

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR  
AUSTRALIENSTUDIEN

# AUSTRALIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

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## Music, Country, and Migration



36  
2022

# **Music, Country, and Migration**

Australian Studies Journal  
Zeitschrift für Australienstudien

36 / 2022

published on behalf of the **German  
Association for Australian Studies  
Gesellschaft für Australienstudien**

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AUSTRALIENSTUDIEN

# AUSTRALIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

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The '**Australian Studies Journal | Zeitschrift für Australienstudien**' is an academic publication issued by the editors on behalf of the German Association for Australian Studies with a regular issue in summer and special issues in spring and autumn.

It discusses a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary aspects relevant to Australia and its society, among them:

- |                         |               |                    |
|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| • anthropology          | • history     | • natural sciences |
| • economics             | • law         | • philosophy       |
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These issues are presented in consideration of both current and historical interrelations of European and Australian societies. In this context, studies on Indigenous Australian matters receive special attention.

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We invite **abstracts** for special issues with the respective deadlines of *15 October / 15 April*.

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# Contents

Editorial	9
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## Essays

<i>Christina Ringel</i>	
The Role of Country and Self-Determination in Revitalisation	13
<i>Ian D. Clark, Rolf Schlagloth, Fred Cahir, Gabrielle McGinnis</i>	
Kurrburra the Boonwurrung 'Wirrirrap' and Bard (1797-1849)	31
A man of high degree	
<i>Joevan de Mattos Caitano</i>	
Alphons Silbermann und die Neue Musik zwischen Darmstadt und Sydney in den 1950er Jahren	51
Perspektive eines Emigranten im Exil	

## Reviews

<i>Andrew Hugill</i>	
Teresa Balough, Kay Dreyfus: Distant Dreams	69
<i>Benjamin T. Jones</i>	
Victoria Herche: The Adolescent Nation	73
<i>Katrin Althans</i>	
Dorothee Klein: Poetics and Politics of Relationality in Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Fiction	77
The Editors	81
The Contributors	83



## Editorial

Good news, everyone: the 'Australian Studies Journal | Zeitschrift für Australienstudien' has taken a profound step towards modernization with a redesigned cover and a restyled interior.

In addition to the reformed design, a new collective of editors has taken over the journal. Our team covers a diverse spectrum of research areas. It consists of the *Managing Editors* Dr Stefanie Affeldt (Heidelberg), Dr Katrin Althans (Duisburg-Essen), and Christina Ringel (Dortmund) and the *General Editors* Prof Dr Dany Adone (Cologne), PD Dr Eva Bischoff (Trier), Prof Dr Patricia Plummer (Duisburg-Essen), and PD Dr Carsten Wergin (Heidelberg).

We are deeply grateful to Henriette von Holleuffer and Oliver Haag for their many years of service to the journal. Their meticulous work and wealth of imagination have benefited the Australian Studies Journal | Zeitschrift für Australienstudien from issue 26/2012 to 35/2021! We will try our best to follow in their professional footsteps.

The issue at hand – ASJ | ZfA 36/2022, 'Music, Country, and Migration' – bridges a broad spectrum of topics in its *contributions*.

Christina Ringel addresses the interconnections of self-determination, formal education, and traditional country. With a case study on the endangered language Miriwoong she demonstrates that both traditional educational practices and several current revitalisation projects undertaken by the Miriwoong people rely on access to traditional Country.

Ian D. Clark, Rolf Schlagloth, Fred Cahir, and Gabrielle McGinnis flesh out the biography of Kurrburra, a member of the Yawen djirra clan and a prominent persona amongst Victoria's Boonwurrung people. They argue how, in the European view, he was seen as a 'bard' and 'native doctor' based on his medicinal and spiritual skills and retrace the narrations surrounding him.

Joevan de Mattos Caitano follows the archival tracks of Alphons Silbermann and the reception of Australian music at the summer courses of the international music institute in Darmstadt. Talking about German-Jewish migration after the Second World War and New Music, he discusses the musical exchange between Australia and Germany.

The *reviews* support and expand the selection of topics.

Andrew Hugill reads 'Distant Dreams' by Teresa Balough and Kay Dreyfus as a highly informative case study of inter-disciplinarity that has a more general and contemporary relevance

Benjamin T. Jones deems Victoria Herche's 'The Adolescent Nation' both an important contribution to our knowledge of Australian film and the coming of age narrative and as a required reading for scholars of film history.



In her close reading of Dorothee Klein's 'Poetics and Politics of Relationality in Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Fiction', Katrin Althans finds a very well-researched discussion which posits contemporary Australian Aboriginal literature within the broader framework of relationality by drawing our attention to its relation to land and Country.

Read long and prosper...  
*The Editors*

# ***Essays***



Christina Ringel

## The Role of Country and Self-Determination in Revitalisation

**Abstract:** The UNESCO Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) is a good opportunity for shining a light on language endangerment in Australia. In this paper, I argue that many causes of endangerment can be traced back to a relocation of speakers of Indigenous languages from their traditional land. A case in point is the endangered language Miriwoong. The analysis of a case study with the Miriwoong people will demonstrate that both their traditional educational practices and several current revitalisation projects rely on access to traditional Country. Miriwoong is no longer transmitted in natural contexts, i.e. it is not spoken and learned in the family home. Thus, in order to achieve the goal of countering endangerment, the community needs the support that Australian governments can provide via the mainstream education system. For such projects to be effective, self-determination needs to be part of any policies concerning formal education. This ensures that traditional beliefs and practices, such as teaching 'on Country', can be properly incorporated.

### Language endangerment and the relocation of speakers

UNESCO declared 2019 the International Year of Indigenous languages "in order to raise awareness" of the fact that "languages around the world continue to disappear at an alarming rate".<sup>1</sup> The numbers are dire: 50% of the world's 6 500-7 000 languages (including sign languages) will no longer be used in the near future.<sup>2</sup> 2022 marks the beginning of the UNESCO Decade of Indigenous Languages,<sup>3</sup> for which concerted efforts all over the world to preserve indigenous languages are envisaged.

Many causes of language endangerment can be traced back to a relocation of the speakers from their traditional lands. Speakers can 'voluntarily' decide to abandon their lands when this becomes *necessary* for sheer survival – for example owing to the effects of climate change and natural disasters – or for economic survival following upheavals such as urbanisation and globalisation. Time and again, however, in violation of Indigenous people and minority speakers' land rights, the relocation of speakers has been enforced by colonialists and dominant cultures.<sup>4</sup>

A case in point is the Indigenous population of Australia. Due to their treatment at the hands of settler colonialists and federal and local governments, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lost – if not their lives – their access to their traditional lands and waters. Land-grabbing in the course of the

1 Matthias Brenzinger et al.: Language Vitality and Endangerment.

2 Peter Austin, Julia Sallabank: Introduction, p. 1.

3 UNESCO: Indigenous Languages Decade.

4 This was expressed, for instance, by Tiffany S. Lee, Teresa L. McCarty: Bilingual-Multilingual Education and Indigenous Peoples, p. 410: "Throughout the world, physical genocide, ethnicide, linguicide, and *detrterritorialization* have been the combined goals of colonial regimes" (emphasis added).

appropriation of land, enforced relocation to government reserves, and removal of children from their families (resulting in the 'Stolen Generations')<sup>5</sup> are some of the causes that have led to Aboriginal Australians' separation from their Country.<sup>6</sup>

Impeding access to traditional land leads to a restriction of opportunities for Aboriginal people to practice their traditional culture. Ceremonies that necessarily take place at particular locations are made impossible when access to those locations is denied by non-Indigenous people who acquired the land. As a consequence, speakers of traditional languages have shifted to languages of wider communication as traditional contexts for the use and transmission of their first languages to their children fade.

The realm of education is another context for the transmission of Aboriginal languages and cultures that has been disrupted. Traditional education<sup>7</sup> was replaced by mainstream education both forcibly for reasons of assimilation and by way of rendering traditional ways impossible or infeasible.<sup>8</sup> Again, relocation from traditional lands is one of the driving forces: important aspects of traditional education were taught on the traditional Country of those in charge of the education of younger generations since it involved, for example, teaching the names and uses of local flora and fauna and the spiritual knowledge about specific places. It is difficult to uphold this practice when teachers and/or pupils relocate, voluntarily or forcibly, to a different part of the country. The lack of opportunities for traditional education is aggravated by two factors; a) the short time children can spend with their families due to i) compulsory mainstream schooling and ii) the unavailability of secondary and tertiary education in many remote areas that leads to a relocation of pupils to larger centres; and b) the influence of globalisation. New media, for example, are primarily available in dominant languages such as English.

As a result of these disruptions, language endangerment has become critical in Australia.<sup>9</sup> Intervention is urgent as the majority of the 250 to 300 languages that were spoken before colonisation – depending on where the line is drawn between language and dialect, this number can grow to 450<sup>10</sup> – are no longer in use<sup>11</sup> and

5 From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century well into the 1970s, children of Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander descent have been taken away from their families by Australian federal and state government agencies and church missions to be brought up in missions or white families for various reasons such as assimilation, or protection from alleged neglect and child abuse, or to provide them with better living conditions and a supposedly better future.

6 Joseph Blythe, Glenn Wightman: *The Role of Animals and Plants*; William McGregor: *Languages of the Kimberley*; Michael Walsh: *Language is Like Food*. Throughout the paper, the convention to write the word 'country' with a capital c will be followed, to signal that it is not used in its usual sense of a nation state but in the sense of the tracts of land (including sea shores and maritime territories) that a particular group of Indigenous people considers itself responsible for.

7 The term 'traditional' (education/Country/language) refers to the state of affairs in the time period before 1788, i.e. before the advent of European colonialists.

8 Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Robert Phillipson: *Linguistic Human Rights*. Daniel Nettle, Suzanne Romaine: *Vanishing Voices*, p. 4.

10 Stephen Wurm: *Australasia and the Pacific*, p. 436; Claire Bowern: *Language Documentation and Description and What Comes After*.

11 Tasaku Tsunoda: *Language Endangerment*, p. 20.

only 13 languages can be considered strong.<sup>12</sup> A reminder of the dire situation of language shift and loss and the corresponding responsibilities of nation states in the form of a Decade for Indigenous Languages is, thus, still relevant even for economically strong countries such as Australia that have more resources for language revitalisation projects at their disposal than other countries.

### ***Language endangerment and the role of Australian governments***

Australian governments have had detrimental effects on Australian Indigenous languages both passively, through neglect, and actively through punitive measures to suppress languages.<sup>13</sup> The government was guilty of (tolerating) the reduction of the number of speakers through shootings, massacres, introduced diseases such as leprosy and venereal disease, and of indirectly putting languages under pressure by harming the land and the connection between the land, the language and the people through land grab, enforced relocation and pollution.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the treatment of Aboriginal Australians at Christian missions and government reserves (among other things the segregation or removal of children from their families and prohibitions to speak Aboriginal languages) had significant effects on the transmission of culture and language. "This history is seen by many as creating a responsibility for present-day governments to do what they can to repair the damage, where this is desired by Indigenous people".<sup>15</sup>

### ***Language revitalisation through the education system: The Australian government and self-determination***

Australia is not bound by any international agreements, such as covenants, to promote Indigenous languages through the education system.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, this paper offers support for the established claim that Australian governments have the responsibility to fund and facilitate projects in schools that support the revitalisation of Indigenous languages. Over the years, a variety of projects and programmes, including bilingual education programmes in the Northern Territory,<sup>17</sup> have been realised. While it is beyond the scope of the present discussion to give a full account of reasons for success and failure, some observations made in the literature will be summarised below. The main contribution of this paper is that it highlights the importance of properly implemented self-determination for any project that concerns formal education.

12 Doug Marmion et al.: Community, Identity, Wellbeing.

13 AIATSIS: National Indigenous Languages Survey, p. 22.

14 William McGregor: Languages of the Kimberley, p. 12.

15 AIATSIS: National Indigenous Languages Survey, p. 22; for a more detailed discussion of Australia's responsibility to play a supportive role with respect to the vitality of Aboriginal Australian's languages see also Christina Ringel: Claiming Vitality.

16 See also Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Robert Phillipson: Linguistic Human Rights.

17 For a comprehensive discussion, see, for example, Jane Simpson, Jo Caffery, Patrick McConnell: Gaps in Australia's Indigenous language policy.

According to the policy of self-determination, projects may not be solely planned and executed by the government. Depending on how self-determination is understood, Aboriginal communities must initiate them or at least be consulted appropriately. In Australia, this policy was proposed in 1972<sup>18</sup> and arguably ended *de facto* “in 1996 with Howard’s first election and *de jure* with the demise of ATSIC in 2004”.<sup>19</sup> Internationally, self-determination has, for instance, been enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Article 1.1 states that

All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.<sup>20</sup>

The ICCPR was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 and became part of Australia’s law in 1986.<sup>21</sup>

In the following, Laura Rademaker and Tim Rowse’s outline of self-determination in Australia will be summarised. They emphasise the “likelihood that ‘self-determination’ has meant different things to different people at different times”.<sup>22</sup> Some authors in their edited collection note that “steps taken in the name of self-determination were sometimes presented as primarily *leading to economic independence and the amelioration of disadvantage*”. Others assert that “the underlying logic of self-determination policy was to *encourage ‘responsibility’, implying control and self-governance*”.<sup>23</sup> The notion of control invoked here, in turn, was interpreted differently by different people: “for some, it was *mere consultation and ‘respect for Aboriginal aspirations’*, while for others it required *Aboriginal involvement in decision-making*”.<sup>24</sup>

Rademaker and Rowse also quote various views expressed by Indigenous scholars. To name but a few, Megan Davis<sup>25</sup> and Pat Dodson<sup>26</sup> outline self-determination as “freedom, agency, choice, autonomy, dignity” and the right to “negotiate our political status and to pursue economic, social and cultural development”, respectively. Noel Pearson equates self-determination with liberty and responsibility.<sup>27</sup> As Jeff Cortassel explains, “[n]otions of ‘responsibility’ – both individual and collective – are familiar to many Indigenous people who feel a keen sense of responsibility to their *country*, ancestors and kin”.<sup>28</sup> More concretely, Larissa Behrendt distinguishes sovereignty from self-determination

18 Jane Simpson: Self-determination with respect to Language Rights, p. 294.

19 Laura Rademaker, Tim Rowse: The history of self-determination in Australia, p. 4, quoting Jon Altman: Email to the editors, 24 October 2019.

20 UN General Assembly: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, p. 171.

21 Jane Simpson: Self-determination with respect to Language Rights, p. 294.

22 Laura Rademaker, Tim Rowse: The history of self-determination in Australia, p. 3.

23 Ibid., p. 9 (emphasis added).

24 Ibid., p. 10 (emphasis added).

25 Prominent advocate of the Uluru Statement and member of the Referendum Council Megan Davis: *Listening But Not Hearing*, n.p., quoted by Laura Rademaker, Tim Rowse: The history of self-determination in Australia, p. 1.

26 Laura Rademaker, Tim Rowse: The history of self-determination in Australia, pp. 11 f., quoting his 1999 Vincent Lingiari lecture: Patrick Dodson: *Until the Chains Are Broken*, p. 29.

27 Noel Pearson: *A Rightful Place*, p. 43.

28 Laura Rademaker, Tim Rowse: The history of self-determination in Australia, p. 14, quoting Jeff Cortassel: *Re-envisioning Resurgence*, p. 93, emphasis added.

by defining the latter as the practice “when Indigenous people are involved in the setting of priorities within their community, the *development* of policy, the delivery of services, and the *implementation* of programs”.<sup>29</sup> Finally, the call for self-determination found a prominent joint expression in the Uluru Statement from the Heart of May 2017, which articulated “an Indigenous vision for a better relationship between settler and Indigenous Australians: one ‘based on justice and *self-determination*’”.<sup>30</sup>

In the following, factors influencing the success or failure of language maintenance and revitalisation projects and programmes as observed in the literature will be summarised. Jospeh LoBianco observes that “40 years of multilingual policy development [in] Australia [...] resulted in multilingual education practice through the teaching, supporting and examining some 100 of Australia’s 300 spoken languages”.<sup>31</sup> However, policies that were implemented were not always successful. As one of the causes he identifies that “Australia’s policy development has been beset by *changing priorities, inadequate and inconsistent implementation, and contested aims and purposes*”.<sup>32</sup> He goes on to note that an explicit national policy would be needed: “[w]hile *absence of explicit language policy* does not preclude innovation in multilingual education, it *renders initiatives less effective*, lacking coherence, coordination, and support”.<sup>33</sup> LoBianco reminds the reader that not only deliberate government policies either contribute to or deter from language maintenance and revitalisation: “[e]rosion of [bilingual education] programs can occur even under supportive policy, via language prejudice entrenching the elevated status of Standard English over traditional languages”. LoBianco characterises this as an “invisible language policy”, which “privilege[s] monolingualism or rank[s] some bilingualisms higher than others”.<sup>34</sup> However, this invisible policy is often aggravated by “the near-universal practice of governments to prioritize investment in languages of wider communication”,<sup>35</sup> in the case of Australia “prestige international languages” and “key Asian trade-servicing languages” in particular.<sup>36</sup>

29 Ibid., pp. 15 f., quoting Larissa Behrendt: *Aboriginal Sovereignty*, pp. 171 f., emphasis added.

30 Referendum Council, *Uluru statement from the heart*, quoted by Laura Rademaker, Tim Rowse: *The history of self-determination in Australia*, p. 1, emphasis added.

31 Jospeh Lo Bianco: *Multilingual Education across Oceania*, p. 608, quoting Joseph Lo Bianco, Yvette Slaughter: *Second languages and Australian schooling*.

32 Ibid., p. 609.

33 Ibid., p. 611.

34 Ibid., p. 609.

35 Ibid., p. 605.

36 Ibid., p. 609. In addition to his treatment of Australia, LoBianco also describes the situation in New Zealand/Aotearoa and the Pacific. In these remarks the following further factors contributing to the failure of policies can be detected: i) primary education can be “hampered by teacher training designs focused on secondary schools” (ibid., p. 610); ii) in “micro-nations [...] small scale and geographic dispersion preclude development of differentiated institutions and efficient administrative structures” (ibid., p. 604). The latter is relevant for the situation in Australia insofar as several hundred languages were spoken there before colonisation, as opposed to one main language e.g. in New Zealand/Aotearoa (i.e. te reo Māori). A one-size-fits-all approach to policies, institutions, administrative structures and funding schemes is unlikely to benefit all indigenous languages in Australia equally, as their present situation can be quite diverse.



Tiffany S. Lee, Teresa L. McCarthy offer some advice on the circumstances under which programmes can be effective: “Indigenous language maintenance and revitalisation work best when tailored to community needs, beliefs, language acquisition resources, and level of commitment”.<sup>37</sup> A concrete example is given by Josphe LoBianco: “Melanesian countries have expanded the range of languages included in education, mainly through decentralization to more efficient *village-based provision*”.<sup>38</sup> Both of these observations are in line with the main argument of this paper, namely that teaching on traditional Country – which is one expression of traditional Aboriginal practices (see below) – plays a major role in successful language revitalisation.

Taken together, the two accounts above show that while changing government priorities, contested aims and inconsistent implementation lead to unsuccessful programmes, these issues could be ameliorated if self-determination in its stronger sense – namely involving Aboriginal people interested in the maintenance and revitalisation or revival of Indigenous languages in the development and implementation of policies and programmes so that they are tailored to community needs – were to be incorporated to a much more comprehensive degree.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Aboriginal beliefs and practices with relation to their land***

Before delving into the Miriwoong case study in the following section, a few Aboriginal beliefs and practices that the Miriwoong people share need to be introduced. This section is not intended to be exhaustive and glosses over many of the details. Instead, it highlights a few aspects that are relevant for the discussion of the case study.

Aboriginal Australians from a variety of backgrounds have testified through stories and literature to a strong connection between people, Country, and culture.<sup>40</sup> Such connections have also been described by non-Aboriginal researchers.<sup>41</sup> According to these sources, languages are believed to belong to specific

37 Tiffany S. Lee, Teresa L. McCarthy: *Bilingual-Multilingual Education and Indigenous Peoples*, p. 412.

38 Josphe LoBianco: *Multilingual Education across Oceania*, p. 605, emphasis added.

39 A third, and even stronger interpretation of self-determination is possible, namely that the Aboriginal community is the sole decision maker from the conceptualisation of a project to its implementation and evaluation. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in which situations this can lead to successful results. Suffice it to say that there is a danger that this would be misinterpreted to mean that there does not have to be any commitment of Australian governments whatsoever. Offering advice, training, funding etc. where needed and desired, can still be part of projects implemented under this strongest sense of self-determination. As Laura Rademaker and Tim Rowse point out, the failure to do so can be argued to have contributed to the questionable success of self-determination in Australia: “the new rights of the self-determination era were not matched with measures ‘designed to assist people through the crises of occupation, discipline, motivation, conflict management and community trauma that soon erupted and by the 1990s had reached a crescendo, especially in remoter regions’”, Laura Rademaker, Tim Rowse: *The history of self-determination in Australia*, p. 19, quoting Peter Sutton: *The Politics of Suffering*, p. 58.

40 For example, Sally Morgan et al.: *Heartsick for Country*.

41 For example, Ronald Berndt, Catherine Berndt: *Aborigines of the West*; Alan Rumsey: *Language and Territoriality*; Harold Koch, Rachel Nordlinger: *Languages and Linguistics*.

places on Country because in the Dreamtime they were planted by spiritual beings at locations where the beings lived or at certain sites along their paths as they travelled through Country.<sup>42</sup> These Dreamtime beings are connected via kinships relationships to human beings, who become speakers of the language and Carers for Country by observing the cultural practices connected to particular sites which were predetermined by the Dreamtime beings who live in those places or travelled by them.

One of the cultural practices relevant to the present discussion is the teaching of language and culture in Aboriginal society. Traditionally, language and culture were taught at the appropriate places (and times of the year) through corroborees (performances of dance and song) and the telling of stories. The strong connection between the Country and the culture mandated that language and cultural knowledge are taught while being on the Country that the stories belong to. The Miriwoong people and their institutions will serve as a case study on how the teaching of language and culture can be organised by Aboriginal organisations today.

### ***Miriwoong case study***

Miriwoong is spoken in the Kununurra area in the north-east of Western Australia and across the border with the Northern Territory. The degree of endangerment of the Miriwoong language becomes obvious when looking at the factors that are typically adduced when assessing the vitality of a language, in particular the total number of speakers, their age and their percentage within the community, intergenerational transmission to children, and the use of second languages:<sup>43</sup> a handful of speakers from the generation of 60 and older have a good command of Miriwoong<sup>44</sup> and up to a hundred speakers from the middle-aged generation are bilingual in Miriwoong to various degrees. These speaker numbers account for a small percentage of the population of around 1000 people who identify as Miriwoong.<sup>45</sup> Most Miriwoong people, including those in child-bearing age, have learned Kimberley Kriol as their first language (L1) and mainly converse

42 See Christina Ringel, David Newry: *The Miriwoong Perspective on Land Rights*, and references therein.

43 In response to global language endangerment, linguists have studied the factors which favour or disfavour language vitality. UNESCO's Ad Hoc Expert group on Endangered Languages (Matthias Brenzinger et al.: *Language Vitality and Endangerment*), the NILS report (AIATSIS: *National Indigenous Languages Survey*), the linguist Tsunoda (Tasaku Tsunoda: *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization*) and the Ethnologue (M.P. Lewis: *Ethnologue. Languages of the World*), taken together, list the following factors: a) transmission to children, b) language attitudes, c) state of documentation and availability of educational materials, d) total number of (fluent/mother-tongue/first language) speakers, e) percentage of speakers within the community, f) age of speakers, g) functions of the language in the community/society, h) response to new domains and media, i) economic opportunity or the lack thereof, j) governmental & institutional language attitudes & policies including the official recognition of languages within the nation or region, k) the use of second languages. Factors a), b), and c) are argued to be most important.

44 MDWg: *Miriwoong Woorlang Yawoorroonga-woorr*, p. 142.

45 David Newry in a personal conversation with the author in August 2015.

in Kriol or Aboriginal English, so that transmission of Miriwoong no longer takes place in natural contexts, i.e. Miriwoong is not spoken and learned in the family home. Since the domains in which Miriwoong is used are limited and Miriwoong words for most modern concepts do not exist, the factors ‘functions of the language’ and ‘response to new domains and media’ currently indicate endangerment, as well: According to informal interviews inspired by Rottet’s sociolinguistic questionnaire<sup>46</sup> conducted in the course of linguistic research for my PhD project<sup>47</sup> (see below), the domains in which Miriwoong is spoken include the following: i) during personal exchanges between Miriwoong-speaking individuals, regardless of whether (non-Miriwoong) non-speakers are present and whether the situation is informal/private (e.g. asking each other for money or tobacco or discussing fishing gear) or somewhat formal/public (e.g. while shopping, while practising art and telling the respective stories at Waringarri Aboriginal Arts centre, in the presence of police), ii) when following cultural protocol, such as asking the ancestors for fish while fishing but iii) not necessarily during official gatherings of Miriwoong and Gajirrabeng people, e.g. Miriwoong Gajer-rong Corporation meetings.

The level of endangerment of the Miriwoong language described above has many different causes, a comprehensive discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper. Hence, here, I will focus on the aspect highlighted in the introduction, namely the relocation of speakers from their traditional Country. In the case of the Miriwoong people, in addition to removal by early colonisers and displacement to missions and government reserves, relocation was caused by the Ord Irrigation Scheme, which led to the establishment of the township of Kununurra and the flooding of a large area on their traditional Country.<sup>48</sup> The Ord River was dammed in two places. In 1967, the Diversion Dam was constructed.<sup>49</sup> In 1969, a larger dam was built 40 kilometres south of Kununurra and created Lake Argyle.<sup>50</sup> The two dams were built in places that are sacred to Miriwoong people,<sup>51</sup> and Lake Argyle now covers important sacred sites.<sup>52</sup> These changes to the landscape affect the Miriwoong people who have a deep connection to the land and feel the responsibility to maintain it.

Kununurra was built in 1963<sup>53</sup> and attracted Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous people with employment opportunities, facilities for medical care, stores and the like. The dams were put in place to supply water for farming on Miriwoong Country and to the town of Kununurra. At the time there was no

46 Kevin J. Rottet: Language shift in the coastal marshes of Louisiana.

47 Speakers were asked, for example, what language is spoken at home as opposed to downtown at the shop, when joking or when talking about serious business, when telling off kids or when arguing.

48 Both for a more detailed discussion of the (causes of) endangerment of the Miriwoong language and further details about the role of colonisers, missions and reserves, the interested reader is referred to Christina Ringel: *Possession in Miriwoong*.

49 William B. McGregor: *Languages of the Kimberley*, p. 6.

50 Greg McIntyre, Kim Doohan: *Labels, language and Native Title groups*, p. 188.

51 Frances M. Kofod: *Introduction to Miriwoong grammar*, p. 1.

52 William B. McGregor: *Languages of the Kimberley*, p. 6.

53 Will Christensen: *Working as an anthropologist*, p. 177.

consultation or compensation scheme,<sup>54</sup> but following a Native Title Claim the Miriwoong are nowadays recognised as Traditional Owners.<sup>55</sup>

The Miriwoong people are not alone in their fate. A similar case has been described, for example, by Tiffany S. Lee and Teresa L. McCarty with respect to the Pueblo Cochiti, which is situated in New Mexico and was partly flooded following the construction of a dam in 1969, “displacing homes and farmlands” and consequently disrupting the people’s “spiritual, economic, linguistic, social, and cultural ties to farming”.<sup>56</sup> The authors explicitly make a connection between this event and the second main topic of this paper, formal education: The disruption of family-based farming, in combination with a remote housing project and the building of a public school that “emphasized assimilation and mainstream values through an English-based curriculum and pedagogy”,<sup>57</sup> led to children being able to spend less time with elders. Hence, there was less opportunity for exposure to traditional language and education, resulting in language shift away from Cochiti, one of seven Keres dialects.<sup>58</sup>

The current level of vitality of the Miriwoong language as set forth above may seem dire. However, revitalisation projects for the language and cultural practices are underway. The language is mainly used during activities implemented through the Aboriginal organisations Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre (henceforth MDWg) and Waringarri Aboriginal Arts (henceforth Waringarri Arts). Activities include language teaching for young children, youth and adults, the creation of radio programs, language planning sessions during which Miriwoong words for modern concepts such as introduced foods, household items, technical innovations, etc. are created, and practising traditional art, song, dance, and ceremonies. The language is, thus, critically endangered, but revitalisation efforts are in place which are aimed at increasing the number of speakers and the domains in which it is used.

Language revitalisation depends on access to traditional Country in many respects. While MDWg employees mostly deliver language classes for toddlers and school children at the MDWg office and at participating schools and day care centres, the courses also include activities at various locations around town, such as Ivanhoe Crossing, Swim Beach, and Mirima National Park. During these sessions, the students learn, for example, to recognise and name trees and bush food. In addition, MDWg organises cultural activities for children and their families ‘on Country’, i.e. remotely, apart from the town of Kununurra and near-by communities, at culturally significant locations that hold stories about creation, the spiritual world, and memories about cultural practices such as the making of artefacts or songs and dances. Here, they are taught the preparation of bush food and the names and uses of bush medicines or learn the making of artefacts such as a wire spear. Moreover, language classes for Aboriginal rangers on the

54 Frances M. Kofod: Introduction to Miriwoong grammar, p. 1.

55 For details on the claim see John Henderson, David Nash: *Language in Native Title*, chapter 8, and Sandy Toussaint: *Crossing Boundaries*, chapter 15-17.

56 Tiffany S. Lee, Teresa L. McCarty: *Bilingual-Multilingual Education and Indigenous Peoples*, p. 414.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.



vocabulary of local flora and fauna enable them to engage with both Country and language during their working hours.

In the following, results of a total of 18 weeks of fieldwork on Miriwoong Country in 2014 (3 months) and 2015 (6 weeks) are reported.<sup>59</sup> Fieldwork was carried out in an office environment at MDWg and during field trips to culturally significant locations on Country. The two research stays were mainly dedicated to the gathering of linguistic data for the description of parts of the grammar. In addition, participant observation and informal interviews were conducted in order to assess the factors that influence language vitality, including language attitudes, and revitalisation strategies.

Participant observation during an internship at MDWg in 2013 (6 months) had indicated that the students participating in Miriwoong language classes enjoyed and profited from the 'on Country' sessions described above.<sup>60</sup> During fieldwork with the Miriwoong people, I could verify that the research sessions that took place while on a field trip to Country were both more pleasant for the participants and more effective in many respects: Elders felt much more confident on their traditional Country than in an office environment since being on Country allowed speakers to reconnect with their language and activated their communicative skills and vocabulary access. Being on Country triggered personal stories in traditional owners of nearby sites as well as stories connected to the place, such as the words for – and stories about – resources found at the place. MDWg employees express this manifestation of the profound relationship between the Miriwoong people, their language, and the land on the MDWg webpage in their own words: their reasoning for organizing field trips is that

[t]he knowledge of the Miriwoong Elders lives in their memories and in the country they relate to. Since it is hard to revive these memories sitting in an office building, we frequently go 'out bush' on field trips to immerse ourselves in the views, sounds and smells of our country. It's much easier to remember how things were done in the old days when you are in the right environment.<sup>61</sup>

A similar argument can be made for the maintenance and revitalisation of cultural practices: it depends on access to traditional Country. Nowadays, w[el-come...]. Welcome to (Miriwoong) Country ceremonies and corroborees that enact traditional ways of teaching about the creation of artefacts or the procurement of bush food, for example, are performed for tourists and the local community at Waringarri Arts or for particular occasions such as the inauguration of a new government building or the opening of a cultural festival. In these cases, the exact location as well as the timing is determined by the occasion. Traditionally,

59 The study was conducted according to the ethical guide-lines published in AIATSIS: Guide-lines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (GERAIS). In October 2020, AIATSIS published the Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research. This document supersedes and replaces GERAIS (ibid.). Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

60 Another language teaching project organised by MDWg, namely an immersion-based programme for the very young called Language Nest (Lenore A. Grenoble, Lindsay J. Whaley: *Saving Languages*) has been systematically evaluated and has been found to have positive outcomes such as improved school attendance (Stephanie Woerde in a personal conversation with the author in August 2015).

61 MDWg: Miriwoong Country Field Trips.

several types of ceremonies and corroborees were strongly connected to particular estates.<sup>62</sup> This connection is still observable when Miriwoong people travel to culturally significant sites. When I participated in field trips to locations that I had not visited before, a Welcome to Country to that particular location was performed by a Traditional Owner as a natural and necessary part of the trip. On one occasion during a female-only trip, the women spontaneously gathered for a corroboree that belongs to a near-by rock formation, which has cultural significance. The maintenance of these kinds of cultural practices relies on access to Country.

As stated above, traditionally, language and culture were taught at the appropriate places and times of the year. Knut Olawsky gives the following example: about 10 years ago a Joonba – “one of the original traditional dances ‘owned’ by the Miriwoong” – was performed at Nyawa-Nyawam (Policehole) in the Keep River National Park in the Northern Territory during ‘Warnga-mageny’, the cold season (which runs from April to August).<sup>63</sup> While Kununrra, the location of the MDWg – the base from which the event was organised – lies in Western Australia, the performance required travelling to the Northern Territory. Olawsky describes this as a “revitalisation attempt”, during which younger people were taught how to perform the corroboree:

[w]e organised a big camp with young and old as the proper performance of a Joonba requires preparation time [...] [for instance] the preparation of props such as paperbark hats. Together we also made sure that the singers had the various ‘verses’ of the song/story ready [and some] explaining was done for the dancers, some of whom were younger people [...]. Children were part of the camp and were learning through observation (i.e. informal rather than structured transfer).<sup>64</sup>

Above, the extra-curricular activities undertaken by MDWg and Waringarri Arts were described. Both organisations are partly funded by the Australian government. So far, funding schemes have been competitive and usually short-termed. In addition, the two organisations rely on donations and income from the services they provide and the resources and art they sell. Thus, government involvement in and direct support for the before-mentioned activities is limited. When it comes to the role of the Miriwoong language and culture in formal education, one would expect the state to take larger responsibility.<sup>65</sup> However, although the Miriwoong language has become part of the local school curriculum as a Language Other Than English (LOTE) in 2018, the LOTE classes are not sponsored by the government but are conceptualised and realised by MDWg personnel through MDWg’s general funds and a small contribution by the school. In order to keep the myriad of activities and services that MDWg and Waringarri Arts have been offering in recent years running while at the same time planning

62 The term ‘estate’ is here used in the sense of Bentley James: *The Language of ‘Spiritual Power’*, where he uses it to refer to a region of different dreaming sites associated with a clan.

63 For the timespan of the cold season, see MDWg: *Miriwoong Seasonal Calendar*.

64 All quotes in this paragraph stem from a personal conversation with the author on 2 September 2022.

65 Nationally, the Australian Curriculum includes a strand for Indigenous languages: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority: *Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages*.

and carrying out LOTE classes in successively higher class levels, an increase in funding and more funding security would be necessary.

Self-determination would still be crucial. This ensures that – if so desired by the Miriwoong people – Miriwoong language classes would incorporate the teaching of cultural knowledge and could involve traditional values and modes of learning such as teaching ‘on Country’.

## **Discussion**

Although intergenerational transmission of Traditional languages is disrupted in many parts of Australia and Indigenous language education, therefore, plays a crucial role in preventing language loss, Australia is not yet fully committed to reform the education system. Indigenous language education is not impeded where it is organised by individuals and Indigenous organisations such as MDWg and Waringarri Arts. However, individual languages are not yet taught as part of the regular formal education system. Though Indigenous language education is anchored in the national curriculum,<sup>66</sup> Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language-medium classes are not offered nation-wide. Language-specific curricula and programs are yet to be developed by the states and territories. In addition, funding for Indigenous language classes and Indigenous language-medium education is often competitive and short-termed and too limited to reverse Australia’s language endangerment. According to the figures in the Closing the Gap report 2019, the focus of investment is on health issues.<sup>67</sup>

Another problem encountered and lamented by those responsible for securing funding for language centres is that continuity in funding is often tied to the achievement of ‘key objectives’ pre-defined in the call for proposals, which do not match the realities on the ground.<sup>68</sup> This issue would resolve itself if self-determination (understood in its stronger sense, see above) were implemented: Aboriginal institutions would be empowered to define their own key objectives so that they align with community priorities as well as community needs and existing resources. In the Closing the Gap report, Indigenous Australians’ relationship to their Country is recognised. The Australian Government pledges its role in students’ opportunities “to attend and thrive at school, regardless of location”.<sup>69</sup> However, given the history of disputes between the federal government and the Western Australian government concerning funding for remote communities, it is unlikely that large sums will be invested into education facilities in remote communities in Western Australia, so that secondary and tertiary education could be offered remotely. The latter would alleviate the problems associated with sending students away for secondary education: when children do not stay on their traditional Country “[o]lder people fear that [...] the links maintained between people and country for many thousands of years will

66 Ibid.

67 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet: Closing the Gap Report 2019, pp. 2, 136, 147.

68 Knut Olawsky in a personal conversation with the author in 2019.

69 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet: Closing the Gap Report 2019, p. 64.

be broken” because the Elders will not have the opportunity to pass on their knowledge and traditions.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, if remote secondary and tertiary education was available, traditional ways of teaching such as teaching ‘on Country’ could be incorporated.

## **Conclusions**

For Aboriginal Australians from a variety of backgrounds, the connection between language, land and people has great significance. A disruption of that connection can have serious consequences. A case in point is the endangered language Miriwoong. The relocation of speakers from their traditional Country, caused, among other things, by the submersion of sacred sites in the course of the Ord Irrigation Scheme, is identified in this paper as one of the major causes of language endangerment.

The relationship between the Miriwoong people, their Country and their language is reflected in their revitalisation activities: language classes and cultural activities take place at culturally relevant locations; rangers are taught Miriwoong in order to allow them to engage with both Country and language during their working hours.

The Australian government has supported the Miriwoong language through funding for Aboriginal organisations. Without the continued support through federal and Western Australian governments, the vitality of the Miriwoong language is at risk. In the face of the dire situation of endangered languages such as Miriwoong, the Australian government has several options to support communities in their revitalisation efforts. The transmission of Indigenous languages can be strengthened, among other things, through long-term funding for language centres and Indigenous language programs at schools.

Self-determination in its stronger sense – namely involving Aboriginal people in the development and implementation of policies and programmes so that they are tailored to community needs – must be part of any policies concerning formal education so that traditional beliefs and practices with relation to the land, such as teaching ‘on Country’, can be properly incorporated.

As several revitalisation projects have been found to depend on access to traditional Country, another way to sponsor the maintenance and revitalisation of linguistic and cultural knowledge is to make sure that Aboriginal people are not denied access to further sites and regain access to those sites from which they have been excluded, may it be by private owners, or big companies.<sup>71</sup>

70 Jane Simpson, Jo Caffery, Patrick McConvell: Gaps in Australia’s Indigenous Language Policy, p. 9.

71 A discussion of the destruction of culturally significant sites in the interest of ‘development’ is also relevant in this respect but is beyond the scope of this paper.



## **Acknowledgments**

I hereby acknowledge all Traditional Elders, past, present, and emerging. I am indebted to the Miriwoong people who discussed issues of language and land ownership with me, in particular Joolama. I am immensely grateful to Frances Kofod for allowing me to draw on her early research, recordings, and transcriptions of Miriwoong language with many now deceased Miriwoong Elders.

This paper is based in part on a presentation at the GAST conference 2018. I would like to thank the audience, as well as two anonymous reviewers, for insightful comments.

## **Abbreviations**

AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
GERAIS	Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
LOTE	Language Other Than English
MDWg	Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre
NILS	National Indigenous Languages Survey
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Ian D. Clark, Rolf Schlagloth, Fred Cahir, Gabrielle McGinnis

## Kurrburra the Boonwurrung ‘Wirrirrap’ and Bard (1797-1849)

A man of high degree\*

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Kurrburra (aka Mr Ruffy) (1797-1849), Aboriginal ‘wirrirrap’ (doctors, healers, bards), sage counsellor of his people, consultant with koalas, and heroic slayer of a feared orangutan-like cryptid that lived in the ranges north of Western Port, is believed to have been born in 1797, and was a member of the Yawen djirra clan, the eastern-most group of the Boonwurrung People whose Country stretched from Wirribi-yaluk (Werribee River) to Wammun (Wilsons Promontory) in Victoria. His moiety was Bunjil and in the early 1840s he had two wives: Kurundum (1819-?) and Bowyeup (1823-?), and two children, whose names are not known. Kurrburra’s traditional Aboriginal name is the Boonwurrung word for the iconic marsupial *Phascolarctos cinereus*, more commonly known as the koala.<sup>2</sup>

The Boonwurrung People were amongst the first of Victoria’s Indigenous Peoples to have contact with Europeans. They witnessed major events such as George Bass’s visits in 1798 and 1802; the visit of ‘Le Naturaliste’ in 1802; the short-lived penal establishment at what is now Sorrento in October 1803; the escape of the convict William Buckley in late 1803 and his travel through their lands until he arrived in Wadawurrung Country near Geelong; the second short-lived penal settlement in 1826 at what is now Corinella; and the eventual colonization of Melbourne in 1835.

In these intervening years the Boonwurrung also suffered from incursions by sealers and whalers, and the forced abduction of Aboriginal women, girls and boys. Added to this was internecine conflict between the Boonwurrung and their eastern neighbours, the Ganai,<sup>3</sup> with whom there was a blood-feud apparently over the Ganai’s unauthorized use of Boonwurrung natural resources, which saw numerous violent clashes between the two groups and considerable loss of life. From 1837 until 1849, Boonwurrung Country also functioned as a site for government initiatives designed to impress European values and customs upon

1 Cultural warning: Readers of this article should be aware that some of the archival records and publications of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contain words that are now considered offensive. Such words may appear in the article where a quote is made from these archival records or publications. The history also refers to persons who have passed away and to incidents of a distressing nature.

2 See Barry John Blake: *Woiwurrung, the Melbourne Language*, p. 112.

3 Native title groups now use the term ‘GanaiKurnai’.

\* This article was first published in the *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, 4, 2020, pp. 73-91.

Aboriginal people, including a government mission that operated from 1837 until 1839 at what is now the site of the Royal Botanic Gardens in South Yarra; the Native Police Corps; and the establishment and operation of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, from 1839 until its closure in late 1849.

Perhaps the best known Boonwurrung men in colonial Melbourne were two Yalukit-willam clan heads, Derrimut and Bullourd (aka King Benbow). Derrimut is famed for his role in preventing an Aboriginal massacre of the European settlement in Melbourne in October 1835 during its early establishment;<sup>4</sup> Bullourd was employed as a messenger by Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson in the mid-1840s. Both Derrimut and Bullourd were active in representing Boonwurrung interests and were instrumental in securing the reservation of Boonwurrung land at Mordialloc in 1852. However, this paper is concerned with Kurrburra, one of several Boonwurrung 'wirrirraps' (doctors, healers), who was recognized as an authority within his community despite not being a clan-head. Kurrburra's standing was confirmed in a recent publication, produced in consultation with the Boon Wurrung Foundation, as a "famous Boon Wurrung doctor, dreamer and diviner in early Melbourne".<sup>5</sup> Kurrburra is of particular interest because of the circumstances by which he acquired his name, and through the stories that exist of his powers and abilities. In reconstructing this biography of Kurrburra's life we will also examine the role of 'wirrirraps' in Victorian Aboriginal society.

In terms of contemporary published sources, we first learn of Kurrburra in a sensational account published in 1846 of an orangutan-like cryptid that lived in the mountains at the back of Western Port Bay, Victoria, and that the great doctor was the only person alive who had killed one of these creatures.<sup>6</sup> Other published primary sources include William Thomas's contributions to Smyth, and Bride;<sup>7</sup> contributions from William Barak to Howitt;<sup>8</sup> and analyses of a song of Kurrburra's by Torrance, and Tate.<sup>9</sup> However, it is in the recently published journals and papers of two officials of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate that we learn the most about Kurrburra: the writings of Assistant Protector William Thomas, and the Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson.<sup>10</sup>

Aspects of Kurrburra's history have been researched by Barwick, Wesson, Fels, and Clark.<sup>11</sup> On the basis of information provided by George Augustus

4 See Ian D. Clark: *You have all this place, no good have children*.

5 Meyer Eidelson: *Yalukit Willam*, p. 83.

6 See George Henry Haydon: *Five Years' Experience in Australia Felix*.

7 See Robert Brough Smyth: *The Aborigines of Victoria*; Thomas Francis Bride: *Letters From Victorian Pioneers*.

8 Alfred W. Howitt: *On Australian Medicine Men*; Id.: *Notes on songs and Songmakers of some Australian Tribes*; Id.: *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*; Alfred W. Howitt Papers: *Notes by Howitt on the Kulin nation from information provided by Ber-uk*.

9 See George William Torrance: *Music of the Australian Aborigines*; *The Argus*, 30 June 1923, p. 7 (Henry Tate: *Aboriginal Music*).

10 See Marguerita Stephens: *The Journal of William Thomas Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip & Guardian of the Aborigines of Victoria 1839-1867*; Ian D. Clark: *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*.

11 See Diane E. Barwick: *Mapping the past*; Sue C. Wesson: *Aboriginal flora and fauna names of Victoria*; Marie H. Fels: *'I Succeeded Once'*; Ian D. Clark: *Aboriginal Languages and Clans*; Ian D. Clark: *The Tara-Waragal and the Governor's Levee in Melbourne*, pp. 33-54.



Robinson, Barwick and Clark have identified Kurrburra as a member of the Yowengerre, the eastern-most Boonwurrung clan, which was associated with the Tarwin River watershed and Wilsons Promontory.<sup>12</sup> Blake renders Yowengerre as 'Yawen djirra', where 'djirra' is a plural marker.<sup>13</sup> They were also called the Yowen(w)illum, which means 'Yowen dwellers'. Yowen and Tarwin may be cognate. According to Thomas, however, Kurrburra was the head of one of the principal families of the Yallock-baluk, the adjoining Boonwurrung clan at Bass River and Tooradin.<sup>14</sup> This discrepancy is discussed below.

With the exception of two men, Kurrburra and Munmungina, Robinson noted on 1 July 1844 that the Yawen djirra clan was defunct.<sup>15</sup> According to Robinson, the clan had been exterminated by the neighbouring Ganai clan, the Boro Boro Willum. This supports the information that Thomas received from Pinterginner (aka Mr Hyatt) on 12 February 1840, that "all the blacks from Wilson's Promontory [...] to Kirkbillesse [near Tooradin] all this country where we now were [...] were all dead, not one left. Two Fold Black fellows [i.e. the Ganai] long time ago killed many many, rest all dead".<sup>16</sup> Fels has studied the internecine conflict between the Boonwurrung and the Ganai and has identified six instances of conflict between 1820 and 1846: a massacre of the Boonwurrung by the Ganai near Arthurs Seat circa 1820; a Ganai attack of the Boonwurrung at Brighton in 1834 where upwards of 77 Boonwurrung were killed; a Ganai attack about 1835 that killed 12 Boonwurrung at Kunnung, a river near modern-day Kooweerup; a Boonwurrung raid into Gippsland in February 1840; a retaliatory raid by 97 Ganai fighting men on 3 October 1840 when they trashed the huts at Jamieson's station and carried off their European plunder; a joint Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung sortie into Ganai country in May 1846.<sup>17</sup> Regarding the latter, an old warrior named Berberry explained to Thomas that "the Gippsland blks [blacks] are very bad men, steal & kill white man's bullocks & they gone to helpem white man too much frightened to gago bush".<sup>18</sup> We know the composition of the February 1840 and May 1846 avenging parties, and Kurrburra is not listed in either of them. Why he did not participate is unknown, but it is hard to imagine that he did not suffer some personal losses of family members through this internecine conflict with the Ganai.

In the ethnographic record, the following variant spellings of Kurrburra's name have been recorded: Car.per.rer / Carborer / Car.per.re / Carbora / Kur.

12 See Diane E. Barwick: Mapping the past; Ian D. Clark: Aboriginal Languages and Clans.

13 See Barry John Blake: Woiwurrung, the Melbourne Language, p. 48.

14 See William Thomas: Papers.

15 See Ian D. Clark: Journals of George Augustus Robinson. Munmungina (aka Dr Bailey) was the son of Purrine, the late clan-head of the Yawen djirra. Munmungina's own country was Tobinnurric Creek and Koornong Creek, Manton's and Jamieson's runs at Tooradin and Lang Lang. Purrine's country was Wammun (Wilson's Promontory). Munmungina died at Mayune on 16 August 1845 – see William Thomas qtd. in Thomas Francis Bride: Letters from Victorian Pioneers.

16 Marguerita Stephens: The Journal of William Thomas, Vol 1, p. 132.

17 See Marie H. Fels: 'I Succeeded Once'.

18 Thomas Jnl, 21 May 1846, qtd. in Marguerita Stephens: The Journal of William Thomas, Vol. 2, p. 176.



bo.roo / Kar.bor.er / Kurboro / Kurburu / Kurburra / Kaborer / Kurboror / Kub-burrough / Kurborough / Mr Ruffy.<sup>19</sup>

In 1841, Kurrburra supplied William Thomas with the names of the hills in the Yering district in the Yarra Valley and gave him information on their custodians, particularly whether or not they were extant.<sup>20</sup> Wesson postulates that there were two men named Kurrburra in Melbourne in the 1840s, a Boonwurrung Kurrburra and a Woiwurrung Kurrburra, and that the Kurrburra who supplied Thomas with this information is not the same Kurrburra that Robinson referred to above.<sup>21</sup> Clark has examined her reasoning for this division and has concluded that she is incorrect, and that there is only one Kurrburra, the man who is the subject of this biographical study.<sup>22</sup>

Kurrburra was also known as 'Mr Ruffy' or 'Ruffy', presumably after one of the Ruffy brothers (Arthur, Frederick, Henry, James and William), who kept a roadside inn at Cranbourne, east of their 'Tomaque' run (1836-50), and 'Mayune' run (1840-45) at Westernport Bay.<sup>23</sup> Henry and Arthur were at 'Tomaque'; and all five brothers were at 'Mayune' from 1840-45, and Frederick Ruffy, alone, 1845-50.<sup>24</sup> This name exchange may also be further confirmation of Kurburra's Boonwurrung connection. Although Kurrburra had taken the surname of the Ruffy brothers, the Ruffy brothers were situated on the estate of a neighbouring Boonwurrung clan, the Mayune-baluk. Given the tension between Kurrburra's clan and the adjoining Ganai, and the apparent violence between them, it is not unreasonable to assume that he spent as much time as possible away from the perceived Ganai threat. His being off his own Country may also explain Thomas' identification of Kurrburra as a member of the Yallock-baluk at Anderson's and Massie's station to the west of his traditional lands. It is possible that he had been adopted by these other clans – there are similar situations documented in south-west Victoria where surviving members of what were effectively defunct clans were adopted by adjoining, more populous, clans and in different census lists they were sometimes recorded as being members of both clans.<sup>25</sup>

Kurrburra was remembered as a 'bard' by William Barak;<sup>26</sup> he was described by Thomas as being held in high esteem as a sorcerer, a dreamer and diviner, a very wise man and a doctor.<sup>27</sup> Given that the eastern Kulin people considered 'kurrburra' (koalas) to be the sage counsellors of Aboriginal people in all their difficulties,<sup>28</sup> and that Kurrburra the bard was considered to be possessed of their spirit, it is not surprising that he too was held in high regard.

19 See Ian D. Clark: *The Tara-Waragal and the Governor's Levee in Melbourne*.

20 See *ibid.*

21 See Sue C. Wesson: *Aboriginal flora and fauna*, p. 16.

22 See Ian D. Clark: *The Tara-Waragal and the Governor's Levee in Melbourne*. This view is supported by Marie H. Fels: 'I Succeeded Once'.

23 See Ralph V. Billis, Alfred S. Kenyon: *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*.

24 See *ibid.*

25 See Ian D. Clark: *Aboriginal Languages and Clans*.

26 See Alfred W. Howitt: *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*.

27 See Robert Brough Smyth: *The Aborigines of Victoria*; Thomas Francis Bride: *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*.

28 See Thomas undated Mss written for Mr Duffy qtd. in William Thomas Papers. See also Rolf Schlagloth, Fred Cahir, & Ian D. Clark: *The historic importance of the koala in Aboriginal society in Victoria (Australia)*.

### ***'Wirrirraps' in traditional Aboriginal society***

As a 'wirrirrap' Kurrburra would have possessed the powers to heal and also to harm,<sup>29</sup> although, the ethnologist Alfred W. Howitt explained that medicine men were not always doctors; they "may be a 'rainmaker', 'seer,' or 'spirit-medium,' or may practise some special form of magic".<sup>30</sup> Some medicine men were bards who devoted their poetic faculties to the purposes of enchantment, such as the Bunjil-yenjin of the Kurnai, "whose peculiar branch of magic was composing and singing potent love charms".<sup>31</sup> The Reverend Francis Tuckfield, a Wesleyan missionary to the neighbouring Wadawurrung wrote in the early 1840s of his amazement in finding that in each tribe there was a 'wirrirrap' who claimed they could fly "contrary to the general established laws of Nature". Furthermore, he related how a Wadawurrung 'wirrirrap' had confirmed to the tribe that there was a Heaven, and that he had been there.<sup>32</sup> Missionaries such as Tuckfield were aware of the enormous influence 'wirrirraps' had on their communities.<sup>33</sup> Tuckfield wrote of the 'wirrirrap's' prodigious skills:

He is, they say, perfectly acquainted with almost all diseases and their cures, and in the case of death if he can be brought on the spot in a short time after the spirit leaves the body, he can bring the individual alive again. This he does by flying after the spirit and bringing it back.<sup>34</sup>

William Jackson Thomas, the oldest son of William Thomas, and who was intimately associated with his father's work in the Aboriginal protectorate, has written of the "medicine men" of the Boonwurrung. Given that William Thomas Jnr was with his father at Arthurs Seat, where he had his own pastoral station, we can be certain that he personally knew Kurrburra. Thomas Jnr wrote of the role of 'wirrirraps' in determining the identity of those responsible for unexplained deaths amongst the Boonwurrung. His account also confirms the feud between the Boonwurrung and the Ganai:

It appears according to the firm belief of all Black fellows that death is in no case (except accident) the result of natural causes, but is always the work of an enemy, of some other tribes, who causes the death by craft, charms, or muttering some form of imprecation [...]. After the man is buried, a space of about one foot is cleared all-round the grave not a blade of grass left, made quite smooth – the Graves are always round about four feet in diameter – The Medicine Men if there are more than one in the Tribe, make a long and careful examination of the ground so cleared, mumbling a monotonous sort of chant all the time, at length they find or pretend to have found the direction of the Tribe a member of which has caused the death – The Medicine Men of the Western Port Tribes generally spot a member of the Gipps Land tribes as the delinquent – This is noted as one against that tribe – after several deaths the cup of iniquity of the Gipps Land tribes is supposed to be full, and calls for punishment – For the purpose of inflicting this punishment eight or ten young strong men are selected, who are to show their skill and bravery

29 See Alfred W. Howitt: *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 365.

30 Alfred W. Howitt: *On Australian Medicine Men*; id.: *The Natives Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 355.

31 Alfred W. Howitt: *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 356.

32 G. W. Greenwood: *Reverend Francis Tuckfield's magnificent failure at Bunting Dale*, p. 11.

33 See Fred Cahir: *'My country all gone, the white men have stolen it'*, pp. 181 f.

34 Francis Tuckfield qtd. in Michael Cannon: *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835-1839*, p. 113.

in an expeditionary raid into the enemy's country – When they near the borders of the Enemies country they divide into parties of two or three advance in the most stealthy manner being careful to leave as little trail as possible, at length they find a weak detached little camp – they wait until they see the young men depart to hunt then they fall on the unfortunate old men and Women all of which they ruthlessly murder [...] This is no one-sided affair – for the Gipps Land Natives act exactly on the same lines. The Western Port Natives tell of many fearful slaughters of their tribe by the Gipps Land Natives.<sup>35</sup>

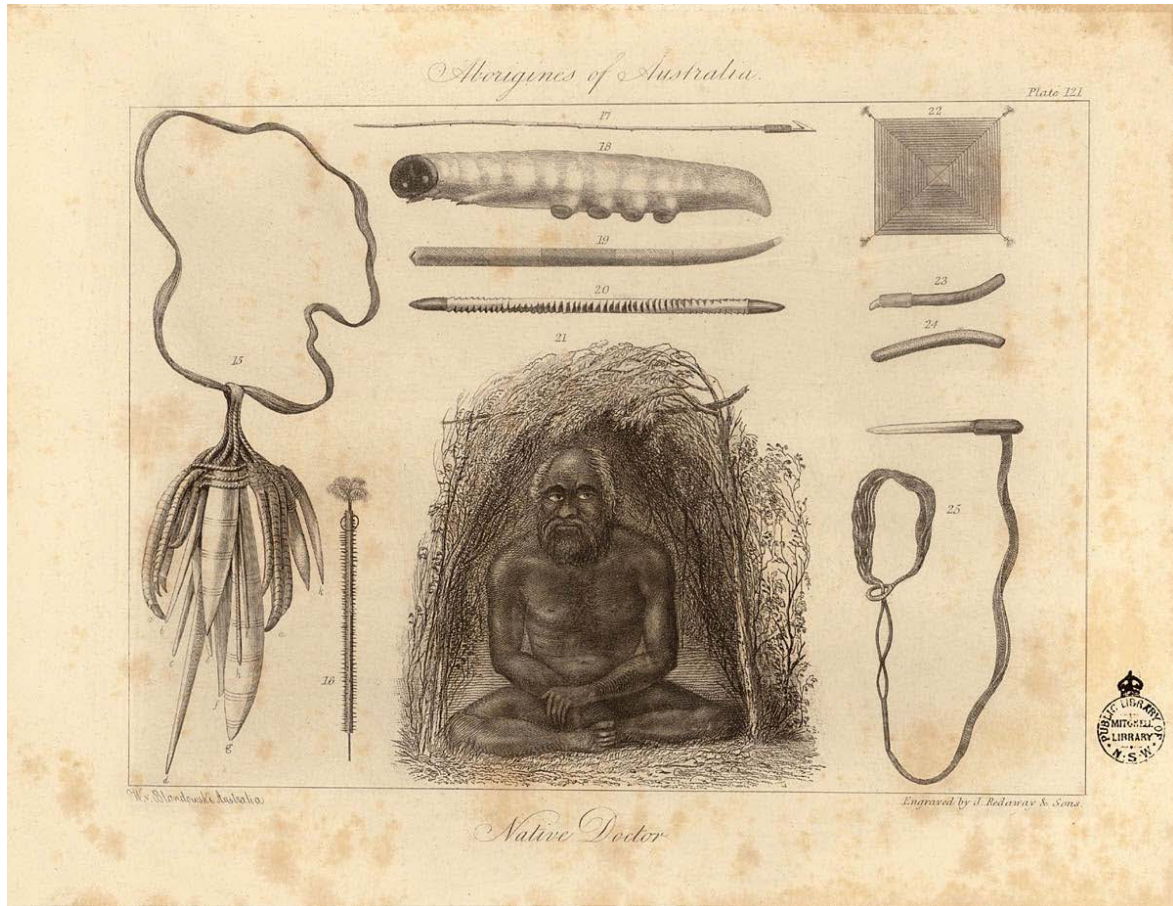


Figure 1: 'Native Doctor' William Blandowski

Henry Meyrick who squatted on Boonwurrung land at 'Colourt' (Coolart) on the Mornington Peninsula, in the 1840s, discussed Boonwurrung "doctors" in family correspondence. This part of the Mornington Peninsula belonged to Bobbinary, the 'ngarweet' (clan-head) of the Burinyung-baluk clan, and who was another famed Boonwurrung 'wirrirrap', so the following account probably refers to Bobbinary, although it is possible that it refers to Kurrburra.

There are four families of blacks with us. One of them is the doctor of the tribe. I saw him cure one of the other blacks of a pain in his breast. He made the sick man lie on his back; kneeling by his side, he began to thump the fellow's breast most unmercifully. On a sudden he jumped up, showing us an immense nail, which he said he pulled out of his breast. He then began singing, and threw the nail into the

35 William Jackson Thomas qtd. in Ian D. Clark, Fred Cahir: The Children of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, pp. 262 f.



sea, saying he had cured him. The patient ('Cognomine' Wougill, alias "Lively") was sufficiently recovered to go kangarooing with me next day.<sup>36</sup>

G.G. McCrae, in "a note on the aborigines of the coast" also discussed a "great 'doctor'" among the Western Port Aboriginal people, and it is possible that this is referring to Kurrburra, or Bobbinary:

There was always one great "doctor", as we used to call him, in the tribe. Among themselves he was known as the coradge, or wizard, and he was credited with supernatural powers. He was held infallible in surgery and in cures of disease, for if anything went wrong after his treatment the patient was to blame. By his incantations (made at the right time) he could procure for his followers either the rain or the wind they desired, and he besides possessed (in their opinion) the power of life and death over people, no matter at how great a distance.<sup>37</sup>

Aboriginal societies throughout Australia had their own healers, who were referred to in the nineteenth century literature as 'doctors', 'medicine men', 'sorcerers', and 'sacred men' (see Fig. 1).<sup>38</sup> In Victoria 'medicine men' were known by different names: for example, 'Wirrirrap' (Boonwurrung; Woiwurrung; Wadawurrung); 'Wavoit' (Daungwurrung); 'Bangal' (Wergaia; Wembawemba); 'Mekigar' ('one who sees') (Wiimbaio); 'Wurowuurn' (Dhauwurdwurrung); 'Lanyiwil' (Djabwurrung); 'Murri-malundra' or 'Budjan-belan' (Ngarigo); 'Gommerá' (Yuin); and 'Biraark' (Ganai).

Aldolphus P. Elkin has noted that an Aboriginal doctor was an "outstanding person, a clear thinker, a man of decision, one who believed, and acted on the belief, that he possessed psychic power, the power to will others to have faith in themselves".<sup>39</sup> He describes them as "men of high degree" – persons of special knowledge, self-assurance and initiative. Indigenous healers play significant roles in the religious, judicial, and therapeutic foundations of community life and they are often described as clever men and women. The word 'clever' resonates with a respect for the healer's extensive therapeutic knowledge and skill, and a degree of fear for their presumed mystical, supernatural, and spiritual capabilities.<sup>40</sup> Philip Clarke's assessment is that the closest equivalent in contemporary western medicine would be a professional who is both a general practitioner and a psychiatrist.<sup>41</sup> As Clarke explains, the role of the healer was to diagnose problems, advise on remedies, and suggest and perform ritualised healing procedures, explore the impact of community social and cultural issues upon the illness, and to reassure their patients that they could be cured.

Howitt explained that Aboriginal doctors did not exercise their powers gratis:

Presents were given them by people who had benefited by their art, and also by people who feared lest they should suffer from it. They received presents of weapons, rugs, implements – in fact, of all those things which are of value to the

36 Frederick J. Meyrick: *Life in the Bush*, p. 133. Fels: 'I Succeeded Once', p. 185, considers the doctor referred to is Wongoro, aka 'Old Doctor', another Boonwurrung wirrirrap.

37 George Gordon McCrae: *The early settlement of the eastern shores of Port Phillip Bay*, pp. 22 f.

38 'Native Doctor' William Blandowski, *Australia Terra Cognita*, W. v. Blandowski, Melbourne. State Library of New South Wales, Call No. PXE 864; IE No. IE1033358.

39 Adolphus P. Elkin: *Aboriginal Men of High Degree*, p. 10.

40 See Daniel Suggit: *A Clever People*, p. 8.

41 See Philip A. Clarke: *Aboriginal healing practices and Australian bush medicine*, p. 9.

aborigines, not forgetting a share of the game caught. Especially did they reap a harvest at the great gatherings.<sup>42</sup>

In terms of the making of medicine men, Howitt noted that the Wurundjerri (Woiwurrung) "believed that their medicine-men became such by being carried by the ghosts through a hole in the sky to Bunjil, from whom they received their magical powers".<sup>43</sup> Howitt observed that the "class of blackfellow doctors was almost extinct in the tribes of which I had a personal knowledge. [...] In those tribes with which I had friendly relations, the medicine-men were of the second generation, that is, it was their predecessors who had practised their arts in the wild state of the tribe. [...] The Wirrarap of the Wurundjeri [...] disappeared about the time of the early gold-diggings in Victoria".<sup>44</sup>

Dawson has noted that in south western Victoria, in the early 1840s, Tuurap Warneen, the clan head of the Kulurr-gundidj, the Djabwurrung clan that belonged to 'Kulurr' (Mt Rouse), was a "doctor of great celebrity in the Western District".<sup>45</sup> So celebrated was he for his supernatural powers, and for the cure of diseases, that people of various tribes came from great distances to consult him. He could speak many dialects. At meetings he was distinguished from others by having his face painted red, with white streaks under the eyes, and his brow-band adorned with the quill feather of the turkey bustard, or with the crest of a white cockatoo.

As well as being famed as a bard, G. H. Haydon, in his publication 'Five Years' Experience in Australia Felix', mentioned that Kurrburra was the only person now alive amongst the Boonwurrung, who had killed a fearsome creature, similar to the orangutan, that lived in the mountain ranges at the back of Western Port Bay.<sup>46</sup>

An account of this animal was given me by Worronge-tolon, a native of the Woorrong tribe, in nearly the following words:—"He is as big as a man and shaped like him in every respect, and is covered with stiff bristly hair, excepting about the face, which is like an old man's full of wrinkles; he has long toes and fingers, and piles up stones to protect him from the wind or rain, and usually walks about with a stick, and climbs trees with great facility; the whole of his body is hard and sinewy, like wood to the touch". Worrongy also told me "that many years since, some of these creatures attacked a camp of natives in the mountains and carried away some women and children, since which period they have had a great dread of moving about there after sunset. The only person now alive who killed one, he informed me, was Carbora, the great doctor, who had succeeded in striking one in the eye with his tomahawk. On no other part of his body was he able to make the least impression". All this might be very probable when it is considered that, in the time before the white people came, their golboranarrook, or stone tomahawk, was not by any means a sharp weapon.<sup>47</sup>

In a review of Haydon's publication, 'The Port Phillip Patriot and Morning Advertiser' mentioned his reference to killing native bears called 'Carbora' during an expedition through Western Port, and added that Carbora was "the name also

42 Alfred W. Howitt: *On Australian Medicine Men*, p. 47.

43 Alfred W. Howitt: *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 405.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 412.

45 James Dawson: *Australian Aborigines*, p. 58.

46 See George Henry Haydon: *Five Years' Experience in Australia Felix*, p. 66.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 65 f.; *Geelong Advertiser and Squatters' Advocate*, 16 July 1847, p. 1.

given to a native doctor".<sup>48</sup> The origin of Kurrburra's name is worthy of more consideration.

### ***The Origin of Kurrburra's name***

Kurrburra, the Bard, was named after the Boonwurrung word for the koala, 'kurrburra'. Indigenous people were often named after animals, and examples are easily found: Beruke, aka Gellibrand, a member of the Gunung-willam clan of the Woiwurrung, was named after the kangaroo rat, 'baruk'.<sup>49</sup> Robinson explained that at his birth a kangaroo rat ran past and so he was named.<sup>50</sup> William Barak, the 'ngurungaeta' of the Wurundjeri-willam clan of the Woiwurrung, was named after a small white grub found in a gum tree, 'bearuk';<sup>51</sup> Burrenun, aka Mr Dredge, was named after 'Burrunan', a large fish of the porpoise kind.<sup>52</sup>

There are two traditions as to how Kurrburra obtained his name. The first tradition, sourced in the 1840s, is that Kurrburra's parents gave him this name at his birth after a 'kurrburra' (koala) in a nearby tree made a noise. Thomas noted that the koala explained to Kurrburra's parents that their son "may always consult me".

When blacks dream of bears it is to warn them of pending danger. One Kurboro named after a bear was always consulted, he was so named because a bear made a noise up a tree under which he was born the father pretended that the Bear said the boy born under me may always consult me. Bears generally by the blacks are regarded & even consulted occasionally.<sup>53</sup>

Kur-bo-roo, a well-known Western Port black, and held in high esteem as a sorcerer, a dreamer, and diviner, was named 'The Bear', under the following circumstances. Kur-bo-roo was born at the foot of a tree, and during his mother's trouble a bear in the tree growled and grunted until Kur-bo-roo was born, when he ceased his noise. By this, it was said, the bear intended to show that the male child born at the foot of the tree should have the privilege of consulting the bears, and the child was called Kur-bo-roo. Kur-bo-roo attained to some excellence in his profession, and was regarded by all as a very wise man and doctor.<sup>54</sup>

Kurrburra's story is connected to the Boonwurrung belief that 'kurrburras' (koalas) are privileged and revered animals, and when people are in difficulty, they will seek advice from 'kurrburras'.<sup>55</sup> William Thomas experienced this first hand in November 1841 when in the company of Wougill (aka Lively), the man Meyrick had witnessed being cured by a wirrirrap at Coolart in 1840 (see above). Thomas and Wougill were looking for tracks left by the four Tasmanian Aboriginal people who had been involved in a shooting at Western Port Bay. They had

48 The Port Phillip Patriot and Morning Advertiser, 15 May 1847; also see Geelong Advertiser and Squatters' Advocate, 16 July 1847, p. 1.

49 See Barry John Blake: Kulin Vocabulary List.

50 See Robinson Jnl 15.10.1840 qtd. in Ian D. Clark: Journal of George Augustus Robinson.

51 See Alfred W. Howitt: Papers; Barry John Blake: Kulin Vocabulary List.

52 See Thomas qtd. in Fels: 'I Succeeded Once', p. 122; Blake: Kulin Vocabulary List.

53 William Thomas undated 'writing' for Mr Duffy qtd. in William Thomas: Papers.

54 William Thomas qtd. in Robert Brough Smyth: The Aborigines of Victoria, Vol. 1, pp. 447 f.

55 Boonwurrung, and other Victorian Indigenous groups' stories of kurrburra will be the subject of a separate paper.

travelled less than a kilometre when Wougill abruptly stopped. Thomas noted the following account in his diary. "Lively stop'd short, & says do you hear, I said me hear Bear or something, he stop'd some minutes & said no stooped [stupid] that fellow, he tells me no you go that way, come over here". Thomas attempted to "laugh him out of his superstitious notions", but it had no effect. "Lively said that Kurboro never told a lie". Thomas realised he needed Wougill's services, so he said to Wougill "well go where Kurboro tells you". Wougill took him back a distance where the koala was still grunting, and "not above a mile further we again came upon very fresh tracks" of the four people they were tracking. Thomas noted "I cannot state but I felt my surprise while he explained now you see no lie tell it Kurbora".<sup>56</sup>

Thomas also noted that dreaming of koalas was a sad omen, and recounted an incident at Narre Narre Warren, when Kurrburra dreamt he was surrounded by "bears":

When a black man dreams of bears, it is a sad omen. All the people are afraid when any one dreams of bears. One time, when there were about two hundred blacks at Nerre Nerre Warreen (on the Yarra) [sic], including about eighteen children attending the school, Kur-bo-roo had a dream. He dreamt that he was surrounded by bears. He awoke in a great fright about one o'clock in the morning, and at once aroused the whole encampment. Fires were suddenly set ablaze. The young blacks climbed the trees, cut down boughs, and fed the fires. The men, women, and children rushed hither and thither, displaying the greatest terror. I reasoned with them, sought to soothe them, endeavoured to control them; but all my efforts were useless. They fled from the spot where they had so long lived in comfort. By eight o'clock in the morning the forest was a solitude – not a soul remained; and all because of a dream of Kur-bo-roo.<sup>57</sup>

### ***The song of Kurrburra***

The second tradition of Kurrburra's naming was provided by the Woiwurrung 'wirrirrap' William Barak in the early 1880s. In conversations with Alfred W. Howitt, Barak told Howitt that Kurrburra was given this name because he once killed a 'bear' and its 'murup' (spirit) went after him, and taught him a 'gunyuru' (song). Howitt in a general discussion of songs and song making, refers to examples of the 'inspired song', a class of song, and also of the belief of the composer, that he was inspired by something more than mortal when composing it.<sup>58</sup> This observation relates to Kurrburra's song, in that Kurrburra was given the song by the spirit of a 'kurrburra' that he had killed. Strehlow, in a study of Australian Aboriginal songs, noted that "old Australian songs" were typically concerned with magic, religion, ritual events and sacred festivals, and included "charms against sickness; war songs, poems concerning the exploits of supernatural

<sup>56</sup> Marguerita Stephens: *The Journal of William Thomas*, Vol 1, p. 404.

<sup>57</sup> William Thomas qtd. in Robert Brough Smyth: *The Aborigines of Victoria*, pp. 447 f. The notation (on the Yarra) possibly added by Smyth would seem to be incorrect. This reference has caused some confusion and has often been taken to refer to Nerre Nerre Minnum (South Melbourne), but the fact that Thomas refers to a school, is clear indication that it is concerned with the protectorate station at Narre Narre Warren.

<sup>58</sup> See Alfred W. Howitt: *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 418.

beings; charms to control wind, sun, and rain; love charms; and songs of the homeland'.<sup>59</sup> The songs were regarded as having been composed by supernatural beings and were regarded as sacred and only fully-initiated men were allowed to sing them.

In conversations with William Barak, Howitt learned more about Kurrburra and his song, and revealed that Kurrburra had the gift of extrasensory perception and precognition:

As an instance he told the following: –“The Mūrūp give the Coroboree songs to the Wiriraps. A man called Kūrbūrū who lived at Dandenong used to be able to tell the Kūlin when the Berbira were coming after them to catch them.<sup>60</sup> This man was a Būnjil (Thara) his own name was Kūrbūrū (native bear) and he got it because when once he killed a native bear its mūrūp went with him. After that it taught him a “gūnyūrū”.<sup>61</sup>

Howitt discussed Aboriginal songs and songmakers in an 1887 journal article entitled ‘Notes on songs and Songmakers of some Australian Tribes’:

In the tribes with which I have acquaintance I find it a common belief that the songs, using the word its widest meaning, as including all kinds of aboriginal poetry, are obtained by bards from the spirits of the deceased, usually their relatives, during sleep in dreams.<sup>62</sup>

One must be struck by the existence in an Australian tribe of a family of bards, the prototypes of the “sacred singers” of olden times. The song is a good instance of this class of compositions, and also a good example of the belief held by these “sacred singers” that they were inspired by something more than mortal when composing them.<sup>63</sup>

As connected with magic, or rather with the supernatural, the following song may serve as an example. It brings into view a curious belief in some connection supernaturally between beasts and man and which is found in so many Australian beliefs and tales.<sup>64</sup> It was composed and sung by a bard named “Kurburu” who lived many years ago in the early days of the settlement of the country by the whites, near where the town of Berwick now stands, in the Western Port District. He was supposed to have killed a “native bear” and being possessed of its spirit (“murup”) thenceforth chaunted its song.<sup>65</sup>

Enagurea	nung	ngalourma	barein	gurukba	murnein
There	now	cut-a-cross	track	blood	?
burunbai	nganungba	lilira	muringa		
hurt	myself	chipped	tomahawk (with)		

Kurburu’s song

The singer, Berak, gave me the following free translation, “You cut across my track, you spilled my blood, and broke your tomahawk on me”.

At Howitt’s request, musical transcriptions were made of three songs (‘Kurburu’s song, Wenberi’s song and Corroborree Song’) and notated by the organist, composer and scholar, Reverend Dr George William Torrance.<sup>66</sup> Torrance interviewed

59 Theodore G. H. Strehlow: ‘Australian Aboriginal Songs’, p. 40.

60 Alfred W. Howitt: Papers, p. 26.

61 Ibid., p. 27.

62 Alfred W. Howitt: Notes on songs and Songmakers of some Australian Tribes, p. 330.

63 Ibid., p. 330.

64 Ibid., p. 332.

65 Ibid., p. 333.

66 See Aline M. Scott-Maxwell: Re-sounding Coranderrk, pp. 32-47.



William Barak, who sang each song, and then made a brief description of them.<sup>67</sup> Howitt published Torrance's transcription of Kurrburra's song (see Fig. 2) in his 1904 ethnography:<sup>68</sup>

Kurburu's song serves as an example of those which are connected with the supernatural, and it brings into view a curious belief, which is found in so many Australian legends and tales, of a supernatural relation of men and beasts. It was composed and sung by a bard called Kurburu, who lived during the early settlement of the country by the whites near where the town of Berwick now stands. He was supposed to have killed a "native bear," and being possessed by its Murup or spirit, thenceforth sang its song.<sup>69</sup>



"The above was repeated several times, without break or pause, omitting the 'intonation' at each repetition, and ending abruptly at the double bar.

Figure 2: Kurburu's Song.

Henry Tate was another who assessed the songs recorded by Howitt and transcribed by Torrance. He noted that "little is actually recorded in musical notation of the remarkable and characteristic sound fantasies that once rang throughout the length and breadth of Australia that the scattered fragments which have been preserved gather a constantly increasing musical interest and value as time goes on in Dr. Alfred W. Howitt's 'Native Tribes of Southern Australia' three dirge-like songs recorded by Dr. Torrance possess considerable rhythmic interest".<sup>70</sup>

Another was composed by Kurburu, a native minstrel who lived where the town of Berwick now stands. It was generally believed by the native composers that they were inspired by some mystic power, something "that rushes down into the breast of the singer". This belief is exhibited in Kurburu's song. Kurburu had killed a native bear and its Murup or spirit entered his breast and made him sing [...].<sup>71</sup>

67 See George William Torrance: *Music of the Australian Aborigines*, pp. 335 f.

68 See Alfred W. Howitt: *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 420.

69 Ibid., pp. 421 f.

70 *The Argus*, 30 June 1923, p. 7 (Henry Tate: *Aboriginal Music*).

71 Ibid.

### ***Kurrburra's engagement with the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate***

During the period from 1839 to 1844, Kurrburra was closely associated with the endeavours of assistant protector William Thomas. Thomas was heavily dependent on the senior Aboriginal men of his district whose knowledge of English was superior to his knowledge of local Kulin dialects.<sup>72</sup> These men, such as Kurrburra, were cultural intermediaries or 'go-betweens' whose knowledges of geography, natural history and ethnography were translated into the process of settler colonialism.<sup>73</sup>

Kurrburra was resident at Thomas's protectorate stations at Tubberubbabel, on the Mornington Peninsula in 1840, and at Narre Narre Warren in 1840. In terms of other localities he is known to have frequented, they include the Boonwurrung encampment on the south banks of the Yarra River, at Melbourne (1840, 1844), Arthurs Seat (1840), Tooradin (1840), Dandenong (1840), Kornwarra (Western Port) (1840), Toolum (Balnarring) (1840); Kurk Billessee (near Tooradin) (1840), and Kullurk (Coolart) (1849). Very little is known of Kurrburra between 1845 and his death in February 1849 at Kullurk.

Kurrburra is first named in Thomas's journal in an August 1839 list of Aboriginal people determined to go from Melbourne to Thomas's new headquarters at Arthurs Seat.<sup>74</sup> From this list we learn that Kurrburra was aged 42, and had two wives Kurundum (Quondom) aged 20, and Bowyeup, aged 16, and two children, details unknown.

On 12 March 1840, at 'Toorodun', Thomas noted that "a trifling altercation took place between Kurboro and another respecting" an Aboriginal woman, but on Thomas's interfering, Kurrburra desisted and said he was "no more sulky" [that is, angry].<sup>75</sup> Six days later, encamped at Dandenong, Thomas observed "Kurbur-rer a little sulky but pacified him".<sup>76</sup> The following month, Kurrburra was one of many sick Aboriginal people in Melbourne who were attended to by Thomas.<sup>77</sup>

On 7 June 1840, Kurrburra was at Thomas's Tubberubbabel station at Arthurs Seat.<sup>78</sup> On 5 July 1840 Old Tuart (aka Old Murray) persuaded Kurrburra and his family to leave the station, but Thomas overtook them and they returned to Tubberubbabel with him.<sup>79</sup> Thomas knew that the success of his district's protectorate stations was dependent upon his ability to ensure that leading Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung elders such as clan-heads and wirrirraps, and their families, spent as much time as possible at the stations. This was one of his motivations in cultivating relationships with community leaders, and partly explains his distress when they left the stations and in this instance his pursuit of Kurrburra and

72 See Rachel Standfield: *Protection, Settler Politics and Indigenous Politics in the work of William Thomas*, p. 5.

73 See Felix Driver: *Intermediaries and the archive of exploration*, p. 16.

74 See Marguerita Stephens: *The Journal of William Thomas*, p. 40.

75 Thomas Jnl, 12 March 1840, qtd. in Marguerita Stephens: *The Journal of William Thomas*.

76 Thomas Jnl, 18 March 1840, qtd. in *ibid.*

77 See Thomas Jnl, 12 April 1840, qtd. in *ibid.*

78 See Robinson Jnl, 7 June 1840, qtd. in Ian D. Clark: *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*.

79 See Thomas Jnl, 5 July 1840, qtd. in Marguerita Stephens: *The Journal of William Thomas*.

encouragement to return to the protectorate station. This instance also serves to highlight the colonial practice of 'strategic intimacy' whereby a colonial agent (Thomas), builds a working relationship with a local elite and cross-cultural broker (Kurrburra), to gain access to local knowledge, extend their reach, and thus improve their governance.<sup>80</sup>

In August 1840, Kurrburra speared one of his wives and was most remorseful afterwards. Her identity is not revealed. Thomas gave the following account of the dispute: "During my absence, Kurboro had speared his lubra [wife] & the encampment had been in a cabal, he came to me [ere?] I knew it & told me the tale said she no fetch me water & I big one sulky [angry], plenty sorry me, plenty cry, big one sulky, Marminarta, knowing that such is their custom, I reprov'd him, went to his lubra [wife] & dressed the wound they both seemed sorry".<sup>81</sup>

Thomas abandoned his protectorate station at Arthurs Seat in September 1840, and established a new station at Narre Narre Warren that same month. Over the next 18 months Kurrburra visited Narre Narre Warren on several occasions, coming and going as he pleased. For example, on 25 November 1840 he left the station with his two wives and others to go to Kornwarra, Toolum, and Kirkbillessee to catch eels, promising to return after five nights.<sup>82</sup> Kurrburra returned on 6 December 1840, and left after five days. Thomas noted that he left the station without saying good-bye to him.<sup>83</sup>

Thomas had established a ritual at the station where he greeted the residents in the mornings and bid them good night in the evenings, so the fact that Thomas mentioned Kurrburra's departing without bidding him farewell, is a clear indication that Thomas felt slighted. It also reveals the limitations of Thomas's influence in his role as protector.

On 31 March 1841, there was a major brouhaha at the Narre Narre Warren station involving Kurrburra's wife Kurundum who struck Mrs Wilson, the station manager's wife, because she would not give her any water, on the grounds that she could not spare any. Kurundum snatched some water and threw it into Mrs Wilson's face, and then struck her with her digging stick. William Thomas broke and burned Kurundum's stick in front of her as a punishment and cautioned that he would not suffer any insult to Europeans on the protectorate station. Kurrburra then punished his wife by spearing her in the arm. Thomas recorded "I was much displeased with Kurboro who was also in tears. I showed great sorrow & spirted water from my mouth for some time on the wound, pretended to mourn".<sup>84</sup> Kurrburra and his two wives returned to Narre Narre Warren on 7 April 1841,<sup>85</sup> and left on 30 April 1841.<sup>86</sup> On 7 June 1841, Jemmy, Mr Murray's son, and a nephew of Kurrburra, was stabbed and later died near Thomas Ruffy's Cranbourne Inn.

80 See Tony Ballantyne: *Strategic Intimacies*, p. 11.

81 Thomas Jnl, 6 August 1840, qtd. in Marguerita Stephens: *The Journal of William Thomas*.

82 See Thomas Jnl, 25 November 1840, qtd. in *ibid.*

83 See Thomas Jnl, 11 December 1840, qtd. in *ibid.*

84 Thomas Jnl, 31 March 1841, qtd. in *ibid.*

85 See Thomas Jnl, 7 April 1841, qtd. in *ibid.*

86 See Thomas Jnl, 30 April 1841, qtd. in *ibid.*

Cannon suggests the murderer was Kurrburra, although Thomas was told it was a Boonwurrung man named Yal Yal.<sup>87</sup>

In one of Thomas's notebooks there is a series of sketch maps of the mountains around Yering station in the upper Yarra district, drawn by William Thomas from information he gleaned from Kurrburra.<sup>88</sup> In the sketch maps there is a series of 53 mountain peaks and under each is annotation that provides the name of the peak and sometimes the name of the leading man of the mob or patriline associated with the peak, whether or not the associated mob is defunct ("all gone dead"), and other locative information. Thomas annotated the sketch maps "There can be no doubt from these names & ranges taken from an old wandering Black named Kurrburra (alias Ruffy) how particular the Blacks are of giving names to every portion of country [...]" The existence of these sketch maps is an important part of Kurrburra's legacy, especially as an interpreter of Aboriginal cultural heritage to Thomas, who assiduously recorded it.

Exactly when the sketch maps were produced is contested – Wesson suggests they date from 1842;<sup>89</sup> Stephens from 1844 or 1845.<sup>90</sup> Clark's analysis, working on the assumption that the sketches were made at Rylie's station, has confirmed that Thomas visited the district on at least four occasions: late August 1840, March 1841, July 1841, and March 1845.<sup>91</sup> All things considered; Clark believes the July 1841 date is the most probable. Kurrburra identified four peaks as "his country": Mown-nabil, Narn, Poromekerner and Noronedo. With regard to Mown-nabil, Thomas's annotation was "Very large high mount, Kurbora's country". Regarding Narn, Thomas wrote "Very high, Kurbora's country". Smyth noted that "there is a mountain named Narn in a mountain range north-east of Western Port which is inhabited by a strange animal named Wil-won-der-er, with a stone-like human form".<sup>92</sup> This strange animal may be the same animal that Haydon referred to in 1846. Regarding Porome kerner, Thomas wrote: "Very high. Kurbora's coun[try]", and finally, Noronedo: "Kurbora country Wagabil".

On 17 February 1842, Thomas recorded that Kurburra was involved in a "cruel punishment and fight" at Narre Narre Warren when he "seriously maltreated" his sister, "for marrying herself" without his consent.<sup>93</sup> Kurrburra, his family, and others left the station on 28 February 1842 for Western Port Bay.<sup>94</sup>

Thomas abandoned the Narre Narre Warren site in March 1842 and based himself at the confluence of the Merri Creek and Yarra River, from where he visited Aboriginal camps in Melbourne and the surrounding districts. Almost a year passes before Thomas next mentions Kurrburra in his journal, when on 11 February 1843, he wrote "Kurboro informs me that his sister's child is dead".<sup>95</sup>

87 See Michael Cannon: *Black Land, White Land*, p. 16.

88 See William Thomas Notebook qtd. in Robert Brough Smyth: *Papers*.

89 See Sue C. Wesson: *Aboriginal flora and fauna names of Victoria*.

90 See Marguerita Stephens: *White without soap*, p. 66.

91 Ian D. Clark: *The Tara-Waragal and the Governor's Levee in Melbourne*.

92 Robert Brough Smyth: *The Aborigines of Victoria*, Vol. 1, p. 455.

93 Thomas Jnl, 17 February 1842, qtd. in Marguerita Stephens: *The Journal of William Thomas*.

94 See Thomas Jnl, 28 February 1842, qtd. in *ibid*.

95 Thomas Jnl, 11 February 1843, qtd. in *ibid*.

The next we learn of Kurrburra is in November 1844, when he arrives in Melbourne and stays at Thomas's quarters at the Merri Creek.<sup>96</sup> In late November, Kurrburra and his wife were staying with the Boonwurrung at their usual encampment on the south side of the Yarra River, near the Princes Bridge. What had become of Bowyeup is not known. Thomas administered medicine to the ill Kurrburra on 29 November,<sup>97</sup> and again on 3 December, when Thomas gave him a "trifle to get bread & sugar".<sup>98</sup> Six days later, Thomas returned to the Yarra encampment and put a poultice on Kurrburra's hand.<sup>99</sup> Kurrburra and his wife Kurundum are listed in an 1846 census of Boonwurrung family connections.<sup>100</sup>

Thomas's final journal entry concerning Kurrburra is dated 27 February 1849, when working at Robinson's office in Melbourne, he heard news from a settler named Rutherford, that Kurrburra had died at Kulluk.<sup>101</sup> Kulluk is Coolart, at Sandy Point, on the Mornington Peninsula. The circumstances of his death are not known.

## Conclusion

This paper has resurrected from the colonial archive a fragmentary but nevertheless fascinating biography of Kurrburra, a Boonwurrung 'wirrirrap' and bard, who lived in the first half of the nineteenth century. He is at times an elusive figure as his engagement with colonial society was only partial, however, through piecing together the scattered information that survives in colonial sources, we have shown that Kurrburra, one of several famed 'wirrirrap' in colonial Melbourne, assumed a special place in the colonial history of the Boonwurrung people and the wider Kulin confederacy. Research of this kind is an example of bringing 'hidden histories' to the surface, and highlighting and celebrating 'forgotten heroes' in settler colonialism. Using selected materials from Aboriginal protectorate records and the settler colonial archive we have sought to bring to life the intermediary Kurrburra. Kurrburra's special talents ensured that in the eyes of William Thomas and others, he became a 'character' or minor celebrity in the literature of settler colonialism.

Kurrburra shared his name with that of the Boonwurrung name for the koala, and possessed of their 'murup' (spirit), he was renowned for his ability to receive the counsel of kurrburras, and had the gift of extrasensory perception and precognition. The spirit of a kurrburra had taught him a 'gunyuru' (song), that was relayed to Alfred W. Howitt by William Barak in the early 1880s. Howitt had Kurrburra's song described and transcribed by composer G.W. Torrance. Other than his healing and counselling faculties, Kurrburra was also famed for his heroic slaying of a feared ourangutan-like cryptid that lived in the ranges north

<sup>96</sup> See Thomas Jnl, 7 November 1844, qtd. in *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> See Thomas Jnl, 29 November 1844, qtd. in *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> See Thomas Jnl, 3 December 1844, qtd. in *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> See Thomas Jnl, 9 December 1844, qtd. in *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> William Thomas: Papers.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Jnl, 27 February 1849, qtd. in Marguerita Stephens: *The Journal of William Thomas*.



of Western Port. He was one of the last surviving members of the Yawen djirra clan, that had suffered at the hands of internecine conflict between the Boonwurrung and their eastern neighbours the Ganai. During the early years of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, he was closely associated with assistant protector William Thomas, who was responsible for the Western Port District. Another exemplar of Kurrburra's role as a cultural intermediary and informant for Thomas, was the detailed map of landscape features in the Yarra Ranges and the identification of Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung patriline associated with these named places.

Kurrburra died in late 1849, though the circumstances of his death are not known. Nevertheless, Kurrburra retains a very important place in the early history of Melbourne and the Aboriginal protectorate of the Port Phillip district.

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Joevan de Mattos Caitano

## Alphons Silbermann und die Neue Musik zwischen Darmstadt und Sydney in den 1950er Jahren

Perspektive eines Emigranten im Exil

*Abstract:* By the 1950s, Darmstadt had established itself as a platform for avant-garde music in Germany, attracting the attention of composers, instrumentalists, musicologists, journalists, and institutions worldwide. In the internationalization of the Summer Course, emigrants such as Alphons Silbermann (1909-2000) can be identified as driving forces. After the Second World War, he and the director Wolfgang Steinecke (1909-1961) worked at the Kranichsteiner Musikinstitut to invite Australian composers to Darmstadt and to inform them about new music from overseas. Based on the materials collected in the archives of the International Music Institute Darmstadt and in the Silbermann estate, the author traces the beginning of the reception of Australian music at the Darmstadt Summer Courses.

### Einführung

Die Rolle des deutsch-jüdischen Alphons Silbermann als Schlüsselfigur der australischen Musikszene in den frühen 1950er Jahren in Darmstadt ist untrennbar mit der Geschichte der Flüchtlinge während des Einwanderungsprozesses vor, während und nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg verbunden. Die erste große Migrationswelle von Deutschland nach Australien begann in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts, ab 1838. Im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland wurden weitere Emigrationsprozesse eingeleitet, und zwischen 1933 und 1939 wanderten etwa 9000 Juden aus Europa nach Australien aus, darunter auch zahlreiche Künstler. Zwischen Juli und September 1940 brachte das Schiff 'Dunera' 2442 "feindliche Ausländer" von Liverpool nach Australien.<sup>1</sup> Am 7. September desselben Jahres traf das Schiff in Sydney ein und brachte europäische Flüchtlinge mit ihren Hoffnungen, Ängsten, ihrer Ungewissheit, ihrem Mut und ihrer Bereitschaft, neu anzufangen und sich existenziell neu zu erfinden, nachdem sie den Trümmern des Krieges entkommen waren.<sup>2</sup>

Viele der Auswanderer sehnten sich nach Integration und Assimilation an einem anderen, fremden Ort, weit weg von der kulturellen Katastrophe des Heimatlandes. Im Jahr 1945 lebten knapp 15000 in Deutschland geborene Menschen in Australien, doch in den folgenden Jahren stieg dieser Prozentsatz erheblich an. Im Jahr 1954 erreichte die Zahl der Deutschen rund 65000, 1961 waren es etwa 110000, was einem Prozent der australischen Bevölkerung entsprach. Insgesamt wanderten zwischen 1945 und 1975 rund 135000 Deutsche nach Australien aus.

1 Alphons Silbermann: Zum Einfluß deutschsprachiger Emigranten auf das Musikleben Australiens, pp. 112-117; Matthias Pasdzierny: Alphons Silbermann.

2 Johannes H. Voigt: Von deutscher Auswanderung nach Australien und der Rolle der Musik – eine Annäherung, pp. 14-23. Die Exil- und Verfolgungserfahrung als Ausgangspunkt für die Argumentation während des Emigrationsprozesses wurde von Alphons Silbermann detailliert beschrieben. Matthias Pasdzierny: Wiederaufnahme, p. 245.

Der Volkszählung von 1991 zufolge lebten 112 000 in Deutschland geborene Menschen in Australien.<sup>3</sup>

Musiker wie der Pianist Peter Stadlen und die Komponisten George Dreyfus und Felix Werder machten auf australischem Boden die Erfahrung, im Exil zu leben. Die Möglichkeit einer festen Anstellung war von Tag zu Tag schwieriger geworden. Silbermann gelang es, ein Visum für Australien erteilt zu bekommen, doch nicht um als Musiker zu arbeiten, denn diese Möglichkeiten waren rar, sondern als Koch.<sup>4</sup>

Wie aus seiner niedergeschriebenen Aussage hervorgeht, wurden Alphons Silbermann und andere, die eine akademische Ausbildung absolviert hatten, in Australien daran gehindert, ihre intellektuellen beruflichen Kompetenzen zu nutzen, weshalb sie sich gezwungen sahen eine untergeordnete Position einzunehmen.<sup>5</sup> Entsprechend wurden anerkannte deutsche Musiker, die nach Australien auswandern mussten, nicht mit der gleichen Offenheit und dem gleichen Willkommen empfangen. Eine Ausnahme bildeten Richard Goldner und seine Mitstreiter in der 'Musica Viva', die sich der Kammermusik widmeten und denen es gelang, diese deutsche Tradition in ein von der englischen Ästhetik dominiertes Land zu tragen.<sup>6</sup>

Während ihres Aufenthalts in Australien stellten Silbermann und seine Mit Einwanderer fest, dass die australische Regierung den Flüchtlingen nur eine eingeschränkte Teilnahme an der Gesellschaft gestattete, da sie häufig als Zuschauer ohne kreatives Potenzial agieren konnten. Wenige intellektuelle Einwanderer erhielten niedere Universitätsabschlüsse; sie wurden aber nie eingeladen, sich in einer Weise zu beteiligen, die ihrer Position und ihrem Ansehen in Europa entsprach. Im Gegensatz zu den USA wurden Führungspositionen in Australien nur an Personen aus England vergeben. Migranten aus anderen Ländern waren ebenso wenig gefragt wie die Australier selbst, unabhängig von ihrem Hintergrund, ihrer Erfahrung und ihrem internationalen Ruf.<sup>7</sup>

Anfang der 1950er Jahre kämpfte Silbermann als deutscher Musiker in Australien um seinen Platz und führte eine Doppelsexistenz, indem er einerseits Hamburger verkaufte und andererseits als Musikwissenschaftler arbeitete.<sup>8</sup> In seiner Autobiographie 'Verwandlung' beschreibt Silbermann, wie er als deutscher musikwissenschaftlicher Vertreter aus dem Exil zurückkehrte und den Musikwissenschaftler Erich Schenk kennenlernte, der seit 1940 Professor an der Universität Wien und ab 1957 Dekan war.<sup>9</sup> Die Begegnung mit Schenk fand 1951 statt, als Silbermann nach Wien eingeladen worden war, einen Vortrag über das

3 Albrecht Dümmling: Die verschwundenen Musiker, p. 341.

4 Albrecht Dümmling: Uncovering Traces: German-speaking refugees musicians in Australia; Alphons Silbermann: Zum Einfluß deutschsprachiger Emigranten auf das Musikleben Australiens, p. 112; Manfred Brusten: [Rezension zu] Dümmling, Albrecht, p. 109; Matthias Pasdzierny: Wiederaufnahme.

5 Alphons Silbermann: Zum Einfluß deutschsprachiger Emigranten auf das Musikleben Australiens, p. 112. Siehe auch id.: Matthias Pasdzierny: Alphons Silbermann.

6 Michael Shmith, David Colville (Hrsg.): Musica Viva Australia. Siehe auch Suzanne Baker: Beethoven and the zipper.

7 Albrecht Dümmling: Die verschwundenen Musiker, p. 340.

8 Matthias Pasdzierny: Wiederaufnahme, pp. 240-244. Siehe auch id.: Alphons Silbermann.

9 Alphons Silbermann: Verwandlung.

“Musikleben in Australien” zu halten.<sup>10</sup> Alphons Silbermann arbeitete von nun an als Gastredner in Wien und Paris und positionierte sich als Repräsentant der australischen Musik in Europa.<sup>11</sup>

Die Musikabteilung der Australian Broadcasting Commission hatte große Verdienste für die Internationalität der Musik errungen. Zu den Vorboten des Internationalismus gehörte ein großes Kontingent an Einwanderern, die sich eine Existenz aufbauten und sich in das australisch-britische Gesellschaftsleben einfügten. Silbermann zufolge wies das Musikleben in Sydney einige Besonderheiten in Bezug auf die ‘Integration’ auf, da die Integration der Auswanderer nur eine Teilintegration war. Soziokulturelle Kontakte zwischen Australiern und Ausländern waren selten, da beide Seiten sehr zurückhaltend waren.<sup>12</sup>

Im Zuge der Anpassung strebten einige Einwanderer (nicht Exilanten) danach, in ihren ursprünglichen Beruf als Musiker zurückzukehren, doch einige erreichten nur eine untergeordnete Position beim Radio, andere gingen den Weg der freiberuflichen Arbeit. Mutige Männer schlossen sich zu einem Quartett zusammen und begannen, im privaten Rahmen und später auch öffentlich Kammermusikabende zu veranstalten, wodurch ein Musikgenre aufkeimte, das in Australien ein Erfolg war. Bei diesen Veranstaltungen bestand das Publikum zunächst hauptsächlich aus europäischen Einwanderern und einigen Australiern, doch nach und nach zogen die Konzerte viele Australier an, die sich für klassische Musik interessierten. Dieses Wachstum gab den Anstoß zur Gründung von ‘Musica Viva’, einem Verein zur Organisation von Kammermusikkonzerten, der ohne jegliche Subventionen, sondern nur mit privaten Mitteln gegründet wurde.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Australische Musik in Darmstadt in den 1950er Jahren***

In den 1950er Jahren hatte die musikalische Komposition in Australien noch kein respektables Niveau in den Medien erreicht, doch einige Komponisten wie Dulcie Holland, Miriam Hyde, Robert Hughes, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, James Penberthy und Dorian De Gallienne inspirierten die junge Generation.<sup>14</sup> Das Archiv des Internationalen Musikinstituts Darmstadt (IMD) bewahrt mehr als 50 Korrespondenzen zwischen Alphons Silbermann und Wolfgang Steinecke im Zeitraum 1951-1957 auf. Dieses Material zeigt Verhandlungen über die Aufnahme neuer australischer Musik in die Darmstädter Ferienkurse ab 1951. Ähnlich wie die Kontakte, die Hans-Joachim Koellreutter (damals lebte er als deutscher Emigrant in Brasilien) und Wolfgang Steinecke zwischen 1949 und 1957 knüpften, kamen die vom IMD und dem australischen Repräsentanten in den 1950er Jahren geförderten Verbindungen über das Netzwerk der Immigranten zustande. Sowohl Koellreutter als auch Silbermann waren Immigranten, die vor

10 Matthias Pasdzierny: Wiederaufnahme, p. 240.

11 Albrecht Dümmling (Hrsg.): Zu den Antipoden vertrieben.

12 Alphons Silbermann: Zum Einfluß deutschsprachiger Emigranten auf das Musikleben Australiens, pp. 112-117.

13 Michael Shmith, David Colville (Hrsg.): Musica Viva Australia. Siehe auch Suzanne Baker: Beethoven and the zipper, pp. 112-117.

14 Roger Covell: Australia's Music.

den Schrecken des Naziregimes flohen. Die erste Verbindung zwischen Silbermann und Steinecke ergab sich aus dem Brief vom 9. März 1951, in dem Silbermann berichtete, dass Edward Clark, Präsident der Internationalen Gesellschaft für zeitgenössische Musik, das IMD über eine Möglichkeit zur Entwicklung des musikalischen Austauschs zwischen Australien und Deutschland informierte. Wie Silbermann versicherte, war er, obwohl er offiziell in Sydney wohnte, mit einer Reihe von Vorlesungen in Musiksoziologie an der Pariser Sorbonne und an der Wiener Musikhochschule beschäftigt. Er erklärte Steinecke: "Ich werde Ende Juni in Frankfurt sein, um am I.S.C.M. Festival teilzunehmen. Wenn Sie Interesse haben, schreiben Sie bitte nach Paris".<sup>15</sup>

Steineckes Antwort erreichte Silbermann im Sydney Contemporary Music Center in Australien, als der Direktor des IMD das Interesse des australischen Soziologen an den Darmstädter Ferienkursen begrüßte. Wie aus der ersten Korrespondenz Silbermanns hervorgeht, würde er Ende Juni zum Festival der Internationalen Gesellschaft für zeitgenössische Musik nach Frankfurt reisen. Diese Nachricht inspirierte Steinecke und veranlasste ihn, Silbermann zu einem Vortrag über 'Die Situation der Neuen Musik in Australien' einzuladen, da eine internationale Vortragsreihe über die Produktion und Förderung Neuer Musik in anderen Ländern geplant war. Steinecke bedankte sich bei Silbermann für sein Interesse an den Darmstädter Ferienkursen und erklärte, er würde sich sehr freuen, wenn Silbermann gelegentlich nach Darmstadt käme. Dabei könne er über die Situation des Musiklebens in Australien sprechen, zumal das Kranichsteiner Musikinstitut Darmstadt (heute: Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt) eine enge Zusammenarbeit mit den Frankfurter Musikfestspielen pflege und eine Vortragsreihe über den Stand der Neuen Musik in verschiedenen Ländern plane. Steinecke erklärte, dass das knappe Budget keine besonderen Ausgaben zulasse, aber das IMD könne Silbermann ein Honorar von 100 D-Mark zahlen.<sup>16</sup>

Der Kontext der ersten Jahre der Ferienkurse war geprägt durch die Unterstützung mehrerer deutscher Emigranten, die von Wolfgang Steinecke eingeladen wurden, wissensdurstige Studenten über avantgardistische Musikrends des Auslands zu unterrichten.<sup>17</sup> Im Prozess der Internationalisierung der Darmstädter Neue-Musik<sup>18</sup> wurde Silbermann zu einer Schlüsselfigur für die

15 Brief von Silbermann an Steinecke. 09. März 1951.

16 Brief von Steinecke an Silbermann. 14. März 1951.

17 Dörte Schmidt: Remigranten und musikalische Vergangenheitspolitik, pp. 30-64. Siehe auch Siegfried Mauser: Emigranten bei den Internationalen Ferienkursen für Neue Musik in Darmstadt (1946-1951), pp. 241-248.

18 "Neue Musik ist stilistisch und zeitlich nicht genau abzugrenzen. Trotzdem kann man sagen, daß die Epoche der Neue Musik mit der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts anfängt (1908 entstanden die ersten atonalen Werke von Arnold Schönberg und Anton Webern). Der Begriff Neue Musik wird gebraucht im Kontrast zur 'alten', um den experimentellen Charakter und die betonte Neuartigkeit der Musik zu unterstreichen. Hingegen wird unter 'zeitgenössischer' und 'moderner Musik' oft eine Musik verstanden, die zwar in unseren Tagen geschrieben wurde, die aber nicht neu ist, weil sie sich auf alten Bahnen bewegt. Wesentlich für die Entwicklung der Neue Musik ist die Forderung des musikalischen Materials, das nach Theodor W. Adorno durchaus geschichtlich ist. Dadurch entstanden nach 1950 bei vielen Komponisten die Meinung, daß Neue Musik nur durch fortschreiten-des Zunehmen des Informationsgehalts der Struktur entstehen kann. Die meisten Komponisten der siebziger Jahre haben diese Ideologie verlassen; sie versuchen, mit einfacheren Mitteln allgemeingültige und teilweise neue artikulierten musikalische Aussagen zu

australisch-deutsche Verbindungen und bereicherte die künstlerische Atmosphäre dieser Veranstaltung, die durch den mutigen Blick des Direktors nach Übersee an Popularität zu gewinnen begann. In den frühen 1950er Jahren lebte Silbermann abwechselnd in Sydney und Paris und war daher in den beruflichen Erfordernissen entsprechend variabel. Silbermann teilt Steinecke mit, dass sein Brief ihn in Wien erreicht hat, wo er an der Universität lehrt. Silbermann bedankte sich für das Angebot, bei den Darmstädter Ferienkursen 1951 einen Vortrag halten zu können, bat aber um einen genauen Termin. Silbermann bestätigte den Erhalt von Steineckes Brief und schlug als Termin den 27. Juli sowie das Thema 'Die Stellung der Musik im kulturellen Leben Australiens' vor.<sup>19</sup>

Die Einladung zu Silbermanns musikwissenschaftlichen Beiträgen erfolgte auf Anregung von Steinecke, der eine internationale Tagung mit Vorträgen zur Musikproduktion aus anderen Kontinenten unter Beteiligung geladener Gastredner konzipiert hatte. Die 'Darmstädter Ferienkurse' fanden vom 22. Juni bis 10. Juli statt, und auf dieser Tagung erörterten Emigranten wie Alphons Silbermann die Situation der Neuen Musik in Australien, Hans-Joachim Koellreutter stellte die Neue Musik in Südamerika vor, Everett B. Helm berichtete über die Neue Musik in den Vereinigten Staaten und Antoine Goléa erläuterte den Kontext der in Frankreich entstandenen Neuen Musik.<sup>20</sup>

Die Dankbarkeit für die Teilnahme an den Ferienkursen 1951 kommt in dem Briefwechsel zum Ausdruck, den Silbermann nach dieser Veranstaltung an Steinecke schickte, als dieser zum Sommeraufenthalt nach Südfrankreich kam. Er schrieb:

Ich bin Ihnen dankbar für die Gelegenheit, die Sie mir gegeben haben, Ihren Studenten von meinem Land zu erzählen und ihnen die Wege der Musiksoziologie aufzuzeigen. Ich bedaure, dass ich nicht die Gelegenheit hatte, mich länger mit Ihnen zu unterhalten und würde auch gerne länger inmitten Ihrer Studenten bleiben. Nun, vielleicht beim nächsten Mal.

Silbermann blieb bis Juli 1952 in Europa, da er in den Präsidialrat der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Neue Musik gewählt wurde und mehrere Verpflichtungen hatte.<sup>21</sup> Die im IMD-Archiv aufbewahrten Briefe belegen, dass Silbermann 1951 in Darmstadt war, über die Situation des Musiklebens in Australien sprach und sich mit der Musiksoziologie auseinandersetzte. Allerdings wurde das Material seines Vortrags nicht im Archiv gefunden.

### ***Das musikalische Leben in Australien***

Der Nachlass von Alphons Silbermann ist bisher nur grob katalogisiert. Zwar war bereits von ihm selbst gut geordnet worden, allerdings konnte bisher kein Vortragsmanuskript gefunden werden. Im Dezember 1952 erschien jedoch ein

erreichen" (Milko Kelemen: Klangwelten, pp. 240 f.). Siehe auch Jörn Peter Hiekel, Christian Utz (Hrsg.) Lexikon Neue Musik.

19 Brief von Silbermann an Steinecke. 08. Juni 1951.

20 Antonio Trudu: La "Scuola" di Darmstadt; Gianmario Borio, Hermann Danuser (Hrsg.): Im Zenit der Moderne; siehe Daniela Fugellie: Musiker unserer Zeit, pp. 361-364.

21 Brief von Silbermann an Steinecke. 22. Juli 1951.



kurzer Aufsatz von Silbermann unter dem Titel 'Das Musikleben in Australien' in der Zeitschrift 'Das Musikleben: Monatszeitschrift', der sich möglicherweise auf den Vortrag stützt.<sup>22</sup>

In seinem Essay spricht Alphons Silbermann über das musikalische Leben in Australien. Bei der Betrachtung der kulturellen Dimension berücksichtigte Silbermann auch die klimatischen Bedingungen Australiens, denn das lokale Klima beeinflusst die interpretatorische und kreative Seite. Die subtropischen Temperaturen, die zwischen extremer Hitze und extremer Kälte schwanken, machten den Sommer für künstlerische Zwecke schwierig. Silbermann stellte auch fest, dass sich die australische Jugend intensiv mit Aktivitäten im Freien beschäftigt.

Ausgehend von diesen Aspekten, weist Silbermann darauf hin, dass die musikalische Entwicklung in Australien von Europäern gesteuert wurde. In den 1950er Jahren gab es in Australien fünf ständige Sinfonieorchester. In Sydney unter der Leitung des englischen Dirigenten und Komponisten Eugene Goossens, in Melbourne unter dem australischen Dirigenten Sir Bernhard Heinz, in Adelaide unter dem Kommando von Henry Kripps, in Perth unter dem Tschechen Rudolph Perarek und in Brisbane unter dem Australier J. Farnsworth-Hall. Alle diese Orchester wurden gemeinsam von der jeweiligen Stadt, dem Staat und der Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) gefördert.

Silbermann berichtet, dass die ABC die Konzertvermittlung in Australien praktisch monopolisiert hat. Jedes Jahr waren mehrere mehr oder weniger bekannte Solisten und Dirigenten mit australischen Orchestern auf etwa dreimonatigen Tourneen tätig. Ausländische Solisten reisten quer durch das Land und gaben in vier Monaten bis zu sechzig Konzerte. Sie gründeten 1936 das erste ständige Sinfonieorchester in Sydney. Zu dieser Zeit gab es in Australien insgesamt 1522 Abonnenten. Im Jahr 1951 waren es bereits mehr als 40000. Im Jahr 1936 veranstaltete die ABC 56 Konzerte, 1952 waren es 475. Zusätzlich zu den kommerziellen Rundfunksendern kontrollierte die ABC allein 36 Sender. In 90 Prozent aller Haushalte war ein Radio zu finden.

Der Aufschwung des australischen Musiklebens zeichnete sich durch das wachsende Interesse an Kammermusik aus. In den 1950er Jahren veranstalteten zwei lokale Gruppen (Sydney Symphony Orchestra und Sydney Musica Viva String Quartet) regelmäßig Konzerte in ganz Australien, die viele Menschen anzogen.

Silbermann sprach auch über das Interesse an der Musikkultur der Aborigines, die in einem Schutzgebiet im Norden Australiens leben.<sup>23</sup> Ihre Musik, die für Festlichkeiten bestimmt war, vermischte Elemente der polynesischen und

22 Alphons Silbermann: Das Musikleben in Australien.

23 Es ist wichtig zu betonen, dass der Dialog zwischen europäischen Kompositionstechniken und der Kultur der Aborigines in einigen Werken australischer Komponisten wie Isaac Nathan, Percy Grainger, Mirrie Hill und Clive Douglas Anklang findet, die es wagten, eine „einheimische“ moderne australische Kunst unabhängig von Europa zu schaffen... In den Arbeiten von Peter Sculthorpe gingen Techniken der westlichen Avantgarde eine Symbiose mit indigenen Themen und Materialien ein. Respektvolle Zusammenarbeit zwischen indigenen und nicht-indigenen Musikern ermöglichte im 20. Jahrhundert die Umsetzung von Interkulturalität in der australischen Musik. Peter Dunbar-Hall, Chris Gibson: *Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places*.

indonesischen Kultur. In den 1950er Jahren gab es bereits öffentlich zugängliche Schallplatten, die von Forschern auf Expeditionen aufgenommen worden waren. Trotz ihres melodischen Einfallsreichtums hatte diese reiche Musik nur wissenschaftlichen Wert. Weiße Volksmusik gab es in Australien nicht, denn der Ausdruck der australischen Volksmusik wurde durch Vorbilder aus England bestimmt, zu denen schottische, irische und englische Volkslieder gehörten. Der größte Nachteil im australischen Musikleben war das Fehlen eines Opernhauses. Eine Gruppe um den Dirigenten Eugene Goossens war jedoch bestrebt, ein Opernhaus zu gründen, zumal Australien über hervorragendes Gesangsmaterial verfügte. Die meisten jungen australischen Sängerinnen und Sänger zogen nach England, da es in den australischen Städten nicht genügend Raum für künstlerische Aktivitäten gab.

Laut Silbermann hatte Australien in den 1950er Jahren noch keine weltberühmten Komponisten hervorgebracht, aber es gab eine große Zahl kreativer Musiker im Land. Die meisten von ihnen vertraten die Schulen der englischen Romantik, des Impressionismus und der Neoklassik. Die Neue Musik hatte zu dieser Zeit noch keinen Boden gefunden.

### ***Alphons Silbermann als Vermittler zwischen dem Internationalen Musikinstitut Darmstadt und Don Banks in London***

Steinecke knüpfte weiterhin Kontakte zu Silbermann in Sydney und Paris. Sie treffen sich in Salzburg während des Festes der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Neue Musik vom 20. Juni bis 3. Juli 1952. Steinecke bat um die Einreichung von Werken australischer Komponisten im Alter zwischen 20 und 35 Jahren, die bei den für den Sommer 1952 geplanten Darmstädter Ferienkursen für die "Junge Generation" uraufgeführt werden sollten.<sup>24</sup>

1951 pendelte Silbermann beruflich zwischen Australien und Europa, weil er eine Umfrage beim französischen Rundfunk in Paris durchführte und mit der Vorbereitung seines neuen Buches 'Introduction a une Sociologie de la Musique' beschäftigt war, das später bei Press Universitaire erschien. Das Treffen mit Steinecke beim Salzburger Musikfest wurde von Silbermann als geeignete Gelegenheit gesehen, offiziell freundschaftliche Gespräche zu führen, um einige interessante Ideen und Projekte der Zusammenarbeit zwischen IMD und australischen Musikern zu verwirklichen. Auf Steineckes Anfrage nach Namen australischer Komponisten für die "Konzerte für die junge Generation in Darmstadt" vermittelte Silbermann den Kontakt zu dem in London lebenden Komponisten Don Banks.<sup>25</sup>

In seiner Autobiographie berichtet Silbermann, dass er während seines Aufenthalts in Paris zweimal London besuchte. Bei der ersten Reise ging es um den Kauf eines Autos, bei der zweiten um die Herstellung einer Verbindung zur

24 Brief von Steinecke an Silbermann. 15. November 1951; Anton Haefeli: Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik (IGNM).

25 Brief von Silbermann an Steinecke. 29. Dezember 1951.



Zentrale der Internationalen Gesellschaft für zeitgenössische Musik in London. Silbermann war an der Gründung der australischen Sektion zur Förderung der zeitgenössischen Musik beteiligt und bekleidete den Posten des Vizepräsidenten. Über das Büro der International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) erhielt er eine Liste mit Adressen von Schwestergesellschaften auf dem europäischen Kontinent.<sup>26</sup> Silbermann lebte zu dieser Zeit in Australien, ließ sich jedoch im Winter 1951 vorübergehend in Paris nieder. Er wusste, dass London ein willkommenes Zentrum für australische Musiker war, die ihre musikalischen Kenntnisse erweitern und sich für ihre Rückkehr nach Australien einen Ruf erwerben wollten, sowie für diejenigen, die davon träumten, eine respektable Karriere in Europa aufzubauen.<sup>27</sup> Wie aus einigen Korrespondenzen hervorgeht, spielte Silbermann eine wichtige Rolle bei der Herstellung der Kommunikation zwischen dem IMD und jungen Komponisten, die in Australien und London arbeiteten.

1950 zog Don Banks nach Europa, um bei Matyas Seiber Komposition zu studieren. 1952 gründete er zusammen mit der australischen Komponistin Margaret Sutherland die Australian Music Association (AMA) in London.<sup>28</sup> Diese diente als Plattform zur Förderung und Verbreitung der Werke australischer Komponisten und Interpreten in Europa.<sup>29</sup>

Die Bedeutung von Don Banks als Bindeglied zwischen Australien und Europa in den frühen 1950er Jahren machte diesen jungen visionären Komponisten zu einem potenziellen Vermittler, der eine Empfehlung für die Teilnahme an den Internationalen Ferienkursen für Neue Musik in Darmstadt verdient hatte. Silbermanns Vorschlag wurde von Steinecke mit großem Interesse aufgenommen.<sup>30</sup>

Vom London Contemporary Music Center (Britische Sektion der Internationalen Gesellschaft für zeitgenössische Musik in Verbindung mit dem Arts Council

26 Alphons Silbermann: *Verwandlung*, pp. 334 f.

27 Stephen Alomes: *When London Calls*.

28 Um den Werdegang von Don Banks zu verstehen, muss man den Prozess der Auswanderung einiger australischer Künstler auf andere Kontinente und europäischer Künstler nach Australien zu verschiedenen Zeiten betrachten. In der australischen Kompositionslandschaft vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg sind Namen wie Percy Grainger, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, Margaret Sutherland in der Migrationsbewegung zu anderen Kontinenten zu finden. Diese historische Migration nach Europa motivierte später australische Künstler, die in London ein Feld vielversprechender Möglichkeiten sahen. Zwischen den 1940er und 1970er Jahren zogen weitere australische Komponisten und Interpreten nach London. Trotz der hervorragenden Möglichkeiten, die Sydney in den frühen 1940er Jahren bot, entschieden sich vier junge Studenten auf der Suche nach musikalischer Vertiefung in London: Patricia Tuckwell (Geigerin), Richard Farrell (neuseeländischer Pianist), Lois Simpson (Cellistin) und Charles Mackerras (Dirigent). Auf die Seereise dieser vier Musiker während des Zweiten Weltkriegs folgten weitere Musiker der Nachkriegszeit, die ebenfalls nach neuen Horizonten strebten: Barry Tuckwell, Joan Sutherland, David Lumsdaine, Roger Woodward, Geoffrey Tozer, Piers Lane, Geoffrey Parsons, Geoffrey Chard, Malcolm Williamson und Don Banks. Don Banks und andere australische Musiker mussten sich mit anderen Jobs durchschlagen, um in London zu überleben. Er arbeitete, indem er innerhalb einer vorgegebenen Frist Aufträge für Film- und Fernsehkompositionen entgegennahm und ablieferte; Malcolm Williamson spielte in Nachtclubs eine Mischung aus Jazz und kubanischer Musik am Klavier. Zu Don Banks und der Australian Music Association in London siehe die folgenden Referenzen: David Symons: *Die Musik von Margaret Sutherland*. Stephen Alomes: *When London Calls*. Jillian Graham: *Composer, wife and mother*. Michael Hooper: *Australian Music and Modernism, 1960-1975*, pp. 31-60.

29 Stephen Alomes: *When London Calls*, pp. 145 f.

30 Brief von Steinecke an Silbermann. 17. Januar 1952.

of Great Britain) aus nahm Don Banks 1952 Kontakt zu Wolfgang Steinecke auf. Im Auftrag von Humphrey Searle hatte Don Banks an das IMD geschrieben und die Partitur seines 'Duos für Violine und Cello' (1951) geschickt, weil Herr Searle berichtete, dass das Kranichsteiner Musikinstitut an der Aufführung einiger neuer Werke junger Komponisten interessiert sei. Banks reichte sein kompositorisches Werk ein und erklärte, dass sein "Duo" kürzlich den Edwin Evans Memorial (London, 1952) gewonnen hatte und im Februar von Emanuel Hurwitz und Vivien Joseph uraufgeführt wurde. Dieses Werk wurde auch von der Jury der 'Internationalen Gesellschaft für zeitgenössische Musik' ausgewählt, die die australische Sektion vertritt, und wurde dort im Juni während der ISMC-Musikfestspiele in Salzburg aufgeführt. Die Dauer des Werks beträgt etwa 15 Minuten. Banks kündigte an, dass er bei der Uraufführung des Werks in Salzburg dabei sein würde und Darmstadt besuchen wollte, um Steinecke zu treffen.<sup>31</sup>

Die Aufführung von Banks' Werk war 1952 nicht möglich, weil das Programm der Ferienkurse bereits schematisiert worden war. Das Werk wurde nach der festgesetzten Frist eingereicht, was Don Banks sicherlich nicht wusste. Nichtsdestotrotz versicherte Steinecke, dass die Türen für Don Banks offen stünden, um sein Stück 1953 erneut einzureichen.<sup>32</sup> 1953 wurden seine 'Four Pieces for Orchestra' von der British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in London aufgeführt. Trotz der Verfügbarkeit für die Aufführung bei den Konzerten in Darmstadt in jenem Jahr gibt es keine Belege für einen Briefwechsel zwischen Don Banks und dem IMD im Jahr 1953. Banks blieb hartnäckig und schrieb 1954 an Steinecke:

I hope that by now my Sonata For Violin And Piano has arrived from Schott & Co. Ltd., as I wished it to be considered for this year's Festival at Darmstadt. Perhaps you may remember my name as I submitted my 'Duo for Violin & Cello' to you in 1952, unfortunately too late for consideration, but you said I would be invited to submit for another year.

I trust that this Sonata will interest you – it had 4 public performances in London last year, was broadcast in the New Music Series of the BBC 3<sup>rd</sup> Programme, selected as the Australian work to be recorded under the UNESCO Recording Scheme and was chosen this year by the British Jury of the ISCM as one of the 6 British works for the 1954 ISCM Festival.

[...]

Works include:

Duo For Violin & Cello (1951) – (performed ISCM Festival, Salzburg, 1952)

Divertimento For Flute & String Trio (1951)

Four Pieces For Orchestra (1953)

Psalm 70 For Soprano And Chamber Orchestra (1953)

Three Studies For Cello And Piano (1954)

Sonata For Violin And Piano (1952)

Songs, Folk-Song arrangements etc.,

I intend to visit Darmstadt this year so would appreciate details of the Festival when they are available. Once again, hoping my Sonate may prove of interest.<sup>33</sup>

Banks' Werk wurde 1954 vom IMD angenommen. Steinecke berichtete, dass er vom Schott-Verlag in London die Violinpartitur der 'Sonate' für die jährlich in

31 Brief von Banks an Steinecke. 26. Mai 1952.

32 Brief von Steinecke an Banks. 4. Juni 1952.

33 Brief von Banks an Steinecke. 25. Februar 1954, original emphasis removed.

Darmstadt stattfindenden Konzerte der jungen Komponistengeneration erhalten hatte. Das Programm der Ferienkurse 1954, einschließlich der Konzerte, wurde bis März erstellt und abgeschlossen. Steinecke hatte Banks gebeten, weitere Kammermusikwerke wie 'Cello und Klavier', 'Duo für Violine und Cello', 'Fun für Flöte' und 'Streichtrio' zur Begutachtung einzusenden. Er hatte außerdem seinen großen Wunsch geäußert, Don Banks in Darmstadt zu Gast zu haben.<sup>34</sup> Die Uraufführung des Werkes von Don Banks wurde von Steinecke bestätigt, indem er erklärte, dass die 'Sonate für Violine und Klavier' für die Konzerte der jungen Komponistengeneration ausgewählt wurde. Die aufgeführten Komponisten erhielten ein Vollstipendium, das Unterkunft, Verpflegung und freien Zugang zu allen Konzerten und Seminaren während der Ferienkurse umfasste. Dem Dokument waren die Prospekte der Ferienkurse 1954 und das Bewerbungsfomular beigelegt. Steinecke bat um eine kurze Biographie, die an das IMD geschickt werden sollte.<sup>35</sup>

Banks sagte, er werde mit seiner Frau und zwei Freunden (Peter Fricker und Helen Fricker) nach Darmstadt reisen. Bezüglich des freien Zugangs zu den vom IMD angebotenen Seminaren erklärte Don Banks gegenüber Steinecke: "Ich würde gerne an den Kompositionsvorträgen von Ernst Krenek teilnehmen, aber da ich annehme, dass sie in deutscher Sprache gehalten werden, wäre das für mich schwierig".<sup>36</sup> Die Teilnahme von Don Banks als Vertreter der neuen australischen Musik an diesen Ferienkursen im Jahr 1954 war sehr wichtig für die Beziehung Darmstadt-Australien. Im Rahmen dieses Treffens im Sommer 1954 kamen mehrere Namen der alten und neuen Generation hinzu, die professionell zu dem hervorragenden Niveau der Vorträge, Diskussionen, Seminare, Konzerte und Bewertungen beitrugen.<sup>37</sup>

Don Banks setzte sich mit Steinecke in Verbindung und äußerte, dass er den kurzen Aufenthalt bei den Darmstädter Seminaren im August desselben Jahres genossen habe, weil es für ihn eine sehr lehrreiche Zeit gewesen sei. Er wolle unbedingt wieder nach Darmstadt kommen. Der australische Komponist wolle Deutsch lernen, um aktiv an den Kursen für neue Musik teilnehmen zu können. Wahrscheinlich schränkten seine mangelnden Deutschkenntnisse den Prozess der Interaktion und Teilhabe während der Vorlesungen und Diskussionen in Darmstadt ein.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Der Aufenthalt von Silbermann in Paris [Radiodiffusion française]***

Am 17. Januar 1952 schrieb Silbermann einen Brief in französischer Sprache an Steinecke, in dem er offiziell mitteilte, dass er eine von Radiodiffusion française geförderte Forschungsarbeit über "soziologische Aspekte der Musik im Radio" koordiniere, und für dieses Engagement in Paris lud Silbermann Steinecke ein,

34 Brief von Steinecke an Banks. 8. März 1954.

35 Brief von Steinecke an Banks. 11. Mai 1954.

36 Brief von Banks an Steinecke. 5. Juni 1954.

37 Antonio Trudu: La "Scuola" di Darmstadt, pp. 115-122.

38 Brief von Banks an Steinecke. 19. September 1954.

sich an diesem Projekt zu beteiligen, und informierte ihn über die Existenz von Veröffentlichungen in Deutschland, die sich mit diesem Thema befassen.<sup>39</sup> Aus der im IMD-Archiv aufbewahrten Korrespondenz geht hervor, dass Steinecke und Silbermann ein Interesse daran hatten, Fragen der Musiksoziologie zu erörtern. In dem Brief vom 10. April 1952 teilte Steinecke Silbermann mit, dass es im Umfeld der Darmstädter Ferienkurse Professoren gebe, die auf diesem Gebiet arbeiten, insbesondere Prof. Dr. Theodor Wieselgrund Adorno (Frankfurt), Prof. Dr. Hans Mayer (Leipzig) und Prof. Kurt Blaukopf in Wien, die Arbeiten über Musik und Soziologie veröffentlicht hätten. Die Anwesenheit Silbermanns bei den 'Ferienkursen' 1952 sei wichtig, um Debatten über die Produktion zeitgenössischer Musik und die positiv verlaufenden Konzerte der Neuen Musikgeneration anzuregen. Steinecke versicherte, dass Silbermanns Arbeit bei Radiodiffusion-télévision in Paris als Plattform in Zusammenarbeit mit dem IMD für die Verbreitung der bei den Konzerten in Darmstadt aufgeführten Werke wichtig sei.<sup>40</sup>

Weitere Briefe zwischen Steinecke und Silbermann im Laufe des Jahres 1952 belegen, dass sie Informationen über den australischen musikalischen Kontext, über Radiodiffusion-télévision française 37, Rue de l'Université Paris VII und über die Projekte der Neuen Musikkurse in Darmstadt austauschten. In einem Dokument vom 3. Juni 1952 bittet Steinecke um ein Exemplar des von Silbermann verfassten und von der Presse Universitaire herausgegebenen Buches 'L'introduction a la Sociologie de la musique' zur Archivierung in der Bibliothek des Kranichsteiner Musikinstituts und bedauert die Abwesenheit des australischen Vertreters in Europa im Juli, da es ihm unmöglich sei, an den Darmstädter Ferienkursen 1952 teilzunehmen. Trotz der Unmöglichkeit von Silbermanns Besuch in diesem Jahr hielt Steinecke die Tür für den australischen Soziologen offen, bei anderer Gelegenheit, vielleicht 1953, an den Ferienkursen teilzunehmen. Die Zusammenarbeit des IMD mit Silbermann in Australien wurde durch die Zusendung von Programmen und Prospekten erweitert, die jährlich über das Geschehen im Darmstädter Musikleben informierten.<sup>41</sup> Die Notwendigkeit, 1953 aus beruflichen Gründen nach Europa zurückzukehren, bestätigte Silbermann in einem Brief, den er nach seiner Rückkehr nach Sydney schrieb. Zu dieser Zeit schickte Steinecke Silbermann auch ein Buch mit einem historischen Überblick über sieben Jahre vom Kranichsteiner Musikinstitut geförderter Werke.<sup>42</sup> Der australische Soziologe hatte vor, Kranichstein zu besuchen, wie aus seinem Brief an Steinecke vom 5. Dezember 1952 hervorgeht, den er von Radiodiffusion-télévision française erhielt. Silbermann, der zu internationalen Kongressen der Soziologie eingeladen wurde, thematisiert, dass er seine Pläne für die Kranichsteiner Kurse im Jahr 1953, die er persönlich mit Steinecke besprochen hat, ausarbeiten möchte. Er verwies auf die Studie zur "Musiksoziologie im Rundfunk", die in der Musikzeitschrift Schott veröffentlicht wurde, sowie auf seine Arbeit zur

39 Brief von Silbermann an Steinecke. 17. Januar 1952. Siehe auch: Alphons Silbermann: Verwandlung, pp. 310 f.

40 Brief von Steinecke an Silbermann. 10. April 1952.

41 Brief von Steinecke an Silbermann. 3. Juni 1952.

42 Brief von Steinecke an Silbermann. 17. Oktober 1952.



“organisierten Kultur”, die in der Zeitschrift für Soziologie in Köln erschien. Silbermann erwähnte auch die Punkte, die Herbert Eimert in seinem Artikel über “elektronische Musik” in seinem Pamphlet zum Ausdruck brachte, und argumentierte über die wichtige Rolle des Rundfunks im Zusammenhang mit der französischen Übertragung.<sup>43</sup>

1953 erhielt das IMD ein Memorandum für die Presse, das vom Internationalen Komitee des Centre de Documentation de Musique Internationale (CDMI) unter der Leitung von Dr. Alphons Silbermann geschickt wurde. Darin wird auf das Internationale Musikfestival hingewiesen, das vom CDMI in Paris in Zusammenarbeit mit Radiodiffusion française veranstaltet wird und für Ende September 1954 in Paris geplant ist. In dem Dokument wurde mitgeteilt, dass das Festival sechs Konzerte veranstalten wollte, die hauptsächlich der Dokumentation zeitgenössischer Musik gewidmet waren, und dass die Auswahl der aufzuführenden Werke (symphonische Musik oder Kammermusik) von einer internationalen Jury des CDMI getroffen werden würde. Die Komponisten wurden gebeten, ihre Werke bis spätestens 31. Dezember 1953 bei den örtlichen Delegierten des CDMI einzureichen, und sie sollten die Aufführungsdauer von etwa 30 Minuten nicht überschreiten.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Die Probleme des Rundfunks und der Musik***

Neben der offiziellen Korrespondenz, in der Projekte zur neuen Musik in Australien, Frankreich, Darmstadt usw. vorgestellt wurden, waren die ‘Donaueschinger Musiktage’ ein wichtiger Ort, um die persönliche Begegnung von Steinecke und Silbermann zu ermöglichen. Aus dem Dokument vom 5. März 1954 geht hervor, dass Silbermann einen Aufenthalt im IMD plante, um “die Probleme des Rundfunks und der Musik” zu behandeln, da er über den französischen Rundfunk forschte und einen internationalen Kongress zu diesen Themen im Rahmen des CDMI-Festivals organisieren wollte. Er erklärt dies in seiner längeren Vortragsreihe in Frankreich zu diesen Themen und auch an der Universität in Freiburg. Am Ende des Briefes schrieb Silbermann: “Ich möchte Kranichstein eine Vortragsreihe (oder ein Seminar) über die Funktionen der Übertragung 1) Musiker 2) Musik und 3) Gesellschaft vorschlagen. In einer solchen Reihe würde ich nicht auf kompositionstechnische Fragen eingehen. Wenn Sie es wünschen, würde ich Ihnen gerne ein detailliertes Programm zusenden. Bitte lassen Sie mich wissen, ob Sie an diesem Vorschlag interessiert sind”.<sup>45</sup>

Nach seiner Rückkehr aus Rom wurde Silbermann von Steinecke eingeladen, an den ‘Darmstädter Ferienkursen’ 1954 teilzunehmen. Trotz Silbermanns ursprünglich geäußertem Interesse, musste er die Teilnahme an den Ferienkursen absagen, weil er mit einem anderen Projekt beschäftigt war. Der Gedanke an eine mögliche Teilnahme an den Ferienkursen 1955 blieb bestehen, und

43 Brief von Silbermann an Steinecke. 05. Dezember 1952.

44 Brief von Silbermann an das Internationale Musikinstitut Darmstadt. 1953.

45 Brief von Silbermann an Steinecke. 05. März 1954.

Silbermann äußerte den Wunsch, Steinecke beim CDMI-Festival in Paris persönlich zu treffen.<sup>46</sup> Die im Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt archivierte Dokumentation zeigt die Bewegung der Korrespondenz zwischen Steinecke und Silbermann zwischen März 1951 und Juli 1957. Archivmaterial deutet darauf hin, dass Steinecke Zuwendungen von Silbermann erhalten wollte, der australische Musikwissenschaftler und Soziologe dazu aus mehreren Gründen leider nicht in der Lage war.

### ***Steinecke und Silbermann über Darmstädter Ferienkurse 1957***

In einem Schreiben vom 5. Juli 1957 antwortete Steinecke, dass er sich sehr freuen würde, wenn Silbermann einige Veranstaltungen der 'Darmstädter Ferienkurse' besuchen würde, und schickte den beigegefügt Prospekt, aus dem hervorging, dass er über das mit dem Kranichsteiner Musikinstitut verbundene Büro Hotelunterkünfte in Darmstadt buchen könne. Steinecke erklärte, dass er Silbermann nicht zu einem Aufenthalt im Seminar Marienhöhe einladen könne, da leider bereits alle Plätze durch das große Kontingent der angemeldeten Teilnehmer für die Ferienkurse belegt seien.<sup>47</sup> Trotz der von Steinecke ausgesprochenen Einladung hat Silbermann nicht aktiv an den Darmstädter Ferienkursen 1957 teilgenommen. Dies ist bekannt, da sein Name weder in der Liste der angemeldeten Teilnehmer noch im Programm aufgeführt ist.

### ***Schlussfolgerung***

Alphons Silbermann war auf dem Gebiet der Soziologie sehr anerkannt; seine musikwissenschaftliche Kompetenz und sein Austausch mit dem Internationalen Musikinstitut Darmstadt sind bislang jedoch noch nicht allgemein dokumentiert worden. Alphons Silbermann war maßgeblich an den frühen Verbindungen zwischen Darmstadt und Australien beteiligt, da er nicht nur die australische Musikszene nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg vorstellte, sondern auch Komponisten wie Don Banks vermittelte, die 1954 Ferienkurse besuchten. Auf der Grundlage mehrerer Briefe, die zwischen Wolfgang Steinecke und Alphons Silbermann gewechselt wurden, versuchte dieser Artikel, die brieftechnische Dynamik der beiden Männer bekannt zu machen und gleichzeitig andere Publikationen zu ergänzen, die die Anwesenheit von Alphons Silbermann in Darmstadt nur oberflächlich erwähnen, ohne die Details hinter dem Darmstädter Ereignis zu klären. Das im IMD-Archiv gesammelte Material belegt zweifellos den Beitrag von Schlüsselpersonen in den 1950er Jahren, die sich darum bemühten, der australischen Kultur in Darmstadt zu einer höheren Sichtbarkeit zu verhelfen. Die Dynamik des Briefwechsels offenbart globale Zusammenhänge in der Geschichte der Neuen Musik.

46 Brief von Silbermann an Steinecke. 25. April 1954.

47 Brief von Steinecke an Silbermann. 5. Juli 1957.



## Abkürzungen

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDMI	Centre de Documentation de Musique Internationale
IMD	Internationale Musikinstitut Darmstadt
ISCM	International Society for Contemporary Music

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# ***Reviews***



Andrew Hugill

## Teresa Balough, Kay Dreyfus (eds.): *Distant Dreams. The Correspondence of Percy Grainger and Burnett Cross, 1946-60*

Melbourne: Lyrebird Press 2020. 182 pp. ISBN: 978-0-734-03794-7. AUD 40,00\*

This fascinating account of the three-way 'Free Music' collaboration between Burnett Cross, Ella Grainger and Percy Grainger between 1946 and 1960 is an important addition to the literature. As well as its great interest to Grainger scholars, the book provides a highly informative case study of inter-disciplinarity that has a more general and contemporary relevance. Interdisciplinary collaboration is a pervasive aspect of today's research landscape, required by almost every funding council and scientific organisation. Its aim is to encourage productive interactions leading to innovations that provide creative solutions. A mono-disciplinary approach, it is often argued, is inherently limiting and so insufficient to address complexity.

The challenges of interdisciplinary collaboration are many. How may someone from one field credibly enter another? How may the gap between the 'Arts' and the 'Sciences' be bridged? How may the specialised language and practices of a discipline such as music or physics or engineering be understood by people who do not have that background? The answer, of course, lies in the ability of the collaborators to overcome such barriers, to respect and learn from one another's expertise, to share a common sense of purpose, to submit to a vision that is larger than any one of them.

This is resplendently true of the Cross/Grainger collaboration and, fortunately for us, the work undertaken by them has been thoroughly documented. This book provides a detailed account of the entire process (or series of processes) from ideation to realisation, complete with every problem encountered and solution found through the creativity of mutually respectful and open minds. It shows what may be achieved when all researchers suspend their egos and engage in genuinely collaborative enquiry, gradually gaining a deeper understanding of one another's approaches as they do so.

I have no hesitation in calling this "research". At its heart was an idea, a hypothesis if you will, that entered the mind of an eleven-year-old Percy Grainger when he "saw waves lapping against the side of boats in the Melbourne Lagoon" (141). Free Music was summarised by Burnett Cross as follows: "Percy was trying to break away from the established way of doing things, from the halftone scale, from the regularities of established music, [...] he was in fact searching for something new" (154). This spirit of adventurous questioning was what sustained the project for so many decades. The details of how it was to be implemented provided collaborators with a series of objectives, each of which superseded the

\* The review was first published in 'The Grainger Journal', 17, 2021, 1, pp. 54-57.



previous ones and so produced endless re-invigoration and progress. In fact, as Cross observed, none of the Free Music machines was ever actually finished, because “as soon as a new machine began to work properly, and demonstrated what Percy wanted to hear, its disadvantages and inadequacies immediately loomed large, and we started to think about something better, a design of free music machine that would overcome the faults of the half-completed one” (158). Today, we would call such an approach ‘agile’, with an iterative feedback cycle leading to continuous improvements to a series of prototypes.

Each of the collaborators stressed the value of the others’ contributions. This is important to note, because the account of Ella Grainger’s work is necessarily less detailed, given that the documentation mostly takes the form of letters and other materials exchanged between the two men. Grainger wrote: “Each of the 3 of us has bright thought-germs [ideas] all the time & each evening sees the ways-of-doing-things of the morning left far behind and forgotten” (3), while Cross wrote: “I must say right away that Ella Grainger was a full partner in this labour—not only in the matter of supplying us with dinner, tea, cake etc., but in helping with what we were trying to do—with creative ideas and with labour” (169). The editors also comment: “though she is mostly silent, Ella Grainger too is continually reflected and refracted through the letters and the complementary daybook entries, completing a creative coalition of three” (Editors’ Note, xvii).

One of the things that made the collaboration so successful was that none of the participants saw it as anything other than a labour of love, driven by Percy’s desire for a kind of democratic approach to music that could be independent of human performers and yet relatable, especially through the construction of the instruments from homespun and domestic materials. The various unproductive encounters with university-based engineers and academics who were working on early synthesizers and other electronic instruments at the time are revealingly described. The inaccessibility of such machines and their need for ongoing and expensive maintenance represented an insurmountable barrier. For Cross, the music they produced was also uninspiring, although Percy Grainger had less to say on that score.

For Percy, of course, Free Music was the climax of all his musical endeavours, in his opinion his only lasting contribution to music. For Burnett Cross, on the other hand, the project contributed to his developing thesis that the supposed objectivity of science is largely a fiction. As he puts it: “The scientists’ communication network is eminently social. There is still another dimension of the scientific method, the extrarational, which includes chance and intuition”. Quoting H. G. Wells, he states: “Swapping wisdom, that’s the true scientific method [...] Scientists collaborate” (170 f.). It is abundantly clear from this book that Cross would not have been able to be so secure in this conclusion without his many decades of collaboration with the Graingers. Since he was a teacher of considerable renown, these ideas have since found their way into the minds of many young scientists.

One of the major objectives of the book is to counter the received wisdom that Burnett Cross was a mere technical assistant to Percy Grainger. This it achieves very well, showing that this was a collaboration in which all parties shared equally, each contributing their own particular expertise and indeed personality.

As Percy aged and became unwell, Burnett increasingly drove the project, but never in a way that would diminish the composer's central position. The Electric Eye Tone-Tool was clearly Cross's own creation, but it is equally clear that he understood that it would not have existed without Grainger. By that stage in the collaboration, the depth of their mutual understanding was such that this was never in question. There was certainly trust and indeed affection between them but, more than that, there was a harmonious relationship between their respectively convergent and divergent thinking, between scientific method and artistic creativity.

This is touchingly brought home in some of the exchanges where Grainger indulges in rueful self-criticism. In a letter written aboard the S. S. Stockholm (many of Grainger's letters are written in transit during concert tours) on June 22, 1950, he begins: "As I look back on my life as a tone-wright [composer] I am aware of having failed again & again thru lack of bravery rather than thru lack of giftedness" (41). The substance of his argument is that by letting his lighter music go first into the world he avoided the difficult challenge of putting forward more experimental works. He contrasts this lack of bravery with Cross's bravery and speed in his scientific work and teaching. Cross replies calmly that Grainger's self-accusation of "lack of bravery" is misplaced because the experimental works were: "Difficult to perform, perhaps, yes; that is no serious barrier. But they lie on a level of expression toward which we move (I think) but errantly and have scarcely touched" (46). Seven years later, while writing appreciatively of the Electric Eye Tone-Tool experiments, Grainger declared: "I have held things back by being too bodily, too mechanical" (122). It is certainly true that almost all Grainger's contributions comprise mechanical solutions, and that Cross himself moved things forwards by introducing electronics. But Cross's reply is clear-sighted: "As for your suggestion that you have held things back by being too mechanical, I beg to demur. The photo cells available until recently were, as we noted, very unstable and out of the question for playing music with any degree of accuracy at all". There may be an element of politeness here, of giving succour to a sick man but, if so, it is very well concealed behind Cross's characteristically rational take on the situation. No, this is just a reasoned reply to an unfounded self-criticism that reflects the scientist's admiration for the composer's ambition and Cross's experience over decades of Grainger's immensely pragmatic approach and energetic solutions.

The bulk of the correspondence is a full documentation of all this, copiously and marvellously illustrated with drawings by both men in their different styles. There are also several valuable photographs and a highly informative commentary that is both thoroughly researched and insightful. Most letters contain detailed discussions of the technical workings of various Free Music machines, along with more speculative writing and discussions of music. Burnett Cross's mother, herself an accomplished musician, provided an additional point of connection and organised several performances of Grainger's work. Cross emerges, to his own surprise, as a trusted singer of Grainger's 'Bold William Taylor', of which he made a recording in 1949. He also helped with the folksong transcription projects and, most importantly, he created the 'Piano-Desk-Roller' or music

roller that Grainger used throughout the 1950s as his memory became less reliable. This alone was an enormous act of support, and it clearly gave Grainger much comfort as his anxieties increased.

Perhaps the most interesting letter (at least, to this reader) is the one sent by Burnett Cross on 15 November 1955 in which he describes his thoughts as he prepares to write a book on the relationship between music and science. He says: “It seems that scientists are at long last beginning to investigate the question of the mathematical relations of musical intervals in a scientific way. Having stated for some centuries that the octave ratio is 2 to 1, the physicists are now beginning to wonder just what evidence they have for that statement—since they have never examined any number of people on the subject” (100). He goes on to describe some experiments in which people hear an octave as more like 2.04 to 1. This insight really summarizes the cross-fertilisation between the two men. On the one hand, Grainger sought to develop a machine-based music that removed the human element from musical performance, while on the other hand Cross sought to embed human perception into the supposedly abstract and perpetual laws of mathematics and physics.

Benjamin T. Jones

## Victoria Herche: The Adolescent Nation. Re-Imagining Youth and Coming of Age in Contemporary Australian Film

Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter 2021. 252 pp. ISBN: 978-3-825-36918-7. EUR 54,00

Australian national identity is not fixed, it is ever-changing and always contested. Even the national anthem, in most countries a reasonably stable and secure symbol, has proven ephemeral in Australia. When Peter Dodds McCormick first penned 'Advance Australia Fair' in 1878 he called for "Australia's sons" to rejoice because they are "young and free". In 1984 the Hawke government changed the phallogocentric opening line to "Australians all". The anthem remained unchanged for nearly four decades before the Morrison government acknowledged the ancient history of Australia's First Nations and changed "young and free" to "one and free". It was not a mere cosmetic change. Australia's national identity has long been tied to the idea of youth. In 'The Adolescent Nation: Re-Imagining Youth and Coming of Age in Contemporary Australian Film', Victoria Herche traces the history of the enduring cinematic trope of youth and coming of age and links it to national identity in Australia. She contends that youth and coming of age has been "a defining narrative of Australia's national cinema" (15).

In film studies, the classic teen movie and coming of age stories are part of an established genre popularised by Hollywood in the 1950s, which has in turn influenced Australia. Broadly speaking, the films in Herche's study depict a transitional stage without meeting a particularly point of maturation. As such, she identifies an Australian filmic tradition with "coming of age as a dominant *narrative*, rather than a *genre*" (emphasis added, 26). Drawing on several theorists, Herche suggests that the filmic repetition of Australia coming of age is not a linear process to national maturity. Instead, the "transitional in-between phase" is "precisely" what constitutes Australian national identity (23). While the coming of age narrative in Australian film has been the subject of several academic works, Herche's book is original in its focus on culture and politics. As the author notes, "This book represents the first study that explores how, among others, Indigenous and refugee filmmakers are responding to the centrality of this [adolescent nation] theme" (27).

The structure of the book is unconventional but not to its detriment. In the first section, the history of the coming of age narrative in a range of mediums is mapped out. A full chapter is dedicated to the evolution of this narrative from the colonial period to the end of the twentieth century. The importance this tradition has for Herche is evident when we look at the front cover. It displays a cartoon image of "the little boy from Manly" from the 'Bulletin' magazine in 1913 rather than a movie still or poster. The next chapter is broadly chronological, focusing mainly on the coming of age narrative in film from the "New Wave"

era of the 1970s, through to the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. The second section continues the study into the twenty-first century but switches from a chronological to thematic layout with chapters on the following genres: road movie, crime, sports, romance, and musicals. While the structure may be jarring to some, for this reader it served the purpose of focusing attention on the tenacity of the narrative over time and away from the general evolution of filmic styles and tropes.

This book is focused on the intersection of film and national identity and asks important questions about how national stories are invented and told. A significant claim made by Herche is that Australia's image as an adolescent nation, with all the accompanying connotations of vulnerability, and dependency on a "mother-country" for guidance through this liminal stage, is not necessarily a limitation. She argues that film-makers have used national adolescence as an artistic springboard to reimagine Australian identity. Rather than being captive to a homogenous national image, Australian cinema has found agency in adolescence and has used it to reimagine what it means to be Australian.

The image of Australia as a child is tied to British imperialism and Indigenous erasure. Herche draws on post-colonial scholar Homi Bhabha to note how imperial powers shape a narrative where the "new" nations have childlike qualities and are therefore dependent on the adult coloniser. Throughout the colonial era, Australians embraced the childhood metaphor, but it was one among several. Of the emerging nationalism in the leadup to Federation, Herche suggests that an identity was constructed that was "radically different from Britain" with innocent, young, and masculine icons (34). While this is true for the popular little boy from Manly cartoons, it is a stretch to say that gender was one of the key metaphoric descriptors. As John Hirst notes in the 'Sentimental Nation', Australia was more frequently represented as a young woman in the years before and after Federation. It was also common to see anthropomorphic representations of a young Australian kangaroo next to the mature British bulldog. Youth rather than gender is the common theme.

For this reader, the strongest chapter in the book is number 3 which explores the coming of age narrative from the 1970s to the early 2000s. It roughly coincides with a period James Curran and Stuart Ward have called 'The Unknown Nation', when the certainties of empire had retreated, and Australia rushed to find new symbols in a post-colonial world. Herche makes the important link between the Whitlam government's strong support for Australian film and "an emerging sense of national identity" (66) revealed both through comedy, such as 'The Adventures of Barry McKenzie', and through drama, such as 'Picnic at Hanging Rock'. Herche writes skilfully about both films which, despite their many differences, can be seen as two attempts to break the self-imposed "cultural cringe".

The chapter finishes strongly with a useful treatment of the depictions of multiculturalism and First Nations on film. While multiculturalism became government policy in the 1970s under Whitlam, Herche suggests that the "multicultural moment" in film came in the 1990s and 2000s where films such as 'Wog Boy' and 'Head On' presented ethnic stereotypes as part of Australian youth culture. Similarly, the 1992 Mabo decision had a gradual impact on film that can be identified more readily in the 2000s. Films such as 'The Tracker', 'Rabbit-Proof Fence',

and 'One Night the Moon', are all presented as part of the cultural legacy of the Mabo decision.

'The Adolescent Nation' has an unconventional structure, and this extends to the final chapter. The book finishes with one last case study in a chapter pithily titled "Instead of a Conclusion" (207). Discussing 'Jasper Jones' by First Nations director Rachel Perkins, Herche takes the opportunity to reiterate many of her previous points about the coming of age narrative, primarily the agency that it can give artists to challenge the homogenous image of a "typical" Australian.

Herche's book makes an important contribution to our knowledge of Australian film and the coming of age narrative that features so prominently within its cinematic tradition. It will be required reading for scholars of film history and of some interest to scholars of Australian national identity more generally. It is clearly aimed at a specialist audience and lengthy theoretical foregrounding may deter a more general readership. Nevertheless, this is a valuable addition to the academic literature on Australian film with several important insights into the intersection of national cinema and national identity.





Katrin Althans

## Dorothee Klein: Poetics and Politics of Relationality in Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Fiction

Abingdon: Routledge 2022. 213 pp. ISBN 978-0-367-65521-1. GBP 120,00

Dorothee Klein's recent study of novels by Australian Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> authors focuses on form and how "a detailed analysis of formal elements *enhances* our understanding of these narratives as decidedly *literary* interventions into current debates" (3). As such, it offers in-depth narratological analyses of seven novels by Australian Aboriginal writers published between 1999 and 2017. At the heart of Klein's study is the idea that "contemporary fiction by Australian Aboriginal writers is one medium that raises awareness of the importance and implications of being part of such networks of relations that span the human and non-human realm" (2). It is indeed this emphasis on the connections between the human and the non-human which guides Klein's analysis throughout the book and which is the focus of her understanding of relationality. She identifies "'a poetics of relationality'" (4), i.e., a particular way of storytelling that originates in Country, which is constitutive for Aboriginal narratives and can, according to Klein, best be understood by looking at form and narrative techniques. Due to her focus on form and narrative strategies, Klein uses the ideas of "New Formalism and contextualised narratologies" (7) as her point of departure but develops an innovative approach to relationality by combining and bringing into dialogue the ideas of Edouard Glissant and Jean-Luc Nancy with Aboriginal texts and onto-epistemologies (11). For her, "relationality [...] connotes the interconnectedness of all elements of the universe. It is decidedly multidimensional and not limited to human relations" (19). In the context of Aboriginal narratives, the relation to land and place necessarily looms large in this understanding of relationality – something which informs Klein's reading of the novels she discusses and to which she keeps returning in the different chapters of her book.

The novels Klein analyses in her book, and which also structure it, are 'Earth' (2001), by Bruce Pascoe, 'Benang' (1999) and 'That Deadman Dance' (2010) by Kim Scott, Tara June Winch's 'Swallow the Air' (2006), Alexis Wright's 'Carpentaria' (2006) and 'The Swan Book' (2013), and 'Taboo' (2017), again by Kim Scott. In each chapter, Klein singles out one particularly important aspect of the novel(s) she discusses, which emphasizes the versatility of Aboriginal writing in terms of relationality. In the first chapter, on Bruce Pascoe's 'Earth', Klein draws our attention to the dialogic form of the novel and its relational ambiguities: whereas

1 Throughout the book, Klein uses the preferred name of the group a writer or scholar identifies with but uses the term Aboriginal as a collective term when referring to members of the different Aboriginal groups of Australia in general and the terms Indigenous/indigenous when referring to indigenous populations worldwide.

the fact that it is written completely in dialogue suggests a non-hierarchical relationality, the novel nevertheless introduces hierarchies by transferring narrative authority to (non-human) Earth and the ancestors (28 f.). This, she writes, invests the land with narrative authority and “requires a rethinking of Western ideas of (narrative) authority” (30). Klein here highlights the “unfamiliar epistemology” (31) with which a western reader is confronted and which challenges traditional western acts of classification and categories. At this point, her reasoning, it seems, is too enthusiastic: although the Earth and ancestors do not feature as prominently in western epistemologies as they do in Aboriginal ones, we still find anthropomorphized characters who have narrative authority in western literary traditions, something Klein does not take into account in her reading of ‘Earth’. Still, Klein quite rightly observes that “the contradictory poetics of *Earth* [...] represents a culturally specific figure of non-literary, non-human authority rooted in Country” (45). The reader of her book, however, is left wondering if it is really on the level of form that the novel challenges western perspectives, or if it is rather on the level of content.

Klein’s reading and line of argument are much more convincing in the next chapter, chapter 2, in which she reads both ‘Benang’ and ‘That Deadman Dance’ by Kim Scott in terms of spatial instead of temporal plot structures. She starts with the observation that a range of critics have described the plot structures of both novels as “unusual” (51) and proposes to move beyond the western privileging of temporality to get a grip on the narratives. Instead, she turns to reading the novels with reference to songlines, or Dreaming tracks, in order to more fully understand those “unusual” plot structures. She here very persuasively argues for reading the novels’ plot structures as following a place-based poetics. This chapter is a very impressive addition to the nascent field of postcolonial narratology: it not only questions the validity of western-centric narratological tools, but also introduces non-western narratological characteristics into the discourse. Always reflecting on her own position as a white western academic, Klein here acknowledges the limits of her own understanding of both Aboriginal epistemologies in general and songlines in particular (52). This position of being cut off from vital knowledge she contextualizes by referring to Glissant’s idea of “opacity”. Her reflections remind us to always re-consider our own positions carefully and to not thoughtlessly impose western frameworks on non-western epistemologies and concepts.

Whereas the novels discussed in chapters 1 and 2 affirm Klein’s working definition of relationality, chapter 3 shows that Tara June Winch’s short story cycle ‘Swallow the Air’ takes a more ambiguous, “less celebratory” (86), stance towards relationality: as Klein demonstrates, in ‘Swallow the Air’, relationality “is the result of a relational and participatory engagement with others, including the land and sea” (90). This, however, includes a constant re-negotiation of relations that may well turn out to be in vain (93). In this chapter, Klein once more discusses genre classifications and argues that categorizing ‘Swallow the Air’ as a short story cycle is ambivalent. On the one hand, such a categorisation re-affirms western taxonomies. On the other hand, the central element which makes ‘Swallow the Air’ a song cycle, the interrelatedness of the different stories

collected in that volume, illustrates “the significance of collective relations for Indigenous women’s writing” (85). Klein’s own approach to academic writing in this chapter deserves a special mention here, as her “reading ... mirrors and reproduces the cycle’s central concern with fluidity by organically moving from one possible interpretation of a particular short story or passage to another” (86).

Klein’s focus in chapter 4, on Alexis Wright’s ‘Carpentaria’, is on deictic markers, especially spatial deixis (133). The entire narratological analysis of this chapter is very thoughtful and in-depth, but this kind of close-reading for narrative techniques leaves me wondering about the de-colonization of the narratological toolbox itself: whereas in chapter 2, Klein offers a most convincing example of how western narratological ideas are undermined, in this chapter, she very much depends on both linguistic and narratological concepts developed and enunciated by western academics without questioning this dependence. I will happily admit that the issue of developing entirely new narratological and linguistic toolboxes is way beyond the scope of any study which focuses on literary representations and unquestionably not something a western academic should attempt – still, I expected to read a brief acknowledgement of this difficulty, especially so since it so readily lends itself to a reading framed by the idea of opacity in the sense of Glissant.

Another novel by Alexis Wright is at the centre of chapter 5, ‘The Swan Book’. Here, Klein once again draws attention to an unfortunate lack in scholarship, “the absence of an explicitly postcolonial intertextual theory” (141). To overcome this lack, Klein proposes to understand intertextuality in a postcolonial context as “a dynamic, non-hierarchical relationship between texts and its various inter-texts (including non-literary ones)” (142). By embedding intertextuality within her framework of relationality, she emphasizes its non-hierarchical nature, which is a very clever ploy indeed, as she does explicitly not maintain the centre-periphery binary, something the writing-back paradigm has been accused of. For Klein, it is the communal aspect which is conveyed through intertextual, and thus relational, references, and in her analyses she in great detail shows the extent to which “the Aboriginal text [becomes] the determining framework” for any intertextual references (160).

In the final chapter, Klein returns to Kim Scott, this time analysing his most recent novel ‘Taboo’. Again, the focus is on “the notion of stories abiding in place” (166), but also on language. Although this, at first sight, may seem repetitive – Klein herself concedes that we find the same techniques in ‘Taboo’ as she had already discussed in the previous chapters (180) – we find them dressed in entirely different clothes: we find different intertextualities, e.g., references to fairy tales and the Gothic, as well as a different premise, that of “a deeply rooted co-existence” (167).

Klein’s book is a welcome addition to the field of Australian Aboriginal Studies, as it offers both very detailed formal analyses of contemporary Aboriginal novels and much food for thought on the de-colonization of the critical toolboxes used in literary studies. At times these detailed analyses are simply overwhelming, but Klein’s very pointed findings more than make up for this.

There are, however, two issues which struck me as odd and slightly dissatisfying: for one, she introduces a whole new issue in her conclusion, one she has admittedly hinted at in the analytical chapters, but which she pursues in full in the conclusion only: the relationality of the reader. This distracts from the closure of the book, as it opens up an entirely new aspect instead of offering only a glimpse of future research possibilities. Secondly, I was surprised that Klein does not include a more detailed analysis of oral storytelling in her discussions of narrative techniques. In individual chapters, Klein mentions oral storytelling in passing but does not discuss its peculiarities in relation to the formal elements she identifies in the novels. This is all the more remarkable since reading those formal elements within the framework of oral storytelling instead of in the framework of a narratology of writing would have given her the opportunity to shift the frame of reference towards an Aboriginal centre even more.

As a whole, however, Klein's study is a very well-researched discussion which posits contemporary Australian Aboriginal literature within the broader framework of relationality by drawing our attention to its relation to land and Country. By focusing on form, Klein adds a valuable addition to the emerging fields of postcolonial narratology and intertextuality, one which steers away from western-centric origins and instead embraces non-western traditions. Always reflecting on her own position, Klein does not appropriate Aboriginal perspectives for her own ends, but respectfully presents her reading of how form is used to convey the relationality of stories and place in Aboriginal onto-epistemologies. As such, her study shows the ways in which Aboriginal literature contributes to current debates about Indigenous sovereignty and how it asks us "to engage with the notion of an inclusive relationality" (202).

## The Editors

### *Managing Editors*

**Stefanie Affeldt** (*Lead*) is a post-doctoral researcher at the Heidelberg Centre for Cultural Heritage, Universität Heidelberg, as well as a member of the **GASt executive board**, the **Specialised Information Service Anglo-American Culture** advisory board, and the **Centre for Australian Studies** team. With a B.A. in Sociology (Macquarie University), an M.A. in Cultural and Social History (University of Essex), and a Dr. rer. pol from the Universität Hamburg, her area of research is racism analysis focussing on the history of whiteness in Australia; her publications include ‘**Consuming Whiteness**. Australian Racism and the ‘White Sugar’ Campaign’ (Lit 2014), ‘“Buy White – Stay Fair”’ (Oxford Handbook of Political Consumerism 2019), ‘Conflicts in Racism’ (Race & Class 2019), ‘Racism’ Down Under’ (ASJ | ZfA 2019/20), and ‘“Kein Mensch setzt meinem Sammeleifer Schranken”’ (Tor zur kolonialen Welt 2021). Her DFG-funded project ‘**Exception or Exemption?**’ analysed multiculturalism and racist conflict in the Broome pearling industry. Currently, Stefanie is a fellow at the Trierer Kolleg für Mittelalter und Neuzeit, researching ‘colonial collecting’ and the German contribution to colonialization in Australia.

**Katrin Althans** is a DFG-funded research fellow at the Postcolonial Studies Section of the Department of Anglophone Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. Her main research interest is in Australian Studies and she has published widely in this area. Here, her focus is on Aboriginal Australian literature, which she has approached from a variety of angles, including genre (the Gothic), ecocritical readings, and geocriticism. Katrin also works in the area of law & literature and for her post-doc project, she is currently writing a second book on the representations of refugees in law and literature and the narrative authority of the law. In the editorial team of the Australian Studies Journal | Zeitschrift für Australienstudien, Katrin acts as Reviews Editor.

**Christina Ringel** completed her PhD at the University of Cologne with a thesis on possession in the endangered Aboriginal language Miriwoong. She has held a post-doctoral position at the University of Cologne, a position as Subject Librarian at the Technical University of Dortmund, and is currently pursuing a post-doctoral project at the Technical University of Dortmund. Christina’s recent conference papers and publications were concerned with contributions of linguistics to Native Title Claims, definiteness and possession in Miriwoong, evidentiality in Australian languages, and the influence of linguistic human rights and identification with territory and language on language vitality. Christina is a research affiliate at **Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language** and a member of **Australian Linguistic Society**, the **Foundation for Endangered Languages**, and the **Society for Endangered Languages**, and the **German Association for Australian Studies**. She serves as Research Coordinator at the **Centre for Australian Studies**, on the Board of Directors of **Cologne Centre of Language Science** and on the Advisory Board of the **Specialised Information Service Anglo-American Culture**.



### *General Editors*

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**Eva Bischoff** is Assistant Professor at the University of Trier. Her doctoral thesis 'Kannibale-Werden' (transcript 2011) examined the intersection of colonial and metropolitan discourses in constructing bourgeois-white, hegemonic masculinity. Her second thesis reconstructs the ambiguous role Quakers played in the process of settler colonialism in nineteenth-century Australia: 'Benevolent Colonizers in Nineteenth-Century Australia. Quaker Lives and Ideals' (Palgrave MacMillan 2020). She has taught at the Universities of Cologne, Bonn, and Münster in North American History and Postcolonial Studies and worked as a Lecturer at the Department of North American History of the John-F.-Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin and as a Postdoc Researcher at the DFG Research Center on 'Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood'. Since October 2011, she works at the University of Trier, teaching classes on Global History, British as well as German Imperial History, and Gender History.

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