number of white citizens, but there is almost no recognition of individual property or rights as between themselves. What is owned by one must be shared by all. Aborigines who have no fixed home, or are on "walkabout," habitually foist themselves on the others, and live with, and on them while anything remains. By refusing this hospitality, the latter would incur "shame" among their fellows, and, although there is ample evidence that most do not welcome it, they appear to be powerless to prevent it. Although it has its admirable features, the character of the "guest" is frequently such as to lead to excessive drinking, immorality, brawls, and the destruction of property, and in any case to gross overcrowding and hardship to the hosts and their children.⁷⁶

In these ways the transitional housing program preserved several principles of the mission era. Despite the rhetoric of equality, the program's pedagogical function was primary, regarding Aboriginal people as child-like and needing to be taught. The scheme also retained the missions' emphasis on physical, and specifically the domestic, environment, although the gendered and familial basis of this principle was obscured under the more neutral label of "housing." The visual inspection of Aboriginal women's domain and judgment of their performance of domesticity continued—particularly the appearance of household interiors, their children, clothing, and general demeanor. As the missionaries had before them, white welfare workers focused on teaching Aboriginal women middle-class domestic practices, including cooking, craft, and hygiene, and how to be "good" wives and mothers.⁷⁷ The material culture and bodily performance of these practices were indices of progress and defined the achievements of the transitional housing program; Barling explained that "some of the dark children had never eaten off a table until they moved into the new houses," and encouraged white people to invite Aboriginal

people into their houses, saying, "It's the best way to show them how to run a home."⁷⁸

Despite missionary accounts of the residents' "neat houses" and successful appropriation of Western domesticity, such dwellings had never been built to the same standards as those of the white staff or the mission-house itself. Similarly, the transitional housing policy betrayed the basic contradiction within assimilation policy, as historian Corinne Manning points out, in seeking "to promote equality through unequal means."⁷⁹ At Dimboola, however, the board's plans to construct substandard housing for Aboriginal people were thwarted by Aboriginal protest and public opposition.

The Communities 1956–1957

At this time there were four families (twenty-four people) living at Antwerp and eight families (fifty-eight people) at Dimboola.⁸⁰ Lined cottages with galvanized iron roofs and concrete floors had been built by the Apex Clubs at Horsham and Warracknabeal, and by local efforts in Dimboola, but these settlements lacked an adequate water supply and electricity.

At Antwerp there was one cottage, one shack, and scattered "humpies," each occupied by "single aboriginal pensioners": these were the four Kennedy brothers Walter (seventy), Ted (sixty-two), Lance (seventy-four), and Peter Kennedy. One house was occupied by their nephew John ("Jack") Kennedy (a railway ganger) and his family, Mrs. Molly Kennedy, thirty, and twins Glennis and John, aged four.⁸¹ Davey commented of the Kennedys' home in 1958 that "it is amazingly clean and well kept. Beds were neatly made and the earth floors covered with various coverings." And he noted, "[the] Kennedy's could look after themselves wherever they are. He is employed permanently on the Railways and his solution seems a railway house somewhere but he does not want to leave his present gang."⁸² This tribute, of course, owed a great deal to John Kennedy's steady income, but was equally a testament to his wife, Molly's, ability to create an appropriate home, by white standards, for her family.

Also at Antwerp lived Michael and Ivy Marks and their children, twelve-year-old Norm, six-year-old Alex, two-year-old Wayne, and "baby." The recently-widowed Robina Hood (nee Kennedy) relied upon her neighboring male relatives to carry water from the river for her eight

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children aged ten and below⁸³ (figure 7.4). Colin Hood had been a “railway man” who had died in September 1955. Mrs. Hood was living in a “cement sheet and corrugated iron house of two rooms with bathroom/laundry on Crown land built by local white people since [her] husband’s death,” which she was buying at 5 pounds per fortnight.⁸⁴ Davey judged that Mrs. Hood was “not a good manager and living conditions are extremely bad,” although he also commented that “the youngsters however look contented and happy and are well fed.” To a modern reader with small children, Davey’s criticism betrays an almost inconceivable lack of understanding of the labor involved for a single parent caring for so many children without facilities such as running water. He concluded that it would be best for this family to move to Dimboola, although “Mrs. Hood is said to prefer Antwerp,” and that “the mother’s wishes should not be permitted to override the interests of the large family of youngsters who should be nearer schooling, church and employment in Dimboola.”⁸⁵

Journalists following McLean’s tour of inspection contrasted the serious, capable demeanor of the white reformers with the childlike Aborigi-



Figure 7.4. “Kindly welfare officer, Miss C. Barling, of Dimboola, meets the lovely, dark-eyed Hood children.” (“How Our ‘Old’ Australians Live,” *Horsham Times*, 14 May 1956, 3. Antwerp.)

nal people who needed to be looked after. By contrast with earlier visits during the first two decades of the twentieth century, Aboriginal men rarely appear in these vignettes, which overwhelmingly feature mothers and children, as in the image captioned: “Kindly welfare officer, Miss C. Barling of Dimboola, meets the lovely, dark-eyed Hood children.” Such accounts endorse the state’s intervention, even against the recipients’ clear opposition—such as when Mrs. Hood objected to leaving Antwerp.

At Dimboola lived nine families, three in small cottages, the rest in “shacks.” Visitors focused upon the elderly and respectable Mrs. Lillian Harrison, aged seventy-six years and an “O. A. P.” (Old Age Pensioner) who “at present, lives in a poor type of shack and has expressed the wish to build a better house, in different surroundings, against the return of her son from overseas [military service].”⁸⁶ Mrs. Harrison

said she had lived in the locality all her life. Her late husband “did a lot of bullock-driving.” She had a “grown-up family of eight” all now living away from Dimboola. With her were two grandchildren, Charles, 18 years, and Patricia Harrison, 15 years.⁸⁷

Davey considered that the Dimboola camp was in a relatively good state, and “a Commission estate in the town would provide for some when they have served a satisfactory probation in the transitory cottages.”⁸⁸

Popular accounts of the housing program represented it as a before-and-after narrative of transformation, in a visual device that had a long history in representing Aboriginal people. When the first housing built for Aboriginal people was completed at Rumbalara, in Mooroopna, images of “humpies” were placed beside the new houses, generating a visual movement from the primitive past to a modernized present.⁸⁹ These accounts argued for the effective management of the Aboriginal population, endorsing Premier Bolte’s claims that Rumbalara inaugurated a “New Deal” for Aborigines.⁹⁰

Substandard Dwellings

The program had its critics, however, becoming the target of an emerging campaign against assimilation. In November 1959, Stan Davey of the Victorian Aborigines’ Advancement League (not to be confused with the

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board's J. H. Davey) wrote to the Aborigines' Welfare Board to criticize its continued policy of erecting "sub-standard cottages for re-housing Victorian Aboriginal families." He argued:

While appreciating that the cottages provide better accommodation than the humpies the people have been living in and that they are to be looked on as a staging-camp, the League is concerned (a) that the staging camps will eventually become permanent residence [*sic*], (b) that the sub-standard dwellings give the aborigines an inferior status in the eyes of both white and dark Australians, (c) that most families could readily care for a standard housing commission home and if it is desired that they should live on equal terms with the surrounding white community they should have equal facilities.

The provision of small cottages with only one entrance door, no internal doors between rooms, with air spaces between walls and ceiling, with small rooms and low ceilings which would not be permitted in a built-up area for white people, will not foster assimilation but will tend to indicate that these people are different and second class.

He urged the board to find ways of providing Housing Commission "homes of a standard equal to that provided for white citizens."⁹¹ In houses built of prefabricated concrete, Rumbalara's residents were glad to acquire basic modern amenities, but criticized their lack of insulation, being cold in winter and hot in summer.⁹² These first houses also lacked many amenities such as back doorways and internal bathroom doors, but several of these defects were amended for subsequent housing, and an open fireplace was added to the living room.⁹³

Other criticism came from the popular press, also seemingly prompted by the Aborigines' Advancement League—this was certainly the board's suspicion.⁹⁴ In late 1960 an article in the illustrated magazine *PIX*, written by Sydney journalist Harry Cox, questioned the quality of Victoria's housing and assimilation policies, exemplified by the Lake Tyers community. Cox drew upon the framework of assimilation popularized by the anthropologist A. P. Elkin, who argued for the need for Aboriginal people to undergo radical transformation in order to survive, essentially through participation in Western capitalism. However, like almost all white observers of the period, Elkin believed that southern Aboriginal people had lost their culture.⁹⁵ These ideas shaped Cox's description of Lake Tyers as

an example of pauperization, where “mixed-bloods are today struggling in a quicksand of perplexing change,” lacking funds for staff and finance to “lift the hygienic standards of the aborigines to where they could become readily acceptable to the white community.”⁹⁶ Cox quoted Stan Davey of the Aborigines’ Advancement League, who argued that Aboriginal people needed “self-acceptance” and leadership “from within,” and concluded that assimilation should be better funded and administered by the commonwealth government. He claimed the community’s children were despairing and apathetic.⁹⁷

As J. H. Davey’s rebuttal noted, there is a profound disjunction between the article’s text and the accompanying images, which feature beautiful, happy children glowing with health (figures 7.5 and 7.6). Davey argued that the people shown in the photographs belied the condemnation of the housing conditions overseen by the board:

On conclusion of the “Pix” article, I find myself trying to reconcile some of the statement that (page 54) “. . . the 30 families of Lake Tyers huddle defensively together, shuddering on the fringe of a civilization they can’t and don’t want to join,” and other derogatory statements about aborigines generally with the pictures accompanying the article. They certainly do not link up, for the latter depict healthy and happy groups of children and adults, any one of whom could take and hold a place in the outside world.⁹⁸

Images of the Lake Tyers community performing domestic tasks, such as washing clothes without running water or domestic appliances, are more persuasive in evoking difficult living conditions (figure 7.7). But where Cox argued for bad conditions at Tyers as evidence for poor management by the board, and against its policy of assimilation, which included plans to close the reserve, the accompanying images lent themselves to J. H. Davey’s argument for the residents’ ability to join mainstream society.

The representation of Aboriginal children as a symbol of potential cultural transformation has a long history, underwriting arguments for erasing difference through their removal and education. Images of the captivating “picaninny” proliferated during the first half of the twentieth century, coinciding with the intensification of child removal policies. Indeed, during this period, when white communities fought to exclude Aboriginal people from white spaces, images and motifs drawn from



Figure 7.5. "Mother and child." ("What we can do for him," PIX, 19 Nov 1960, 10.)

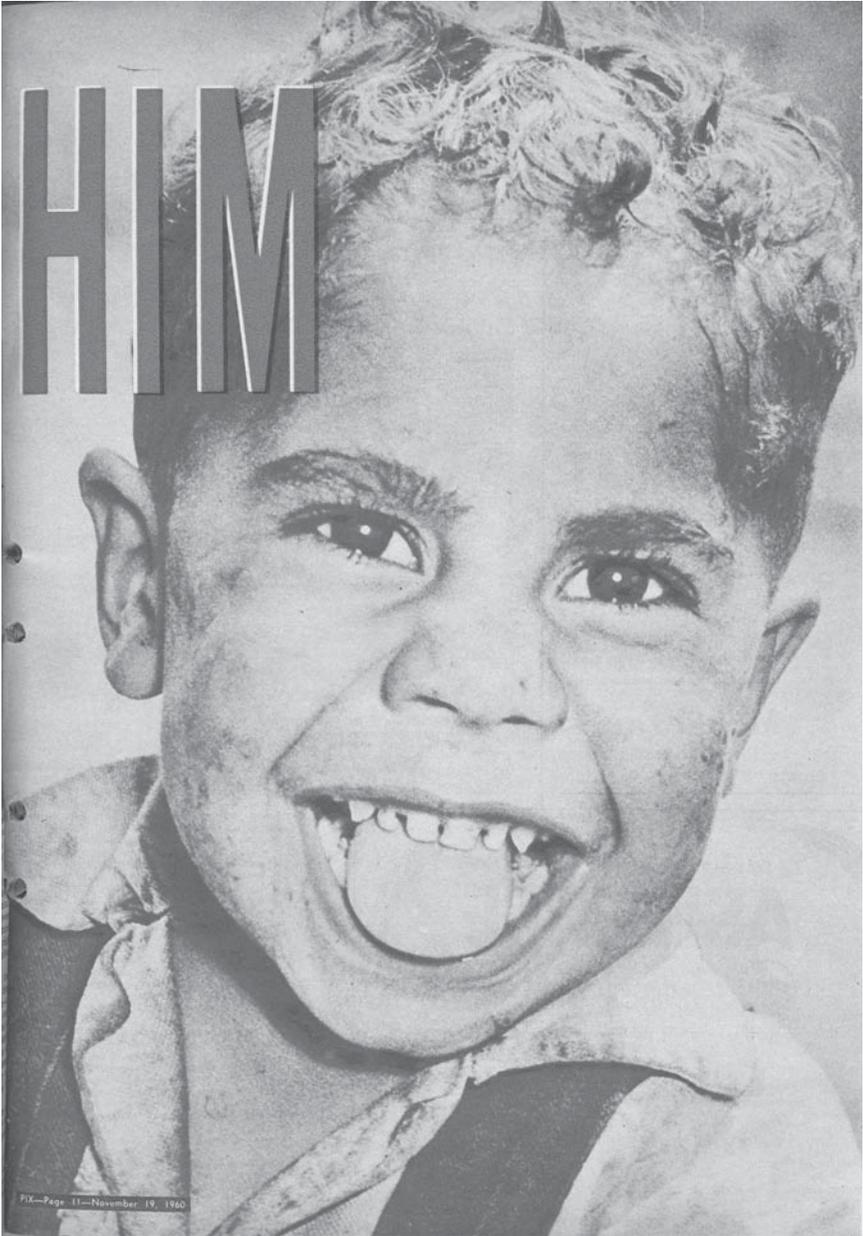


Figure 7.6. ("What we can do for him," *PIX*, 19 Nov 1960, 11.)



ABORIGINES (cont.)

Figure 7.7. "Washing day at Lake Tyers, with mother supervising operations. The house they live in is neat, but it has no laundry or bathroom." ("What we can do for him," *PIX*, 19 Nov 1960, 12.)

Indigenous culture became tremendously popular in Australian decorative arts and interior decoration.⁹⁹ However, at this time ideas about the potential transformation of Aboriginality were also intensely questioned through popular media such as the 1955 film *Jedda*, which challenged assimilation by showing the seemingly Europeanized heroine's ultimate reversion to Aboriginal tradition. Such ideas dominated popular thinking and were to prove powerful impediments to the board's housing program at Dimboola.

“Two Modes of Life Placed Next Door to Each Other”

When it was Dimboola's turn, local opposition to the transitional housing scheme was fierce. In mid-1959 Davey submitted a proposal for building houses for Aboriginal families within the township—not outside it as Rumbalara had been. Bedrooms were again smaller than specified by the building code, as a deliberate deterrent to overcrowding.¹⁰⁰ But when the news of the scheme became known to the townsfolk, Miss Barling of the SCF telephoned the board to inform it that there was “a great deal of local hostility” and a protest meeting had been held.¹⁰¹

The Dimboola Memorial High School objected to the proposed location of the new houses next door to its own grounds, which it saw as “undesirable and indeed could be disastrous to the well being of our student body.” The overcrowding and communal life of the camp was considered to pose a moral danger to the students, and it concluded that “our school is educating for citizenship. The tempo of modern society makes its task difficult enough and it should not be made more difficult by transplanting one of the gravest of our national social problems to its boundaries.”¹⁰² The board's response was that Aboriginal children would not be given opportunities through “keeping aborigines in isolation in remote positions in the towns they have selected as their permanent abodes.”¹⁰³ Objectors supported better housing for Aboriginal people but proposed to locate it on the “Town Common near the Wimmera River”—that is, where the camp already was, beyond the township limits. Mr. Muntz of the high school council stated that “housing of stone-age people near the High School was not desirable from the point of view of teachers and staff.” Davey attributed the objections to a few troublemakers, but when he met a real estate agent to inspect several properties as potential house sites,

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the man informed him that when the vendors had learned they were for housing Aborigines they withdrew them from sale. "The agent said to me he did not want to have anymore to do with it as 'he did not want to be run out of the town.'"¹⁰⁴

The chamber of commerce argued bluntly for "the simple incompatibility of two modes of life placed next door to each other." It suggested that

the Aborigines cannot be treated as ordinary democratic citizens of a "twentieth century state," on the basis of the camp settlement and the fact that "corroborees" are held there and that violence, drunkenness, loose behaviour and the coarsest of language prevail on these occasions.¹⁰⁵

However, its secretary explained that

on this topic misunderstanding can easily develop and it might be thought that Dimboola townfolk want total segregation. This is not so; there are already two families of aboriginal blood (and exceptional attainment) living within the town boundary and their presence is welcomed. Assimilation will develop in time, but it is suggested to the Board that it must "hasten slowly."

While it acknowledged the scheme's merits, "the prevalent opinion here is that the Board is carrying an experiment too far too soon." It requested the proposed settlement be placed "out of town."¹⁰⁶

More concrete opposition came from the Shire of Dimboola, which declined to approve the plans on the basis that the houses were substandard. Davey considered that its real objection was to locating Aboriginal people within the town but "realizing they place themselves in a position to receive press and public criticism if they come out into the open," building standards had been made the pretext.¹⁰⁷ With some bitterness, the board decided "to defer the project indefinitely and proceed with housing in other places where the local attitude is much more sympathetic and cooperative."¹⁰⁸

Against this hostility should be set the support of the editor of the *Dimboola Banner*, Keith Jones, who wrote to the board to suggest that there was, in fact, "little opposition" among most townspeople.¹⁰⁹

In February 1961 the council approved amended plans for six houses spaced throughout the town, and in mid-1961 these were built and serviced in School Road, Church Street, Warracknabeal Road, and Hindmarsh Street.¹¹⁰ Mrs. Hood didn't want to leave Antwerp, and Davey noted that a demolition order would be issued to force her to do so.¹¹¹ In October 1962 two more standard houses were built—in Dowell Street, Dimboola, and Kaniva, leaving only “several old single pensioners” behind.¹¹² Demolition notices were served for the remainder as they became vacant, and no more permissive occupancies were issued (figure 7.8).¹¹³

In early 1963 only Sam Kennedy and Alf Marks remained, and by 1964 Sam Kennedy and his family had moved to Ballarat, leaving their house near the bridge vacant. This house had originally been built by the Horsham Church of Christ for A. M. Marks, who had moved into a welfare home in the township. By 1964 Miss Betty Marks and “Billy” Marks had moved in. A hut on this site (perhaps rebuilt after 1966) was later known as “the Ranch,” and a 2004 heritage survey recorded a building and the remains of several others in the vicinity.¹¹⁴ Miss Desma Harrison lived on the south edge of the Billabong but had moved away by 1964. In 1966

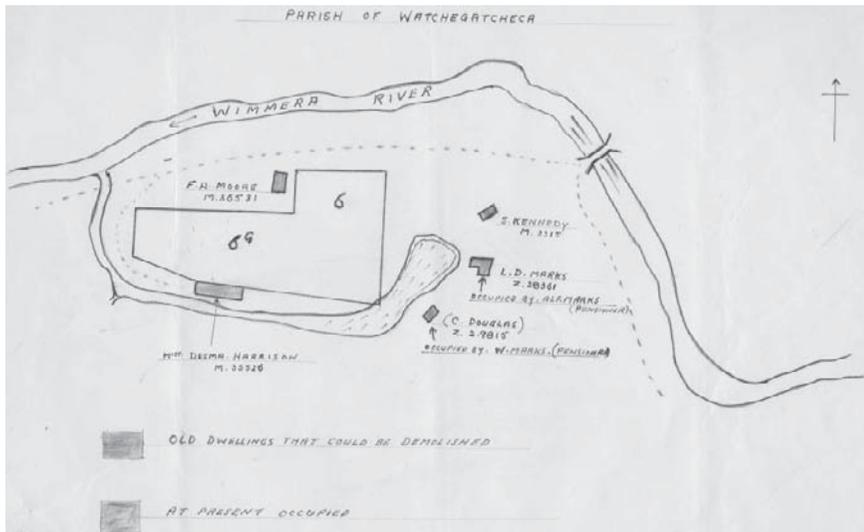


Figure 7.8. Sketch of the Billabong settlement, Dimboola, 19 Jul 1962. (H. Faux. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 5357 Land Selection and Correspondence Files, PO 2899, M36492. Reproduced with the permission of the Keeper of Public Records, Public Record Office Victoria, Australia.)

Faux advised that he had demolished the last building, built by the SCF, and his final sketch in a long series shows the last residents.¹¹⁵

“There’s No Little Rock Here”

In 1962 Dimboola seemed pleased with its progress toward assimilation, comparing itself favorably with desegregation in North America (figure 7.9).

“There’s no Little Rock here,” asserted young aboriginal laborer Reg Clarke, as he stood in the front garden of his neat weatherboard house at Dimboola. Obviously, he is right. Dimboola, a town of 2000 people in the Wimmera, is providing the rest of Australia with a lesson in assimilation. After living for eight months in the same streets as the aboriginals, the white people have changed their minds about them. They now agree that the best way to raise the aboriginals’ standard of living



Figure 7.9. “From this to this,” photographer Graham Welsh. (“Dimboola, A Brighter Life Together,” *Herald*, Tuesday 12 Jun 1962, 1.)

is to accept them as equals. So they have asked the Aborigines Welfare Board to shift another two dark families from their river-side humpies into modern houses in the town.¹¹⁶

The people of Dimboola, black and white, were comparing their own situation with the 1957 clash in Arkansas that saw federal troops mobilized to protect nine African American students entering Little Rock Central High School. The image of a lone and dignified fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Eckford surrounded by jeering white students made headlines across the world and was broadcast on the new medium of television, becoming an international symbol of this crisis in race relations. Throughout the 1960s, as Australia's own civil rights movement gathered pace, Little Rock remained a touchstone of racial tension, and certain country towns continued to be termed "Australian Little Rocks."¹¹⁷

In a peculiarly Australian account of racial harmony surely intended to refer to Little Rock imagery, the *Banner's* headline declared, "Mate Helps." The accompanying image (figure 7.10) showed Bill Pryor, aged



Figure 7.10. "Mate helps," photographer Graham Welsh. ("Dimboola, A Brighter Life Together," *Herald*, Tuesday 12 Jun 1962: 1 and 6.)

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eight (white), and Pat Moore, nine (“dark”), seated side by side at their school desks. “Dimboola is proving that the people who doubted the wisdom of full and quick assimilation were wrong.” The writer dubbed the process of integration a resounding success:

Things were different a year ago, when the settlement of aboriginals alongside Europeans was developing into a hot issue in the town (it’s 220 miles from Melbourne). Some of the locals were not so sure then that it was a good idea to invite six aboriginal families to share the town with them. The doubters were wrong. The aboriginals had always lived in squalid conditions on the other side of the river. “They’ll soon go back to their old ways if we bring them into the town,” opponents of the scheme declared. But the Board went ahead and built six attractive houses for the aboriginals—and the wisdom of their action is now obvious to all.

The “dark people,” as they are called today, have accepted the challenge by working harder and making constant improvements to their homes. . . . And the general attitude of white-to-dark and dark-to-white is one of tolerance and understanding, instead of hostility and suspicion.

The reporter singled out Jack Kennedy for special attention, praising his home:

Enter the front room of railway ganger Jack Kennedy’s house in School-st., and you could be in any suburban house. The big room is tastefully furnished with a lounge suite, dining setting and a bright new radio.¹¹⁸

This praise was, of course, largely due to Kennedy’s wife, Molly, of whose home at Antwerp Davey had commented in 1958 that “it is amazingly clean and well kept.”

Such newspaper stories reproduced the logic of transformation characteristic of the mission era, and especially the 1860s when the first “civilizing experiments” were made. Like the accounts of Mooroopna that constructed a “before” and “after” logic of uplift and good management by white officialdom, this story contrasted the former state with new civilization, and in a final note of optimism focused on the children, of whom it concluded:

“Now they are living in houses like all the other children, they seem to be more willing to come to school. I suppose it’s because they feel they have been accepted as equals.” Another teacher agreed: “The whole spirit of this town is an eye-opener. Everyone mixes well, and there is very little vandalism.”¹¹⁹

Dimboola was declared “the town where black and white have become good friends.”¹²⁰

Assimilation during the 1950s and 1960s emerged in the global context of new ideas of universal human rights as well as a domestic ideal of unity and equality, seeking to improve Aboriginal living conditions in the expectation that their values would also become the same as those of whites. However, proponents failed to recognize the distinctive cultural orientation of Aboriginal people, which maintained family organization, connections to country, and associated customs such as “hospitality.” In addition, housing policies were implemented in discriminatory ways, inciting protest from activists and resentment from the recipients: despite the rhetoric of equality, the policy was coercive and pedagogical, its rewards conditional upon relinquishing Aboriginal values. Abstract official ideals of political community clashed with the local desire for segregation as Aboriginal people were excluded by prejudice from sharing space and resources.

Victoria’s transitional housing program continued many of the principles of the mission era, despite its goal of assimilating rather than segregating black and white communities. Just as on the mission, housing played a central role in attempts to change Aboriginal people, attempts focused upon the home environment created and maintained by Aboriginal women, who were judged on their performance as wives and mothers. A relationship of benign, familial authority defined Aboriginal people as inferior and childlike, unable to reproduce the domestic environment of middle-class white Australia. The substandard conditions of the camps were interpreted as a symptom of Aboriginal incapacity instead of perceiving their underlying causes as poverty, exclusion, and lack of opportunity. As integration of the Aboriginal community proceeded over the following decades, it became apparent that Aboriginal people were capable of adopting a modern lifestyle, yet at the same time retaining a strong sense of Aboriginal identity.

Notes

1. National Archives of Australia (NAA): B336/0 Item 12, Health Inspector Report, Shire of Dimboola: 13 Dec 1937, 22.

2. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, Health Inspector Report, Shire of Dimboola: 13 Dec 1937, 22.

3. State Library of Victoria (SLV), Manuscript Collection, MS 9212, Victorian Aboriginal Group Papers, Christian Co-operative Credit Union—Press Cuttings, *The Age*, 5 Mar 1940, “Housing of Half-Castes Petition to Premier.” In addition, in 1939 the Dimboola Country Women’s Association had sponsored a move to provide building accommodation, water supply, and regular medical attention at a center to be established at Antwerp or Dimboola. Burdeu noted in 1938 that conditions at Antwerp were said to be the worst in Victoria, especially as there was a large number of children there: State Library of Victoria (SLV), Manuscript Collection, MS 9212, Victorian Aboriginal Group Papers, Christian Co-operative Credit Union, copy of *Uplift: The Official Organ of Aborigines Uplift Society of Australia* 1(4) (Nov 1938): 9.

4. Expressed in manifestos such as the 1933 Declaration of the International Rights of Man adopted by the League of Nations: Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), 335–39. For a good overview of links between Indigenous activists and global debates, see also Ravi de Costa, *A Higher Authority: Indigenous Transnationalism and Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006); for links during the 1960s, see Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002); and regarding decolonization as global context, see W. G. Sanders, “Indigenous Affairs after the Howard Decade: An Administrative Revolution While Defying Decolonisation,” Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Topical Issue No. 3, 2006, www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/topical/Sanders_Decade.pdf.

5. Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 54–78; see also Russell McGregor, “Protest and Progress: Aboriginal Activism in the 1930s,” *Australian Historical Studies* 25(101) (1993): 555–68; Andrew Markus, ed., *Blood from a Stone: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines’ League*, Monash Publications in History, no. 2 (Melbourne: Department of History, Monash University, 1986); Andrew Markus, *Governing Savages* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), 173–89.

6. Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, 42.

7. Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 242, Crown Reserves Correspondence, Unit 306, File no. C55663. Inspector to Carey, 26 Nov 1940.

8. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 242, Crown Reserves Correspondence, Unit 306, File no. C55663, Letter Arthur Burdeu to Secretary for Lands, 27 Oct 1940. Burdeu had founded the AUS in late 1937, aiming to raise awareness of Aboriginal problems through a public media campaign (lectures, radio, and the magazine *Uplift*) that emphasized the goals of “equal opportunity” with white Australians: State Library of Victoria (SLV), Manuscript Collection, MS 9212, Victorian Aboriginal Group Papers, Christian Co-operative Credit Union, *Uplift: The Official Organ of Aborigines Uplift Society of Australia* 1(4) (Nov 1938): 9.

9. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 242, Crown Reserves Correspondence, Unit 306, File no. C55663, Inspector to Carey, 26 Nov 1940. The site was in fact Allotment 3 Parish of Katyl, a portion of the former Ebenezer Mission that had been reserved from sale when the station was opened for selection.

10. Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 245.

11. SLV, MS 9212, A. Burdeu, “Housing at Antwerp Aboriginal Camp, report to Aborigines’ Uplift Society.”

12. The policy was formulated by McEwan with advice from the anthropologist A. P. Elkin, and for analysis of the diversity of approaches, see Geoffrey Gray, “From Nomadism to Citizenship: A.P. Elkin and Aboriginal Advancement,” in *Citizenship and Indigenous Australians: Changing Conceptions and Possibilities*, ed. Nicolas Peterson and Will Sanders (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55; Tim Rowse, “The Modesty of the State: Hasluck and the Anthropological Critics of Assimilation,” in *Paul Hasluck in Australian History: Civic Personality and Public Life*, ed. T. Stannage, K. Saunders, and R. Nile (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1998), 119–32; Russell McGregor, “From Old Testament to New: A.P. Elkin on Christian Conversion and Cultural Assimilation,” *Journal of Religious History* 25(1) (2001): 39–55.

13. Tim Rowse, ed., *Contesting Assimilation* (Perth: API Network, 2005); Anna Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2008).

14. Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, 271–81.

15. Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, 285.

16. Corinne Manning, “A Helping White Hand’: Assimilation, Welfare and Victoria’s Transitional Aboriginal Housing Policy,” *Labour History* 87 (2004): paragraph 43; www.historycooperative.org/journals/lab/87/manning.html (accessed 18 Oct 2007).

17. This can also be seen to a lesser extent in films, and gradually television, which was introduced to Australia in September 1956 (and to the United States in 1928 and Great Britain in 1936).

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18. Tony Birch, "The Battle for Spatial Control in Fitzroy," in *Beasts of Suburbia: Reinterpreting Cultures in Australian Suburbs*, ed. Sarah Ferber, Chris Healy, and Chris McAuliffe (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1994).

19. NAA: B2292/0, item 17: *Age*, 16 Mar 1948; "Half-castes at Dimboola 'Live in Squalor,'" *Argus*, 16 Mar 1948; "Seeks report on half-castes," *Herald*, 16 Mar 1948; "Half-Castes 'Live in filth' at Dimboola" (no newspaper identified, 15 Mar 1948).

20. "The Black Man's Camp Pell," *Herald*, Tues 27 Dec 1955, 5.

21. Alan Mayne, *Representing the Slum: Popular Journalism in a Colonial City* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne School of Historical Studies Monograph series no. 13, 1990).

22. The Realist Film Unit was founded by Ken Coldicutt and Bob Matthews in 1945 with the support of the Communist Party of Australia, and aimed to produce documentaries in the socialist-realist tradition, focusing on issues of social justice. Deane Williams, "Screening Coldicutt: Introduction," in *Screening the Past: An International Electronic Journal of Visual Media and History* (1997), www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/classics/clasdec/cold.html (accessed 20 Sep 2008).

23. Tony Birch, "'These children have been born in an abyss': Slum Photography in a Melbourne Suburb," *Australian Historical Studies* (123) (2004): 1–15.

24. Henry Mayhew divided the world into "two distinct and broadly marked races, viz., the wanderers and the settlers—the vagabond and the citizen—the nomadic and the civilized tribes." Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London: 1851; repr. London: Penguin, 1985).

25. Renate Howe, "Reform and Social Responsibility: The Establishment of the Housing Commission," in *New Houses for Old: Fifty Years of Public Housing in Victoria 1938–1988*, ed. Renate Howe (Melbourne: Ministry of Housing and Construction, 1988), 20–23; Graeme Davison, "Introduction," in *The Outcasts of Melbourne: Essays in Social History*, ed. Graeme Davison, David Dunstan, and Chris McConville (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 3; A. J. C. Mayne, "'The Question of the Poor' in the Nineteenth Century City," *Historical Studies* 20(81) (Oct 1983): 557–73.

26. Pastor Doug Nicholls, quoted in "Plea for Better Deal for Aborigines," *The Warragul Gazette*, 10 Oct 1957, 4.

27. Like the urban "slumming" genre, usually framed as a "descent" across spatial, class, gender, and sexual boundaries, they, too, were premised upon social distance: Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 9.

28. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 5357 Land Selection and Correspondence Files, Unit 2899, File no. M36492, "1955–1965

Dimboola settlement.” Other people who lived at the Billabong included Jimmy Clarke and Leila Harradine with her mother, Emma Millington. W. (Billy) Marks did not live at Claude Douglas’s dwelling, which was pulled down, but rather at “the Ranch”: Gail Harradine, e-mail correspondence, 13 Apr 2009.

29. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 5357 Land Selection and Correspondence Files, Unit 2899, File no. M36492, 16 May 1955, Inspector H. Faux, Lands Dept Dimboola, to Superintendent, Inspector Branch: “re Mallee 36492 of the 4th May 1955.” More realistically, the district surveyor noted that “it would seem that these native people are compelled to live in these unattractive and probably unhealthy positions because there is nowhere else for them to go. They are unable to find any quarters in the Township. Until such time that some better arrangement is made for them it would be unjust to deprive them of the only available camping place close to the township, where the adults work and the children attend school”: PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 5357 Land Selection and Correspondence Files, Unit 2899, File no. M36492, 17 April 1956: District Surveyor Madden reported on Parish of Watch and Township of Dimboola.

30. Fiona Paisley, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women’s Rights 1919–1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000); A. Holland, “Post-War Women Reformers and Aboriginal Citizenship: Rehearsing an Old Campaign?” in *Citizenship, Women and Social Justice: International Historical Perspectives*, ed. Joy Damousi and Katherine Ellinghaus (Melbourne: History Department, University of Melbourne, 1999); A. Holland, “Wives and Mothers Like Ourselves? Exploring White Women’s Intervention in the Politics of Race, 1920s–1940s,” *Australian Historical Studies* (Nov 2001).

31. But for recent evaluation of the CWA and its Aboriginal activities, see Jennifer Jones, “Cross-Racial Collaboration in the Country Women’s Association,” in *Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the Construction of an Identity*, ed. Leigh Boucher, Jane Carey, and Katherine Ellinghaus (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing in association with the School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, 2007 [online]), 179–89; Jennifer Jones, “Inside the CWA Rest Room,” *History Australia* 3(1) (2006): 9.3; Alison Holland has also explored the work of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in working for rights for Aboriginal people: A. Holland, “To Eliminate Colour Prejudice: The WCTU and Decolonisation in Australia,” *Journal of Religious History* 32(2) (2008): 256–76.

32. SLV, MS 9212: Save the Children Fund (SCF), 13th Annual report, year ended 30 April 1957. See also NAA: B2292/0, item 24, 1955 and item 28, 1959; Constance Brown (nee Barling), “An Account of Events and Lives of Aborigines in a Victorian Town,” (n.d.) SCF Welfare Officer, manuscript in author’s

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possession, courtesy of Renn Wortley; “The Save the Children Fund,” *Dimboola Banner*, 10 Jan 1955, 1; *Dimboola Banner*, 10 Feb 1955, 1; SCF Australia website, www.savethechildren.org.au/australia/who_we_are/our_history.html; NAA: B2292/10, item 23, *Age*, 21 Dec 1954.

33. In March 1957 G. N. Marks’s home burned down and was being rebuilt by SCF: PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 5357 Land Selection and Correspondence Files, Unit 2899, File no. M36492, “Good Progress by SCF,” 17 Nov 1955, 8.

34. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 5357 Land Selection and Correspondence Files, Unit 2899, File no. M36492, “Good Progress by SCF,” 17 Nov 1955, 8; “Car Drivers Can Help Welfare Workers,” *Dimboola Banner*, 14 Jun 1956, 4; “Welfare Worker Requires Help,” *Dimboola Banner*, 14 Jun 1956, 1; “Welfare Centre Requires Help,” *Dimboola Banner*, 23 Jul 1956, 1; “Welfare Centre Christmas Treat,” *Dimboola Banner*, 17 Dec 1956, 1.

35. Constance Brown, “An Account of Events and Lives of Aborigines in a Victorian Town,” 10. Barling’s great-nephew Renn Wortley also suggests that her nickname “Sug” may have been a play upon her surname, so close to “Barleysugar.”

36. Irene Harrison, Hazel MacDonald, Faye Marks, and Karen Marks, interview by Jane Lydon, 4 Jul 2008, Horsham, 20.

37. Constance Brown, “An Account of Events and Lives of Aborigines in a Victorian Town,” 1.

38. Constance Brown, “An Account of Events and Lives of Aborigines in a Victorian Town”; see also “Children Leave for Camp,” *Dimboola Banner*, 5 Dec 1955, 1; “Dark Children Treated,” *Dimboola Banner*, 22 Dec 1955, 1.

39. Constance Brown, “An Account of Events and Lives of Aborigines in a Victorian Town,” 1–5.

40. Aborigines Advancement League, *Victims or Victors? The Story of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1985), 30; see also Robert Bropho, *Fringedweller* (Sydney: Alternative Publishing Co-operative, 1980). Bropho describes a childhood in the camps of Western Australia dominated by hunger and exclusion.

41. Corinne Manning, “‘If aborigines are to be assimilated they must learn to live in houses’: Victoria’s Transitional Aboriginal Housing Policy,” in *Contesting Assimilation*, ed. Tim Rowse (Perth, API Network, 2005), 221–36 (231).

42. Corinne Manning, “A Helping White Hand” (2004): paragraph 43; Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, 278–85.

43. Beatrice Atkinson, “Personal Recollection,” in *Mooroopna to 1988: An Account of Mooroopna and Its Immediate District* (Historical Society of Mooroopna Inc., 1989), 168.

44. Irene Harrison, Hazel MacDonald, Faye Marks, and Karen Marks, interview by Jane Lydon, 4 Jul 2008, Horsham, 17–20.

45. Daryl Tonkin and Carolyn Landon, *Jackson's Track: Memoir of a Dream-time Place* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1999), 215–19.

46. Constance Brown, "An Account of Events and Lives of Aborigines in a Victorian Town," 9.

47. Wayne Marks, in A. Brown, *Wotjobaluk Dreaming* (Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 2000), 159–60.

48. For accounts of this first cricket tour of England and Jungunjinanuke's role, see Rex Harcourt and John Mulvaney, *Cricket Walkabout: The Aboriginal Cricketers of the 1860s* (Victoria: Golden Point Press, 2005). He died at Ebenezer in 1870: Bill Edwards, "The Fate of an Aboriginal Cricketer: When and Where did Dick-a-Dick Die?" *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2, Research Report (1999): 59–61.

49. Nancy Harrison, interview by Jane Lydon at Ebenezer Mission, 13 Oct 2006.

50. Gillian Cowlishaw, *Blackfellas, Whitefellas, and the Hidden Injuries of Race* (Malden, Mass., and Carlton South, Victoria: Blackwell, 2004) explores this process in rural Australia.

51. Nancy Harrison, interview by Jane Lydon, Dimboola, 3 Jul 2008, 4.

52. Many years later, Nancy's younger brother faced the same problem, and she took him aside and asked, "Why won't you go swimming, you can swim,' I said, 'You're a good swimmer cause I taught you.' 'Because I'm black.' 'So what?' I said. 'That happened to me Les, don't let it happen to you.' I took him down the back yard and I was talking to him and I bawled me eyes out and I told him. I said, 'That's what I thought Les and I did not go swimming.' I said, 'You get in there and you whop their arses.' He did and he won a little cup." Nancy Harrison, interview by Jane Lydon, Dimboola, 3 July 2008, 8–9.

53. "Good Progress by SCF," *Dimboola Banner*, 17 Nov 1955, 8.

54. These were: "1. The child must be protected beyond and above all considerations of race, nationality or creed," and "2. The child must be cared for with due respect for the family as an entity." United Nations General Assembly, *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* (1948).

55. *Dimboola Banner*, 28 Feb 1955, 1; *Dimboola Banner*, 28 Apr 1955, 1.

56. "Plea for Aborigines," *Dimboola Banner*, 5 May 1955, 7.

57. "Plea for Aborigines," *Dimboola Banner*, 5 May 1955, 7.

58. "Housing Descendants of Aborigines," *Dimboola Banner*, 23 May 1955, 2.

59. NAA: B408/0, Item No. 1, Barcode 1073170, "McLean Inquiry: Country Visits 1955–1957," Files relating to Dimboola, [138]; Corinne Manning, "The

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McLean Report: Legitimising Victoria's New Assimilationism," *Aboriginal History* 26 (2002): 159–176; McLean's visit was widely reported by regional newspapers: see, for example, "Aboriginal Welfare . . . Housing Is Main Need," *Dimboola Banner*, Mon, 15 May 1956; "What Type of Homes?" *Dimboola Banner*, 17 May 1956, 1.

60. Charles McLean, "Report on the Operations on the Aboriginal Act 1928 and the Regulations and Orders Made Thereunder," Victorian Parliamentary Papers, Legislative Assembly (1956–57), vol 2: 1–22 (4, 21). For detailed analysis of the McLean report, see Manning, "The McLean Report," 159–76; Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, 312–18.

61. McLean, "Report on the Operations on the Aboriginal Act 1928," 10–11.

62. McLean, "Report on the Operations on the Aboriginal Act 1928," 10–11.

63. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 5357 Land Selection and Correspondence Files, Unit 2899, File no. M36492, In March 1957, G. N. Marks's home burnt down and was being rebuilt by the SCF.

64. Will Sanders, "Aboriginal Housing," in *Housing Australia*, Chris Paris, with contributions from Andrew Beer and Will Saunders (Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australia, 1993), 212–27 (213).

65. Howe, "Reform and Social Responsibility," 26.

66. Swan Hill was considered an "excellent example of the improvement that can be obtained." NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Files of the Housing Member of the Aborigines Welfare Board, 1951–1965, J. H. Davey, "Aboriginal Housing in Victoria": 26 June 1957, 3; quotation re Camp Pell, 4.

67. NAA: B336/0 Item 1, letter P. E. Felton to Councillor W. E. Roff, 3 Apr 1959; NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey, "Aboriginal Housing in Victoria," 1.

68. NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey, "Aboriginal Housing in Victoria," 4.

69. NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey, "Aboriginal Housing in Victoria," 5.

70. PROV, VPRS 5357 Unit 2899, File no. M36492, 17 April 1956: District Surveyor Madden reported on Parish of Watch and Township of Dimboola.

71. Davey disagreed here with McLean, who advocated placing Aboriginal families directly in housing commission houses, writing that, "In all my travels I have not yet seen one aboriginal family which could be entrusted with a Commission house." He contradicted himself, however, concluding, "This, of course, excludes some of the families who have already been housed by the Commission and are making a very satisfactory effort." NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey, "Aboriginal Housing in Victoria," Appendix: Inspection of Dimboola, 30 Apr 1957, 2.

72. NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey, "Aboriginal Housing in Victoria," 3.

73. NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey, "Aboriginal Housing in Victoria," 2.

74. NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey, "Aboriginal Housing in Victoria," 1.
75. NAA B336/0 Item 12, M. Porter to Shire of Dimboola 6 May 1960, 115.
76. McLean, "Report on the Operations on the Aboriginal Act 1928," 10. Later, like McLean, Davey singled out traditional customs such as "sharing" as the cause of many problems: "Natural habits and tribal customs have contributed largely to the failures . . . for instance, is the tradition that what is owned by one should be shared by all and that they live together as long as hospitality remains. . . . This custom will be hard to stamp out and there will be heart-burnings in the process but if any re-housing is to succeed it must be eliminated." NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey, "Aboriginal Housing in Victoria," 2.
77. As historian Heather Goodall has argued of New South Wales assimilation policy at this time, the modernization of childcare and domesticity were used as means of social control and cultural change: Heather Goodall, "Assimilation Begins in the Home: The State and Aboriginal Women's Work as Mothers in New South Wales, 1900s to 1960s," *Labour History* 69 (1995): 85.
78. *Herald*, Tues 12 Jun 1962: 1, 6.
79. Manning, "If aborigines are to be assimilated," 221-35; Jeremy Beckett, "Aboriginality, Citizenship and the Nation State," in "Aborigines and the State in Australia," ed. J. Beckett, *Social Analysis* 24 (special issue) (1988): 3-18.
80. The Australian Christian Youth Council also visited and expressed support: "Aboriginal Welfare," *Dimboola Banner*, 5 Apr 1956, 1; "Native Inquiry Begins," *Dimboola Banner*, 16 Jan 1956, 6; "Moves for Aboriginal Welfare: Homes should replace humpies," *Dimboola Banner*, 29 Mar 1956.
81. The "Kennedy brothers" lived in tin huts, and Lance Kennedy, "ailing" with tuberculosis, "Said his hut is on part of the old Ebenezer Mission Station, on which he was born." NAA: B408/0, Item No. 1, Barcode 1073170, "McLean Inquiry: Country Visits 1955-1957," Files relating to McLean's visit to Dimboola and Antwerp, 9 May 1956.
82. NAA: B336/0 Item 11, Memo 12 May 1958.
83. NAA: B408/0, Item No. 1, Barcode 1073170, "McLean Inquiry," 9 May 1956; NAA B336/0 Item 12, P. E. Felton, Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare, "How 'Our Old Australians' Live," 11 Aug 1958, 32-35; "Kindly welfare officer, Miss C. Barling, of Dimboola, meets the lovely, dark-eyed Hood children," *Horsham Times*, 14 May 1956, 3.
84. *Dimboola Banner*, 19 Sep 1955, 1; *Dimboola Banner*, 22 Sep 1955, 4.
85. It was planned to move the Kennedy and Hood households into "the new housing scheme" in September 1959. While the board "would have no power to compel them to live in Dimboola it is thought that there are circumstances which may give it some strong points of persuasion in this matter." NAA: B336/0 Item

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12, 32–35, P. E. Felton, Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare, 11 Aug 1958; NAA: B336/0 Item 11, Davey, Memo 12 May 1958.

86. PROV, VPRS 5357 Unit 2899, File no. M36492, 17 Apr 1956: District Surveyor Madden reported on Parish of Watch and Township of Dimboola.

87. NAA: B408/0, Item No. 1, Barcode 1073170, “McLean Inquiry,” 140–41; “How ‘Our Old Australians’ Live,” *Horsbam Times*, 14 May 1956, 3. Davey noted, “Two shacks . . . occupied by Mrs. Harrison and her daughter, Mrs. Haber, with twelve children were inspected. The shack, however, was not badly kept. It was reasonably waterproof and had an open-air laundry and kitchen and a crude bathroom, two fireplaces and living room with linoleum laid on the earth floor. Mrs. Harrison’s shack was remarkably clean. Both would make an immediate response to better housing.” NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey, “Aboriginal Housing in Victoria,” Appendix: Inspection of Dimboola, 30 Apr 1957, 2.

88. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, Summary of Housing Needs, P.E. Felton, 1 Sep 1958, 37; NAA: B408/0, Item No. 1, Barcode 1073170, “McLean Inquiry,” 140–41; NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey, “Aboriginal Housing in Victoria,” Appendix: Inspection of Dimboola, 30 Apr 1957, 2.

89. “Home is a humpy on a rubbish tip,” *Herald*, 11 Jun 1957, 15; Jack Cannon, “New Homes for Aborigines,” pictures by Lester Howard, *Herald*, 20 Jul 1959, 13.

90. NAA: B336/0 Item 5, 74. In 1959 an amendment to the Aborigines Act 1958 provided for the Housing Commission to build housing for Aboriginal people on land bought by the Aboriginal Welfare Board: NAA: B336/0 Item 4.

91. See J. H. Davey’s suggested draft response of 7 Dec 1959: NAA: B336/0 Item 1, letter from Stan Davey, Secretary Aborigines’ Advancement League to Secretary AWB, 27 Nov 1959; NAA: B336/0 Item 1, letter from G. G. Bolwell to AAL, 15 Dec 1959.

92. Manning, “A Helping White Hand,” paragraph 20; Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, 319–23.

93. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, Memo “Aboriginal Housing Generally,” Davey 27 Aug 1958, 36.

94. J. H. Davey wrote to Chief Secretary Hon A. G. Rylah in December 1960, refuting Cox’s criticism in *PIX*. He began, “I seem to see in it the hand, not of the expressed author but of another personality in this State who represents a body whose objects are set out as the ‘advancement’ of the aborigines, but whose policy seems to have been criticism of rather than co-operation with the authorities who are endeavouring to help them to become part of the normal community.” NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey files, Aborigines (Housing) Act 1859, J. H. Davey to A. G. Rylah, 8 Dec 1960.

95. Elkin advanced a model of cultural transformation, focused upon northern Australia, in which traditional hunter-gatherer life was characterized as “intelligent parasitism,” or an economic adaptation to the natural environment that was oriented toward consumption rather than production. Following white settlement, he suggested, Aboriginal people formed a similar economic relationship with new resources such as rations or wages from pastoralist stations, while their social and cultural life remained unaltered. Elkin’s schema preserved much earlier notions of a stadial progression through increasingly more complex forms of subsistence, culminating in Western capitalism, yet he distinguished between the “external” exploitation of material goods that left “internal” cultural orientations unchanged, and an “appreciation of European culture” that he claimed was starting to emerge during the early 1950s: A. P. Elkin, “Western Technology and the Australian Aborigines,” *International Social Science Bulletin* 4(2) (Summer 1952): 324, cited in R. McGregor, “Intelligent Parasitism: A. P. Elkin and the Rhetoric of Assimilation,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 50–51 (1996): 118–130 (125); R. McGregor, “Assimilationists Contest Assimilation: T G H Strehlow and A P Elkin on Aboriginal Policy,” *Journal of Australian Studies* (2002); Elkin’s ideas were widely disseminated through a range of popular and political channels, including books written for a general audience such as *The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1964), first published in 1938 and reprinted over following decades, as well as through academic publications.

96. Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, 237–53. Such criticism of assimilation can also be seen in the context of a long-running Aboriginal campaign, in alliance with various white activists and organizations, that was to heat up over the next few years, aiming to secure ownership of the Lake Tyers reserve, to improve conditions, and to run it themselves.

97. Harry Cox, “What we can do for him,” *PLX* (19 Nov 1960): 10–15, 54–55.

98. NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey files, J. H. Davey to A. G. Rylah, 8 Dec 1960.

99. Victoria Haskins, “Aboriginal Representations in the Ceramics of Brownie Downing and the Martin Boyd Pottery,” in *The Worlds of Antiques and Art* 58 (December 1999–June 2000): 68–72; Liz Conor, “The Australian ‘Piccaninny’: The Paternal State and the ‘Bush Orphan,’” paper invited for a panel at the Fourteenth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women: Continuities and Changes, June 12–15, 2008, in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Anna Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2008).

100. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, M. Porter to Shire of Dimboola, 6 May 1960, 115. Davey made inquiries regarding suitable allotments of land in Dimboola,

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Orbost, and Robinvale in July 1958: AWB to HC, 14 July 1958, NAA: B336/0 Item 12, 30.

101. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, Memo, "Housing at Dimboola," P. E. Felton, 11 Aug 1959, 61. Their draft response included the argument that "the aborigines of Dimboola are citizens and as true Australians are entitled to a 'fair go' and to the same consideration which one would extend to any other citizens. The objections raised to the proposed housing scheme are rationalizations, and the real objection is to the idea of housing aborigines in the town. Reasons given are merely to justify the prejudices which are felt towards aborigines." It addressed the "moral and social behaviour" and concludes, It is considered that those features to which exception has been taken are very largely the result of their depressed living conditions . . . [The responses are] more the symptoms of their situation than the causes of it . . . completely uncharitable." NAA: B336/0 Item 12, 58–59.

102. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, L. H. Smith to W. J. Mibus, 7 Aug 1959, 76.

103. NAA: B336/0 Item 12 (Draft), P. E. Felton to W. J. Mibus, 24 Aug 1959, 74.

104. NAA: B336/0 Item 12: Chamber of Commerce, 2 Sep 1959, 9 Sep 1959, 66–68.

105. NAA: B336/0 Item 12: Chamber of Commerce, 2 Sep 1959, 9 Sep 1959; Telegram to HC, "Cannot get offer of building blocks," 1 Sep 1959.

106. NAA: B336/0 Item 12: Chamber of Commerce, 2 Sep 1959, 9 Sep 1959.

107. Following inspection of Rumbalara Housing Estate at Mooroopna 23 Oct 1959: Shire of Dimboola to AWB, 24 Nov 1959; Davey to Porter, 22 Oct 1959. In May 1960 the Dimboola council again rejected its plans, explaining that "as these houses are to be erected in the town, adjacent to existing standard homes, it must strongly oppose their erection, while they do not comply with the Uniform Building Regulations." NAA: B336/0 Item 12, R. Livingstone, Shire Secretary to Minister for Local Government, 12 May 1960, 120; NAA: B336/0 Item 1, Davey files, J. H. Davey to A. G. Rylah, 8 Dec 1960.

108. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, Chief Secretary Rylah to Lindsay Smith, Dimboola Memorial High School Advisory Council, 23 May 1960, 128.

109. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, K. Jones to J. H. Davey, 16 May 1960.

110. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, 156–5: J. H. Davey, "Dimboola Aboriginal Houses," 22 July 1961.

111. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, 156–5: J. H. Davey, "Dimboola Aboriginal Houses," 22 July 1961.

112. *Herald*, 14 Jun 1962, 5.

113. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 5357 Land Selection and Correspondence Files Unit 2899, File no. M36492, Faux to Sec for Lands, 19 July 1962.

THE OUTSKIRTS OF CIVILIZATION

114. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, 17–21; Harry Webber and Steven Avery, “The Ranch-Billabong Heritage Investigation,” Wimmera Indigenous Resource Management Partnership, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Melbourne, 2005.

115. PROV, VPRS 5357 Unit 2899, File no. M36492.

116. Alan Stewart, “Dimboola, A Brighter Life Together,” *Herald*, Tues 12 Jun 1962, 1, 6.

117. Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 114–41.

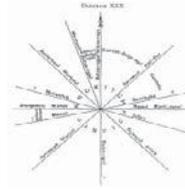
118. NAA: B336/0 Item 12, “Keen to go to Dimboola,” P. E. Felton, Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare, 11 Aug 1958, 32–35; *Herald*, Tues 12 Jun 1962, 1, 6.

119. *Herald*, Tues 12 Jun 1962, 1, 6.

120. Alan Stewart, “Whites give Lynette the sound of music,” *Herald*, 13 Jun 1962, 11.

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“A HANDLE OF A CUP”: CHANGING VIEWS OF THE MISSIONS



Ebenezer itself as a building is neither here nor there for me but Ebenezer in my story lines is like my left or right arm, it's quintessential to my whole being . . . it's just part of our story.

Mark Dugay-Grist, 2008

“Only for the Missionaries . . .”

Former missions and reserves continue to occupy an important place in Aboriginal memory, as sites of recent memory, ancestral resting-places, historical landmarks, and the focus of social action in the present. Traditional owners retained their ties to country, including places such as Ebenezer and especially the nearby settlement at Antwerp. Mainstream perceptions of these places prior to the 1960s were predominantly shaped by a humanitarian framework that emphasized redemption and transformation, “success” or “failure.” As I have argued, missionaries sought to Christianize and “civilize” the Indigenous residents through spatial and material practices, creating an idealized landscape intended to teach through example, performance, and the creation of individual subjects. Their attempts were deemed “failures” until the conversion of Nathanael Pepper confirmed the Moravians’ approach at Ebenezer to be a model of missionization.

During their first decade Victoria’s “civilizing experiments” were exhibited to an urban audience through a narrative of successful

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transformation evidenced by spatial order and European housing. For missionaries, the Aboriginal residents' appropriation of domesticity, defined by material culture and everyday practices, was an index of progress, a Western view that equated material goods and circumstances and outward appearances with moral and intellectual status. Such perceptions continued to govern views of Aboriginal capabilities after the missions closed, evinced in the intense debate surrounding Aboriginal "fringe camps" as a marker of deficiency and housing as an instrument of assimilation.

The missionaries' own perspective has continued to shape the ways the missions and Aboriginal people are seen today, in a strand of historiography that emphasizes the efficacy of Aboriginal stations as carceral institutions, exaggerating the capacity of spatial organization, environment, and material culture to determine human behavior and legitimate power relationships. Such views are embedded in a Western tradition that interprets material change as acculturation and assumes Aboriginal people to have "lost" culture. This approach has too uncritically accepted contemporary missionary sources that argued for their successful management, particularly on the basis of their material circumstances. This framework focuses upon the missionaries to the exclusion of Indigenous perspectives, marginalizing Aboriginal people and, indeed, homogenizing the missionaries themselves by overlooking their internal differences and their own transformation following their colonial experience.¹ It perpetuates a crude perception of missionaries as either "good" or "bad": a dichotomy grounded in a view of the missions as places of Western acculturation rather than Indigenous transformation and cultural renewal. In this view Ebenezer's ruins stood for the disappearance of Aboriginality, as the residents and their descendants became invisible to mainstream Australian society. The relics of the missionaries' vision seemed to mark a closed chapter in the national story.

During the 1960s, however, historians began to break the "Great Australian Silence" regarding the Aboriginal experience of colonialism, and missions became recognized as important sites of encounter.² Writing in 1972, historian Charles Rowley pointed out their dual effect on Indigenous people in arguing that

the missions must certainly be credited with the survival of Aboriginal populations. The cost was institutional living, under paternal management. . . . This kind of control, especially where the missionary was insensitive to the imperatives of Aboriginal culture, and driven hard by conscience to save souls, was almost as destructive of Aboriginal autonomy and leadership as seizure and use of the land or use of the group as a source of labour on the cattle station.³

It has now become standard to introduce discussions of Aboriginal missions by reference to their ambivalent status in Aboriginal history—summed up by the title of Susan Maushart’s wonderful book about Moore River in Western Australia, *Sort of a Place Like Home*.⁴ A range of fine scholarly histories have now explored the history of missions across the continent, delving into their history, social dynamics, and role in building current Aboriginal identities.⁵

Most recently, the process of missionization has been placed in a larger historical and global context. Historians have questioned any fixed or causal relationship between colonialism and missions, suggesting, for example, that both can instead be seen as “related parts in a larger drama—the spread of modernization, globalization, and Western cultural hegemony.”⁶ Here, however, I have argued for the close relationship between church and state in the establishment and management of Victoria’s system of reserves and missions over the second half of the nineteenth century. I have examined the ways that the missionaries’ objectives derived from Western assumptions about progress and transformation that were intimately bound up with everyday practices and material culture. It is clear that the world of “lovely built houses” and “little things” was deeply important to missionaries as evidence for inner change and spiritual redemption.

Aboriginal attitudes toward the missions have ranged from nostalgia—even gratitude—to resentment. In 1980, Aboriginal man Phillip Pepper wrote of the Moravians who established Ebenezer:

Only for the missionaries there wouldn’t be so many Aborigines walking around today. They’re the ones that saved the day for us. Our people were finished before the mission came.⁷

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Pepper represented the attitude of many of his generation, choosing to worship as a Christian and to emphasize humor and the warmth of family over grief or anger. Some reviewers of Pepper's book were critical of his identification "as a poor white," shaped by generations of paternalism, and suggested that he was unable to discern the structures of oppression underlying the goodwill he expressed toward individual missionaries. But, as Diane Barwick pointed out, such views rest on a notion of cultural change as acculturation and the appropriation of Western ideas as undermining Aboriginal identity.⁸ Such thinking was the basis for assimilation, and it persisted in anthropological thought until at least the 1960s. It also denies the power and importance of Christianity in Indigenous lives—a topic that has recently received more sustained scholarly attention.⁹

Today some Aboriginal people lament the role these institutions played in actively disrupting their traditional culture, imposing restrictions, and especially in separating children from families. The Koorie Heritage Trust website "Mission Voices" states that

in Victoria, as with all of Australia's states and territories, the state government played a pivotal role in the removal of Aboriginal children from their families. . . . Such policies were especially evident on the missions and reserves where children were sent to "orphanages" or "children's dormitories" even though their parents were living on the same mission.¹⁰

Perhaps the most powerful representation of the mission's role in the Stolen Generations is the 2002 film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, where Moore River appears as a concentration camp, a place of brutality and heartbreak. Nonetheless, missions are powerful sites of memory and identity today.

Ebenezer as Heritage Site

Since the 1970s heritage managers have drawn heavily upon archaeological research in reclaiming places such as Ebenezer Mission for Aboriginal descendants as well as for the non-Aboriginal community. This program of research and conservation has been shaped by a European aesthetic but has been increasingly defined by Aboriginal memories and values. These values overlap in privileging the church and graveyard as sacred places,

for example. Today, for a range of reasons, these places are key sites of memory for the Aboriginal community.

After it closed in 1904, Ebenezer's settlement buildings lay on farming land and gradually deteriorated, while the Aboriginal residents moved nearby. At this time, the local Lutheran congregation of Antwerp signed a petition to ask whether it could buy the "Ebenezer Mission Church and Graveyard."¹¹ It was unsuccessful, and despite the congregation's reverence for these sacred remains, over following decades the site fell into ruins (figure 8.1).

During the 1950s the local non-Aboriginal community took action to preserve and restore the site's settlement remains, and especially the church, on the grounds of historical significance. In 1959 local resident A. B. Werner compiled a small booklet about the site's history, noting that "the bell tower is in reasonable condition and it is a relic of great historic value amongst the adherents of the Lutheran Church."¹² He also recorded that "five trustees appointed by the government from the Immanuel Church, Arkona" held annual working bees "to clean up the graves, etc."¹³ The ruins were perceived first and foremost as part of the district's strong



Figure 8.1. View of settlement area, 1957, looking southwest toward the kitchen and toilet building with the church in the background. (F. Raven, in Longmire 1985, 17.)

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Germanic and Lutheran heritage, which remains highly visible—although played down during the world wars, when, for example, many place names were altered.¹⁴ This process of recognition and preservation also occurred at other Aboriginal missions around the continent, where local white concern for the past focused on observable relics and especially the church, which was often the only surviving visible or recognizable feature, and which retained its associations with the sacred.¹⁵ As Graeme Davison has suggested, churches in particular represent stability and community, forming a particularly clear example of the preservationist urge more broadly, and “the attempt of a post-Christian society to hold to the sense of transcendence and spiritual continuity.”¹⁶

In a more general sense, Ebenezer’s preservation should also be seen in the context of a new mainstream awareness of Australian history at this time, leading to the development of the Australian heritage system.¹⁷ The ruined appearance of the former village no doubt suggested romance and age, contributing to its popular appeal—a nostalgic aura perhaps enhanced by the perception of Aboriginal extinction: Tom Griffiths has suggested that memorials raised to the “last of” the Aborigines in country towns marked the frontier, “a clear divide between an Aboriginal past and a white Australian future.”¹⁸ In this way Ebenezer may have served as a monument to a bygone people, even as descendants were considered to have lost culture or were overlooked, camping nearby at Antwerp or outside the towns. As Wergaia people such as Nancy Harrison recall, however, they continued to come to Ebenezer, fishing along the river or visiting relatives’ graves.

A Western aesthetic that valued the solid, whitewashed masonry of the church and other standing central buildings and the marble headstones and iron crosses of the cemetery determined that these aspects of the settlement were considered more significant than the more ephemeral traces of Aboriginal-occupied households. The less durable Aboriginal dwellings were left behind on the encircling, privately owned farming land, and were ploughed under. Many of the insubstantial Aboriginal headstones were lost, including those of children buried in the northwest corner. To these early conservationists, the central settlement buildings summed up the site’s interest, and their assessment of its significance mirrored the missionaries’ own values, centering upon their work of conversion and redemption, and the patriarchal authority of the mission-house.

This process of romanticization and manicuring may also be compared with that surrounding the Californian missions during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁹

The buildings still standing are the oldest surviving mission buildings in Victoria. In 1968 the National Trust bought the land on which they stand, including the remains of the mission-house. The Trust was appointed as a committee of management. In 1971 ownership of the land containing the church and cemetery was transferred to the National Trust (allotment 16A, Parish of Katyl), which subsequently transferred it to the Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative in 1991 under the provisions of the Aboriginal Land Act 1991. More working bees were carried out at Ebenezer. In April 1972 the National Trust Junior Group excavated in the vicinity of the mission-house, which they referred to as the “old hospital.”²⁰

Following heritage listing more professional assessment and investigation of the site’s significance began to be carried out under the auspices of the Victorian Archaeological Survey (VAS). In 1984–1985 a survey of the Wimmera River and Datchak Creek within a six-kilometer radius of Ebenezer (but not including the site complex) was conducted. In 1990 a historical, archaeological, and architectural survey of the site complex was commissioned by VAS and the Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative, resulting in a conservation management plan (CMP).²¹ The CMP also recommended excavation of the mission-house footings as a desirable long-term objective in order to resolve spatial questions relating to the location of the cellar, the plan and structure of the mission-house, and the relationship between the footings of the mission-house, the water tank, and the area of the footings. This area was also considered to have the greatest archaeological potential.²² In 1993 the administration of “Aboriginal” and “maritime/historic” heritage archaeological functions was split when the latter was transferred to the planning portfolio of government, while the former remained with Aboriginal Affairs, Victoria. This division ended the unique working relationship between these branches, underlining the conceptual and practical schism that still defines these fields of archaeology in Australia.²³ Ebenezer is currently listed on the Victorian Heritage Register maintained by Heritage Victoria for its non-Indigenous values.

During the 1990s the site was managed by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV), which actively responded to Aboriginal objectives. AAV

developed a proactive heritage framework that addresses places such as Ebenezer that have historic as well as precolonial significance. Notably, Aboriginal people have a strong attachment to the resting places of their ancestors, which represent a continuing spiritual and physical connection. This concern prompted a range of studies focusing on the cemetery between 1997 and 1999, including microtopographic and surface vegetation analysis, a ground magnetic survey, and ground-penetrating radar. These noninvasive techniques were able to identify the extent and distribution of many graves.²⁴ The church was conserved and in 2006 was reconsecrated in a multid denominational service.

In the course of conservation works around the church, kitchen, and dormitory, an artifact scatter was recorded in the road reserve, aiming to determine whether any of the glass fragments had been modified by Aboriginal people; no definite conclusions were drawn.²⁵ In 2000 a monitoring and limited excavation project around the former kitchen and “girls’ dormitory” buildings accompanied soil removal required for conservation works.²⁶

Ebenezer in Research Context: The Archaeology of Aboriginal Missions

Substantial research that addresses the archaeology of “contact” between Australian settlers and Aboriginal people has only gained intellectual currency over recent decades, and there is little research that addresses mission sites.²⁷ This book presents the chief outcomes of a project conducted within a sociopolitical context that has altered greatly in recent years.²⁸ Archaeologists have now acknowledged the development of their discipline in complicity with imperialism and its inheritance of ideas and methods that distance Indigenous people from their heritage and facilitate structural disadvantage within present-day society. We have accepted the need to create new intellectual frameworks and practices that will bring about decolonization. The ethical necessity to conduct archaeological research as a collaboration between archaeologists and Indigenous people has prompted new forms of fieldwork and analysis.²⁹

Investigation of Ebenezer was conducted with Wergaia descendants, represented by the Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative and the Wotjobaluk Traditional Land Council, now superseded by the Barengi



Figure 8.2. Ebenezer excavations, bank of Wimmera River, 12 Oct 2006. Left to right: Zvonka Stanin, Matt Secombe, Chrissy Secombe, Noelene Douglas, Kelly Britten (seated), Mirani Litster (seated), Steve Brown. (Photograph Bruno David.)



Figure 8.3. Wimmera River Road 2/Midden 1. Suzie Skurrie, Noelene Douglas, and Chrissy Secombe, 9 Oct 2006. (Photograph Bruno David.)

Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BGLC). BGLC is now also the region's Registered Aboriginal Party, with significant responsibilities for managing cultural heritage on behalf of the traditional owners of the Wimmera/Mallee region, under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (Victoria) 2006. I discussed the initial proposal with these representative bodies as a series of possible questions or approaches to Ebenezer's past, which were revised as a result. Community representatives participated in fieldwork and oral histories (figures 8.2 and 8.3). They read and commented on the draft manuscript, suggesting clarifications, corrections, and changes.

Wergaia Perceptions of Ebenezer and Heritage

For descendants, the Victorian missions remain powerful symbols of home and country. There are several reasons for this: unlike many Aboriginal reserves and missions, the Victorian reserves were established on traditional land, often including significant ceremonial sites or camping grounds.³⁰ They were centers of Aboriginal life and community during the nineteenth century, as the residents moved to and from them against the managers' wills; kin connections spanned the state and extended beyond it via reserves such as Cummeragunja in New South Wales. These links persist today, in far-flung and mobile family networks defined by the former reserves, preserving links to traditional country. This is the Aboriginal obverse of the Western perception of missions as museums of Aboriginal culture, places where the fading remnants of language and traditional knowledge might be salvaged for posterity, as scientists, photographers, artists, and tourists flocked to study and image their residents.

Diane Barwick studied the living culture of Victorian Aboriginal people during the 1960s, arguing that it was held together by place and kinship, networked through the missions:

For Aborigines the basic sub-cultural ties are those of locality and family. They identify or place one another not by asking "What work do you do?" but rather "Which place do you come from? Which family is yours?" This subculture emphasises allegiance, its members share a

strong attachment to the land, to the “home place” or region surrounding the Aboriginal reserves where their forebears lived, worked and lie buried.³¹

This generation of Aboriginal people increasingly came to see itself as a single entity, and a new sense of history emerged: “They realise their own role as carriers of a folk history composed of memories and legends of a century of European contact, and listen with respect and attention to their elders’ recollections of the forebears who pioneered and farmed the Aboriginal reserves.”³² In this way, as nuclei of Indigenous culture and sociality during the nineteenth century, missions can be seen as historical nodes in a network connecting people, experiences, and representations through these sites of exchange.

For most descendants I have talked to, Ebenezer is a place of primary importance to their history and heritage as Aboriginal people. Community member and archaeologist Mark Dugay-Grist, for example, states that

Ebenezer itself as a building is neither here nor there for me but Ebenezer in my story lines is like my left or right arm, it’s quintessential to my whole being . . . it’s just part of our story. . . . My sons, my daughters and their sons and children, it doesn’t matter what authority’s in place, will go through that landscape as a citizen of this country and they will know that that’s their people’s country. And that is a beautiful feeling. That is a good feeling. That’s my backyard. You come to my house up my driveway you’re in my backyard. You go up there you’re in my backyard. And that’s a good feeling. So that’s the two worlds of black fellas, there it is and I’m comfortable in both of my houses.³³

Eleanor Bourke, a Wergaia elder and senior academic, also values Ebenezer’s place in her family and community history. Her grandmother Eleanor Jessie Pepper was born at Ebenezer, later marrying Jackson Stewart from Swan Hill and becoming Mrs. Nellie Stewart. Bourke suggests that the mission

shaped her life in that she had a good education for her time: she went to grade eight, she spoke very well, her speech was not what some people may commonly call “mission-English” she spoke very well and she

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valued education and all her children did go to school, which for the time was something.³⁴

Her religious beliefs were less definite, as she changed denomination at least twice, but as Bourke notes, “she had her own beliefs, she had her various stories about who she was, and the totems and the place that her father came from” and “she was Christian, I’d say yes, but probably like a lot of Aboriginal people if that didn’t work for her, well she had another option.”³⁵ While Bourke now resents the control of people on the mission, her grandmother imparted only happy memories, of going to school and having her family around her. Bourke has a long-term interest in her family history and Ebenezer in the broader context of Aboriginal government policy, which at one time she intended to make the subject of a doctorate. In the course of historical research for a Victorian government inquiry, she found references to her family in the archive that were confronting:

When I got into the correspondence I found a number of references to my immediate family and I wasn’t prepared for that, I thought that it would be fairly obscure and remote and about people I wouldn’t know and I found that very disturbing actually and, uh, quite emotional because as I say a lot of my information comes from my Grandmother about Ebenezer and about that time, and when I saw things on the public record that were a little bit different . . . for example, a missionary who wrote a particular note about [my great-grandmother] just didn’t like her, and you could tell from the note that he didn’t, and I just felt really upset reading that, but on the other hand it explained to me that there have been a lot of strong-minded women in my family! Because at the time he was writing about her she was fifteen or sixteen, you know and she obviously wasn’t happy under that sort of regime.³⁶

Other descendants have only come to an understanding of their Aboriginal heritage, and Ebenezer’s important role within it, after years of painstaking research, carefully re forging a link deliberately broken by ancestors who chose the survival tactic of assimilation. Lynette Russell grew up being told by her grandmother that her great-grandmother, Emily, was “a beautiful Polynesian princess.” As an adult, she gradually pieced together evidence for Emily’s life as an Aboriginal woman who “passed” (as white), from her marriage in 1914 onward, but was

subsequently admitted to a lunatic asylum—perhaps, Russell speculates, because “she could only assimilate, be a part of the broader society, if she denied herself, denied her spirits. . . . The asylum offered her some kind of comfort and safety—there she was safe.”³⁷ Ironically, as Russell notes, the dual functions of institutional life—protection but also control—can be compared with the way the missions preserved Aboriginal culture even as they worked to eradicate it. Such fragmented, yet enduring ties are only the more precious to descendants now.

By contrast, some members of the community declare their lack of knowledge of Ebenezer and its history. Some have a more specific interest in the past, such as relearning Wergaia language or tracing a sibling removed as a child. While acknowledging a vague genealogical link to people who lived at the mission, they assert that it has little importance in their lives except as a place to picnic occasionally. Nonetheless, they have views about its management and future.³⁸

One effect of heritage work at Ebenezer has been to make the conserved remnants a focus for Aboriginal people who have come to revalue them. Although some descendants express ambivalence toward mission heritage, and especially the evangelism of the missionaries, they are also concerned for and proud of the remains, seeing them as part of a distinctively Aboriginal past. When asked how she feels about the mission, Wotjobaluk elder Nancy Harrison responded “Sort of half and half . . . feel sad sometimes . . . but I feel happy—I think the spirits are happy too—because they have done it up [restored the church]. And while they were doing it up and they were painting inside it, one of the girls heard the bell toll . . . [but] there’s no bell! I told her maybe it’s because the spirits are happy, because its all being done up” (figure 8.4).

Like other Aboriginal people I spoke to, Nancy thinks the archaeological work carried out at the missions is “really, really interesting and I’d like to see still more done. It would be great.” For Nancy the benefit of the work lies in understanding the everyday lifestyle of the residents:

Realising what they had there, 'cause you just can't think what they had, like their bread, flour, sugar, tea and that's what they had there. And then you find a couple of ornamental things you never thought that would exist. And some of these women must have had their own ornamental stuff.³⁹



Figure 8.4. Nancy Harrison (left), Rose Horner (right). (Ebenezer, 2006.)

Other descendants are also interested in small domestic fragments found on the site, as the following exchange demonstrates:

Irene Marks: There's broken crockery and there's other whatever, stones or whatever bits, or whatever.

Hazel Macdonald: And they smuggled things that they'd used on the Mission years ago and now they're just going through the—

Faye Marks: Pieces.

Hazel: —layers of the dirt and find just little bits, there's not necessarily any big pieces but there's just a bit of, a handle of a cup or pattern of a cup.

Irene: Or plate or a cup or whatever.

Hazel: Sort of, you think oh well they have those back in those days and very nice, you sort of feel really good just finding something from the past.⁴⁰

Mark Dugay-Grist agrees, seeing this kind of evidence as important for understanding the site's history in interpretive displays:

What I would really like to see, is the little bits of material culture that have been retrieved there . . . maybe old pennies or buttons or that sort of thing. I think that would work really well in the display, in the interpretation internally. You know, like whether it's bone buttons or old Bakelite type buttons or whatever. Those everyday items. I think they really tell a story.⁴¹

Archaeologists sometimes forget the enchantment of finding tangible fragments of the past, hints at the different lifestyle led among what are now ruins. Mark Dugay-Grist has worked in a range of cultural institutions and is now a senior heritage manager at AAV, so he is well aware of the complexity of interpretation. Yet, like the others who want to know about Ebenezer's history, he sees its physical remains as an important perspective upon the people who lived there.

In the Aboriginal attachment to the site of Ebenezer, it is evident that particular ideas of what heritage is have contributed to its value, defined through the objectification or "singularization" of Western heritage.⁴² Ironically, the rescue efforts of the 1960s and 1970s destroyed archaeological value by removing "rubbish," even as they created social value. The monumental European fabric has been most amenable to preservation within the Western heritage process, and as a result the material remains of the mission have become more valuable to the Aboriginal people who lived through its mixed effects. As a consequence of the formal recognition constituted by heritage listing, resources have become available, and the site has accrued prestige. Unlike many other places that have been important to Wergaia people, Ebenezer is partly owned by the Aboriginal community, who can therefore determine what happens there. These remains have come to be valued by Aboriginal people as surviving traces of a place that again belongs to them, alongside a native title determination in late 2005. They have invested these remains with their own ambivalent meanings, happy and sad—in the words of Nancy Harrison, "sort of half and half."

While Aboriginal heritage has also become highly valued by mainstream society as a whole, racial tension remains a force in rural Australia. This became apparent when the current owner of the farmland surrounding the heritage-listed site refused access to the archaeological remains on his land in 2003, expressing hostility toward the Aboriginal community.

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The former owners had been sympathetic to the mission's heritage value and had facilitated access for detailed surveys during the 1990s. During the course of the project, the archaeological remains of mission buildings on this land were exposed by removal of detritus such as barbed wire and car bodies. Within weeks, this site was ploughed, distributing architectural remains and artifacts over a wide area. It remains uncultivated. In addition, during our work along the riverbank in 2007, we noted that features recorded a decade earlier, such as the remains of a windmill, had been removed or destroyed.⁴³ Attitudes of suspicion survive from earlier decades, perhaps underlined for some farmers by the popular misconception that their land might be subject to native title claims. Mark Dugay-Grist also comments on these tensions:

My own family tell me about the racism. No, it's still around today and I think . . . it's a lot less . . . but it's definitely still around. Why did the farmer plough up that area near the paddock? You know, like seriously. He doesn't need that land right near there. He had no need to do it. You know. What's that built on? That's our home there. Like I'm saying, it's my left and right arm. He bulldozed it. We don't go and do that to their places. We respect things. So yeah, there's still elements of racism or paranoia around, yep.⁴⁴

Off the Mission: Wergaia Landscape

Ebenezer has assumed iconic status in part because it accords with Western notions of heritage, embodying Christian sacred ideals, in tangible, even monumental form. Yet despite their seemingly ephemeral, sometimes flimsy structures, Wergaia people have retained their connection to many places across the landscape throughout the displacements of colonialism. Heritage managers now seek to address these often intangible values: for example, since 1991 AAV has maintained the Aboriginal Historic Places Program to acknowledge such places, and a range of heritage management projects have recently been carried out at sites such as the Billabong at Dimboola.⁴⁵ For Aboriginal descendants in the Wimmera, waterways remain very important, being, as one historian has pointed out, their "history, their cathedral, and their larder."⁴⁶ Nancy Harrison remembers of Lake Hindmarsh that

we used to go camping up there in the old horse and cart when we were kids, see. We'd camp at Hindmarsh away from people, we'd just go in, pick a spot . . . we'd have our two uncles there. . . . And then the men would go fishing or they'd walk down to where the river is and they'd catch fish or my dad would have rabbit traps and catch rabbits. So we had fish and rabbits to eat. Duck. So that's what we ate, bush tucker.⁴⁷

The kids spent their time swimming and playing around the lake. "You can walk for miles, Lake Hindmarsh when it's full. It would only come up to your knees. We'd walk for nearly half a mile, and that's no word of a lie, only come up to your knees." She noted how "back in the olden days the aunties . . . the women used to go and get the reeds to make their baskets." In 1988, the bicentennial celebrations of Australia's European settlement, there was a camping weekend there for the Aboriginal community.

Links to the former settlements also remain strong: they are still used as refuges, occasional homes, and holiday sites. Antwerp is occupied today by elderly men who return to country at the end of their lives. Rocky Harrison now lives at Antwerp in a caravan with his dogs, power provided by a solar panel he rigged up himself (figure 8.5). He showed me around, pointing out landmarks such as former residences, now abandoned, the cemetery, the river. Rocky was born in 1946 and lived at Antwerp until he was seven years old. As a small boy, he remembers fetching water from the river with a horse and cart, playing games, and visiting his Kennedy granduncles who also lived at Antwerp. His family moved to Ballarat, and it wasn't until much later that he returned to the district to live, getting work on the railways during the 1980s. He spent a couple of years in Dimboola but found it too "racial," so he moved to Antwerp in the early 1990s. Rocky explains that

[it's] sorta like there's something there that brings them back to it if they feel like they're going, their last days and that, they always like to get back to where they were, on their own sort of country, a piece of their own country, if they can, but some of them just born [there], you know. But mostly Elder people go that way, but not so much these days, a lot of it in the younger days, I used to notice that, a lot of Elder people would come back and then they die.⁴⁸



Figure 8.5. Rocky Harrison at Antwerp, November 2007. (Jane Lydon.)

Native Title

The close and enduring link between the Wergaia people and the river was recognized in December 2005, when after a decade of negotiations, they were successful in obtaining the first consent determination of native title in southeastern Australia (figure 8.6).⁴⁹ The determination recognizes native title rights to hunt, fish, gather, and camp for personal, domestic, and noncommercial communal needs along approximately 153 kilometers of the length of the Wimmera River, as well as freehold title to three parcels of land, plus other rights.⁵⁰ In his judgment, Justice Merkel quoted elder Uncle Jack Kennedy, whose testimony concluded:

I am looking forward to getting some of my country back before I die so I can die knowing I have done what the Elders expected of me. The Beal trees are dying at Lake Albacutya because they are not getting enough water. If we look after the river properly it will run clear again, run all the way to the Teardrop Lakes. If the Wotjobaluk continue to follow Bunjil then things will go on as the old people would want.⁵¹



Figure 8.6. The Wimmera in drought, 2006. (Photograph Bruno David.)

Many Wergaia people see the importance of the native title agreement as a mark of recognition by Australian society. Where many remember or are still aware of racism, this formal acknowledgment of Aboriginal people's distinctive identity and status as Indigenous counters the experience of exclusion. As I documented in the preceding chapter, Wergaia elder Nancy Harrison grew up at Antwerp, and her childhood was structured by everyday segregation. When she got a job in insurance she was able to travel and work in different places, which she enjoyed, and she noted, "I did strike prejudice in the jobs that I had but it was lucky that I knew my job. I was very good at my job, if I may say so."⁵² Like other members of the community, she notes that attitudes have changed tremendously since the 1960s. As Hazel MacDonald comments:

Oh it has changed, the attitudes because I think you know like I've read the *Dimboola Banners*, the old *Banners* that were back way at the time and they sort of treated, like my Mum and my Dad in that era, treated them like as if they were nothing and weren't worthy of being on the

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earth. . . . But it has changed a great deal to be where we are today and for us to walk down the street even and just don't give a damn about who's in the street, you know we're here, we're going to stay, we're part of this land as much as the other people. And that's my attitude in life and I don't let the white people, nobody can get over me, especially not my husband [laugh].⁵³

Regarding the native title agreement, Nancy Harrison states that

it's good to get recognition for it, that's what I like about it. At last we've got recognition and people we've got their respect now. And that's when I get called upon to do something like welcome to country, and that's really good.⁵⁴

Other descendants are more cynical, seeing the native title process as a tokenistic sop to white conscience that has little bearing on the descendants' personal identity or relationship to country.⁵⁵ Some non-Wergaia Aboriginal people who have lived in the district for many years feel excluded from the acknowledgment and resources that have come with the agreement, in turn linked to changes in the heritage system that emphasize descent from traditional owners.⁵⁶

Heritage and Housing

Despite increasing recognition of Aboriginal culture and history, the colonial past is evident in continuing social distance between black and white, and the continuing disadvantage of Aboriginal people in regional Victoria. Government policy continues to monitor and improve Aboriginal lives through housing, among a suite of policy goals including schooling, use of alcohol, and welfare reform. Media and political commentary on Aboriginal issues maintains a focus upon perceived "real" blackfellas who live in remote communities in northern Australia, overlooking the seemingly less authentic Koories of the southeast, despite new research that shows that 43 percent of Aboriginal people live in rural and regional towns compared with 15 percent in remote centers, and a further 8 percent in far-flung outstations.⁵⁷ Despite the high profile of Aboriginal art and cultural practice, practical problems continue to confront commu-

nities across the country where expectations for health, education, and employment remain uniformly low.

In the context of a federal election campaign during 2007, the former conservative government, headed by then-prime minister John Howard, declared a national emergency that responded to allegations of the widespread sexual abuse of children in the Northern Territory. The “Northern Territory Intervention” introduced alcohol restrictions, welfare reforms including sequestration of family payments to control spending, enforced school attendance, compulsory health checks for children, acquisition of townships through five-year leases, increased police presence, local “clean-ups,” improvement to housing and the introduction of market-based rents and tenancy arrangements, a ban on pornography, and the appointment of government business managers.⁵⁸ Despite the importance of the allegations and the sincerity of many of the intervention’s proponents within government and administration, this program has been seen as a highly politicized campaign tactic, intended to effect several long-term objectives of a government that had a poor record on Indigenous issues. It was conducted with little or no consultation with Aboriginal people themselves, and few of the program’s objectives addressed child abuse, termed a “Trojan horse” by senior Aboriginal figures. Nor did it incorporate existing programs in this area. In particular, the intervention’s provisions relating to land ownership were perceived to undermine Indigenous kin-based forms of ownership and land rights in the pursuit of the goal of assimilation. As Indigenous academic Larissa Behrendt concludes:

Howard’s agenda to fix the “Aboriginal problem” was a series of ideologically led policy approaches—assimilation and mainstreaming, mutual obligation and shared responsibility, unlocking Aboriginal community-controlled land so that it could be accessed by non-Aboriginal interests, the beliefs that home ownership is the panacea to intergenerational policy, and that all the “real Aborigines” live in the north.⁵⁹

In particular, the debate surrounding child abuse blames the problem on the “misuse” and overcrowding of Aboriginal housing by extended families.⁶⁰ As I have argued, the rhetorical link between poor Aboriginal housing and the residents’ moral depravity has a long history. Colonial evaluations of Aboriginal society, and especially Indigenous gender organization as

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disorderly and immoral, justified intervention into Aboriginal lives from the beginning of white settlement. Concern to “improve” Indigenous lives has been expressed through programs centered upon housing and domesticity throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—yet a double standard has often been applied in providing inferior housing, while its form has often been culturally inappropriate—sometimes deliberately so, in attempts to change Aboriginal lifestyle. Problems faced by Aboriginal communities such as poor schooling, health, and employment opportunities have been attributed to Aboriginal inadequacies, measured through their domestic environment, rather than to poverty (and racism).

One solution, as many have argued, is to increase funding for housing, yet current initiatives often require Aboriginal communities to relinquish collective ownership and control of their traditional country in exchange for financial and planning assistance.⁶¹ Many housing programs have also failed to recognize how Aboriginal peoples’ distinct lifestyle interacts with European structures. Since the 1970s cultural geographers have shown how Aboriginal people have reworked Western architecture in distinctive ways in attempting to design appropriate housing. Paul Memmott, for example, found that the social and cultural frameworks of the Barkanji peoples along the Darling River determined housing forms, as well as spatial relationships between forms, external covered spaces, and the use of internal spaces.⁶² Yet such recognition has not been reflected in government policy or popular perceptions of Aboriginal use of housing, as Memmott’s review of the Indigenous “parallel settlement system” found in 2001, noting that “unfortunately this circumstance is often overlooked by funding agencies and architectural designers in the Indigenous housing sector, who may continue to provide houses to Indigenous people designed for relatively small nuclear families.” This study also noted the bias toward remote communities and the neglect of Aboriginal housing needs in cities, where around 50 percent of the population lives.⁶³

For Victorian Aboriginal people in centers such as Shepparton, site of the first transitional housing project at Rumbalara, housing remains a central issue. Yorta Yorta man Les Briggs recently gained title to 1.6 hectares of land on the Murray through a mortgage cosigned with his son, Doug. When asked what owning the house means to him, he responded, “It means the world. . . . To have security, a place for all the family to go to.” This home ownership pilot provides financial counseling and assistance.⁶⁴

Despite the popular attention paid to “remote” Aboriginal communities, the problems faced by Victorian people are statistically very similar. Indigenous leaders suggest that a self-confident identity is key.

While the story of Ebenezer seems far from these compelling social problems, it is important to understand how Western structures of thought persist in defining and managing Aboriginal people within mainstream Australia. Western observers have always assessed Indigenous people according to their material culture, equating their property with their level of civilization. Material goods and practices, especially those pertaining to housing and domesticity (Cook’s “Magnificent Houses, Household-stuff”) became a basic tool of transformation, as missionaries sought to teach Indigenous people how to live like whites. Through frameworks of acculturation and assimilation, they defined the appropriation of Western material practices as a process of becoming less Aboriginal. But as the critique of essentialism has shown, identity is not a set of reified attributes, nor can it be straightforwardly correlated with material things; the formulation that defines “real” Aboriginal people as static, traditional, and remote denies their capacity for change, yet simultaneously denigrates them when they do.

One outcome of this view has been the rejection of archaeological evidence for Aboriginal use of Western material culture as not “really” Indigenous. Yet in the same way that people today proudly identify themselves as Wergaia, despite a range of creative transformations, they also see such material, whether made in Staffordshire or on site, as part of their heritage. In this way, historical archaeological analysis reveals the complexity of cultural interaction and the role of material culture in both maintaining and transforming culture.

Perceptions of Aboriginal people have continued to focus on their material environment and especially on domesticity. Life in the camps was condemned as a symptom of incapacity rather than attributed to underlying causes such as poverty, exclusion, and a cycle of disadvantage. During the assimilation era, attempts to remove inequality focused on housing programs that were designed to force Aboriginal people to alter their lifestyle and values. Nonetheless, Aboriginal people have maintained a distinctive way of life, including strong family ties and obligations and connections to traditional country. In the past these aspects of tradition

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have been seen as incompatible with modernity, as from Ebenezer to Rumbalara and beyond, white experiments in transforming Aboriginal people have focused upon their appropriation of Western goods and their settlement in houses. In these ways the Moravian missionaries' "fantastic dreaming" stands for a larger idealizing vision for Aboriginal people that remains powerful today.

Notes

1. Recent research by historian Anna Johnston, for example, emphasizes the self-consciousness and complexity of the missionaries' self-representations, actively seeking to "remake colonial projects in the image of religious conversion": Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

2. For a discussion of the "Great Australian Silence" and its breaking, see Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth about Our History* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking/Penguin, 1999). The term comes from W. E. H. Stanner, *White Man Got No Dreaming: Essays, 1938–1973* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979).

3. Charles Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970; Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 308. See also Bill Edwards, "A Moravian Mission in Australia: Ebenezer Through Ernabella Eyes," paper presented at the 1st Biennial Trans-Tasman Conference, 2004, http://rspas.anu.edu.au/pah/TransTasman/papers/Edwards_Bill.pdf (accessed 23 Sep 2008).

4. Susan Maushart, *Sort of a Place Like Home: Remembering the Moore River Native Settlement* (Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2003).

5. Peggy Brock, *Outback Ghettos: A History of Aboriginal Institutionalisation and Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Christine Choo, *Mission Girls: Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900–1950* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2001); Thom Blake, *A Dumping Ground: A History of the Cherbourg Settlement* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2001); Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989); Victoria's Aboriginal history, including the six reserves of the second half of the nineteenth century, was popularized through the work of curator and amateur historian Aldo Massola, *Aboriginal Mission Stations in Victoria: Yelta, Ebenezer, Ramahyuck, Lake Condah* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1970); Aldo Massola, *Coranderrk: A History of the Aboriginal Station* (Kil-

more, Victoria: Lowden Publishing, 1975); Aldo Massola, *Journey to Aboriginal Victoria* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1969).

6. Norman Etherington, "Introduction," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. N. Etherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1–18 (4); Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002).

7. Phillip Pepper and Tess De Araugo, *You Are What You Make Yourself to Be: The Story of a Victorian Aboriginal Family 1842–1980* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1980), 15.

8. Diane Barwick, "Writing Aboriginal History: Comments on a Book and Its Reviewers," *Canberra Anthropology* 4(2) (1981): 74–86.

9. For studies of Aboriginality in southern Australia, see Ian Keen, ed., *Being Black: Aboriginal Cultures in "Settled" Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1988); Jeremy Beckett, *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1988). Also see Peggy Brock, ed., *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Bronwyn Douglas, "Encounters with the Enemy? Academic Readings of Missionary Narratives on Melanesians," *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History* 43(1) (2001): 37–64.

10. Koorie Heritage Trust, "Mission Voices" website: www.abc.net.au/mission/voices/stolen_generations/default.htm (accessed 24 Sep 2008).

11. PROV, VA 538 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, VPRS 242, Crown Reserves Correspondence, Unit 306 (1904–1961), File C23899, C. F. Shulze and J. G. [?]hundersifs to Dept of Lands and Survey, 23 Jan 1904. Shulze also made numerous requests for grazing leases over the land.

12. A. B. Werner, *Early Mission Work at Antwerp, Victoria* (self-published, unpaginated, 1959).

13. Werner, *Early Mission Work at Antwerp*.

14. The Land Act of 1869 divided the area into 320-acre blocks for lease and eventual purchase by selectors, many of whom were German families from South Australia. The Hamilton and Wimmera districts became the main areas of strength for the Lutheran Church in Victoria. For the German Australian experience of World Wars I and II, see Gerhardt Fischer, *Enemy Aliens: Internment and the Home Front Experience in Australia* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989); John Mcquilton, "German Australians in Rural Society 1914–1918," in *Imaginary Homelands: Journal of Australian Studies* no 61, ed. R. Nile (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999).

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15. For example, Birmingham notes that her excavation at Wybalenna in 1969 was prompted by the decision by local white people to preserve the church as the “only identifiable building surviving” from the settlement period—an impulse leading to local conservation efforts at many former Aboriginal settlements during the 1960s. Judy Birmingham, *Wybalenna: The Archaeology of Cultural Accommodation in Nineteenth Century Tasmania* (Sydney: Australian Society for Historical Archaeology, 1992), 15.

16. Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 146–61.

17. Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Tim Bonyhady, “The Stuff of Heritage,” in *Prehistory to Politics*, ed. T. Griffiths and T. Bonyhady (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 144–162; Jane Lydon and Tracy Ireland, eds., *Object Lessons: Archaeology and Heritage in Australia* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2005).

18. Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, 111–112.

19. Karen J. Weitze, *California’s Mission Revival* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1984). Now subject to extensive archaeological investigation: see contributions to David Hurst Thomas, ed., *Columbian Consequences*, vols. 1–3 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989).

20. Archaeological investigation has confirmed the extensive damage to the site due to this event. It is probable that excavation of the “water tank” was carried out at this time, but no artifacts or records of what was removed are extant.

21. This located 246 sites. Of these, 238 were scarred trees, of which around half had steel axe marks. Eight occupation sites were located, on dunes in the vicinity of the watercourses; two were middens, and four were artifact scatters: du Cros and Associates, “Former Ebenezer Mission Reserve: Site Conservation and Management Plan,” draft report for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative, 1997 (vol. 1: Summary; vol. 2: Master Plan; vol. 3: Archaeological Site Survey), vol. 2, 20; D. Rhodes, *An Archaeological Report on the Ebenezer Mission Station*, report prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 1998, 16–18.

22. du Cros and Associates, “Former Ebenezer Mission Reserve,” vol. 3, 86.

23. Tim Murray, “Contact Archaeology: Shared Histories? Shared Identities?” in *Sites: Nailing the Debate: Archaeology and Interpretation in Museums* (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1996), 199–213; and see contributions to Rodney Harrison and Christine Williamson, eds., *After Captain Cook: The Archaeology of the Recent Indigenous Past in Australia* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2002).

24. Steve Brown, Steven Avery, and Megan Goulding, "Recent Investigations at the Ebenezer Mission Cemetery," in *After Captain Cook: The Archaeology of the Recent Indigenous Past in Australia*, ed. Rodney Harrison and Christine Williamson (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2002), 147–70.

25. Christine Williamson, *An Archaeological Investigation of an Historical Artefact Scatter, Ebenezer Mission, North West Victoria* (report prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative, 1999), 20.

26. A. Long and J. Howell-Meurs, *Archaeological Excavations at Ebenezer Mission (2000)* (report prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 2001), 2.

27. For an overview, see Jeremy Ash, Jane Lydon, and Michael Morrison, eds., "Introduction," in "Aboriginal Missions in Australasia," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* (forthcoming, 2010).

28. Jane Lydon with Bruno David and Zvonkica Stanin, "Archaeological Investigation of the former Ebenezer Mission, Victoria: Stage II," prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Heritage Victoria, 2007; Jane Lydon, "Archaeological Investigation of the Former Ebenezer Mission, Victoria: Stage II," Community Report, 2007; Jane Lydon, "Archaeological Investigations at the Mission-House, Ebenezer Mission," Community Report, 2004; Jane Lydon with Alasdair Brooks and Zvonkica Stanin, "Archaeological Investigations at the Mission-House, Ebenezer Mission," prepared for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Heritage Victoria, 2004.

29. For recent overviews of these developments, see Ian J. McNiven and Lynette Russell, *Appropriated Pasts: Indigenous Peoples and the Colonial Culture of Archaeology* (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2005); Jane Lydon and Uzma Rizvi, eds., *The Handbook to Postcolonialism and Archaeology* (LeftCoast Press, forthcoming 2010); Claire Smith and H. Martin Wobst, eds., *Indigenous Archaeologies: Decolonizing Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

30. And see Ian Keen, "Introduction," in *Being Black: Aboriginal Cultures in "Settled" Australia*, ed. Ian Keen (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988), 20.

31. Diane Barwick, "Aborigines of Victoria," in Ian Keen, ed., *Being Black*, 27–32 (27); see also Diane Barwick, "A Little More Than Kin: Regional Affiliation and Group Identity Among Aboriginal Migrants in Melbourne" (PhD thesis, Australian National University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 1963); Diane Barwick, "Economic Absorption Without Assimilation? The Case of Some Melbourne Part-Aboriginal Families," *Oceania* 33(1) (Sep 1962): 18–23.

32. Barwick, "Aborigines of Victoria," 31–32.

33. Mark Dugay-Grist, interview by Jane Lydon, Melbourne, 1 Aug 2008 (transcript in author's possession), 3, 8–9.

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34. Eleanor Bourke, interview by Jane Lydon, Dadswell Bridge, 3 Jul 2008 (transcript in author's possession), 3.
35. Eleanor Bourke interview, 3 Jul 2008, 3.
36. Eleanor Bourke interview, 3 Jul 2008, 5.
37. Lynette Russell, *A Little Bird Told Me: Family Secrets, Necessary Lies* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 110; and see Margery Fee and Lynette Russell, "'Whiteness' and 'Aboriginality' in Canada and Australia: Conversations and Identities," *Feminist Theory* 8(2) (2007): 187–208.
38. Irene Harrison, Hazel MacDonald, Faye Marks, and Karen Marks, interview by Jane Lydon, 4 Jul 2008, Horsham (transcript in author's possession), 1–5.
39. Nancy Harrison, interview by Jane Lydon, Dimboola, 3 July 2008, 5.
40. Irene Harrison, Hazel MacDonald, Faye Marks, and Karen Marks, interview by Jane Lydon, 4 Jul 2008, Horsham.
41. Mark Dugay-Grist interview, 1 Aug 2008, 7.
42. I. Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization in Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–94.
43. Du Cros and Associates, "Former Ebenezer Mission Reserve," 116. The location of this feature was approximately the same as the windmill shown on the 1904 surveyor's plan.
44. Mark Dugay-Grist, interview by Jane Lydon, Melbourne, 1 Aug 2008.
45. For a recent review of the challenges intangible cultural heritage poses for Indigenous peoples, see Amanda Kearney, "Intangible Cultural Heritage: Global Awareness and Local Interest," in *Intangible Heritage*, ed. Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (Taylor & Francis, 2009): 209–225. Australian heritage managers have been working to develop appropriate ways of addressing these issues for some years: see, for example, W. J. A. Jonas, *Consultation with Aboriginal People about Aboriginal Heritage* (Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission, 1991). For Wergaia projects, see, for example, Harry Webber and Thomas Richards, "Barrabool Flora and Fauna Reserve: Aboriginal Heritage Investigation and Training Project" (unpublished report for the Aboriginal Community Heritage Investigations Program, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 2004); Harry Webber and Steven Avery, "The Ranch-Billabong Heritage Investigation" (Melbourne: Wimmera Indigenous Resource Management Partnership, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 2005).
46. Inga Clendinnen, "True Stories," *Boyer Lectures 1999* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999), 62.
47. Nancy Harrison interview, 3 Jul 2008, 5.
48. Interview with Rocky Harrison, Antwerp, 27 Nov 2007, 5.

49. In 1992 the Australian High Court's decision in the Mabo judgment recognized the survival of native title in some cases, but subsequent claims failed, such as that of the Yorta Yorta people of the Murray River. Instead, the Wergaia negotiated an agreement: Commonwealth of Australia, *Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Native Title Determinations: What They Mean for the Wimmera Region* (National Native Title Tribunal, 2005).

50. *Clarke on behalf of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Peoples v. Victoria, no. 1*, Federal Court of Australia [1795] (13 Dec 2005) (Victoria: Australasian Legal Information Institute, Native Title Determinations), www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/federal_ct/2005/1795.html.

51. *Clarke v. Victoria, no. 1*, FCA (13 Dec 2005).

52. Nancy Harrison interview, 3 Jul 2008, 3.

53. Irene Harrison, Hazel MacDonald, Faye Marks, and Karen Marks interview, 29.

54. Nancy Harrison interview, 3 Jul 2008, 6.

55. Mark Dugay-Grist interview, "What's important for me is that [I can go to that] place and [for] my kids to enjoy it and my family to enjoy it," 10–11.

56. Graham Atkinson, "Indigenous Aspirations Relating to Native Title," paper presented at DPI forum, Jan 2007, Koorie Heritage Trust, www.nts.vic.gov.au/document/DPI-Forum.pdf. The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act (2006) gives control over cultural heritage to traditional owners. Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Department of Planning and Community Development website: www1.dvc.vic.gov.au/aav.

57. Jo Chandler, "A Town Like Shep," *Age*, Saturday 12 Jul 2008, 1, 6.

58. Melinda Hinkson, "Introduction: In the Name of the Child," in *Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia*, eds. Jon Altman and Melinda Hinkson (Melbourne: Arena Publications Association, 2007), 1–2.

59. Larissa Behrendt, "Rethinking Indigenous Policy," *Age*, 25 Aug 2008, 12.

60. John Wiseman, "Overcrowding Opens Door to Social Tragedy," *Australian*, 18 Aug 2008, 1–2.

61. Such as the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands of northern South Australia, where federal and state governments are nearing an agreement to spend \$25 million on upgrading housing in return for fifty-year leases: John Wiseman, "Overcrowding Opens Door to Social Tragedy." This was also a basic element of the NT Intervention: see Jon Altman and Melinda Hinkson, eds., *Coercive Reconciliation*.

62. Paul Memmott, *Humpty, House and Tin Shed: Aboriginal Settlement History on the Darling River* (Sydney: Ian Buchan Fell Research Centre, Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney, 1991); see also Paul Memmott, *Gunyab*,

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Goondie & Wurley: The Aboriginal Architecture of Australia (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2007); Penny Tripcony, "Towards Aboriginal Management of Aboriginal Rental Housing, Melbourne 1960–89," in *Settlement: A History of Australian Indigenous Housing*, ed. Peter Read (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2000), 144–56, and other contributions to Peter Read, ed., *Settlement: A History of Australian Indigenous Housing* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2000).

63. Paul Memmott and Mark Moran, *Indigenous Settlements of Australia*, Australia: State of the Environment Second Technical Paper Series (Human Settlements), Series 2 (Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2001). The authors examine physical and cultural properties of these settlements such as population mobility, sociospatial patterns, and Indigenous lifestyles across cultural-geographic regions.

64. Jo Chandler, "A Town Like Shep," 1, 6.

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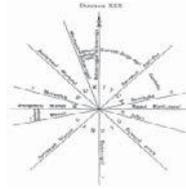
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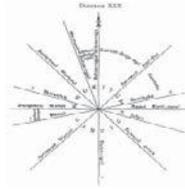
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