Musquito

"The Darkies were as quiet as dogs before Musquito came ..."

—James Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race*, 1884

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Brutality and Exile

Aboriginal Resistance in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land

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For Edwina, whom I have never adequately acknowledged

INTRODUCTION

TERMINOLOGY

Historians tread a wary path through terminology when dealing with the delicacy of feeling in Indigenous history. Offence, perceived or invented, is never far away but some caveats need to be made.

Terms like ‘native’, as a noun not an adjective, though in common usage at the time, have been avoided even though never then consciously intended as offensive. Similarly ‘darkie’ was simply descriptive, though we rightly shy from its usage today. Use with inverted commas indicates these terms as those of the time.

Recent adoption by Aborigines of group identifiers such as ‘Koori’ in New South Wales or ‘Palawa’ in Tasmania is understandable, however they gloss over the historical reality that there was no pan-Aboriginal identity at the time. In fact it was the gradual emergence of such that is a key aspect of the period under consideration. In Tasmania, the Aborigines have been simply referred to as Tasmanians, as neutral a collective descriptor as can be concocted, though obviously one that would have been incomprehensible to the people of the period.

Because they too are so problematic, the modern fashion of ‘tribal’ names both in the Sydney and Tasmanian context have been avoided. The very notion of ‘tribe’ is deeply fraught, and terms of the time, like “Big River” and “Oyster Bay” in Tasmania, for instance, have been retained. Though a colonial imposition, these generic terms were standard usage in the literature.

Rather than ‘tribe’ or even ‘clan’, the more vague term ‘mob’ as a descriptor of Aboriginal groups has been favoured, firstly because Aboriginal people tend to use the term self-referentially today — and did so from very early on — but also because it comes from the seventeenth century contraction of *mobilis vulgaris* applied to the common rabble, who were regarded by the social elite with considerable apprehension. That a descriptor of Indigenous groups in this context should encompass an element of apprehension seems a reasonable and proud claim.

PROLEGOMENON

Where is the man amongst ourselves who would not resist an invading enemy; who would not avenge the murder of his parents, the ill-use of his wife and daughters and the spoilation of all his earthly goods by a foreign enemy … he who did would be immortalized as a patriot.

— James Calder, letter to the *Launceston Advertiser*, 22 September 1831, writing on the resistance of the Tasmanian Aborigines

All histories are embedded in broader stories. We have to begin with the general to comprehend the particular, but never be misled — the particular, conversely, always illuminates the larger tale, adding both breadth and the breath to the air to understanding.

1 Occupation

The legend of Musquito draws impulses from much wider elements, from the dynamics of occupation, the saddening experience of oppressed peoples through the aeons. The struggle to recognise occupation as the foundation of Australian settler history comes from our inability to see our historical experience as anything other than completely exceptional, an heroic endeavour not built on the bones of others.

White settlement took little account of the incidental inhabitants. The British were people distanced by "scientific" concepts of "race" from the "savagery" of the people they encountered — and thus from a shared humanity. This has bedevilled understanding Aboriginal experience. Ignored as a feral nuisance, they were inconvenient to a tale of a pioneering people that were "young and free". These founding white folk were innocents able to innovate with baling twine, invent a stump jump plough or rust free wheat, and cure the curse of foot rot in sheep.

It took barbed language to arrest attention. "Invasion" was how historian Henry Reynolds in the 1970s described white occupation and it deeply affronted white Australia and still does. Far from benign, white settler society was transformed into metaphors of war, and far from a shining pastoral vision, it pock marked the landscape with death.

It was a disturbing picture. People struggle with terms like "invasion" with its emblems of murder and destruction because it seems too overtly intentional. These were *colonists*, they were not *invaders*: they had come to *stay*, to build, to settle, not to harm. White settlers did not *intend* mayhem and dispossession: it was simply an unfortunate by-product of their presence.

But if we are to get past this barrier of words, we must stand back and appreciate the wider historical dimensions of occupation. To do that, we must grasp a broader world history. We have to fathom the significance of the extraordinary European mass migration from 1500 on. It was astonishing, unprecedented — the vast occupation by Europeans of every temperate corner of the world. Nothing like it since the Mongol hordes.

By the late 19th and early 20th century this had turned into a flood of over 50 million European "boat people" just in that period alone. Our utter familiarity with the European migration story — our own family story as "anchor babies" — blinds us to the staggering scale of colonial occupation. Unconsciously it has engendered a pedestrian sense of natural right and entitlement that contradicts the offensiveness of "occupation". That natural entitlement made "inevitable" and "natural" the destruction and dispossession of Indigenous peoples — unfortunate, unavoidable but ultimately "inevitable", the exculpatory term of choice.

Wrestle as you will with a term like "invasion", it is impossible to deny the massive colonial occupation of temperate Indigenous territory, in North America, South America, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa from the 16th to the 20th centuries.[1] More significantly, the nature of occupation offers behavioural insights. "Occupation" and "invasion" are as old as human association and so are the ways people respond. It's always the same: collusion, collaboration and resistance, with people often moving between responses.

In occupied Holland during World War II, for instance, the German-condoned Jewish Council trod an extremely fine line between defending the Jewish community and collaborating with Jewish deportation to extermination camps. Nearly 80 per cent of Dutch Jews were wiped out, greater than elsewhere except in Eastern Europe. It shocks us the way decent people act so collusively, yet close observation of the twists and turns people employ to survive tends to remove any easy judgment.[2] It is here though that we find the most useful analogies for Indigenous responses to occupation. The responses are not exceptional nor different, merely human — but we still find it difficult to grasp that "they" are just like "us".

The European analogy is both recent and ancient. The resistance figure Arminius (b. 18 BC), the son of a German chieftain, was held during his youth in Rome as a hostage but received military education and Roman citizenship. He became for all intents and purposes "tamed" to Roman ways, a commander of Roman German auxiliaries, but in 9 AD he used his Roman credentials to persuade the governor in Germany, Varus, that a rebellion in northern Germany required suppression. Three legions marched into an ambush in Teutoburg Forest set by Arminius and his allied German tribes, an act of stupendous betrayal. Over 20,000 were systematically butchered in the most devastating defeat Rome ever suffered. A charismatic commander, Arminius ensured Rome would never again attempt to occupy Germany. Yet despite such success, is it surprising that Arminius himself was later assassinated by chiefly rivals consumed by envy?

Arminius en.wikipedia.org

The significance of his effective and devastating resistance lay in his role as *cultural broker*, his familiarity with Roman tactics and his ability to reinforce Indigenous resistance. We find this too with Musquito. The familiarity with the forces of occupation enhances the effectiveness of resistance despite its often-forlorn outcome. Musquito and Arminius were culturally *'in between'* and it is frequently these personalities that form the fiercest figures of resistance. And this remains so. It is true, however, that they pass through the various responses to occupation, of collusion and collaboration before being engulfed by *Enough!* — the pure rage of resistance. And their sheer success becomes their undoing: pursued by adversaries and betrayed by enemies within.

If we look for the patterns we discover us.

Exile

Musquito was nurtured in Hawkesbury sandstone and raised in the Broken Bay regional hinterland of Sydney. He was a child, only about ten years of age when the white sails of Sydney settlers entered Port Jackson. He was born in the before and grew into the reality of British occupation, but he flourished in a warrior culture that assumed an absolute command of the realm they inhabited.

One of the earliest incidents reported in the infant Sydney colony during 1788 illustrates this cultural command vividly. A British officer and two armed men wandering the scrub surrounding the Sydney settlement met a group of about 14 armed Aboriginal warriors, a spear in one hand, a large stone in the other, moving with clear determination, 'in regular Indian file'. At their head 'appeared a chief', marked and painted with purpose. The initial response was palpable alarm as the British were clearly at a disadvantage, but without even an acknowledgement of their presence, the native contingent marched straight past them and 'passed peaceably on'.[3] They ignored the intruders with a supreme indifference.

To some it simply shows borderland incidents 'did not always end in violence',[4] as John Connor suggests, but it illustrates far more. The aloof indifference of the ceremonially marked Aboriginal contingent indicates a ritually determined course of action: a retributive raid, a trial by ordeal or a formal battle, all highly ritualised occasions which passing observers, in the Aboriginal conventions of thought, were expected to treat with due respect, deference and avoidance.

Death in Aboriginal society was always attributable to human agency and was never accidental. To avenge a killing elders and warriors would gather, and 'with their heads, shoulders and chests painted with pipe clay' travel to the enemy camp. The *koradji* or 'clever man' would mark trees with a quartz crystal or sound a bullroarer to render members of the intended mob unable to protect the culprit and to give him up for punishment. The victim would prepare to defend himself from the ritual onslaught of spears with a shield and dextrous manoeuvring until wounded, whereupon the group would withdraw by the same route 'making magic at each of the scarred trees to make them ordinary … again.'[5] This is not a neutral Nature but one of enormity and power, able to be manipulated, mollified or turned to personal purpose.

The European intruders were oblivious to this intent and ignorant of their place in the order of things. The British were seen at first as the dead returned to life. This was no simple superstition but the evidence of a minutely observed world. When the corpse of a black man bloats and blisters in the rotting heat, the skin splits to reveal a pink inner dermis, the colour of the new intruders. Death and pink skin were *literal*, and were to become more so.

It is easy to forget that at that time, from an Aboriginal view, their world and its values were central and Europeans were utterly peripheral. Theirs was a supreme command of place, an absolute confidence that clearly the British did not share so they were easy to ignore. It was a command, even superiority, which comes unaffected to those who naturally occupy a familiar realm integral to their sense of self. It was a sense soon that would not be so readily assumed.

Musquito grew up in this formidable world of order and ritual where the dead could return and walk the land and nature could be shaped to their want. That would unravel under foreign occupation. The response would be the same as in any realm of occupation, a mix of resistance and accommodation, avoidance and attraction to the novelties of the new living. At its core would arise an abiding rage, a deep resentment for displacement and dispossession, for countless and consistent affronts and violations, and more than anything, for the dumb disregard, the exquisite British mix of arrogance and ignorance.

In the life of Musquito, he crossed and re-crossed an array of boundaries. He is recorded in the Sydney settlement, both drunk and frequently disorderly, and again on the Hawkesbury expressing powerful vengeance towards the Europeans and leading raids on vulnerable settlers. Given over to the British he was banished to Norfolk Island, across a formidable watery boundary into the bizarre brutality of convict society, where he lingered for eight years before the closing and transfer of the settlement to Van Diemen's Land, traversing yet another boundary into yet another unfamiliar realm. He became a perpetual exile, alienated at every turn.

In Van Diemen's Land he ingratiated himself to white society, aiding in the apprehension of the bushrangers that riddled the island, but there came a tipping point. Disillusioned, he crossed irrevocably into the realm of bush life, not among the familiar sandstone crags of the Hawkesbury but into the Tasmanian hills and forests, among an alien Aboriginal people.

From this weaving of events emerges a complexity and sadness. The youth of Musquito was propelled by initiation into manhood and warrior culture and then to initiation into the wiles and vices of a white world. He resisted European intrusion by the means and methods of traditional society, interpreting white presence by the standards of his own world, but the power and seduction of white life lured him beyond, to a point of understanding where the calamity of contact became inescapable. His return in Tasmania to "native" living and resistance to white presence was in part romantic return and bitter rejection, a futile recreation of what had already passed, a continuation of a greater exile. This complex reaction made confrontation inevitable and the calculated and strategic violence he spawned created fear and awe among white settlers who naturally saw his influence on Tasmanian natives as corrupting, a catalyst for the Black War.

For instance, Henry Emmett, a Treasury Clerk who arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1821 and who later participated in the 1830 Black Line, a monumental farce intended to corral the combative Aborigines, repeated the received wisdom of the time that 'the teachings of the notorious' Musquito, 'who was saturated with villainy' influenced 'the habits of the natives against the robbers of their hunting grounds'.[6] His familiarity with events explains his view but the fact he was writing in 1873 shows the persistence of both this view and of Musquito's extraordinary notoriety.

It was Musquito's profound shift from collaborator to combatant that earned the wrath and attention of colonial authority, that and what seemed a towering ingratitude. After all, he had been accepted into the dominant, occupying culture, like Arminius, and there could be no greater betrayal than to turn his back on such generosity. He was an easily identifiable scapegoat upon whom to heap the anger and loathing of white settlers.

The way his life has been contorted by the different commentaries we encounter indicates the difficulty determining the historical personage. He became many things to many different people within his own time: vile savage and criminal, tame black and blacktracker; the 'Black Napoleon'[7] and legendary warrior against the whites. In the present, where he has been put to work for another set of perceptions, he has been elevated to a figure of resistance against invasion and condemned as bushranger and criminal. For Arminius his transformation was into a nationalist figure and Nazi hero, which has left him an historical embarrassment, but once dead, our "lives" are not our own.

Musquito's is a story of black and white but one that rarely separates into such simple contrasts. His voice is muted and mediated through the minds of others, always white, usually oblique. The evidence is often cryptic and always inflected. It requires constant reference to context and comparison to lift him into life. Like any life it is not certain and is inevitably contradictory, but its exploration is prismatic, turning light and colour into uncertain corners of thought and historical existence and experience.

The Black War and the 'extinction' of 'race'?

In 1884 the notable Tasmanian historian James Bonwick wrote *The Lost Tasmanian Race*, a mourning for what was then seen as the extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines. The last gasp of resistance had expired when George Augustus Robinson had rounded up the remnants to be exiled on Flinders Island in Bass Strait, ending the Black War that had extended through the 1820s, for nearly a decade of massacre and reprisal on all sides.

The Black War was a description that arose from the horror, enormity and impact[8] and was elevated in its aftermath to capitalised importance. It was *the* Black War, the only time where the term War for conflict on Australian soil has been used as a proper noun, such was the significance. The magnitude measured in per capita death rates[9] was so staggering — in fact far greater than the Maori Wars of New Zealand — that War is the only apt term to apply.

The expression has been contested[10] but whether it is described as guerrilla or asymmetrical warfare, resistance, terror or vicious retribution, it was an astonishingly brutal period of colonial conflict with an Indigenous people that warrants understanding.[11] The most unusual feature of this war was there was no instance of rape or sexual violation of white women by Aborigines,[12] not once; though of course, rape of Aboriginal women was routine.

Though today there is vigorous denial of the passing of the Aborigines of Tasmania, evidenced by their descendants, at the time it was seen as a certainty with the death of Truganini in 1876. The "race" had disappeared and the repeated reference to the "extinction" of the "last" Tasmanians in the nineteenth and twentieth century, even

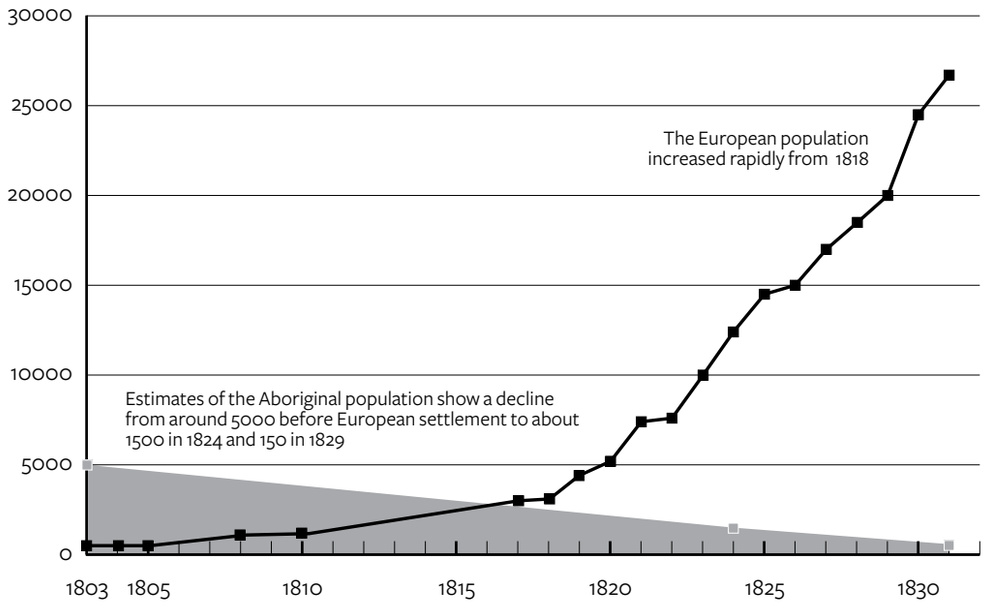
repeated in book titles,[13] assumed their disappearance. While the Tasmanians were a unique human culture they have been both absorbed and have re-invented themselves into the present. From the beginning of white intrusion the Tasmanians have been willingly and unwillingly drawn into a wider gene pool but have never disappeared.

The revelation among ethnologists and anthropologists — between the 1930s and 1960s — that "race" was meaningless and scientifically useless as a means of analysing and classifying, has never really sunk in to the wider public, which still bandies the term "race" about, along with its potent derivative, "racism", with one concept reinforcing the other. The idea haunts the sources and dictates the thinking. It is difficult to escape the grip of the assumption of a distinct "race" even if it is nonsense.

The reality of "race" extinction both disturbed and excited the colonial conscience for while many saw the extirpation of the Tasmanian Aborigines as clearing a path to progress, for the colonial administration it was seen as an 'indelible stain upon the character of the British Government'.[14] It was not a good look for a people inflated by their own sense of decency.

In the considerable angst and reflection that occurred both at the time and in the remaining years of the nineteenth century there was ready acceptance of the violent contribution that convicts and settlers made to the Black War. The authorities, however, excused themselves by their good intentions.

Comparing increasing settler numbers to the decline in the Aboriginal population



In the search for clues to causation one thing seemed to stand out — that the Tasmanian Aborigines had been generally peaceable and avoidant of conflict, more wronged than wrong, until war erupted around 1824 — right about the time that the Sydney Aborigine, Musquito, began a series of attacks and outrages on white settlers in Van Diemen's Land. The coincidence was too unambiguous to ignore because as Bonwick observed, reflecting the received wisdom of the period, the 'Darkies were as quiet as dogs before Musquito came'.[15]

Keith Windschuttle goes further to suggest the Black War was little more than an outbreak of common criminality that 'never rose above or beyond robbery, assault and murder'.[16] The local Tasmanian Aborigines had simply learned bushranging lawlessness from Musquito to go on a crime spree. So addicted were they to tea, sugar and other European commodities, they were little better than 'junkies stealing from a petrol station',[17] and dismissed with towering contempt as inconsequential. Front and centre, in Windschuttle's view, Musquito was a catalyst for brutal violence and pure criminality, not guerrilla war or resistance.

It seems self evident, however, that no man could shoulder such responsibility alone, nor could such a people as the Tasmanians be incapable of volition beyond crude criminality or be so devoid of legitimate grievance and reason to resist. The significance of Musquito, however, has turned historically on these concerns and characterisations.

Musquito's apparent conversion to marauding violence after years of cooperation and collaboration caused considerable consternation. It confirmed in the mind of those like the Rev. Samuel Marsden that the Aborigines were simply incapable of "civilisation" beyond thin skinned behaviour that would be readily shed when their true nature reasserted itself, for a primitive murderousness forever lurked beneath the surface. This constant denial of motivation beyond crude reaction and savagery evades the basic human impulse to strike back at humiliation, to defend hearth and home and preserve the familiar in the face of catastrophic alteration.

The massive influx of white settlers into Van Diemen's Land after the Napoleonic Wars and increasing white intrusion into Aboriginal lands barely registered in local minds as an explanation for the upsurge in Aboriginal/Settler violence, yet they are pivotal to understanding the outbreak of viciousness. These demographic forces were utterly altering. White population increased from 2367 in 1817, to 4037 by 1819, to 7740 by 1823 and 9514 by 1824[18] — a more than fourfold increase in seven years. Hull gives the population rise as 3114 in 1817, to 4411 by 1819, to 5827 by 1821, and 10,009 by 1823;[19] either way it was nothing less than an inundation of people.

The population thereafter doubled to 26,640 by 1831, according to Hull (the ABS says 19,815), when the Black War concluded with the wearied and decimated remnants of the Tasmanian native population banished to Flinders Island.

War has forever been a contest for resources and the Black War was no exception. In the 1820s passenger fares to Van Diemen's Land halved[20] and in the wake of the influx of free settlers and convict labour came a surge of economic activity. It is a constant and historically recurring phenomenon evidenced in other theatres of colonisation that 'spasms of intense Aboriginal resistance correlate with booms',[21] demographic or economic. This explosive colonisation in Van Diemen's Land was no exception. The roots of the violence lie in the demographic eruption and inundation of landscape.

The abandonment of white society and commencement of bloodshed and attacks on white settlers by Musquito occurred at this same crucial time in Aboriginal/Settler relations. In part his alienation was spurred not only by the slights, insults and many broken promises made to him but also by exactly the same rapid demographic changes.

When the Norfolk Island settlement was finally transferred to Van Diemen's Land in 1813 close to half the population of Tasmania was of Norfolk Island origin or experience. Musquito, far from a nameless savage, was known, or known of, by many and he knew many of the 1192[22] souls who populated the colony at that time. It was an astonishingly small cast of players, and while the equally astonishing increase in white population after about 1817 elbowed him to the margins of a rapidly changing white society, it cast him among the local Tasmanians with common cause. It meant though that he was still readily recognisable and resented for his bellicose behaviour and his ingratitude for the opportunities of white living.

Musquito presented as an obvious figure of blame and lent himself variously as a causal factor, a catalyst and convenient scapegoat, for the Tasmanian Black War. Historians have turned themselves into pretzels deciding Musquito's contribution to the Black War, however whether *cause* or *catalyst* rests on a basic definition. A catalyst is not causal: a catalyst increases the rate of reaction in two reactants and in this sense Musquito was undoubtedly a catalyst exacerbating the volatility of black and white antagonism.

But more than catalytic, Musquito was central to a crucial *conjunction*. The increasing demographic disaster saw the collapse of Aboriginal society and the devastating disruption of landscape and life by white colonisation. It had reached crisis by the early 1820s and tragedy by 1824. Circumstances had so aligned that conflict was primed for detonation.

Rage, desperation and dejection made the Tasmanians receptive to the charismatic power of a figure like Musquito. He was one of those accidental personalities of an historical moment, a unique conjunction of time and place.

The nineteenth century commentators recognised the pivotal place of Musquito in the upsurge of violence and they saw his subsequent capture, trial and hanging in January 1825 as precipitating the subsequent outbreak of War. Brian Plomley, in the twentieth century, certainly marks 1824 as 'the beginning of the Black War'[23] and cites two events as 'important in relation to the eventual state of warfare':[24] the first was the firing on natives peaceably visiting Launceston in January 1825 and the other was the hanging of Musquito and Black Jack in the same year though the further execution of the Tasmanian Aborigines Jack and Dick in May 1826 marked the 'real beginning'[25] of hostilities.

The juxtaposition of events around 1824 indicates the catalytic importance of Musquito, however, the upsurge of violence took place against the backdrop of an immense demographic upheaval. It was of such magnitude that it precipitated a catastrophic collapse in Indigenous society and a desperate endeavour to salvage the past. The story of Musquito can only be told and understood in a wider woven manner against the background of these events.

The early history of Australia takes place against constantly shifting boundaries and borderlands. All boundaries and frontiers, both literal and metaphoric, are edges of intensity and potential chaos and the story of the Australian frontier seethes with alteration where fixed assumptions and old ways, on both sides, rapidly capitulated to change. That frontier serves as a discontinuity in landscape before and after European intervention yet also acts as a backdrop to the performance of persons beyond the proscenium that framed the new staged action. The enactment after European entry into the landscape is the commencement of recorded Australian history. It is a tableau of tales that those who come after, historians and other busybodies, stitch together to make order where there was chaos, using the trail signs of stories, since 'humankind is a story telling animal'.[26]

The frontier experience of European intrusion was with a world that was deeply unfamiliar, interpreted with the tools of another knowledge, frequently in error. Such error and misinterpretation still dominates the manner even of present understanding. For those Indigenous Australians who inhabited the other 'side of the frontier'[27] it was an encounter with frequent misunderstanding, both by them and of them, that fuelled a seething resentment and resistance.

Hanging and the man 1

Opposite: Musquito
Nouvelle-Hollande, Y-erran-gou-la-ga

From *Voyage de decouvertes aux terre Australes* (1807/1811). *Atlas*.
Illustration drawn by Petit.

Hanging Musquito

When Musquito was convicted and condemned to be hanged in the Hobart Supreme Court for aiding and abetting the wilful murder of William Hollyoak at Grindstone Bay on 15 November, 1823,[1] his conversation with Mr Bisdee, the jailer, 'and some other prisoners' was noted.

'Hanging no good for black fellow,' Musquito was purported to have sourly intoned.

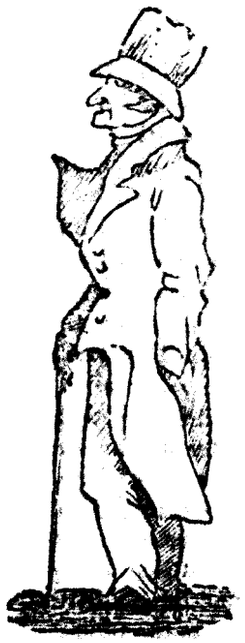
Mr Bisdee, who obviously warmed to the moralising opportunity and is thus probably the original reporter of the conversation, replied, 'Why not as good for black fellow as for white fellow if he kills a man?'

'Very good for white fellow, for *he* used to it.'[2] Musquito retorted.

Henry Melville, writing some ten years after the event, interpreted this exchange to suggest Musquito meant, '*his* execution was useless as an example to the savages' although execution had a deterrent effect among whites, 'who understood the reason.'[3] Melville recognises both the insight and the irony, but it is a many layered and bitter irony Musquito is expressing and a puissant contempt for white culture: they're used to the barbarity of hanging and deserve it.

Musquito was fully aware that Governor George Arthur's offer of the considerable sum of £100[4] reward for his apprehension was an attempt to target him personally for the brutal attacks on settlers, in the hope his hanging would deter. Arthur, newly arrived as Lieutenant Governor in the colony and a man 'quite as fond of maintaining order by making examples,'[5] had been lured to believe that Musquito, a "Sydney black", had turned the heads of local Tasmanians from their otherwise peaceable ways, and his elimination would quell resistance. Musquito, however, had lived both sides of the ethnic divide and knew how culturally abhorrent hanging was to the Aborigines: far from deterrent, it was provocation.

The reason Musquito was heaped with blame was partly from the way native Tasmanians were viewed. They had been characterised up to about 1818 either as passive and peaceable or so unbelievably primitive as to pose no threat — 'as quiet as dogs before Musquito'.[6] This kind of "missing link" primitivism was a remarkably persistent characterisation of the Tasmanians throughout the 19th century and surprisingly, persists even into more recent texts.[7] It made, at the time, for a ghoulish worldwide and slow motion fascination with their demise — species extinction for armchair racial theorists.



Mr Bisdee, a *"well known Sheriff's Officer"*
Karl Von Stieglitz (ed), *Sketches in Early Van Diemen's Land by Thomas Scott* (Hobart: 1966)

By 1818, when Musquito had finally turned his back on white society and firmly resorted to the bush, the 'natives' of Van Diemen's Land had been transformed into 'unquestionably the most perverse known anywhere', leaving slaughtered sheep to waste and attacking settlers. No longer 'much intimidated at the appearance of a musket', their 'hatred to us appears at present to be fixed and ineradicable.'[8] The hand of Musquito was seen behind these actions and Governor Arthur's simplistic view that elimination of Musquito would terminate the surge of attacks failed to understand that forces more complex than the presence of Musquito were responsible for the increasing violence.

It was the kind of thinking, however, that contributed to the frequent pinpointing of Musquito's hanging as a precipitating moment in the Tasmanian Black War. After his and the hanging of the Aborigines Dick and Jack in September 1826, the Aboriginal people around Kangaroo Point, the "tame mob", 'sullenly withdrew to the woods, and never more entered the settled districts, except as deadly enemies of our people.'[9] James Calder's opinion on this was reflected in the views of the *Aboriginal Committee* set up by Governor Arthur to investigate causes of the Black War, so it was a firmly held view at the time.

Melville's interpretation of Musquito's statement to Bisdee is restrained and discerning, unlike some that transform the much-repeated exchange into an increasing burlesque of speech and parody of person. 'Oh! Whitefellow bin blurry well used to it now!'[10] was how later writers repeated and altered the text. This descent into a simpleton black ignorance that does not quite comprehend the enormity of the situation, is twisted into a black joke from the mouth of a naïf. It is a deterioration in tone, however, that mirrors deterioration in regard and relations: from the "Manly" warrior who gave his bearing if not his name to the Sydney suburb to the squalid native simpleton with infant thinking.

It reflects too a decided alteration in cultural regard. In the late 18th century Indigenous peoples were held in some respect, seen more as *different* than necessarily *inferior*. The unfolding of the 19th century however saw a valuation that increasingly assigned native peoples to an inferior savagery. It was a valuation reinforced intentionally or otherwise by later Darwinian theories of evolution that relegated

Indigenous peoples to a lowly mire of intellectual and cultural stagnation compared to the Progress and Improvement of European "civilisation". These have been remarkably persistent prejudices of thought that have barnacle adhesion not only to our present field of vision but also to the many historical reports and commentaries that have to be scoured.

Far from an ignorant savage, Musquito was experienced and aware, and though he may have seen through a "glass darkly", his dawning understanding was of a dark and inevitable demise, and not simply his own. He had seen from both sides and knew the European mind on punishment. He knew too that hanging was deeply abhorrent to Aborigines. The ritual nature of their conflict and punishment, of trials by ordeal where the culprit was made to withstand a fusillade of spears, made the restraint and deliberate asphyxiation or broken neck of hanging appear quite barbaric to Aboriginal society.

His final public utterance is an encapsulation of bitterly unresolvable difference: a contrast of colour, of understanding, of perception. It is not a plea for his own exemption. He knows there is no likely reprieve. He had been banished, exiled for eight years within the convictism of Norfolk Island almost exclusively in the company of convicts, guards and soldiers, where hanging and flogging were reality. He understood the mind and behaviour of the British and undoubtedly spoke "good" English.

His speech was probably heavily peppered with convict cant and underclass argot, language almost incomprehensible to a modern ear (and even to the middle class of the time). His accent may have even had a surprisingly cockney inflection, courtesy of his convict companions, but he understood the meaning and nuance of English and did not talk a kind of black Pidgin English with halting phraseology. If he ever mimicked the native Pidgin it would have been to satisfy a white audience that had begun to impose the expectation of a savagery of tongue as well as behaviour.

The man, *Y-erran-gou-la-ga*

Biography pretends that a life can be told,
when experience teaches us that it cannot.
We suppress the knowledge, because we have a
need for stories, a need to make sense of lives.

—Virginia Woolf

Musquito was not his native name. The Sydney Aborigines, while astonishing mimics of voice and gesture, had inordinate difficulty pronouncing the English "s", so like so many aspects of Aboriginal life that have come down to the present, it was a colonial imposition. It was not even particularly original as there were others of similar appellation, and like the numerous Toms, Jacks and Jemmys the names bestowed on Aborigines by the British owed more to convenience than imagination. More consideration was given to naming their stabled horses than their "sable" neighbours.

How the name Musquito arose however owes more to folklore than reliable evidence, and was more likely a tossed off title than something considered. Of course there are obvious comparisons with the troublesome insect of the same name and Muschetta — one of his reported names — is said to be an obsolete word for the insect[11] though the OED begs to differ. Then again, to the British the scimitar shaped non returning boomerang favoured by Musquito may have appeared like a machete, possibly corrupted to *muschetta*, in the recording of his name as Bush Muschetta.[12]

Bush Muschetta encountered British forces on the Hawkesbury in 1805 and was said to have threatened, in good English, to continue determined hostilities against Europeans. 'Bush' may have been added to distinguish him from another of the same name but prefixing 'Bush' would also have identified him with the inland "bush" or "woods" tribes rather than from among the coastal people. Were Bush Muschetta and Musquito the same person? Names, in their spelling and pronunciation in the nineteenth century were astonishingly fluid and *muschetta* and *musquito* — where the 'ch' is pronounced as 'k' — were probably garbled versions of the same name.

The first glimpse of Musquito appears in the illustrations of Nicolas-Martin Petit, drawn in Sydney for the Baudin expedition 1800-1804 as it re-victualed in Port Jackson (November 1802 to April 1803). There he is named *Y-erran-gou-la-ga*[13] though like most aspects of Musquito's life, this is much disputed. It is nevertheless a potentially rare glimpse of an historical Aboriginal figure where usually nothing of a likeness remains.

The French expedition led by Baudin to Tasmania and mainland Australia was an ambitious mission to "discover" and map the great southern continent, named in part by them as 'Terre de Napoleon' in honour of their imperial patron. It was an extraordinary exercise in geography militant[14] and commanding exploration.

Petit and Lesueur collected and drew an astonishing array of zoological items, from ctenophora to chelonians, from birds to mammals. It was a task demanding painstaking and photographic accuracy. Through the detailed drawings of Petit and Lesueur it also became a unique ethnographic mission, one of the first ever to accurately depict the peoples encountered and their way of life. It was this meticulous attention to detail that has left an invaluable legacy of Enlightenment enthusiasm.

The illustration of *Y-erran-gou-la-ga* is part of an extensive series of drawings of Aboriginal subjects made while the expedition was in early Sydney. The drawing of *Y-erran-gou-la-ga* in particular has attracted some fierce controversy. Is this actually Musquito? Plomley[15] asserts it *is* the Musquito later shipped to Van Diemen's Land and hanged in 1825; others, like Kociumbas, equally maintain he 'certainly … was never' there.[16] Parry[17] is absolutely sure it is *not* the same person and Hamy in his 1891 catalogue of works from the Baudin Expedition, while making the comparison, clearly does not see it as the same 'terrible Mousquito … deported to Tasmania for murder'.[18] This scholarly squabble may appear immaterial but for how it presents Musquito.

Musquito, engraving titled *Nouvelle Hollande. Y-Erren-Gou-La-Ga* From *Voyage de decouvertes aux terre Australes* (1807/1811). *Atlas*. Australian National Gallery

Mousquéda ou Mousquita J Bonnemains *et al.* (eds) *Baudin in Australian Waters. The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804* (Melbourne, 1988), p174

Nouvelle-Hollande — Mousqueda — no. 3 couleur J Bonnemains *et al.* (eds) *Baudin in Australian Waters. The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804* (Melbourne, 1988), p175

The Petit illustration of *Y-erran-gou-la-ga* is the one engraved (thus reversed) and included in the famed *Atlas*[19] prepared by Péron. It is clearly based on pastel and charcoal illustrations of *Mousquéda ou Mousquita* in sketchbooks held in the Museum in Le Havre that did not make it into the *Atlas*, so it is definitely an Aboriginal otherwise called Musquito. What is significant is the difference in detail. This was a purported exercise in accurate ethnographic depiction — picturing reality — yet each subtle alteration in the illustrations reveals more about those observing than the observed.

The first illustration of Musquito, entitled *Mousquéda ou Mousquita*, depicts a mature, well-built tall man of about 20–24 years of age, clearly showing the scarification associated with tribal initiation but in the second illustration, titled *Mousqueda — no. 3*, the detail of scarification is oddly omitted. Though motive is always difficult to determine, the emphasis on ethnographic accuracy in these early European efforts would make such an omission significant, not something casual.

The scarification of initiation was profoundly important as a signifier of manhood. Within Sydney Aboriginal society lack of initiation literally meant retaining the status of a child. It was intensely important for warrior regard and these were the qualities of the Noble Savage sought by the French.

In the final *Atlas* version the engraver, Barthélemy Roger, even went so far as to include a bone through the nasal septum of *Y-erran-gou-la-ga*. Though often depicted in other Sydney Aboriginal illustrations by Petit it was not in his sketches of Musquito.

On the one hand the notions of painted and scarred savagery were emphasised, even embellished by the engraver, Barthélemy Roger. On the other hand Nicolas-Martin Petit was also attracted, in one of the sketches, to the European aesthetic of a youthful unblemished chest of muscled masculinity (Mouscqueda — no. 3 coleur).

Petit was much influenced by his teacher, the neo-classical Louis David, an aspiration to art in contrast to the family background of artisans skilled in the meticulous craft of illustrating luxury fans for women, a craft that died with so much in the Revolution.[20] David transformed the odious Marat into a painting of *pietà* and Napoleon's mule over the Alps into a rearing stallion — Petit's embellishments in comparison are modest.

Musquito though was *interpreted* by Petit — and the later engraver Roger — to represent what they wished to see and what they wanted others to see.

Within these efforts at representation resides the nagging issue of provenance, of whether indeed this is the same Musquito (later hanged in Hobart) or simply an extremely tempting conflation of what were multiple figures with the same name.

Paul Delaroche
Napoleon Crossing the Alps
1850 en.wikipedia.org

Jaccques-Louis David
Napoleon Crossing the Alps

Jaccques-Louis David
Death of Marat
Commons Wikimedia

Petit and Lesueur drew a substantial number of Aboriginal characters from around Sydney who later found their way into the *Atlas*. Musquito or *Y-erran-gou-la-ga* was obviously one. Another was *Ourou-Maré dit Bull-Dog par les Anglais, Jeune guerrier de la Tribu des Gwéa-gal*, Ourou-Maré called Bull-Dog by the English, a young warrior of the Gweagal tribe.

Without the scarification of initiation the chunky Bull-Dog was neither man nor warrior in the traditional sense indicating the possible breakdown of traditional culture, though he is obviously still very young and of a size and shape to lend himself to an English sobriquet that parodied his shape.

The importance of the Bull-Dog drawing is that it confirms Petit's Musquito was the one later hanged in Hobart. The reason is seductively simple: Musquito and Bull-Dog were drawn in Sydney at the same time, were captured together on the Hawkesbury for murderous attacks on settlers and together banished to Norfolk Island. The coincidence is simply too great that they could be other than the same people. It was certainly the evidence that Plomley relied on. His extensive work on Baudin in Tasmanian waters[21] would have made him extremely familiar with Péron's *Atlas* and Petit's illustrations in the Museum at Le Havre[22] and would have led to his emphatic assertion.

In this case the evidence is absolutely convincing, however the occurrence of Aboriginal figures with the same name or simply confused reports concerning the same person are common. The British had an utter disregard for native names; they were beastly careless, indifferent really, when it came to Aborigines. In the modern enthusiasm of studies in Aboriginality we need reminding that to the British they were simply peripheral pests, much on the margin but of little consequence beyond their place as a "problem".

There is a powerful challenge, however, to the assumption the figure drawn by Petit in Sydney was the Musquito later hanged in Hobart for at the same time Musquito was being shipped with Bull-Dog to Norfolk Island, his death and funeral were being recounted in great detail in the *Sydney Gazette*.

This is a problem indeed, a striking conundrum really. The reports are not simply a parenthetic and passing reference either, but a robust description of a battle, death and funeral of Musquito reported at length over several days.[23] Knowing and detailed, it is difficult to dismiss. This is what makes the Petit illustrations so central.

The explanation may be careless misreporting or even deliberate misreporting but multiple figures of the same name are also possible. The Musquito on the Hawkesbury is a 'Principal of the latest Outrages'[24] and attacks on settler farms, a formidable resistance leader. The Musquito reported in Sydney town is frequently in fights and drunken encounters. Is the Musquito of Hawkesbury notoriety distinguishable from the drunken rowdy of Sydney Town? And that leaves the dilemma of who was depicted by Petit — the rowdy or the rebel? And could he quite reasonably have been both? Did the Musquito of Petit's illustration die on the streets of Sydney or did he live on to ravage white settlement in Van Diemen's Land, and end on the scaffold in Hobart?

The juxtaposition of the Petit drawings of Musquito and Bull-Dog, their arrest together on the Hawkesbury and banishment to Norfolk Island favours the probability they are one and the same, but it is no idle conjecture since it goes to the heart of how Musquito is represented, with the evidence tugging the character into opposite depictions.

Ourou-Maré dit Bull-Dog par les Anglais, Jeune guerrier de la Tribu des Gwéa-gal.

From *Voyage de decouvertes aux terre Australes* (1807/1811). *Atlas*

Ourou-Maré dit Bull-Dog par les Anglais, Jeune guerrier de la Tribu des Gwéa-gal.

J Bonnemains *et al.* (eds) *Baudin in Australian Waters. The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804* (Melbourne, 1988), p178.

Separating them into town and country, warrior and drunkard, as Naomi Parry[25] attempts to do, assumes Aborigines in the Sydney region remained in defined enclaves. They moved seamlessly, however, between the frontier and the town and rapidly adopted the vices of white society, rum and tobacco. According to Bonwick, Musquito became 'an English scholar in our national vices of drinking and swearing'[26] and these are the contradictions that contaminate any idealised picture of a resistance warrior when it comes to a person like Musquito. A drunken rowdy round town might not cut the cloth of noble resistance and this makes it tempting to see in simple opposites, but warriors of any culture are inclined to kick up dust occasionally.

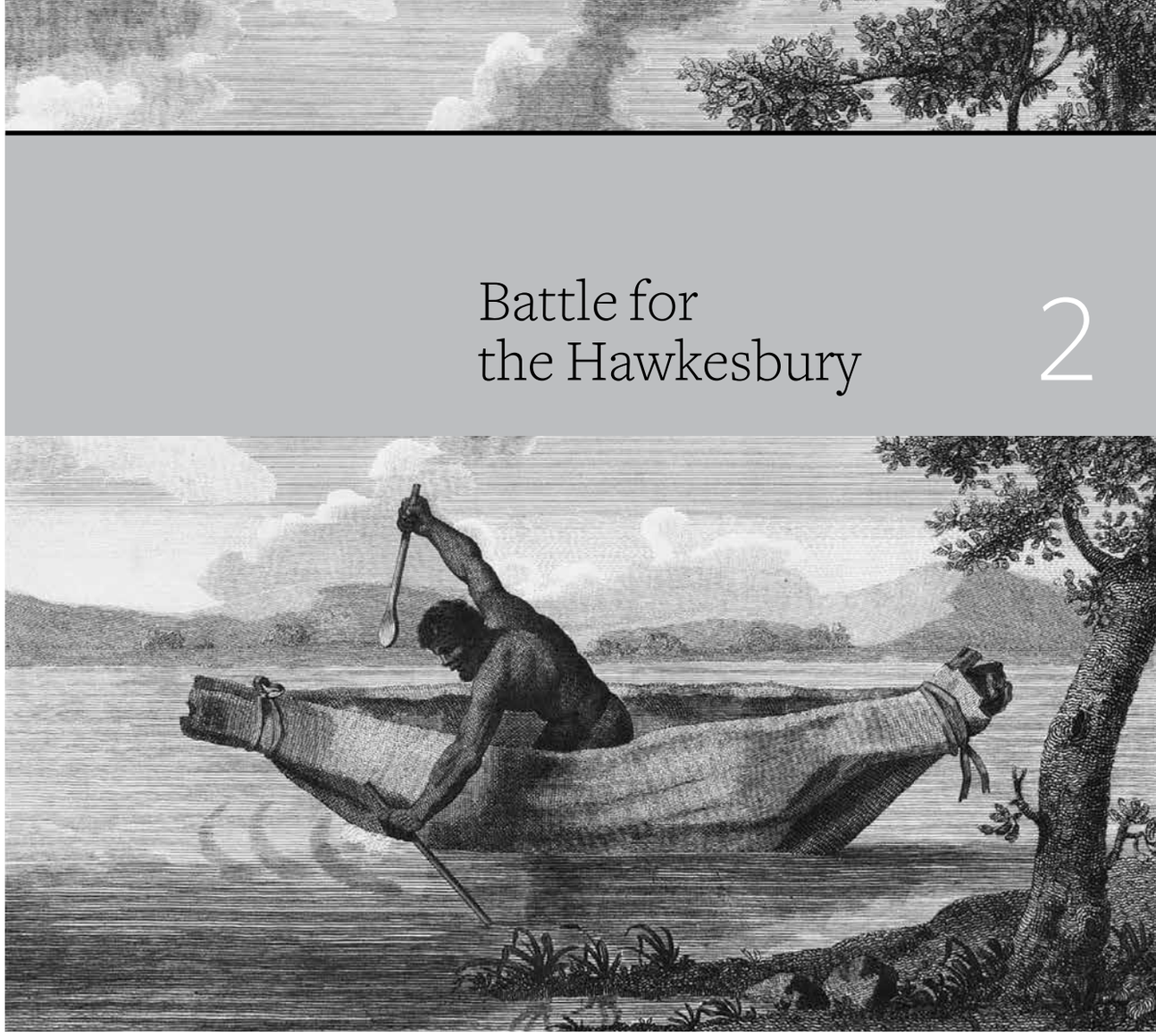
Naomi Parry sees the Petit drawing as that of the drunkard killed in the streets of Sydney while another Musquito went into exile. Windschuttle sees the death of the Musquito on the streets of Sydney as simply mistaken reporting of the exiled Musquito. Misreporting, as Windschuttle suggests, is probably correct but the evidence is also that the Petit drawing was of the exiled Musquito, contrary to Parry's assertion. A mess of contradictions shadows any representation, ready to upend certainty.

It becomes quickly clear that for so much of Australian history of British origin, Aborigines form a backdrop of vague two-dimensional characters rather than as people fully formed. Musquito is no exception. Like every story it is an invitation to perceive particularly, with the subject voice modulated by the expectations of author and audience. Without such mediation the subject is mute; with it they are victims of authorial vivisection.

Those that suffer most are those whose evidential remains are skeletal, and the bones of this story, bleached bare, would be little more than an historical footnote if Musquito's murderous outrages in Van Diemen's Land had not made him obnoxious, elevating him to cultural malignancy for his part in the opening bouts of the Black War in Van Diemen's Land.

It is a story peripheral to the grand scheme of white settlement in Australia, a shadow cut out of the past, not a person, merely a pest and irritant to the spread of progress and cultivation. The paucity of detail has meant his motives have been difficult to fathom and he has been appropriated to turn every purpose and make every narrative, portrayed in myriad ways from malicious savage to resistance fighter. This appropriation reflects and mirrors the need we have of myths and a history that sanctions our origins, black or white, an appropriation more powerful than fact. [27]

Opposite: Pimbloy: Native of New Holland in a canoe of that country, engraving by Samuel Neele. From James Grant, *A Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery performed in His Majesty's vessel the Lady Nelson, of sixty tons burthen, with sliding keels, in the years 1800, 1801 and 1802, to New South Wales.* (*Pimbloy is a spelling variant of Pemulwuy.*) Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales



Battle for the Hawkesbury

2

... the third sort of Land is what is commonly called Brush-Land — that is subject to overflow by the Rivers — there is no finer alluvial Soil in the World — on the Banks of the River Hawkesbury it has yielded heavy Crops of Wheat Maize Barley &c for thirty years in succession without Manuring and is now in as good tilth as at first , if not better.

— Edward Eager, *The Evidence to the Bigge Reports: NSW Under Governor Macquarie*[1]

2.1 Setting the scene

They 'Wou'd do as they pleas'd'

The Hawkesbury is a riverine slash across the landscape, under the brow of escarpments that make up the Blue Mountains. It diverts the flow from this vast watershed into Broken Bay and Pittwater, away from the Parramatta estuary that empties into Sydney Harbour and shapes the character and topography of the Cumberland Plain. As a result Sydney Harbour before European intrusion was so crystal clear and devoid of turbidity that native Australians were expert in spearing from the shore the fish glistening beneath the surface.

On the other hand the Hawkesbury in flood could exceed a terrifying 15 metres above its normal flow and leave behind in its wake a rich alluvial wash of abundance and fertility. Sydney Harbour became a dominant Aboriginal fishing culture, the Hawkesbury a garden of wild yams, freshwater mussels, orchids, lilies and floating nardoo fern as well as possum, though when the seasonal mullet runs swarmed the estuaries, everyone became a fisherman.

This was Musquito's country, along the Hawkesbury and into Broken Bay and northern Sydney. Understanding the intense violence that engulfed this borderland, propelling Musquito into notoriety, has to take account of what lured white incursion and the nature of the first feral settlers drawn by opportunities without restraint.

The central feature of the Hawkesbury was its rich abundance,[2] a profusion of resources that made it a flashpoint for conflict. It was a node of concentrated habitation, black at first then rapidly overlaid by white. It was central to Sydney Aboriginal culture and its interlaced links with the Cumberland landscape dictated Aboriginal movement, making it a place of coming and going.

As Lancelot Threlkeld[3] was to discover in the 1820s, his missionary subjects were forever wandering from their northern Lake Macquarie haunt and following the traditional riverine paths down to the Hawkesbury.

And while the river valley was a place of abundant food, the plateaus of the steep escarpments were places of ceremony and initiation where, to the present, unusual rock carvings and paintings continue to be found, images of connection to landscape, ceremony and food, the pivots of importance to Aborigines.

From the Hawkesbury and Broken Bay Aboriginal highways, paths by land or water wended their way down to Sydney Harbour, and from the harbour south to Botany Bay and the swamps and lagoons where waterfowl and their flavoursome eggs could be found. The Sydney Aborigines formed relatively small extended family clans that were all to some extent related to one another, necessitating marriage beyond the group, and these highways formed webs of connection, great marriage and initiation circuits, trails of constant movement and contact that bound the various groups. This is why Musquito moved so easily between Sydney and the Hawkesbury.

Aboriginal society was intensely interconnected through marriage and kinship, by initiation, totem and law but more particularly by place, by 'country' and to that of their extended relations. Despite the persistent use of dubious "tribal" names in modern literature, Aboriginal identity was principally through these minutely meshed

Sydney Hawkesbury region

connections. Many groups had no name and no use for one. The movement, then, of Aboriginal people was by necessity much more extensive than imagined by the British, who conjured exclusive "tribal" domains, much as they imagined their own past. They looked for "tribes" and because that was what they sought they often found this formula.

Kinship, totem and country, then, were the principal markers of personal Aboriginal identity, not "tribes", despite the way some modern scholarship has attempted to re-create tribal entities in the Sydney region. Musquito, for instance, has been described as a Gai-Mariagal man from Gu-ring-gai country but this is artifice.[4]

Gu-ring-gai or Kur-in-gai was a well-meaning invention by the amateur ethnologist John Fraser[5] in the late 19th century and Gai-Mariagal is a coinage by Aboriginal academic Denis Foley that has no provenance but is probably a reconstructed spelling of Cammerragal in the traditions of white ethnologists of the 19th century who revelled in such concocted reconstructions.

That Aborigines today seek to assume identity through creating or borrowing "tribal" names is entirely legitimate but that does not always mean they are original or endowed with ancient authenticity. All we can really say of Musquito was that he was from the Hawkesbury Broken Bay region.[6]

The British occupation of the Sydney basin centred on the elegant deep-water anchorage of Sydney Cove, but demanded a food source beyond the abundant fish about the harbour wolfed down by the indiscriminate appetite of their fishing seines. They needed arable land for crops and quickly identified suitable soils around Parramatta.

One of the first of the convict farmers was James Ruse, who has entered history as a pioneering great and saviour of the settlement, partly through his own invention. The reality is less heroic but more interesting. Ruse may have successfully demonstrated the agricultural possibilities of the pocket of soil around Parramatta, but in 1793, now a free man, he decamped for the Hawkesbury along with a gaggle of shipboard cronies. Governor Phillip had revealed the Hawkesbury in an earlier expedition of 1789 and all were aware of its rumoured fertility. More importantly they recognised its place beyond the pale of settlement and authority, and that was what drew these first white interlopers.

Ruse may have been a free man but the distinction between free and convicted in the initial period was blurred, unless of course you were of the officer class. Extracting labour from a reluctant and argumentative cohort of convicts required negotiation and compromise, carving out corners of freedom and reward where compulsion otherwise prevailed.[7] The first Hawkesbury settlers of cantankerous determination lived out a recurring seventeenth and eighteenth century aspiration of underclass freedom. It found its form in literature, in tales like *Robinson Crusoe* and the satirical versions by Swift in *Gulliver's Travels,* but these in turn were founded on actual stories of shipwreck and survival, like Alexander Selkirk and Robert Knox's *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*.

Convicts like Knight and Wilson chose the risks of cohabitation with the Aborigines in preference to the dubious benefits of convict society. James Wilson in 1797 reappeared in the Sydney settlement after 'herding with the savages in different parts of the country'. This had 'obliged' him to submit to having his 'shoulders and breast scarified after their manner.'[8] Wilson, who brought with him the first reports of wombats and lyrebirds, had become an Initiated Man among the Aborigines.

Even Australia's first bushranger, Black Caesar, a Negro of considerable size and immense appetite, preferred the vagaries of bush life, and one of the escapees from the failed settlement of Melbourne, William Buckley, lived for thirty years with the Victorian Aborigines. Many took advantage of their maritime experience and colonised the sealing sites of Bass Strait, which became a haven for absconders and misfits. Captain George Sutherland visited Kangaroo Island in 1819 and found it inhabited by 'pirates, complete savages, living in bark huts like natives … dressed in untanned kangaroo skins … wearing moccasins of seal skins, keeping native women in a state of slavery … They smelt like foxes.'[9]

This theme of freedom resonated and land was its means of realisation. Having land was to be one's own Master, and it became the grail of generations in Australia and North America. The Hawkesbury then was a borderland of mythic possibility even before it began. It was a place of perceived ease and freedom, where they wrote in 1795 that they were not bound by the Governor's orders as they 'were free men, and wou'd do as they pleas'd'.[10] They were an 'indolent and improvident',[11] lot frequently 'immersed in intoxication'.[12] The Hawkesbury became, as a result, a magnet for every vagrant and fugitive. Even James Ruse, though never successfully prosecuted, was patron of a gambling den on the Hawkesbury.

Free land was a cornerstone of this early adventure, but living drifted not only into drinking and gambling but into aspects of hunter/gather and subsistence agriculture. This reversion to aspects of hunter/gather existence brought them into close contact with the Aborigines, whose inclination was always to integrate outsiders into their system of kinship and connection. It equally brought them into conflict, particularly over the exploitation of women and children, which did such fundamental damage to Aboriginal society.

Despite the haphazard nature of the frontier venture, it was the natural fertility of the soil that ensured a vital contribution to the colonial food store and grudging tolerance by the authorities. The land also became a lure for the grasping ambitions of the officers of the NSW Corps, who saw the immense potential for self-enrichment. So this vagabond era quickly vanished by the early 1800s, whereas it was to persist in Van Diemen's Land until the 1820s.

It is difficult to imagine who these people were without the preposterous guise of "pioneer". Their hovels of framed poles, bark slab or wattle and daub[13] with grass thatch may have seemed like peasant squalor.[14] A sparsely furnished room with dirt floor meant earth inhabited every dwelling. It was kitchen, living and bedroom, leaving barely a moment of privacy in a vast empty loneliness of threaded paths that led through scrub and teatree to other people, as close as they were far.

Hovel or not, they were their own proud Masters. Peasants possibly, but we tend to forget these were pre-industrial creatures proficient in survival with a plethora of basic skills, from leather work and candle-making to master plonk producers able to turn the fruit they grew — particularly the peaches that thrived in the new colony — into a virulent alcoholic concoction. They came from an era of alcohol, rough games and savage entertainments, gambling and cards, fierce boxing matches, horse racing and cruel animal baiting.

All featured in the stories of the early Hawkesbury, along with intoxicating moments of congregation when people retreated from their isolation and gathered in vulgar conclaves of drinking, singing, flirting, gambling, and dancing. The dancing! When every fiddle, stringed instrument, fife, whistle and pipe conspired with spirits that leapt higher than the bonfires of exploding sparks. And the faces were not merely white and weathered but black and curious, adding their dance steps to the amazement of their neighbours, vibrating their knees and kicking dust in swirls of acrobatic footsteps and stick patterns of hand and leg movements. Those were the positive moments of black and white contact before conflict and misunderstanding made death the medium of exchange. Then there was only a savage rage on both sides of the loathing.

Importance of American Indian foods

These early vagrant settlers took their ways into this new realm of untidy bush, steep sandstone cliffs, caves and paddocks of loam that grew as you watched them. They took too, not only the Old World grains like wheat but a vital cache of New World and Mesoamerican crops like maize, potatoes, beans and pumpkins. These were the crops encountered by the Spanish in their conquest of the Aztecs and Incas.

Along with crops like tomatoes, chillies and capsicum, they spread through the rest of the world with astonishing speed, even before the last of the Conquistadors were dead.

What was so important about these crops was their ease of cultivation and adaptability to climate and soil type. Potatoes grew even in marginal soils, which was why they became the crop of peasants in Ireland. More importantly, they produced more per hectare with a greater calorific return, and were relatively easy to store. Maize did not require the fine tilth of wheat and produced significantly more per hectare than wheat with greater protein content.[15] In addition, maize was easy to dry, store and transport. It was highly calorific and easily ground into corn cakes though it was seen as an inferior product. Wheaten bread was the staple, forming some 80 per cent of the British workingman's diet, a staggering proportion that is difficult for us to imagine in the modern land of latte and croissants.[16]

Alongside the New World crops was the pioneering portable plough — the pig. Astonishingly fecund and fast growing, the pig was a compact source of meat and a source of cash on the Sydney market. It was carried by the emerging Hawkesbury shipping industry that also serviced a vast sealing trade in Bass Strait, recruiting Aborigines and introducing them to below decks culture. While the main virtue of the pig was that it could live on almost anything, including maize cobs and potatoes, its snout was its other central virtue, an efficient cultivator of virgin ground before the hoe was set to work. What they found to thrive on and root up on the Hawkesbury was an abundance of native bracken roots and the yams that were part of the staple food of local Aboriginal people.

These elements were vital to the initial contact with Aboriginal people on the upper Hawkesbury. The hunter/gather economy is finely balanced and the intrusion of white settlers overwhelmed resources, so Aboriginal contact with this particularly unruly form of white society shaped a relationship of competition and conflict. Initial contact emphasised integration and reciprocation with conflict resolved by payback and retribution, but as conflict escalated and community pressures intensified the mode of reaction mutated to ridding the landscape of white presence, a shift from retribution to war. The pigs and corn cultivation quickly damaged Indigenous food sources but replaced it with a highly portable substitute in the form of corn. Aboriginal society was quick to adopt culturally useful items like blankets, glass, or horrid little lap dogs whose noisy yapping made excellent sentinels to danger. And maize. Generally, Aboriginal society did not store surpluses. European sedentary existence on the other hand depended on surplus and storage so they had much to offer their Aboriginal neighbours, who maximised this advantage in exchange for access to their land.

Aborigines learned quickly the virtue of storage which corn made easy. After a corn raid, Tedbury led settlers to a huge Aboriginal cache of 'at least 40 bushels of corn'[17] or about 1.3 tonnes, an astonishing haul. Storage too made the settlers vulnerable as well as sources of abundance. Aborigines learned that firing crops, stacks or grain storages threatened the lives and livelihoods of settlers and drove them from vulnerable peripheral settlements, the "out-farms", as conflict turned to eradicating white presence.

Aboriginal habitation around and about the new settlements became common and even saw Aboriginal labour being applied to cultivation in exchange for a share of the return. Women were obviously also an incendiary factor in this predominantly male domain. This uneasy mutual dependence became a quite vexing problem when conflict flared, and the authorities on a number of occasions had to specifically prohibit fraternisation and harbouring of Aborigines 'lurking' about the farms.

This seems an odd contradiction. How could contact have continued while a general state of conflict existed? Certainly there was a mix of interests on both sides that stood to one side of general conflict, but there is evidence that Aboriginal participants in conflicts with Europeans continued close association with other Europeans. As the Chief Constable at Green Hills on the Hawkesbury deposed, even 'after natives had committed depredations ... even murders ... they have been received into the houses of the settlers'.[18] Obviously there were a variety of negotiated arrangements — even collusion — and the sides were by no means seamlessly united in their opposition.

This fits with the Aboriginal form of conflict, which was sporadic and rapidly put to one side, even where moments before the rage had been intense. An example stands out with the resistance figure Pemulwuy. He had openly and defiantly confronted the British troops in the streets of Parramatta and was wounded and captured there. After his recovery and escape he met later with white authorities where his polite question was whether the Governor was still angry with him over past events.[19] It was as though it was as natural for these moments to pass as it was just as natural for them to reignite if provocation was provided. As one description of a "native affray" put it, a 'suspension of hostilities took place as abruptly and unaccountably ... as the affray had commenced; and the wounded ... sat down perfectly satisfied with the event.'[20]

This pattern of internecine conflict in Aboriginal society revealed aspects of conflict that often puzzled the British, though the core level of violence was often more bitter and intense than could be imagined. For while it was a society of reciprocity, sharing and exchange, this also meant retribution was equally a violent part of that reciprocity. Payback and exchange are obverse sides of the same coin.

2.2 Conflict: the beginning of catastrophe

On the Hawkesbury frontier there was sometimes good reason for cooperation and collusion between white and black, and always sufficient provocation for conflict. The tocsin for violence and revenge was loud and the scale and dimension immense. It turned the Hawkesbury into a 'frontier of the most lawless kind',[1] where no language could 'describe the scenes of villainy and infamy', according to the local Parramatta magistrate, Richard Atkins,[2] which is saying a lot given Atkins' dissolute character.

For a people whose experience was of absolute population stability, the continual influx and expansion of white presence was astonishing, placing inordinate pressure on limited resources and provoking clashes. War and conflict are always about resources. As conflict moved from punishment for infractions of Aboriginal Law towards a determination to eradicate white presence, some of the Aboriginal bands in the Hawkesbury "outrages" expanded to several hundred. This was the nearest thing in the Aboriginal lexicon to determined warfare and this was only possible with sufficient food to sustain operations.

The source of sustenance and the object of operations centred on the maize grounds and the caloric concentration of such portable food. Not only did maize provide the opportunity to concentrate hostility, it was often collected in blankets provided by the British. They made admirable tote bags.

Corn is why the Hawkesbury was such an important site of conflict and why the extent of the conflict was so magnified. Both sides relied on maize, which meant conflict ebbed and flowed with the season. It is ironic, but if it had not been for the favourable characteristics of American Indian food, Aboriginal/white conflict might not have been so intense on this early Australian frontier borderland.

Entry of the British into the Hawkesbury larder was highly contested and subject to Aboriginal law of reciprocation. The need to share and reciprocate was not entirely alien to the British. On the margins of British society where scarcity ruled, communal sharing was readily understood. The British understood too, the nature of reciprocal "payback" which could be visited upon someone other than the perpetrator of an offence.

The British routinely engaged in "punitive expeditions" that visited violence on the many for the misdemeanours of a few — simple "payback". After all, Governor Phillip sent troops to Botany Bay to take ten Aboriginal heads in retribution for the murder of the gamekeeper McIntyre. They were, however, strangely myopic, with a remarkable inability to see any injustice in their approach while railing against the "treachery" and "savagery" of Aborigines who wreaked vengeance on "innocent" settlers. When

violence flared on the Hawkesbury in 1795, Paterson, then Acting Governor, had no hesitation in ordering soldiers not only to destroy as many as possible but also to erect gibbets to display the hanged bodies as a warning to the rest.[3]

The colonial "frontier", a term pillaged from American Frederick Jackson Turner, has been harried by overuse but it also hobbles us to an anticipation of *advancement*, of 'progress towards what we know eventuated'. We overlook that the colonial setting was a *periphery*, 'a ragged outer margin' of 'primitiveness and violence' with a 'bizarre ... outlandish quality ...'[4] Bernard Bailyn employs the terms "borderland" and "marchland", from the historical experience of the Welsh borderlands and Scottish marchlands, to describe the violence, exaggeration and chaos of these peripheral places. The marchland or borderland is where the 'restraint on brutal exploitation' is abandoned and 'savagery and developing civilization' intermingle.[5]

In conflict with Indigenous people on the borderlands even the good and respectable 'acquire vicious habits', creating constant anarchy and confusion, a place where '[k]indly, devout and genteel householders become brutal overnight'. They lived with the 'constant apprehension of extreme violence' and must have considered in their darker moments 'their own capacity' both to inflict and endure 'degradation, humiliation and pain'.[6] To suggest, as Keith Windschuttle does, that '[m]ost colonists were Christians, to whom killing the innocent would have been abhorrent',[7] is charmingly naïve and utterly unsighted.

The Australian borderlands seethed with violence, chaos and an arbitrary morality, just as it has in every peripheral and colonial outpost. It is an unfortunately consistent and recurring pattern. Pastoral peace is the vision; violence the ultimate means. The brutality of the Hawkesbury borderland and British understanding of payback can be seen in one of the most celebrated legal cases of violence against Aborigines on the Hawkesbury — the case of Edward Powell and the brutal murder of Jemmy and Little George in 1799.[8]

It seems clear, as Grace Karskens[9] has pointed out, that this had been payback for the earlier killings of two settlers, Hodgkinson[10] and Wimbow,[11] and that the two youths, if not complicit, were nonetheless associates of those involved. This can be made to appear a tale of outrage on innocents but both, though adolescent, were initiated warriors and combatants, even though they regularly associated with the settlers. Hodgkinson was on generally good terms with the local Aborigines, so he was an unfortunately convenient victim, killed for his association with Wimbow, who had offended Aboriginal law by abducting a local woman.[12] That was payback number one.

Similarly the brutal execution of Jemmy and Little George, lured into capture, one shot, one murdered with a cutlass, their throats slashed and their bodies buried, indicated, again, elements of payback. Payback number two.

The settlers had gathered in their hovels to plan the youngsters' execution, the air tense with intention and fear, reluctant to be the agents of revenge but determined on retribution. Even the wife of one of the white victims was consulted on their course of action and with her nod of assent the path was fixed. Everyone clearly understood neither of the native boys was personally responsible but that, as in Aboriginal law, payback could be visited upon others. In the later trial proceedings for those arrested for the murders, it seemed the settlers believed they had tacit permission from the authorities to deal with the situation summarily, to engage in the familiar British "punitive" action.

The case of R. v Powell comes to us because of that court action. It was only the tip of an iceberg of hidden brutality so common that the culprits, though found guilty, were never gaoled but wandered back to their farms. This escalating tit-for-tat reprisal sustained a violent death toll. According to John Molloy, surgeon for the area, 26 Europeans had been killed and 13 wounded by Aborigines on the Hawkesbury in a 4 ½ year period[13] but there is no count of Aboriginal casualties, which would have been more magnified.

This intermittent violence ratcheted to such ferocity that George Caley, the irascible and eccentric botanist, saw the situation on the Hawkesbury in 1803, when Musquito spearheaded the conflict, as a 'sort of war',[14] and he was not alone in the observation. Caley suggested it began over a comparatively inconsequential matter, the purported spearing of some sheep, which indicates the underlying tinder-dry tension. 'Accordingly war was declared without much deliberation'[15] on the Aborigines and the Aborigines revenged themselves by killing one of the stock-keepers. This 'sort of war' lasted about 12 months, until the time of Musquito's apprehension. The tipping point into war came when Aboriginal response moved from simple payback to erasing white presence. By that time white intrusion was virtually unstoppable.

The early violence on the Hawkesbury was frequently sparked by white exploitation of women and children. The disproportionately male cohort meant that both coerced and consensual sexuality was rampant. Children too were stolen and raised as labour units and servants, but also for base child sexual exploitation of both sexes. It was a paedophiles' playground, though it needs to be remembered that at that time, accepted sexual engagement, the age of consent, was extremely low,[16] often as young as 10 or even 7. Nevertheless exploitation of children wreaked havoc on the transmission of culture, contributing to the disintegration of Aboriginal society.

The white exploitation of women distorted Aboriginal mores where traditionally women were feisty agents of their own interests. Malaspina, spy for the Spanish crown, whose secret report on the British included inordinate and, no doubt, tactically useful information on local sexual preferences, observed the Aborigines

left to the 'females the superior position in copulation', not the usual indication of female subordination. Aboriginal women were the social arbiters and facilitators, and sexuality was part of that armoury. The fact that Aboriginal women were 'allowed to go freely where they wish, and they themselves make all the efforts to offer themselves'[17] considerably facilitated appeal to the British inclined to cross the cultural divide. As the social fabric frayed, however, it descended into crude exploitative prostitution.

In the infamy of sexual exploitation on the Hawkesbury borderland, even as the ferocity of intention and warrior battle lines were drawn, one thing was conspicuously absent. War and rape are a lamentable given, yet the rape and violation of white women by Aborigines during frontier conflict did not occur; there is 'not a single instance'.[18] The first instance of rape by an Aborigine of a white woman in Sydney was not until 1816 where the perpetrator is clearly a displaced/marginal, not "tribal", Aborigine and certainly not one engaged in warfare.

2.3 A narrative landscape and psychic invasion

Comprehending Musquito and the broader realm of Aboriginal resistance necessitates understanding the intimate interweaving of ritual belief and landscape, what for Aborigines was 'country'. Without this there is no appreciation of the dimension of British intrusion, for it was not just an invasion of land but of the mind; nothing less than a *psychic* invasion.

There has been a tendency from the earliest period of occupation, from Collins onward, to characterise Aboriginal people as without religion, and it stubbornly resisted revision even into the 20th century,[1] only relenting with the writings of Bill Stanner in the 1930s. Certainly Aborigines were seen as bound by superstition and night fears, demonic terror and ritual magic, but this in the European mind did not constitute religion. The tendency was to largely ignore the religious life of Aborigines so the accounts are very thin, even though religious life was elaborate and extensive.[2]

Aboriginal society was locked to landscape, in a detailed, rule-ridden formula of connection, totem, and potency of place that was literally for them what it was to be a *person*. Place or 'country' was the locus of being. It was the source of the Dreaming, a place of Abiding Events,[3] timeless episodes of explanation that adhered to geographical features, places from which people originated and to which they returned. So elaborately detailed were these tales of place adhering to geographic features that what emerged was a *narrative landscape*, both sacred and profane. Through a pattern of stories you were able to traverse the countryside like a map, but the points of geographical importance and direction were also nodes of awesome significance. Like ancient icons they are both simply pictures as well as numinous and glowing. We would see it today in at least quasi-religious terms, though for Aboriginal society, where the sacred and profane interpenetrated, it is indistinguishable from religious purpose;[4] that is, from *meaning* which is at the core of what is perceived as *reality*. *Meaning* and *reality* are central constructs, though not artifices, of the healthy psyche: without these the soul shrivels.[5]

The stories and lessons attached to the landscape were not simply stories of origin, of a genesis, of a past; they were firmly rooted in the "present–now" and persist beyond the future. Aboriginal connection to 'country' is spatial, not temporal, and the Ancestral presences that inhabit 'country', along with the people, are an enduring presence. Though the word cringes with use, these crafted explanations of landscape are literally "timeless".

Once this primacy of place is understood, aspects of common human behaviour have no meaning. Aborigines, for example, could not comprehend warfare for the sake of acquiring territory or another's 'country',[6] as the British accepted without question. If you were defined by place, within a defining cosmos, why would you want that of another? This is not to say Aboriginal space did not expand and contract under pressure of population and needs like food sources, but it was never a conscious endeavour as it was for the British.

It also meant that the preservation of Aboriginal place, their 'country', became characterised by a determined and violent tenacity once it was fully realised that the British demanded exclusive possession. Place, or 'country', not only defined who they were; it defined the *law* or rules of place and 'country', to be renewed and maintained by complex religious and initiatory rites, rule-ridden formulae of behaviour bound to the land that modern thinking would call an ordered and civil society. Because it is not possible to separate sacred and secular all living becomes both numinous and prosaic, though this certainly does not imply some New Age religious enthusiasm. The performance is prosaic and extraordinarily ordinary, though at core, profoundly intense. This is why the intrusion of a British *Weltanschauung*, perceived world-view, was much more potent than their *presence*. Invasion not only robbed Aborigines of their 'country' but their being; it was nothing less than a *psychic* invasion.

There has been a tendency to see resistance to British occupation purely in terms of warrior response and not to discern a deeper cultural response involving beliefs and religious interpretation. It was simply not possible for Aborigines to have a merely

secular military response. It had to involve their entire mental furniture, taxing the depth of attachment to sacred space, to origin and continuity of being. Anything less would have entailed abandonment of innermost belief and an utter mental capitulation. A clue to some of the complexity of response to British occupation can be seen in the later religious reaction to the British presence, in the Baiame Waganna,[7] 'the god dance' of the Wellington Valley in the 1830s, the Mulunga first reported by Walter Roth in the 1890s and the Kunabibi cult described by Stanner.[8]

These are not peculiarly "native" but universal social phenomena. They arise when people find themselves in 'an exposed and defenceless position' that has 'disturbed the normal, familiar, pattern of life' and removed the 'emotional support afforded by traditional social groups' and where 'their kinship-groups [have] disintegrated'. Apocalyptic millenarianism breaks out 'again and again' against a 'background of disaster', plague, famine or pestilence.[9] Norman Cohn was describing medieval Europe but he was acutely aware of the universality.

What was also significant was the emergence of '*propheta*[10] to bind them together as a group of their own',[11] charismatic seers, shamans, prophets and *sibyls*. Sometimes these are outsiders, for a prophet 'is never appreciated in his own country', but wherever they arise figures of charisma, *propheta*, always carry an edge of danger, chaos, fierce fervour and the potential for excess.

Nativist and millenarian movements have been largely discounted in the Australian context[12] but then Europeans often had difficulty detecting the drama of Aboriginal religious practice. There was not the apparent theatre of North American Ghost Dance movements,[13] but nevertheless there was an inevitable and radical reassessment of Indigenous cosmogony in the light of British occupation. This gave rise to revivalist practices that sharpened the edge of resistance, giving an apocalyptic fervour beyond simple rage. This has happened wherever Indigenous cultures were scarified by European intrusion, so not to encounter it in Australia would have been unusual indeed.

The Baiame Waganna rituals, of dance, corroboree and rituals to Baiame, the All-Father initiation figure, in the 1830s were a response to the appearance of smallpox among Aboriginal people. It had two purposes: to ward off the disease and to re-assert traditional society, practices and values; a back to basics fundamentalism. All of this was encapsulated in rituals, songs[14] and dances as well as a re-formulation of traditional stories of the figure of Baiame as a warning to the people.

The idea that a decline in traditional religious practice had caused deterioration in the power and position of the people is a common theme in nativist revivals, and figures powerfully in the various Ghost Dance 'revitalist' movements among American Indians. A fundamental return to past practice is the nativist path to avoiding catastrophe and restoring the world to its familiar order.

Similar avoidance of catastrophe is observable in early Aboriginal stories of the sky falling down as a result of failure to renew the props and structures that hold the world in order: these were told by William Buckley, who lived thirty years among the Aborigines until the establishment of Melbourne in the 1830s. Even Aborigines far from the principal node of settlement in Sydney were affected by a sense of catastrophe occasioned by the British presence, a profound and fearful apprehension that passed like wildfire along the great paths of Aboriginal movement.

There is no recording of similar stories on the Hawkesbury, but given the Aboriginal prohibition on disclosing sacred beliefs and the almost total European disinterest, this is hardly surprising. The location of important Baiame ritual sites on the Hawkesbury escarpment, though, means this was a focal point of practice and significance. Baiame was later often depicted with blemishes and pockmarks, and was seen as part of the means of warding off disease.

At heart Aboriginal religious life is the basis of lore and law. The perceived violation of law and propriety by the British astonished and enraged traditional Aboriginal mores. It is retaliation for these violations that marks the first phase of violence visited upon white settlers. The Aborigines saw their country plundered and their women and children abused. The British ignored Aboriginal Law and practice, which after all was the "Law of the Land" as Aboriginals saw it, knew little about the land, got lost without any difficulty, blundered about the bush and didn't understand even the basics of survival. They were, to the traditional Aborigines, both astonishingly ignorant and fundamentally stupid.

The Aborigines could not comprehend the drastic modification of place, the ripping apart of the bush, to them a mindless desecration. They could not comprehend the peculiarities of violence practiced by the British, or their self-righteous condemnation of Aboriginal violence when it offended them. But they had awesome power, expanding numbers and a culture that seduced as dominant cultures do.

Herein lies one of the great contradictions of settler/Aboriginal contact. Many Aborigines were attracted to the ease and abundance of white society, even to the relatively reduced level of violence compared to traditional Aboriginal society. Others were incensed at the violations of law and behaviour, the fundamental way the British quite unconsciously and without concern lived outside the lore/Law and understanding central to Aboriginal identity. What was at stake for some in Aboriginal society at that time was so utterly central that it mandated punishment by the Law, not just resistance.

The division that emerged under occupation was between those who *collaborated* and those who *resisted*, though that could shift from one extreme to the other, from collusion to revolt, and could vary over time. The contrast was in what Stanner called high culture and low culture, between those who "came in" and sought accommodation with white society and those who resisted, between those who shed their culture and those who held steadfast to traditional forms, thought and religion. In its earliest and most violent form it was played out on the Hawkesbury, between the most feral form of white society, the freed convicts beyond the pale with their manifesto of freedom, and the Aborigines of determination and tradition, deeply conservative at the core yet radically resistant. There was an often-belated recognition of dispossession that only really struck when the first whites became a wave and the impact began to see their society unravel. War and resistance emerged when it was almost too late, a desperate stand against a white demographic juggernaut.

At root it was an interminable clash of understandings illustrated by experiences the British saw as trivial or quaint, yet ones that caused consternation among the Aborigines. The way Aborigines were astounded at the tooth missing from Governor Phillip that to them indicated he was an Initiated Man, yet in all other ways he acted in complete ignorance of his purported sacred knowledge of the law.

Or in the events following the early disastrous floods on the Hawkesbury that severely disrupted food supply. It was readily recognised by the British that felling trees on the river frontage compounded the ravages of flooding and choked the stream with debris that dammed the flow. A prohibition was placed on felling and the trees marked with the King's sign, the familiar broad arrow. Wilful cutting of trees offended Aboriginal sensibilities too and trees were often marked in ceremony and ritual with an elaborate language of signs. Now what they confronted caused bewildering consternation. The trees were marked by the British with the broad arrow, a sign initiated Aborigines recognised as the emu footprint, the sign of the wife of Biaime, the All-Father figure of Aboriginal initiation, the core of religious life.[15] The significance was electric, the meaning unfathomable, and the confusion complete, as it was with so much that marked transactions between the two peoples.

Musquito as a youth passed through and observed the phases of settlement on the Hawkesbury from the early attempts at reciprocation and accommodation, through the violations and attempts to impose Aboriginal law, to the stage where it was not simply payback but waged attrition to remove the presence of white settlement. In the midst of this grew a fundamental divide between those Aborigines seduced by white abundance and those that clung to the high culture, the old values and old religion.

He was an Initiated Man brought to manhood in the sacred rites performed in the ceremonial escarpments of the Hawkesbury that were frequently violated by casual white intrusion. He was caught up in the old ways, yet he still moved in town life and its vices when brought to Sydney for the rites still performed in Farm Cove and Woolloomooloo. These were still, even with British presence, caught up in the wider network of ceremonial and ritual sites.

2.4 Disease and the Great Dying

Disease shaped Aboriginal resistance as much as corn sustained it, and its impact is crucial to understanding the scale of Aboriginal antagonism. The first disease epidemic in the Sydney region in April 1789, so soon after the First Fleet, gets lost or glossed over in the telling of early Australian history. It never touched white society, which is why it scarcely rates mention. Its effect, though, among the Aborigines was monstrous, a catastrophic population decline that has been largely lost in contact history.

The assumption has long been that the disease was smallpox, as Watkin Tench[1] early suggested, and controversy has raged over the issue of its nature and origin.[2] Though it promises no firm certainty, recent research has suggested chickenpox,[3] a far more persistent, endemic disease (e.g. shingles), easily confused with smallpox in its full-blown form but nearly 100 per cent infectious. While lacking the headline tragedy of smallpox, chickenpox in a population without "herd immunity" — previous contact with the disease — is not only highly infectious, it has a high mortality rate: around 20 per cent, and even greater in a population under severe demographic pressure. Argument over what was to blame has gone as far as suggesting the deliberate spread of smallpox,[4] but what is central to present consideration is not the culprit or the cause but the devastating effect of the disease.

As the illness spread inland it laid waste to the people of the Hawkesbury, yet in the midst of this cataclysmic Dying, Musquito was shouldering adolescence into initiated warrior manhood. At any time initiation was a fervently felt experience where the sacred disclosures of initiation placed an awesome burden on the mind, but more so with this Dying. Initiation was a re-birth, a "born again" ritual, wherein divulgence of any of its occult mysteries meant hideous death. It was felt deeply and literally. The intensity of this time with a pall of death surrounding was like no other, and induced a shaping of thought akin to a powerful apocalyptic end-of-days. It focused the minds of young warriors at the same time as taking from them the gifts and insights of the older men stricken by disease.

For those that experienced these catastrophic events and mourning, the immediate response was to see the malignancy as within, some sorcery in response to their own deficiency. The impassioned 'revitalisation', often a re-invention, of past ritual and practice that spread with the same ferocity as the disease, was intended to evoke a profound cleansing wherein elimination of a white presence would have been seen as part of a wider purification, renewal and revitalisation.

Even before the arrival of disease, however, the Aboriginal population was under profound pressure from white presence. The pre-contact population in the immediate Sydney region was estimated at about 1500 Aborigines, a sustainable hunter/gatherer demographic for the area, but the sudden influx created by the First and Second Fleets — about 2000 — instantly doubled the population density, placing immense strain on food resources. Importantly, a population under demographic stress will succumb to disease on a greater scale than that explained by a lack of disease resistance or herd immunity.[5]

The epidemic, the Great Dying, shredded Aboriginal society, rupturing social connection, religious practice and customary behaviour, all the minute and nuanced threads that hold communities together. Ships sailing the harbour noted the strange silence and absence of voices. The myriad caves and coves about Sydney Harbour became bloated with corpses and the sweet stench of death took the place of voices in the watery air.

Arabanoo, the colony's captive, had been taken out by boat to look for survivors and searching among the rocks and inlets they found them 'filled with putrid bodies'. Arabanoo 'lifted up his hands and eyes in silent agony' and then at last he moaned, 'All dead' and 'hung his head in mournful silence.' [6] Elsewhere they found an old man desperately ill beside a fire while a young boy, covered in ulcers, poured water on his head. Nearby were the emaciated bodies of a mother and little girl.

John Hunter, a later Governor, found bodies hunched up, their heads between their knees or just leaning against a rock, dead. 'I have seen myself, a woman sitting on the ground, with her knees drawn up to her shoulders, and her face resting on the sand beneath her feet.'[7] As the people fled into the surrounding country they spread the disease onto the Hawkesbury and wider hinterland.[8]

Such a monumental catastrophe and rapid fraying of social practice provoked a profound reassessment of religious cosmogony and reassertion of "traditional" practice with apocalyptic and millenarian aspects. So little has been recorded about the wider effects of disease in Sydney that we need to examine the experience elsewhere in North and South America to get a grasp of the catastrophic effect. For instance, the Ghost Dance rituals aimed at revitalising native belief among the Nevada Paiutes in 1867 followed closely on a typhoid epidemic that wiped out 10 per cent of the population.[9]

What more would have been the response of Aborigines to the calamity of more than 50 per cent of their people dying in a matter of weeks, as Governor Phillip estimated? The effect was disastrous. In a people under population stress, with no herd immunity, the death rate would have risen from 20–30 per cent to over 50 per cent. But is it possible the impact was even greater?

The identification of additional factors of genetic homogeneity in South America has suggested even greater death rates. The mortality from smallpox and other introduced diseases has been estimated to be as high as 80–90 per cent. This is a staggering figure,[10] propelled to that level by a suggested genetic vulnerability in Indigenous people that inclined them to a particular susceptibility to European diseases. [11]

This has been an extremely controversial hypothesis, as much political as scientific and historical. Indigenous commentators are understandably wary of a "natural" explanation that subtly exculpates European agency and not so subtly suggests Indigenous vulnerability as a "deficiency". It allows shrug-of-the-shoulder language like "inevitable" and "unavoidable" to cloak the catastrophe of European invasion.

These 'trapdoors in terminology', with their racist sub-text, are potent but avoidable if there is the will to move beyond blame to explanation. That caveat needs to be heeded, as there are similar genetic issues to be addressed in the Australian context since the Aborigines of southeastern Australia are also genetically homogenous. As one of the earliest out-of-Africa people, Aborigines retained a genetic homogeneity compared to increasing European genetic diversity — European mongrelism if you wish to be crude, or 'hybrid vigour' if you want to be positively Mendelian — though these genetic slurs need to be appropriately placed.

With respect to the Aborigines of southeastern Australia, immunologist Peter Roberts-Thomson[12] emphasises the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) — the genetic region of the human genome important for defending immunity — in Aborigines is somewhat restricted. This lack of polymorphic variants, required for enhanced protection against pathogenic microorganisms, makes Aborigines highly susceptible. With such a genetic profile and with no herd immunity, the impact of disease may well have been more devastating than the reported 50 per cent, which after all was only ever an estimate, a guess by Governor Phillip. It may even have approximated the extraordinary levels suggested in South America.

If this hypothesis has validity, then the impact of disease would have been greater than previous estimates and requires a radical re-examination of contact history and

the impact of European intrusion. Such a catastrophe would not only have devastated Aboriginal social structure; it would have muted resistance significantly. This was a population so devastated it had little capacity to fight back or resist. Because of the Great Dying, white ventures into the immediate interior found sparse evidence of Aboriginal occupation, making the concept of *terra nullius* eerily literal.

Given the demographic decimation and social collapse, what is even more significant is the level of resistance on the Hawkesbury and elsewhere, and the odd importance of Mesoamerican foods like maize and potatoes to the extent and ferocity of that resistance. Simply put, disease muted resistance and the foods magnified it. The resistance was really quite remarkable given the social collapse. How much more ferocious would frontier violence have been if the original population had been spared the effects of disease?

In 430BC Thucydides in the *Peloponnesian War* described the catastrophic impact of "plague" (possibly typhoid fever) on Athens. More than a third died, resulting in social fragmentation and breakdown, lawlessness and the emergence of apocalyptic ecstatic cults. The revitalisation of Aboriginal religious practice would have been equally as great and would have infused resistance with an apocalyptic fervour and desperation, an edge of determination more brutal than simple payback. It has not been possible to adequately describe the real impact of disease in Sydney in 1789 but it appears far more widespread and dramatic than First Fleet accounts, and far greater than modern commentaries indicate.

The rage and resentment to white intrusion was fearfully profound and tied to the shattering of Aboriginal society and belief tied to landscape. In one example of early British behaviour can be discerned an Aboriginal response, however muted in the record. As part of the requirement for arable land and to undermine the constant harassment of British endeavours by Aborigines, a decision was made to clearfell about 120 acres at Portland Place[13] — eliminating any refuge for Aboriginal attack — a task swiftly accomplished in a matter of a few weeks with gangs of convict labour.

Aboriginal understanding of the landscape as a living entity, a map of movement, of stories and living things both seen and unseen, a *narrative landscape*, meant those Aborigines that ventured to the edge of that cleared space found a landscape massacred. Caught between awe and outrage at such vast erasure, the most conspicuous realisation was the absolute absence of sound, the sheer volume of silence. No bird songs, no rattle or scurrying of creatures, no crackle of insects. Nothing that represented the familiarity of their world that was a minutely tessellated pattern of living sound. These are emotions difficult to detect in any historical narrative but they are there like an itch that pesters our composure. It reinforces the fact that British intrusion was not merely a physical invasion but a profound *psychic* invasion, an invasion of the mind.

So certain is the dismissal both then and now of Aboriginal ritual and belief that consideration of this psychic cost and trammelling of religious significance has been omitted from the dimensions of Aboriginal resistance. It was however not simply a war of resistance but a desperate attempt to resurrect a world and way of life rapidly unravelling. It was a resurrection of the numinous, a heady mix of ritual, sorcery, magic and violent retribution, warriors fired with belief and apocalyptic vision.

A compelling illustration lies in the writing of Bill Stanner, who worked in the Daly River area in the 1930s. He lamented the seductive power of European goods and living that created 'a sort of low culture as distinct from the high culture of tradition'. He noted though the resistance of some like Durmugam,[14] a powerful and dangerous charismatic warrior figure who spread a deserved level of fear among the surrounding peoples. Part of the fear Durmugam engendered came from his association with the revival of Nangiomeri high culture through the new religious cult of Kunabibi, a millenarian revivalist movement. He was known to have murdered quite a few, and had 'a monumental cunning in disposing of bodies or otherwise concealing his crimes'.

One man was given a sacred bullroarer and promised to make a substantial payment for it. When after five years no payment had been made Durmugam ambushed him, speared him in the back and disguised the site to give the appearance the man had been the victim of a crocodile attack. Another who was thought to be a warlock who stole men's kidney fat was lured to a remote spot and speared.

During a camp fight an old man related to Durmugam was killed and the culprit later arrested and sentenced for the offence. The view was, however, that the culprit was simply doing the bidding of others and after divination involving the spirit of the dead man two were named as ultimately responsible. Durmugam inveigled the two into a kangaroo hunt and killed them both. Each of these homicides was consistent with traditional beliefs or the principles of the Kunabibi cult, but kin of the victims did not necessarily see it that way and Durmugam was challenged and required to face several ritual onslaughts of spears, though he was wounded only once, such was his impressive skill and capacity. What is disclosed is a culture of awesome violence, 'a murk of fear, suspicion and hatred', for even if a ritual killing was consistent with tradition and practice there was a real anxiety that blame could be visited upon someone with horrendous consequences.

Stanner describes the terror of his Aboriginal companions in the time after dark, of one who would 'try to defecate at night so as to be within the glow of my campfire', of

another who was thrown into turmoil by a footprint he could not recognise, and the rest who sat sleepless throughout the night. The terror engendered by Durmugam and his companions was monumental.

Stanner, who wrote the story of Durmugam in 1960 saw the once powerful figure reduced to a shade of himself in old age, defeated, pessimistic and depressed, a dream of the old culture shattered by an indifferent youth. Where once he would kill with impunity any perceived infraction of traditional Law and seethed with the certainty of law and tradition, now he was emptied of himself, a shell of his former being.

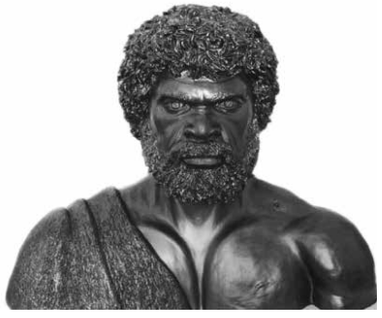
These charismatic elements of resistance to the decline of high culture and the emergence of an apocalyptic revivalist cult of traditional elements of belief may be discerned in the initial period of occupation, in *propheta* figures like Pemulwuy and Musquito, who assumed leadership of early Aboriginal resistance. Musquito had all the qualities of a Durmugam: the cold-blooded cunning, the warrior skills and the awesome violence in defence of the fundamentalist values of high culture under threat. It is certain he would have aroused awe and a fearful reverence among his own people, but also dread and terror among those who might inadvertently fall within the pale of his rage and retribution.

2.5 Pemulwuy: charismatic resistance

Before the rise of Musquito, leadership of resistance on the Hawkesbury was led by the charismatic Pemulwuy. He was outlawed by Governor King in 1801 and first shaped his renown when he speared gamekeeper John McIntyre in 1790. The spear he used was a murderous instrument, barbed and studded with sharp stone, red silcrete; not one of the plain-shafted spears used in ritual combat, like that used against Governor Phillip at Manly. It was an instrument of retribution intended to induce a slow and painful death from the stench and infection of a suppurating wound.

An unusually murderous Governor Phillip sent Watkin Tench and others in a pointless punitive expedition to revenge McIntyre by gathering ten severed Aboriginal heads, but it was sufficiently known that Pemulwuy was the actual culprit. And he intended it to be known because, despite McIntyre's deathbed equivocation, he had profoundly violated Aboriginal law. McIntyre may have murdered the colony's first emu but there were obviously more significant deaths and violations for which he was responsible.

Pemulwuy was described as a *Bidgigal*, of the inland 'woods tribe' as Collins called them, however British knowledge and understanding, not only of Aboriginal language,



Pemulwuy bronze University of Queensland

but also of Aboriginal clans, was extremely garbled. The British, listening to the whispered echo of emerging European nationalism, expected entities linked by geography, language and culture — that is, 'nations' or 'tribes' — and began to map the region accordingly. Many mobs and clans simply never had a name by which they were known since such names were not central to their identity. Looking for 'tribes' distracted the British from finding the truly significant links one to another as well as those elements that defined Aboriginal authority.[1]

One of the entities that puzzled the British was the Sydney *Cammeragal* that Judge Advocate David Collins and others envisaged as some sort of *super* tribe. The Aborigines were in awe of them and so fixed were the British in search of tribes they failed to see them for their *function*, as ritual leaders responsible for initiation and other religious ceremonies, men of magic as well as fierce warriors. The ignorance was so considerable they confused them with the *Gommeragal* (the g and c, as well as the a and o, are interchangeable) who were assigned by the British to another regional abode.

Alfred Howitt,[2] one of the finest of the nineteenth century amateur anthropologists, described much later in detail the ritual role of the *gommera/cammera* headmen of Sydney and their equivalent inland power entity, the *bidja bidja* (or *bedia bedia*) out of which the British concocted the *Bidgigal* tribe.[3]

In describing Pemulwuy as *Bidgigal*, Collins confused community and function, for Pemulwuy was a *bidja bidja*, a revered and towering figure of authority and initiation as well as man of ritual and religious standing.[4] The British presence altered him further to a *propheta* figure that infused his resistance with a fervour and almost messianic significance among the people. Illustrations of him show a nuggetty man, less wiry than other local blacks. He is reputed to have had an odd stigmatism in one eye, which magnified his stature among a people who saw such afflictions as ominous. What elevated his stature to messianic standing among his people was his evasion of death at the Battle of Parramatta.

By 1797 the actions of Pemulwuy had shifted from the imposition of Aboriginal law on the errant British like McIntyre, to retributive raids, skirmishes and battles, an attempt indeed to drive out the British presence. It has the fierce courage and reckless determination of a nativist movement, the fervour of faith. Using the maize harvest for logistical support, they brazenly attacked the principal government farm at Toongabbie, the core site of British agriculture, as well as a number of other farms at the Northern Boundary. Retribution was swift, with a punitive expedition formed

to retaliate, pursuing them unsuccessfully towards Parramatta before giving up in exhaustion.

For Pemulwuy and his warriors evasion was second nature and their contempt for British ineptitude was visceral, so pronounced in fact that they reeled round and entered the town itself. A hundred warriors stormed the town centre with Pemulwuy in the lead, in a towering rage. It was an awesome act, not just of defiance but of proprietorial assertion against the assumed right of the settlers and soldiers to 'hunt them down like wild animals' in their own revered 'country'.[5] It was a clash of collective egos and arrogances, an assertion not just of equality but superiority against the constant British avowal of hierarchy that saw them as inferior savages. But it was also a passionate assertion of propriety and ownership of their 'country'.

As the military moved forward to capture him, Pemulwuy and his warriors loosed a fusillade of spears and the military returned fire bringing down Pemulwuy with gunshot wounds to the head and torso and leaving five other warriors strewn dead in the streets of Parramatta. He was taken to the hospital, his condition critical and his death expected, but within days he had escaped, a shackle still attached to his ankle. This miraculous recovery gave him a reputation that spread like flames through the people as a man of superhuman power and immunity to gunfire,[6] the making of a nativist myth, akin to the 'ghost shirts' of North American Indians that were reputed to protect against gunshot wounds.

What is evident from the actions of Pemulwuy was a determination to eliminate white presence. What his ritual role also indicates is that this resistance was embedded in a sacred intention to remake their original world wherein the escarpment religious sites of the Hawkesbury formed a focus. These were the spiritual places of male ritual but also of planned warrior retribution. The actions of resistance by Pemulwuy, and later, Musquito, cannot be seen outside this desperate attempt to remake their world into an idealised original of Edenic perfection. It is not simply heroic resistance and battling rampages that suit the images of European romanticism captured by the likes of John Pilger and Al Grassby.[7] It is a much more poignant and saddening attempt to rescue, in defiance, a crumbling world.

What was unusual and probably more ominous was the degree to which the social margins had coalesced into collusion, with convicts like John Wilson, William Knight, John Jewson, Joseph Saunders and Moses Williams joining the resistance,[8] along with unnamed Irish convicts. Here were recognisable elements "going native" and defending their "kingdom of freedom" — different agendas with a common foe — a strange alliance and multiple challenge to authority. Always the odd aspect of resistance, it is never the uncomplicated black and white of Hollywood simplicity.

The level of violence was now perceived by the British as a form of war, and Governor King, recognising the blurred boundaries of conflict, forcibly banished Aborigines from white settlement, disrupting the multiplicity of mutual relationships that existed between the two and defining a combative division of opposites, the tactics of an occupying power. Further he directed the attention of the authorities to removing the leaders by offering rewards for the capture of Pemulwuy's white associates[9] and offering to potential Aboriginal low culture collaborators the right to be 'readmitted to our friendship' if they gave up Pemulwuy.[10] It was somewhat of an understatement when King wrote to Lord Hobart of the 'great influence Pemulwye had over' the Aborigines.[11]

The relationships of black and white were too intertwined for these inducements to fail. Worse, what had begun as a fairly mutual relationship on the frontier had descended into a lop-sided dependence that had diminished Aboriginal agency. In any arena of military occupation, collusion and collaboration is always the fault line of resistance. Within half a year of being declared an outlaw, Pemulwuy in 1802 was dead, his head severed, pickled and sent to London, bringing to an end the first phase of borderland resistance.

How Pemulwuy died has always been a silence rather than a detailed triumph, though later reports suggested 'artifice"[12] and subterfuge accomplished it and the finger, without certainty, can be pointed at the noxious and violent drunkard, Henry Hacking,[13] an excellent marksman who had always displayed a penchant for shooting Aborigines. Governor King, however, always thought of him as a fine sort of fellow.

But it was only a lull in resistance despite a report in the *Sydney Gazette* happily noting that natives on the Hawkesbury had 'relinquished their mischievous behaviour'.[14] Conflict again reared up at the time of the maize harvest of 1804, and the immediate catalyst had been the encroachment of farms further up the Hawkesbury towards Portland Head, close to Broken Bay. Earlier settlements had been abandoned because of concentrated Aboriginal attacks on peripheral farms but renewed settlement led to renewed attacks. Governor King attempted to conciliate local people by prohibiting settlement in the narrow and vulnerable valley flats, a gesture that emphasised and acknowledged dispossession as a powerful grievance among the Aboriginal populace.[15] He joined this gesture of reconciliation with the tried tactic of prohibiting contact between the Aboriginal and settler societies until the perpetrators of the "outrages" were "given up".

The formula was always the same — isolate the leaders and put uncomfortable pressure on the rest. Pemulwuy was a figure of mythical proportions among the Aborigines but there are usually some among a population under occupation who

will collude for whatever advantage. Hacking may have killed him, but Pemulwuy was ultimately the victim of his own people. The person who rose to leadership in his place was Musquito, fierce in his determination, fervent in his intention, but more calculated in his tactics.

2.6 Musquito and the mantle of resistance

Musquito would remain, like most white descriptions of the Aborigines, a silhouetted figure in the background of violence, but for the portrait of *Y-erran-gou-la-ga* by Petit, which reveals a figure of striking dimension. In this portrait, he is a youth, and though difficult to age he is probably in his early twenties, with vibrant clear eyes, cropped curly hair, broad lips and broad nose with a subtly shaped bone through the septum, an added touch by the engraver Roger. He slouches slightly like a youth but there is immense energy in his shape, though he is yet to fill to the muscular figure of later description, from which we know also, he was unusually tall, 'slim' with a 'wiry, active frame'.[1] In the Petit portrait he is marked with ceremonial swirls of white and ochre and his hair and beard are trimmed indicating someone who frequents the town as this was one of the delights of visiting Aborigines, to experience the novelty of shaving.

The French were immersed in Enlightenment thought, in collecting and classifying, so while they were sympathetic observers of the peoples they encountered, they were also looking for representative "types". The portrait of Musquito is a carefully selected warrior type, deliberately chosen with thought and admiration, for they see in him the qualities they valued, the romantic visions of a Rousseauesque "Noble Savage". And what is critical in the portrait is the evidence of the raised scars of initiation aligned down his chest. He is an Initiated Man, a warrior, which in Aboriginal culture is of vital importance. Without these outward signs, a man remains a child, an infant unable to marry.

There is in him a charismatic vibrancy; a capacity to drive a purpose even in the face of determined opposition, an almost reckless disregard, which his youth discloses, but his ageing did not discard. He was born before the arrival of the British and initiated just as the Aboriginal world imploded under the devastation of disease, which removed the older men, the carriers of culture, and propelled young men into a seniority that was culturally unusual. These were powerful forces forging his character and driving him forward in a determined opposition to British presence. He is one of the last of his generation to undergo the traditions of initiation, one of the last to have divulged to him the old knowledge and cultural secrets.

He picked up the mantle of leadership from Pemulwuy, whose death had left a dispirited people and leadership vacuum. The battering that Aboriginal culture had endured meant that any figure who stepped into that role would have exceptional qualities and the charisma to carry others with him. Like Durmugam, however, that did not necessarily mean a figure of warm heroics: he enforced order by intimidation and violence that would have left others in deadly fear of his might. As a charismatic *propheta*, carrier of a traditional religious manifesto and apocalyptic cult of violence, he harboured an absolute antinomian conviction of his own might and certainty. Those are the qualities that inflame resistance against hopeless odds.

In June of 1804, concentrated Aboriginal attacks in the Portland Head area forced some settlers to relinquish their holdings,[2] and Governor King despatched troops with instructions to adopt whatever measures were required. An attempt by fourteen settlers to pursue the Aboriginal attackers brought them into confrontation with some 300 Aborigines, a substantial horde, an alarmingly large battle group intent on the elimination of white settlement, not just retribution. The hand of Musquito was ominously in the background. The size of the group has been questioned as exaggerated reporting,[3] but the size and intent closely mirrors what Musquito commanded in Van Diemen's Land.

When asked why they were attacking the settlers of Portland Head they made the 'ironical declaration' that they would have 'corn, wearing apparel and whatever else the Settlers had'.[4] It seems odd to our ear and to those listening then but it is a profoundly revealing comment, and is accurately reported because it puzzles. Ironic or defiant, the declaration is one of contempt and determination to erase the settlers by appropriating their abundance. It is white abundance, the core of perceived white power that seems to be coveted, but like nativist "cargo cults"[5] seen in Melanesia it is more about *power* than possessions. This is the classic manifestation of millenarian cultist fervour, but is passed over as just avarice.

By December 1804 Governor King, in response to the continuing attacks, was attempting to restrict settlement on the Branch region of the Hawkesbury near Portland Head to appease the Aborigines. He openly recognised that Aborigines were being driven from their lands and were being attacked for crossing land the whites had usurped.[6] It was a gesture that assumed white command of the landscape elsewhere, an assumed arrogance that was never going to quiet the urge to retaliate.

By June of 1805 Musquito's command of the renewed outbursts of violence and intensified 'outrages' on the Hawkesbury had led to a 'General Order' naming Musquito as a principal leader whose 'apprehension … might effectively prevent any further mischief'[7] along the Hawkesbury and Georges rivers. Again the tactics were about divide and rule, as the same Order indicated that 'Natives' were to be offered

'no molestation … provided they have behaved quietly' since they had 'solicited to return to Sydney and Parramatta'. The endeavour as always was to isolate and target leaders, and to set conditions for Aboriginal fraternisation with the white settlers.

While we know Pemulwuy was a *bidja bidja*, a *gommera* of the inland *tugara* (woods) people and a powerful warrior and ritual leader, it is unlikely Musquito had such a traditional role as these were rapidly unravelling with the decline of the older men. His leadership was something new. As one of the last of the Initiated Men and custodians of tradition and high culture, he asserted leadership by strength, power and charisma wrapped round an apocalyptic core. He was a new kind of *propheta*.

By the early years of the 1800s the *gommera* had lost their power and standing. Once the *gommera* had denied Bennelong the use of the tin and leather shield given him by the British. They saw its use as dishonourable, an act of a coward, *jee-run*, because it would have given him unfair advantage in ritual combat. Once Bennelong raged at Governor Phillip to help him attack the *cammera/gommera*, but not much later Bennelong was participating in the initiation tooth avulsion ceremony where once only the powerful *gommera* presided. Such was the rapid disintegration of Aboriginal authority, circumstances that not only gave opportunists like Bennelong their chance, but also created the opportunity for nativist movements to take hold, and leadership to emerge from those who under other circumstances would have had to wait until they were much older to assume positions of importance.

These then were the conditions of Musquito's ascension to leadership. His was a charismatic leadership of calculated violence that took up the nativist elements of Pemulwuy's revolt, but it was a deeply contested assumption of power. Although there was no necessity that Tedbury would have assumed the mantle of his 'father', Pemulwuy, there was an obvious rivalry that eventually saw the capture of Musquito as the price for Tedbury's freedom.

Whether Tedbury was Pemulwuy's natural son is conjecture, as uncles and others were regarded as 'fathers' in tight knit Aboriginal society, but the connections were obviously familial and close, and may well have included Musquito in their broader entanglement. Tedbury nonetheless continued his participation in attacks on settlers, while at the same time cultivating John Macarthur, correcting old scores while ensuring future protection and patronage.

It is significant that Musquito came from the Broken Bay area near Portland Head on the Hawkesbury, because it became one of the pivotal points of conflict, lying as it does on the principal pathway leading north to Lake Macquarie and Newcastle and south to the Georges River. It is also significant that he was from the inland *tugara* (woods) people, from where Pemulwuy originated.

Whether they were from the same mob is conjecture, but as the rivalry with Tedbury indicates there was some sort of relationship, by marriage, kinship or totemic alliance. Pemulwuy's death traumatised and discouraged the resistance to British intrusion because so much messianic hope and faith was invested in his leadership. It would be natural that succession would occur from within the compass of his connections.

Events continued to brood on the periphery and came to a head under Musquito's leadership on 11 April 1805[8] when a Branch settler, John Llewellyn, and his servant were attacked in the very area King had offered to restrict settlement. As he was to repeat in Van Diemen's Land, Musquito directed others from behind in initial engagements, usually behind those unlikely to arouse suspicion.

This quiet tactical command, this subtle menace, contributed profoundly to the fear he engendered as a leader. It was not unusual but a recognisable style of Aboriginal leadership noted by Libby Connors in Queensland in the powerful authority of Dundalli, a similarly formidable figure of retribution who was also later hanged. Again Dundalli directed 'proceedings' from behind just as 'a battle leader or lawman might do', so, like Musquito, it was often difficult to 'ascribe specific acts' to him.[9]

The tactics were familiar Aboriginal strategies and, like Dundalli, Musquito used a blend of subterfuge and familiarity to move in close. In this case he used Branch Jack, a cheery, treacherous soul and likeable rogue. He came out of the forest and was invited to share a meal with Llewellyn and his servant — unlikely if he was utterly feared — and took the opportunity to make off with the settler's musket and powder horn, effectively disarming them. A war party of about 20 then stormed into the clearing and speared the two. The convict servant was hacked several times in the head by a tomahawk and dragged to the edge of the river and dumped in the stream.

On the same day, further upstream, Thyne Adlum was attacked and killed by the same mob, and body parts were found in the ashes of Adlum's burned farmhouse. These attacks took place in the area deeply contested, and the attack itself was brutal with bodies mutilated and limbs strewn. The attack was also extremely ominous since such mutilation often indicated ritual magic. The extent of this is unclear but, for example, sometimes hands were removed as grisly talismans and hung over the shoulder to forewarn of enemy approaches from behind — a deathly tap on the back as warning. This was a mix of ritual magic and brutality, part of the apocalyptic element of nativist fervour.

Around 25 April 1805 there was another 'barbarous murder' of two stock-keepers near Prospect, significantly on Captain Macarthur's farm. One had been 'grinding part of their provision' when Aborigines 'rushed in upon him and clove his head with

a tomahawk'. They awaited the arrival of his companion, who 'unhappily shared the fate of his murdered fellow-servant'.[10]

These killings electrified Sydney town with the *Gazette* muttering about the 'impropriety'[11] of encouraging further settlement in the area. Others, including the military, wondered whether settlers really could be protected,[12] which of course is exactly what the Aboriginal attacks intended — to terrorise the settlers into abandoning their claims.

The atmospherics rapidly spiralled into tense hysteria as the same report in the press noted an earlier account of a 'passenger' murdered on the road to Parramatta. Now it appeared it was 'unfounded' as the 'subject of the rumour' was 'in the land of the living'. At such times reports become inflated and rumours become rife. They blaze and consume with anxiety, which always makes it difficult to fathom the real magnitude of events.

The murders at Prospect, though they have the hint of legal retribution, are really about terrorising the settlers and making habitation untenable. Captain Macarthur, however, had a reputation for conciliatory relations with the local Aborigines and particularly supported Pemulwuy's 'son' Tedbury, and that too may have had a bearing on the attack, a rivalry in leadership. Aboriginal resistance was never uniform or united, and traditional rivalries and fierce inter-group conflict continued unabated throughout the period of resistance. This is the odd truth of foreign occupation — local politics continue, rivalries remain, rather than being put aside for any common cause — but this is more so in a hunter/gather society where overarching identity or allegiance is rare.

The buildup to these events had been considerable. In April 1805, again under Musquito's leadership, a huge gathering of some three to four hundred Aborigines joined together from the 'interior of the mountains',[13] and probably beyond. They were different, something unusual and described that way because many were unknown to locals.

Drawn from a great distance, from the north beyond Broken Bay and even beyond the Blue Mountains, this was a remarkable alliance of disparate groups. The scale is organisationally unusual and points to a formidable leader and military architect. The numbers created logistical considerations, which meant it had to be planned and arranged to coincide with the corn harvest.

It was corn that sustained such battle groups. At the corn harvest 'no consideration can restrain them from destroying a much greater quantity than they can consume by eating'.[14] In other words they are storing and putting aside as well as denying the settlers their winter surplus, and placing further pressure on them to abandon their farms. Corn may have been the operational focus but only so as to sustain a concerted campaign of vengeance and war on a scale not seen before, and conducted with ferocious determination.

2.7 War and terror

The remarkable alliance in April 1805 that Musquito was able to arouse from areas beyond the Hawkesbury was formidable, but what is more significant is that it represents the emergence of a quite unusual pan-Aboriginal response to a common enemy. A gathering of this order would have been based on the extensive marriage and ritual circles and paths gathered with war-like intent, which again indicates nativist religious aspects and a slowly forming common identity, crafted from a loathing of white presence.

Again settler response to the attacks was immediate and ferocious, with a punitive expedition sent in pursuit, which was easily eluded by their militant Aboriginal opponents. A press report offers a revealing vignette when the pursuing settlers appeared to catch up with the Aboriginal battle group on the other side of a creek whose swirling stream prevented closer contact. More than likely the Aborigines had successfully evaded but allowed contact in circumstances where they held the advantage — and where they could savour the frustration of their pursuers. The settlers 'commenced a parley', wanting to know why there had been an upsurge in attacks. From the Aboriginal point of view the British simply did not "get it". It was long past dialogue so there was no attempt to explain.[1]

From the British point of view the "outrages" had no cause, and they were frustrated and annoyed that the Aborigines offered no 'motive whatsoever'. Worse, the Aborigines indicated they were determined to continue their attacks at 'every opportunity'. This was an important strategic contact by the Aborigines engineered to provide the opportunity to make it clear this was an unrelenting war of terror. Theirs was an uncompromising attitude that saw no reason to explain beyond a determination to continue. The resolution on the white side was equally determined that 'before the flame can be extinguished, severity will be found necessary though reluctantly resorted to,' which was menacing indeed.[2]

The tactical authority of Musquito, like Dundalli, is unmistakable. He was not like Pemulwuy, a commander who led from the front, but one who allowed others to act and to speak while managing the message. It was not only the *traditional* strategy of lawmen and battle leaders but a logical one, since he existed within a society not

known for developed formal hierarchy. Without the recognised ritual leadership role of someone like Pemulwuy he had to lead in a much more oblique fashion, from among than from the front. He demonstrated this kind of leadership again in Van Diemen's Land, as well as an ability to muster formidable alliances. He was no nascent democrat, however, but a highly directive and calculating tactician.

Despite this gathering of people not generally known locally, they were obviously familiar with white culture as they 'spoke English tolerably'. While there was contact with Sydney Town there had also been a number of Aborigines who had joined the sealing and whaling ventures into Bass Strait.[3] These were operating out of the Hawkesbury, which had a thriving boat construction industry serving the trade, with men like the emancipist Andrew Thompson.[4] His Hawkesbury-built ships brought grain, fruit and vegetables to Sydney, took convicts to Newcastle and returned with cedar and coal; they traded for pork in Tahiti and sponsored sealing in New Zealand and Bass Strait. Significantly one of those known to have seaboard experience was Bull-Dog, Musquito's close companion, who was later taken captive with Musquito and banished with him to Norfolk Island.

Aborigines were employed like other sailors and sealing gangs 'upon lay',[5] though not always. They were not just cheap labour but valued for their unique skills: their extraordinary eyesight and ability to espy whales or landfall at a considerable distance; and their spear-throwing skills applied to harpooning. From the Aboriginal point of view there was access to the delicacy of whale meat. They melded with a below-decks underclass culture that influenced evolving Aboriginal culture and behaviour. Many, like Bull-Dog, according to Mann, adopted the mien of sailors, 'copying their customs, imitating their manners; such as swearing, using a great quantity of tobacco, drinking grog and similar habits'.[6]

In part it explains piratical attacks by Aborigines on vessels plying the Hawkesbury,[7] and their command of saltier terminology by ordering, on one occasion, 'in plain English', the vessel 'to strike',[8] the nautical injunction to halt that still has currency today in labour disputes. When American ships entered the Bass Strait trade in numbers their slave terms from black seamen entered the Aboriginal *kriol* — words like *mammy*, *massa* and *piccaninny*[9] as well as *omminay* for a cooked corn dish.

This command of underclass culture is observable in an encounter between a military party and a 'horde of natives' in May 1805. The Aborigines 'saluted' them with '*who comes there: white man I believe*'. It is not just mimicry but deliberate contemptuous mockery — a more benign form of resistance — though the consequences were significant since it was 'the fate' of one 'to be left behind' which is an equally contemptuous way of indicating the price of "taking the piss".

The murders at Prospect in April 1805 that brought together so many Aboriginal factions also revealed the division between those Aborigines dependent on white culture and those offering resistance. The strength of desire by some to avoid conflict led a deputation to the Rev. Samuel Marsden, farmer, magistrate and occasional clergyman, in May 1805. The role of magistrate at the time commanded both the police and any military summoned for police duties, and delivered judgment — so it was a position of considerable authority. The Aborigines were obviously deeply wary, with 'prodigious numbers' scattered in the scrub and 'no more than twenty approached near enough to be conversed with'.[10]

Marsden was emphatic. He knew and loathed the growing myth of Musquito and the danger he posed. The towering arrogance of Musquito matched his entirely. If the "tame" Aborigines, the de-cultured and degraded, wanted to reside safely among the settlers, Marsden demanded, they would not only have to give up the names of all the perpetrators, they would have to physically aid in their apprehension. Marsden had ramped up the conditions to an impossible level, which explains the awe and loathing of Musquito's leadership.

Marsden was no friend of the Aborigines at the best of times, and was accused by the botanist Caley of wanting all the natives killed.[11] They were beneath his contempt and some twenty years later when Lancelot Threlkeld conducted an Aboriginal mission at Lake Macquarie, Marsden wanted the Aborigines evicted and the mission made over to Maoris, who were in his view at least worth missionising. These more servile Aborigines knew the names of the mountain and Branch 'natives' responsible, but were reluctant to assist in their apprehension. The consequences if they colluded and the consequences if they avoided involvement were equally onerous, though several from Richmond Hill agreed to act as guides to the military. When they eventually caught up with a "culprit", a Richmond Hill Aborigine 'burst into a transport of rage' and 'presented his own piece and shot him'.[12]

What is casually accepted in this report is the increasing command by Aborigines of western weaponry. Whether, though, this incident represented an old wound dressed for white view or whether this was actually one of the culprits is impossible to say though the insistence on partisan participation by Marsden virtually meant conversion to the white cause. Though names were disclosed, all are obscure and none appear elsewhere in the records. Musquito is not mentioned and another well-known figure, Tedbury, is also omitted as one of the 'assassins'.[13] It is significant that notorious figures are omitted and some obscure names are revealed, indicating that despite Marsden's insistence the Aborigines were resisting disclosure.

Tedbury, who was obviously involved, was eventually captured and taken into custody, and though he attempted to escape he was brought before Major Johnson

and the Rev. Marsden. He 'was soon *brought over*', however, admitting to be 'one of the ruffians' involved in the murder of 'the stockmen at Prospect' but given the awesome pressure applied, it is not surprising. Tedbury then took a white party to where the 'property taken from the unfortunate victims in their cruelty lay concealed'.[14]

What was significant about this report was that, on the way, they 'fell in with a small cluster' of Aborigines including Bush Muschetta, another name for Musquito. This meeting was no coincidence, however, but a likely planned encounter. Aboriginal intelligence or more correctly, their inordinate fondness for gossip, meant little escaped community knowledge. And his eyes would have been everywhere. Musquito addressed them 'in good English' and before 'escaping' declared his 'determination' to continue his 'rapacities',[15] the same message as the meeting across the raging stream. The encounter was intended to drive home the message of resistance as well as underlining a leadership other than Tedbury — possibly even a community rivalry between the two — and far from 'escaping', as suggested, once the message was delivered, Musquito made a dignified, strategic departure.

General Orders in the *Gazette* on 9 June 1805 once more expressed the hope that the 'apprehension of the Native called Musquito might effectually prevent any further mischief in those quarters'.[16] The relentless harassment by authorities saw the capture of nine of those involved, several of whom now volunteered to assist in the 'search of Musquetta, who with Branch Jack … still keeps the flame alive'.[17] The capture of these nine indicates the level of collusion, since they would not have been taken without Aboriginal assistance, and demonstrates the degree of coercion and the relentless pressure on resistance, though the British liked to characterise their approach as one of kindness and consideration.

The figures behind the 'native affrays' remain generally unnamed. As in all provincial papers a public knowledge of who and what is assumed, though there is also a policy of ignoring or not granting publicity to particularly vexatious villains. The *Sydney Gazette* at this stage is still very much an official instrument of government policy. Views and intentions and its rationing of news must be seen in that light: political spin is not a recent invention. The reporting of attacks increases not just with their occurrence but also with the government's intention to crack down, providing justification for draconian action. It is highly constructed reporting with many layers of intended meaning and audiences.

Eventually, of course, notoriety reaches a stage of official government proclamation where a particularly odious offender is nailed to public attention. Musquito escapes much specific mention until the official public pronouncements of outlawry, though lesser figures like Branch Jack sometimes appear — 'Branch' because these are the Aborigines of the area where the branches enter the Hawkesbury near Portland Head, Musquito country.

In an incident, again in June of 1805, Branch Jack is named as leading an attack on William Knight at Portland Head, though it is likely that the hand of Musquito directed this brazen attack. While spears were their principal weaponry, Branch Jack took the settler's musket and set about plundering the place of an amount which 'one hundred pounds sterling would not replace'. They knew the weapons, knew the language and knew who the settlers were 'by name'.[18] Musquito too, like many other Sydney Aborigines, became adept in the use of British weaponry, but they preferred their own spears and bludgeons. This was not just because they could loose more spears in the time it took to reload a musket but because retention of traditional weaponry also indicated fierce retention of traditional high culture.

These are not Aborigines from a remote frontier but warriors familiar with white culture, prepared to use that knowledge to advantage. This was also a movement asserting traditional values and means, including traditional weaponry. It was a conservative movement to defend the culture from the corrosion of values provoked by a white presence. The real ferocity of resistance is born of familiarity, a more powerful source of resentment than simple difference.

While there are numerous reports of attacks through 1804–05, again specific mention of culprits is avoided. Branch Jack continued his involvement in these skirmishes with Musquito, but in September 1805, after Musquito surrendered in June, he attacked a boat in Broken Bay and was shot in the attempt. Again it was after a congenial meal with the boat crew. The stealthy return of the attackers was detected by the captain, resulting in gunfire and death. Familiarity with river craft and seamanship shows the influence of Aborigines who had experienced the sealing ventures emanating from the Hawkesbury,[19] but without the tactical leadership of Musquito he was more likely fated with death or capture.

2.8 The surrender of Musquito and the problem of the law

The sustained attacks on the Hawkesbury and reprisals by the military led to the gradual isolation and capture of Aboriginal resistance elements. In July 1805 a number of those 'concerned in the latest Outrage'[1] were gaoled at Parramatta by the Magistrate, Rev. Marsden, scourge of the heathen pestilence. He applied his established technique of currying his harsh repression with the promise of kindness for cooperation in the betrayal of others, though from his heights of moral indignation, he was merely tempering justice with mercy.

Marsden embraced his duties with the vehemence of old time religion. Aboriginal violence was simple lawlessness and the response entailed nothing less than the full weight of the law, either incarceration or military reprisal. Marsden had contempt for the Aborigines and regarded them as unredeemable savages. He saw Musquito as a prime example, 'a great savage' responsible for many 'robberies and murders' on the Hawkesbury. Aborigines were incapable of being civilised. Writing years later, Marsden pointed to Musquito as a classic example. Even being 'cut off from his own people' in Van Diemen's Land did not assist his 'progress in civilisation'. He had lived and died 'the same character he was when I knew him on the banks of the Hawkesbury almost 30 years ago'.[2]

Marsden's single-minded purpose those twenty years before was to curb Musquito's savagery. Musquito was the leader and herald of trouble, and release of Marden's captives required nothing less than their active aid in the capture of Musquito.

Marsden's uncompromising tactics meant the cost of collusion was far less than the cost of further resistance. In this case the method was simple and not even fully appreciated by the British authorities: Aborigines had an absolute abhorrence of incarceration. A confined cell, without sky or bush to reach into, was a near death experience, an extreme torture and mental torment. This is not some back projection of contemporary sentimentality but a profound reality, recognised even in the December 1850 investigation into Aboriginal deaths in custody.[3] It was a highly effective method of inducing Aboriginal cooperation.

The later release of Tedbury[4] in exchange for the surrender of Musquito points to the many complex layers in the deal that was struck. There were obviously elements of traditional Aboriginal communal enmity, as well as the undoubted involvement of Macarthur, who acted as mentor to Tedbury. Despite his tendency to frequently stray into some serious pillaging, which must have made Tedbury almost as desirable a catch as Musquito, it is clear Musquito was the real prize, the head of the Medusa.

Whatever the deals made and on what basis, the surrender of Musquito was a blend of coercion and negotiated exchange, the sort of unholy deal that frequently occurs in societies under foreign occupation; the sort of deal that would make a Gestapo captain blush with pride. There is clear indication of acquiescence by Musquito rather than actual capture, suggesting elements of the deal that compelled his surrender for the sake of others or for reasons of deep communal honour.

So in late June 1805 Musquito was taken with Bull-Dog, his experienced sea salt companion of the Hawkesbury, and held in the Parramatta gaol. The kind of determination exerted in his capture can be seen in the General Orders of 7 July.[5] It was announced that as the 'Principal of the late Outrages', Musquito, had been captured with the assistance of the local Aborigines, and so the "natives" were again allowed to "come in" and were not to be molested. British divide and rule: the iron fist and velvet glove. There is a grandiose confidence in the announcement by the authorities, a certainty that saw no likelihood of renewed aggression with Musquito out of the way. They knew they had captured the leader of the troubles, even though Branch Jack was still at large and not eliminated until September. It is obvious that Musquito was the key to the resistance, not only a leader of charismatic appeal but also a tactician of talent beyond the ordinary.

Musquito was confined to the Parramatta gaol, but was far from acquiescent and obviously saw any deal for his capture as temporary. He fulminated furiously, threatening to set fire to the building and 'destroy every white man within', such was his murderous hatred of white society. After the bombast and defiance diminished and the night set in, he quietly set about with Bull-Dog 'ingeniously' to loosen some of the stone work with the aid of a spike nail. Convict masonry was not what it ought to be. And some forethought and sympathetic assistance had provided the means and intention all along to escape.

They worked feverishly at the friable mortar, loosening enough stones to make a minuscule escape hatch but another prisoner, far from comatose, overheard their efforts and loudly alerted the turnkey. Sharing a cell with savages did not induce collusion, and Musquito and Bull-Dog confirmed the prisoner's point of view by violently attacking and beating him senseless, pounding him with their fists and feet brutally until forcibly restrained by a bevy of guards responding to the alarm, flooding the cell with muscular violence.

Whatever his crime, diabolical or simple misdemeanour, the authorities were sufficiently impressed — and relieved — to allow the prisoner and self-interested snitch to be released 'for his good conduct'. After all he had prevented the escape of 'two criminals whose turpitude might have engendered more excesses', which again indicates the importance the British attached to the capture of Musquito and Bull-Dog.[6]

The problem that then emerged for the Governor was what to do with Musquito and Bull-Dog. This had also been an issue faced by Governor Hunter earlier in 1799 when an Aboriginal miscreant, Charley, was brought before him. He believed he did not have the power to give orders to shoot or hang such 'Ignorant Creatures' because they could 'not be made sensible of what they might be guilty of, therefore could not be treated according to our Laws'.[7]

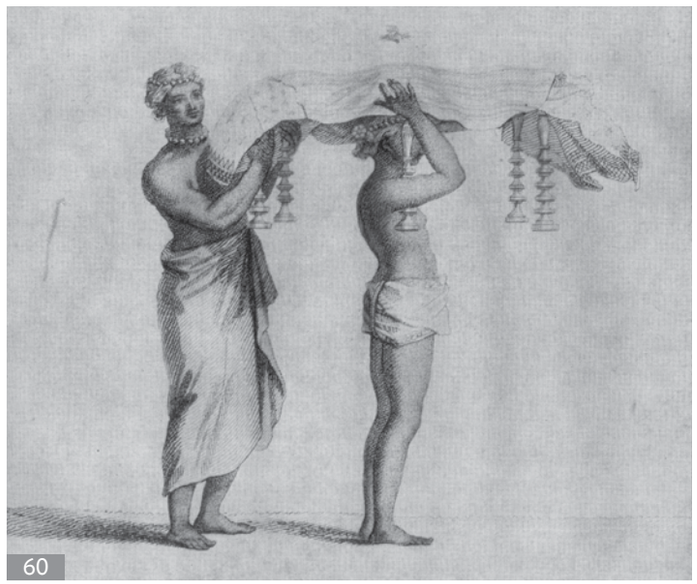
Governor King, a man of odd qualities, had similar reticence. By the time he assumed office in 1800 he had shed his adolescent charm and had become an incorrigible

drunk. This was hardly out of place in Sydney, where once, according to lark,[8] he leapt into a basket of eggs in drunken delight to the amused diversion of all. Inebriated or not, his first year of rule seemed to harbour hope of reconciliation with the Aborigines.

By 1801, though, he was ordering troops along the Georges River to defend the ripening wheat by 'every means' and to drive the Aborigines off 'either by shooting them or otherwise'.[9] By 1805 he wanted exemplary punishment for Musquito and Bull-Dog, nothing less than a first public hanging of an Aborigine in Australia, but he was sufficiently sober to cover his legal back. To this end King sought the advice of his fellow inebriate, Judge Advocate Richard Atkins, elevated from the Parramatta magistrates' court. They made a likely legal pair.

Atkins was no legal genius, and probably called upon the assistance of his then clerk Michael Massey Robinson, an Irishman transported for blackmail, but a qualified lawyer nonetheless. He was also a published poet and seditious troublemaker, compulsory attributes of an Irishman, and was later sent by King to Norfolk Island to cool his ardour. The legal opinion that eventually emerged was a cautious one that sidestepped the fraught problem of hanging an Aborigine, a first that was certain to draw Colonial Office attention as well as the ire of political masters at home. Courage and the law were never soulmates.

Atkins averred that applying the rigour of the law to acts by Aborigines was impossible because 'the evidence of persons not bound by any moral or religious tie' cannot be construed as 'legal evidence'. In other imperial British jurisdictions, like India and Ceylon, evidence by "natives" was allowed, sworn upon their respective holy texts, Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim.



Carrying the Sacred Book

James Cordiner *A Description of Ceylon* Vol.1 & Vol.2 (London; 1807) [Facsimile reprint 1983 Tisara Press, Dehiwala, Sri Lanka, p156]

But the view from the beginning was that Aborigines had no religion and thus could have no moral understanding. This has been seized upon by most modern commentators — Aborigines were not baptised Christians, they declare. Atkins' opinion, however, is *not* about baptism or Christianity. Though not necessarily grammatical, Akins enunciated a core element of common law: 'natives are within the pale' of English sovereignty — that is to say, they are subject to British law — but they are unable to plead when 'the meaning and tendency of which they must be totally ignorant of.'[10]

The problem with an act like murder is that to sustain a conviction one must satisfy two conditions, *actus reus* and *mens rea*, an intentional act and a mind capable of conceiving the implications of that act. This is why in the 1843 M'Naughton ruling insanity became a defence, as later were any other intervening aspects that cloud judgement. Atkins was not just suggesting that Aborigines have no religion. What was more important was that they had, in his opinion, *no mind capable of conceiving* the import of their actions. In the words of the legal maxim, *non actus reus nisi mens sit rea* — the accused is not guilty unless his mind is guilty.

That was the problem from the British legal point of view, and Atkins was correct. From an Aboriginal point of view there was no guilty mind because their actions within Aboriginal law were entirely appropriate and legal. They were no more guilty of murder than a British judge who pronounced the death penalty from the bench. That reasoning, however, was beyond Atkins' ken.

The solution was obvious to the colonial mind — banishment — and it was used with routine regularity in the British Empire. Exile and banishment were legally synonymous terms and *Magna Carta* specifically prohibited exile or banishment without parliamentary legal sanction. This was why the British had to enact the Transportation Act of 1718 legalising judicial banishment. But once in a Crown colony something legally odd took place, and Prerogative power of the Crown prevailed allowing banishment without legal sanction.

The British constantly used this Prerogative power during the period of empire to shuffle troublemakers around the empire, using the collection of colonies as a chessboard to deal with political prisoners and resistance or rebellion wherever it was encountered.[11] Musquito was not simply some Indigenous pest but a man acting with powerful political (and religious) motives. A warrior in rebellion, he was, if not a political prisoner, then a prisoner of war. It is not surprising then that the solution found in December 1805 was to simply banish Musquito and Bull-Dog to Norfolk Island, cast among other political prisoners, out of sight, out of mind and out of trouble.

2.9 Musquito in Sydney

Man, being reasonable, must get drunk.
—Lord Byron

The reporting of conflict on the Hawkesbury, a stilted commentary of abbreviated incidents and largely anonymous players, hints at the magnitude but glosses over the carnage. Aboriginal resistance has forever been assigned to the frontier, to the liminal space of the periphery, and the figures of conflict portrayed as phantoms of thought, villains or heroes of the imagination that flare momentarily in the flow of narrative. Only occasionally do named characters like Pemulwuy or Musquito come to the fore, and only for their notoriety and impact. The rest are strangers.

Musquito was not simply a fringe figure but one frequently seen in Sydney, known and reported in Aboriginal affairs and sufficiently familiar to be drawn by the curious French. This seems odd, as we do not expect the colonial spheres to intersect. A recurring aspect of resistance and even revolution, however, is that the leading participants come not from the anonymous periphery or proletarian underclass but from those of some status and standing. They are familiar with the occupying authority and to some extent integrated, such as Arminius or Musquito.

The reason this puzzles is that it seems counter-intuitive, yet it is precisely those familiar with the occupying culture who realise the emphatic truth that they will never really have voice, position or authority. They know they will forever be reviled and on the margins. That is what makes their resentment and rage so intense and their resistance so determined, since they know "the enemy" well.

That resentment could be articulated without hesitation. The perceptive Watkin Tench related the story of how, when out on an exploratory journey, Boladeree, a Sydney-side Aborigine, refused to retrieve a duck shot by a European because ducks were reserved for the whites while the Aborigines ate crow, literally. Tench reflected that the incident placed in 'sharp focus' the deep Aboriginal resentment of English hierarchic behaviour and obvious Aboriginal relegation to the 'bottom of the social ladder'.

'They would simply not tolerate being treated so,' Tench stated emphatically. 'Instead they laughed and mocked the Europeans for their clumsiness and stupidity in the bush. When the exhausted Europeans … showed ill humour at this, the Aborigines promptly called them *gonin-patta* — shit eaters.'[1]

The message was unmistakable, and one would have had to be exceedingly sanguine to imagine it would have been otherwise. There may, however, have been cultural layers to enactment of this insult, for while accusing another of eating excrement is a universal affront, within the 'woods' region, Musquito country, where they were operating, Aboriginal initiation involved ingestion of excrement.[2] Whether this was literal (as Mathews believed) or was what Elkin called a 'noble fiction'[3] in Aboriginal religious ritual, is difficult to tell.

So the insult may have also been an allusion to the absence of initiation among the whites and thus to their lack of manhood. It may even have been a sideswipe at local Aborigines, whose initiation into manhood involved such startling practices as opposed to the tooth avulsion practised around Sydney. Understanding Aboriginal response is often extremely fraught, particularly from such historic distance.

Musquito on the margins suits the expectation of a warrior rebel but he not only appears on the Hawkesbury as a principal in the resistance, he also frequently appears in Sydney town among reported Aboriginal occasions.

To some commentators like Naomi Parry this so violates expectation that they propose multiple figures of the same name, which is quite understandable. As the cliché puts it, they looked the same to the British, so confusion and mistaken identity was highly likely. And they were not always aware of the degree to which Aborigines moved seamlessly from town to bush and back again. This is not surprising since not only were there the temptations of town — particularly alcohol — it was also still the place of ritual contest and initiation around Farm Cove and Woolloomooloo. The Aborigines did not move their ceremonial sites just because the British arrived.

Musquito is first mentioned in the *Sydney Gazette*[4] in October 1803 in a ritual battle conducted at the 'upper end of Pitt's Row' (Pitt Street), in what is now central Sydney, 'about an hour before sunset'. The gathering was designed to carry out ritual punishment on two men, one of them 'known to us' as 'Musquetto'[*sic*] who were responsible, 'directly or indirectly', for the 'assassination of two others … who died of their spear wounds'. The knowledge of his warrior role and the kind of awesome violence he was capable of lends credibility to his involvement in such an assassination. Like Durmugam, this was warrior work.

The punishment group advanced on Musquito with 'ungovernable antipathy and rage', part meant malice and part ritual performance, and he defended himself 'against 64 spears, all thrown with rancour and malignity', 17 of which went through his shield some 'to a depth of two feet'. The 65th spear, some two metres long, and the last thrown (since satisfaction was achieved) penetrated the calf of his right leg about 13 cm.[5] It is clear that Musquito was the main object of revenge as the other culprit

only had nine spears thrown at him, 'all of which he avoided'. While the reportage is detailed about the contest, little is disclosed of the cause beyond retribution for a death, but the vigour and vengeance identifies Musquito as a figure of importance, ferocity and skill.

The report also indicates a morbid fascination by white town folk with Aboriginal custom. They were part of the local landscape, becoming spectator sports for Sydney rowdies and eventually so deteriorating into drunken farce that they were banned by Governor Macquarie in a Proclamation on 8 June 1816.[6] Active white involvement can be observed after Musquito's ritual contest, a fight over the wife of one of the deceased. After she received 'many severe blows' and her 'arms almost dragged from their sockets' she was 'borne in triumph from the field' by an Irishman.[7] Black women were already nonchalantly viewed as part of the spoils, as objects of male acquisition.

These battles were not seen favourably by visitors to Sydney like the Russians, who saw condoning these contests as barbaric and a poor reflection on the British, for a 'sensitive man would shudder at such bestial conflicts'.[8] It may have been sport for local whites, but Musquito was engaged in a serious traditional ritual that was conducted in deadly earnest.

Unsighted as they were by their own crude cruelty, the British increasingly saw these contests as sure signs of savagery where in fact they were highly structured rituals, which avoided social violence by contained contest. As the culture collapsed, so too did the ritual significance, but they were never 'mock fights',[9] as Parry suggests, but ritualised legal proceedings for the social regulation of violence.

British accounts are 'thick with descriptions of pre-planned [Aboriginal] battles',[10] and the rituals of Aboriginal conflict and punishment were much like medieval chivalry and just as frequently honoured in the breach as observed. Bennelong's leather and tin shield, a gift of the Governor, was confiscated because 'it was deemed unfair to cover himself with such a guard'.[11] So it was extremely rule-ridden behaviour, not some loutish testosterone-charged punchup.

It was in fact very *civilised* behaviour. For example, in 1797, Colbee, one of the Governor's early captives, while fighting with ironwood clubs in a ritual battle with Yeranibe, violated the rules of chivalry by savagely striking his opponent while he was stooping to retrieve his broken shield. This earned him the contemptible 'appellation of *jee-run*, or coward'[12] and fierce retribution by ritual trial by relatives — either that or risk assassination in the dead of night. To understand the significance of such nuanced behaviour requires contrast with British practice.

In 1789 Governor Phillip wanted to demonstrate to the Aborigines the nature of British justice. Arabanoo, kidnapped by the British at Manly cove and "tamed" to the

settlement, was made to witness the flogging of convicts who had thieved Aboriginal fish-gigs (fishing spears). These fish-gigs were usually left carelessly about by Aborigines who never imagined anyone would steal them, but they were prized as artefacts to be sent home for profit.

Firmly trussed, the convicts were flailed by a whip that frequently flicked pulped flesh and blood on assembled witnesses. Far from impressed, Arabanoo was astonished and appalled, reacting with 'symptoms of disgust and terror'.[13]

While undoubtedly a ritual feared and revered by the British, it was one that offended Aboriginal sensibilities. Tench, a perceptive observer, noted the 'strong abhorrence of punishment' by the Aborigines in later incidents wherein the 'women were particularly affected' with some moved to tears and others angered to the point of snatching a stick and menacing the executioner.[14] But it was not so much an abhorrence of *punishment* as an objection to the *method*.

In Aboriginal society punishment was ritually formed, with the offender offered for self-defence a shield and deflecting instrument. The idea of *restraining* a person for punishment was utterly alien, so if flogging was abhorrent, hanging culprits was equally unintelligible and astonishing. And of course incarceration was utterly incomprehensible. Worse, leaning on western moral concepts, it was not honourable or proper. Simply stated, restrained punishment, incarceration, flogging or hanging, from an Aboriginal perspective, was profoundly *uncivilised*.

Musquito was a recognised warrior, which obviously attracted Petit to draw him. He was enmeshed in the proprieties of culture, and in December 1804 Musquito was again present in 'native warfare the most malignant that has been witnessed'. The gathering, this time at Farm Cove, was to punish the 'heroic *Wilhamanan*' (the same who was accused of spearing Governor Phillip). After 'avoiding an immense number of spears' he was wounded in the hand by a spear passing through his shield. Instead of bringing the matter to conclusion as the rules dictated, dissatisfaction with the result provoked a further general skirmish that lasted about an hour.[15]

In an aside, it was reported by '*white* spectators' that Bungaree, 'a native distinguished by his remarkable courtesy' threw a 'bent, edged waddy resembling a [T]urkish scymetar [*sic*]' — the weapon favoured by Musquito and used by him in Van Diemen's Land. This form of non-returning boomerang was remarkably vicious and it is reported in the incident that the weapon was thrown at a distance of 30 to 40 metres, 'twirling through the air with astonishing velocity'. After striking an opponent on the right arm 'leaving a horrible contusion', it rebounded some 70 or 80 metres 'exciting universal admiration'.[16] It was a mastery demonstrated by Musquito in Van Diemen's Land when Gilbert Robertson related how Musquito was so skilled he could knock the

head off a pigeon with a ‘stick’, obviously the kind of non-returning boomerang used by Bungaree.[17]

The conflict, as frequently noted, ended as abruptly as it commenced and everyone ‘sat down perfectly satisfied with the event’. Nothing further occurred until evening, when ‘a villain of the *darkest* hue’ threw a spear ‘treacherously’ among the ‘dormant and promiscuous group’, striking Musquito in the arm. A vociferous alarm was raised, and the ‘assassin’, who was known by the spear he used, was pursued to the Brickfields (south of Hyde Park) and forced to defend himself ‘by the light of the moon’ until ‘severely wounded in his turn’.[18]

Again the cryptic description leaves much unexplained, but it was not just anyone who was subject to this treacherous attack, but Musquito who had clearly been singled out, a deliberate attempt at assassination. This is an attack with history and background, executed with sly stealth, which indicates a seething resentment and fear of Musquito. The response to the universal call to arms saw the attack as cowardly and unacceptable by Aboriginal standards, and indicates Musquito’s prominent position within Aboriginal society, a warrior of some standing feared for his capacity.

It is obvious that while he is reported at the frequent contests in Sydney, Musquito is a regular visitor and fully familiar with white culture — far too familiar on occasions. And there is an increasing contempt that enters the reporting by the *Gazette* of conflict about the settlement and facetious resort to comparisons with ancient Greek characters, rendering the reports more like a parody of *Midsummer Nights’ Dream* than sober commentary.

In the report of another ritual contest in January 1805 the full parody of a Greek drama is applied to an incident involving Bennelong, who was made to withstand a ‘torrent of revenge’, a fusillade of ‘upwards of a hundred spears’, which he avoided successfully. In the middle of these proceedings the scene was suddenly confused when ‘Musquito, pregnant with nectarean [*sic*] juices, rolled like a pestilence among them, discharging random spears in every direction’.[19] To the reporter it was fast becoming farce, with Musquito’s drunken aggression adding to the effect. This rude intrusion set off further trouble and conflict, though whether it was his intention to create a diversion or merely an accident of his inebriated condition is not clear.[20]

The attitude towards Aborigines in the *Gazette* had begun to migrate from an earlier sympathetic characterisation as creatures of Nature to one of ‘merciless barbarity’ among a ‘wretched race’. It is clear, too, that an alarming decline of the native population is recognised and the reasons attributed to their own internecine warfare and disputes, particularly the regular ritual battles, that were ‘barbarous and irreconcileable [*sic*] usages’ which threaten to ‘wholly extirpate their already thin and scattered handfuls’.[21]

The continuing demographic collapse occurring even after the catastrophe of disease is clearly understood, but attributed to Aboriginal savagery. This constant reference to savagery in the press illustrates the profound gap widening between the British and their understanding of Aboriginal culture. Savagery or not, demographic collapse and rapid white encroachment signalled the onset of resistance, born of a desperation against smothering by an alien culture; a deeply human response to mourning and loss; a determination to defend to the last.

All the British saw was savagery, and every act was made to carry the opprobrium as one poignant tale illustrates. British indignation for the ‘deliberate inhumanity towards a fellow creature, unparalleled save only in the barbarous usages to which these people are habituated’[22] was visited on an incident on the Hawkesbury. An Aborigine had been urged on by white settlers to climb a tree in pursuit of a cockatoo but became entangled and fell from a height, breaking both legs and his hip.

The women set up a ‘piecing shriek’ and the men assembled. They minutely examined him and declared him sadly incurable; they understood profoundly the prognosis of particular wounds. Ordering the women to retire, they gathered brushwood about the body and set fire while he was still alive. Yet far from reflecting on their own purported cruelty, ‘the fatal event had aroused the indignation of the whole tribe against all white people’, [23] who were blamed because the incident would not have occurred had they not offered a reward for the capture of the cockatoo.

Again it is well to pause and explore the behaviour, since rarely are things as they appear. To the British, burning the man alive was astonishingly barbaric and profoundly insensitive — and historically past the time they burned witches. There was, however, considerable Aboriginal forethought in the behaviour, not indifference. Far from being detached from the man’s pain they sought to quench his agony as quickly as humanely possible.

Had they bludgeoned him out of his misery there would have been potential blame and responsibility for his death and thus possible retribution and more ritual combat. By entering into the *rituals of death* and cremation, however, agency for his death was removed from the participants. After all, the British were to blame. They may even have added elements of compassion to their act of cremation by throwing green wood onto the flames to asphyxiate swiftly. Even the Inquisition with their *auto da fe* knew of that.[24] The clash of perceptions is clear. Theirs is in fact a *civilised*, if violent, realm.

Civilised implies rule or law-based consistent civil behaviour. John Dunmore Lang disclosed this unvoiced assumption when he said of the Aborigines, 'Their internal polity, however is far from arbitrary', with "arbitrary" the defining sign of "savagery". Instead, Lang suggested, as though it were revelatory, that Aborigines are 'much regulated by ... traditionary laws and institutions', and with considerable insight added, wherein 'obligation is imperative upon all' and where 'breaches' are 'uniformly punished by death'.[25]

So from an Aboriginal perspective it could be said that their rule-ordered ritualised behaviour was "civilised", while that of the British was "barbaric". Similarly the British would protest that while flogging was harsh it was only administered after scrupulous application of judicial process and determination, hallowed rules and rituals that were the backbone of British "civilised" behaviour.

While parenthetic to our understanding, the capture of a parrot may seem odd unless it was understood how fashionable the presence of these birds was in Sydney, with shopfronts hung with parrots in cages like some South Seas emporium. The birds were unique and their colours vibrant, particularly those birds from around Rose Hill, later Parramatta. So the Rose Hill-ers became Rosellas and their capture and caging much sought after, with the Aborigines exploited to retrieve them from their treetop nests.

These are elements of the clash of values, the clash of worlds, of perceptions and beliefs, so deep in fact that conflict was utterly inevitable. The contempt and condemnation of white culture eroded any potential for resolution and induced a visceral rage and hostility on both sides.

Musquito disappears from the reports of the *Sydney Gazette* on events around Sydney, and begins to appear in reports of the Hawkesbury in the shadowy war of the borderland, an interminable and brutal conflict without quarter where bloodshed became companionably familiar.

Governor King wanted not only his capture but his ritual strangulation, a public hanging that underlined British "civilised" practice and a legal solution to the problems posed by Aboriginal insurgency. Ironically British common law and Atkins' caution gave him no legal foundation to prosecute and hang. While Governor King was frustrated in his intention, he had in his armoury the formidable exercise of Prerogative and the power to banish Musquito and Bull-Dog to wherever he chose, in this particular case, Norfolk Island in December 1805.

2.10 Another Musquito?

Musquito should have disappeared from the papers after banishment to Norfolk Island in December 1805 but he suddenly turned up again in January 1806. Now he appeared in the *Sydney Gazette* involved in a ritual contest, a battle between 'two well known natives', Musquito and Mirout. This report upends the story so far, and it is not easy to dismiss. It is a detailed and extended report that ends in the dramatic death of Musquito.

The reported contest took place in front of the military barracks after Musquito, in a state of intoxication, wounded young Pigeon with a tomahawk. Mirout won the admiration of the crowd for his 'determined intrepidity' by exposing himself to attack while declining to take advantage of opportunities presented in the battle. His bravado was eclipsed, however, when he was suddenly struck down. While on the ground he received another blow from Musquito, which laid his head 'completely open'.

Musquito's success only incensed his opponents, and he was attacked later in the week at night, speared 'under the heart' in front of the General Hospital. He was taken into the hospital, where as he died he disclosed the name of his assailant, Blewett, which set in train another pattern of revenge.[1]

What is unusual about the story is the elaborate description of the funeral that followed. It was, on the admission of the *Sydney Gazette* reporter, 'more extravagant than ever before witnessed'. The whole of the morning following his death was given over to the lamentations of his female friends and relatives, which were loud and 'even tumultuous' whenever it was necessary to disturb the body. Even a group of Aborigines unrelated to Musquito were attacked with 'repeated flights of spears' when they strayed near the mourning scene, all of which 'denoted the general esteem in which the deceased was held'. At night the body was wrapped in bark and accompanied by an old man who ordered those carrying the body to 'make numerous turns, to walk backwards and frequently to vary their paces' in order 'to *bewilder* the deceased' and prevent his return.

Even in the midst of mourning a dispute arose when an older woman made a disparaging remark about Musquito to his sister, 'who was much affected', and a battle among the women ensured, many of whom were wounded by each other's waddies.

The next morning the body was interred and friends and relatives gathered to exact revenge against Blewett, who was responsible for Musquito's death. They met in the sandhills behind the Brickfields but Blewett had returned to Botany Bay to obtain reinforcements.[2] The revenge attack subsequently took place against Blewett and

young Pigeon and involved Bennelong and other well-known Sydney personalities, Coleby, Nanbury, Wilhaman and old White. Blewett was wounded when a spear struck the upper arc of his shield, shattering the wood and penetrating about an inch (25 mm) below the left eye and through the nose, 'occasioning a ghastly wound'. Pigeon too was wounded through the leg, and a general affray ensured wherein Colinjong was killed. Bennelong escaped with only a minor wound, which was a 'matter of astonishment to all present'.[3]

The elaborate description and involvement of Aboriginal personalities well known about Sydney makes it difficult to reject. Just how can this occurrence be explained if Musquito and Bull-Dog are already secure on Norfolk Island?

The *Sydney Gazette* was, of course, the organ of the authorities and it has been suggested[4] that the report of Musquito's death was concocted to ensure a silencing of his voice among the people of the Hawkesbury. It was well known to the British that mention of the name of a deceased person was anathema to Aborigines and by concocting his death the military authorities were ensuring he would be quickly forgotten, his name no longer able to be spoken, and his resistance movement on the Hawkesbury severely weakened.

Certainly the British military were capable of such skulduggery, but whether they had either the imagination or inclination is granting more credit to the military than they usually possess. The considerable cast of Aboriginal characters also would require inordinate organisation and subterfuge. Further, while the name of a deceased person may not be spoken this does not mean they fade from memory. Aboriginal languages had elaborate symbolic means and alternate words for referring to people, which in fact grants a mythic quality to the deceased, ensuring that awe and power continues to adhere to them.

To suggest a conspiracy of sorts immediately raises the adage that if there is a choice between a conspiracy and a mistake, consider the mistake first. The choice thereafter is either a confusion of personalities — two characters with the same name — or misreporting, neither of which can be discounted.

There is the possibility of multiple characters with the Hawkesbury figure, as Naomi Parry claims, distinct from the Sydney personality. This is based on the view that the Petit illustration of Musquito is different from the resistance figure of the Hawkesbury, and that there are two distinct characters of the same name. This sees the two areas and the various Aboriginal groups as quite separate, distinguishing the heroic resistance figure from the town rowdy.

The merging and movement of the various groups, however, discounts this, and the Petit portraits of Musquito and Bull-Dog in Sydney were of the same

Aborigines captured on the Hawkesbury. Also when letters were later sent seeking Musquito's repatriation to Sydney from Van Diemen's Land they were at the request of his brother Phillip. While no assertion is certain, this would indicate that his brother had engaged in an exchange of names with the first governor, Phillip, which places members of the family in the Sydney area from the beginning of British settlement.

The supposed Musquito killed outside the hospital was characterised by the *Gazette* as drunk, and earlier incidents regarding Musquito point to inebriation. This of course was one of the cultural hazards of association with the British, and he was later described in Van Diemen's Land as 'an English scholar in our national vices of drinking and swearing'.[5] Succumbing to some of the sins of town life would not necessarily rule out a figure of resistance. Bull-Dog served aboard sealing vessels and undoubtedly assumed some questionable habits, but he too figured in resistance before capture with Musquito. As previously emphasised, familiarity with the culture of the occupying force is a powerful sculptor of resistance.

None of this can be determined with certainty, but the simplest answer to the story of Musquito's death in Sydney is just error, a confused misreporting like so many reports in that period that confused Aboriginal figures. This was no era of investigative reporting and others would have relayed the story, a sure means of securing a garbled story. The name of Musquito was much in the thoughts of many at the time of his surrender, so its use was readily at hand.

Another aspect does not quite gel either. Musquito was a warrior, granted a violent and often vicious adversary, but a warrior nonetheless, imbued with a warrior ethos. The likelihood of him taking advantage of an opponent while on the ground is not consistent. This would have been rank cowardice, and there was no violation so abhorred as the vengeance visited on the supposed Musquito later in the week, attests. A misreporting appears the most likely explanation, and another example points to this likelihood.

One of the most notable examples of mistaken reporting occurred at the same time, in June 1805, as Musquito's assaults on the Hawkesbury round Portland Head. The *Sydney Gazette* detailed an attack on Lamb's farm. Aborigines standing on a rocky outcrop showered firebrands on the house, barn and stack of barley, all of which were destroyed.[6] It appears to be a classic terror attack aimed at inducing whites to abandon their farms. A few days later the *Sydney Gazette* told of another raid on Abraham Yoular at Portland Head, again involving firing of a barn and stack. All consistent with Aboriginal tactics; however on the 7th July an utterly new version arose.[7]

Now, it appeared, an orphaned Aboriginal girl raised by the Lambs and now around puberty had been caught in the act of setting fire to her new abode. It rapidly became clear she had been responsible for the previous two fires, as the family had moved house, to Yoular's at first and then to Chaseland's. While she had not been associated with the local Aborigines and knew no language, she had been seen of late in the company of an older Aboriginal boy. Whether the behaviour was pubescent disturbance or instigated by her association with the boy is unclear, but what is certain is that the elaborately detailed earlier story was completely untrue and the young Aboriginal girl was the real culprit.

The account was completely overturned, but the *Sydney Gazette*, far from contrite, barely missed a beat. It was obviously fairly frequent, given their reliance on casual reporting sources. The original version was total misreporting and this seems to be the same sort of misattribution as the death of Musquito.

As with so many stories, there are illuminating tangents. Chaseland, with whose white family the Lambs ultimately found sanctuary, was to sire a child, Tommy Chaseland, by an Aboriginal. Whether Tommy's mother was the same young Aboriginal is speculation but Tommy, like so many Aborigines on the Hawkesbury, later went whaling and earned fame and reputation for his skill in the south island of New Zealand. What seem apparent however are two things: the extraordinary small cast of characters encountered in early colonial history (and their interwoven connections); and the common occurrence of black/white offspring, even in homes where a white wife was present.[8]

The manner in which accounts could be confused can be seen in the frequent reference to Musquito in Van Diemen's Land having been transported for killing a woman. Bonwick added sensation: after Bull-Dog and Musquito had 'waylaid a woman, ill-used and then murdered her', to gratify 'their horrible propensities, they ripped open the body of the poor creature, and destroyed the infant she carried'.[9] The hint is that she is white and 'ill-use' suggests rape but there is nothing in the record to suggest any such incident took place. The record is clear: he was taken into custody as a result of outrages on the Hawkesbury, exiled on Norfolk Island and later transferred to Van Diemen's Land.

There were, however, reports in the *Sydney Gazette* that may have lent weight to the rumour. In March of 1805, in what was described as a 'trivial misunderstanding', an Aborigine speared his female companion, the point entering her back below the shoulder, exiting below the left breast. The 'unhappy victim of a brutal rage' was then left, 'abandoned to her fate by the barbarian'.[10] The spear remained in her body for two days before she was brought to the surgeon Mr Arndell who attempted, at her insistence, to remove it, but she later died.[11]

It would seem that 'the enormities of this sanguinary miscreant' did not end there. He had previously murdered a female companion he had purchased for a blanket from her previous partner. In a dispute over this transaction the terrorised woman had her head 'cleft' open and died. While the reporter fulminates with moral outrage over these events, no mention is made of the perpetrator's name.

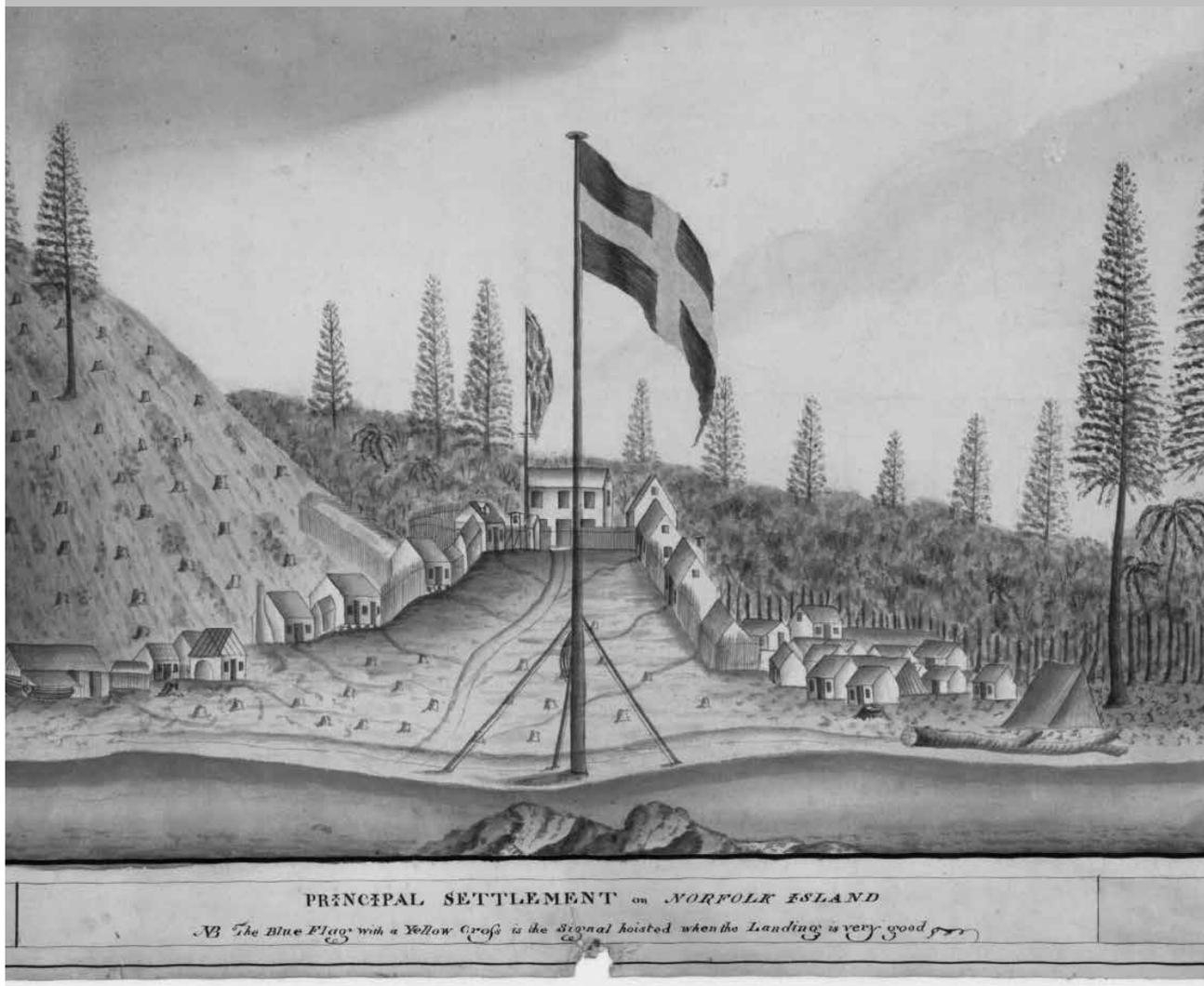
Whether this story was ascribed to Musquito can never be known of course, though it does parallel stories told of Musquito's brutal treatment of women in Van Diemen's Land. Again this may be misreporting or rumour repeated until it appeared fact. Certainly the treatment of women in Aboriginal society could be very violent and while culturally consistent, it does not make it particularly edifying. A warrior figure holding firm to brutal misogynist behaviour, however "traditional", may not accord with our wish to reveal a figure of noble resistance, but these are the contradictions frequently exposed when a man is revealed to the air.

Whether Musquito was responsible for vicious attacks on women or whether these obviously infamous events were simply heaped on Musquito to add to his blame will always remain unclear. Certainly his notoriety meant he acquired responsibility for events not always of his making, but that is the nature of a figure like Musquito. Once he had acquired infamy, events were added to his store of notoriety whether deserved or otherwise. Thus are legends made.

Whatever the permutations of personality, the one certainty was the abrupt decline in attacks, which Governor King clearly saw as a consequence of the capture of Musquito.[12] The attacks ceased and the corn raids dropped off.[13] Even though 1806 was a time of scarcity, where you would expect an increase in violence, relations with the Aborigines were quiescent.

The leadership and strategic direction of Musquito had been crucial to the upsurge of attacks and outrages and his removal had been central to their elimination. In King's Memorandum to Bligh on his relinquishing the governorship, he wrote that the Aborigines had been 'generally inoffensive owing to the great effect my sending two of their number to Norfolk Island'. Musquito had been the principal architect of terror and resistance on the Hawkesbury and King recognised that.

Norfolk Island 3



Principal settlement on Norfolk Island, George Raper, 1790.
National Library of Australia

3.1 Banishment and Norfolk Island

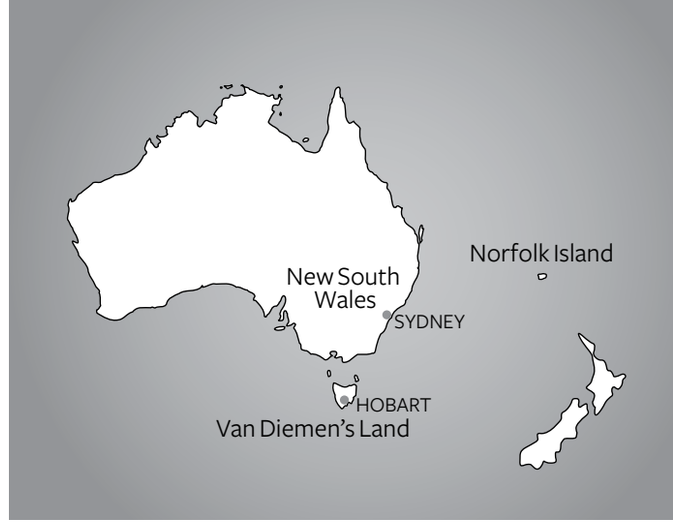
The decision to banish Musquito and Bull-Dog to Norfolk Island is a story passed over without comment in historical recounting simply because banishment was so common in British colonial history. Because those banished were often held under the overarching edifice of transportation and convictism it was reasonable to see it as a form of the same legal genera and conflate the process, but legally it was an umbral area, like martial law,[1] that does not quite fit the edifice of justice that the British were so fond of viewing as part of their enlightened civilisation. That British justice "followed the flag" was a firmly held illusion.[2]

The difficulty was that banishment violated one of the cornerstones of British justice defined in the constitutional foundation of Magna Carta. In Cap. 29 of Magna Carta it was spelled out that it was a principal of British justice that no freeman could be exiled except by law. Similarly in s12 of the Habeas Corpus Act, 31 Car. II, 1679, exile except by law was specifically excluded, a reiteration required because the old principle was so frequently violated.

The principle was so strong that even the deportation of thousands of criminals to the North American colonies, before the Transportation Act, was couched in a fiction. Since most were capitally convicted, commutation of the death sentence or royal pardon was granted on condition of their "voluntary" exile to America: the choice was death or exile. The merchants and private purveyors who carried them to America sold them for the price of their passage as "indentured servants", not convicts, and advertisements in American papers for the capture and return of such absconding "servants" were relatively common.

A significant number of pardoned convicted criminals were sent to the Americas before the Transportation Act of 1718 but the number exploded thereafter. Some 50,000 were sent between 1718 and 1776 alone — about a quarter of all American bound British migrants[3] — yet convictism rarely features in the American narrative, and not just because the story of slavery so overshadows. They were not usually described as convicts but as indentured servants who, in a continuing fiction, had arrived "free".

The Transportation Act rectified the fiction of voluntary exile by banishing by law, by sentence of a duly constituted court and by alignment with Magna Carta. While it had always been a feature of medieval practice, exile or banishment — the terms are interchangeable — became a routine feature of 18th century British law, so central that it prompted the foundation of an antipodean settlement in Australia just for that penal purpose once the convenience of North America had been removed by revolution.



But even in Australia the preference in parlance was to avoid the opprobrium of "convict" for the euphemistic "indentured servant", or simply "government man". Euphemism or not, it underlines the inherently coercive nature of labour relations in the 18th and 19th centuries, where the various Master and Servant Acts made even free labour highly constrained. The first Act in NSW in 1828 drew the barest line between convict and free labour.

Yet this does not explain the banishment of Musquito and Bull-Dog, nor the hundreds routinely banished *without* trial or legal process from the various British colonies and possessions to other colonies over the period of British imperialism. The Empire became a shuffleboard, shifting various troublemakers, political prisoners and castoffs from conflicts elsewhere out of harm's way, often indefinitely and often without even the pretence of legal process.

Ceylon, for instance, became a depository for Egyptian nationalist dissidents like Colonel Arabi. At one stage 5000 Boer prisoners of war were exiled there until they acknowledged British sovereignty in South Africa, which meant that one at least, Englebrecht, was exiled in Ceylon until he died in the 1920s, still refusing to take the oath.[4] Similarly, the last king of Kandy was exiled after the 1815 Kandyan War to Vellore in Madras, and those responsible for the 1817 Rebellion in Ceylon were exiled in Mauritius.[5]

Norfolk Island also became, after the 1798 Irish Troubles, a particular place of exile for Irish dissidents, rebels and political prisoners as well. So keenly sensitive were the British to Irish dissent and rebellion that in 1800 Lieutenant Governor Joseph Forveaux, in one of the most notorious acts on Norfolk Island, after church rounded up Irish dissidents suspected of plotting an uprising and summarily hanged two on a hastily erected scaffold on the beach. A dubious deed, it was nonetheless an act of Prerogative and was upheld by Governor King and commended by the Colonial Office in London.[6]

The most prominent of the Irish dissidents was Joseph Holt,[7] who was sent to Norfolk Island in 1804. Holt was a leader in the 1798 Troubles and agreed to voluntary exile. Holt was exiled to New South Wales, but after the Irish Uprising at Castle Hill was further exiled to Norfolk Island on suspicion of collusion. Also banished without trial to Norfolk Island after the Troubles in Ireland were two priests, Father Peter O'Neil

Far left: Sir Henry Browne Hayes en.wikipedia.org
Left: Maurice Margarot, stipple engraving published by H.D. Symonds, 1794
National Library of Australia

and Father James Harold,[8] as well as a Protestant minister, Rev. Henry Fulton. Transported for sedition, Fulton spent five years on Norfolk, from 1801 to 1806.[9]

"Gentleman" troublemakers were a feature of Norfolk Island. Michael Dwyer, suspected by Governor King of planning yet another Irish uprising with other notable Irish exiles, was sent to Norfolk Island. Dwyer was the "Wicklow Chieftain" of the Irish Troubles who had refused to surrender like Joseph Holt, but after an amnesty in 1803 he also agreed to voluntary exile. Similarly Michael Massey Robinson, transported for blackmail, but a lawyer, poet, and seditious troublemaker, was shunted off to Norfolk Island in 1805. It was probably Michael Massey Robinson, the only qualified lawyer in the colony at the time, who, ironically, had produced the opinion for Governor King on the banishment of Musquito and Bull-Dog.

Banished in 1805 along with Michael Massey Robinson was Maurice Margarot, one of the "Scottish Martyrs" tried for sedition in 1793; William Maum, another voluntary Irish exile; and Sir Henry Browne Hayes, a roistering Irishman transported for kidnapping a would-be bride. All were in some way seen as seditious critics of the administration, so Musquito was in appropriate company among a gaggle of political prisoners and misfits, though it is doubtful they would have recognised any commonality with a renegade "native".

Probably the most quixotic of the administration's critics was the colourful John Grant. Originally sentenced for attempted murder in a botched endeavour to enforce a duel: all for the love of a maid above his station. He became an advocate of rights and justice that eventually saw him sentenced in 1805 to five years on Norfolk Island for seditious libel. After consorting with Browne Hayes against the direct orders of Captain John Piper, Acting Commandant, and accused of seditious remarks about Fouveaux and Piper, he was given 25 lashes, a basic low order punishment but extremely severe nonetheless.

Thereafter Grant neither shaved nor cut his hair, and appearing like some ancient prophet, was seen shouting from the heights of a new injustice, his mane flaring to the flight of his arms gesticulating and his roaring voice. Piper could tolerate it no more and had him exiled on the offshore Phillip Island for four months.

While not all these dissidents and troublemakers were banished without trial, many were and had been previously. So the case of Musquito and Bull-Dog was far from unusual — in fact it was a routine imperial process. It was not simply, as Atkins had determined in the case of Musquito and Bull-Dog, that trial was not appropriate because there was no "guilty mind". Banishment was an available alternative but it requires legal explanation.

The key lies in the nature of kingship, however fictional it became with the progress of parliamentary supremacy after the Glorious Revolution in 1688. While in *domestic* affairs the Crown thereafter was constrained by Parliament and the common law, in *external* affairs and foreign policy, in theory at least, the use of Royal Prerogative remained unrestrained.[10] Basically where the white cliffs of Dover ended, Royal Prerogative took over.

The Crown, for instance, declares wars, which is why parliament is not necessarily consulted in any such declaration. Colonies, similarly, are constituted under the Crown's jurisdiction with respect to foreign policy, particularly those colonies in "uninhabited" country "discovered" and "inhabited by Englishmen" (rather than those acquired and constrained by the obligation of treaties).

Royal Prerogative is the 'remaining portion of the Crown's original authority',[11] and governors and administrators of colonies and possessions are vice-regal appointments. Within the bounds of their instructions and any constituted assembly, governors were able to exercise all the unfettered plenary sovereign powers of the Crown outside of its domestic parliamentary sphere of constraint. The Crown retained 'powers of extraordinary scope and arbitrariness in relation to colonies',[12] with English law offering a 'dismally modest check on the executive's extra-territorial exercise of Prerogative power'.[13]

The incidence of banishment from Ireland at the time of the Troubles derives from its position then as an external possession, before Union with the United Kingdom, and where essentially as a colony, the exercise of Royal Prerogative was more extensive. Magna Carta did not necessarily hold and exile without due process was the legal outcome of the exercise of Royal Prerogative. It was used without inhibition throughout the colonial era.

This was why Musquito and Bull-Dog could be summarily exiled, and why Governor Arthur could exile the remnants of the Tasmanian Aborigines to Flinders Island. The Tasmanian Aborigines may have "voluntarily" agreed to exile but they were kept there by Prerogative and only allowed to return by the same Prerogative power.

Far from being an arcane historical curiosity, the issue of banishment and its legal foundation was adjudicated as recently as 2008, when the banishment of the

Chagossian Islanders from the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) and the issue of banishment by Royal Prerogative was given exhaustive legal scrutiny.[14] There the British desire in the 1960s to establish a separate territory for the purpose of leasing the island of Diego Garcia to the US for an immense military base led to the exile of the local population and to protracted legal action.

The historical foundations — minutely detailed and endorsed by the judges — can still be discerned in the exercise of Royal Prerogative by the Crown to banish the quaintly described 'belongers' of that territory.[15] Lord Rodger concluded that while it is a 'fundamental principle' of English law that no citizen can be banished,[16] in a colony those rights may be removed. In a colony, Prerogative power as primary legislation was in accord with the 'law of the land'.[17] Prerogative allowed governments 'to … legislate for British colonies in ruthless promotion of the interests of the United Kingdom … '[18] As Dyzenhaus states, it was 'rule of law in England, arbitrary power elsewhere'.[19] The Empire was simply the 'raw projection of power … unmediated by law'.[20]

The exile of Musquito and Bull-Dog was certainly not an isolated incident. In the Caribbean in 1796, 550 rebellious Maroons of Trelawney were exiled to Nova Scotia, and in 1798 the Black Caribs of St Vincent were banished to the island of Roatán, off modern Honduras, which is why Governor Arthur (previously Superintendent in Honduras) was familiar with the practice.

Back in Sydney, Dual, another one of those troublesome Aborigines engaged in frontier confrontation in Appin and Cowpastures, was exiled to Van Diemen's Land in 1816 by Governor Macquarie.[21] Unlike Governor King, Macquarie adopted an explicitly judicial mantel in his exercise of Prerogative power, wrapped in legalese and the conventions of courts and conviction. Here was an utter conflation of the legal process — of trial, judgment, sentence and executive mercy by the exercise of Prerogative — all rolled into one.

The notice of Public Order lays it out. Macquarie declared it was 'expedient' — a dazzling understatement — that Dual should 'meet with condign Punishment' in order to deter others, given he was a danger 'to the Peace and Good Order of the Community'. Despite the 'Crimes and Offences' that Dual had 'been guilty and personally concerned in', Macquarie was magisterially 'moved with Compassion towards the said Criminal', and, considering his 'Ignorance of the Laws and Duties of civilised Nations', he intended by the power 'vested in' him to commute his summary sentence 'into Banishment' for seven years, the typical sentence of transportation. It was, as Lisa Ford[22] justly suggests, an extraordinary legal gesture, but these were Prerogative powers 'vested in' him nonetheless.

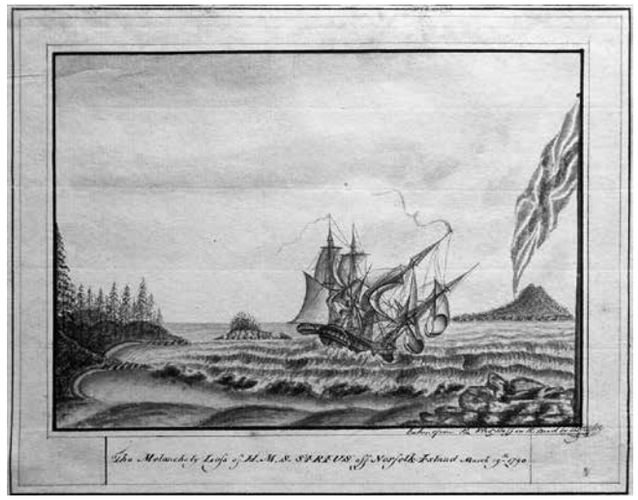
While Dual was sent to Van Diemen's Land he was later repatriated, an exercise of Prerogative that was extended but never fulfilled in respect of Musquito. However arbitrary the Prerogative power to banish may have been, neither Musquito nor Dual were ever convicts — in the sense of a recorded court conviction — and they were free to move about at will; they were banished, not sentenced to incarceration, labour or punishment. This was not an optional extra for a convict, though many had relatively unfettered movement in the early period when the colony was virtually an open prison.[23]

What recurs in these examples is the routine way Prerogative powers were exercised, though it was often couched in deceptively judicial language that deflects our gaze. Even studies like Kristyn Harmen's, which specifically focus on Indigenous convictism,[24] do not subject such foundational legal practice to scrutiny. The understandable tendency is to see Prerogative practice as simply a pedestrian part of the wider legal umbrella of transportation and convictism, and to be misdirected by the legal exceptionalism. The fact that it was notably applied to "native" miscreants also deflects our vision, but as Irish examples on Norfolk Island show, it was used against white dissidents too. Kirsten MacKenzie has shown that it was also applied occasionally to pesky whites in South Africa. There, in 1824, George Greig, critic of the administration and printer of a newspaper, was also summarily banished. [25]

3.2 Musquito on Norfolk Island

Exile of Musquito and Bull-Dog to Norfolk Island was logical given Governor King's familiarity with the island. As the founder and first administrator of Norfolk Island, he had a particular regard for the place and resisted those like Major Joseph Foveaux, who advocated abandonment of the settlement. The island, though endowed with rich volcanic soils, was difficult to access, with no natural port. Landing places were hazardous and dependent on prevailing winds. The loss of the supply ship *Sirius* on the reef at Kingston on 19 March 1790, at a time when the early settlement in Australia could ill afford such a loss, emphasised the dangers.

The Norfolk Island that Musquito and Bull-Dog encountered was not the island of vicious notoriety that characterised the second settlement when Norfolk Island was established as a walled penal establishment of secondary punishment short of death. The first settlement was an open prison focused on the serious business of food for the Sydney colony and the production of flax and timber. The latter two



The Melancholy Loss of H.M.S. Sirius *off Norfolk Island, March 19th 1790,* painting by George Raper
National Library of Australia

never succeeded but its production of food satisfied the crucial needs of Sydney even though Norfolk Island itself suffered early privation. By the 1800s its use was less crucial, and the expense of production and shipping difficulties made it less desirable. In 1803 the decision was made in London to abandon Norfolk Island, and though Governor King delayed, Norfolk Island's first settlement was beginning to be evacuated in 1804 and 1805 when the Aboriginal exiles arrived and Captain John Piper was Lieutenant Governor (1803-1810).

Piper was man of mixed reputation. A genial beau, he left an illegitimate daughter in Sydney and took up with fourteen-year-old Mary-Ann Shears on Norfolk Island. She was to present him with ten children before he married her some twelve years later. As for his rule on Norfolk Island, he definitely saw himself as more benign than his predecessors, Joseph Foveaux and Robert Ross. Certainly Joseph Holt, who Piper released from virtual convict status, regarded him as a 'Christian and a gentleman'. Others like John Grant took a less charitable view of Piper, but it is fair to say that his administration was even-handed, though that did not mean it deviated from the usual British resort to regular corporal punishment (as Grant experienced).[1]

The population at the beginning of 1805 had been over a thousand but by the middle of the year it had fallen to 712, with the majority of the convicts and half the soldiers withdrawn. In fact that part of the population under restraint was significantly marked by the presence of gentleman troublemakers and Irish exiles along with those retained for labour on the farms and military establishment, a generally more compliant convict cohort.

King's support for the settlement (whose policy Piper upheld) saw its population stabilize for a period but by 1807-08 under Bligh, families again began to be shipped to Van Diemen's Land, leaving 250 on the island. This meant that by the time of

Far right: Captain John Piper, ca. 1826, painting by Augustus Earle
State Library of New South Wales (d2 08266)

Right: Joseph Holt, lithograph by R.J. Hamerton, published 1838
National Library of Australia

Musquito's arrival, the pressure of initial construction of the settlement was well and truly passed. The depletion of population meant that those remaining were commandeering abandoned structures and abandoned farms. The emphasis on control and punishment would have been less, and the atmosphere would have been almost languid in comparison to earlier times. Holt, though probably engaging in his accustomed exaggeration, described his time there after his initial brutal experience with Fouveaux as mainly taken up with fishing.

By the end of March 1810 the population had fallen to 117.[2] From January to March of 1813 the *Lady Nelson* took the balance of the population to Sydney and the *Minstrel II* to Port Dalrymple in Van Diemen's Land. Though the fate of Bull-Dog is unknown, he was probably repatriated to Sydney. A figure called Bulldog turned up as a crude portrait in the journal of the explorer and botanist Allan Cunningham[3] while journeying north of Sydney in the area where Bull-Dog's presence might be expected, though it is not possible to be entirely certain. Musquito was obviously not allowed to join Bull-Dog and instead was sent 20 January 1813 from Norfolk Island on the *Minstrel II* to Van Diemen's Land, where he disembarked at Port Dalrymple.[4]

Though Musquito spent eight years on Norfolk Island, almost nothing is known about his time there. He was sent with Bull-Dog on the *Buffalo* on 22 August 1805, arriving at Norfolk Island on 5 September.[6] As an exile he could not be compelled to work (though this delicacy of difference was not always appreciated, as the case of Holt shows). King's instructions were to ensure he was fed from the stores though if he could be put to labour then all the better.

In July of 1806 it is evident that the two were obviously well-behaved and compliant, as King indicated their 'general good conduct' could 'induce' him to 'recall the two who were sent hence', though this did not occur.[7] It does indicate however

Bulldog from Liverpool Plains

Allan Cunningham in *Journal of Exploration*, Friday 23 May 1823 PRO NSW Reel 6035; SZ15, p112 [5]

that Musquito and Bull-Dog had sufficient notoriety to figure in dispatches and were the subject of sufficient discussion in the Colonial Secretary's Office to be referred to without being specifically named.

What is known from the musters is that he worked as a charcoal burner, one of the essential tasks of the settlement, providing fuel for foundry blacksmithing, the making and repairing of tools. It is to our view a relatively unskilled occupation, however it was hazardous and required responsible overview. While they would have worked as assistants to a convict overseer the work involved close supervision, particularly overnight, to ensure the stoved wood did not ignite and disintegrate into ash instead of charcoal. Because the wood was burned in the absence of oxygen the process drove off hazardous fumes that were deadly if inhaled, and a subtle sense of smell was required to understand what was occurring. The skills then, though basic, required workers that could be relied on to ensure the heap was properly stacked and assembled, ignited, covered and sealed, and properly supervised over the lengthy process of conversion to charcoal, without falling victim to the inhalation of noxious fumes.

To have been engaged in this way indicates a semblance of acceptance. They had acquired sufficient English to grasp sophisticated instructions and were sufficiently compliant to fulfill a quite responsible task. The risk of losing the outcome of considerable effort to careless oversight meant a degree of trust and confidence. In effect they had been integrated within the social and economic fabric of the island economy.

The fact that the depopulation and transfer to Van Diemen's Land was slowly unravelling that economy adds another feature. The decline in population would have drawn the remaining people into much closer and more intimate connection. It was an extraordinarily small, isolated island with an extraordinarily small population. The remaining population at this stage still involved a number of free settlers — ex-marines and convicts whose sentences had expired — as well as a core of convict labour. Almost all, except the military establishment, were of convict origin, and even in respect of the military, apart from the officers, most were drawn from proletarian origins.

Though he would have been familiar with the Sydney *kriol*, a barbarous mix of English and Aboriginal that became the *lingua franca* of cross cultural communication, on Norfolk Island he would have added to that a more sophisticated English understanding. Sophisticated is probably too generous a term since the English would have been a lower class patois, the vocabulary redolent with convict cant.

Without a cultural reference other than Bull-Dog, he would have been absorbed into a convict culture coloured with Irish rebelliousness, anti-British sentiment, and a deeply held sense of injustice. He obviously never figured in the thoughts of the Irish dissidents of class and culture and probably had no more than cursory contact, being simply a "native" in the background. He would have been ignored, which allowed him to listen intently to the rebellious political dissent and anti-British feeling that infused the atmosphere. Among the convict class, though, there was an intense understanding of hierarchy and the simmering resentments that accompanied it, defiance and a sense of grievance. The resort to violence and the lash to ensure compliance added to the sense of injustice and outrage.

Musquito's insight into white culture would have been well fleshed and he would have understood, from the inside, a very particular but not particularly representative aspect of British and Irish culture — the world of dissent and of the underclass. He would have learned at the feet of his convict companions another form of resistance to that which had brought him into exile — a political ideology of resistance as well as the usual multifaceted means of avoidance and defiance that convict society perfected as a way of isolating themselves from the demands of authority. This was to add far greater complexity to the resistance he was to exhibit in Van Diemen's Land, an original Aboriginal resistance to a white presence mixed with the methods and ideology of convict defiance.

On Norfolk Island his black skin and Aboriginality would have made him noticeable though not necessarily noticed — just a background curiosity. His companionable integration with convict society and their clandestine culture of alcohol may have seduced thoughts of acceptance and severance from the past, but he remained absolutely other, a lesson he was to learn painfully in Van Diemen's Land. The Norfolk Island experience was indelible and followed him to Van Diemen's Land, where at that stage nearly 50 per cent of the population was of Norfolk Island origin. It was Norfolk Island writ large. He would have known many and heard of most, and most had heard of him. He did not arrive to anonymity.

4 Van Diemen's Land

Opposite: Early days of settlement in Hobart, painting by Lieutenant Charles Jeffrey, 1817.
Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office

4.1 Early settlement

The Van Diemen's Land that Musquito entered in 1813 was, like Norfolk Island, a remarkably small community, a little over a thousand Europeans.[1] And nearly half had come from Norfolk Island. While today Tasmania is viewed as tiny, distance and travelling times in the colonial era created administrative difficulties that led to the island being divided, until 1812, into two separately administered colonial centres, one situated on the Tamar in the north and one on the Derwent in the south.

The northern settlement at Port Dalrymple where Musquito disembarked had been established in 1804 under the command of Colonel Paterson. He was an experienced member of the notorious New South Wales Corps, knowledgeable about events on the Hawkesbury and contact with Aborigines. The original settlement at York Town had not been successful and had been relocated to the mouth of the Tamar,[2] but the search for productive land had moved the centre of settlement some 60 km upstream to present-day Launceston and its rich alluvial flood plains.

Though notorious today as a convict penal settlement, Van Diemen's Land had been established principally for strategic naval reasons during a lull in the Napoleonic Wars, brought about by the Treaty of Amiens. The cessation of hostilities provided an opportunity to forestall any potential future French territorial ambition. Port Dalrymple during this era of sail and dependence on the Roaring Forties commanded the principal shipping lane of Bass Strait, which provided access to Sydney and the Pacific generally. Similarly, Hobart commanded traffic rounding Tasmania from the south. Far from being in remote antipodean isolation, as it is viewed today, Tasmania then sat four square in the middle of a growing trade route of strategic importance, the information superhighway of its time.

Bowen's small settlement at Risdon Cove in 1803 was joined on the Derwent later by Collins's unsuccessful attempt to settle Port Phillip, near modern-day Melbourne. After Collins abandoned Port Phillip he chose not to join the Risdon settlement further up the Derwent but to locate instead at Sullivan's Cove, modern day Hobart, a better site in all respects. Collins was an experienced officer who had been Judge Advocate under Governor Phillip in the original Sydney settlement, and was familiar with the problems of a convict settlement in the Australian landscape. Familiar too with the problems encountered with Aborigines, and anxious not to encourage their presence within the settlement as Governor Phillip had done in Sydney.

There would be no Bennelong, as in Sydney, to be cultivated as an intermediary and cultural broker to "conciliate" the "natives" for, as Collins was to reflect on his Sydney experience, 'it would have been wiser to have kept them at a distance, and in fear'.[3] To Collins the 'kindness' shown to the Aborigines in Sydney had only caused trouble with 'every endeavour to civilise these people' proving 'fruitless'.[4] His experience at Port Phillip, where there was frequent harassment by Aborigines, no doubt reinforced his opinion.

Even the Risdon Cove Massacre on 3 May 3 1804, where an Aboriginal hunting group of some 300–600[5] was fired on by New South Wales Corps troops was probably not seen privately by Collins in a particularly adverse way. The officer in charge at Risdon was Lieutenant Moore, an officer familiar with events in Sydney and not one to be hampered by sentiment in the face of so many, whatever their intention.

Moore visited Collins after the affray[6] to communicate verbally an account of events, and some four days later provided a written report. Obviously confirming their earlier conversation, Moore acquainted Collins with the 'circumstances that led to the attack on the natives' — it was an attack on the natives and doesn't disguise it — and added that he hoped nothing had been done 'but what you approve of'.[7] It is a formal sign off but one that could intimate an agreed attitude to the events — to 'keep them at a distance and in fear' as Collins had resolved.

Several days later Collins sent some convicts to collect oysters from the opposite shore but they were beaten back by waddies and rocks. It may have been a revenge attack but Collins inflated the facts to make it a declaration of war,[8] hyperbole that indicates his attitude.

Collins made no formal investigation of Risdon Cove and took no further action, though in part this may have been because he did not assume control until 5 May and did not want to interfere with Bowen's command. Jorgen Jorgensen, who had been present on the Derwent when the *Lady Nelson* brought Bowen's founding settlement to Risdon, and present too, on whaling vessels calling on the Derwent after Collins's arrival, took a different view. He understood the significance of events at Risdon, and later fulminated that Collins had been derelict in his duty by not investigating what became a legendary event in colonial memory.

> *I cannot conceive the reason that this officer* [*Moore*] *escaped condign punishment for so wanton and sanguinary an aggression and levying open war on a nation without the sanction of the government.*[9]

Jorgenson, who once made himself temporary King of Iceland, was a figure both of exaggeration and inebriation, and prone to inflated rhetoric. Nevertheless Collins showed a remarkable lack of curiosity and involvement in the events of that day. It seems he saw little reason to look too closely into the affair.

Though Collins had instructions to issue a directive indicating that Aborigines were to be treated humanely and to be conciliated, he failed to do so on three separate

occasions when reminded by Governor King in Sydney.[10] He suggested to King he had not read the proclamation because the settlement had had no real contact with the natives, which given the Risdon incident sounds disingenuous indeed. By not reading the proclamation, however, he allowed room for incidents like Risdon and such "necessary" responses to remain in an exculpatory legal grey area. As he wrote, 'I shall wait until my Numbers are increased, when I shall deem it necessary to inform the whole'.[11] Collins seemed satisfied to keep the Aborigines at a distance and early relations were avoidant on both sides. Crucially, they were to remain so until the 1820s, when the surge in population and intrusion into Aboriginal lands made escalating conflict inevitable.

Aborigines did venture into the settlement, of course, and Knopwood, the worldly parson of the colony, used Aborigines to keep him supplied with succulent Tasmanian crayfish, even when recording the colony was starving and in want. (In want of a good chardonnay no doubt …)

There was sufficient familiarity to even have Aboriginal women occasionally mind white children, and for white children to become companions to Aboriginal children, as Bonwick alludes to, but Collins did not actively encourage their presence. Neither did Paterson in the north, who similarly encountered early violent Aboriginal resistance to white presence on the Tamar. In Sydney, Paterson had advocated a resolute and retributive response to Aboriginal violence on the Hawkesbury — hanging the corpses of Aborigines as a warning to others — so he was as wary as Collins. The sort of summary response Paterson had condoned in Sydney makes Moore's actions at Risdon understandable and consistent.

Given the sobering experience both Collins and Paterson had had with Aboriginal violence on the early New South Wales frontier it is ironic indeed that Musquito, a principal protagonist in that very same violence, was to eventually come to Van Diemen's Land and renew the habits they so feared.

With two nodes of settlement pinioned at either end of the island, and with no real influx of additional settlers until the main evacuation of Norfolk Island after 1808, the economy remained static. It would take nine years for the first convict ship from Britain to arrive, the *Indefatigable* with 149 male prisoners in 1812, so by 1817, when transportation really began in earnest, most convicts had been freed from sentence. In 1817 only 17.7 per cent of the population were serving convicts compared with a proportion greater than 30 per cent from 1818 to the cessation of transportation in the 1850s.[12]

What this meant was that even the free population, apart from the military and administration, was basically convict in origin. Even those who came from Norfolk Island, a mix of convict and retired military, were basically of underclass origin. As such they have been much maligned, described by Joseph Holt as the 'Refuse of Botany Bay — the doubly damned'. By the time they reached Van Diemen's Land, most were middle-aged and too old to begin the heavy manual labour of pioneering agriculture.[13]

They had followed on Norfolk Island a simple subsistence and minimalist life, with some cash ventures like pork for the Sydney market or passing whalers, but even that diminished as Sydney became self-sufficient. When they transferred to Norfolk Plains (Longford) in the north and New Norfolk in the south they not only retained reminders of their past in the names they chose, they also retained their way of life. And it did not impress either the authorities or commentators of the time who regarded their 'dissipated state' as West described it, with disdain.[14]

But it was more than just simple subsistence. The dependence from the beginning of settlement on kangaroo meat and a class of convicts who would venture into the bush to hunt it, particularly after 1808 when game about the settlement had been greatly diminished, meant a cohort of people familiar with and adapted to the bush. They created what James Boyce has described as a vandemonian culture, an underclass culture. They hazarded their way into the Aboriginal hunting grounds along the fingers of rivers and valleys that reached into the highlands and into the Midlands between the two nodes of settlement. There they established a mode of life that was not simply subsistent but to an extent hunter/gatherer.

As Jared Diamond[15] has demonstrated, sedentary agrarian cultures will under appropriate circumstances move to a hunter/gatherer mode as the sedentary agricultural Maori did when they migrated to the Chatham Islands. We have to shed our 19th century notions of Progress to understand this. The problem is, with our European ethnocentricity we cannot imagine Europeans turning to hunting/gathering, but in fact it became fairly clear very early on that such an existence was rich, rewarding and reliable; and required minimal exertion.

To underclass Englishmen, particularly those with a rural or poaching background, this had an immense appeal. It was much as had emerged in initial settlement of the Hawkesbury, only on a more extended scale. In New South Wales an exploitative officer class rapidly appropriated the land that lent itself to that subsistence spirit, and within a few years that indolent lifestyle had disappeared. In Van Diemen's Land the vandemonian subsistence lifestyle persisted until the influx of free settlers after 1820 — some seventeen years.

The inland area away from settlement became an immense hunting ground and vast pastoral run with 'Settlers … allowed to Depasture their Livestock' without 'let or

hindrance … over all parts of the Territory … '[16] Land grants were made haphazardly. In 1813 alone Governor Macquarie approved 347 grants totalling 33,544 acres, but this was mainly a catchup on outstanding applications.[17] Usually land was occupied by 'tickets of occupation', and the inland became, as Boyce has characterised, one great Common, which had profound echoes for a largely pre-industrial English population. Van Diemen's Land retained its pre-industrial aspect until well into the nineteenth century, if not the twentieth century.

In a sense what took place in the 1820s was something akin to the Enclosure movement in England, with the Common appropriated for the influx of wealthier free settlers. So the dispossession of the interior of Tasmania took place twice: once, in part, to dispossess the original Aboriginal owners, and again in the 1820s to dispossess both the Aborigines and the vandemonian underclass.

The difference was one of both scale and intent. For the vandemonians there was a strained accommodation with Aborigines and a congruence of hunter/gatherer lifestyle. The later free settlers, however, were greater in number, and with an aim to introduce large-scale commercial pastoral and cropping enterprises that were profoundly disruptive of the prevailing land use.

Now we begin to see the Georgian mansions that characterised colonial Tasmania. Built with convict labour restricted by the Government to construction of farm buildings, it is not surprising many stately homes began as "barns" or similarly "necessary" farm structures. The new free settlers were a class rapidly on the make. As Janet Ranken put it bluntly, 'We are all come here to make money and money we will have by hook or by crook,' even if the 'society here is abominable'.[18]

Boyce places considerable emphasis in the emergence of the early vandemonian culture on the introduction of hunting dogs and kangaroo hunting in an environment where no native dog, like the dingo, existed. Because resupply of the colony was erratic, hunting kangaroos with dogs — because the guns of the time were so inaccurate — became a focus in Van Diemen's Land, with purchase by the Government Commissariat Store of vast amounts of game meat to feed the settlement. It was not such a unique aspect of Van Diemen's Land, as Boyce seems to suggest, however.

In New South Wales, kangaroo was an established part of an informal economy and an important dietary supplement. The *Sydney Gazette* reported some Irish prisoners who had escaped in a hopeless endeavour to find China and were found half dead, 'by a man, who with some natives, were in quest of kangaroo'.[19] It is no more than an aside but it throws light on a pedestrian occurrence. The *Sydney Gazette* also carried ads, 'Capital Kangaroo Dog' for sale,[20] indicating traffic in these valuable animals.

Alexandro Malaspina, the Spanish spy on the Sydney colony, gives revealing details of kangaroo consumption and the 'greyhound' that are 'hard worked' in pursuit of them. The kangaroo was a 'frequent diversion, and of utility to the colonists', he commented, and there was 'much consumption' with kangaroo rarely 'missing from our table'. So 'excessive' was the 'consumption' however, that he wondered whether an increasing population 'must winnow them'. He noted that there were 'some living in several houses … so tame as to come to one's hand when called'[21] which led him to speculate on their domestication and managed harvest. What his observation reinforces is the importance of kangaroo as a staple. Since kangaroo are always carrying young — anything up to three in various stages of maturation from foetus to young in the pouch — young joeys are always a by-catch of hunting, and to this day find a place in the hunter's home.

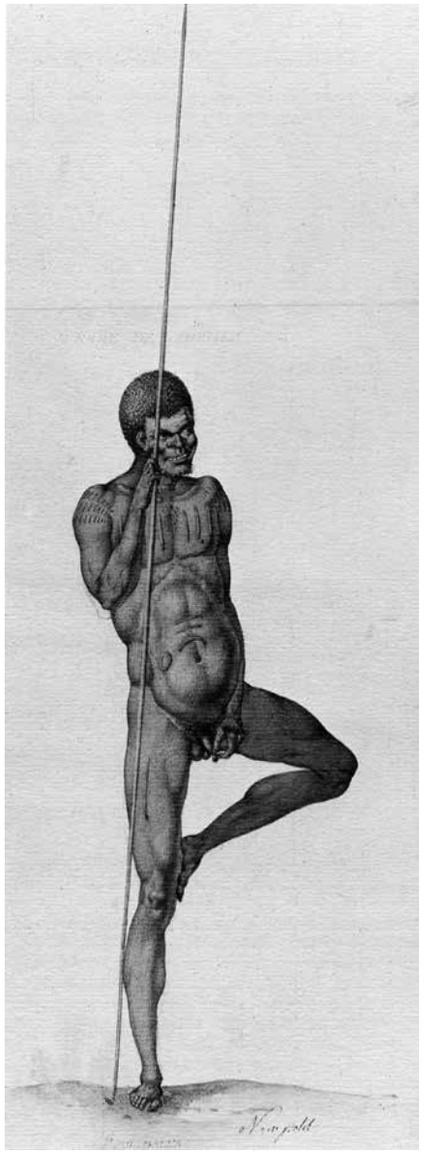
Kangaroo hunting using dogs had been trialled and perfected well before it was introduced into Tasmania. In fact the settlers came prepared. And the Rev. Knopwood especially ordered a hunting dog from Sydney. The dogs became the means of maintaining the colony in food but it imposed immense pressure on kangaroo as an Aboriginal resource. It is a good example of where an introduced "technology" that looks relatively innocent actually has a disproportionally large impact, disrupting an entire ecosystem, and the people dependent on it, while aiding the incomers.

Dogs became the means of negotiating entry into the interior Aboriginal hunting grounds as Aborigines sought the killing efficiency and technological advantage of dogs. The Tasmanian Aborigines quickly perceived the advantages, and survival drove speedy adoption. In fact they needed the increased kill rate of dogs to compensate for what was taken for white requirements.

Dog trading made possible the entry of white hunters into Aboriginal lands, a means by which they could be integrated into the Aboriginal social structure, which also of course meant access to women. And despite the frequent violence towards Aboriginal women, by both white and black, they were not without agency and became important facilitators, diplomats and negotiators, not simply prostituted inconsequentials.

4.2 The Tasmanian Aborigines

Just who were these Aborigines encountered in the interior of Van Diemen's Land, the people with whom Musquito forged such a formidable alliance? There is ample literature on the subject, but the middle class English observers tended to be coy. Late eighteenth century English sexual mores vacillated between the prurient and the exceedingly prim. The French were less so, and it is their descriptions that are most disclosing.



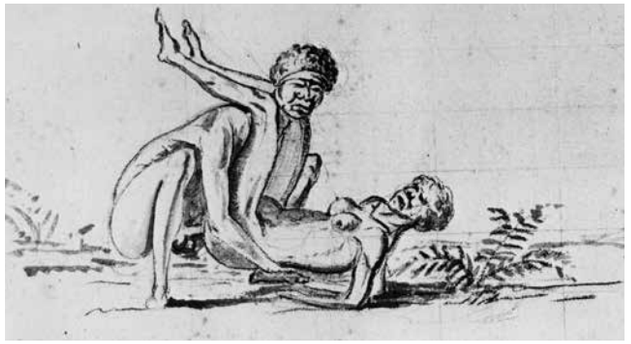
Man standing on one leg partly supported by his spear. In the characteristic attitude remarked upon by the Frenchmen, he holds his prepuce between thumb and forefinger. The elaborate scarification is commented upon in the text.

Gouache by Petit used in the composition of *Atlas* Plate XV, *Voyage de decouvertes aux terre Australes* (1807/1811).

Baudin after landfall at Bruny Island offered a description of people utterly unselfconscious about their bodies. The men held 'almost constantly the extremity of their foreskin with their thumb and forefinger whether they are walking or resting with the result that it is very long',[1] a problem, it would seem, of not having pockets.

Similarly, when speaking to one of the Aborigines who 'needed to pass water' the French noted he 'merely turned a quarter circle to obey the need' and then returned his attention. The women were similarly unselfconscious and would simply stand up and with 'legs slightly apart while still paying attention to us' they would 'obey their natural needs facing us'.[2] When it came to sexuality, the women 'offered their favours ... quite unambiguously showing them that which they usually hid with a piece of kangaroo skin.'[3]

John Barnes,[4] who acted as a doctor in Van Diemen's Land, most particularly at the notorious penal settlement at Macquarie Harbour, delivered a paper, *A Few Remarks on the natives of Van Diemen's Land*, to



Aborigines copulating.

Wash and pencil

J Bonnemains *et al.* (eds) *Baudin in Australian Waters. The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804* (Melbourne, 1988)

the Royal College of Physicians in London in February 1829.[5] He heavily censored his remarks, however, mindful of his audience's sensibilities, even allowing of course that these were "medical men". In his description of the women he noted their custom of shaving the head and pubic hair, and how they were 'careless of observation' during menstruation. In 'their amours' they neither shunned 'publicity' nor regarded 'decency'. Men and women performed 'those reciprocal rights in the enjoyment of each other's embraces' in public 'by the Fireside of an Evening, totally regardless of the presence of other members of the tribe,' yet mindful, it would seem from the illustration, of the hazards of gravel rash.

This obvious lack of sexual inhibition brings seriously into question the constant description of Tasmanian Aboriginal women prostituting themselves with all the stigma that attaches to the term. It was certainly not how they saw it and did not represent a degradation.

This tendency to deprecate Aboriginal behaviour extended even to the terms applied to the presence of venereal disease that came originally from the Europeans. Now of course it became the "Black Pox" or "Native Pox", with white agency disowned. The distinction between gonorrhoea and syphilis was not recognised until 1837 but both had serious effects: gonorrhoea caused serious infertility and would have contributed to a declining birth rate, and syphilis caused gross disfigurement and even insanity in its tertiary stage. The rotting membrane tissue of the nose was quite repelling.

Generally there was little evidence of European disease until later,[6] but the silence in the record does not discount the presence. That great scourge, smallpox, did not appear to have occurred and that long-term killer, tuberculosis, is difficult to detect in the record. Common respiratory illness, though highlighted later as a devastating killer, is similarly unreported. Measles and chicken pox, routine killers, miss mention and venereal disease is named only because it came back to plague its European hosts.

What may have muted contagion to some extent was the scattered nature of Aboriginal groups, but also those with the most contact, the underclass convicts and vagabonds, while probably good sources of contamination were not good sources

of information. The incidence of disease though was inevitable, the impact on early depopulation probable, but the scale difficult to gauge.

One disease received considerable mention principally because it was so grossly repellent. Aborigines became subject to an itching scaly skin disease, like a severe psoriasis, that could, in extreme cases, cover much of the body. This was frequently commented on in colonial times and was often attributed to their sleeping too close to their fires. A 'species of Leprosy' was also suggested, and even yaws,[7] but John Barnes suspected it came from the dogs adopted into the Aboriginal lifestyle (and so did the Aborigines themselves). The dogs were kept close by the Aborigines and even suckled by the women. They frequently had mange caused by dog scabies, and this mite was contagious and readily transferred to humans.[8] Again of course the Aborigines became the carriers of a white curse and the disease was known in colonial parlance as "Native Itch" or "Black Scab".

Whatever the ultimate consequences of Aboriginal/white contact, the initial negotiated entry into the interior grazing grounds had much mutuality. For the vandemonian underclass the unselfconscious and uninhibited behaviour of the Aborigines was not as repellent as it was to the more priggish officer class, and not unlike British underclass sexuality and culture. In a primarily male society, in fact, it had much to recommend it, but it went beyond base instinct. Women negotiated cultural integration that avoided violence, and as "sleeping dictionaries"[9] they taught the white interlopers language and bushcraft, the basis of negotiated passage through the landscape.

They introduced too, the advantages of a hunter/gatherer existence to the vandemonian underclass. Even in the 1820s — quite late in the piece — the Land Commissioners, on their way to Mt Orielton, reported a hut housing four white men and a black woman 'who had no occupation or ostensible means of support'. They met one of the occupants 'returning from Kangarooing in a state of nudity' and noted that there were many such areas inhabited by examples of such 'licentious characters'.[10]

The snorting outrage was more than simply censorious. Paterson, commander of the Port Dalrymple settlement, attempted to restrict the buying and selling of hunting dogs. His reason was blunt and to the point. Hunting kangaroo would 'cause much idleness and neglect of cultivation'.[11] And therein lies the clue — not just 'idleness' but 'neglect of cultivation', hunter-gatherer *subsistence* in contrast to sedentary agriculture and *surplus*, which was vital to the economic advancement of the colony.

Life in the interior Common was deeply subversive of authority on many levels, which explains the vehemence with which it was suppressed and the loose way the pejorative label of bushranger was applied to those who adopted the lifestyle.

The fear of underclass "indolence" attracted by hunting/gathering echoed the English class obsession with poaching. Game was seen as an aristocratic preserve, a privilege constantly challenged by underclass wiles. The legal restraint deemed necessary, strict poaching laws, were 'to prevent persons of inferior rank, from squandering that time, which their station in life requireth to be more profitable employed'.[12] "Protecting" the poor from 'their own idleness' was a 'salutary restraint'.[13] It was obvious the opportunities in Van Diemen's Land provided a glorious chance to upend order and this was the constant fear of authority. This is why official commentary needs to be read carefully for such inflections.

When Musquito arrived in 1813, according to Jorgenson and Bonwick, he worked as a stockman with William Kimberley at Antill Ponds in the central Midlands.[14] Jorgenson is not always the most reliable source but given the strong Norfolk Island connection it is highly probable. Kimberley was one of the four sons of Edward Kimberley, the infamous flogger on Norfolk Island, a man feared for this brutality but also one who would have been known to Musquito. What Musquito's role as stockman really entailed was probably elastic. Looking after sheep and cattle in the unfenced Common was an important role and usually on a system of thirds, whereby shepherds and stock-keepers received a third of the profit. When it involved convicts this disconcerted the administration because it granted some economic independence. It was also a system that encouraged stock theft and cattle duffing, which became a frequent feature.

The reliance on hunting and a subsistence life — few ate into the profits of their sheep enterprises — meant Musquito was returning to a familiar bush life albeit initially in the company of confreres from Norfolk Island. While the historical record sees Musquito going bush in the 1820s, in fact he became deeply familiar and attuned to the Tasmanian landscape from the moment of his arrival in 1813, and familiar too with the Tasmanian Aborigines.

This is a significant aspect of Musquito's vandemonian life and points up the importance of his not being a convict. While early Van Diemen's Land was an open prison with convict movement relatively easy, Musquito was not bound or assigned like a convict, and could move about as he wished. He roamed the interior, engaging the Tasmanian terrain and the people with a far greater intimacy than the record indicates. It was a profound continuation of his ancestral lifestyle. The choice historians assume Musquito made in the 1820s to sever connection with white life and retire into the interior was not a choice at all. It had been made years earlier.

The Sydney blacks tended to regard the Tasmanian Aborigines as even lower down the hierarchical rung than the Irish convict "croppies" they disdained, and there was

even a suggestion by West that Musquito initially joined occasional white attacks on the Tasmanian Aborigines. This is entirely credible, but he very rapidly formed a more integrated connection and an odd pan-Aboriginal identity. The rapid disintegration of Tasmanian band structure in the face of white intrusion meant that enemies were driven into alliance, a collusion forged by dire social circumstance, so Musquito's absorption into an emerging coalescence was part of a much wider re-invention of alliance and black connection.

The Tasmanian Aborigines' uneasy association with the vandemonian underclass of the interior meant both were similarly displaced by the huge influx of free settlers in the 1820s, and similarly overwhelmed by the new social forces rapidly altering Van Diemen's Land. Musquito too was part of that social dislocation, driven even further into alliance with Tasmanian Aboriginals, but importantly it was formed from the moment of his arrival and first contact.

The vast new flood of convicts after 1817 was from a totally different generation to the one with which Musquito was familiar. They were the products of a social upheaval caused by the Napoleonic Wars and its aftermath of unemployment, not those of the 1780s, nor those who were a product of the Irish Troubles.

The free settlers too were from an utterly different class to the settlers with whom he was familiar. A different class, a different attitude and an utterly different outlook. These were people wanting substance and wealth, who quickly invaded the open Midlands grazing grounds and built Georgian manors, not the simple homes that owed more to Aboriginal influence than stately homes.

The vast inland Common before the demographic influx after 1817 was an archetypal borderland, a ragged inchoate confusion of interests where violence was the common denominator, liquor the lubricant, and where even the kindly acquired 'vicious habits' and became 'brutal overnight'.[15] It altered and distorted habits and feeling in an anarchic setting of arbitrary law and morality. The whites drawn or sent there were convicts and vagabonds of all hues: men compelled, men on the make, men escaping difficulties of all sorts and even men just wishing to be left alone.

But it was overwhelmingly white and male, with male needs and male inclinations that carved their presence in flesh. Initially it was the flesh of game and profit, then the flesh of women and even children, then the flesh of men killed in the interminable hate and quarrels.

Even though the word "bushranger" seemed reserved only for the most notorious, to some extent they were all bushrangers, petty larcenists and opportunists moving easily between bush and the social underbelly of town. It meant however that the social cluster encountered by the Aborigines was decidedly feral, a vandemonian underclass of poachers who were their own Masters.

It is difficult in the present to understand just how open and extensive this immense inland Common was. Early narratives frequently report the ease with which coaches and carts traversed the Tasmanian Midlands without obstruction. It was of course an accessible Aboriginal-made fired landscape that has persisted to the present in an odd way. In the latter part of the twentieth century the trees of the Midlands began to die and blame was ascribed variously to "die-back" fungus and the depredations of possums.

It took the eye of cultural landscape expert Oliver Rackham (1939–2015) to ask the pertinent questions. Why had the Midlands' Peppermint gums been pollarded (limbs cut back to "knuckles" that then regenerated multiple spikes)? The answer lay in the colonial practice of cutting limbs into billets for household fires because the Peppermints had a twisted grain that made it difficult to split. The significance of the practice was that it had constantly renewed growth of this old remnant vegetation. Once the practice ceased the trees began to die.[16]

These were what Rackham described as "Aboriginal" trees that had persisted since colonial times because of constant lopping. Sheep grazing had suppressed regrowth and regeneration where fire once remade the landscape.

Rackham's simple questions pointed to a long-lived and persistent open landscape only now disappearing, a landscape traversed with ease and speed. The early settlements in Launceston and Hobart were *not* hemmed with forest but places only inhibited by the fear of venturing afield. People quickly hazarded into this inviting landscape and even though the numbers were not considerable to our mind, their impact was significant, bleeding the land and the Indigenous people, crippling community and Aboriginal social cohesion.

Their violence took a toll, but even in the midst of this mayhem there were multiple instances of oddly functional unions and areas shaped out for peaceful and contributory alliances between white and black. This is an immense paradox, since for many it was a highly desirable life with much to merit it. Even Aborigines found aspects attractive and certainly Musquito found himself in familiar living, an exile in conducive surroundings.

Overleaf: Map of Van Diemen's Land by George Frankland, Surveyor General and sole Commissioner of Crown Lands; published by Joseph Cross in 1836. An overlay of British names covers the landscape, especially intense throughout the Midlands. Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office

GREAT LAKE
Nineteen Lagoons
Mt. Manfred
Mt. Byron
L. Fergus
Laura
L. Petrarch
Mt. Olympus
LAKE ST CLAIR
Mt. Ida
Cuvier Valley
First visited by the expedition under Mr. Frankland, 1835.
Mt. Hügel
King William's Plains
Mt. Charles
Wentworth Hills
King William's Mt.
Guelph R.
Mt. Hobhouse
Derwent River
Mt. Shakespeare
Wylds Craig
Nive River
Shannon River
St. Patrick's Plains
Ouse River
Lake Echo
MARLBOROUGH
CUMBERLAND
Arthur's Lakes
GRINDELWALD
Mt. Patrick
Regent's Plains
Lake River
Silver Plains
Mt. Penny
Mt. Direction
SORELL
Woods Lake
Lagoon of Islands
INTERLAKEN
Crescent Lake
ROCHFORD
Table Mountain
Clyde R.
DALMSBURY
ST. ALBANS
FORTESQUE
BURFORD
LARGO
EXMOUTH
DULVERTON
OATLANDS
RUTLAND
AMHERST
GRANTHAM
BOTHWELL
ABERGAVENNY
NEVILLE
VINCENT
APSLEY
WINTERTON
SPRINGHILL
BATH
YORK
NEWICK
L. Tiberias
BRISBANE
ANDOVER
SLIGO
Crown Lagoon
BANDON
Stony Lagoon
KENMERE
TIERNEY
LENNOX
CAMPBELTON
ABERCROMBIE
AUBURN
SOMERSET
CHATSWORTH
PAKENHAM
MILTON
TUNBRIDGE
MAXWELL
CORNWALLIS
DURHAM
EAST GRINSTEAD
PEEL
GLEN MORRISTON
BOURNE
GLAMORGAN
Cape Lodi
GREAT SWAN PORT
SWANSEA
Waterloo Point
C. Tourville
Low sandy Neck
Thouin Bay
C. Forrestier
Hazards or Refuge I.
FREYCINET'S PENINSULA
Geographe Strait
C. Degerand
SCHOUTEN'S ISLAND
C. Sonnerat
Islets
OYSTER BAY
Little Swan Port
Little Swan Port R.
Cape Bailly
Grindstone Bay
White Rock or I. des Phoques
Gordon River
Open Plains
Mt. Wedge
L. Pedder
L. Edgar
L. Maria
Frankland Range
(Expedition of 1835)
Extensive Open Plains
Huon River
Valley of Rasselas
Florentine River
Arthur Range
The Hartz Mountains
Picton River
BUCKINGHAM
L. Fenton
L. Barker
SUTHERLAND
RUGBY
LAWRENNY
MONMOUTH
BEAUFORT
PELHAM
HUNTINGDON
COLEBROOK
ORMAIG
GRAFTON
LANSDOWNE
MONTVILLE
BRIGHTON
DRUMMOND
RICHMOND
ULVA
ARUNDEL
UXBRIDGE
NEW NORFOLK
FORBES
PITT
Mt. WELLINGTON
HOBART TOWN
QUEENBORO
RIDGEWAY
PEMBROKE
TENBY
C. Bougainville
BUCKLAND
Prossers Bay
I. du Nord or Green I.
MARIA ISLAND
Oyster Bay
REIDLE BAY
C. Mistaken or Coxcomb Hd.
C. Peron
CANNING
FORCETT
Gordon's Mt.
MARION BAY
North Bay
C. Frederick Hendrick
FORESTIERS
BAIE du NORD now FREDERICK HENRY BAY
NORFOLK BAY
TASMAN'S PENINSULA
Monge or Pirates Bay
C. Surville
STORM BAY
WEDGE BAY
Wedge or Quoin I.
Hippolyte Rocks
C. Direction
Yellow Bluff
Trumpeter Bay
CONNINGHAM

4.3 Return to Sydney?

The story of Musquito may well have ended in 1814 with only a brief stay in Van Diemen's Land if a letter from Macquarie to Lieutenant Governor Davey giving permission for Musquito to return to Sydney had been acted upon. There is a tendency to think of Van Diemen's Land at this time in isolation, but the thread of contact and communication with Sydney was intimate and the sea-going traffic of information and people between the settlements was fairly constant.

Part of that traffic to Van Diemen's Land included other New South Wales Aborigines. Batman was to later use New South Wales blacks to help track the local Aborigines during the hostilities of the 1820s. Dual too had been summarily banished to Van Diemen's Land by Governor Macquarie in 1816.[1] Dual is said[2] to have helped Musquito in 1817 to track the bushranger Michael Howe, though there is no corroborative evidence for this. Whether this partnership ever occurred is not as important as the fact that the two would have inevitably had contact, given the enclosed world of Van Diemen's Land. Again, as a banished person Dual was free to roam. Dual would have been vital in conveying to Musquito information about his Sydney home. The dwindling numbers of Sydney Aborigines would have driven them into relatively close contact and knowledge of one another, and would have made clear the relentless effects of the spread of white settlement in Sydney.

That thread of connection between Sydney and Hobart meant that when the prominent New South Wales settler Charles Throsby wanted Dual as translator for an intended expedition into the interior region of Bathurst to seek suitable land for settlement, Dual was returned to Sydney in 1817.[3] Musquito did not have that sort of patronage and he failed to earn similar repatriation.

Macquarie's letter to Davey regarding Musquito is detailed, however. Following representations by a number of Aborigines including Musquito's brother Phillip, Macquarie had agreed to allow Musquito to return to NSW. He even went to the extent of indicating that his brother Phillip would voyage down on the *Kangaroo* to accompany Musquito back to Sydney.[4] Phillip never appeared on the ship's manifest and he never again appears in the records.

This is the second time — the first time had been on Norfolk Island — that Musquito has been approved for repatriation, but again nothing happened. It is difficult to fully fathom the reasons his repatriation was approved in the first place, but it may have had more to do with Macquarie's designs than for reasons of family compassion or good behaviour in the colony. Like Throsby, he was in need of collaborators.

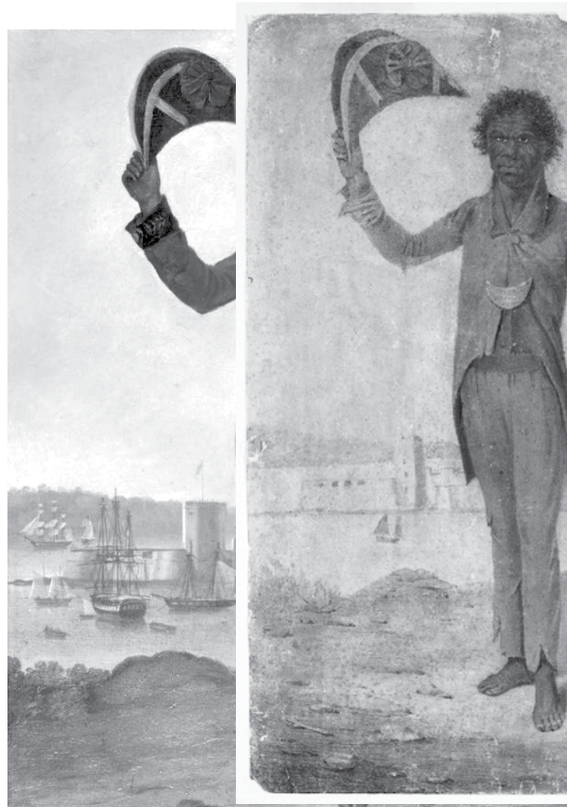
At the time of the approval for Musquito's return, violence had again flared in the remote Sydney districts of Cowpastures, Appin, Bringelly and Airds, where Dual was principally involved and which had led to his exile in Van Diemen's Land. The Cowpastures leader and British ally, Cogy, who had been Barrallier's guide in his attempt in 1802 to cross the Blue Mountains,[5] had now fled to sanctuary at Broken Bay[6] 'from a personal wish to maintain a friendly footing with us'.[7] This area was Musquito's country and was part of Macquarie's grand design.

Macquarie had plans to deal with the Aboriginal problem, and detailed his ideas to Bathurst in October 1814, two months after the letter of Musquito's repatriation in August 1814. He would bring in Aboriginal people and give them land within the settlement of Port Jackson, at George's Head, build them huts and give them a fishing boat. Here they were to be "civilised" into the role of labourers or lower class mechanics, in other words to be integrated into the white labouring class,[8] a position on the hierarchy utterly alien to the egalitarian nature of Aboriginal society.

It was Bungaree, who was known to be "friendly" and acquainted with English, that Macquarie made Chief of the Broken Bay tribe,[9] and who was now to be leader of the new Sydney tribe at George's Head, where Phillip's wife was also to reside.

Not only would this contribute to their social integration, by making them close allies, these Aborigines would be of inestimable value in either conciliating other Aborigines or providing assistance in the tracking and apprehension of their brethren. To this end, as the British had done among the Iroquois[10] during the French and Indian Wars of 1755–1762, Macquarie was later to issue *gorgets* as marks of office and esteem. It would also be for 'loyal conduct in the assistance ... rendered the military party when lately sent in pursuit of the refractory natives ... of the Nepean."[11]

Above: An example of a gorget. National Library of Australia



Right: Augustus Earle's portrait of Bungaree wearing a gorget, circa 1826. National Library of Australia

Macquarie had been determined to bring an end to these latest "outrages", and issued instructions that if the 'natives' when called upon 'by your friendly Native Guides to surrender' refused or made 'the least show of resistance' they were to be fired upon. If 'natives' were killed they were to be 'hanged up on Trees in Conspicuous Situations, to Strike the Survivors with the greatest terror'.[12]

In his determination and grand scheme to settle compliant natives and use them as allies to bring frontier conflict to an end, had he perceived a role for Musquito? In the eight years on Norfolk Island Musquito had shown himself to be compliant, and as one of the leaders of the previous Hawkesbury conflict he would have been of inestimable value as an ally, possibly taking the place of Bungaree in Macquarie's George's Head settlement. Of course Macquarie would have had opposition from those like Marsden, who remembered Musquito and his depredations well. Macquarie regarded Marsden as leader of a seditious low cabal unfit for private society, but he had enormous influence and so did his "cabal".

According to Bonwick,[13] who was probably repeating Jorgenson, Musquito named his first wife in Van Diemen's Land, Gooseberry. It is further suggested Musquito barbarously murdered her 'in jealous anger' on the Government Domain, which at one time was owned by Edward Lord, for whom Musquito later worked. In an odd coincidence this was the same name as Bungaree's wife and "Queen" in Sydney, a fact Jorgenson was unlikely to have known. Musquito even dressed his Gooseberry in the Sydney fashion with a bone through the septum of the nose. Whether there had been previous rivalry between Bungaree and Musquito for Gooseberry is a fact of course unknowable.

The machinations of these players will never be made clear, but information obviously filtered through to Musquito and meant he was aware of the offer of repatriation, and aware too that it had not been fulfilled — a factor that formed a bitter element in his later behaviour. Did they just change their minds, were they simply indifferent or did other priorities waylay them? It is easy to suspect a distracted indifference was at work, a dismissal more infuriating than refusal.

4.4 Tales of the colonies

The period between 1813, when Musquito arrived, and 1817, when Sorell assumed office as Lieutenant Governor, can only be described as socially anarchic. If the interior was a chaotic borderland, the town was little more than an extension of that disordered borderland where law and morality were fluid.

The Governor at the time was "Mad" Tom Davey, who was eccentric at best, alienating those desperate for social standing by carousing 'once or twice a month' with convicts, emancipists and other social inferiors, in a way in 'which a seaport in time of war might furnish an example'.[1] He enjoyed practical jokes and delighted in throwing his 'forehead into comical contortions'. As he was in debtors prison at the time of his appointment, why he was chosen as Lieutenant Governor 'would be useless to conjecture'.[2]

The administrative pattern of alcoholic excess, executive neglect, venality and corruption prospered as it had in the regimes preceding but now with a flair only Davey could muster. He would stand at the gate of government house with a cask of rum and a tin pannikin offering passers-by a friendly draught and once, when a passing drunk dropped his duds and mooned the governor's residence, Davey took aim and blasted his buttocks, leaving him incapacitated for months.[3] He had good aim and a keen sense of humour.

Musquito would have had contact with the chaotic Davey in his consideration of Musquito's repatriation, and though Davey was probably companionable the disorder of his regime no doubt contributed to the failure to repatriate him.

In administration of the colony Davey was not helped by the desperate shortage of Government stores and clothing. Harmen suggests that 'the hardships ... led to anarchy within the ranks of colonial administration',[4] however the anarchy was part of the earlier pattern and led by example from above.

It was not so much the hardships, however, as it was the centrifugal forces that beckoned in the advantageous borderland, the opportunities that lay beyond the confines of the narrowly constrained townships. Large 'bands of runaway convicts'[5] simply decamped into the bush for good reason, and with insufficient government forces to control this movement, these bushrangers and banditti roamed at will in a conducive hinterland. Disordered as it was, it was nevertheless a life not 'without attractions' with an 'alliance with stockkeepers, who themselves passed rapidly and almost naturally from the margin of the civilised to the lawless life'.[6]

This would have been part of the traffic and peopled world of Musquito's life in the interior. In this chaotic colony of misfits and opportunists he was thoroughly in his

element, free to move about without hindrance. He was deeply familiar with these feral elements of white marginality, many elevated to the notoriety of bushrangers that ebbed and flowed between bush and town. The distinction between free and absconding was difficult to determine.

This blurring of boundaries is no better illustrated than by the dress of the time. All wore ensembles of animal skin — hats of possum skins, kangaroo skin trousers, shoes or moccasins, jackets, waistcoats and rugs, though preference was for the fine-grained wallaby skins.[7] Even the military wore this bush garb and carried their goods in a kangaroo haversack or Derwent Drum.

The ubiquity of dress occasioned mistakes where military mistook other soldiers for bushrangers and tense moments ensued. Like an episode from Davy Crockett, everywhere was skin and fur. Even the townfolk assumed the bush style, though some were prepared to go to the extent of trading convict clothing to avoid the rustic garb. Though it was partly from necessity, the bush style was also eminently suitable. Cotton material, the usual military issue from tropical British India, was disastrous in a wet, cold climate whereas the skins were both warm and showerproof.

The appeal of life beyond the pale attracted not only convicts. Peter Mills, Acting Deputy Surveyor of Lands, and George Williams, Acting Deputy Commissary of Provisions at Port Dalrymple, found themselves in inescapable debt and simply went bush to lead a group of other absconders on occasional robberies of homes on the outskirts of settlement. More importantly, they engaged in cattle duffing, the lucrative trade in meat where distinction between stolen and legitimate was impossible to determine.[8]

In this confused borderland the distinction between lawful and unlawful, as West has suggested, became profoundly blurred, overwhelmed by the exigencies of opportunity, and people moved seamlessly from one side of the law to the other. Or simply made it up as they went along. It suited many, including those in positions of power like Edward Lord, who exploited the situation to his own ends, but it made the formal exercise of authority almost impossible.

Davey reacted by declaring martial law and made an example of those lawless bushrangers captured by summary execution and hanging their bodies prominently in chains on Hunter Island (now part of the Hobart foreshore). These acts demonstrated not only how determined but also how desperate and close to losing control Davey was. His frustration was understandable. Anyone who was to be tried for a capital offence had to be shipped to Sydney for trial and everyone knew it. Martial law was the route round this impasse that allowed Davey a draconian response to the lawlessness, but it infuriated Macquarie in Sydney and did little to alter the balance of power on the ground.

Nothing symbolises the chaotic atmospherics more than the arrival in 1814, in Davey's term, of a consignment of 200 women convicts from Sydney on the brig *Kangaroo*. The disembarkation was riotous as women were snatched and fought over by prospective settlers and employers in search of a servant or companion. The distinction was never clear and there was 'little delicacy of choice' as West demurely suggests.[9] Viking pillaging showed more decorum. The lawlessness of the interior was matched in the towns.

In Port Dalrymple in the north, Commandant Stewart was recalled for insubordination and 'unmilitary' behaviour[10] while the garrison under his command did as they pleased, drank as they pleased, and wrote the rules as they went along until finally they were shipped off to India. These incidents should be seen as a rare glimpse of what was commonly the case below the surface.

This then was the social milieu that Musquito inhabited in the borderland and inland Common. It was anarchic, chaotic and extremely fluid, a place where the law and authority were questionable and where people often simply did what they liked. This is the 'bizarre' and 'outlandish', often brutal borderland,[11] which was far from the later atmospherics of Governor Arthur's rule, where the shock of authoritarianism riveted the colony.

It was not just in the inland that the rules bent with the wind. The atmosphere favoured opportunism at every level. One of the most ambitious and successful of the exploitative officer class was Edward Lord, who for a short period after the death of Collins assumed the role of acting Lieutenant Governor. His convict mistress, Maria Riseley, who was as equally adept as Lord at the entrepreneurial sleight of hand, helped Lord in his efforts, contrary to regulation.

Lord, ever the opportunist, had selected Maria as an assigned servant from a line up of convict women at the Female Factory at Parramatta, Sydney. The Parramatta Female Factory was undoubtedly a meat mart, sometimes for selecting a servant, more often for companionship and cohabitation, an exercise in male prerogative. Whatever the nature of the negotiated arrangement, Maria moved with Lord to Hobart in 1805 and proved both a fecund and financially astute companion. He eventually married her and she shepherded his assets in his frequent absences until Lord shed her for respectability later on.

Maria, it seems, formed a liaison with the local magistrate Charles Rowcroft, a nearby neighbour of sorts. It was hard not to be neighbour of Lord; he owned some 35,000

Charles Rowcroft, artist unknown
State Library of New South Wales (gpo1 20487)

acres (14,164 ha), an extraordinary amount of land. At about this time Lord was worth about £200,000 in a colony with a total annual budget of about £35,000.[12] It was a most unwise affair to have but obviously one of unusual passion since she was some 18 years his senior.

Maria's indiscretion roused Lord, a man Governor Macquarie described as 'vindictive and implacable',[13] to sue Rowcroft in the euphemistic tort of "criminal conversation", a particularly quaint way of describing pillow talk. He won damages of £100, effectively pauperizing the rutting Rowcroft, who left the colony in 1824.[14]

Rowcroft is an important part of the story of Musquito. Not only was he a magistrate in the Midlands, closely aware of Musquito's activities in the 1820s, but in 1843 and in financial need, Charles Rowcroft published *Tales of the Colonies or The Adventures of an Emigrant edited by a Late Colonial Magistrate*,[15] purporting to detail the experiences of a settler, William Thornley, and including the menacing activities of Musquito. The irony was that Musquito had been the loyal servant of the same Edward Lord. This is highly significant, for while Lord had numerous servants he handpicked the most capable. Musquito was not simply any servant or just any "native" but one of rank and regard.

The power of Lord contributed a further irony to the connection with Rowcroft and Musquito. Lord had manoeuvred with his fellow colonists for the establishment of a separate legal jurisdiction in Van Diemen's Land in 1823 and ultimately separation of the colony from New South Wales altogether, an outcome fully effected by the appointment of Lieutenant Governor Arthur in 1824.

From an administrative point of view, this suited the government because it avoided the cost and inconvenience of shipping capital cases to Sydney for trial. It also meant that civil cases no longer had to be heard in Sydney either, and that suited Lord admirably. At the time he was owed some £70,000, which meant now any suit could be heard locally. He had tethered both town and country by a web of loans and obligations, where any default saw assets flow into his grasp. A local court made pressing any claim convenient. It also made sueing Rowcoft simple, and made the trial and execution of Musquito a local matter.

In another wretched irony, had the legal structure remained, Musquito would have been sent to Sydney for trial, fulfilling in a strange way the promise made to him and never fulfilled, of repatriating him to his own country.

And so Rowcroft and the story he penned about colonial life, bushrangers and Musquito, stands within the intrigue of local events and personalities. It ducks and weaves fact and fiction, and attracted considerable public acclaim, proceeding through seven editions including a German translation in 1855 and a Dutch version in 1852. Its apparent authenticity comes from its emulation of those many accounts of colonial opportunity that flooded the literary market. So interwoven are the elements that many, including historians like Lloyd Robson in his *History of Tasmania*, have seen it as Thornley's genuine, if embellished, memoire. It was convincing or convenient enough for Rowcroft's bushranging character, George Shirley, a.k.a the Gypsey, to be included in a repertoire of bushranging fiends.[16] Beyond the ripping yarn Rowcroft's novel, however inflated, gives some glimpses into the character of Musquito and also indicates the degree to which Musquito had entered into notoriety within colonial folklore.

It is not surprising that Rowcroft's fable of Thornley has some foundation. A free immigrant, Rowcroft arrived in Hobart in 1821, took up a grant of 2000 acres (800 ha) north of Bothwell on the Clyde River. He was soon made a Justice of the Peace, a citizen of some standing — effectively the local magistrate. Rowcroft entered Van Diemen's Land at a crucial time of accelerating population growth and expanding agricultural settlement. With it came a surge in bushranging activity and conflict with Aborigines. The arrival of Lieutenant Governor Arthur in 1824 saw a determined effort to crush bushranging and with it the lawless interior. Equally pressing, however, was the escalating incidence of settler–Aboriginal conflict spiralling into war. Rowcroft thus gives a snapshot of the times.

Rowcroft's assumption of occasional collusion between bushrangers and Aborigines is arguable though it did take place and the records lend some support. Certainly it was true of the bushranger Michael Howe, who, apart from his companionship with the Aboriginal, Black Mary, is reputed to have made an alliance with the Cape Portland Aborigines about 1816.[17] Other examples abound, so the bloodlust of bushranger predations on Aborigines is far from universal. The level of collusion suggested by Rowcroft is probably overstated,[18] though in the earlier period before Arthur the line was far more blurred as some moved from lawless to lawful with ease, and where a spot of bushranging was almost a rite of passage for many young men.

Rowcroft's central Aboriginal personality is 'Musqueeto', a 'fierce vindictive Sydney black'.[19] Known as 'the cruellest savage that ever tormented a colony', a person

who ‘kills for killing sake, without reason’,[20] is founded, of course, on the historical figure whose predations climaxed at the time of Rowcroft’s period in Van Diemen’s Land. Rowcroft possibly encountered Musquito as he frequented the area where he resided, and certainly, as magistrate, he was thoroughly aware of Musquito’s attacks. He was privy to the many reports of Musquito’s activities and the methods of his attacks and had written to Governor Arthur on 16 July 1824[21] arguing for armed assistance to combat Musquito, alleging he had committed six attacks including four murders.

Rowcroft describes Musquito as a ‘tall and powerful man’, a similar description to that of the Rev. Horton who encountered Musquito at Pitt Water and described him as having ‘superior skill and muscular strength’.[22] Rowcroft suggests Musquito was sent by Governor Macquarie from Sydney, ‘I think it was [for] murder’, repeating the general gossip in Van Diemen’s Land but also repeating the received view that Musquito had, before his attacks, ‘conducted himself well’, assisting in tracking runaway convicts, bushrangers and lost or stolen sheep[23] — the latter efforts mainly on behalf of the powerful Edward Lord.

Most of Rowcroft’s descriptions of Musquito dwell on an elevated savagery and ignore his earlier peaceable collaboration, though it is this apparent transformation that begs explanation. The surviving historical accounts of alteration from tame to savage rarely venture an explanation beyond an innate barbarity.[24] It is a transformation, however, that is pivotal to understanding the historical figure, however omitted from the record.

As they approached the camp of naked Aborigines, ‘one man, whom by his stature and bearing we recognised as Musqueeto, was distinguished by a black hat with waistcoat and trowsers’.[25] This indicates knowledge of the actual person who frequently dressed as described, but there were further signs of Rowcroft’s familiarity. He described the use by Musquito of a boomerang, certainly not a Tasmanian Indigenous weapon, but Jorgen Jorgenson described Musquito’s accurate skill in its use with some awe when he removed the head of a bird in flight with a boomerang. It was not, though, the returning type described by Rowcroft but a more deadly non-returning scimitar-like weapon, and one described by the key witness, Radford, at Musquito’s trial.

Rowcroft does not avoid the sensational savagery but grants some humanity to his character, however two-dimensional. He even goes so far as to have his Musquito character denounce any prurient intent towards the bushranger Gypsey’s child, ‘Piccaninny white! … not good for black man’,[26] thus ennobling his motives and redeeming him from that titanic white fear, molestation of “our” women — he was not so much a Noble Savage as a savage with nobility. The constant assignment of Pidgin or Creole inflection to Musquito’s speech, however, is standard and necessary to ascribe savagery.

While in the camp Musquito summoned his ‘favourite gin’, the ensuing description salacious. Dressed in an old soldier’s jacket without buttons, it remained ‘open in front’ forming ‘an airy spencer’. Nothing ‘prevented the free exercise of her supple and well formed limbs’. While the description exudes voyeurism, what is more interesting is the description of a fishbone piercing her nose, adding ‘finish to the spendour of her personal appearance’.[27] Again this is a detail not mentioned in the records about Musquito, who was known to style his favourite wife in the Sydney fashion, with a bone piecing the nasal septum.

It is this detail that gives Rowcroft’s account an authenticity, whether it be of Aboriginal hunting or cooking practice, their mode of attacking settlers or the little-known details of Musquito’s behaviour, including his taciturn demeanour and languid casual attitude while resting, what Rowcroft dismissed as ‘his usual sulky, stupid look’.[28] The look Rowcroft perceives was undoubtedly a wary cultural conditioning, a raging contempt couched in restraint and reserve. It was what WEB Du Bois[29] described as the veil that descends when the world looks on with contempt and pity. Dealing with the arrogance, assumed superiority and assertive aggression of the British required a smouldering patience and rat cunning, though the only thing the British detected was the cunning.

Musquito’s depredations dominated the period of Rowcroft’s narrative, and there is little doubt they did, consuming both newspaper column inches and public imagination. Musquito elicited horror and fascination, a public preoccupation far beyond the significance of his actual presence. It is clear that though Rowcroft was writing some fifteen years after he had left Van Diemen’s Land, the figure of Musquito still had pronounced recognition and immediacy. He had entered the fabric of the period, a central figure of sensation and enormity, credited with fuelling the blaze of war and the retributive vengeance of the Tasmanian Aborigines.

4.5 Musquito and the bushrangers

Rowcroft may have turned Musquito to fictional narrative and temporary financial advantage but Musquito was, more importantly, the valued and the key servant of the opportunistic Edward Lord, who had sued Rowcroft into poverty. The reason was simple. Musquito had a crucial command of the interior landscape and bush.

Edward Lord, painted by Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, 1846
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania

Lord began early to exploit the opportunities of officialdom and his military rank in Collins's marines. Like many in the military he used his position to enormous financial advantage. One of his most audacious and opportunistic manoeuvres came when Collins died suddenly and Lord became Acting Lieutenant Governor. The funeral was elaborate and exorbitant, and included a bill to Governor Macquarie for clothing all the principal mourners (i.e. Lord's friends) from a local merchant (another friend) but which likely included supply from his own business run by his wife, Maria.

He became one of the principal suppliers of the Government's Commissariat with goods of all shades from kangaroo meat to wheat. He often acted as intermediary for others or manipulated the Commissariat to monopolise business through his friendship with Governor Collins and later Governor Davey.

Rev. Knopwood, who like most had a chequered relationship with Lord, hobnobbed at his table frequently. He wrote in his diary of 30 October 1807[1] that Lord had landed a cask of spirits in a wheelbarrow from HMS *Porpoise* without a permit, a nod to Lord's role in smuggling and excise avoidance. As magistrate Knopwood was supposed to defend government revenue against the sly grog trade, but he allows the observation to pass without comment or action. The fact that Lord wheeled the barrow of rum through town indicates his blatant disregard and collusion with authority.

Of course Knopwood was no innocent, being named by the bushranger Howe, rightly or wrongly, as an accomplice to bushrangers of the interior. Truth here is not important. What is important is that it was believable within Hobart society of the time, and indicates once again the constant traffic with the interior and the blurred line between legal and illegal, even when it came to the town's "quality".

Macquarie named Lord as one of the more disreputable characters on the Derwent and took exception to Davey's preferential treatment. Certainly it is difficult to imagine Lord's staggering wealth having been acquired by entirely honourable means. Granted, after he resigned his military commission in 1813 he had gone to England and returned with a profitable cargo worth £30,000 to unsuccessfully sell on the inflated Hobart market.

He was partially capitalised by his brother who had inherited the Owen family baronetcy[2] and with it, influence as a member of parliament, but the brig, *James Hay* was refused entry by Davey and diverted to Sydney. The result was not as Lord had hoped but between 1804 and 1824, with a succession of governors in his pocket, he repeated journeys of this kind some six times with lucrative results.[3]

As the slur made by Howe on Knopwood's character suggests, communication and commerce between town and the interior — even with the bushrangers — was frequent and regular. Carl Canteri has suggested the bushranger Michael Howe had an arrangement with Lord, essentially a protection racket that shielded his assets from the depredations of the other inland bushrangers.[4] Certainly Howe often got supplies from Lord's stock-keepers. On one occasion at the Coal River, Howe bailed up a detachment of sleeping soldiers with the cry of 'Lay still you buggers!' then took his captives to dine at Lord's tents near Tin Dish Holes (near Oatlands).

In 1816 Howe raided Governor Davey's farm at Richmond. Twice. On the second occasion he timed his raid to coincide with Christmas Day festivities, and while drinking with his captives boasted that the bushrangers would shortly visit Hobart at will, as Edward Lord was going to intercede with the Governor. It may have been outrageous bravado but it also indicates Howe's negotiating strength. Even Governor Macquarie had agreed to forward a petition to Lord Bathurst in London. It also indicates that Lord was clearly seen as an intermediary between the interior and the town. In this he could afford to recruit the most useful as his agents, and it is not surprising that Musquito became, as Calder describes him, 'the faithful servant of Edward Lord'.

Musquito's knowledge of the interior, his understanding of convict and vandemonian culture, as well as his skills as a bushman, were invaluable to a person like Lord. On one occasion Musquito, with a convict called Beaumont, was tracking cattle that had been stolen from Lord and came upon them grazing on plains near Hamilton in the Derwent Valley. It was prime country, open grassland of Aboriginal creation. It later became the foundation of Lord's great estate of *Lawrenny*, with the area known colloquially as "Musquito Plains". Lord valued him and when, in March 1818, Lord decided to take a shipment of sixty-one cattle for export to Mauritius, he indicated plainly that he intended taking Musquito with him. The ship was forced back when bad weather lengthened the trip and fodder ran out, and there is no indication in the ship's manifest that Musquito travelled when the ship resumed its departure. Whatever the reason he did not go later is not as important as the fact that Lord valued him sufficiently to want Musquito to accompany the voyage.

Lord dominated a vast trade in meat, skins, wheat and any other commodity of value, and the bushranger Michael Howe dominated the narrative of the interior where

Lord extracted much of his wealth. Michael Howe had been transported for seven years for highway robbery and arrived in Van Diemen's Land in October 1812 aboard the *Indefatigable*. He was initially assigned to the merchant John Ingle, another of those Governor Macquarie regarded as disreputable, and who was also, as one would expect, a sometime business partner of Lord. So even before Howe absconded and took to the bush as joint leader with Whitehead of a band of twenty-nine convict escapees and army deserters, it is undoubted Lord was familiar with Howe.

Howe was served well by his native companion Mary Cockrill, or Black Mary, who in the pattern of relations in the interior acted both as guide and companion as well as easing relations with Aboriginal groups so that movement through the landscape was unobstructed. Howe grandiosely characterised himself as 'Lieutenant Governor of the Woods' and 'Governor of the Rangers' in his audacious correspondence both with Davey and later Sorell.[5] In this Howe was simply underlining the uncomfortable reality that his position within the interior was as unchallenged as that of the Lieutenant Governor in Hobart.

The law of the interior, that of honour among thieves, was of his making and it had as much consistency and application as that of the town. The government was negotiating from a weakened position. Even as early as 1814 Macquarie had offered an amnesty for any of the bushrangers that came in, and for a time Howe relinquished his bush life for the Camp, as Hobart was termed.[6] But he did not remain long, probably fearing Macquarie's amnesty was qualified.

There was in Howe not merely grandiosity and the romance of the bold highwayman but an underclass romance of settled simplicity. In one daring encounter, in September 1818, McGill, in the employ of Lord, went in search of Howe after he had robbed McGill's hut. He took Musquito with him and they eventually came upon Howe lighting a campfire. Startled, he quickly grabbed a fowling piece and escaped, abandoning his possessions.

Wells, an informed government clerk, wrote the account of Howe at a time when his notoriety was at a pitch. He makes no mention of Musquito but Knopwood certified a statement by McGill that 'Muskato [as Knopwood spells it] fired at him' and that McGill tried too but his 'piece missed fire [Howe] then made his escape across the river'.[7] Aborigines were seen as props to white deeds so omission of mention does not mean he was not aware of him — just indifferent.

In his haste Howe dropped his knapsack and a diary, which was inside. The diary was made of kangaroo skin and written in kangaroo blood. This has elicited much comment since but it fits the circumstances of the time when paper was short and where skin could be made a crude substitute for parchment and kangaroo blood a reasonable substitute for ink. His letters to both Davey and Sorell were similarly written in blood, but it is the content of the diary that was both sad and revealing. In it he dreamed of a life in the wooded hills and high country lakes and included lists of seeds and plants, flowers as well as edibles that he hoped to grow. It was a poignant romance in contrast to the violence that surrounded him and the fears he had of murder by the "natives" without the protection of Mary Cockrill.

In the encounter with McGill and Musquito, Harman suggests that their association with Lord may have meant that they had allowed Howe 'to slip through [their] grasp'.[8] This cannot be discounted given the long and productive association with Lord. Musquito would have spent time in the company of Howe and would have been familiar both with Howe and other bushrangers. In fact it would have almost been impossible not to. Circumstances, however, may have altered.

In May 1817 Howe had been closely pursued, several of his accomplices shot and his companion Mary Cockrill taken after Howe callously fired on her for failing to keep up. Again Howe communicated with the new Lieutenant Governor Sorell, and surrendered under terms of a conditional pardon, part of which was to inform on the others. Now without their leader, the gang was pursued by the military deeper into the forested hills. This time Howe's spurned lover Mary Cockrill assisted the military.

The gang was to resurface suddenly some time after, under the leadership of Geary. The object of their attack was *Orielton*, Lord's estate near Sorell (and named after his brother's estate in Wales). When nearby soldiers arrived under Lieutenant Nunn the initial skirmish saw Nunn wounded and the remaining soldiers ignominiously retreat. Governor Macquarie was incensed and issued a formal rebuke. Military parties were fired with renewed effort and Geary was eventually killed — ending, it seemed, a chapter of notorious bushranging.

Of Hollywood proportions it demanded a sequel, and this occurred with the sudden escape of Michael Howe and his return to the woods. Sorell immediately posted a reward of 100 guineas, on 7 September 1817, proclaiming Howe a murderer. What was Lord's position now? Had the attack on *Orielton* erased any arrangement with the bushrangers? It certainly appears like a deliberate choice to attack Lord's property, possibly in revenge for Howe's perceived betrayal.

The subsequent encounter of Musquito and McGill with Howe may have been a deliberate cover for Howe's escape, as suggested, but the more likely explanation was that Howe was no longer useful to Lord. Worse, he was more dangerous for the knowledge he had of past associations.

Howe was now alone and a spent force, and Lord was ruthless about his interests. Quite possibly Lord sent Musquito and McGill to deal with the problem before it

caused embarrassment. Howe was eventually captured on 21 October 1818 and it is significant that Worrall, one of the principal architects of the capture, was also a convict stock-keeper assigned to Edward Lord.

The convoluted involvement of Lord and the interior banditti will always remain, as it was intended, secretive. Even though Lord on one occasion accompanied John West on a voyage to England and undoubtedly granted West great insights for his *History of Tasmania*, it is unlikely Lord disclosed anything other than a sanitised version of his own role. What becomes obvious, however, was that Musquito, Lord's servant, had a very conscious understanding of the many arrangements between the town and the interior and an intimate understanding of the methods of the bushrangers and the points of vulnerability within the colony.

Whatever the results of Musquito's encounter with Howe, he had given considerable assistance to the military parties established by Sorell to track the bushrangers, so much so that Sorell had written to Macquarie regarding his repatriation, the third time such a promise had been made. Sorell pointed out that Musquito had 'served constantly as a guide to one of the parties, and has been extremely useful and well conducted'. What is significant however is that Sorell points out it is 'at his own desire [he] *goes* to Sydney' and argued for Macquarie's consideration 'on account of his useful Services'.[9] More's the point, repatriation was clearly the cost of collusion in tracking the bushrangers.

It is evident that Musquito was speaking bluntly to the Governor of his desire to return to Sydney. This took place precisely as conditional pardons for convicts and others who had assisted in the apprehension of Howe were being considered. Among them was McGill.

It is one of the recurring stories of Musquito that the central reason he went bush and commenced his war of attrition was because his repatriation just never took place. It was said too that he had become a 'hangman's nose' and repellent to the convict community for his assistance in tracking bushrangers. This may have been a 'misreading' of the pardon sought for Musquito's companion McGill, Harman suggests.[10] Sorell pointed out that McGill had been useful in service against the bushrangers but had become 'unavoidably odious amongst the prisoners'.[11] This was no doubt correct but McGill would not have been alone in attracting opprobrium from among the convicts.

By 1817 there was a change in the composition of convicts with the renewal of transportation and a surge of prisoners, a new generation of convicts, unlike those Musquito had lived alongside. Van Diemen's Land society was changing and expanding rapidly, displacing and alienating men like Musquito and McGill. To this new cohort of prisoners both McGill and Musquito would have been odious traitors, but there would have also been anger and disappointment among their earlier interior bushranging and convict associates. Musquito may have been doing Lord's bidding but it was an inexcusable collusion as far as the convicts were concerned.

Once again he is cleared for return to Sydney, along with Mary Cockrill, Howe's native lover and again the vessel, the *Pilot*,[12] is implied as ready for imminent departure but once more his repatriation fails to materialise.

It is becoming increasingly clear, as with the earlier decision not to return Musquito, that more often than not these decisions and plans alter more on whim, careless oversight or the usual indifference than on deliberate resolution. The frustration must have been infuriating and the injustice of his failed repatriation must have been greater with the knowledge that several months after the death of Howe, Dual returned to Sydney aboard the *Sinbad*, in January 1819.

4.6 Grievance

I have lived in the monster
and I know its entrails.

—Jose Marti

The rage that festered like gravel under the skin had grated with Musquito from the beginning. It had veered and tacked with attempts to collude and collaborate but surfaced in the 'blatant humiliation of inferiors' that forever punctuated British behaviour. It was a 'matter of common experience' for the underclass and Indigenous in a society where 'degrading physical punishment … was routine', where the 'utter debasement of chattel slavery' needed little justification, and where 'lesser forms of servitude were regarded as normal'.[1]

Musquito was forever reminded of his subservience and proper "place". The British of the 18th and 19th century were obsessed with manhood and manliness and forever "unmanned" others and visited upon them effeminacy, deficient courage and a lack of mettle. For a man born to warrior audacity this was the ultimate affront. He had tasted the grit of white thinking and behaviour; like the Cuban revolutionary Jose Marti, who had lived in America for a time, he had 'lived in the monster' and knew 'its entrails'.[2]

The slow smouldering resentment and monstrous hate was what bonded his relationship with Black Tom Birch, or Kickerterpoller, who joined Musquito in the

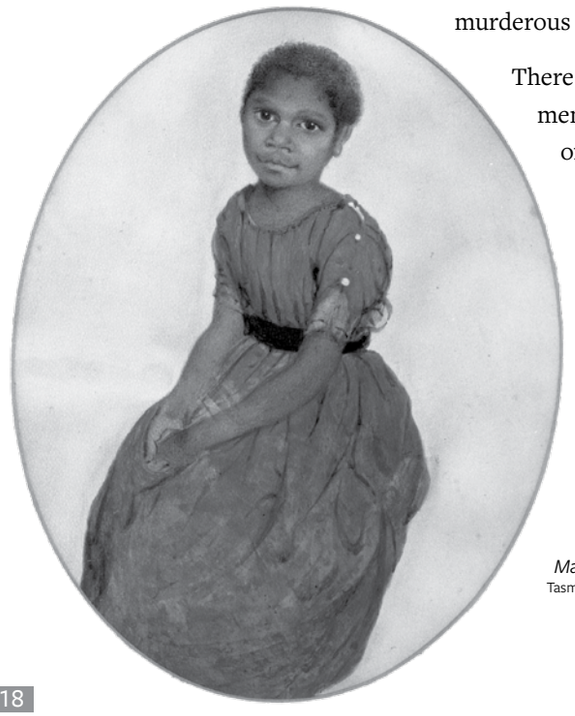
bush around 1822. He became Musquito's brother in arms and to some extent, even more ruthless than his mentor.

Tom Birch was part of the background story of Tasmanian occupation, of the constant removal of children often by force or stealth. The repetition in the record is so routine as to amount to a stolen generation on an astonishing scale. To appreciate the significance it is well to understand that one of the legal definitions of genocide established in the wake of World War II was the systematic removal of children. The reason coldly and simply is that removal of children prevents the transmission of culture. It crushes cultural formation and annihilates self and soul. And this was a crucial consequence of contact in Tasmania.

The trauma of social dislocation created a familiar pattern of rebellion and reaction that often found its way into the press: a native boy Jacob arrested at York Plains for aiding and abetting the killing of a stock-keeper; two natives, James Tedbury and George Frederick, charged with robbing Roger Gavin of several articles and James Godwin of a musket, and sentenced to three years. All these were raised in white households and these are patterns familiar to us today, of Aboriginal children or British child migrants wrenched from their origins.[3]

GA Robinson once asked BULL.RER how she was taken by sealers and she told him 'Munro and others rushed the fires and took six, that she was a little girl and could just crawl' and had been with Munro ever since.[4] Aboriginals were at their most vulnerable at night and in the early hours about their campfires and it was at this time raids were made for children or women — or simply for some murderous raid on the hearth group as a whole.

There were regular government pronouncements[5] against the removal of children, often chasing down women till they abandoned their infants, a cold-blooded predation. The practice was widespread at all levels of society including a later governor's wife, Lady Franklin, and the child Mathinna abandoned when she left the colony, later to die drunk, drowned in a shallow murky puddle.



Mathinna, painting by Thomas Bock, 1842.
Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office

Such destructive practice was so constant it became almost muted in the colonial narrative but the behaviour was not just the well-meaning acquisition of a pet black to "civilise". At the level of settler behaviour such an unsentimental acquisition was a valued labour unit or, as with stock-keepers, shepherds and sealers on the periphery, they were coercible, tameable companions and sexual mates, male or female, a practiced paedophilia on an unusual scale.

It was an atrocious violation that corroded community and group cohesion as it attacked the core of the bonded group. Once the core community began to crumble, Aboriginal society as a whole began to disintegrate, with birth rates despairingly low. Reports later in the Black War frequently mention the 'marked decrease of children',[6] an absence that 'compels us to the inference that they were destroyed'.[7] The insinuation by Meredith that such deliberate infanticide was in order to leave mobs unencumbered when raiding and pillaging neglects another reason more poignant — to dispose of children rather than have them 'fall into the hands of their implacable enemies'.[8] There may have been some limited truth, since infanticide is mentioned to GA Robinson by Aboriginal women sold to sealers, but the more likely explanation was simply that, as with any social group under profound stress, birth rates collapsed, probably assisted by the prevalence of venereal disease that destroys fertility.

Kickerterpoller then was not an unusual social occurrence. His foster father, Thomas Birch, after whom he was named, was a surgeon, owner of the renowned property *Lovely Banks,* and a shipowner involved in whaling and shipping Huon pine — a typical pioneer on the make. It was probably his forays along the east coast that brought him into contact with Kickerterpoller, who came from the Oyster Bay area[9] and was about ten on his removal from Aboriginal society. According to Sarah Birch, his foster mother, Tom was 'a good and useful lad, so obliging and gentle, so honest and devoted to his master'.[10] And there of course is the unconscious clue — devoted to his master and intended as a servant to the household. It simply did not occur to those so hierarchically bound that others would not simply assume their "place" without question.

Bonwick believed Musquito was to blame for poisoning the mind of Tom against white society, but it would never have taken root without the dawning realisation by Tom of his "place" in white society. Musquito did no more than point out the obvious. 'He pictured the hopelessness and aimlessness of his future.' What would he ever be but a 'slave of the whites'? Would he ever be allowed to take a 'wife among them'? Would they ever allow him equality with whites? Musquito represented the Europeans as 'the enemies of their race'[11] and in saying this to Tom, Musquito did no more than voice his own visceral contempt and hatred of white society.

Musquito may have introduced Tom, then about 17 and turbulently adolescent, to drink and to the 'licentious orgies of the roaming tribe',[12] but he was primed and prepared for this transformation by his own understanding. In his bolt for the bush he entered not into marginal squalor but into active resistance and attacks on white settlement. In many ways Tom's murderous rampaging, with or without the collusion of Musquito, far exceeded even Musquito's standards, and it is remarkable that Tom escaped the kind of attention and notoriety that descended on Musquito. It was suggested by Jorgenson that Tom was captured twice and sentenced to Macquarie Harbour and Bonwick[13] concurs, though there is little else in the record to suggest this. There is no doubt however that the intervention of Sarah Birch preserved 'his life from the law's demands'[14] and the vengeance of authorities.

The litany of accusation that Musquito is supposed to have poured into Tom's mind has the ring of truth, and is both potent and rational. Bonwick received his information directly from Sarah Birch and it is clear that many extensive discussions took place in the attempt to dissuade Tom from his errant path, so the substance of these arguments was obviously reiterated at length. More than anything it is the nearest we have to a clear manifesto of grievance not just by Tom but by Musquito as well.

Another better-known statement of grievance is included in Melville. The source was probably Gilbert Robertson, the ethnically mixed West Indian figure of some notoriety who showed considerable sympathy for the Aborigines and saw their resistance as quite clearly warfare and their capture as that of prisoners of war. He also had a lot of contact with Musquito, who used to 'come begging to his house' and made himself 'very useful'.[15] Again what may have been simply equal and respectful reciprocal exchange was characterised as "begging" and "useful" service — the action of an inferior underling graced by the generosity of a superior, more of the assumed pernicious hierarchy.

Robertson saw Musquito's principal grievance rooted in the 'breach of faith' by the government for his efforts tracking bushrangers and the subsequent ill treatment by convict prisoners, which forced him to go bush, and he complained long and hard to Gilbert Robertson about this. Robertson sees a man more wronged than in the wrong and believed the execution of Musquito (and later Jack and Dick) '*caused subsequent murders*',[16] according to what he was told by Black Tom and others. The integration of Musquito within Tasmanian Aboriginal society saw significant payback by others for the perceived wrong inflicted.

Melville[17] took the same sentiment, couching Musquito's words again in the garbled Pidgin of a savage even though Musquito spoke good English. It is probably the nearest thing to a manifesto of reasons and grievance, a narrative that covers a convincing array of wrongs, but at its heart is a disillusionment with the basic promise of acceptance and inclusion that had always been the pledge by Europeans for peaceful coexistence.

'I stop wit white fellow, learn to like blanket, clothes, bakky, rum, bread all same white fellow'. It is a fundamental statement of an attempt to find inclusion in white society on an invitation that white colonial society frequently voiced but never meant, the assurance of equality denied by an impenetrable hierarchic barrier to acceptance.

' ... Gubernor send me catch bushranger — promise me ... send me back to Sydney my own country ... Gubernor tell too much lie, never send me.' Again there is disillusion with the lies and unkept promises, the glib and hollow utterances. With it came a dawning sense of betrayal, particularly of the promise to see his own country and be among his own people. Worse, the overt collusion with authority that was entailed in tracking bushrangers meant alienation from the camaraderie of the one realm of white society that was as disparaged as he, the convicts. Musquito had spent eight years in the convict society of Norfolk Island. It was nearest thing to a home in white society but it was changing with the influx of a new generation of convicts. Now Musquito observed, 'prisoner no like me, givet me nothing, call me b----y hangman nose'.

The 'hangman's nose' was an epithet of utter contempt. It was 'flash' talk for a constable who like a hound could scent carnage for the hangman's noose. Noose/nose: it was a dark pun and a play on words common in rhyming and other slang. The constabulary was largely composed of convicts, ex-convicts, and expired military, with a 'reputation ... so bad that no free man would join it,'[18] so Musquito understood clearly the meaning of the slang taunt and had no doubt of his utter exclusion.

Conflict beckoned, 'I knock one fellow down, give waddie, constable take me. I then walk away in bush',[19] the only place of fond familiarity and belonging, joining with the so-called "tame mob" of Tasmanian Aborigines.

The "tame mob" has generally been described as Aborigines that had been cast out of tribal society for transgressing Aboriginal lore or for being detribalised in some unspecified way; 'absconders from different tribes' as West describes them. Because these Aborigines gravitated to the fringes of white society it has been convenient to see them as some kind of degenerate and outcast group but this does not provide a real understanding of what was rapidly occurring in Aboriginal society.

The constant pressure on the bands through the stealing of children and removal of women, particularly in the northeast as a result of attacks by sealers, had led to a

collapse in social cohesion. The rapid intrusion after about 1820 of free settlers along the valleys and estuaries of traditional hunting grounds had also dislocated foraging and migration routes, further pressuring traditional patterns of existence. None of this was obvious to white settlement, which simply saw snapshots of native life and had no appreciation of the impact and rapid unravelling of social structures.

Only the tedious Bishop Broughton, who attended Musquito's hanging, seems to have gleaned an inkling of the impact of white encroachment when he told the Parliamentary Committee, 'they do not so much retire as decay … they appear to wear out … actually vanish from the face of the earth'.[20] While omitting agency, he nevertheless grasps the essence of the British impact on Indigenous society.

So, far from a clear division between inland traditional society and a marginalised "tame mob", the existence of the "tame mob" was a manifestation of a wider social collapse, a bleeding out of society.

A society where sharing and reciprocation were integral logically saw begging and importuning white settlers as not simply opportunistic but entirely fair and reasonable. The distortion it creates in traditional society forms what Bill Stanner[21] called an 'intelligent parasitism', a sensible survival mechanism but nevertheless one that diminishes agency and independence — and engenders white contempt. As in Aboriginal society elsewhere, where such 'intelligent parasitism' emerges it tends to indicate a breakdown of high culture and a slide towards the margins of white society.

With the Tasmanian "tame mob", however, it is more about displacement and dislocation in a wider context of social disintegration, an echo of what is happening within the interior. These were a 'people in-between' with a potent discontent: displaced, discontented, disorientated and ripe for the expression of dissent. They understood white society intimately however, and their contact was with its crude social underside, its powerful contempt and racial rejection.

This was not just any de-cultured marginal Aboriginal group, for when Musquito, and later Dick and Jack, were hanged, this mob retreated to the interior and commenced relentless retaliation, never to savour white society again. It was in just such a milieu that people like Musquito and Black Tom would find a companionable culture. It was liminal social realm, a very fluid and highly mobile group able to move between town and bush effortlessly, wherever opportunity and inclination most presented.

Melville's enumeration of grievance by Musquito indicates the source of conflict even in a bush setting and settler contact. Cadging and begging were part of that interface, and while female exchange crudely formed part of that give and take it was an ordered reciprocation not always conducted honourably, if it can be so described. It is clear white settlers saw access to Aboriginal women as a right and believed 'intercourse between white men and native women was not offensive to the tribes',[22] whereas it followed a ritual of reciprocal exchange and peaceable co-existence for Aborigines, however much it appeared as simple prostitution to whites.

The use of prostitution, a term of such European opprobrium, indicates the level of white contempt. Musquito obviously saw the rules of reciprocation regularly violated — 'some tak't away my "gin": that make a fight' — and it was these violations of what was Aboriginal law that precipitated conflict — with complaints to the Governor leading to his ostracism — 'all white fellow want catch me, shoot me' on sight.[23]

'I want all the same white fellow, he never give'. Here again are hints of cargo cult expectation, of partaking of white abundance and white power that were not realised. In the failure to share abundance, the shift was to appropriation. Now, 'mob make rush, stock-keeper shoot plenty, mob spear some.' Though probably part of a wider recurring pattern of wrongs experienced in contact with stock-keepers and settlers, here Musquito was probably alluding to the clashes that took place at Grindstone Bay and the death of Hollyoak for which Musquito was tried and hanged.

Together, these were not simple statements of greed and wanton theft but the voicing of a powerful imperative of traditional Aboriginal reciprocation incorporating more novel elements of the desired power that flows from white abundance. It was rooted in traditional obligation, and to fail such obligation was not honourable and warranted retaliation and punishment under Aboriginal law. The killing of Aborigines in the process of retaliation only compounded the perceived wrong and escalated the issue from a violation of Aboriginal law into warfare and wider punitive retaliation.

Musquito's manifesto is not simply about personal or even group grievance. He concludes with an ominous observation of the future — 'White fellow soon kill all black fellow',[24] and he makes no distinction between himself and the native peoples of Tasmania. He recognises clearly the deadly consequences of continued contact; recognises too, that there is little that can be done to arrest the inevitable. He had seen the devastation of Aboriginal society in Sydney and his contact with other Sydney blacks in Tasmania like Dual would have ensured his knowledge of their further decline since he had left. This was the most significant grievance he had to convey to the Tasmanian Aborigines. With this he became a seer, a *propheta*, who could see the end of their own independent existence with apocalyptic certainty.

What he resolved was severance from white society and rejection of negotiated resolution, 'Never like see Gubernor any more'. It was retaliation and open defiance,

though he assures his friend, ‘You good fellow, mob no kill you.’ The same obviously could not be said for encounters with others.

Musquito’s statement is ultimately a declaration of death and defiance, of warfare and rebellion, but it is also desperate and quixotic because he recognises that it is a forlorn cause. It is very much a political statement that recognises the disproportionate imbalance of power and chooses to stand against it. It is also clear where his allegiance now lies. He had begun to perceive through the common cause of a pan-Aboriginal identity, however garbled the articulation, a ‘national’ identity unthinkable in traditional society.

As Colley[25] has demonstrated, “British-ness” and British identity in the late 18th century was not crafted from what they were but from what they were not — and they were not French. Similarly Aboriginal identity at this time was beginning to be forged by the *Other*, by a murderous opposition to white presence. It is an identity driven by dire circumstances no doubt, the commonality and community of oppressed, but one that nonetheless now views beyond the confines of clan boundaries.

4.7 The cult of resistance and Indian food

During the Black War the Tasmanian Aboriginal population withered to a remnant, but this decline had begun with first contact and reached a point of collapse about 1818 with the rapid influx of convicts and free settlers after the Napoleonic war. Aboriginal bands were never particularly large, with about 50 members at most, and hearth groups even smaller, but with the demographic explosion of white presence, the fragmentation of Aboriginal community and connection forced the merger of groups as a way of survival and forlorn hope of social stability. It was this social fluidity, threat and insecurity that allowed figures like Musquito and Black Tom to merge with groups beyond the “tame mob” into assemblages of up to several hundred.

As has been described earlier, such social eruption cuts to the psyche, deeply affecting belief structures, the experience everywhere of Indigenous groups experiencing foreign occupation. Musquito had already experienced the psychic dislocation of white presence in Sydney but he now had the unique perspective of someone who has passed through and knows not only its symptoms but also its cause. It was a wisdom that inflamed understanding and left the ache of knowing.

Tasmanian Aboriginal religious belief and practice has never been particularly well understood but, as has been emphasised elsewhere, if the experience of other cultures under collapse is any guide then there would have been a resurgence, even reinvention, of traditional practice, with a millenarian or apocalyptic threshold. The early Baudin French expedition observed elaborate funerary rites and cleared ceremonial corroboree rings, and both Bonwick and GT Lloyd describe Aboriginal corroborees at times of full moon and suggest some invocation of the moon.

Adolphus Schayer, a German observer on the north west coast, made similar observations but goes further and describes how a warrior ‘gets so worked up, after a few moments he can barely speak and can only utter inarticulate sounds … and in a way he comes to a state of mind which is close to madness’.[1] In this trance-like state the other men rush in and around the fire shouting and dancing in a frenzy ‘giving vent to frightful screams’, to be later joined by the women in a similar fever pitch.

The presence of women in this ceremony might signal a more general and sociable corroboree, as would be the usual case on the mainland, but Tasmanian practice may have tolerated female inclusion in these ceremonies. Entering into a trance-like state is a recognisable shamanistic practice, communing with other worlds.

Schayer goes on to describe how if, when attempting to enter such an ecstatic state the shamanistic figure falters or falls, this could see the whole rite descend into mirth, and the attempt abandoned. He saw this as child-like behaviour but it can equally be seen as an unexceptional juxtaposition of the ordinary and the remarkable, a routine communion with out-of-body experience that all, including women, accept as commonplace.

This was echoed in the occasional custom of the northeast chiefly figure Mannalargenna of entering a trace, communing with another world through some personal guiding medium/spirit and uttering prognostications.[2] He was at one stage supposed to be assisting GA Robinson in locating other Aboriginal groups by such clairvoyance but with a remarkable lack of success, and was probably deliberately leading Robinson astray. At other times these rites led Mannalargenna into violent convulsions and utterances of foretelling that terrified onlookers.[3] What is important to glean from these examples is the routine resort to and the acceptance in Tasmanian Aboriginal society of such “powers”.

Mannalargenna was assuming the guise of seer or shaman and it was obviously a role deeply revered by the Aborigines. At a time of social implosion such *propheta* would shoulder an even more elevated and valued role. Again the North American comparison provides many examples: the shamanistic utterances of Chusco

and Pontiac[4] offer similarities, and Tecumseh[5] and his brother Lalawethika (Tenskwatawa) illustrate where shamanistic nativist revival, war and resistance combine and focus energies.

It seems highly probable that Musquito also assumed a role as *propheta* or seer given his experiences of nativist cult revival on the Hawkesbury, and that would have significantly enhanced his stature among the Tasmanians. He had seen the future in his past and his message to his Aboriginal companions was clear: the future was bleak indeed. At the hands of the whites they would all soon be erased, and they needed only their own experience to confirm his foretelling. Musquito's presence and whatever utterances and prognostications he made were no more than extremely timely. It was a crucial conjunction of time and place, a critical moment that enhanced reception of his presence by confirming Indigenous thinking.

His influence on the Tasmanian Aborigines may then have been more extensive than modern writers suggest and may well have been as significant as white settlers imagined at the time because he not only had an inkling of the future, he had experience of the methods of resisting white intrusion. He had a lot to offer. On the one hand he was a capable cultural broker able to advantageously negotiate with the whites. On the other hand he had knowledge of how to effectively combat their presence.

At this time of social implosion the options available to the Tasmanian Aborigines were becoming stark. Resistance and warfare was not simply a choice but an unavoidable reality. Whatever religious elements drawn on would have added that apocalyptic edge, that fierce desperation of last-ditch determination to stand against white encroachment. This realisation is always belated because understandably Indigenous people cannot imagine how the whites can just keep on coming like a flood. It is always too late.

Violence against Aborigines had become routine and prosaic. One recently arrived immigrant travelling to his allotted block of land was appalled to find a convict labourer had shot an Aborigine 'with as much compunction as one might shoot a snake' and considered it 'entertainment to make the fingers of the corpse move by tugging at the sinews of the arm.'[6] Such casual callous disregard only occurs when the culture and general atmospherics give permission for such behaviour.

When the Rev. Rowland Hassall visited Hobart from Sydney in 1817 he noted the absence of Aborigines about the town and when he asked was told, 'We shoot them whenever we find them'.[7] It may have been bravado but it harboured grim violence. It was simply not that unusual or out of the ordinary.

White presence had so infested the landscape that contact and conflict was unavoidable. White population increased from 2367 in 1817 to 9514 by 1824[8] — a more than fourfold increase in seven years — a staggering increase felt profoundly in the interior as settlement spread. It is difficult in the present to appreciate the demographic dimension of white presence; the numbers seem so small but not the magnitude. Within a hunter/gatherer landscape this intrusion was mammoth and came on top of a corrosive presence that had been there on a lesser scale from the beginning. What was needed was some means of fuelling battle groups on the move and what Musquito brought was the experience of Aboriginal resistance on the Hawkesbury borderland, the utilisation of the imported Mesoamerican crops of corn and potatoes.

As has been pointed out these crops were of far greater importance than modern society appreciates, so common are they to our culinary experience. They were highly productive, highly calorific, very portable, and readily storable. They were ideal as a means of sustaining battle groups on the move. Potatoes were more commonly grown in Tasmania and alerted to the possibilities by Musquito, potatoes became a common item of pilfer, oftentimes on a considerable scale. Certainly Lloyd believed that 'prompted by Musquito, the natives commenced an artful depredation upon the crops … potatoes were rooted up and carried off by the hundredweight'.[9]

As a young man, 'a bold little fellow', Lloyd once stole his way into Musquito's camp one night to be greeted by a glowering Musquito. There he saw in the 'not less than twenty three' fires in every 'brushwood enclosure', roasting potatoes 'being carried out upon a most extensive scale' with 'each potato steaming and cracking its skin'. It was a quite sizeable mob that Lloyd estimated at about 165 cooking for themselves on an industrial scale. He was invited to join their feast but returned home to inform his furious uncle who mustered 'our available forces' and crept up on the campfire and attacked the mob with stock and bullock whips, and, he hints, with swords. They captured one of the Aborigines and 'resolved to adopt the more summary process of Mr Lynch'. They slipped a noose around the throat of the 'terror stricken culprit', the rope over a limb of a tree, and while berating the victim they reinforced the message by 'sundry significant tugs on the rope'. This 'serio-comic performance', as Lloyd describes it, was soon over and the prisoner released 'upon which he took to his heels'.[10]

This extraordinary and macabre story, which was undoubtedly inflated in the retelling, reveals both a cruelty and attitude to Aborigines that leads to the reasonable suspicion that the lynching was not all just in jest. Nor, unless it is an entire invention, would they have gone only with whips and no other armoury. In the midst of this bravado, however, is revealed the significance of potatoes to large Aboriginal groups

and their importance to the settlers too, who depended on their winter store, hence the raging vengeance of Lloyd's uncle.

The Aborigines knew the importance to settlers of a winter store of potatoes and sometimes disguised their theft. Since potatoes were rowed up (mounded) the Aborigines artfully learned to disguise their pilfering by taking soil from the base of the row, removing the potatoes and leaving the tops undisturbed. Once the soil was remoulded the farmer would be none the wiser until the crop was dug.

Potatoes were staple food items in the bush, along with flour for damper, so the removal of such crops severely impacted on settlers' livelihoods. Most commentators rightly emphasise the importance of flour, sugar and tea. As with potatoes the Aborigines contrived to store flour, making pits lined with bark to absorb moisture and stones and wood to indicate the spot.[11] Pilfering flour was elevated to an art form by the Aborigines, using any invitation to enter a settler's hut as an opportunity to filch flour. In one instance a shirted Aborigine 'fingering the flour' in a cask, conveyed it by 'rapid and clever movement' up his sleeve. In another instance an Aborigine 'making free' with the contents of a flour cask, suddenly screamed in agony, withdrawing his arm minus his hand. The 'shrewd' farmer had secreted a steel trap in the flour to discourage theft.[12]

These stories, while intended as wry humour, reveal disturbing cruelty and comical caricatures of cunning savages. However embellished and distorted these stories, they emphasise the importance of flour. This marked a considerable alteration in diet from predominantly protein to carbohydrate-rich; instant sugar calories and endurance calories in potatoes and flour. While flour is much noted in Aboriginal theft, potatoes are less emphasised but no less important. Stealing both sustained Aboriginal movement and removed white winter food storage, which made these attacks far more significant than a modern reader might imagine, with settlers seeing it as part of a wider attack and atrocity.

An attack on Hobbs's house at the Eastern Marshes near Oatlands in 1824 saw several *tons* of potatoes dug and taken away.[13] Hobbs, whose property lay in the paths taken by Aborigines, had been under attack by Musquito's mob of Oyster Bay Aborigines, a group of about 60. According to West, Musquito waited until Hobbs's servants had fired before rushing in on them. Some days later a small group sensed the scene then retired to signal to a larger group of about 150, which as a body attacked the farm. Better prepared this time, the settlers held out for some five hours before the Aborigines moved in, intent on burning them out, and they were forced to escape. They refused to return to the scene for several days, such was the terror among the defenders.

The sheer size of the party indicates it was far larger than just the Oyster Bay mob and suggests an alliance with the Big River mob. The calculated tactics also indicate this was not simply a pillaging party but a battle group intent on removing the presence of whites, or why continue to return? Pillaging was secondary, but the appropriation of potatoes was essential to the maintenance of such a large group. One intention predicates the other and cannot be simply separated into stealing and resistance.

It is important too that while this was undoubtedly a mob of Musquito's making, many of these types of events took place months after his capture. If the tactics were learned to some degree from Musquito, the local Tasmanian Aborigines needed no further tutoring and had capable leadership from among their own.

This was a masterful raid, a calculated exercise with a planned place of storage. It meant that Aborigines were aware that storage required a cool, dry, dark place, which again shows forethought and planning, and given that some of these raiding groups were upwards of several hundred strong, a scale of storage was required to sustain groups of that size. This is exactly the kind of experience Musquito would have brought from the Hawkesbury, and while it would be unwise to fall into the trap of believing the local Tasmanian Aborigines were not capable of such forethought they were experiencing a turmoil of adaptation that would have made them receptive to the kind of stratagems that Musquito had to offer.

Potatoes figured in the logistics even late into the Black War. In 1829 a report from the Macquarie district described the method by which Aborigines would empty the wool content of mattress bedding and fill them with potatoes[14] to be taken away for storage. Again, there is forethought and planning, since storage was not an inherent part of Aboriginal practice.

4.8 Warrior return

The perilous and calculated decision by Musquito to renew in Van Diemen's Land the familiar attacks of the Hawkesbury was a return to warrior life and warrior regard, a re-creation of a youthful past in a man aged with experience but still fired by the dignity of determination. He was reaching into the heart of white settlement to tear the lifeblood from their continued presence, the action of a warrior intent on war and reprisal. This is not some groaning of the heart by a savage beast but pure rage and resentment, built up not by singular instances but a constant pattern of disregard and dismissal.

His involvement with the "tame mob" and Oyster Bay mob was not just collusive. Not just one of the mob, he saw himself very decidedly as the leader he had once been on the Hawkesbury. He cultivated and nurtured the role and the accompanying performance. Bonwick, who was not sympathetic to Musquito, described how he 'hung about … Hobart Town soliciting for his people' though not without gratifying his own 'civilized' wants by exchanging some of that food for tobacco and rum. 'Receivers and exchangers were readily found at the huts of convict servants'[1] so it seems not only food was traded but other pilfered objects of value. Here was the cultural broker who leveraged his regard among the Aborigines by his ability to navigate white society and culture.

His knowledge of underclass culture aided his efforts to supply some of the wants of the "tame mob", but it also brought him into violent contact with the new breed of convict servants who despised his earlier role tracking escaped convicts and bushrangers with whom they felt affinity. This obviously was one of the precipitating reasons for severing all connection with the town, shifting decidedly to the margins of settlement and even further to harass those on the frontier.

Musquito took with him a visceral hatred of white society that aligned with the same loathing as his followers, but that did not preclude contact and exchange with some of the white settlers who proved useful sources. The means of exchange were often the women attached to the mob. Musquito kept about 'three wives or gins' for his exclusive connection and would not allow them to fraternise with the whites but other women 'were allowed to prostitute themselves … for bread and other things.' If Musquito 'ordered a gin to retire with a Whiteman … she obeyed his orders. This happened, as I am told, very often.'[2]

This control over access to women has to be seen in context. Women as part of exchange and facilitation of social connection had always been a part of the Aboriginal means of social cohesion and reciprocation. It was certainly managed by the dominant male leaders but that is not to say that women did not have agency in this exchange and even actively facilitated.

As descriptions from the early Baudin expedition illustrate, women openly indicated their genitalia and the possibilities, 'suggestive signs that in Paris would not be ambiguous.'[3] This indicates the level of female agency and volition involved. The breakdown of social structures and contact with an almost exclusively male convict society, however, saw a shift from a means of cementing group relationships to a basic exchange of commodities, to a form of prostitution, but it is only at this time that it can begin to be seen in this way. Only at this time had the social fabric become so frayed that the opprobrium of the term "prostitution" could be applied, but it was a sad echo of the past.

This shift does not necessarily mean that female agency was extinguished. It is clear that GA Robinson's later mission would not have been successful without the mediation of Aboriginal women like Dray and Truganini, despite Robinson's arrogant belief in his own influence. As the Black War intensified women even actively engaged. In one instance women pounded the testicles of a white captive to pulp in vicious torture and understandable revenge. Women increasingly participated and directed conflict. Bonwick described them as the 'real arbiters of war'[4] and Calder described how women, though denied an active role in war, 'could not be constrained from joining' and 'sometimes leading the attack'.[5]

The manipulation of Aboriginal women by Musquito indicates both his sway over the group and his assumption of leadership and control. As West describes it, Musquito 'had high notions of his own worth'. He would 'stalk into the cottages of the settlers' and 'seat himself with great dignity'. His followers, upwards of one or two hundred, would patiently await 'his signal to approach'. According to West, as his influence 'enlarged, it became more pernicious', and influenced not only his immediate followers 'but propagated his spirit' and deeds 'of great enormity were committed at his direction; several by his own hand.'[6]

It is clear even from a commentator of such little sympathy for Musquito as West that Musquito had an assumed authority, a formidable charisma that extended well beyond his immediate circle of influence and animated a wider sphere of Aboriginal behaviour, even if they would not necessarily approve of him personally, as can be seen from later examples where he was actually attacked by other Aborigines. His sway was far from absolute, but as with many tempestuous figures his character did not command universal approval.

He still remained an outsider to the Tasmanian Aborigines and only found commonality within the bonds of enmity towards the whites; nevertheless it was the inkling of a pan-Aboriginal identity that is the remarkable aspect of Musquito's presence. For a society so continually riven by enmity to accept an outsider indicates the degree to which Aboriginal society was creating a new coalescence from the fragmentation. Musquito was not necessarily an endearing or even admirable figure but a turbulent, vengeful character who drove adherence by might and cowed others by ruthless determination.

GA Robinson as a witness was always anxious of the interests of the Aboriginal women under his protection and that has to be borne in mind when he relates comments from his charges that do not compliment Musquito. In conversations with Lucy and Caroline from the Big River band, Lucy admitted she had lived with Musquito, who had taken 'her from her people' and that he had taken 'plenty of black women'. She also said that Musquito had killed many blacks including black women.

He had shot a woman in the breast as she climbed a tree to get a possum and later burned her body. She also relayed how he had shot a blackfellow at the Big River as he climbed a tree. Robinson was incensed that someone who had 'murdered several at Sydney' — again the repetition of this assumption — had been sent to Van Diemen's Land. 'What a policy!'[7]

It is always difficult to sort such accounts for accuracy without context, particularly as witnesses were undoubtedly anxious to please Robinson with what he wanted to hear. Musquito had basically run with the Oyster Bay mob, and while a merging with the Big River group was part of the new realignment this may not

Geographic distribution of Tasmanian Aboriginal groups

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have been a seamless transition without some coercion. Taking women from another group was a traditional way of solidifying connection, and Musquito was asserting a major leadership role with women, part of the spoils of office. He also demonstrated proficiency in western weaponry and added muskets to his arsenal of command.

This is a man from a warrior culture asserting authority through both force of arms and force of presence. The degree to which he asserted that authority and drove an agenda of vengeance extending beyond his immediate group begins to reveal the might of his influence, the permission he accorded the actions of others and focused their hatred. The women also reported to Robinson that Musquito exhorted the Aborigines repeatedly to kill the white men 'kill DRYER [white women], kill LUTERTEIN [white men]',[8] and this seems no exaggeration. His aim of vengeance was absolute.

There is often surprise that a Sydney black could become so integrated into the struggle of others, and this is used to deny Musquito a role in resistance, assigning him simply as criminal.[9] How could he be a patriot fighting for country when it was clearly not his cause or country? The romance that encrusts these concepts — patriot, resistance, rebel — needs first to be discarded. War is a rather unseemly pattern of serial dying and is rarely heroic. Of course there are examples like the romantic poet Lord Byron who died of diarrhoea in the cause of Greek Independence, a death neither romantic nor heroic. It was the death, however, of a fervent British philhellene drawn to a cause regarded as legitimate by many British at the time. That Musquito made common cause with the Tasmanian Aborigines is similarly legitimate and not easily dismissed as criminal, though it would never have occurred but for his early initial association.

There were other comparable characters to Musquito who similarly acted beyond their normal boundaries and with similar consequences. Pevay,[10] a Tasmanian Aborigine who accompanied GA Robinson, 'The Great Conciliator', to Victoria and his new role as Chief Protector of the Aborigines, deserted and, also out of his own country, engaged in a series of raids and depredations that led to his arrest and eventual execution. Again, simple criminality appears obvious but, as with Musquito, behind these acts are more complex motives recognised by others.

William Thomas (son of the Assistant Protector) related how Pevay talked of how his people had 'suffered at the hands of the white man' and 'how many of their tribe had been slain'. They had been 'hunted down in Tasmania' and 'now was the time for revenge',[11] and so with his wife Fanny, Tim.me, Truganini, and Matilda they took to the Victorian bush.

The issue remains how to characterize such action and behaviour. Revenge looms large, a visceral rage and bitterness for the enormity of injustice. The common enemy was white culture wherever it was encountered, for death always followed in its wake. This is resistance in its most base form, crude, vicious and indiscriminate killing and mayhem. Not nice and not heroic, but profoundly felt.

The disappointment of GA Robinson was plainly sensed. His tame blacks had let him down and he turned his back on them to face their fate without his active intervention, except for Truganini who was to return to Tasmania, fated to be forever in white thinking, the Last of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Pevay and Tim.me went to their deaths as the first Aborigines in Victoria to step from the gallows. In his vision from the scaffold a saddened Pevay contemplated joining his father and ancestral folk in hunting once more on the grasslands of Tasmania.

4.9 The magnitude of events: demographic implosion

> *I remember his insisting very especially … upon the idea that a principle source of error in all human investigations, lay in the liability of the understanding to underrate or to overvalue the importance of an object, through mere misadmeasurement of its propinquity.*
>
> —Edgar Allen Poe, "The Sphinx"

Scrutinising the size and proportional magnitude of both the white and black populations is the only way to understand the extraordinary extent of Musquito's power and influence. The number of people he was able to direct and influence may appear relatively modest, but placed in the demographic context of the time *proportionately* it was huge. [1]

The menace of the 100–200 warriors he was able to muster can only be appreciated if you place yourself outside some pioneering hovel with wife and family and contemplate the approaching stealth of seasoned fighters bent on slaughter. Dots of dark shadows moving mottled against the bush. It was a dread that drained the heart and pulsed fear. Even the dogs barked with the irregular staccato of fear and apprehension.[2]

Appreciating the raw and personal experiences of people utterly out of place is necessary to understand the amplified panic and hysteria that spilled out of the interior and into the town journals of the day. Appreciating the real magnitude of the threat, however, can only be understood by examining the patterns of population. While the Aboriginal population of Van Diemen's Land at the time of white intrusion has been hard to assess, it has also been an issue fraught with controversy. What is unquestionable is that the population had begun to decline from the beginning of white presence. What was the cause of the decline? And just how dramatic a decline was it?

The genre of conquest studies[3] has emphasised the role of disease in the rapid Indigenous depopulation that takes place when Europeans confront a society without herd immunity to European diseases. This is particularly true of catastrophic diseases like smallpox,[4] though Tasmania was fortunately spared the impact of smallpox. The role of other diseases like chickenpox, measles, tuberculosis[5] and the common cold[6] are difficult to ascertain with the early record relatively silent, though there was undoubted impact, with Josephine Flood going so far as to suggest influenza, from sailors on passing ships, may have been a depopulating factor even *prior* to settlement.[7] Certainly influenza struck the D'Entrecasteaux Channel area from 1827-29, and when GA Robinson gathered the Tasmanians on the west coast and on Flinders Island after 1830. They died with appalling rapidity from respiratory illnesses, but this was at a time of social stress and forced congregation.

Disease is not always the primary factor in depopulation. In fact, the Tasmanian Aborigines were generally regarded as remarkably healthy, though that in part may have been because of small groups and a scattered population.[8] As Hamish Maxwell-Stewart[9] has pointed out, even on the west coast of Tasmania where the population was tiny, demographic interface with white incomers had a profound impact.

So the infinitely more subtle factors of population stress may be sufficient to trigger depopulation as the ecological examples of the natural world attest: humankind is like any species. Similarly, population stressors may, where present, exacerbate disease impacts, which was certainly true in the Sydney context described earlier.[10]

In the case of hunter/gatherer societies, nuanced population stressors are emphasised by the intimate link of land and resources. Populations are not static and vary in accordance with those resources, and disruption of that pattern has profound repercussions. What appears a relatively small intrusion of people can have a significant impact as a trigger for depopulation. This is often overlooked.

For foraging societies land has a carrying capacity,[11] a baseline population that can be sustained, pitched conservatively to the period of least resource availability, usually midwinter. While essentially a considerable *under* population to our way of thinking, it is nevertheless fragile, easily disrupted by seasonality, drought, an influx of other people and their animals or a combination, as happened about 1808 when drought and low kangaroo numbers coincided.

In fact the recurring shortages of kangaroo meat[12] for white consumption in the early years of the colony placed inordinate strain on the resource and inevitably impacted on Aboriginal society even at a distance. If, as Lourandos[13] suggests, pre-contact population was actually *increasing* before British settlement then they may have been moving towards a Malthusian crisis,[14] contributing *even further* to population stressors associated with scarce game and resources.

The consequences of white intrusion were multiple. White presence not only visited violence on Aboriginal groups, it attacked the social fabric by the abduction of women and children, reduced fertility by the introduction of venereal disease[15] and fundamentally curtailed resource management by disrupting Aboriginal firing and landscape maintenance. The suite of factors precipitating demographic decline is almost complete. This combination of social stress factors was inevitably more significant than usually assumed and quite devastating.

It is not just as Maxwell-Stewart suggests, a 'question of violence … on the one hand and disease on the other',[16] *either* disease *or* white slaughter, to explain the decline of the Tasmanians. This has been an historical divide that separates into controversy, blame and accusation, but the explanation is more subtle and more devastating than any singular explanation.

Again, to place Aboriginal population decline in perspective you have to ascertain a base population. The question of the pre-contact Aboriginal population is vexed and Keith Windschuttle ignited debate in what became the History Wars by insisting on the 'accuracy'[17] of the figures and advancing a firm pre-contact population of no more than 2000.[18] Ironically, by measuring the population as so low he magnifies thereafter the proportionate level of slaughter, a death toll he seeks to deny,[19] but this is frequently the way his work 'tends to argue against itself'.[20]

Population estimates by other authors vary by methodology and opinion. Many, like Rhys Jones and Plomley,[21] are based on the size and number of bands but this remains tentative. Similarly, the reported sizes of groups seen by settlers are similarly unreliable and prone to exaggeration so any conclusion is conditional. The range of pre-contact population estimates varies from 2000[22] to 9000[23] and even as great as 15,000[24] to 20,000,[25] which underscores the uncertainty.[26]

For the purposes of analysis here cautious reliance is placed on Rhys Jones and Plomley, the two most regarded in this area, and an estimate of pre-contact Aboriginal society of about 5,000, though in a sense this is merely a generalised consensus.

Further archaeological analysis may provide a more accurate estimate but there is reason to suggest, on present information, an upward revision of the suggested baseline estimate founded on the rarely considered yet unusual level of landscape modification by precise Aboriginal firing. There has been a tendency to see the Tasmanian Aborigines as a littoral population clinging desperately to a coastal toehold, when in fact they extensively traversed and intensely utilised more than half the island, a confident, capable and resourceful people.

While rainforest would have been expected to be nearly the entire primary Tasmanian cover in 1803, Bill Gammage suggests 47 per cent was in fact grassland and eucalypt, fired landscape that is the basis for the carrying capacity of both people and animals.[27] Granted the abundant grasslands were created by fire over aeons, but it took a vigorous sustainable Aboriginal population in 1803, considerably greater than the minimal estimates advanced,[28] to maintain it, though confirmation requires further analysis. Landscape maintenance was a central Aboriginal task — *the* central task — upon which sustained existence totally depended.[29] Population decline after white intrusion disrupted landscape maintenance, contributing to a spiralling population decline by shrinking resource 'carrying capacity'.[30]

While there is good foundation for revising estimates upwards, reliance on Rhys Jones' and Plomley's pre-contact estimate of 5000 is a reasonable base figure. Once established it allows for some remarkable conclusions. For instance, the known white population in 1815, about 1933,[31] represents nearly 40 per cent of the pre-contact Aboriginal population, and a considerably greater percentage, probably closer to 60 per cent of the Aboriginal population at that time. The numbers are small but the magnitude is not, emphasising the considerable population stressors on the Aborigines as well as pressure on food resources even well away from the nodes of white settlement.

These were significant stressors on a hunter/gatherer population, and would have been exacerbated by the level of intrusion beyond the main settlements, which was likely greater than generally thought and with greater impact. The lure of life beyond the pale had always been a by-product of imperial expansion and trade. Even in 1660 Robert Knox, taken into the Kandyan Kingdom of Ceylon, found himself among over a thousand other Europeans,[32] which gives us a rare glimpse of this curious phenomenon of Europeans who crossed to the other side of the cultural boundaries.

In Van Diemen's Land, these marginal personalities, some reclusive, some banditti, are in addition to the game hunters, shepherds and small holders drawn to the inland Common, the vandemonian cohort referred to by Boyce. Small in absolute numbers, they nevertheless added to Aboriginal social stress by their presence, their occasional marauding and their demands on food, women and children.

For these reasons and others less easy to identify, the Aboriginal population had steadily declined but this rapidly accelerated with the steep influx of convicts after the resumption of transportation and the arrival of free settlers in 1817. Passenger fares to Van Diemen's Land halved in the 1820s[33] and sheep numbers exploded when the duty on wool in 1822 was reduced, giving special treatment to Tasmanian production.[34] Sheep and people — the difference is difficult to discern in more ways than one — but the impact on the landscape by both was substantial. White population increased from 2367 in 1817, to 4037 by 1819, to 7740 by 1823 and 9514 by 1824[35] — a more than fourfold increase in seven years.

The clue to its effect is in the increase in attacks after 1818 and the considerable spike in Aboriginal retaliation about 1824, and it was a significant conjunction. It is a constantly recurring colonial phenomenon that 'spasms of intense Aboriginal resistance correlate with booms',[36] demographic or economic. 1824 represented that point of tension where the flood of British compelled Aboriginal reaction and resistance, but of course by then it was too late.

Though estimating the Aboriginal population in about 1824 is as equally problematic as estimating pre-contact populations, about 1200[37] is arguable though tentative. If this is the case then the Aboriginal population in 1824 was about a *quarter* of the original population, which is an extraordinary decline, amounting to a population collapse.

If, however, Plomley's figure of only 500 in 1824 were used then this would indicate an even more catastrophic decline, barely 10 per cent of the original population. Even Henry Reynolds' most optimistic estimate of about 30 per cent is alarming. Whatever the estimate, the result is startling and indicates the disastrous level of social collapse. This is a society teetering on the edge even in 1824, so it is astonishing that these people continued a sustained campaign of resistance for another *seven* years as the population dropped to less that 300 Aboriginal individuals by 1831.

In the central and eastern area, the "settled districts" where Musquito operated and the region where the Black War was most intensive, the population in 1824 was about 1000.[38] Even allowing for some inflation, the fact that Musquito was able to sway a population of from 100 to 200 people, according to West, constitutes some 10 to 20 per cent of the population of the central settled district. Further, since battle groups of up to 200 are also reported and these are primarily male,[39] Musquito was able to muster and command from 20 to over 40 per cent of the male cohort of the region for concerted operations, which was mobilisation on a huge scale.

The figures may be argued but the magnitude was significant and indicates the surprising extent of his influence. His reach and command was quite remarkable, with a reputation that extended well beyond even the considerable mobs he could muster. The Aborigines did not always operate on this scale but broke into smaller raiding parties, however the fact that they could organise themselves into war bands of this relative population density is amazing. They had always done this for ceremonial purposes, of course in better times, but this was quite different.

The impact and influence of Musquito and the frequent assertion he was a catalyst for the Tasmanian Black War has always been controversial. Before Musquito the Tasmanians had 'never committed any acts of cruelty, or even resisted the whites'[40] and the 'Darkies were as quiet as dogs ... '[41] The only ones who had 'done any mischief' were corrupted by Musquito, who 'with much and perverted cunning, taught them a portion of this own villainy'.[42]

The role of Musquito's 'villainy' in directing these mobs would have made him a figure of awe and almost legendary standing. It was not only among the whites that he achieved a mythological significance but among the Tasmanian Aborigines as well. It was not just that Musquito was a known and recognisable scapegoat upon whom to heap blame, he actually did command a fearsome capacity to inflict vengeance and terror.

Even where Aboriginal mobs held traditional enmity there were frequent pauses in animosity for all manner of negotiated exchange, and information was a vital item of exchange. His reputation would have spread in the gatherings, corroborees, dances and songs where Aborigines celebrated deeds and successes. As well as being great gossips and storytellers, the Tasmanian Aborigines were consummate negotiators;[43] they had to be in order to maintain connection and trade, and to make alliances and avoid conflict. There is evidence that they suspended internecine 'broils'[44] to negotiate and resolve, but the alliance negotiation observed by Jorgenson and Robinson[45] in the latter part of the War had always been there, and accounts for the means Musquito employed to amalgamate the groups.

They were united in a political ideology of hatred to whites. As Robinson observed in his close contact, they considered 'every injury' inflicted 'upon White Men as an Act of Duty and patriotism' and considered those who suffered 'punishment as Martyrs in the cause of their country'.[46] While this is Eurocentric language, the sentiments are both recognisable and universal. But despite fierce common cause the acceptance of

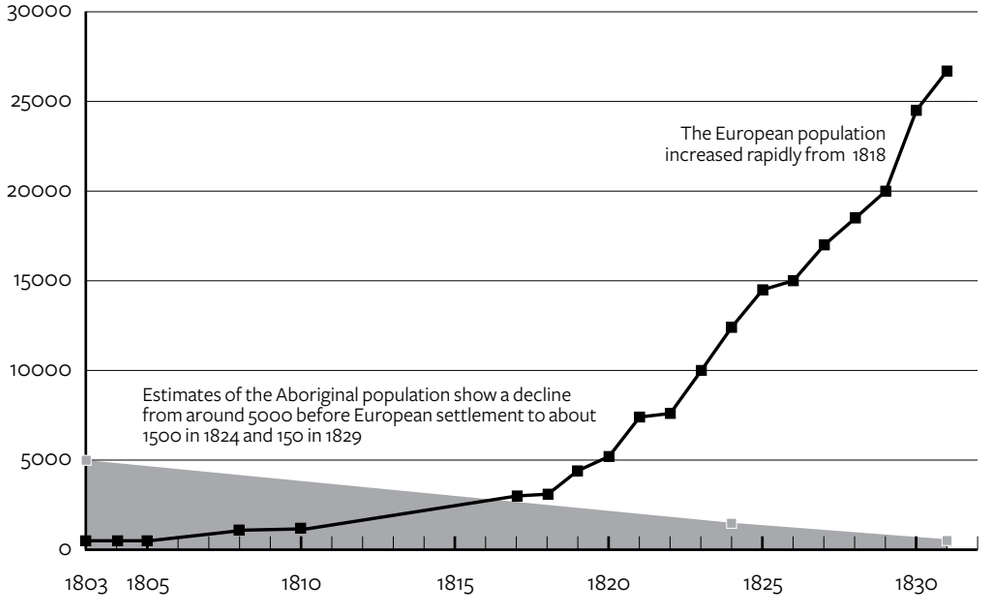
an outsider like Musquito would not have been possible without his long association from the moment of his arrival and the exigency of social collapse.

He was not only asserting a leadership role, however, he was turning these raiding groups into war parties with an intention beyond pillaging to remove the presence of white settlers by carnage and slaughter, choosing the vulnerable as well as those singled out for retribution. 'Many deeds of terror are laid at Musquito's charge',[47] Melville declared, and though it was impossible for Musquito to have committed them all he had no doubts that there were many. The term is "terror", for while the present era has elevated terror into holy war, in its use at the time it was appropriate.

His 'people kept the land in a state of terror'[48] but terror[49] is the means of the weak faced by forces that exceed their capacity to confront, and there is no doubt Musquito employed terror as a means of ridding whites. Spreading terror, like guerrilla tactics, allows the magnitude of the means to become inflated in the minds of opponents, and Musquito's attacks undoubtedly amplified alarm and caused an utterly inflated view among settlers and townsfolk of his success and effectiveness. *But that is the point.*

The transformation of Musquito was complete — a total reversion to his previous warrior persona, one that resonated with the local Tasmanians. This common purpose of war and retribution was an uncompromising resistance to white

Comparing increasing settler numbers to the decline in the Aboriginal population



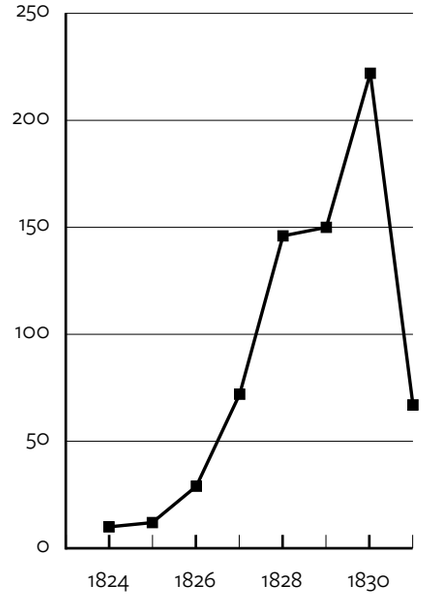
presence. Musquito had been literally an exile, and from the common store of exile behaviour there was an attempt to embrace the society of exile while at the same time retaining, often freezing in form within the mind, an idealisation of the native culture abandoned and left behind.

Musquito endeavoured by collaboration and collusion to ingratiate acceptance and found the task futile, condemned to lowly insignificance. The return to warfare was a return to warrior regard and leadership, that long abandoned path of the remembered past. At the same time he must have understood in his own heart and experience the futility of this course, which could only ever end in death. There was then the quixotic desperation of a man at the end of his tether, a man prepared to cast all aside for one last grasp of dignity.

4.10 Grindstone Bay

The east coast region of Tasmania around Oyster Bay became one of the most contested borderland areas of white intrusion. The scramble for land was of course what drew men like George Meredith, Adam Amos and William Talbot in 1821, but with access at that early stage only by sea it took on all the attributes of a sea frontier

Aboriginal clashes with settlers



with sealing, whaling and the inevitable attacks on Aboriginal bands. George Meredith pioneered both the settlement and the subsequent violence, dabbling as he did in sealing and whaling.

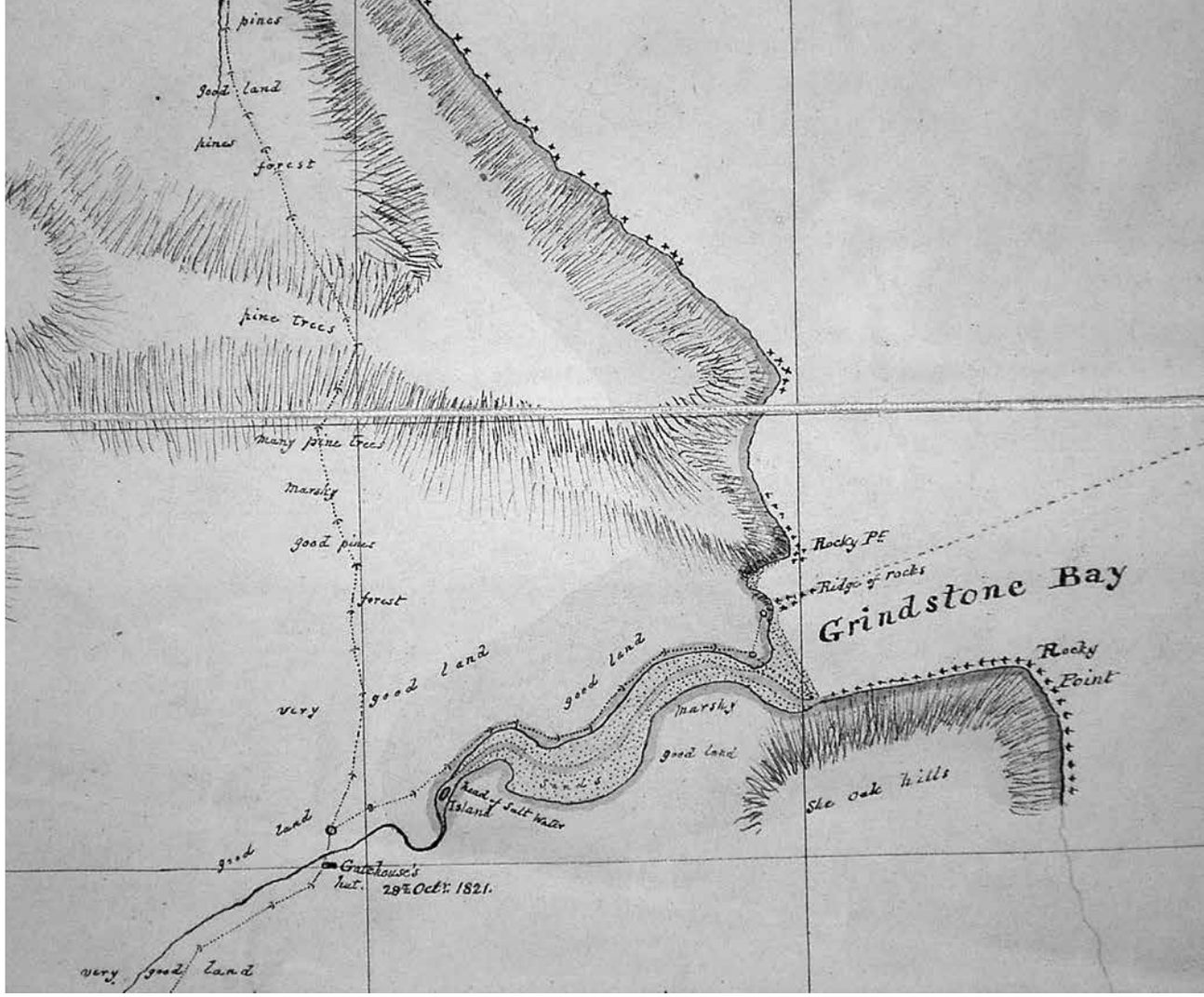
Meredith's son George junior became notorious. He was caught drunk with his assigned convicts and faced a tongue-lashing from his father and threat of removal of his convict labour by the military.[1] His generally dissolute behaviour was one thing, but he also became known for his systematic forays in a schooner along the east coast abducting Aboriginal women to sell and trade with the sealers on the Bass Strait islands.

His later excursions onto the mainland to abduct women led to captured mainland Aboriginal women being sold into the Bass Strait islands to sealers like Munro and others for £7 a head.[2] Both the price and the need to venture further afield for fresh captives indicate that Tasmanian Aboriginal women were becoming more scarce and considerably more wary, and probably both. His death by spearing was sanitised by his father by suggesting he was 'barbarously murdered by savages' reading his bible on a beach while on a 'fishing' expedition in South Australia.[3] GA Robinson saw it as just retribution, as many 'aggressions had been committed by the Merediths on the natives of Oyster Bay'.[4] It is probably no exaggeration when Robinson wrote of the constant abduction of women that 'Surely this is the African slave trade in miniature'?[5]

Meredith senior's involvement was not at arm's length. By 1824 he was tangled in the sealing business supplying boats and equipment to the sealing gangs for a share of the profit.[6] It is difficult then to take Meredith senior seriously when he describes the early settlers as 'neither pirates nor robbers … but British farmers and country-gentlemen, not usually considered a desperately ferocious and blood thirsty class'.[7] He was a scheming, turbulent man, later embroiled in a bitter legal dispute with his neighbour Amos over land, and also always in bitter dispute with the Aborigines over access to traditional hunting grounds.

Meredith's neighbour Amos, who had worked previously for Meredith in England, kept a diary replete with instances of confrontation with Aborigines and atmospherics of constant apprehension. It is the casual recording of incident that gives his account such force. 'I fired small shot at about 50 yards distance, they ran off. I fired another piece loaded with ball over their heads to let them know I had more pieces than one'.[8]

But it was not just that they guarded against attack. They also actively pursued Aborigines. Having detected a group near his property, with his eldest son, they 'traced them for several miles but could not come up with them'.[9] Later his son joined with 'two of Mr Meredith's men' who fired and wounded one of a 'mob who appeared numerous and fled over the hill'.[10] They pursued them, returning after dark with many



Scott's survey of Grindstone Bay, 1821. [24]

spears dropped in pursuit of their quarry. This is serious: Aborigines only discarded their weaponry when flight exceeded fight in urgency. There was an active policy of firing on Aborigines and keeping them at a distance while still attempting fireside raids to plunder women.

There have been attempts in recent times to characterise the trade in women in the Bass Strait islands[11] in a more benign light[12] and to understandably credit the women with more agency. While the later Straitsman creole community with its extraordinarily diverse ethnic mix of white, Tasmanian and Mainland Aboriginal, Afro-American and Polynesian, developed a bonded, unique and vibrant culture, its origins were in a violence and oppression that cannot be easily tidied to one side as

anything less than the most rapacious exploitation. That it began in exploitation and transformed into a functional community is not really all that paradoxical.

Mannalargenna, the northeast chief from whom many of the present Tasmanian Aboriginal community claim to be descended, railed against the violent savagery of Tucker, Mansell and others, and asked GA Robinson why 'the white men were not put in gaol for killing the natives'.[13] Robinson's excuse was lame but the reality was that nothing could really be done to curb the slavers and their violence. Ironically today many of the descendants still bear the names of those abductors, slave names which some of their North American counterparts have sought to expunge.

The east coast then was a site of inevitable conflict. In 1818, after an Aboriginal man had been killed by a stockman and an Aboriginal woman had had children stolen from her, the local Aborigines developed a 'strong and rooted animosity'[14] to the white presence and speared a local white. This was reported after the sensational murder of John Kemp at Grindstone Bay in 1818, but the incidents were obviously related. Grindstone Bay was an area frequented by the Aborigines as a favoured hunting ground and place of gathering, with reports of some 500 assembling there in the past.[15]

Kemp had been with a party of five men sealing and hunting kangaroo in the Oyster Bay region of Grindstone Bay. He was part of a venture sponsored by Thomas Birch, who had taken Kickerterpoller — Black Tom Birch — into his home, and it was from this general area that Tom Birch originated. Kemp had been put ashore with skins, muskets, ammunition and knives while the remainder returned to sealing on the offshore island, Ile des Phoques. While they were away Kemp was murdered, 'cut and mangled in a manner too shocking to relate'[16] and when the rest of the party returned they were rushed from the bush by some 20 Aborigines and forced to retreat to their boats. While much of what was with Kemp was destroyed, including a dog, the muskets and ammunition were taken.

It is significant that the white party recognised one of the Aboriginal women as being seen about Hobart, which indicates the intercourse, both literal and metaphorical, and ease with which the Aborigines moved between the frontier and the town. The woman seen about Hobart would have been associated with Musquito's mob, which indicates too that Musquito was journeying between the town and the frontier as well as routinely associating with the Tasmanian Aborigines of the interior.

It is important because Bonwick indicates Musquito, whose attacks he says became 'conspicuous'[17] at this time, was behind the attack on Kemp because he was after the ship's stores in Kemp's care. What is more important is that the muskets and ammunition were taken. It is clear Musquito was familiar and skilled in the use of arms.

The settler John Leake claimed Musquito kept and used a gun and instructed the local Aborigines in their use, particularly that they could not fire a second time without reloading.[18] There is no doubt the Tasmanians became familiar with guns and GA Robinson later reported Aborigines taking him to guns stored in a hollow tree that were primed and cared for with pieces of blanket stuffed in the muzzles.[19] It is unlikely that the Tasmanian Aborigines were so unaware of the firing capacity of European weaponry, but Musquito would certainly have acquainted them with the more subtle aspects. More than that, if weapons were taken, he would have used his knowledge of the weaponry to consolidate his position among them, to the point of intimidation.

There is no other record blaming Musquito for this killing but Bonwick says he was 'always endeavouring by subtlety to throw the blame onto others should discovery of an offence be made'.[20] This was really Musquito's strategic means of organising attacks as previously observed, and was part of the arsenal of traditional tactics also used by Dundalli in Queensland. So effective tactics became sly blame-shifting but Bonwick's negative interpretation was understandable even if it missed the point. His was a calculated revenge, and Musquito's involvement in this killing shows obvious alignment with a well-founded grievance among the Tasmanians.

This is the first suggestion of Musquito engaging with the Tasmanian Aborigines in a retributive raid on white presence, and significant as it comes around the time, in October 1818, that Musquito with McGill was in pursuit of the bushranger Michael Howe. It had been in October 1817 that Musquito's repatriation to Sydney had failed to take place, the grievance that most angered him. His presence with others from the Hobart and Oyster Bay mob gives strong plausibility to the notion of his alliance.

There is an instance even earlier. In May of 1817 an overseer went to the camp of the "tame mob" then camped at Sweetwater Hills between Sorell and Edward Lord's estate *Orielton*, obviously trying to access the women, when he was attacked by one of the men, who hurled a stone at him. He was 'struck ... violently on the mouth', which 'staggered him'. The assailant was quickly joined by others who pitched a volley of rocks, dislocating the shoulder of the rutting interloper.[21] Lyndall Ryan suggests it was Musquito who cast the first stone, though it was doubtful he was without sin.[22] Again his association with the "tame mob" at this time makes his presence likely, though whether he was the principal attacker is a matter of conjecture. But it reinforces the view that Musquito was engaged with the Aborigines from the beginning.

The incident at Grindstone Bay in 1818 takes on additional significance in that it was exactly the same place that on 15 November 1823 saw the murder of William Hollyoak and the Tahitian, Mammoa. The presence of a Tahitian tends to confound the casual reader but Van Diemen's Land was a site of Pacific maritime influence,

particularly with whaling and sealing. Wherever these ventures thrived, persons of colour congregated — Polynesian, Afro-American and Lascars from the Indian sub-continent. A lasting reminder of that presence on the highway from Hobart to the east coast is a narrow pass unfortunately named "Black Charlie's Opening", named for a man of colour who farmed the area.

It was for aiding and abetting the murder of William Hollyoak and Mammoa that Musquito and Black Jack were tried in December 1824. Musquito was found guilty of aiding the murder of Hollyoak, but not Jack. Both were found not guilty of the murder of Mammoa, but Black Jack was subsequently found guilty of the murder of Patrick McCarthy at Sorell Plains and was fated to join Musquito on the gallows. Little is known of Black Jack or the murder he was charged with. Radford at his trial describes him as having different facial features to the other Aborigines and he is named later in the newspapers as Jack Roberts,[23] which leads to the suspicion that he, like many of the characters of this drama, was an Aboriginal child taken into a white household or even possibly half white, people culturally 'in-between' who become deeply alienated and resentful.

What little is known portrays him as literate, confirming the suggestion that he was a stolen child. At his trial he is reported to have muttered at his sentencing, that if sent to the Macquarie Harbour penal settlement, he would quickly escape.[25] Heroic bravado, but it was death that was his fate. Brash and with audacity, he also had a vengeful streak and a taste for cruelty. When 'torturing some unhappy creature' he is reported to take grim pleasure in prolonging pain: 'Jack will touch him there again, he don't like it'.[26] Sadistic cruelty was not the monopoly of either side of this conflict.

4.11 The trial of Musquito

The trial of Musquito and Black Jack was one that would not be recognised today. There would be no defence representation and no cross examination except from the jury, so Musquito and Black Jack stood mute before the court as Aborigines would in colonial courts for most of the nineteenth century. It is interesting to note in the later trial of Dick and Jack in 1826 that defence counsel was provided, demonstrating administrative reaction to the considerable public disquiet over the conduct of the trial of Musquito.

Writing some 50 years after the event, James Calder made it plain that there was no 'justice, or anything like'[1] it done, and that was the view of earlier commentators like Melville. The evidence was extremely circumstantial and uncorroborated. The intention, Calder states baldly, was to 'intimidate his surviving brethren into submission to the superior race'.[2]

The principal witness in the Court proceedings was John Radford, a convict stock-keeper working on the grazing run of Silas Gatehouse at Grindstone Bay, helped by Mammoa, a Tahitian. William Hollyoak, a servant of George Meredith, had been returning home from the Colonial Hospital and had asked to rest with them. After a few days a group of about 65[3] Aborigines led by Musquito came into camp, and Musquito cadged provisions. Here again is Musquito the cultural broker and intermediary with the whites, a powerful role among the Tasmanians.

Meredith, who knew Radford later when he ran a hotel of dubious repute in the district, says that Musquito asked to be shaved by Hollyoak.[4] This was not as unusual as it might seem, as the Sydney Aborigines in the period of early settlement often came to town to be shaved, which they found a novelty.

In Radford's evidence to the Court, on the following morning Musquito came to the hut and brought 'two or three women' — a fact omitted in his version to Meredith — and had breakfast with the men. Later he went hunting with the mob but returned that evening and had supper with the stock-keepers. There were weapons in the hut, a small fowling piece and a musket, which Musquito handled casually and knowingly. The next morning, Saturday, Radford noticed the Aborigines camped in the stockyard about 10 yards from the hut.

It was clear by this stage that Radford was uneasy and he came out of the hut with Mammoa, followed by Hollyoak. Musquito stood armed with other Aborigines on the opposite side of the creek that ran past the hut. He was carrying a waddie and a 'stick shaped like the axe of a tomahawk', the sort of non-returning boomerang Musquito was known to favour and a vicious weapon when loosed.

They called Mammoa to come across the creek — thus dividing the stock-keeping party — and Musquito spoke with him for a few minutes. Obviously apprehensive, Mammoa sought assurance from Musquito that they would not spear him. The atmospherics were extremely tense as the Aborigines took up their spears and moved towards the hut. Radford asked about the guns in the hut and, receiving no assurance, realised they had been taken.

The Aborigines crowded about the hut. There was no talk, only an unspoken tension. There were three kangaroo dogs and a sheep dog, which Musquito silently untied and led to the stockyard. Mammoa begged him not to take them but Musquito made no answer.

Meredith's version from Radford later has Musquito saying when taking the dogs, 'I shall do as I like, now',[5] but Radford's Court version seems more plausible. Musquito tended to manoeuvre less overtly and his removal of the dogs, which were extremely valuable to the stock-keepers, was a signal of intention requiring no statement.

With the Aborigines menacing them with their spears Radford urged the others to run for it. He bolted over the open ground but a spear seared a wound through his side as he escaped, momentarily concentrating his terror. He stumbled a further 2–300 yards but Hollyoak could not keep up and cried out for help. Radford turned around to pull a spear from Hollyoak's back, but pivoted about and dashed off in panic as 30 or 40 Aborigines pressed closely in pursuit.

Again he sensed the shafted pain of another spear, this time through the back of the thigh. The Aborigines were closing rapidly, now only 30 yards away and closing. Hollyoak shouted in despair, 'Jack don't leave me!' but Radford kept running, his lungs heaving for life. When he eventually felt sufficiently safe to dare look back he could see the Aborigines crowding about Hollyoak, who had 5 or 6 spears jammed in his convulsing body. 'He was throwing some rotten sticks at the blacks who appeared to be standing quiet',[6] a last stand desperation which the Aborigines observed dispassionately. Radford then made good his escape, the Aborigines preoccupied with the dying Hollyoak.

Radford assured the Court he had offered no provocation, nor had any of the others, and when cross-examined by Dr Hood on the jury he again assured the Court that no offence had been offered to the women, nor had any liberties been taken.

Dr Samuel Hood had long colonial experience. A crony of "Mad" Tom Davey, Rev. Knopwood and Edward Lord — the colonial cast was very small — he understood the colonial underbelly.[7] It is obvious from Dr Hood's question that he knew the presence of women had provided provocation and Radford's answers were too glib to be accepted at face value. He knew but didn't press the matter. Whatever the view that whites had about native women, Aborigines like Musquito saw any exchange as an honourable reciprocation. Violations of that were seen as clear breaches of lawful behaviour.

There was good reason to suspect the testimony of Radford, and that becomes clear when considering an alternate version that appears in the writings of GA Robinson. It is a surprising version because it comes from Black Tom Birch, who was obviously there at the time though there is no other reference to his being at the Grindstone Bay incident. His presence would not be unexpected or unreasonable, so close was he to Musquito.

Tom's version is also plausible because he tells how Radford's party had shot one of the women in the back, leaving a hole 'as broad as his hand'. It was, as Tom said, as 'cruel a thing as he ever saw done'.[8]

Suddenly the events of Grindstone Bay take on a far more sinister tone and the behaviour of the Radford party far less innocent than that presented to the court.[9]

Obviously there had been some conflict regarding the woman, but whatever the reason it showed a complete contempt for women as disposable refuse. From the Aboriginal point of view it was an outrageous violation of law, their law, deserving retribution. And this is the factor that needs to be sought in such instances, because the Aborigines had a profound adherence to their mode of law. Despite the level of social disintegration taking place, they held onto their concepts of lawful behaviour with great tenacity, a fact white settlers and later white commentators tend to ignore.

While there was no direct evidence of Musquito's involvement in either murder, Bonwick's assertion that Musquito tended to orchestrate attacks obliquely is shown in these events. His menace was in his ability to direct from behind, a generalship that attests to his effectiveness. Bonwick acknowledges Musquito as a tactician who would 'lurk about, gain information, lay his plans in a skilful manner', then concentrate his forces on the target. By this means he kept the colony in a 'constant state of terror'.[10]

There is a further element that emerges when Gatehouse and another Court witness, George Wise, arrived at the scene some ten days later, led by one of Musquito's 'wives' — probably caught and coerced — to show where the 'dead bodies are hid'.[11] They found the body of Mammoa, naked except for a 'pair of leather small-cloathes'[12] in a deep pool. They counted about 37 spear wounds on the body but in one area, the back, it was difficult to distinguish the wounds from those 'inflicted by a gun shot'. This uncertainty as to the cause of the lethal wound led to their acquittal for the death of Mammoa.

There was no consideration that the Tasmanian Aborigines were capable of using firearms or that Musquito may have taken the musket from the hut and fired on Mammoa. He was certainly the first to be killed, which would indicate that they saw Mammoa as the principal cause of the incident. That would appear to be confirmed by Mammoa having been singled out for conversation before the flight of Radford and Hollyoak. And confirmed further by a possible gunshot wound that oddly replicated that inflicted on the Aboriginal woman. Again it was well known that Musquito was a 'dangerous fellow as he is acquainted with fire arms and has the natives at his command.'[13]

Whatever the bumbling confusion of this contrived trial, it was certain Musquito would never be freed. As in Sydney, Musquito was seen as the principal problem whose elimination was the means to a solution. It wasn't then, and it wasn't in Van Diemen's Land, but it takes a particular and exceptional figure to provoke such vehement and concentrated antipathy.

4.12 The lead up to Grindstone Bay

After the sensational events of Grindstone Bay and the alarmist reporting in the press, Musquito was fixed in the sights of the authorities, seen as a formidable instigator of violence with a £100[1] reward placed on his capture, a quite considerable sum. The rumour mill churned salacious tales and the pursuit was on.

But there were other incidents leading up to the sensational events of Grindstone Bay, contributing to the desire for his arrest. Joseph Tice Gellibrand, the Attorney General, had a further indictment: the attack by Musquito using 'force and arms' with intent to 'kill and murder' Joseph Jerome, a convict, at Pitt Water[2] on 25 July 1824 and reported in the papers in August 1824, after Grindstone Bay and at about the time of Musquito's capture. The Gellibrand document is the only mention of the victim's name in the record, though there are a number of versions of this attack. Some like West suggest Jerome died, but it is clear from the Gellibrand indictment that while he was seriously wounded, he did not die.

This was only one of two incidents where Musquito was unequivocally identified as the perpetrator. Musquito was reported to have coo-eed to Jerome from outside his hut and when he came out Musquito speared him in the back as he was 'returning to get him some bread'. The spear broke in the wound and he 'suffered much in having it extracted'.[3]

This brief outline of events barely discloses what was a brutally deliberate attack. Musquito obviously knew and had had dealings with Jerome previously, evidenced by the fact that he responded readily to his call. This has all the signs of a payback for a perceived infraction or wrong. Musquito was alone, used a traditional weapon, a spear, and did not press his advantage to finish off Jerome. The fact that Jerome was speared in the back indicates that he became fearfully alarmed when he realised Musquito's intention and was probably trying to escape, rather than just returning to get bread. And he was also more than likely aware of the wrong he had done. This was not just an opportunistic attack.

We will never know the full circumstances that led to this incident as we are confined by white perspective, but repeatedly there are instances where Musquito is endeavouring to enforce Aboriginal values. He was undoubtedly murderous but his behaviour is embedded in the general context of Aboriginal law and values.

It was also at Pitt Water that the unctuous and pious Rev. William Horton observed Musquito with his mob, and where we get an insight into white thinking, but also a glimpse of Musquito in his "natural setting" — one of the few other than Rowcroft's fictional account. This was in June 1823, some twelve months before the Jerome spearing and before the attacks that made Musquito so odious to the public.

The Wesleyan Rev. Horton regarded the Aborigines as the most 'wretched portion of the human family'. In fact, 'the shape of their bodies is almost the only mark by which one can recognise them as fellow men' — a towering contempt. He met with Musquito's mob, the 'tame gang' as Horton described them, a group of about 20 or 30 of both sexes and all ages, 'not advanced one step from their original barbarism'. Again it is a fair-sized mob, and Horton puzzles at the assumed leadership of Musquito, which he can only suppose arose from 'his superior skill and muscular strength'. To Horton the charisma and leadership of Musquito was not obvious, not what he expected. Possibly the addition of epaulettes to his naked shoulders would have helped?

Here he found them gathered casually, lolling around their fires 'perfectly naked' eating 'roasted potatoes', their bodies 'besmeared with red gum and animal fat' which was probably ochre and fat, a traditional means of both protection from the cold and decoration. He described the disfigurement of the scabrous encrustations on their legs, the result of dog scabies, which he ascribed to 'extreme filthiness'.

He observed the dogs curled up with the same casual disregard as their human companions and watched small groups of men returning in dribs and drabs from hunting with spears, dogs and game in tow, a carcass slung over the shoulder. Tall naked men, thin and angular, who moved with a lithe ease, tossing the game on the ground before crouching to perform their rudimentary dissection. He 'was disgusted' by their 'slovenly method of cooking', ripping out the entrails and simply throwing the carcass on the fire to be singed and only partially cooked before being pulled off the flames and torn up 'like dogs' and eaten.

His disgust was undisguised, and his conversation with Musquito discloses an increasing moral outrage. He noted one man returned with nothing for himself or his wife and child. Musquito told him he had eaten back in the bush and Horton censoriously enquired, 'What has his wife to eat?'

‘Nothing,’ Musquito replied.

‘Has she had any food today?’

‘No.’

‘When will she get any?’

‘Not until she procures some for herself.’

Horton is incensed by the ‘unfeeling wretch’, her husband, and his apparent indifference, which he made plain to the miscreant, ‘but he paid no attention to me’. He simply does not understand the intermittent habit of Aboriginal eating or the primacy of men in the priority of food in Aboriginal culture, however blatantly gendered that might be.

He then asked them questions about religion and Horton only received, ‘ “I do not know”, accompanied sometimes by a vacant laugh.’ He was appalled at the apparent disinterest. He assumed they had little idea of a Supreme Being and doubted they had any religious rites at all — the usual white assumption. Here is a sanctimonious inflated minister offended by the dismissal of his wondrous message. These were, however, not the only ones unreceptive to the good pastor, who later ran afoul of his own white parishioners who similarly found him tedious.

Horton questioned Musquito whether he was tired of his mode of living and desired sedentary farming — the assumption of the superior virtues of civilized yeoman existence (and an underclass status in a hierarchic society). Musquito replied, according to Horton, that he ‘would like it very well’ but thought none of the others would. He had no inkling that Musquito was simply fobbing him off and had no desire to converse. Nor had he any idea that their bush life was preferred and had many advantages that even underclass whites appreciated. He could not understand how his assumption of “civilised” superiority could be so simply ignored.[4]

Horton gives a singularly illuminating description full of white self-righteousness and assumed superiority. He is entirely unaware of his censorious pomposity and ludicrous posturing, which the Aborigines perceived quite clearly. To them it was the familiar persona of British arrogance and oppression. He did not even have any sense of his own intrusion — simple bad manners in any culture — nor the fact that the answers he elicited were just evasive and avoidant. Here is once more what WEB Du Bois calls the peculiar ‘double consciousness’ of blacks, of seeing themselves ‘through the eyes of others’, the rage at being ‘looked on in amused contempt and pity’,[5] the veil drawn down to deny an imperial gaze.

Utterly oblivious to the fact he was being ignored and stonewalled (even quietly ridiculed), Horton nevertheless leapt to conclusions and sweeping judgements that confirmed his prejudices. He was totally unmindful that his behaviour induced anger and contempt, a frustrated powerlessness in the face of sanctimonious judgement, the kind of dumb judgement the Aborigines encountered constantly.

Horton may have been a particularly unpleasant observer who must be read with caution, but he illustrates the cultural gulf that was becoming so immense it was nearly unbreachable. British colonists just did not get these people, and were forever puzzled by a simplicity they saw as savagery. Within a few months of Horton’s visit the events of Grindstone Bay and its aftermath would bring conflict to a point of altered atmospherics from which it would never return.

This change may be observed in an attack in August 1824, one of many, on Mr Hobbs at Eastern Marshes, near Oatlands, a property bang in the middle of traditional Aboriginal paths to the east coast. In this attack on Hobbs’s servants, James Doyle was speared to death and a mob of about 200 were said to be responsible.[6] This is a huge mob, given the demographics of the time — a war party indicating some combination of the Big River and the east coast Oyster Bay mob. Again Musquito directs the attack.

Not only did they drive Hobbs’s other servants away in terror, they looted the huts, and drove off Hobbs’s milking cows. These are acts intended to disrupt white settlement and domestic comfort. They knew the value of milking cows to homestead living, as fresh milk was scarce and very valuable. As with stealing potatoes, disruption of supplies and winter storage was a serious threat to settlers and what was apparent is that the Aborigines were now targeting surplus and storage, the key to staying in place.

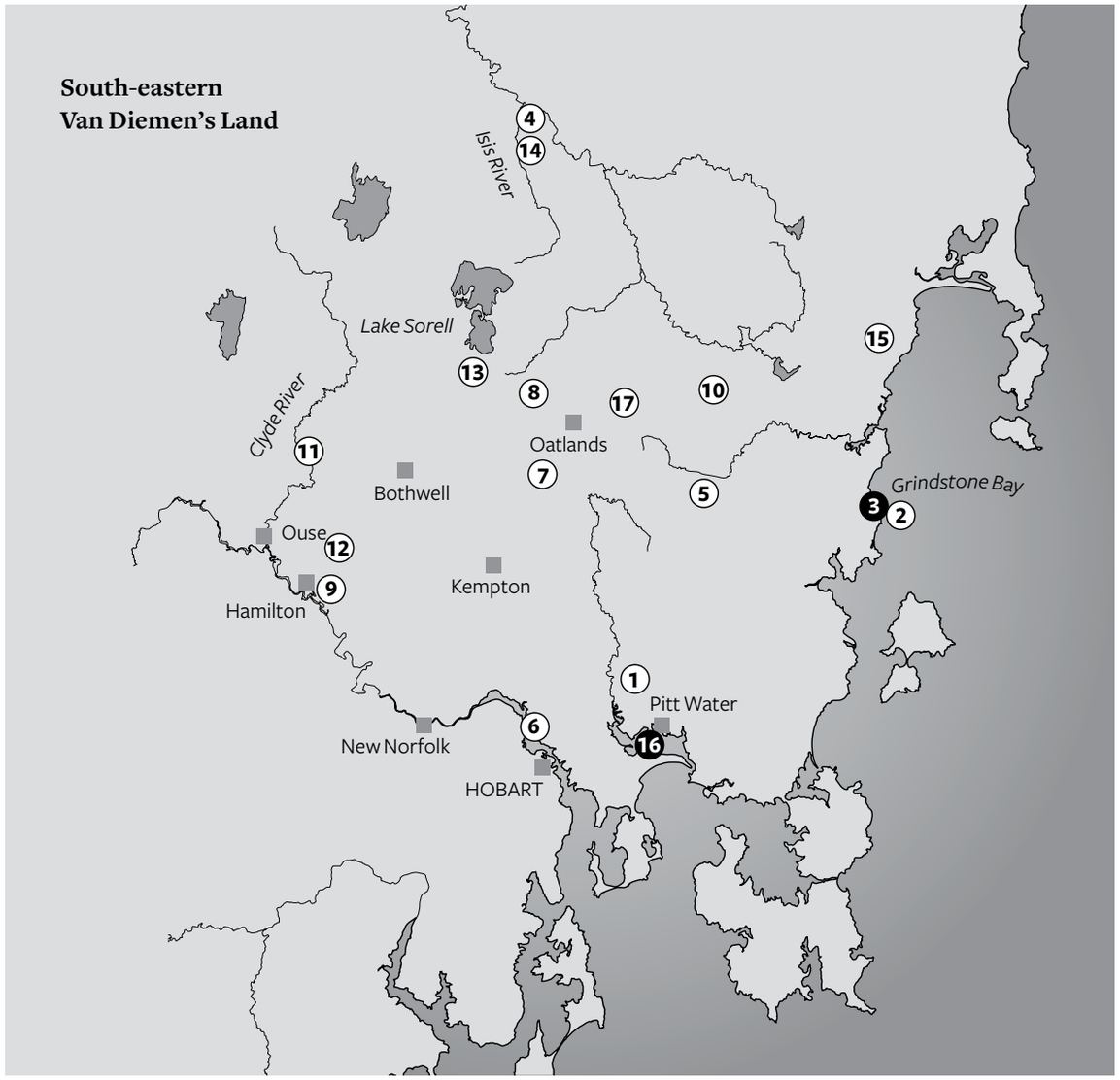
Amos on the East Coast reported with alarm a threat he had heard from his neighbour Talbot that the Aborigines intended to ‘burn my corn (wheat)’[7] and this set him with his neighbours in deadly pursuit of a marauding mob. A catastrophe of this order would have made Amos’s continued presence problematic and it was perceived quite firmly by white settlers and the government that the continued presence of settlers was critically at stake. To make any area uninhabitable, as had happened on occasions in Sydney, was deeply feared.

This marks a significant shift in Aboriginal tactics from imposition of Aboriginal law to the elimination of white presence; a shift from law to war and it is from this point, as Plomley emphasises, that the Black War can be seen as beginning. As always with Indigenous response, it is too late: the white population by this time vastly exceeded that of the Aborigines and had become a virtual torrent.

Attacks where Musquito is accused of involvement[8]

①	Sweetwater Hills	24 May 1817 Rock attack on overseer
②	Grindstone Bay	28 November 1818 John (David) Kemp killed
● 3	Grindstone Bay	15 November 1823 Hollyoak and Mammoa killed
④	River Isis	9 March 1824 Attack on settler Cox
⑤	Blue Hills	20 March 1824 Mrs Collins's servant James Doyle killed; hut burned
⑥	Old Beach	2 April 1824 John Cassidy's servant James Taylor wounded
⑦	Jericho	10 June 1824 Matthew Osborne killed; Mrs Osborne wounded
⑧	Michael Howe's Marsh	"some time after Osborne" Bamber killed
⑨	Sorell Plains	No date Patrick Macarthur killed (Black Jack)
⑩	Abyssinia	16 June 1824 Two of Oakes' stock-keepers killed
⑪	Big River	16 June 1824 One of Triffit's stock-keepers killed
⑫	Clyde River	16 June 1824 Two of Hood's stock-keepers harassed
⑬	Lake Sorell	16 June 1824 One of Hood's stock-keepers harassed; hut burned
⑭	River Isis	29 June 1824 Brown, Sutherland's stock-keeper harassed
⑮	Swanport	23 July 1824 One of Meredith's stock-keepers killed
● 16	Pitt Water	25 July 1824 Joseph Jerome wounded
⑰	York Plains	6 October 1824 James Hobb's servant killed

● indicates attacks that can be ascribed with certainty.



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1 Ryan (2012), p67.
2 HTG 28 November 1818.
3 Melville's History; HTG 3/12/1824.
4 Sutherland Diary 9/3/1824.
5 HTG 26/3/1824; HTG 6/8/1824.
6 HTG 2/4/1824; Dr Hudspeth evidence to Aboriginal Committee.
7 HTG 16/7/1824; CSO 1/316/8 (16/6/24).
8 Jorgenson p94-5; Windschuttle ascribes this to Musquito, however Plomley dates this to 1825 after the capture of Musquito.
9 John West p268; Melville's History.
10 CSO 1/316/8 (16/6/24).
11 CSO 1/316/8 (16/6/24).
12 CSO 1/316/8 (16/6/24).
13 CSO 1/316/8 (16/6/24).
14 Sutherland Diary 29/6/1824.
15 HTG 23/7/1824.
16 HTG 6/8/1824; Gellibrand Indictment.
17 HTG 6/8/1824 unlikely Musquito involved.

4.13 The shape of war and terror

The new tactics employed by Musquito and the Tasmanian Aborigines to erase the settlers by terrorising their presence generated the most fearful and electric alarm. As men like Amos in the Swansea district knew well, fire as a weapon in the new armoury could make living untenable. Infernos that consumed homes, kinfolk and crops also threatened to vaporise the fundamental hopes and dreams that brought them in the first place.

Sherwin detailed to the Aborigines Committee similar experiences to Amos. He described small groups of Aborigines stealthily setting fires around huts and along fence lines every 20 or 30 yards, sparking flames that spread to crops and engulfed storage and outbuilding. Once fire spread they retreated to join a larger mob on an 'overhanging rock' and shouted out to the panicked settlers, 'Parrawa, Parrawa … Go away you white buggers. What business have you here!'[1] The sentiments were unmistakable, the hatred and resentment unambiguous and the intention to cause havoc and destruction explicit.

Among the settlers and in the newspaper reporting there is a new and very alarming awareness emerging. Up until this time the local Aborigines were regarded as the most 'harmless race of people in the world'.[2] Now the paper is noting a considerable alteration in the pattern of native behaviour. They had withdrawn from the coast into the interior and had 'formed themselves into one formidable body', confirming what was apparent from the collapsing demographics.

This was a quite new aspect of Aboriginal organisation and the paper clearly saw the hand and 'knowledge' gained from 'Musquito and other blacks' brought up among Europeans in this new organisational arrangement. This was a crucial development, and the danger and implications were seen with surprising clarity.

Again it has to be emphasised that the Tasmanian Aborigines were under intense pressure, forcing the amalgamation of disparate groups, not only to resist but to survive. The presence of Musquito and Black Tom was a decisive conjunction of strategy and opportunity, a melding of interests that injected leadership and ideology, and an intoxicating rage against white society — a cause felt universally among the Aborigines.

There were also reports of other new tactics — not just stealing, firing and disrupting stores. Aborigines had from the earliest period valued dogs for their technological advantage in hunting. Now the paper is noting dogs 'of the English breed' being gathered by the mobs — in other words, specifically hunting hounds — and they were using these to attack cattle, spearing them when they were brought down. This has everything to do with creating wanton economic harm, not food. Elsewhere in Australia there were reports of Aborigines deliberately houghing or hamstringing cattle, a mode of resistance also found in the Irish insurrections, so this represented another escalation of Aboriginal attacks to undermine economic sustainability. Cattle were a very valuable commodity, more so than sheep, and represented great value on the hoof.

Valuable as cattle were, sheep were more numerous. Attack on these was hugely destructive. Dogs can savage whole herds, leaving swathes of dead and maimed in their wake, a scattering of animals convulsing in slow dying agony, as the dogs rarely complete the killing when in such a frenzy. They just go on to maim the next, and the next, leaving twitching bloody carnage. Again the Aborigines were applying tactics. Clark, a settler, writing to Arthur in a tone more sober than the bloody reality, described not only the robbing of huts but also 'my flock carried off by their dogs' causing 'considerable loss among my sheep'.[3]

The accumulation of hunting hounds was also a means of maximising hunting returns required by large war parties when on the move, but the consequence was an overkill with the paper reporting at one spot '50 to 60 fine large foresters, weighing 50 to 150lbs. each'[4] and speculating rightly that this short term advantage might lead to a diminution of game over time. The latter consequences, however, were obviously put to one side in the organisation of resistance on a scale and the immediate need for game to sustain a larger group.

This new pattern of coalescence and coordinated attacks was seen as part of the upsurge in Aboriginal violence. In June 1824 the local Justice of the Peace, Charles Rowcroft — he of the fictional version of Musquito — wrote to the Governor from the Clyde River, alarmed at what he saw as an outbreak of violence, a mob of Aborigines 'headed by Musquito', that 'continue to infest' the district. He referred to the killing of two convicts assigned to Mr Parks of Abyssinia not more than 7 miles from his *Norwood* property on the Clyde, and to the killing of a convict servant of Mr Triffit at the Big River. He also referred to the 'maltreatment' of two convicts assigned to Mr Hood and the burning of a hut at the Great Lakes. He also emphasised the recent killing of Osborne at Jericho on the main Launceston road and that the life of his wife 'was despaired of'. His litany of instances is by way of a plea for a military detachment to quell the violence and 'prompt steps' to apprehend the leaders of 'this marauding party of natives'. His request was not fulfilled.[5]

Rowcroft is panicked, as many were by this sudden upsurge. The covering note forwarded with the incident report to the Governor concluded that the Aborigines 'are shewing a deportment more mischievous and daring to the settlers than

heretofore known', which was the closest the bureaucrat could come to expressing alarm.

The killing of Matthew Osborne was a major incident, something of an alarmist sensation. He farmed at Pooles Marsh near Jericho, and had been informed by his servant — who had been with a group of Aborigines according to Dr Hudspeth — that they had questioned him 'in good English' about the number of firearms in their possession. Osborne was understandably alarmed and fired off his musket to deter the Aborigines from attacking.

The next morning eight or ten blacks approached Osborne's hut and, hoping to appease them, Mrs Osborne took a large damper and placed it on a 'tuft of grass', the sort of clumps of native grass that Louisa Anne Meredith described as being able to be sat upon comfortably like an 'ottoman' (assuming no snakes hid beneath, of course). Matthew Osborne followed his wife carrying his gun.

The Aborigines indicated they intended no harm and offered to lay down their spears if Osborne did the same with his gun. He gingerly agreed and when the Aboriginal spears were delivered up to him, he removed the weapons some distance and returned empty-handed to join the group. The Aborigines then toyed and teased him in jest, removing his hat and putting it on their own heads one after the other, before returning it to Osborne and shaking hands 'with him respectfully'. While his attention was distracted, however he suddenly 'received a spear in his back',[6] which 'convulsed him to such a degree ... he bounded several yards and fell',[7] an agonising shaft of pain that flattened him.

Mrs Osborne fled, and after receiving 'three desperate wounds' the Aborigines overtook her flight and she was 'beaten down by a waddy', robbed of her 'silk neck-kerchief'[8] and left for dead. She dragged herself in bloody pain three miles to the hut of John Jones, who took her to Dr Hudspeth's house where he cared for her till she recovered. When Dr Hudspeth went to Osborne's hut he found Osborne's body and the house stripped of contents, a mattress emptied of its flock and filled with potatoes taken from a (straw and earth) covered heap in the garden, which was the way potatoes were stored over winter.

It was no isolated incident. Hudspeth told the Aboriginal Committee it 'was impossible to recollect the numerous instances of violence' but went on to enumerate some dozen attacks in that period.

The difference between Hudspeth's account and that of the *Hobart Town Gazette,* which received their story from Mrs Osborne, is the specific naming of Black Tom, the 'notorious companion of Musquito', as the instigator. And far from a group of eight to ten, Osborne is supposed to have said 'the hill is covered with savages', a far more alarming threat — alarm and exaggeration being close fellows. Black Tom is reported as having entered the house, pointing to different things and demanding them before taking Osborne's hat and circulating the wearing of it. Osborne realised his musket was now missing and knew 'I'm a dead man' as the natives shook his hand and drove a short spear into his back.

The menacing behaviour of Black Tom and the murder of Osborne did not require the presence of Musquito but the constant reports of the two in collusion means he was likely to have been in the vicinity, possibly once again orchestrating the attack from afar. This kind of circumstantial blame can be seen in an attack on a stock-keeper at Old Beach, near Hobart. Though Musquito and Black Jack were 'not seen with this party', they were believed to be nearby because the blacks had been 'entirely harmless until these two Blacks ... lately appeared among them'.[9]

With such universal blame, bounty parties 'in pursuit of Musquito and his companion' were quickly on the move, spreading out over the countryside. One returned in April 1824, 'unsuccessful after a search of five weeks'.[10] The hunt for Musquito was well and truly on.

While the surge of attacks after Grindstone Bay urged action on the government, the Grindstone Bay attack itself met with swift retaliation, when it was reported. Silas Gatehouse, who lived at Pitt Water, and whose men at Grindstone Bay had been attacked, gathered 30 armed men, including constables and soldiers. He was intent on avenging 'the murder of his servant',[11] Hollyoak, and swore not to rest 'two nights in his bed until he had taken bloody revenge'.[12] They received intelligence from a Sydney black, Douglas Evans, of a large body of Aborigines camped by 'Sally Peak, six miles from Bushy Plains on the border of Prosser's Plains'.[13]

They moved with caution as they neared, and quietly surrounded the band. On a signal they fired 'volley after volley of ball cartridge' into the mob and 'the number slain was considerable' and 'few passed the fatal line'. Among the wounded were women sprawled in blood 'grasping their children amidst their dying torments.' A sergeant seized an escaping child and swung him by the legs and 'dashed his brains out' against a tree.[14] It was certainly an extraordinary and unnecessarily bloody revenge related by Bonwick with relish and his usual, casual sensationalism. If the story was correct, however, it was unlikely to have been Musquito's mob and this killing would have been the bloody collateral damage of war, the usual level of indiscriminate vengeance.

Musquito's mob in fact, had moved north to the property owned by George Meredith, who, unaware of events at Grindstone Bay, gave permission for them to camp on his

property, some several hundred yards from the homestead. Here again was Musquito the powerful cultural broker: permission was needed to avoid being driven off and they stayed six or seven days before moving on to Talbot's property at Oyster Bay.

Gatehouse, continuing his pursuit of the Aborigines, arrived at Talbot's that same evening, and on spying the group was so intent on further vengeance that he opened fire before he was within proper range. The Aborigines who were camped beside a lagoon immediately dived into the water and made for the opposite shore, leaving weapons and dogs behind. There is nothing ambiguous about Gatehouse's intention. He was prepared to kill indiscriminately and without a second thought, a war party intent on slaughter, not apprehending miscreants. Only his blundering anticipation spoiled bloodshed in this instance[15] but it was this same ferocious vengeance that animated the atmospherics of Musquito's later trial.

Once the Aborigines had scrambled to the other side and, still under fire, the mob divided into two groups escaping separately. This was a startling alteration in white tactics from occasional punitive sorties to an outright and deliberate organised effort to kill without compunction and on some scale. It is at this point Meredith suggested that a number of Aborigines turned on Musquito and 'wounded him severely',[16] forcing him to proceed alone. It is an odd statement and puzzling.

Meredith quite clearly blamed Musquito for the eruption of war. The Aborigines, who he said 'were under the guidance of Mosquito, commenced and carried on … a war of extermination', though Gatehouse's attacks were, of course, nothing less than warlike and similarly intent on extermination. For Meredith, however, the whites were entirely innocent — 'I know of only *one* instance, in which a native lost his life by the hands of a white man'.[17]

His pious protestations may well be disregarded but his comment upon the Aborigines turning on Musquito remains curious and has the feel of truth. The attack by Gatehouse was unexpected, involving considerable firepower, and Musquito may well have been blamed for drawing this fire upon the mob. Musquito maintained his position of leadership not only by assertion and intimidation but also by the advantages of his role as cultural broker with whites.

This sudden alteration in events and murderous retaliation may have seen him blamed. Warriors who, to that point, had acquiesced to his authority may have taken the opportunity to challenge his leadership. His control would always have been tenuous in any egalitarian group, and only as good as his ability to negotiate favourable arrangements and maintain a commanding presence. More significantly than that, it shows there were warriors among the Tasmanian Aborigines willing and able to take the fight to the white settlers themselves.

Obviously the rift that occurred did not endure as the attacks where Musquito is assumed to be involved continued unabated, but it seems to have been the attack on Jerome at Pitt Water and the indictment drawn up by Gellibrand that first prompted a concerted effort to capture Musquito.

4.14 Capture

In August 1824, some nine months after Grindstone Bay and a succession of other attacks, a party was sent in pursuit of Musquito. It consisted of a settler, Godfrey (probably the ex-convict Gotfried Hanskey), a constable called Marshall and an Aboriginal boy called Tegg, who according to Calder had been the servant of Andrew Bent, editor of the *Hobart Town Gazette*.[1]

West, to the contrary, suggests[2] Tegg was a servant in the household of Dr Edward Luttrell, a colonial surgeon with an odious reputation. Luttrell was described by Macquarie as 'Criminally inattentive to his Patients … extremely Irritable and Violent in his Temper and Very Infirm from Dissipation', that is, an incorrigible drunkard.[3] The Luttrells had been originally from Richmond on the Hawkesbury and were familiar with the violence there, so they undoubtedly were aware of Musquito's past. In fact Luttrell's son Edward in 1810 was charged in Sydney with wounding Tedbury, son of Pemulwuy, though found not guilty.[4] Another son, Robert, was killed by Aborigines, brained by a *nulla nulla*[5] for a quarrel over stealing Aboriginal women. The family did not have a memorable record of cultural sensitivity.

At the Legislative Council select committee of 1867 Edgar Luttrell's widow, Sarah, gave evidence that it was her husband who had been responsible for the capture of Musquito with 'my black servant Tegg' and this was attested to by others. He had also captured other Aborigines 'who were committing great depredations under' Musquito's 'leadership'.[6] It seems Tegg was in the Luttrells' service, but whether Edgar Luttrell was instrumental in the capture of Musquito seems questionable. With the evidence so long after the event it is reasonable to suspect some Luttrell family re-invention to appropriate some notoriety — and money — as Musquito held a continuing place in Tasmanian colonial mythology long after his death. It is that continuing notoriety that points up the place and significance of Musquito in the colonial narrative, deserved or otherwise.

What is undoubted is the role of Tegg in Musquito's capture. His price for collaborating in the capture of Musquito was a promise from the Governor of a boat, as he entertained ambitions of entering into business for himself trading between

Bruny Island and Hobart. It would come as no surprise that the promise made to Tegg was not fulfilled, leaving him deeply embittered and leading him to abscond into the bush and threatening to 'kill all white men come near me'[7] — an oft repeated sentiment of Indigenous figures traduced by authority.

Musquito was camped in the Oyster Bay area accompanied only by two of his women. Only three days out of Hobart, Tegg tracked him down. This was an astonishing feat over some 60 miles of rough country and indicated either remarkable sources of intelligence or remarkable complacency on the part of Musquito. Tegg was an experienced enough tracker, having been set in pursuit of the notorious bushranger Matthew Brady, but his unerring course indicates other factors. Possibly there were the usual collusive elements found within resistance factions, but also there was an odd careless distraction that seemed to have afflicted Musquito.

He was not evading with as much determination as he had once and there is a sense of a man facing his fate. He was not armed in any way, which shows an unusual degree of lax inattention. Taking Musquito captive was thus something of an anticlimax. Hanskey and Marshall secured Musquito's women and Tegg levelled his gun at Musquito, wounding him in three places, once in the body from one barrel and twice in the thigh with the other.

Despite his injury he fled a considerable distance from the scene until forced by increasing blood loss and weakness to slow. He leaned against a tree for support as Tegg came into sight. All he was capable of was picking up a stick to hurl at Tegg, a last miserable gesture of defiance. All in all it was an easy capture, almost languid. There was certainly no intention that he should escape and no particular wish to take him alive.[8]

Musquito was taken, wounded and in pain, to Hobart, probably by boat, where he was treated in the Colonial Hospital. There it is said that Governor George Arthur visited him.[9] What possessed Arthur to make such a celebrity visitation can only be conjectured but it is obvious that the capture of Musquito represented sensational news, news that Arthur saw as closing a chapter of violence.

He was still relatively uninitiated into the colony at that stage and determined to impose his own authoritarian stamp on colonial affairs. Faced with a surge of both bushranging and Aboriginal violence, Governor Arthur was easily convinced by the colonial narrative that Musquito was the principal cause of Aboriginal violence, which conflated to a species of bushranging and criminality in effect. Even in 1828 he was still convinced that the Aborigines had been 'led on by a Sydney black' and local 'men partially civilised' to commit many murders.[10] What conversation, if any, passed between the two men was probably perfunctory given Musquito's taciturn nature, but then Governor Arthur may only have gone for a viewing, a chance to gloat or just to inspect a specimen.

He wasn't alone in his curiosity — the town was abuzz. The Rev. Knopwood, parson of the colony from the earliest settlement, called on Dr Hood, who was later on the jury of Musquito's trial, and went with him to the hospital to see Musquito, who 'was badly wounded'.[11] Musquito's notoriety made him an object of interest among the social elite and Town quality.

Dignitaries and commonfolk alike widely discussed his capture. In a curious description that appeared at that time, William Parramore, Governor Arthur's private secretary, described Musquito brought into Town wounded, as an 'old black who has been making mischief among the aborigines'.[12] He repeated the description of him as an 'old man' and, because he was responsible for his indictment, like so many of the Town's elite, he had been to see Musquito. The description of him as 'old' was a curious observation.

Musquito's age is difficult to determine but he was born around 1780, which would mean he would have been in his mid forties. For anyone at that time, let alone a man raised in a hunter/gatherer society, this was a fair age. This provides another clue to Musquito's state of mind, and an explanation for the apparent complacency that led to his easy capture.

There was a sense whereby he knew that mayhem and resistance could never succeed for long. He had seen the future and knew the futility of resistance, yet he had thrown himself into an impossible cause that could only ever result in death. It was an act of utter defiance. As Albert Camus has said of the rebel, he is a man who says "no", emphatically, defiantly, without compromise, even in the face of inevitable defeat, and defeat was at hand. He was now an old man and resigned to defeat.

4.15 A lost historic moment

When Musquito recovered from his wounds he was transferred to the gaol to await trial.[1] That should have been simply the beginning of the end but in early November 1824 there was a quite astonishing incident. Hobart had its occasional stray Aboriginal visitor but this was something unusual to say the least. Drifting down the main street in peaceful if disordered ranks was a large mob of Aborigines, 64 if we follow the precise reporting.[2]

Their arrival caused quite a public stir and some consternation, as this was a mob of significant size and their 'visit was unexpected and its cause unknown'.[3] What was dimly perceived in all the public and official chatter was that the visit represented

potential rapprochement, a plea for accommodation, and it had all the appearance of a traditional Aboriginal effort in negotiation. These negotiated resolutions were frequently observed in Aboriginal society and particularly noted by GA Robinson and Jorgen Jorgenson; the Tasmanians were skilled and attuned to the means.

The increasing conflict of the interior was causing growing social anxiety, so among local townsfolk the visit led to an optimistic surge of interest in plans to conciliate the Aborigines. All manner of quixotic schemes were tossed about, from proposals to build institutional and education facilities for the children, to a proposal to set aside 2000 acres to offer the Aborigines for their cultivation.[4] The assumption that land was gift of the Crown and not the preserve of its Indigenous people was assumed and established a basic perceptual division.

On the day they arrived the Tasmanians were accommodated in the main market house, a site at the centre of the town's commercial affairs. They formed into 3 circles with a fire in the middle. To one side of each, elevated above the rest, was a person GA Robinson believed to be a chief of some sort who could 'speak broken English'.[5] Robinson believed they were Oyster Bay Aborigines, which would have made them part of Musquito's mob. Here were key figures of leadership and potential negotiation, an entirely male warrior assemblage it would seem, probably representing about 13 per cent of the male cohort of the settled district and considerably more, around a quarter of warriors in the Oyster Bay mob.

Despite the elevated expectation and curiosity, they did not elicit much sympathy or compassion among townsfolk: they were 'miserable looking beings … covered with leprosy' and without clothing except a kangaroo skin 'thrown over the shoulders'. Some wore 'great long coats' and were 'infinitely pleased' one morning with the 'swath from a cart wheel', axle grease that they grabbed in gobs and smeared their bodies with.[6] They were treated with condescension, as objects of oddity and pity, asked to do little jigs to amuse the crowd. But on the third day they 'refused' to again repeat the 'kangaroo song' and became understandably 'rather sullen'.[7]

Governor Arthur was greatly encouraged by their arrival and went out of his way to provide food and build huts. He personally had 'frequent interviews' with them and assured them of protection, but nevertheless 'their enmity was evidently unabated'.[8] Arthur, along with the rest of the community, remained perplexed by the arrival and presence of the Aborigines and was unambiguously aware of their animosity. Beyond that, Arthur's interviews did not elicit any real explanation. He was obviously missing something. While communications would have been deeply fraught, the Aborigines had entered Hobart with obvious purpose and not simply on a whim. This is what eluded him, and Arthur missed a significant historic opportunity.

This was a party sent to test the waters of reconciliation. They 'promised to come with many more'[9] if negotiations proceeded well, but the agenda was wider, 'to solicit a pardon for Musquito'.[10] Bonwick[11] confirms this assertion of prominent Quaker, Dr Story — the Aborigines sought some resolution of Musquito's capture though they were probably unaware of the prospect of trial and execution.

This was an extraordinarily powerful moment in Aboriginal and settler affairs. As so often was the case, the moment was missed, the opportunity lost, and continues to be lost in commentaries today. The capture of Musquito was pivotal for both sides and may have brokered some kind of fractured resolution if the significance had been grasped. The Aboriginal social world was imploding and the resistance galvanised by Musquito was imperilled without his warrior presence. The Tasmanians were acutely aware that, with the British determination to capture Musquito fulfilled, this was a crucial moment of opportunity. They were obviously hopeful for some peaceful resolution, but British ignorance and arrogance prevailed.

It is tempting to imagine some potential peace and the avoidance of war but the chasm between the expectations of both sides was never going to be bridged. What could the Tasmanians have hoped for? Obviously their hope was to be left unmolested by white encroachment. On the other hand white expectation was that they might be satisfied with a "grant" of 2000 acres of their own land.

There was a ludicrous mismatch in expectation and understanding. The only solution, really, from a white perspective, was for them to die, and that essentially was the outcome. Rather than reconciliation, there were to be seven more years of war and attrition, pursued with skill and tenacity by a people never lacking in their own leadership or determination.

The capture of Musquito had been pivotal to that moment, however forlorn the hope and outcome, but it emphasises just how substantial a figure he represents in this history. He triggered possible peace and the moment was lost. John West, who does not grasp the significance of the event, wrote that, disgruntled and disheartened, they 'departed suddenly and on their journeying attempted to spear a white man.'[12]

The importance of Musquito to the Tasmanian Aborigines as well as his role in their life and ceremony cannot be underestimated. The Tasmanian Aborigines were quick to incorporate incident and individuals into their story lines, songs and ceremony. This was not only part of their entertainment; it was part of the making of group memory as well as a way of conveying to others news of their world. Battles, hunts and random curiosities like horses or guns were incorporated into re-enactments, songs and stories. Musquito and his feats would have figured in their theatre, embellished

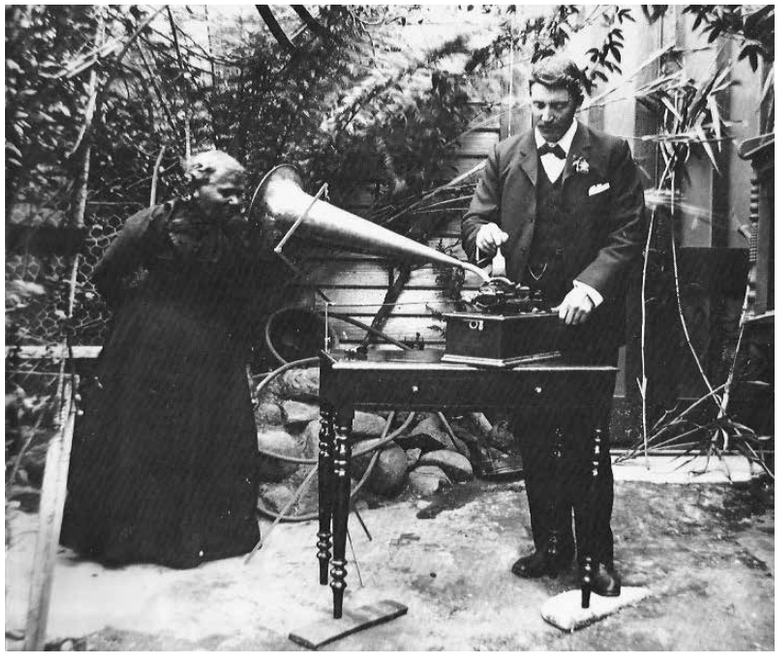
and elaborated in the retelling till it read like myth. The white settlers were not the only ones to mythologise Musquito.

In 1899 and 1903, one of the last remaining Aborigines from the Flinders Island incarceration, Fanny Cochrane Smith, recorded songs from her childhood into the horn of an Edison phonograph onto wax cylinders. One was the 'Dance Song' purportedly 'composed in honour of a great chief'.[13] This chief was never named but the fact that so long after the scarifying experience of the Black War these songs were still recalled attests to the astonishing power of oral tradition. Whether it referred to Musquito is tempting but unimportant: the fact is stories and songs about him would have circulated at ceremonies and gatherings whenever opportunity arose, telling the past in the present.

Lo! With might runs the man:
My heel is swift like the fire.
My heel is truly swift like the fire.
Come thou and run like a man;
A very great man, a great man,
A man who is a hero!
Hurrah!

The mob that came to plead Musquito's cause and negotiate some accommodation with white society was to be relatively short-lived. Attracted by the inducements

Fanny Cochrane Smith, recording session 1902 with Horace Watson at "Barton Hall", Sandy Bay.
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery



offered by the Governor to settle at Kangaroo Point (Bellerive), across the river from Hobart, they remained, commuting into the interior, until events made it untenable.

In the north some 200 visited Launceston in January 1825. Again this is an extremely significant group, mainly from the northern area of the settled district, but nonetheless constituting nearly 20 per cent of the population. Following on from the reception in Hobart, which they would have known about as news flew fast, they too were endeavouring to negotiate some kind of rapprochement, but they were 'wantonly fired on' and some of their women treated with 'indescribable brutality'.[14] They retreated into the bush, wounding two sawyers as they withdrew.

There seemed now a total divide surrounded by the most toxic hostility. Two of the Kangaroo Point mob, Dick and Jack, were arrested for the murder of Paddy Hart's shepherd Thomas Colley at Oyster Bay,[15] and were tried and later executed on 13 September 1826. Because of the furore over the trial of Musquito, Jack and Dick at least were provided with representation by JT Gellibrand (who prosecuted Musquito) and Gamaliel Butler.

While Thomas Buxton, a well-regarded East Coast resident, gave evidence, he was a man implacably opposed to Aborigines[16] and once more there is doubt about the full circumstances. Colley, it seems had taken a dislike to Jack and 'flogged him with a bullock whip'.[17] He was speared several days later so it was obviously payback and retribution, though nevertheless premeditated murder in the eyes of British law.[18]

They were strung up with seven others like some bizarre child's mobile. The execution of Dick and Jack was barbarous. As Dick, the older man, approached the scaffold he 'screamed out most bitterly'[19] and had to be carried to the trap, weak and his body covered with a 'loathsome cutaneous disease'. He 'died hard', his body contorted by slow strangulation. Jack freed one hand and 'reached up to his neck, and bled profusely from the nose' as he struggled.[20] It was witnessed by the Rev. Knopwood, drawn once more by curiosity and town notoriety. The press continued as before to question the legitimacy and use of execution as a deterrent to Aborigines.[21]

Gilbert Robertson revealed to the Aborigines Committee[22] that word had spread and Dick's brother became the leader of a mob committed to murder and mayhem in the Oyster Bay area. Far from a deterrent, it was a spur to revenge and retaliation. The executions saw Aboriginal contact with the town completely cease. Thereafter the Aborigines 'sullenly withdrew to the woods', never to enter the settled districts again 'except as deadly enemies of our people'.[23]

There can be no exact date placed on the beginning of the Black War in Tasmania for in a sense it had existed from the moment of white intrusion. The pivotal point

of violent escalation, however, can be dated to the upsurge of attacks sponsored by the presence of Musquito. His execution, and the later executions of Dick and Jack, bracketed the time when the Black War became a reality for settler society in Tasmania.

Musquito's capture presented the last opportunity for conciliation with the Aborigines before Robinson's grand gesture. The significance of their attempt at traditional negotiation, by entering Hobart to parley, seemed to completely evade white thought, burdened as they were by ignorance, blind arrogance and assumed superiority. For Governor Arthur it was a missed historical moment. The rest was war.

For the Tasmanians it became a war of last resort, a war of desperation and survival but one fought with murderous rage and determination. 1824 was that pivotal moment where as Plomley says the nature of Aboriginal violence moved from 'retaliation for specific wrongs to a determination to drive the settlers from their territories'. In effect 1824 'marks the beginning of the Black War'.[24]

4.16 Rage and execution

Musquito had assumed such an active and deliberative role as leader that the belief grew in the public mind, and in some journalistic circles, that the Aboriginal raids were being led by a European, such was the continuing conviction that the Tasmanian Aborigines were not capable of rebellious warfare. What is implied by this ethnocentric conviction was that there was obvious planning and execution of an unusual order, and it is this that made Musquito feared and loathed. He was obviously passing on a knowledge of tactics and white vulnerability that made Aboriginal retaliation much more dangerous, and it was this leadership role that was targeted by the criminalisation of his actions.

Henry Melville disparaged the court process, understandable since he wrote his history while in prison for contempt of court: the court of Chief Justice Pedder, who tried Musquito. In Melville's opinion Musquito was a 'legitimate prisoner of war' and the legal process — 'what mockery!'[1] Musquito and Black Jack were without counsel, were unable to examine the sworn evidence of convicts, and were probably unable to comprehend the proceedings, according to Melville.

His outrage is palpable. Melville, who was implacably opposed to Governor Arthur — who reciprocated in kind — regarded Musquito as a rightfully part of the Tasmanian cause. The seamless way they lumped all Aborigines together probably made this easy

but Musquito's unusual position as a Sydney black did not remove legitimacy from Musquito's role, in Melville's view.

He was not alone. When Gilbert Robertson, volatile settler, magistrate and a man of colour, brought in the Aboriginal leader Eumarrah during the Black War he was invited to the Executive Council to be thanked. There he urged the Governor to show some respect for the leader in order to encourage conciliation but Arthur was dismissive — 'I would not attempt to conciliate that man.'

Robertson then asked what he would do with him, to which Arthur replied that if he could find 'the evidence to prove all those outrages … I would have him tried, and executed … ' Robertson, described by Robert Anstey, another magistrate, as 'evidently mad but … there is method in Robertson's madness,'[2] suggested to Arthur with some impertinence that Eumarrah was 'defending his country against cruel intruders' and was thus a 'prisoner of war'. If Arthur were to execute him, Robertson added, the Governor would 'be guilty of a worse murder than ever he committed'.

The harsh statement drew Chief Justice Pedder to intervene and to 'sharply' question Robertson, ' … do you consider that those men [Musquito and Black Jack, and later Dick and Jack] who were tried and executed here were murdered?'

'I do indeed your Honor [sic],'[3] Robertson replied.

It was a forceful position and one that influenced the Council not to proceed to trial and to entrust the care of Eumarrah to Robertson.

It is a dialogue that indicates the degree to which the Governor was prepared to use the law to suppress Aboriginal retaliation. It is clear too that Chief Justice Pedder was particularly sensitive to the hinted accusation and confronted it directly. After all he was the judge before whom the matters had been tried. Pedder was a product of Enlightened thought and was very aware of the debate, then taking place in the Hobart press, regarding whether captured Aborigines should be treated as criminals or warring enemies and whether British or native law prevailed.

Both Arthur and Pedder were well acquainted with the nuanced difference between criminality and warfare, and though both were men of an Enlightened disposition, they understood the way language and response shifted between the two depending on political exigency. Robertson may have been mad but he sobered proceedings by naming up the issue in a manner intended to embarrass — and succeeding. Method in his madness indeed.

It is not difficult to understand how Arthur (and Pedder) resorted to the convenience of criminality to suppress Aboriginal violence, a tactic discarded as war became

increasingly obvious. After all, brute repression is the first expedient of authority before resort to other methods when this fails. The view that Musquito was utterly ignorant of legal processes, however faulted their implementation, needs to be considered carefully. He might well be regarded as a legitimate prisoner of war, but he understood the British use of law to repress and was not ignorant of the criminal process.

Earlier sympathetic commentators like Melville and Calder rightly point to the travesty of a trial and a repressive agenda to curb the violence by capital punishment, a cruel example that was, of course, largely lost on the Tasmanians. Contemporaries like Hedge also expressed it. 'The trial was ... a mockery. The execution a bloody act of vengeance'.[4] Hanging was a barbarism the Aborigines could not comprehend and saw as part of the continuing attack upon their brethren.

The degree to which commentators exempt Musquito from any understanding and paint him as some kind of naïve victim does not credit the depth of his acute understanding. Though he rejected the justice of British law he knew exactly how it acted and understood his fate precisely. The trial may have been little more than a performance played out but he understood these performances and knew the outcome. Musquito understood British values, their smug self-righteousness and hypocritical divide between what was said and what was done. It induced an appalling rage. Was he a murderer, a criminal? In the eyes of British law, undoubtedly. But he also saw the British violating Aboriginal law constantly, blithely and with impunity, which enraged him even further. Worse was their blundering ignorance and belligerent stupidity.

This kind of visceral rage has tended to confound even those sympathetic to Musquito. There is a tendency to wish for an agreeable hero, but there is much about him that was not compelling. He was described as having 'a profound love of excitement and mischief',[5] which is really only to say that he relished wreaking vengeance on others and revelled in the mayhem and warrior violence, much as his companion Black Jack. It may not have been an agreeable quality but it was one engendered in reaction to the brute violence of colonialism. What is more, it was a quality that was probably necessary for effective resistance.

And he was not alone. Probably one of the most unusual characters spawned by the violence of settler society was Walyer, a warrior woman of murderous fury who GA Robinson called an 'Amazon'. She would 'stand on a hill' and give orders to her mob of about eight warriors about when to attack the whites and carried a fowling piece she would use without compunction. She would scream uncouth abuse at the settlers, daring them to emerge, and spearing any unfortunate enough to be caught.[6]

Her hatred of whites was without bounds. She liked 'a white man as she did a black snake'.[7] But she had just as little sympathy for black men who crossed her. The rage and impulsive violence is fanatical but not without cause. She had earlier been abducted by sealers and held in brutal sexual subjugation. Her desire for vengeance was utterly understandable. Her retaliation drew from experience as a woman, but for her to adopt a warrior role was highly unusual. In a society of male dominance the emergence of a woman warrior figure like Walyer underlines the fragmentation and implosion of Aboriginal society, but also the desperation and inchoate wrath at the core.

Musquito too exhibited an anger born from the oppression and subjugation of foreign occupation. Melville endeavoured to mollify the accusations by suggesting, 'Many deeds of terror are laid at Musquito's charge, which it is impossible for him to have committed,' though he admits there were more than a few. Musquito was no innocent, and what 'deeds' he did not commit were nevertheless intended. 'Terror' was the operative word — the same tactic as employed on the Hawkesbury. The intention was to terrorise settlers till they abandoned the land, a war of attrition. It was for his Tasmanian collaborators nothing less than a war for survival, a desperate attempt to hold on to a life evaporating before their eyes.

Musquito went to the gallows along with Black Jack Roberts on 25 February 1825. With them facing the public in the Town gaol were six other condemned prisoners — Henry M'Connell, for robbery; Jeremiah Ryan, Charles Ryder and James Bryant, for murder and robbery; John Logan for attempted murder; and Peter Thackery, for bushranging and robberies.[8] They were strung up among thieves and murderers, their warrior struggle reduced to criminality. The newspaper report gave the usual pious commentary and reprinted the unctuous address of the Rev. Bedford. Musquito 'preserved a sullen silence' but Black Jack became increasingly agitated and when the clergyman exhorted him to pray he spat back, 'You pray yourself; I'm too bloody frightened to pray'.[9]

Standing in the crowd that day was George Augustus Robinson, who would one day take the war-weary, straggling remnants of the Tasmanian Aborigines into exile on Flinders Island. Far from the proceedings reflecting 'credit' on the feelings of the newly appointed Sheriff, the whole 'melancholy arrangements'[10] were far from satisfactory. Robinson watched the botched hangings with dismay as slipshod arrangements saw the men 'put to great suffering',[11] slowly strangled, their legs thrashing in the air.

The question of whether Musquito was a catalyst for the vicious Black War that was waged in the 1820s rests on definition. A catalyst is not causal: a catalyst increases the

rate of reaction in two reactants, and in this sense Musquito can be seen as a catalyst exacerbating the volatility of black and white antagonism. It is not about causation but *conjunction*: by 1824 a number of circumstances had so aligned that conflict was primed for detonation. The demographic disaster that saw the collapse of Aboriginal society, the devastating disruption of landscape and life by white colonisation, accelerated dramatically after 1817. It reached crisis by the early 1820s and tragedy by 1824 as the sheer weight of British intrusion smothered the landscape.

The desperation and dejection, the immense frustrated powerlessness and anger made the Tasmanians receptive to the charismatic power and influence of a figure like Musquito. He was one of those personalities of an historical moment. It was a unique conjunction of time and place, of need and charismatic personality, but it would not have occurred had he not been among them from the beginning; known, understood, feared and revered.

The Black War did not begin on some determined day. It was a cause festering in the mind and felt in daily living that reached a perilous tipping point around 1824. Musquito may have initially stirred the Tasmanians, but with their backs to the wall, they were utterly focused on their own survival and carried it on with absolute determination beyond his death.

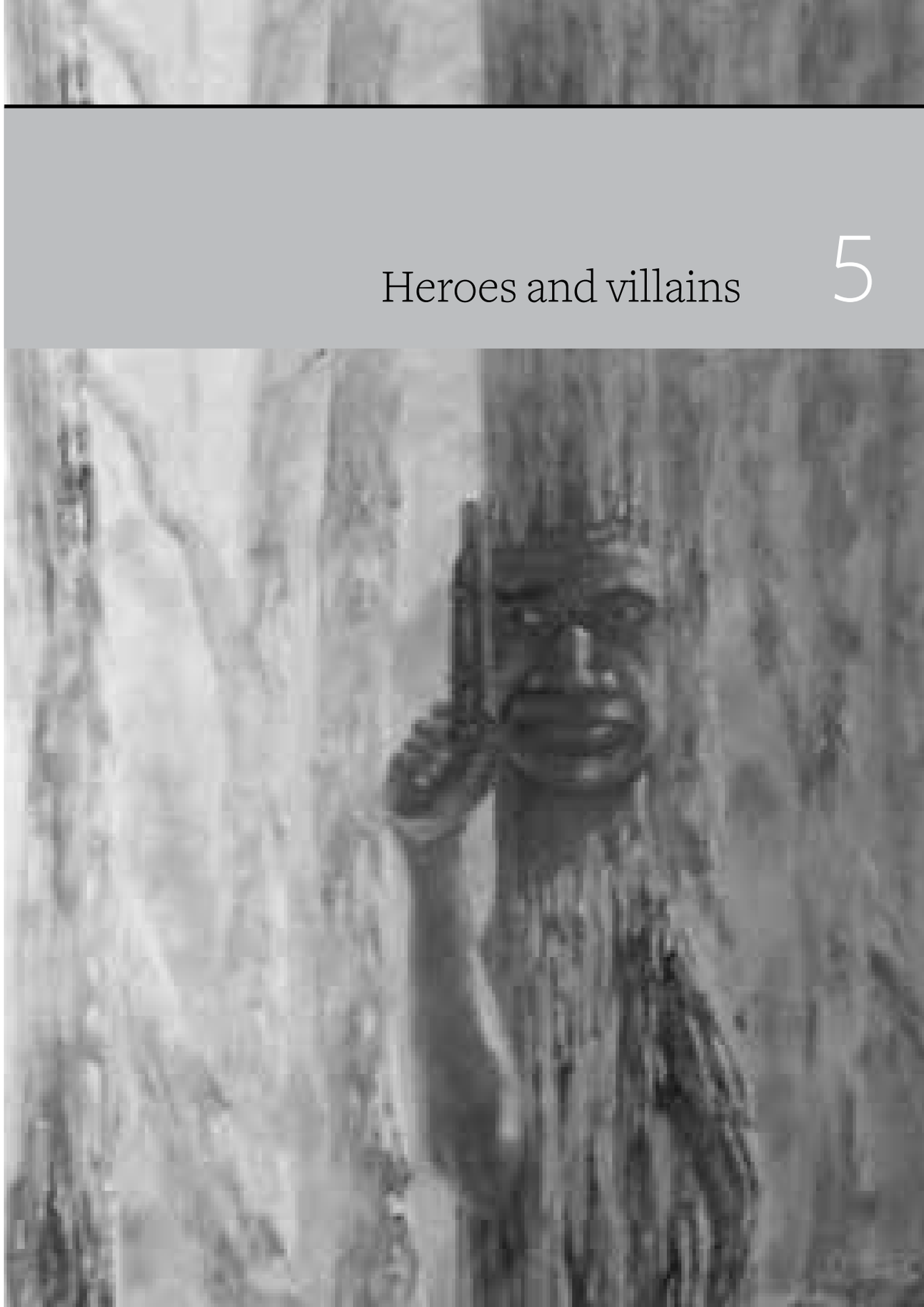
By November 1826 fear among settlers had reached such a point of clamouring alarm that the government issued a proclamation essentially giving permission for settlers to treat Aborigines as 'open Enemies' if they attempted 'felony' in large numbers, were armed in some way or attempted harm 'to Persons and Property'. They were to be treated as 'rioters, and resisted if they persist in their attempt'. Again, there is the mixed language of law and war. Even if they 'merely assembled' for such purposes they could be apprehended, and if they resisted, settlers could 'use force'.[12] This was tantamount to an open hunting season on Aborigines, an unfettered invitation to slaughter. It was a fight to the death, and the Aborigines knew it with certainty.

It is remarkable that a people so assaulted sustained resistance for so long before negotiating peace through the auspices of George Augustus Robinson and his 'Friendly Mission'. He was seen as a saviour by whites and saw himself as such, but he too was a man of a particular historical moment, a conjunction that lent his mission success. Without that last dejected effort by the Aborigines to broker respite, he would not have succeeded. Among those that survived to be exiled on the Bass Strait Islands, all carried injuries of that war.

> *there is not an aborigine on the settlement ... but what [sic] bears marks of violence perpetrated upon them by the depraved whites. Some have musket balls now lodged in them ... and others contusions, all inflicted by the whites.*[13]

Opposite: *In Hiding*, painting by Lin Onus acknowledgement

Heroes and villains 5



Representing resistance: heroes

Of the many ways Musquito has been turned to purpose, probably none has been more forceful than his more recent appropriation as a figure of Aboriginal resistance. For the 19th century settler generation caught up in the events of the Black War or in that immense pondering that took place in its aftermath, troubling the facts for explanation, there was at least some recognition that the Tasmanian Aboriginal people had cause and grievance. Musquito, however, while seen by some as having legitimate grievance, could not be quite aligned with the Tasmanian cause: a catalyst, a barbarous instigator, possibly, but as a Sydney black, Musquito endured as detached from the cause of others in most minds. He remained an exiled outsider, exiled even from explanation.

For an Aboriginal people so constantly diminished over the past 200 years, the need for valorised figures, for people of admiration, for heroes, is like thirst. They are instruments of aspiration and desire, yet denied their right to be simply human. People once again colonised and appropriated, in bondage to the wants of others. Nevertheless this imagery has a strength that lifts from the canvas to challenge assumptions and coax feeling from the past.

In 1979 the Aboriginal artist Lin Onus produced a series of paintings based on Musquito. His inspiration came from the fact that he had 'noticed Koories had few historical figures like Cochise, Sitting Bull and Geronimo'. In 1977 he found 'reference to a "murderous, guerrilla fighter" called "Musqito" ... ' and began his 'Musqito' series. Onus's work soars beyond the particular to the universal that is the ultimate measure. What is striking is that he succeeds in grasping the humanity, not simply the caricatures that historians have depicted. And left in the canvas a place for humour and humanity.

For Lin Onus, his work was both a personal exploration and 'a way to publicise unwritten stories of Aboriginal political resistance.'[1] Onus's motivation may have been prompted by the lack of the valorised Indigenous warrior figures like those found in American contact history; bushrangers and Aborigines does not have the same ring as cowboys and Indians. The same could be said for Australian white history, which like the landscape, seems to lack towering figures and prominent personalities. But that is as much cultural as real, given some determination by many to see Australian history as a Calvinist creation without rich resonance.

Left: *Quiet as Dogs*, painting by Lin Onus
acknowledgement

Heroes and villains

> '... *any idea of heroes and villains in colonial race relations cannot easily be sustained.*'
>
> —Jan Kociumbas[2]

The necessity for heroes and villains to people the landscape has been a want of both white and black Australia, but as with the bushranging myth of outlaw and social bandit, the rebel myth of Aboriginality, portrayed 'as leaders of an Anzac-style "resistance" ', is tempting[3] but anachronistic, and undoubtedly would have been puzzling even to those burdened to carry such imagery. Figures like Musquito or the Germanic Arminius, however, are fated to endure the imposition of the narratives made in the minds of others and as they were in their own time, so it continues.

In a recent interpretation by Kristyn Harman of the Musquito narrative[4], he is inextricably linked with the now fashionable fascination with convictism, forming the perfect daily double at Doomben — an Aborigine, *and* a convict. The striking painted primitive as convict is highlighted by conspicuously including Petit's disputed illustration[5] of Musquito (Y-erran-gou-la-ga) on the book's cover. The dramatic juxtaposition is irresistible but leaves unexamined a significant assumption.

Musquito was certainly gathered in with others under the overarching edifice of convictism, but he was never convicted and was never a convict — merely banished, exiled. While this conflation is easily understood, the decided difference ignores the unique use of non-judicial banishment as one of the most powerful instruments of colonial control, used with ruthless regularity around the Empire. Musquito was never a convict, but as in so much that has inflamed the narrative of Musquito, details give way to the preoccupations of the moment.

"*There were monsters in those days. One of those was Musquito.*"[6] The temptation to load Musquito with menace was a literary licence few could resist, as these opening lines by Grove Day attest. Musquito's reputation swelled in each incarnation and the pattern of multiple representations. Even where "truth" is purportedly the touchstone, the character is enlisted to carry yet another appearance of menace. To Keith Windschuttle[7] the Black War was little more than an outbreak of common criminality that 'never rose above or beyond robbery, assault and murder',[8] and Musquito was the archcriminal and catalyst for brutal violence and pure criminality.

The Tasmanian Aborigines' 'addiction' to flour and sugar[9] reduced them to such debased beasts their demise was a foregone conclusion, led to that termination by the odious Musquito, 'an interloper, a bushranger leading a violent crime spree in a foreign country'.[10]

Windschuttle inevitably provoked an enraged response. Naomi Parry waded into defence: the Tasmanian Aborigines had been denied agency for their own actions and Musquito had been given credit or blame beyond what could possibly be attributed to him. Blaming Musquito for the Black War was a powerful part of nineteenth century Tasmanian history[11] and Windschuttle, she suggests, far from providing a new critique, was simply reiterating a very old interpretation.

This recurring blame for the Black War that lifts Musquito into historical prominence presents a problem. On the one hand, influential nineteenth century narratives like West and Bonwick[12] elevated the influence of Musquito and allowed his 'transgressive influence'[13] to 'percolate' through the literature into the twentieth century. On the other hand, others like Calder and Melville[14] provided a more balanced, sympathetic account, yet one that leaves unresolved issues of motive and personality.

For a character like Musquito to be made to carry such enormity of blame and responsibility indicates no ordinary personality. He was obviously possessed of volatile charisma, extraordinary skills and powerful qualities or he would never have loomed with such significance in the minds of white settlers or later commentators. Whether the leap can be made from his conduct to responsibility for instigating the Black War — for reasons of resistance or criminality — is quite a hurdle. A catalyst, certainly, but causal, certainly not.

This was a vicious war of attrition, an eruption of violence that for over seven long years consumed the colony, physically, mentally and financially. The cost, for instance, of instigating Governor Arthur's Black Line to corral and subdue the Aborigines exceeded half the annual budget for the entire colony, a staggering sum that underlines white desperation.

The conflict infected the thoughts of not only settlers at the time but also historians and commentators thereafter seeking to explain these astonishing events. The colony suffered a violent convulsion far exceeding the menace of bushrangers. It seemed like mindless savagery, with the slaughter of innocents — simple settlers, women and even children. These were times of atrocity. It was no simple colonial curiosity.

Placing Musquito in the centre of such turbulence requires careful consideration. Dismissing events of this magnitude as simply criminal diminishes the occurrence, diminishes the participants and diminishes the history, but the manner in which

Naomi Parry tidies Musquito to one side to allow the Tasmanian Aborigines agency in their own struggle also diminishes the figure of Musquito. To suggest, as she does, that Musquito was peripheral to events at that time and responsible for no more than a handful of the 'outrages' attributed to him, leaves him literally hanging for his criminal misdeeds. His leading role may be contested but he was obviously no bit player either, with simply a 'walk on part',[15] as she suggests.

What is 'significant', as Parry herself avers, is the 'manner of his depiction'.[16] Historians and other authors 'have fitted his life to their narratives',[17] and she has not escaped that any more than any other. Parry balances the many versions to emerge while curiously minimising Musquito.[18]

West, for instance, presents a Musquito of commanding military skill, charismatic leadership and quiet command, whose pernicious influence he blames for leading the Tasmanian Aborigines into a devastating conflict. That is not to suggest West is always accurate, since like Jorgenson[19] he suggests that Musquito was transported for the murder of a woman, a story that continually circulated.

Bonwick too draws on the tale, embellishing the savagery by claiming a pregnant woman was eviscerated by Musquito and the child dashed to death. Bonwick goes further to include additional deaths of the women Black Hannah and Gooseberry, as well as the callous severing of the breast of a "gin" who continued to suckle a child against Musquito's will. Bonwick sees Musquito as a figure of monstrosity, principally responsible for stirring the Tasmanian Aborigines who 'were as quiet as dogs before Musquito came.'[20]

James Erskine Calder was originally appointed in 1829 as assistant surveyor of Van Diemen's Land. He arrived at the climax of events, when the Black War totally consumed the concerns of the colony. He was drawn, as was Melville, to the obvious historical significance in the wider story of empire and wrote with knowledge and conviction, rummaging the archives of the parliamentary cellars where it was once housed and where he worked in his later years. He extracted oral evidence from many personalities like Alexander McKay, who had been enmeshed in the events of the period, including the activities of George Augustus Robinson. But like all such evidence it both distorts and contributes.

Like Melville, Calder had a sympathetic view of Tasmanian Aborigines, whom he felt ought to have been treated as prisoners of war in the interminable conflict. To Calder, Musquito was 'a civilised black' betrayed by the unfulfilled promises made by the Governor. He was a 'desperate fellow' heaped with blame beyond his guilt, and Calder did not believe 'justice or anything like it' was done.[21] Calder's view of the Tasmanian Aborigines as a 'most mischievous, determined and deadly foe', inflicting more

carnage than they got, accepts both their military capacity and the potency of their grievance while acknowledging the influence of Musquito on their understanding of European habits and practice.

The polarity of positions assumed by Windschuttle and Parry brackets the many interpretations of Musquito, who has been appropriated to carry many narratives, with reliability the most elusive feature. Rowcroft sees noble savagery; Onus, warrior resistance; Windschuttle criminality; and Harman a version of convictism.

Parry wants Musquito to assume the role of resistance fighter in Sydney but not in Tasmania, and she wants a clear separation of the Sydney rowdy from the Hawkesbury warrior — a house-trained hero, not an unruly villain. Windschuttle, on the other hand, sees only a disreputable criminal in either theatre of conflict. In his view there is simply no possibility of anything resembling war in either arena.

In this scrabble for explanation, what of the man? Is there any path through the authorial clutter? Is there any means of seeing more than an outline? Is there a person to behold?

Conclusion: the man 6

Opposite: *Wanted: One Rope Thrower*, painting by Lin Onus acknowledgement

Human nature is not a bad starting point for understanding the direction of history

—Paul Ham

Tracing the path of Musquito has unavoidably been through the public and official record — the white record — one often without context or understanding. Impulse or motivation is evaded or dismissed, yet it remains pivotal to grasping who he was. In the many versions of Musquito, in the counterpoint and contrast, all seek to confine and categorize but none make him a man.

In the reading of Aboriginal history there is a constant injunction to consider culture, the unique particulars of ethnicity, and of course there must be antennae to detect the nuance of Indigenous behaviour and tradition. If it is assumed, however, that this is an arena that cannot be entered except by those initiated into the culture, then we risk falling into an exceptionalist narrative and an obverse racism. It was the racism of the times, seeing a clear division between civilised and savage, that denied our antecedents understanding. It should never again be repeated by either side.

It is the firm conviction of common humanity and knowledge of the nonsense of race that grants entry to understanding now, but there is nothing sentimental about human nature. There is much that both fascinates and disgusts: the flaws and failings, the brutal and noble, the petty and sublime, the egregious and heroic. Musquito manages to enter all the contradictions of human nature and emerge a man, sometimes powerfully compelling, often driven, always focused, not always admirable, and occasionally repellent. But a man nonetheless. Unpicked from the preoccupations of authors and censoriousness of authority there emerges a dimensional person.

Musquito is a liminal figure, a man 'in-between', out of place, caught between cultures. He is quite literally an exile, banished from his origins, and it is exile that reveals the man. Exile may be as Ovid said a form of death – *Exilium mors est* – but it may also be a means of seeing with clarity. It is the contrarian's vision. It is a state of restless contrast, of counterpoint and contrapuntal opposition.[1]

One obstacle to understanding is in the knot of nineteenth century colonial society. We cannot quite see the pernicious rod of hierarchy that ruled British society nor see it twist on the periphery into something even more monstrous. The hierarchy of Home was benign compared to colonies. There is a peculiar way in which the social

principles of the metropolis freeze into unshiftable shape in the colonial setting; it applies to fashion, habits, social norms and even the expression of speech, where words now out of use persist on the periphery.

Opportunism was the principal reason free settlers were attracted to convict society, the only motive to venture into an antipodean penal hell. The formula was simple: free land and unfreed labour with enough modest capital to make a fortune and that was the three-fold formula throughout the British Empire.[2] Far from the mythology of intrepid pioneers, these were people of base acquisitiveness expropriating with greed.

They ranked themselves by their piles of money, jealously guarding their signs of status. Here the marks of hierarchy were even more finely honed than Home. If ex-military, ex-convict and assorted servants were treated with the dismissive disdain perfected by the British in their contempt for others, the way they snubbed and ignored with withering condescension, it can be imagined how they viewed the Aborigines.

On the other hand the Aborigines 'feel they owe us nothing' and are 'under no obligation to work'[3] wrote E.S Parker, Protector of Aborigines at Port Phillip and this reflects a common observation. For Aborigines 'No man has the idea of serving another,'[4] wrote the missionary James Gunther. Again this reinforces the non-hierarchical nature of Aboriginal relations, the resentment they reserved for superior conceit, the contempt for British snobbery which Tench saw explode with Aborigines calling the British a bunch of 'shit-eaters'.

This was a warrior caste that measured in prowess, not position, and found the British airs and graces both ludicrous and contemptible. Governor Macquarie's view that Aborigines could be slotted socially 'among the lower class of mechanics' or among 'landless labourers'[5] made perfect British sense, oblivious as they were to sensibilities other than their own.

When the missionary Horton came across Musquito at Pitt Water, he leavened his report with disgust. When he earnestly urged Musquito to consider a civilised sedentary life of worthy agricultural toil, Musquito's evasive response escaped Horton's understanding and increased his contempt. Horton did not fathom that Musquito was merely mocking his pious intention and sober desire to "improve the natives".

There was an early noted Aboriginal habit of concurring with whatever silly suggestions made by Europeans, ignoring it and then quietly doing as they chose to the contrary.[6] The Aborigines were not always as combative as the British, often preferring to evade than confront. Sometimes this Aboriginal resistance was

characterised as ‘sulky’, a description frequently ascribed to Musquito. It is telling that this is the term frequently applied to African slaves and their dogged defiance, and which WEB Du Bois saw as a veil to frustrate white intrusion.

In the vicious slaughter and cruelty that became the Black War there were moments of humanity. A shepherd near Jericho in the Tasmanian Midlands ‘being oppressed by the indolence of his occupation’ fell asleep in the heat of the day, his musket propped against a tree. Some Aborigines stealthily stole his gun and with a ‘loud simultaneous shout, startled the Bushman from his dreams’. He leapt up terrified, looked for his gun and at that moment despaired of his life surrounded by so many ‘Natives’. At that moment the Aborigines fell about themselves in hysterical laughter, writhing in mirth at the man’s utter terror, but permitting him ‘to leave in safety’. Humour too may be a form of resistance, and is generally not lethal.[7]

The Aborigines were a people of fierce equalitarian outlook who, as the missionary Quaker GW Walker quaintly described it, did ‘service to others through courtesy’. Whatever was done was not “work”, rather it was done ‘as a personal favour’, as one settler saw it.[8] This staunch adherence to an ethos of mutual reciprocity, of give and take between equals, explains much about Musquito’s close relationship with the entrepreneurial Edward Lord. Lord relied on Musquito’s bush skills and capacity to trace missing stock, an ability that saw the discovery of Musquito Plain[9] and the site of Lord’s grand *Lawrenny* estate, but it was a relationship that respected Musquito’s uncanny abilities or it would never have thrived.

Musquito was an exile among exiles and more exiles. The convicts were transported to an alien landscape so utterly altered to their own as to appear a further punishment, yet some managed to unearth an agreeable accommodation with the new landscape and people.

The opportunistic free settlers, unlike the earlier coarse vandemonians, alienated by landscape and mourning the loss of Home, began in the 1820s to alter it to England — their pockets of acorns spread not in forests but in regimented rows to match their austere Georgian façades. They hungered for autumn shades, for trees that shed their leaves and not their bark. Musquito, however, found a place of silent, autumn light that chilled the skin. Here the light turned golden, not the leaves, filling the air with melancholy and yearning.

Musquito was exiled from place, physically and psychically from his origins in a warrior culture. He was exiled also from speech, ‘living in the jabber of a foreign language’.[10] It must have been particularly galling to have speech constantly reduced to crude creole in the retelling of others when it was reiterated often that Musquito spoke good English. However well he knew the language around him, his was always a savage tongue articulated by a savage’s intelligence, an assumed stupidity and inability.

No doubt he frequently acquiesced to British expectation in “sulky” submission to such determined inability to sense beyond their assumed superiority. This was no simple deprivation: not only was he exiled from the use of his own speech, he was denied the ‘gift to name’[11] in another, left eventually with the patois of the periphery, the creole of the marginalised Tasmanian Aborigines exiled to the fringes of white society and banished from the interior of their own selves.

These multiple experiences of exile were compounded by further expectation of gratitude. This is the core of the outrage and resentment of white society when Musquito began his attacks on white settlement, why it was they heaped on him such monstrous responsibility beyond his actions. He had been made “one of us”, allowed to dwell amidst white society, able to partake of its “benefits” — and then he turned savagely against those who had bequeathed him such acceptance. It is that monumental white hurt that was later incorporated in Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden”, the ingratitude of the “natives”:

> *The blame of those ye better*
> *The hate of those ye guard.*

He was not only expected to accept his exile but be in some way grateful; grateful too for the lowly regard assigned to him, ‘ … the humiliation of a turned back, the sting of a slur, the rage of impotence.’[12] He not only refused to accept his “place”; he transformed into an awesome force that insisted on recognition and at least grudging respect. For a man imbued with equality yet excelling as a warrior, to be demeaned and disregarded engendered a volcanic rage. To be so dismissed with barely a tremor of concern ate out his heart in exile.

The failure to repatriate Musquito to his home country as promised by various governors can never be entirely fathomed from the records but the reason was probably not malice nor altered opinion but simply oversight. Just that — oversight. This is the appalling truth: to authorities he was simply insignificant before his outbreak of notoriety, invisible, utterly dismissed. He could catch all the bushrangers he could and never be really noticed, remaining just a blacktracker. In this British world, lesser ranks and beings only became visible when they impinged on consciousness by actions that disrupted visions of order, or stepped out of their subordinated “place” in hierarchic regard.

To be ignored, treated with indifference, exiled from regard, was the cruellest hurt of all and the source of an unfathomable resentment and indignation. The manner

of such profound alienation was not gracious; it was indiscriminate vengeance and retribution. His method was simple terror; terrorising settlers till fear consumed their will to remain. It was vicious, never nice and rarely noble. It was nevertheless powerful resistance to authority and an audacious stand against white intrusion. It was not simple brutishness but welled from the bitterness of countless causes, hurts and slights.

The many representations of Musquito are fragments of a whole. All distort or in some way exorcise the demonic preoccupations of their authors, and all lead us away from the understanding of the man. To view Musquito as exile is not simply an additional representation but a means of gathering the many contradictions into a man.

'... I am describing a state of mind, no place. I am in exile here.'[13]

Human conduct is inconsistent and contradictory, often unkind and frequently base. That is the assemblage of our humanity, and whatever way Musquito is characterised, he was a man with reason to be as he was: an exile then and an exile from intimate understanding to this day, but still a man.

Afterword

The seven years of war after Musquito was hanged was a conflict of deadly and sustained desperation. The influx of free settlers and their stock, a ferocious competition for grass and land, drove the Tasmanians to increasing despair. There is no way of describing this massive incursion as anything less than invasion. The Tasmanians, their backs against the wall, fought a brutal battle for survival.

It is evident from the graph on page 141 of Aboriginal–settler clashes that while they became increasingly manifest by 1824, the peak of conflict occurred in the period between 1828 and 1830, at the same time as the Tasmanian population had collapsed to no more than a few hundred: conflict was in inverse proportion to presence.

By this stage it was not so much *seeking* a fight as having the fight *come to them* as white settlement encroached from every side. It was more a case of the Tasmanians threading their way through points of habitation in an attempt to avoid conflict. Even then their dependence on the portable foods of the whites, their tea, sugar, flour and potatoes, made contact unavoidable and violence inevitable. The disruption of their pattern of traditional foraging made the compromise of white foods a necessary and foregone conclusion, and it forced a deadly connection with white society.

So the greatest irony is that at the very time the Aboriginal population was weakest, conflict was most pronounced. Many more were imagined than existed, an inflated sense of terror that whipped the populace into heightened horror and rabid rage. The extraordinary decision in 1830 to create the Black Line, an attempt by Governor Arthur to use military means — an extended line of soldiers and settlers across the island — to drive the Aborigines into a corner where they could be contained and captured turned out a very costly farce.

It was however a sobering performance for the Aborigines, for while they readily avoided the blundering troops and settlers, they understood the magnitude of the threat to their existence. When Robinson described to the Aborigines the intention of the Black Line and the inevitability of their defeat, they expressed in 'bitter terms'[14] the resentment they felt for way they had been treated by the whites.

Robinson, along with his Aboriginal guides, had seen the evidence of the vast camps created by the soldiers and recruited settlers on the Black Line when they passed these places not much later on. Eerily deserted and entirely silent, their sight roamed the rows of bark huts thrown together along the roadway, some with verandas and seats out the front; some with 'large porches; some with bark tables; some ... thatched with grass; some ... in the form of a semicircle. Hundreds and thousands of trees had been stripped of their bark.'[15] It was a scene of utter devastation: hundreds of worn-out shoes strewn about and the ground torn up and rutted by the carts, horses and bullocks. 'Nature had been completely dismantled' — vast acres erased. Where trees remained they drooped, the leaves rusted with death from the bark removed, leaving the darkened flesh of wood weeping.

To the Aborigines it was a panorama of the prospect of white power, the extraordinary capacity to waste a landscape with cyclonic destruction. Their response was a mixture of awe, enveloping fear and utter rage, but the message was as brutal as a knife thrust.

And still they fought on to survive. Robinson saw himself as saviour, as the one they trusted to minister to them, but it was gross inflation of his own self-importance. The Tasmanian Aborigines surrendered to him because they had no choice but death.

The tears of these people brush the heath and nurture the land beneath, exiled forever from the crush of eucalypt and scent of leaf mould.

ENDNOTES

Prologomenon

1 Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, (2008) and James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-world, 1783-1939* (Oxford: 2009).

2 Paul Hilberg *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish catastrophe, 1933-1945* (New York: 1992).

3 Tim Flannery (ed), *Two Classic Tales of Australian Exploration: 1788 Expedition to Botany Bay by Watkin Tench* (Melbourne: 1997), p56.

4 John Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars 1788-1838* (Sydney: 2001), p22.

5 James Kohen, *The Darug and their Neighbours: The traditional owners of the Sydney region* (Sydney: 1993) p32, quoting Howitt, *The Native Tribes of SE Australia* 1904.

6 Henry Emmett, *Reminiscences*, NG1216, TAHO pp8-9.

7 Robert Cox, *Steps to the Scaffold: the untold story of Tasmania's black bushrangers* (Hobart: 2004) p24.

8 The formal use of this description dates from commentaries in the aftermath, like Melville, Bonwick and Calder.

9 See Mark Finnane, "'Just like a nun's picnic'. Violence and colonization in Australia." *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*. Vol14, No3, 2003, pp299-306.

10 Keith Windschuttle, "Guerrilla Warrior and Resistance Fighter? The Career of Musquito" *Labour History* No.87, November 2004.

11 See Nick Clements, "Frontier Conflict in Van Diemen's Land: an attitudinal and experiential history." Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 2013. Published as *The Black War: Sex, Fear and Resistance on Australia's most violent frontier* (2014), this is the most recent and definitive analysis of the Black War.

12 James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians; or, The Black War of Van Diemen's Land* (London: 1870), p125.

13 For example, Clive Turnbull, *Black War: The Extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines*, (Melbourne: 1974, originally 1948), and Robert Travers, *The Tasmanians: The story of a doomed race* (Melbourne: 1968).

14 Secretary of State for Colonies, Sir George Murray to Lt.-Gov. George Arthur, Nov. 5 1830, cited in AGL Shaw, *Van Diemen's Land* (Hobart: 1971), p56.

15 James Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race* (London: 1884), p78.

16 Keith Windschuttle, *Fabrication of Aboriginal History: Vol.1 Van Diemen's Land* (Sydney: 2003), p129.

17 *Roundtable on Aboriginal History* (Launceston, 2003). Videotapes in possession of the Author.

18 Australian Bureau of Statistics Historical Population Statistics 2008.

19 Hugh Hull, *Statistical Account of Van Diemen's Land or Tasmania from the date of its first occupation by the British nation in 1804 to the end of the year 1823* (Hobart: 1856). Australian Bureau of Statistics Historical Population Statistics 2008 gives the figures as 1817 2367, 1819 4037, 1821 4636, 1823 7740, 1831 19815.

20 James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-World 1783-1939* (Oxford: 2009), p263.

21 Belich, p272.

22 Australian Bureau of Statistics Historical Population Statistics 2008.

23 NJB Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash in Van Diemen's Land 1803-1831 — Occasional paper No.5* (Launceston: 1992), p6.

24 NJB Plomley, *Weep in Silence* (Hobart: 1987), p4.

25 Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p5.

26 G Swift, *Waterland* (London: 1992), p62-3.

27 Henry Reynolds, *Frontier* (Sydney: 1989). The expression is of Reynolds' coinage.

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1 Henry Melville (ed. G. Mackaness), *The History of Van Diemen's Land from the year 1824 to 1835, inclusive, during the Administration of Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur* (Sydney, 1959, originally 1836), p31.

2 Melville, *History,* p33.

3 Melville, p33.

4 Lands & Surveys Dept, Tasmania 220, 20 August 1830; Melville *History* p 33. The Diaries of Adam Amos suggest $100 but this is probably local usage for currency.

5 James Calder, *Some Accounts of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits etc. of the Native Tribes, of Tasmania* (Hobart, 1972, facsimile of 1875 edition), p45.

6 James Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race* (London, 1884), p78.

7 See Windschuttle, *Fabrication of Aboriginal History* passim.

8 *Sydney Gazette*, 18 August 1818, p3.

9 Calder, *Some Accounts*, p46.

10 A Grove Day, *Adventures of the Pacific* (New York: 1969), p239. A similar version is repeated in FG Bennett, *The Story of the Aboriginal People of the Central Coast of NSW* (Gosford, 1969), p16.

11 Naomi Parry, "Many deeds of error: Response to Windschuttle's Defence of his view of Musquito" *Labour History* 87, Nov., 2004, p 236. This is Parry's assertion however the OED gives *muscheto*, not *muschetta* as the obsolete version of the many spellings of mosquito: *musceto, muskito, musketa*, etc. The 'ch', as in the Greek may be pronounced as a 'k'.

12 Keith Willey in *When the Sky Fell Down: The Destruction of the Tribes of the Sydney Region, 1788-1850s* (Sydney: 1979) clearly sees the two names as the same person. Windschuttle (*Labour History* 87, Nov 2004, p221 & 234) on the other hand dismisses the connection and even suggests *Bush* is a transcription error of *Busa*, the meaning of which is never explained. The poorly printed terminal letter 'h' in the italicised reporting in the *Sydney Gazette*, preceded by the old fashioned "s" (that looks like the modern "f"), might lend itself to such an explanation but any considered examination shows it to be plainly wrong. On the other hand, while there is little other evidence that Musquito and Bush Muschetta are one and the same their appearance at the same moment in the Hawkesbury resistance makes it probable. This is one of the frequent examples of historical assertion where the evidence is in inverse proportion to the level of emphatic avowal.

13 François Péron & Louis Freycinet, *Voyage de découvertes aux terre australes, fait par ordre de Sa Majesté l'Epereur et Roi, sur les corvettes le Géographe, le Naturaliste, et la goelette le Casuarina, pedant les année 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803 et 1804*. 3 vols and 3 *Atlases* (Paris: 1807-1816).

14 The term 'geography militant' is one coined by Joseph Conrad to describe the imperial project of 'filling the geographic blanks'. Joseph Conrad, "Geography and Some Explorers", *National Geographic*, March 1924 and published in *Last Essays* (ed. Richard Curle) (London: 1926), pp10-17.

15 Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p10.

16 Jan Kociumbas, " 'Mary Ann', Joseph Fleming and 'Gentleman Dick': Aboriginal–Convict Relationships in Colonial History". *Journal of Australian Colonial History* Vol.3, No.1, April 2001, p45.

17 Naomi Parry, "'Many Deeds of terror': Windschuttle and Musquito." *Labour History*, 85, November 2003. Also *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry by Parry on Musquito.

18 Jacqueline Bonnemains *et al* (eds), *Baudin in Australian Waters. The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804* (Melbourne, 1988), p174.

19 Péron & Freycinet *Voyage de découvertes aux terre australes.*

20 Jacqueline Bonnemains, "Biography of Nicolas-Martin Petit" in J Bonnemains *et al*, pp27-30.

21 NJB (Brian) Plomley, *The Baudin expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines 1802* (Hobart: 1983).

22 Plomley Records, Queen Victorian Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston. Plomley had extensive correspondence with the Museum in Le Havre, which holds the Petit drawings.

23 *Sydney Gazette*, 12 January 1806; *Sydney Gazette*, 2 February 1806, p2.

24 *Sydney Gazette*, 9 June 1805, p4; *Sydney Gazette*, 11 August 1805, p2.

25 Naomi Parry, "'Hanging no good for blackfellow': looking into the life of Musquito" in *Transgressions: critical Australian Indigenous histories*, Aboriginal History Monograph 16, 2007.

26 James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p92.

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1 J Richie, (ed) *The Evidence to the Bigge Reports: NSW Under Governor Macquarie*. Vol.2. Evidence of Edward Eager (Melbourne: 1971), p17.

2 Val Attenbrow, *Sydney's Aboriginal Past: investigating the archaeological and historical records* (Sydney: 2010).

3 Lancelot Threlkeld, *Australian Reminiscences and papers of LE Threlkeld: missionary to the Aborigines 1824-1859* [edited by Niel Gunson], (Canberra: 1974).

4 See Naomi Parry, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry for Musquito; Naomi Parry, " 'Hanging no good for blackfellow': looking into the life of Musquito" in *Transgressions: critical Australian Indigenous histories* Aboriginal History Monograph 16, 2007.

5 John Fraser, "The Aborigines of NSW", *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of NSW for the year 1882* (Sydney: 1883), p16.

6 See Michael Powell & Rex Hesline, "Making Tribes? Constructing Aboriginal tribal entities in Sydney and coastal NSW from the early colonial period to the present." *JRAHS* Vol. 96, Pt.2, December 2010.

7 Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia* Vol. I (Melbourne: 1997); Alan Frost, *Botany Bay Mirages: Illusions of Australia's Convict Beginnings* (Melbourne: 1994).

8 Flannery, *Birth of Sydney* p155-6, citing David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony of New South Wales with remarks on the dispositions, customs manners etc. of the Native inhabitants of that country* (1798).

9 Cited in R&R Beckett, *Hangman: The life and times of Alexander Green Public Executioner of the Colony of NSW* (Melbourne: 1980), p76-77.

10 *HRA*, series 1, Vol.2, p23. Hunter to Duke of Portland, 20 June 1797.

11 Collins (Flannery edition, 1975), Vol.1 p382.

12 *HRA*, series 1, Vol.1, p470; 347, 388, 394, 395.

13 *HRA* Series 1, Vol.5 pp292-3.

14 *HRA* Series 1, Vol.1 p 483; *HRNSW* Vol.4, p873.

15 Maize lacks digestible niacin needed to make proteins available, causing *pellagra* in maize-dependant diets. In Mesoamerica the cropping system known as *Milpa* combined maize, and beans, which complimented the dietary deficiencies of both. Pellagra caused an unpleasant skin disfigurement along with nervous dysfunction and aggression and became significant in places like Italy in the 19th century where there was peasant dependence on maize.

16 Kenneth Kiple, *A Moveable Feast: Ten Millennia of Food Globalization* (New York: 2007).

17 *Sydney Gazette*, 19 May 1805, p3. A bushel is a dry measure of 8 gallons (c.35 litres).

18 R. v. Powell and others, 15-16 October 1799. *HRA* Series 1, Vol.2, pp 401-422. Evidence of Thomas Rickerby.

19 Collins, *Account* 2, p86.

20 *Sydney Gazette*, 23 December 1804, p3.

Chapter 2.2

1 Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars,* p36.

2 Diary — Atkins, 26 Sept. 1794, 12 Feb., 9 May 1795, NLA, mfmG2198, cited in Connor, p36.

3 Collins, (1975), Vol.1 p341; HRNSW Vol.2, p307.

4 Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America* (New York, 1985), p113.

5 Bailyn, p114.

6 Bailyn, pp115-117.

7 Windschuttle, *Fabrication,* p32.

8 R. v. Powell and others, 15-16 October 1799. *HRA* Series 1 Vol. 2, pp401-422.

9 Grace Karskens, *The Colony: A History of early Sydney* (Sydney, 2009), p467f.

10 Karskens describes him as Hosskinson which seems an unintended error.

11 Also called Wimbo, Wimbolt

12 Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars*, p39.

13 *HRA* Series 1, Vol 2, p422.

14 JEB Currey, *George Caley Naturalist and Explorer: Reflections on the Colony of New South Wales* (Melbourne: 1996), p91. Caley suspected the Aborigines were blamed for white theft.

15 Flannery, *Sydney* p194, citing Caley's letters to Sir Joseph Banks.

16 Stephen Robertson, "Age of Consent Laws," in *Children and Youth in History*, Item #230, http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/teaching-modules/230 (accessed 14 September 2014).

17 R King, *The Secret History of the Convict Colony: Alexandro Malaspina's Report on the British Settlement of NSW* (Sydney:1990).

18 Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race,* p49. See Reynolds *Fate of a Free People* p64, and Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* p125.

Chapter 2.3

1 See for example JG Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A study of Magic and religion* (London:1972). Also Robert Travers, *The Tasmanians: The story of a doomed race* (Melbourne: 1968).

2 Hilary M. Cary, "Death, God and Linguistics: Conversations with Missionaries on the Australian Frontier, 1824-1845", *Australian Historical Studies*, 40:2, pp161-177.

3 Tony Swain, *A Place of Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being* (Cambridge: 1993), p22ff.

4 Max Charlesworth, "Introduction" p4 in Charlesworth, Morphy, Bell & Maddock, *Religion in Aboriginal Australia: An anthology* (Brisbane: 1989).

5 William W Meissner, *Psychoanalysis and the Religious experience* (New Haven: 1984); Donald Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: 1965); P Ornstein, *The Search for the Self: Selected Writings of Heinz Kohut* (NY: 1978).

6 Swain, p93.

7 Hilary Carey & David Roberts, "Smallpox and the Baiame Waganna of Wellington Valley, New South Wales, 1829-1840: The Earliest Nativist Movement in Aboriginal Australia", *Ethnohistory* 49:4 (fall 2002).

8 William E.H Stanner, "Durmugam: A Nangiomeri" in *Dreaming and Other Essays* (Melbourne: 2010).

9 Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: 1970), p282.

10 From the Latin meaning foreteller, soothsayer or prophet and originally from the Greek, *propheta*.

11 Cohn, p282.

12 See Eric Kolig, "Religious Movements" in James Jupp, *The Australian People: A Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and their Origins* (Sydney: 1988) p165-67; Eric Kolig, "Post Contact Religious Movements in Australian Aboriginal Society" *Anthropos* 82 (1987); Tony Swain, *A Place of Strangers*; Klaus-Peter Koepping, "Nativist Movements in Aboriginal Australia: Creative Adjustment, Protest or Regeneration of Tradition" in Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (Eds), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies* (Adelaide: 1988).

13 Russell Thornton, *We Shall Live Again: The 1870 and 1890 Ghost Dance Movements and Demographic Revitalization* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1986).

14 Sometimes the songs involved remote dialects not understood by participants, which indicates the extent and area of such beliefs but also the way an unknown tongue or even a glossolalia was used to add *gravitas* and mystery to the rites, much like Latin in the Mass.

15 I am grateful to Rex Hesline for discussions on this motif.

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1 Watkin Tench, *A Complete Account of the Settlement of Port Jackson* (London: 1793), available through Gutenburg.

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3 Boyd H Hunter & John Carmody "Estimating the Aboriginal population in early colonial Australia: The role of chickenpox reconsidered." *Australian Economic History Review* (edited by Kris Inwood & Hamish Maxwell-Stewart) Vol.55, No.2, July 2015, pp112-138.

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5 David S Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited". *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series Vol.LX, No.4, October 2003, pp703-42.

6 Collins, *An Account of the English Colony,* Vol.1 [1798] 1975, p597.

7 John Hunter, *An historical journal of the transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island with the discoveries which have been made in New South Wales and in the Southern Ocean since the publication of Phillip's voyage* (1968), p93.

8 Watkin Tench, (edited and introduced by Tim Flannery) *A narrative of the expedition to Botany Bay and A complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson* (Melbourne, 1996), p193.

9 B Alice Kehoe, *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalisation, Death of Renewal,* (New York: 1989), p33.

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11 FM Black, "An Explanation of High Death Rates Among New World Peoples When in Contact with Old World Diseases." *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 1994, 37:295; FM Black, "Disease Susceptibility Among New World Peoples" in Salzano & Hurtado (eds) *Lost Paradises and the Ethics of Research and Publication* (New York: 2004).

12 Peter Roberts-Thompson *et al*, "Immune dysfunction in Australian Aborigines" *Asian Pacific Journal of Allergy and Immunology*, Vol.23, 2005, pp135-44. Also, Peter Roberts-Thompson "The Impact of Introduced Disease into Tasmanian Aboriginal Populations and its Role in Depopulation" *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and proceedings*, Vol.61 No.2/3 December 2014, pp119-135.

13 Collins, p538.

14 WEH Stanner, "Durmugam: a Nangiomeri" in *Dreaming and other Essays* (Melbourne: 2010), p43ff.

Chapter 2.5

1 See Michael Powell & Rex Hesline, "Making Tribes? Constructing Aboriginal tribal entities in Sydney and coastal NSW from the early colonial period to the present" *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* Vol.96, Pt.2, December 2010.

2 (AW) Alfred William Howitt, *The native tribes of south-east Australia* (Canberra: Facsimile of 1904 edition, 2001,) p303.

3 Powell & Hesline, *Making Tribes*.

4 Eric Wilmot, *Pemulwuy: The Rainbow Warrior* (Sydney: 1988). In Wilmot's novel these ideas are entertained but Howitt's analysis makes it clear.

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6 Collins, *Account* 2, p27, p32.

7 John Pilger, *Heroes* (London: 1986); Al Grassby & Marji Hill, *Six Australian Battlefields: The black resistance to invasion and the white struggle against colonial oppression* (Sydney: 1988).

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9 *HRNSW* Vol.4, p625-629.

10 *HRNSW* Vol.4, p867-8. King to Hobart, 30 October 1802.

11 *HRNSW* Vol.4, p867.

12 *Sydney Gazette*, 24 June 1804.

13 "Journal of Samuel Smith" p44, cited in, Peter Turbet, *The First Frontier: The Occupation of the Sydney Region 1788-1816* (E publication Rosenberg 2011), p125.

14 *Sydney Gazette*, 1 July 1804, p4.

15 *HRA* 5:17, p166-7, King to Hobart 14 August; 20 December 1804.

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2 *Sydney Gazette*, 24 June 1804.

3 Turbet, *First Frontier*, p142.

4 *Sydney Gazette*, 17 June 1804.

5 See, for example, the classic works of Worsley and Lawrence. Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of 'Cargo Cults' in Melanesia* (New York: 1957); Peter Lawrence, *Road belong cargo: a study of the Cargo Movement in the Southern Madang District, New Guinea* (Manchester: 1964).

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13 *Sydney Gazette*, 28 April 1805.

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4 JV Byrnes, 'Thompson, Andrew (1773–1810)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University.

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6 David D. Mann, *Present Picture of New South Wales* (London: 1811) [facsimile reprint: Sydney, 1979], p28.

7 *Sydney Gazette*, 5 May 1805, p3.

8 *Sydney Gazette*, 28 April 1805, p4.

9 *Piccaninny* is a Portuguese term that entered the slave vocabulary.

10 *Sydney Gazette*, 5 May 1805, p4.

11 Currey, *George Caley Naturalist and Explorer*, p50.

12 *Sydney Gazette*, 19 May 1805, p3.

13 *Sydney Gazette*, 19 May 1805, p2.

14 *Sydney Gazette*, 19 May 1805.

15 *Sydney Gazette*, 19 May 1805, p2.

16 *Sydney Gazette*, 9 June 1805.

17 *Sydney Gazette*, 30 June 1805, p2.

18 *Sydney Gazette*, 23 June 1805, p2.

19 *Sydney Gazette*, 15 September 1805.

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1 *Sydney Gazette*, 7 July 1805, p2.

2 Samuel Marsden, "The Reverend Samuel Marsden's Report to Archdeacon Scott on the Aborigines of N.S.W. (2 December 1826)" Appendix VIII in WN Gunson, *Australian Reminiscences and Papers of L.E. Threlkeld: missionary to the Aborigines 1824-1859*, Vol2 (Canberra: 1974), p347.

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9 *HRA* Series I, Vol. 3, p466-7.

10 *HRNSW* 5, p653-4. Atkins to King, 8 July 1805.

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5 *Sydney Gazette*, 16 October 1803, p2.

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7 *Sydney Gazette*, 16 October 1803, p2.

8 Tim Flannery, *Birth of Sydney* (Melbourne: 1999), p219, citing from the published journal of Alexsey Rossiysky 1813-16 in G. Barratt, *The Russians at Port Jackson 1814-1822* (Canberra: 1981).

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12 Tim Flannery, *The Birth of Sydney* (Melbourne: 1999), p158, citing from Collins "An Account of the English Colony of NSW".

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15 *Sydney Gazette*, 23 December 1804, p2.

16 *Sydney Gazette*, 23 December 1804, p2.

17 *Minutes of the Committee for Care of Aborigines*, 1830, Evidence by Gilbert Robertson. TAHO, CBE1/1, pp16-17.

18 *Sydney Gazette*, 23 December 1804, p2-3.

19 *Sydney Gazette*, 13 January 1805, p2.

20 *Sydney Gazette*, 13 January 1805, p2-3.

21 *Sydney Gazette*, 16 October 1803, p2.

22 *Sydney Gazette*, 25 December 1803, p3.

23 *Sydney Gazette*, 25 December 1803, p3.

24 This astute observation and interpretation I owe to Dr Tom Dunning.

25 John Dunmore Lang, *Cooklands in North Eastern Australia....with a disquisition on the origin, manners and customs of the Aborigines* (London: 1847), pp393-94.

Chapter 2.10

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2 *Sydney Gazette,* 12 January 1806.

3 *Sydney Gazette,* 2 February 1806, p2.

4 I am grateful to Rex Hesline for discussion of this view, which he believed Plomley supported.

5 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p92.

6 *Sydney Gazette,* 2 June; 9 June; 30 June 1805.

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8 See "'A New Holland Half-Caste': Tommy Chaseland: Diaspora, Autonomy and Hybridity" in Russell, *Roving Mariners,* p47ff.

9 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p92.

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11 *Sydney Gazette,* 31 March, 1805, p3.

12 *HRNSW*, Vol.6, p42. King to Camden, March 1806.

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Chapter 3.1

1 Julie Evans & Tessa Fluence, "Securing the Settler Polity: Martial Law and the Aboriginal Peoples of Van Diemen's Land." *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol.15, 2013, pp2-22.

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5 Geoffrey Powell, *The Kandyan Wars* (Colombo: 1984), p271.

6 Margaret Hazzard, *Punishment Short of Death: A History of the Penal Colony at Norfolk Island,* (Melbourne: 1984).

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13 Elliott and Perreau-Saussine, p21.

14 *R (Bancoult) v Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (No 1)* (2001) QB 1067; *R (Bancoult) v Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (No.2)* (2008)

15 [2007] EWCA Civ 498 Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and The Queen (on the application of Bancoult). See also on Royal Prerogative [1983] UKHL 6 Council of Civil Services Unions v Minister for Civil Service.

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18 Elliott and Perreau-Saussine, p1.

19 David Dyzenhaus, "The Puzzle of Martial Law", *University of Toronto Law Journal*, Vol. 59, No.1, 2009, p15.

20 Dyzenhaus, p58.

21 *Sydney Gazette*, Public Order, 30 July 1816.

22 Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2010).

23 Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, "Convict Labour Extraction and Transportation from Britain and Ireland, 1615-1870". Chapter 6 in Christian De Vito & Alex Lichtenstein (ed), *Global Convict Labour* (Leiden/Boston: 2015).

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Chapter 3.2

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2 Hoare, *Norfolk Island*, p31-2.

3 Allan Cunningham, *Journals and papers*, Friday 23 May 1823. SRONSW Reel 6035; SZ15 (State Records New South Wales), p112.

4 Reginald Wright, "Appendices – I: Population Records" in Raymond Nobbs (ed), *Norfolk Island and its First Settlement 1788-1814* (Sydney: 1988), p186f.

5 I am grateful to Rex Hesline for bringing this reference to my attention.

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7 *HRA* Series I, Vol.5, King to Castlereagh, 27 July 1806. I thank Lydall Ryan for this reference.

Chapter 4.1

1 1092 people. Australian Bureau of Statistics *Historical Population Statistics* 2008.

2 Named after Governor King's English home of Launceston on the Tamar.

3 David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony* (London: 1804), p412.

4 Collins, *An Account,* p410.

5 The numbers vary with the version, however suggestions of 600 appear exaggerated and intended to inflate the potential danger — 5-600 is the figure Montgarret gives Knopwood [Diary 3 May 1804]. Given an estimated Aboriginal population of 5000 at settlement this would mean some 12 per cent of the population were gathered at Risdon at the one time, which is unlikely.

6 Robert Knopwood (ed. Mary Nicholls). *The Diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood, 1803-1838: first Chaplain of Van Diemen's Land* (Hobart: 1977). Entry 3 May 1804. At 7:30 of the evening of the affray.

7 *HRA* Series III, Vol.1, Moore to Collins, 7/5/1804, p242.

8 *HRA* Series III, Vol.1, Collins to King, p238.

9 NJB Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land* (Hobart: 1991), p123.

10 The Lieutenant Governors of Van Diemen's Land were under the directive of the Governor in NSW until 1825.

11 *HRA* Series III, Vol.1, p281.

12 James Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land* (Melbourne: 2008), p105. Hamish Maxwell Stewart *The Bushrangers and the Convict System.* Unpublished PhD Thesis University of Edinburgh, 1990, p154.

13 Marie Fels, "Cultural Contact in the County of Buckinghamshire, Van Diemen's Land 1803-1811", *Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, Vol.29, No.2 1982, p62.

14 John West, *History of Tasmania* (Sydney: 1971, first published 1852).

15 Jared Diamond, *Guns Germs and Steel* (London: 1998).

16 John Ritchie (ed), *The Evidence of the Bigge Reports: New South Wales under Governor Macquarie Vol.2* The Written Evidence: The

Evidence of Edward Eager 19 October 1819 (Melbourne: 1971), p19.

17 Sharon Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania: Creating an antipodean England* (Cambridge: 1992), p166.

18 Alison Alexander, *Corruption and Skullduggery: Edward Lord, Maria Riseley, and Hobart's tempestuous beginnings* (Hobart: 2015), p250.

19 *Sydney Gazette*, "Fatal Excursion", 27 June 1803.

20 *Sydney Gazette,* "Capital Kangaroo Dog", Sunday 21 July 1805, p1.

21 Flannery, *Birth of Sydney,* p125, citing from R King, *The Secret History of the Convict Colony: Alexandro Malaspina's Report on the British Settlement of NSW* (Sydney: 1990).

Chapter 4.2

1 *Baudin Expedition Journal* (Plomley trans.) Plomley Collection QVM Launceston CHS 53 13/25, p10.

2 *Baudin Expedition Journal* — Hameli (Journal de mer — Naturaliste). Plomley Collection QVM Launceston, CHS 53 13/25, p8.

3 *Baudin Expedition Journal* — Hameli (Journal de mer — Naturaliste). Plomley Collection QVM Launceston, CHS 53 13/25, p2.

4 See David Richards, *Medical Men in Tasmania: 1803-1870* (Hobart: 1994), pp375-385.

5 Ian Gregg, "A Young Englishman's Observations of the Aboriginals During Five Years in Van Diemen's Land", *Tasmanian Ancestry*, 2000. I am grateful to Prof. Campbell Macknight for bringing this article to my attention.

6 Peter Roberts-Thompson, "The Impact of Introduced Disease into Tasmanian Aboriginal Populations and its Role in Depopulation." *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings* Vol.61 No.2/3 December 2014, pp119-135.

7 See NJB Plomley, "Disease Among Tasmanian Aborigines", *Medical Journal of Australia* Vol.151, December 1989.

8 JE Gach and A Heagerty, "Crusted Scabies looking like psoriasis", *Lancet*, 2000, pp356:650.

9 This was the term used in colonial parlance and particularly in British India to describe "native" lovers.

10 Anne McKay (ed), *Journals of the Land Commissioners of Van Diemen's Land 1826-28* (Hobart: 1962).

11 RW Giblin, *The Early History of Tasmania* Vol II *The Penal Settlement Era 1804-18 Collins, Sorell and Arthur* (Melbourne: 1939), p71. Also *HRA*, Series III, Vol.I, p645, 648.

12 Bacon quoted in Richard Burn, *The Justice of the Peace and Parish Officer*, 1772, cited in Douglas Hay, Peter Linbaugh, John Rule, E.P Thompson & Cal Winslow, *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England* (London: 2011), p191.

13 Hay et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree,* p191.

14 NJB Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land* (Hobart: 1991), p74; Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p92.

15 Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America*, (New York: 1985), p115-17.

16 These ideas and considerations arose out of a visit to Launceston by Oliver Rackham and a forum discussion by historians.

Chapter 4.3

1 *Sydney Gazette*, 3 August 1816.

2 Christine Wise, 'Black Rebel Musquito', in Eric Fry (ed), *Rebels and Radicals* (Sydney: 1983), p3.

3 See Charles Throsby 'Journal of a Tour to Bathurst through the Cow Pastures Commencing on April 25th 1819', *NSW Colonial Secretary's Correspondence* Reel 6038 SRNSW.

4 Macquarie to Davey Re Permission for Musquito to Return to Sydney (Reel 6004, 4/3493, p251) 17 August, 1814 *Colonial Secretary Index* 1788-1825 SRNSW.

5 R Else Mitchell, "Barrallier's Blue Mountains Explorations, 1802", *Journal and Proceedings (Royal Australian Historical Society)*, vol 24, part 4, 1938, pp291-313.

6 Carol Liston, "The Dharawal and Gandangara in Colonial Campbelltown", in *Campbelltown, the Bicentennial History*, p52, says he went to Botany Bay when he thought Macquarie wanted to use him as a guide on military expeditions.

7 *Sydney Gazette*, 4 June 1814.

8 See Henry Reynolds, 'Aborigines and the European Social Hierarchy' *Aboriginal History* Vol. 7, No. 1-2 1983, pp124-133, for a considered discussion of this issue.

9 Keith Vincent Smith, *King Bungaree: a Sydney Aborigine meets the great South Pacific explorers*, 1799-1830 (Sydney: 1992).

10 The British similarly recruited native forces in South Africa and, on an immense scale, the Sepoys in India.

11 *Sydney Gazette*, 28 December 1816.

12 Macquarie to Schaw, 9 April, 1816, Reel 6045 CSO 4/1734 SRNSW.

13 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p94.

Chapter 4.4

1 James Fenton, *History of Tasmania* (Hobart: 1884, reprinted 1978), p43.

2 John West, *History of Tasmania*,(Sydney: 1981), p47.

3 Alison Alexander, *Corruption and Skullduggery*, p128.

4 Harman, 'Aboriginal Convicts...', p39.

5 *HRA* Series I, Volume III, Macquarie to Bathurst, 7 May, 1814, p250.

6 West, *History of Tasmania*, p358.

7 Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, p118.

8 *HRA* Series III, Vol. II p250, Macquarie to Davey, 7 May 1814.

9 West, *History of Tasmania*, p47.

10 *HRA* Series III, Vol II, p354, Macquarie to Sorell.

11 Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America* (New York: 1985), p113.

12 ER Henry, "Edward Lord" *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, Vol.20, No2, 1973.

13 ADB *Edward Lord* entry by Thea Rienits.

14 Governor Sorell had similarly been sued by Kent, whose wife Sorell brought with him to Van Diemen's Land.

15 Charles Rowcroft, *Tales of the Colonies or The Adventures of an Emigrant edited by a Late Colonial Magistrate* http:/setis.library.usyd.au/ozlit/

16 Charles White, *History of Australian Bushranging* (Sydney: 1900), pp6-15.

17 Lyndall Ryan, *The Tasmanian Aborigines* (Sydney: 1996), p69.

18 See Jan Kociumbas, " 'Mary Ann', Joseph Fleming and 'Gentleman Dick': Aboriginal-Convict Relationships in Colonial History", *Journal of Australian Colonial History* Vol.3, No.1 April 2001, pp29-54.

19 Rowcroft, p158.

20 Rowcroft, p335.

21 Rowcroft to Arthur, 16 June 1824, CSO 1/316/7578/1:1-7, TAHO.

22 Bonwick Transcripts 52, vol. 4 Wesleyan Mission Papers 3 June 1823, pp1269-74. ML.

23 Rowcroft, p111.

24 Neil Gunson, *Australian Reminiscences and Papers of L.E Threlkeld, missionary to the Aborigines 1824-1859.*Vol II (Canberra: 1974), p348. Letter by Samuel Marsden.

25 Rowcroft, p341.

26 Rowcroft, p348.

27 Rowcroft, p349.

28 Rowcroft, p 355.

29 WEB Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

Chapter 4.5

1 Robert Knopwood (ed Mary Nichols), *The Diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood, 1803-1838, first chaplain of Van Diemen's Land* (Hobart: 1977).

2 Alison Alexander, *Corruption and Skullduggery: Edward Lord, Maria Riseley and Hobart's tempestuous beginnings* (Hobart: 2015).

3 ER Henry, "Edward Lord: The John Macarthur of Van Diemen's Land" *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Research Association (Tasmanian Historical Research Association)* Vol.20 No.2, 1973.

4 Carl Canteri, *The Origins of Australian Social Banditry in Van Diemen's Land 1805-1818.* Unpublished BLitt thesis Oxford University, 1977.

5 TE Wells, *Michael Howe, the Last and Worst of the Bushrangers* (Hobart: 1819), pp9-10.

6 This is an almost universal colonial term for any initial settlement and it persisted as a description until quite late.

7 Statement by Robert Knopwood, 29 September, 1818, *Tasmanian Papers*, p44.

8 Harman, *Aboriginal Convicts*, p44.

9 *HRA* Series III, Volume II, Sorell to Macquarie. 13 October 1817, p284. Author's emphasis.

10 Harman, *Aboriginal Convicts*, p43.

11 *HRA* Series III, Volume II, p283, Sorell to Macquarie, 13 October 1817.

12 Harman p42 says it was the *Jupiter*.

Chapter 4.6

1 Bernard Bailyn, *Voyages to the West: the peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: 1987), p4.

2 Jose Marti, "Letter to Manuel Mercado, 18 May, 1895" in Deborah Schnookel & Mirta Muniz *Jose Marti Reader: Writings on the Americas* (Melbourne: 1999), p253.

3 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 25 October 1817 and 13 December 1818.

4 NJB Plomley, *Friendly Mission* (Hobart: 2008), p284.

5 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 13 March 1819, 'pursue the Women for the purpose of compelling them to abandon their Children'.

6 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* p 106; See also Clements, *The Black War*, p116.

7 Louise Anne Meredith, *My Home in Tasmania* (Adelaide: 1979), p78.

8 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* p106.

9 Robert Cox, *Steps to the Scaffold* (Hobart: 2004), p67.

10 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* p96.

11 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p96.

12 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p96.

13 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p96.

14 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p96.

15 Shaw, AGL, *Van Diemen's Land: Military Operations Against the Aborigines*. Evidence by Gilbert Robertson, p48.

16 Shaw, AGL, *Van Diemen's Land: Military Operations Against the Aborigines*. Evidence by Gilbert Robertson, p48.

17 Henry Melville (ed George Mackaness), *History of Van Diemen's Land* (Sydney: 1965), p40.

18 R&R Beckett, *Hangman,* p10-11.

19 Henry Melville, *History of Van Diemen's Land*, p40.

20 *Aboriginal Committee 1830*, p36.

21 WEH Stanner, *The Dreaming and other Essays* (Melbourne: 2010).

22 Dr J Hudspeth to the *Aborigines Committee* CSO/323 16/3/30 pp327-333. In a note on p327 Anstey agrees with Hudspeth 'as to the prostitution of Black women by the consent of their Husbands'.

23 Melville, p40.

24 Melville, p40.

25 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: 1992).

Chapter 4.7

1 Ian McFarlane, "Adolphus Schayer: Van Diemen's Land and the Berlin Papers", *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings* vol.57, no.2, 2010, pp105-118.

2 Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 25/10/31, p527, & 27/10/31, p528.

3 J Backhouse, *A narrative of a visit to the Australian colonies* (London: 1843), pp104-120.

4 Gordon Brotherston, "'Far as the Solar Walk": The Path of the North American Shaman' *Indiana* Vol.9, pp15-29, 1984.

5 R David Edmunds, "Tecumseh, The Shawnee Prophet and American History: A reassessment" *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol.14, No.3 (July 1983), pp261- 276.

6 Alex Calder, 'F. E. Maning, 1811–1883', *Kotare: Essays in New Zealand Literary Biography Series Two: Early Male Prose Writers*, special issue, 2008, pp12-28.

7 Rowland Hassall, 1891, *Hassall Papers* Vol.2, part 1, MLA860, Mitchell Library, 17 March 1817.

8 *ABS* Historical Statistics. Other sources inflate these figures.

9 George Thomas Lloyd, *Thirty-three Years in Tasmania and Victoria* (London: 1862), pp43-60.

10 Lloyd, *Thirty-three Years in Tasmania*, pp43-60.

11 Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p891.

12 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p111.

13 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 29 October 1824, p2.

14 *Hobart Town Courier*, 18 April 1829, p1.

Chapter 4.8

1 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* p94.

2 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* p94.

3 Plomley Collection, QVMAG, CHS53, 13/25. Draft of the Baudin Expedition, p2.

4 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* p225-6.

5 Calder, p11.

6 West, *History of Tasmania,* p268.

7 Plomley, *Weep in Silence,* p481.

8 Plomley, *Weep in Silence*. Robinson's Journal 3 October 1837. See NJB (Brian) Plomley, *A word-list of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Languages* (Launceston: 1976). Various forms: loderwinner, lut.te.win, p318; drie, dryerlooner, p460.

9 Keith Windschuttle, "Guerrilla Warrior and Resistance Fighter? The career of Musquito" *Labour History*, No.87, November 2004.

10 See Ian McFarlane, "Pevay: A Casualty of War." Unpublished Honours Thesis Monash University 1999, and in "Pevay: A Casualty of War", *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers & Proceedings*, Vol.48, No4, 2001.

11 NJB Plomley, & KA Henley, "The Sealers of Bass Strait and Cape Barren Island Community", *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, Vol.37, No2&3, 1990, p115.

Chapter 4.9

1 Michael Powell, "Assessing Magnitude: Tasmanian Aboriginal Population, Resistance and the Significance of Musquito in the Black War" *History Compass*, August 2015.

2 See Nick Clements ' "Army of Sufferers": The experience Tasmania's Black Line' *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol.37, No.1, pp19-35.

3 "Introduction: the Genre of Conquest Studies" in Laura Matthew & Michael Oudijk, *Indian Conquistadores: Indigenous Allies in the Conquest of Mesoamerica* (Oklahoma: 2007).

4 Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (New York: 2003).

5 Peter Dowling, "'A Great Deal of Sickness': Introduced diseases among Aboriginal people of colonial southeast Australia, 1788-1900". PhD Thesis ANU 1997. Dowling suggests TB as a factor in depopulation in the early period.

6 See Peter Roberts-Thompson, "Impact of disease on Tasmanian Aboriginal populations and its role in depopulation" *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings* Vol.61 No.2&3, 2014, pp119-135.

7 Josephine Flood, *The Original Australians: Story of the Aboriginal People* (Sydney: 2006), p67.

8 See James Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land.*

9 Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, "Competition and Conflict on the Forgotten Frontier: Western Van Diemen's Land." *History Today*, Vol.6 No.3, 2009, p15.

10 David Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series Vol. LX, No.4, October 2003.

11 See Geoffrey Blainey, *Triumph of the Nomads* (Melbourne: 1975).

12 See James Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, p45ff.

13 Harry Lourandos, *Continent of Hunter-Gathers: New Perspectives in Australian Pre-History* (Melbourne: 1997), p281.

14 Malthus suggested population would rise until it exceeded resources and then decline rapidly. This remains crudely correct but is considerably more subtle than Malthus proposed.

15 See Noel Butlin, *Economics of the Dreamtime; a hypothetical history* (Melbourne: 1993).

16 Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, "Competition and Conflict on the Forgotten Frontier: Western Van Diemen's Land", *History Today*, Vol.6, No.3, 2009, p15.

17 Keith Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume 1: Van Diemen's Land 1803-1847* (Sydney: 2002), p364.

18 Windschuttle, *Fabrication* p367, 372. He bases his figure on James Backhouse Walker in 1898, who in turn drew on Milligan but Milligan's rough population density model was crude at best. See Joseph Milligan "On the dialects and language of the aboriginal tribes of Tasmania" *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society* 1859, 3:275-282.

19 See Mark Finnane, " 'Just like a nun's picnic'. Violence and colonisation in Australia." *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, Vol. 14, No 3, 2003, pp299-306.

20 Maxwell-Stewart, "Competition and Conflict", p15.

21 Rhys Jones, "Tasmanian Tribes" in Norman Tindale, *The Aboriginal Tribes of Australia* (Canberra: 1974), p325 estimates 3-4000 but accepts up to 5000; NJB Plomley, *Tasmanian Tribes and Cicatrices*. [monograph] (Launceston: 1992) p12, estimates 4-5000; Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People* (Melbourne: 1995), p4, estimates 5-7000, and Ryan (2012) estimates 7000.

22 Milligan, pp275-282. Windschuttle, *Fabrication* p371.

23 Colin Pardoe, 1985: 'Population Genetics and Population Size in Prehistoric Tasmania', *Australian Archaeology*, Vol.22:1-6 and Colin Pardoe, 1991: 'Isolation and Evolution in Tasmania', *Current Anthropology*, Vol.32:1-12. Pardoe estimates up to 9,000 based on genetic drift and crania. This is discussed in D. J. Mulvaney & J. Kamminga, *Prehistory of Australia* (Sydney: 1999), p339.

24 T Atkins, *Wanderings of a Clerical Eulysses, described in a narrative of Ten Year's Residence in Tasmania and New South Wales; at Norfolk Island and Moreton bay; in Calcutta, Madras and Cape Town* (Published by the author, 1859).

25 Henry Melville (ed G Mackaness), *The History of Van Diemen's Land from the year 1824 to 1835, inclusive, during the Administration of Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur* Part 1 (Sydney: 1959).

26 I am grateful to Lyndall Ryan for access to her unpublished article, "Estimating the Aboriginal Population in Tasmania 1803: A History". Ryan discusses pre-contact figures in her *Tasmanian Aborigines* (Sydney: 2012), p14. Ryan assumes a pre-contact population of 7000 and a population in 1819 of 5000. This is at variance to her estimates in her previous edition [*Aboriginal Tasmanians* 1996] of a pre-contact population of 4000 and a population in 1818 of less than 2000. This is the difference between a decline of 30 per cent or 50 per cent; either way significant.

27 Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How the Aborigines made Australia* (Sydney: 2011), p11ff. I am grateful for further clarification of this point in personal communication with Bill Gammage.

28 WD (Bill) Jackson, "Vegetation", in JL Davies (ed) *Atlas of Tasmania* (Hobart: 1965), p30, and WD Jackson, "The Tasmanian legacy of man and fire", *Papers & Proceedings Royal Society Tasmania*, 133, 1999, p1. Also Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth*, p11ff. Jackson does not suggest pre-contact population levels greater than those already suggested but his research lends itself to the suggestion of a greater population. See also JL Silcock, TP Piddock & RJ Fensham, "Illuminating the dawn of Pastoralism: Evaluating the record of European explorers to inform landscape change", *Biological Conservation*, 159 (2013), pp321-331.

29 Bill Gammage, personal correspondence. I am grateful to Bill Gammage for emphasising this point.

30 Geoffrey Blainey, *Triumph of the Nomads: a history of ancient Australia* (Melbourne: 1975), p273. Carrying capacity was the basis of Blainey's pre-contact population estimate of 7-8000, which may be closer to the truth than otherwise thought. He defers however to Rhys Jones' earlier estimate of 4000.

31 *HRA* Series III, Vol.3, p251. In 1810 the population was 1321, which represents some 26 per cent of the pre-contact Aboriginal population and probably over 40 per cent of the population in 1810.

32 Robert Knox, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon* (Colombo: 1966), pxv. These 1000 (male) Europeans were in a population of about 200,000 and contributed significantly to the gene pool.

33 James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-World 1783-1939* (Oxford: 2009), p272.

34 This is a point made strongly by Richard Broome in his *Aboriginal Australians: a history since 1788* (Sydney: 2010).

35 *ABS* Historical Statistics, 2008.

36 Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p263.

37 NJB Plomley, *The Tasmanian Aborigines* (Launceston: 1993), p27, estimates about 500 which seems very low, while Henry Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain* (Melbourne: 2001), p71, estimates about 1500, which accords with the *Hobart Town Gazette,* 4 February 1826, which was aware of the decline and estimates a figure of 1200-1500 in 1826.

38 Nick Clements, *Frontier Conflict in Van Diemen's Land An Attitudinal and Experiential History*, Unpublished PhD University of Tasmania 2013, p332, estimates about 1000 based on Reynolds' total population in 1824 of 1500, though Reynolds is working on a more generous base of a pre-contact population of 7000, which is probably close to actuality.

39 A gender balance is assumed though by this stage the percentage of women was probably much less than the male, and the number of children was also alarmingly low.

40 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 16 July 1824, p2.

41 Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race*, p78.

42 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 16 July 1824, p2.

43 Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, p149.

44 Jorgenson to Burnett, 24 Feb 1830, CSO1/320 p367.

45 Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p257.

46 Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p489.

47 Melville, p32.

48 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p96.

49 See Ian Copland, *Europe's Great Game: Imperialism in Asia* (Melbourne: 1986), pp65-73.

Chapter 4.10

1 Lois Nyman, *The East Coasters* (Launceston: 1990), p117.

2 NJB Plomley, *Weep in Silence* (Hobart: 1987), p414.

3 Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p654; *Hobart Town Courier*, 22 April 1836.

4 Plomley, *Weep in Silence,* p333.

5 NJB Plomely, *Friendly Mission* (Hobart: 2008), p91.

6 Nyman, *The East Coasters*, p42.

7 Meredith, *My Home in Tasmania*, p78.

8 Diary of Adam Amos 1822-1825, 3 May 1823. NS 323/1 TAHO.

9 Diary of Adam Amos 1822-1825, 3 May 1823.

10 Diary of Adam Amos 1822-1825, 14 December 1823.

11 Iain Stuart, "Sea Rats and roistering buccaneers: What were the Bass Strait sealers really like?" *Journal Royal Australian Historical Society* Vol.83, Part 1, June 1997, pp47-58.

12 See Patsy Cameron, *Grease and Ochre: the blending of two cultures on the colonial sea frontier* (Launceston, 2011). Also Lyndall Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines: A history since 1803* (Sydney: 2012), and Lynette Russell, *Roving Mariners* (New York: 2012).

13 Plomley *Friendly Mission*, pp435-6. Mansell was also known as Sydney.

14 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 20 March 1819, p2.

15 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 28 November 1818, p1.

16 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 28 November 1818, p1.

17 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p95.

18 Susan Kemp, *John Leake 1780-1865: early settler in Tasmania*, unpublished thesis UTAS; Sharon Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania*. (Cambridge: 1992), p158.

19 Robinson to Burnett, 30 January 1832, CSO 1/318, TAHO.

20 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p95.

21 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 24 May 1817.

22 Lyndall Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines* (Sydney: 2012), p67.

23 *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*, 5 January 1827.

24 I thank Nick Clements for this reference.

25 NJB Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land: Being a reconstruction of his "lost" book on their customs and habits and on his role in the roving parties and the Black Line* (Hobart: 1991), p75.

26 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p97.

Chapter 4.11

1 Calder, *Some Accounts,* p54.

2 Calder, *Some Accounts,* p54.

3 Meredith, *My Home in Tasmania* (Adelaide: 1979), p79, Meredith Snr suggests Radford claimed the figure to be 75 but the discrepancy is not significant.

4 Meredith, *My Home in Tasmania,* p79.

5 Meredith, p80.

6 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 3 December 1824, p3. Trial of Musquito and Black Jack.

7 Alison Alexander, *Corruption and Skullduggery*, p146. Hood also became Lord's Agent after the revelation of Maria Lord's affair with Rowcroft.

8 NJB Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p347. There is some doubt by Plomley that this refers to Hollyoak and Mammoa, however the specific reference to 'Musquito and Black Jack' credibly suggests it refers to Grindstone Bay.

9 See also Jacqueline Fox, "Constructing a Colonial Chief Justice: John Lewes Pedder in Van Diemen's Land", unpublished PhD Thesis University of Tasmania, 2012.

10 Bonwick, p93.

11 Diary of Adam Amos, 1822-1825, 20 November 1823. NS 323/1, TAHO.

12 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 3 December 1824, p3. Trial of Musquito and Black Jack.

13 Diary of Adam Amos 1822-1825, 20 November 1823. NS 323/1, TAHO.

Chapter 4.12

1 Diary of Adam Amos, 15 March 1824 NS323/1/1, TAHO, suggests 100 *dollars* but this may be just a confusion of language.

2 Gellibrand Letter of Indictment in private hands. The attack actually took place according to the indictment on 25 July, 1824. Jerome was convicted of larceny in 1817 and transported for 7yrs. In 1824 his occupation is uncertain but by 1840 he was a farmer at Cherry Tree Opening at Sorell. He died in 21 August 1853 aged 72. I thank Nick Clements for this reference. Also *Hobart Town Gazette*, 6 August 1824.

3 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 6 August 1824.

4 Bonwick Transcripts 52, vol.4, *Wesleyan Mission Papers*, 3 June 1823, pp1269-74. Mitchell Library.

5 WEB Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903.

6 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 6 August 1824.

7 Diary of Adam Amos, 14 December, 1823. It is unclear whether he meant Indian corn (maize) or wheat, which was routinely described by the English as "corn". He probably meant wheat, which was very susceptible to fire.

8 Based on an original suggestion by Nick Clements, drawn by Owen Powell and refined and detailed by Richard Barker. I am grateful to all.

Chapter 4.13

1 Minutes of the *Aborigines Committee* CBE1. Evidence of J Sherwin, 23 February 1830, TAHO.

2 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 6 August 1824.

3 *Arthur Papers, Aborigines*, CHS43/4.6-CY1025 ML A2188 (Vol.28) Part B, a1771016.

4 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 6 August 1824.

5 CSO1/316 pp8-9; Rowcroft to Arthur 16/6/24, TAHO.

6 CSO1/323pp327-34; 16/3/30. Dr J Hudspeth to the *Aboriginal Committee*, TAHO.

7 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 16 July 1824, p2.

8 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 16 July 1824, p2.

9 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 2 April 1824.

10 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 9 April 1824, p2.

11 Meredith, p80.

12 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p99.

13 Bonwick, p99.

14 Bonwick, p99.

15 Meredith, p81.

16 Meredith, p81.

17 Meredith, p81.

Chapter 4.14

1 James E Calder, *Some Accounts of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits etc. of the Native tribes of Tasmania* (Hobart: 1875 reprinted 1972), p51ff.

2 John West, *The History of Tasmania*, p268; See also Robert Cox, *Steps to the Scaffold* (Hobart, 2004), p58ff.

3 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*: entry for Edward Luttrell.

4 *Sydney Gazette,* 24 February 1810; Macquarie University Law Reports R v Luttrell 1810. Edward Luttrell Jr died at sea two years later.

5 *Sydney Gazette,* 16 November 1811; State Library of NSW: Papers of Sir Joseph Banks 5, 20, 12 November 1812, Suttor to Banks.

6 *Cornwall Chronicle* (Launceston), 9 October 1867, p2, reporting on the Legislative Council Select Committee into 'Mrs Luttrell's Case' October 4, 1867. She claimed £150 as compensation for his expenses.

7 Calder, p52.

8 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 20 August 1824.

9 *Hobart Town Gazette,* 20 August 1824.

10 Dispatch, Arthur to Goderich, 10 January 1828.

11 Knopwood's Diary, 13 August 1824.

12 DC Shelton (ed), *The Parramore Letters: letters from William Thomas Parramore, sometime private secretary to Lieutenant Governor Arthur of Van Diemen's Land, to Thirza Cropper, his fiancée* (1993). Emigration Letter No.8, 4 August 1824, p48.

Chapter 4.15

1 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 3 September,1824.

2 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 5 November 1824.

3 West, *History of Tasmania,* p269.

4 *Parramore Letters:* Emigration Letter No. 10, 2 December 1824, pp60-1.

5 Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p118, n3.

6 *Parramore Letters*, Emigration Letter No.10, 2 December 1824, pp60-1.

7 *Parramore Letters*, Emigration Letter No.10, 2 December 1824, pp60-1.

8 AGL Shaw, Van Diemen's Land *Military Operations,* 20 November 1830, Arthur to Murrray.

9 *Parramore Letters*, Emigration Letter No.10, 2 December 1824, pp60-1.

10 *Tasmanian,* 10 December 1830. The name is on the letter is "William Penn", a pseudonym for Dr GF Story, a respected East Coast identity.

11 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p103. Bonwick, who knew Dr Story, a prominent Quaker, may have incorporated his interpretation.

12 West, p269.

13 Julia Clark, *The Aboriginal People of Tasmania* (Hobart: TMAG, 1982), p38.

14 West, p269.

15 Knopwood's Diary 13 September 1826; *Hobart Town Gazette*, 27 May 1826; *Colonial Times*, 2 June 1826.

16 Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race*, p117.

17 Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p347, Robinson Journal entry 13 January 1831.

18 See also Jacqueline Fox "Constructing a Colonial Chief Justice: John Lewes Pedder in VDL". Unpublished PhD, UTAS, 2012.

19 *Colonial Times*, 15 September 1826.

20 *Colonial Times*, 15 September 1826.

21 For example *Colonial Times*, 2 June 1826.

22 Aborigines Committee (*Committee for the Care of captured Aborigines*): Minutes, 3 March 1830, CBE1/1/1, TAHO.

23 Calder, p46.

24 NJB Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash in Van Diemen's Land 1803-1823* (Launceston: 1992), p6.

Chapter 4.16

1 Melville, Part I, p31.

2 Arthur Papers, *Aborigines*, A2188ML Letter, Anstey to Arthur 16, November ND.

3 Melville, Part II, p15.

4 JH Wedge, unpublished *Autobiographical Sketch*, ML A576 on CY2802, p7.

5 Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race*, p76.

6 Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p215. Robinson's Journal, 21 June 1830.

7 Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p338. Robinson's Journal, 30 December 1830.

8 *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser,* 5 January 1827. In the *Hobart Town Gazette* of 25 February a different version is made. M'Connell or McConnell was executed for bushranging and burglary and Thackery for stealing in a dwelling house and putting the owner in bodily fear.

9 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p103.

10 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 25 February 1825.

11 Robinson's Journal 25 February 1825 ,A7022 Vol. 1 pt.4 ML, cited in Vivienne Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson* (Melbourne: 1988), p16.

12 Government Notice 28 November 1827, *Sydney Gazette*, 29 November 1826. See also Julie Evans and Tessa Fluence "Securing the Settler Polity: Martial Law and the Aboriginal Peoples of Van Diemen's Land", *Journal of Australian Colonial History* Vol.15, 2013.

13 Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p464, Journal 22 July 1837.

Chapter 5

1 National Museum of Australia, *Outlawed! Rebels, Revolutionaries and Bushrangers* (Canberra: 2004), pp34-37.

2 Jan Kociumbas, " 'Mary Ann', Joseph Fleming and 'Gentleman Dick': Aboriginal-Convict Relationships in Colonial History', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol.3, No.1, April 2001, p28.

3 Kociumbas, p35.

4 Kristyn Harman, *Aboriginal Convicts* (Sydney: 2012).

5 Harmen attributes the sketch to engraver Roger whereas the original drawing is by Petit, an error of convention she later corrects. Roger had the good sense never to have left France while Petit literally rode the waves and drew the sketches.

6 Andrew Grove Day, *Adventures of the Pacific* (New York, 1969), p235.

7 Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Sydney: 2002).

8 Windschuttle, *Fabrication,* p129.

9 Windschuttle, *Fabrication,* p125.

10 Naomi Parry, "Hanging no good for blackfellow: looking into the life of Musquito" in Ingereth Macfarlane & Mark Hannah, *Transgressions: Critical Australian Indigenous histories*, Aboriginal History monograph 16, p169. This is Parry's summation of Windschuttle's portrayal but a more than fair précis.

11 Naomi Parry, "More on Windschuttle" in *Overland*, 172, 2003, p70.

12 John West, *History of Tasmania*; James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*.

13 Parry, "Hanging no good...", p168.

14 James Calder, *Some Account of the Wars of Extirpation;* Henry Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's Land*.

15 Parry, "Hanging no good...", p170.

16 Parry, "Hanging no good...", p166.

17 Parry, "Hanging no good...", p170.

18 Parry, "Hanging no good...", p166ff.

19 Plomley (ed), *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Tasmania*.

20 James Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race*, p78.

21 Calder, p54.

Chapter 6

1 Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile" in *Reflections on Exile and other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass: 2000). Vinay Lal, "Enigmas of Exile: Reflections on Edward Said", *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol.40, No.1 (Jan 1-7, 2005), pp30-34.

2 Michael Powell, "Fragile Identities: The Colonial Conflicts of CJR Le Mesurier in Ceylon", *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History,* 2010.

3 Parker Papers of the Port Phillip Protectorate, VPRO, Box 12, cited in Henry Reynolds "Aborigines and European Social Hierarchy", *Aboriginal History,* Vol.7, 1983, p125.

4 Gunther, ML MSS B505, cited in Reynolds, "Aborigines and European Social Hierarchy", p127.

5 Macquarie to Bathurst, 8 October 1814, *HRA* 1:8, p368.

6 See Henry Reynolds, "Aborigines and European Social Hierarchy".

7 Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p123.

8 Reynolds, "Aborigines and European Social Hierarchy", pp127-8.

9 Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*, p104.

10 Alma Ambert, "The Eighth Continent or living on the Edge" in Anne Luyat & Francine Tolron (eds), *Flight from Certainty: the Dilemma of Identity and Exile* (New York: 2001), p9.

11 Ambert, p11.

12 Ambert, p9.

13 David Malouf, *An Imaginary Life* (London: 1999), p3.

14 Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p470.

15 Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p348-9.

PEER REVIEWS

This work has been peer reviewed and a number of articles have been published that inform or form core aspects of this work.

Michael Powell & Rex Hesline, 'Making tribes? Constructing Aboriginal tribal entities in Sydney and coastal NSW from the early colonial period to the present', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society,* December 2010.

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The efforts of Clive Tilsley and Fullers Bookshop to bring to publication works on Tasmanian Aboriginal history are of central importance: it takes to a wider public stories that made our past and shape our present.

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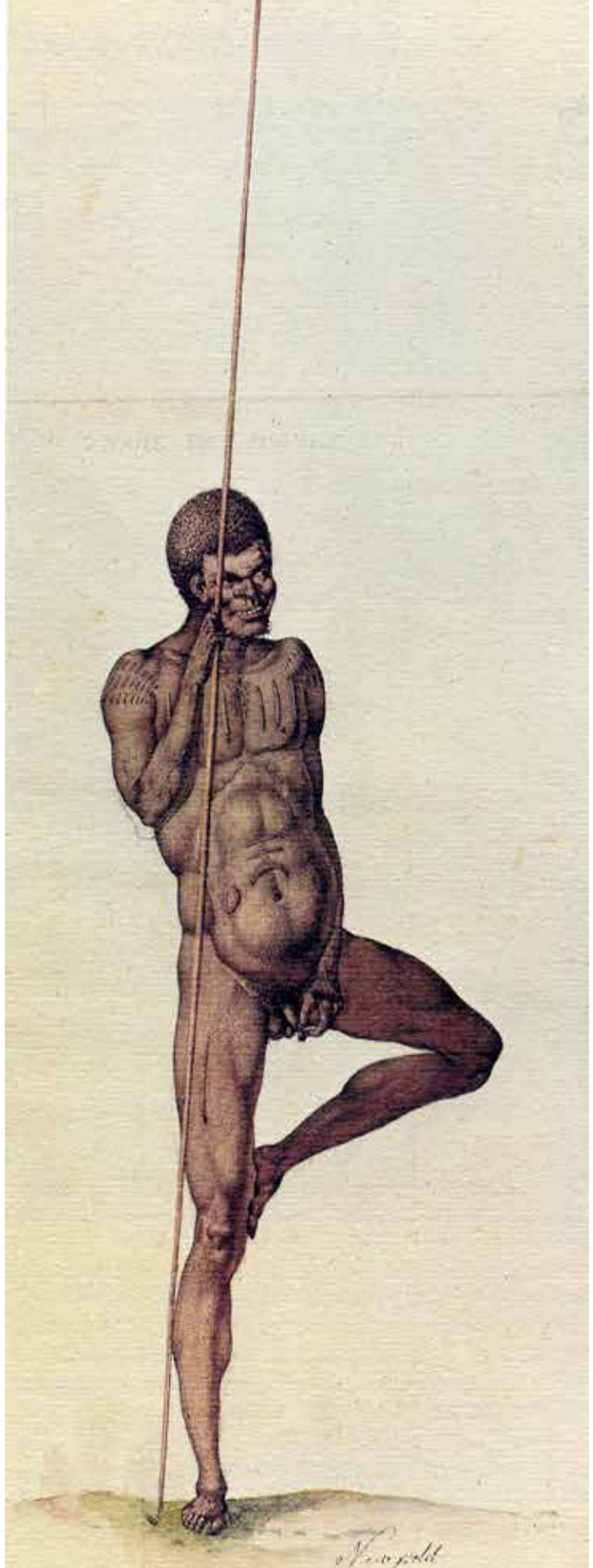

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4 COLOUR PLATE

Quiet as Dogs, Lin Onus

The painting *Quiet as Dogs* emphasises settler dismissal both of the humanity and resilience of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Settlers reported the 'Darkies were as quiet as dogs' before the arrival of Musquito, and he stands both with and before in determination.

The utter consternation in white society to the upsurge in Aboriginal violence in the 1820s seemed without cause but the appearance of Musquito, a Sydney Black, made it coherent. And made his behaviour simply criminal, vicious and murderous. That the local Tasmanian Aborigines, it seemed, followed his lead made their actions similarly criminal. People so utterly primitive could not have acted with agency or volition but must have been led like dogs.

White Man's Burden, Lin Onus

The *White Man's Burden* is a visual pun and literal rendering but within is Kipling's mantra:

'The blame of those ye better

The hate of those ye guard'.

Onus ridicules white arrogance and hurt for black ingratitude.

In Hiding, Lin Onus

In Hiding celebrates the ease with which Musquito commanded the landscape and 'melted' into the bush, 'merging' with a tree trunk. He had been exiled from his native NSW but was still native to the Australian landscape, maintaining an intrinsic affinity.

Wanted, One Rope Thrower, Lin Onus

While he may have *Wanted, One Rope Thrower* his rescue was literally at the end of a rope, a grim pun by Onus.

Escape, Lin Onus

For Musquito the landscape was his grandest *Escape*; able to move with ease, he was little altered from the landscape itself. On the other hand, the effort and paperwork for his repatriation to his native New South Wales left him stranded in exile.