

1. Statement of Problem and Context of Practice

My thesis revolves around the story of the Bungalow, Alice Springs, 1914 - 1929. It is a story of cultural interface, between Indigenous people and newcomers, of politics and society, that stands alone as an intriguing and formative chapter of Alice Springs and yet, like so many stories of cultural interface in early Australia, also has profound national resonance.

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Topsy Smith, an Arabunna woman, arrived in Stuart in 1914 with her seven children. Her husband and the father of those children, a Welsh-born man, had died at the gold fields at Arltunga where they had all been living. Sergeant Stott, the local policeman and subprotector of Aborigines for the region, erected a tin shed across the road from the police station for Topsy and the children to live in. The tin shed became known as the Bungalow for half-castes. Over the years that followed, it developed into an institution where many children of mixed heritage were placed after having been removed from their Aboriginal families. By 1923, sixty children aged between a few months and sixteen years were growing up in the Bungalow cared for by two Aboriginal mothers and provided with rations from the police (Nelson, 1990).

The other central player in the Bungalow story was Ida Standley. She was a non-Indigenous single woman who had already raised four children of her own and in 1914 was recruited to Stuart as the town's first schoolteacher. Although initially recruited to teach the children of the white pioneers, she was permitted to teach the children of the Bungalow providing it was done separately. Ida also became employed as the matron of the Bungalow. She stayed for fifteen years and was awarded an Order of the British Empire for Education in Central Australia (Nelson, 1990).

Although small tributes to Ida Standley and Topsy Smith exist around Alice Springs, historic, academic and/or literary examinations of those women's lives are limited. Standley gets the odd mention in history books and on a sign outside the original, heritage school of the town. Smith is barely known. This example is typical of colonial portrayals of history in which, 'The traditional literary representation of European imperialism has been overwhelmingly a masculine story, as have tales of indigenous resistance' (Grimshaw 1997,

p. 126) and that, 'In such accounts, then, European women were an absence, indigenous women a cipher; neither had status as autonomous subjects, neither had agency' (Prasch 1995, p.175).

The story of the original Bungalow, between 1914 and 1929, is the story that forms the basis of my PhD. Those are the years in which Standley and Smith worked together to run the place with Sergeant Stott, regional protector of Aborigines, as the overseer. The Bungalow did continue after that, in other locations and under different administrations, but it is this original Bungalow that is the subject of my interest.

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1.1

I grew up in Mooroolbark, an outer eastern suburb of Melbourne that takes its name, according to local hearsay, from an Aboriginal word for red earth. Which Aboriginal word? What language? Who were the people from whom the name of my childhood town came, where were they now and where was the red earth?

These were, sadly, not questions I asked as a child, nor to which I had any access. I was a reader. I wrote stories. I had an active imagination and a sensitive heart, but, growing up in those fertile foothills of the Dandenong Ranges, on the cusp of the Yarra Valley, it never occurred to me to wonder about those who first knew these lands. It never occurred to me that the tracks upon which I walked through my childhood were part of a richer, deeper Wurundjeri story of human habitation. And nobody bothered to tell me. In that I was no different, it seems, to many Australians growing up in the post-war affluence of the 60s and 70s.

As Bruce Pascoe muses in his history of Victoria and call to action, *Convincing Ground*:

I am intrigued by the people who blithely swept the Aboriginal people off the land they had 'selected' and then turned around with finicky pride to paint the Indigenous place name on a board, stepped back to assure themselves it was hung straight, sufficiently grand, to honour their land. (Pascoe 2007, p. 78)

Although Pascoe's reference here is to the establishment of pastoral properties, the sentiment can be just as well applied to the development of towns. Yes, the Mooroolbark signs stood bold and straight.

Young and adventurous at the age of 27, I moved to Central Australia and worked as a schoolteacher on a remote Aboriginal community known as Mount Allan or, by a more local name, Yuelamu. Here, at last, were the Aboriginal people. Here was the red earth. For me it was life changing. I stayed for 27 years in Central Australia, in remote communities and then in Alice Springs. I had a relationship with a Warlpiri man and a child with him.

In 2005 I combined my passions for such things as history, culture, knowledge, story-telling and the natural environment into a guided walking tour of Alice Springs. I conducted this, as a small business, for the next twelve years. I took my guests to heritage buildings and sites of significance and enlightened them with stories of the place. The story I grew most excited and curious about with each new telling, spurred on by the enthusiasm of my guests, was that of the Bungalow.

I carried a folder of photographs and maps. These included pictures of the town at the time of the Bungalow and one of the tin shed itself, with the residents arranged out the front in classic school photo pose. Together, at the old Bungalow site, my guests and I would pour over those photos, looking for clues, speculating about how it might have been. Such pondering became the questions I now set out to answer through my creative writing and exegetical work:

- Who were the women of the Bungalow and what were the circumstances of their lives?
- Why did so many mixed-race children come to live at the Bungalow?
- How did the children and mothers of the Bungalow orient themselves to the reality of their lives that bore no precedent for them? In his studies of the cultural interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, Nakata (2002) speaks of the gamut of human response which is evident in Indigenous histories since European contact: rejection, resistance, subversiveness, pragmatism, ambivalence, accommodation, participation, cooperation. It is, he says, a place of tension, that requires constant negotiation. What was going on, in the intercultural spaces of the Bungalow?
- How did Ida Standley approach her role of providing instruction for children who had no history of schooling and for whom English was not their mother tongue? Did she subscribe to the mainstream ideologies of the day regarding racial hierarchy and the social controls required to manage miscegenation (Reynolds, 2005)? What was her

approach to the care and education of the Aboriginal children of the Bungalow and how did that approach reflect the general attitudes and government policy of the time?

I felt an affinity for the story, which seemed to hold parallels for my life, a century later. I was a non-Aboriginal single mother and schoolteacher, living in Central Australia with my own experiences in the education of Aboriginal children. I was committed to intercultural relations and to a greater national truth-telling and reconciliation with the First Nations people. As an aside, I'd had an aunty called Ida, also a schoolteacher, who had died when I was in my teen years but whose photo I still carried.

In 2001 Julie Marcus came to Alice Springs to launch *The Indomitable Miss Pink* (Marcus 2001); the story of another significant historic female figure of the town. I joined Julia's Olive Pink tour and rejoiced in the biography she had written. Could I add to the historic record of Alice Springs by becoming Ida Standley's biographer? Could I add to the historic record of Australian women, a record that was systematically neglected until the latter decades of the twentieth century?

1.2 REDRESSING THE SYSTEMATIC NEGLECT

In her introduction to the 2002 edition of *Damned Whores and God's Police*, Ann Summers reflected on the task she undertook in the writing of the first edition, back in 1975:

The occasional individual woman was singled out for her accomplishments by mainstream histories, but the vast majority of women's lives might as well not have been lived if you were to take those histories as an accurate reflection of our past. One of the early excitements of the second-wave women's movement thirty years ago was to discover how rich and diverse women's history actually was. (Summers 2016, p.19)

This second-wave women's movement, from the early 1970s, saw the emergence of the scholarly examination of women's place in Australian history. As Saunders (1995) noted in her examination of the evolution of women's history and gender studies through the 1970s and 80s, if in 1982 the mere act of reading women's history was a radicalising experience, ten years later women's history and the study of gender relations across time had become thriving, dynamic and complex enterprises.

The dynamism and complexity came with the myriad of approaches that can be taken in telling histories; from what angle and whose point of view? As Saunders explained, from those early days of inserting women into traditional historic genres and treating them

according to masculine standards of significance, ‘A variety of approaches have been adopted and several distinct historiographical traditions can be identified’ (Saunders, p.17).

There are now, as Saunders identifies, works that explore women’s role in the economy and the union movement; works that explore the private sphere including the family unit and its ideological component; studies of sexuality including contraception, sex education, abortion and relationships between the sexes. There are examinations of women and the law; historical biographies that have tended to concentrate upon women who have achieved in the public male domain; work that has looked at the interrelationships between race, class and gender; the dichotomy between private and public domains; bush versus metropolis. There are Aboriginal women’s perspectives on offer including biographies, academic analyses of the relevance of women’s liberation to Aboriginal women’s lives, colonisation and the imposition of Christianity on Indigenous family structures and Aboriginal women’s role in the economy (Saunders p. 25).

What kind of a history did I want to write, from which perspective and whose point of view? A study of Ida Standley on her own started to seem like a rather colonial undertaking. Ida Standley was part of a bigger story of society, politics, ideology, gender, race, colonialism, and intercultural relations. I decided to broaden my focus and investigate this bigger picture of the Bungalow, focussing on several of the central characters and the interconnectedness of contexts that enabled the Bungalow to exist.

2. Literature Review and Background

There are four distinct aspects to my doctoral research.

- 2.1 Historic research
- 2.2 Theories and concepts
- 2.3 Literary study
- 2.4 Creative practice

Each area is distinct. At the same time, comprising one research project as they do, they are entirely entangled and interrelated. An examination of each aspect of the project follows.

2.1 HISTORIC RESEARCH

While there is not one text dedicated entirely to the Bungalow and its people, there are a range of text books that provide some treatment of the Bungalow as it pertains to the overall subject of their thesis. Each of these texts has drawn on the range of primary sources available including archived government documents, personal correspondence, personal experiences and oral histories, to develop their narratives and arguments. As such, each of these texts offers a generous reference list, directing me to state and national archives that form an essential part of my research.

Racial Folly (2010) by Gordon Briscoe is especially valuable as a text written by a descendant of The Bungalow. Briscoe's mother was a resident of the original Bungalow, being taken from her family in the bush to live at the institution in 1927. Briscoe was born nine years later, into a subsequent incarnation of the Bungalow that is beyond the focus of this study. The early chapters of *Racial Folly* interrogate the Bungalow and the political and social situations that surrounded it. Briscoe has drawn on his own life experience and family history as well as those of his contemporaries and laid these alongside the official Indigenous Affairs policies and programs of the time. The resultant *Racial Folly* is part memoir, part examination of Indigenous Affairs throughout the twentieth century at regional and national levels. As stated in the preface, Briscoe uses 'significant landmark issues in Aboriginal social and political history as a way of weaving these events into the fabric of (his) own personal narrative' (Briscoe, p. xx).

I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly (1993), by Tony Austin, documents 'the response of the Commonwealth Government to the presence of young Aborigines of mixed descent in the

Northern Territory in the period 1911 to 1939' (Austin, p.2). The book traces the scientific and political thinking that informed government policy and resulted in the 'half-caste' institutions. Although it is a text book that focusses primarily on the dominant ideology and policy of the time, the book uses archival evidence and oral histories to offer details about what life was like at those 'half-caste' institutions and what effects they had on the people who endured them.

Alice Springs: from singing wire to iconic outback town, by Stuart Traynor (2016) is a history text, based on extensive research, that explores the establishment of Alice Springs and the circumstances that pre-empted it. There are two chapters dedicated to the Bungalow in its three separate incarnations, from 1914 to 1942. The rest of the book offers much context in terms of politics, society and the characters that are central to the Bungalow story. Traynor's work is far less an examination of ideology and politics and more an exploration of the social history and the characters who made it, presented in a biographic and narrative style.

The man from Arltunga by Dick Kimber (1986) explores the life of Walter Smith (1898 – 1990), the oldest son of Topsy and Bill. Walter was seventeen years of age when his father died, and his family moved to Alice Springs. Walter was part of the move and wanted to stay with his family however he was sent away to work because, 'Gruff old Sergeant Stott of the police force pointed out he was a man and needed to provide for his family' (Kimber, p32). Beyond Smith's recollections of the Bungalow, *The Man from Arltunga* is valuable to this study as it offers insights into the life and times of this remarkable man of Arabunna and Welsh heritage: bushman, cameleer, a man initiated into Aboriginal tribal ways who was fluent not only in several Central Australian languages but also in a range of world languages that were spoken in Central Australia in the early years of Walter's life. Walter's story is not one of binary opposites and division to which Australian history has so often been reduced. Although the roles that various groups of people were playing are illuminated in the stories of Walter's life, we also see relationships that existed across the divides and the humanity, necessary for survival, that often came before race, class, age and perhaps gender.

Alone on the soaks – the life and times of Alec Kruger by Alec Kruger and Gerard Waterford (2007) is another personal story of hardship, cruelty, discrimination, determination and ultimately triumph that, as with *Racial Folly*, exposes the very real, deeply felt and ongoing effects of official Australian policy as it related to individual Aboriginal people throughout

the twentieth century. The story traces Alec's life, from the early years when he was stolen from his family:

As a child I had no mother's arms to hold me. No father to lead me into the world. Us taken-away kids only had each other. All of us damaged and too young to know what to do. We had strangers standing over us... Many of us grew up hard and tough. Others were explosive and angry. A lot grew up just struggling to cope at all. They found their peace in other institutions or alcohol. Most of us learnt how to occupy a small space and avoid anything that looked like trouble. We had few ideas about relationships. No one showed us how to be lovers or parents. How to feel safe loving someone when that risked them being taken away and leaving us alone again. (Kruger & Waterford, pp.31-32)

Alec Kruger did not live at the Bungalow during the years which are the focus of my study. He was an inmate in later years when it had moved to a different location and was under a different kind of administration. Nevertheless, *Alone on the Soaks* offers insights into ideology and government policy of the early 20th Century and the ongoing implications of this to the people who were affected.

In *Broken Song* (2002), Barry Hill sets out to explore the story behind a seminal work of Central Australian anthropology, history and spirituality: *The Songs of Central Australia*, by TH Strehlow. In this endeavour, Hill straddles a century of Central Australian history, focussing on Strehlow, his life, work and driving forces and radiating out from there. Hill offers some brief references to the Bungalow as part of his overall story:

The recommendation was, among others, that all 'cross-breeds' had to be 'rescued from camps' so that they could be educated in institutions. 'Separate the quadroon and octaroon types, at any early age, from the Aboriginal, and give special care to training for the future reception into the white races. (Hill, 2002, p.274)

Despite only brief references to the Bungalow, *Broken Song* offers powerful insights into life on the frontier, attitudes and behaviours of the time, intercultural relations, the natural environment and the effect that had on the way things went. Hill is an award-winning poet and historian. In *Broken Song* he has combined both to demonstrate how history can be written to take the reader on a literary as well as intellectual journey.

Several other works of history and anthropology, which predate the Bungalow, offer valuable insights in the years leading up to the establishment of the Bungalow. *From the Frontier* by John Mulvaney (2000) is based on letters sent between three white men of the Centralian frontier between 1894 and 1925. The letters and Mulvaney's commentary are rich with atmosphere and insights. *White Flour White Power: From Rations to Citizenship in Central*

Australia (1998) is Tim Rowse's doctoral exploration of the essential role that rationing played in the colonisation of Central Australia. It too offers deep insights into intercultural relations on the frontier.

The work of Alistair Paterson and others in historical archaeology offers contextual background to my study. Techniques of archaeology and historical enquiry are combined to reimagine the environmental and social structure of mid to late nineteenth century pastoral practices in Central Australia. The results offer some challenges to generally held, simplistic and binary notions of intercultural relations at that time. In his paper, 'Early Pastoral Landscapes and Culture Contact in Central Australia,' Paterson (2005) investigates the results of contact between native people and European pastoral settlers in Northern South Australia, during the second half of the 19th century. Paterson speaks of the 'textured ways' that people interacted, pointing out that the analogy to texture finds resonance with studies that perceive colonial-period interaction as complex and plural or characterised by different forms of cultural interaction (Paterson, p. 39).

The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* offers preliminary biographical information on Ida Standley and Robert Stott. Walter Smith has an entry, presumably because of the interest shown in him by Dick Kimber. Tellingly, Topsy Smith hasn't yet made it into the Dictionary, despite her significant role in the history of Central Australia. Topsy's near omission from written history speaks in itself and harks back to the point raised earlier that Indigenous women were a cipher with no status or agency in mainstream telling of Australian history. Three fictive works stand out as offering particular insight and atmosphere to the subject of my enquiry. They include the novel, *Capricornia*, by Xavier Herbert (1938); Rachel Perkin's 2001 movie, *One Night the Moon*; and the 2017 movie, *Sweet Country* by Warwick Thornton. Each offers fictive interpretations of life on the frontier at the time and place I am studying and interrogate the sorts of intercultural relations that may have been taking place.

2.2 THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

The ways in which historic stories are told, will determine the attitudes and points of view that are presented. Authorial decisions are made that shape the possible inferences and interpretations. There are many issues for me to understand and be mindful of as I develop my thesis.

2.2.1 STORIES AS A TOOL OF COLONISATION

My maternal and paternal ancestors both settled in Australia in the mid-1800s. The story I am exploring is of intercultural relations of people just a few generations ago who I am not related to by blood. The story is of immense significance to the First Nations people, particularly those of Central Australia, for whom the consequences are ongoing.

The way I approach the research and narration of this story needs to be informed by knowledge and awareness of the issues that accompany me, a non-Aboriginal enthusiastic observer, getting involved. The first option I have is not to tell the story, to see that it is not mine to tell and leave it alone. I do not see this as a satisfactory response? Jo Henwood (2013) points out that, for the sake of the global community, stories need to be shared. Not telling stories, siloing them according to members and non-members, is to focus on the soulless binaries of us and them, preoccupied with difference. This feeds right into the racism of concentration on differences rather than seeking human commonality. Such racism on the concentration of differences was the focus of Professor Lynette Russell's comments in the catalogue of the 'Squatters and Savages' exhibition, shown at the Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2016:

Invader	coloniser
Native	savage
Newcomer	squatter
Usurper	owner
Victor	victim
Frontier	war
Resistance	accommodation
Aborigines	Europeans
Black	white
Dispossession	settlement
US and THEM	

...Each of these pairs of terms, each oppositional binary, presumes and assumes that there are discrete and separate categories...If we see the world in binary pairs/oppositional constructs, we are forced to choose one over the other. In order to belong we need to choose a 'side' (Russell, 2016, p 11).

The presentation of soulless binaries, the concentration on differences rather than the seeking out of human commonality, have been at the basis of stories of Australian history so pervasively that they have become part of the Australian psyche. This belongs to a broader discussion about the slants that have been put on our nation's history as part of its colonisation. In his 1968 Boyer lectures, 'After The Dreaming,' anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner spoke of 'The Great Australian Silence,' in reference to the omission of the Aboriginal experience from Australian history books. 'What may well have begun,' he said, 'As a simple forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale' (Stanner, 1969, p. 25).

A 'simple forgetting' then a 'habit' that then became cult-like seems like a generous way of explaining something whose intent was demonstrably more deliberate. In *From the Edge: Australia's Lost Histories* (2017), Mark McKenna presents four little known stories from around the continent, of frontier contact between Aboriginal people and newcomers, that challenge some commonly held stereotypes about such interactions. Each of these stories, 'positions the encounter between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians – each irrevocably altered by the other – at the heart of the nation's creation' (McKenna, p. xix).

McKenna's first tale, 'Walking the Edge: South-East Australia, 1797,' tells of a group of British and Bengali men who, between March and May, traipsed their way through 700 kilometres and at least eight distinct language groups to reach Sydney, after being shipwrecked on the Ninety Mile Beach in Kurnai country, East Gippsland. It was, as McKenna points out, the most sustained contact with Aboriginal people in the early colonial period beyond Sydney (McKenna, p.2). Encounters with local groups along the way were largely favourable and in many instances Indigenous people offered support and guidance that were crucial to the travellers' survival. Once in Sydney, the survivors' tale was told and then quickly adapted by those who passed it on, to suit their various agendas.

Whereas Palmer (church minister) spoke enthusiastically of the kindness of Aboriginal people, (Governor) Hunter condemned the savage barbarity of the natives...Very quickly, the survivors' story became an allegory for the colonists' hopes and anxieties regarding the expansion of settlement. (McKenna, p. 40)

I can see no ‘forgetting’, no force of ‘habit’ operating in this example of falsification of the public record. It was a deliberate and systematic altering of the truth whose effect was to perpetrate certain stereotypes. It is a standard practice of the national telling of our history that has been exposed frequently in the decades since Stanner’s lectures; the disingenuity that imbued the public, colonial record and has gone on to set our national agenda.

Bruce Pascoe in *Dark Emu* (2014) relies almost solely on the journals of the first European visitors to Aboriginal lands, ‘to witness the pre-colonial Aboriginal economy’ (Pascoe, p. 12).

As I read these early journals I came across repeated references to people building dams and wells, planting, irrigating and harvesting seed, preserving the surplus and storing it in houses, sheds or secure vessels, creating elaborate cemeteries and manipulating the landscape. (Pascoe, p. 12)

It was a far cry from the ‘primitive hunter-gatherer lifestyle we had been told was the simple lot of Australia’s first people’ (Pascoe, p. 11). Could it be, Pascoe asks rhetorically, ‘that the accepted view of Indigenous Australians simply wandering from plant to plant, kangaroo to kangaroo in hapless opportunism was incorrect’ (Pascoe, p. 12)? In *Dark Emu*, Pascoe offers ample evidence of the inaccuracy of that view. In his earlier work, *Convincing Ground* (2007), Pascoe uses early colonial behaviour on the Gunditjmara lands in south-western Victoria as a springboard, to examine the brutality of European settlement, the dishonesty inherent in the history that has been told and the national identity that has evolved as a consequence. What kind of a country do we want to be? Pascoe asks and what do we have the potential, in addressing this, to become (Pascoe, 2007)?

Henry Reynolds has challenged the dominant public discourse around the colonisation of Australia in much of his writing including *The Other Side of the Frontier* (1990), *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (1998) and *Why weren’t we told?* (1999) As with Briscoe and McKenna, Reynolds unearths little known stories of our history to reveal the bigger picture.

In *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, Reynolds refers to a public lecture given in 1842 by prominent Sydney barrister, Richard Windeyer in which he contended that Aboriginal society had ‘no social bonds, no law, no government...They have never tilled the soil or enclosed it, or cleared any portion of it, or planted a single tree, or grain or root’ (Windeyer cited in Reynolds 1998, pp. 20-21).

It is a notion that Pascoe has set about correcting through his research. Similarly, in *The*

Biggest Estate on Earth (2011), Bill Gammage demonstrates that collectively and through all manner of ingenious means, the Australian Aboriginal people managed an Australian estate they thought of as single and universal (Gammage 2007, p.1).

In Finding Eliza: Power and Colonial Storytelling (2016) Larissa Behrendt explores how the telling of history is used as a tool of colonisation. Behrendt uses the public stories that were told by and Eliza Fraser and her experience of shipwreck and subsequent time spent with the Butchulla people of the island that now bears her name, to interrogate how Indigenous people of Australia and other countries have been portrayed in their colonisers' stories. Behrendt examines stereotypes perpetuated through versions of frontier encounters such as cannibalism, savagery and the myth of the noble savage and discusses how coloniser stories have been used to reflect and reinforce dominant stereotypes and ideologies.

Similarly, Alexis Wright's 2016 essay, 'What happens when you tell somebody else's story?' looks at what the media has achieved, in the colonisation and subjugation of Aboriginal people, by controlling their story and spinning its own version. 'It has always seemed to me,' Wright muses:

That the media's overall story about Aboriginal people has been the most politically useful method throughout the country for negatively constructing or deconstructing, confusing and mangling, and above all else attempting to govern the direction of the national Aboriginal story...It was the media's choice to highlight negative stories about the conditions of Aboriginal people, but it was too often silent about what Aboriginal people thought, had to say about what happened, or wanted. An outpouring of stories about Aboriginal people followed. (Wright, 2016, p. 63)

In her paper that examines the relationship between Australia's history and national identity, Ann Curthoys identifies this distortion of history more generally as, 'This practice of constructing an account of the past that works to authorise the identity of the particular social group doing the construction' (Curthoys, 1993, p. 167). The practice is nothing new nor particularly isolated to Australia. It does, however, need to be understood and disrupted in the context of the role it has played in shaping Australia's identity and perceptions of its first people.

2.2.2 WRITING AS A NON-INDIGNEOUS PERSON

In the paper mentioned above, Curthoys identifies that, even with the best of intentions, there are challenges and pitfalls faced by white academics in the writing of colonial history.

‘Many Aboriginal people resent being written about by white academics at all’ and ‘There is, clearly, for anyone writing the history of an Australian colonial past, a danger of yet another appropriation, of Aboriginal knowledge and experience through a western-style history’ (Curthoys, p. 172).

Certainly, as Jackie Huggins has pointed out in relation to outsiders writing creation stories, ‘Much of what has been written about Aboriginals by non-Aboriginals has been patronising, misconstrued, preconceived and abused’ (Huggins, 1994, p. 12).

On the other hand, and more in connection with exploring our shared history, as Aboriginal academic and poet Jennifer Martiniello sees it:

For many issues there is also a white story, not just a black story – after all, we didn’t create the last 200 years of crap all by ourselves. So long as white writers are aware that there are boundaries they cannot cross when they are writing, and where or what the appropriate protocols are for dealing with aboriginal people, their stories and their communities, then their work may be approved (Martiniello cited in Heiss 2002, p. 200).

I interpret the ‘boundaries they cannot cross’ as being the telling of Aboriginal cultural stories and attempting to speak on behalf of Aboriginal people. Other protocols are outlined on the website of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

In what Curthoys referred to as the ‘reforming enthusiasm’ of the 1970s and 80s, came a ‘tendency to write histories of the all-powerful dominant groups on the one hand, and the utterly vanquished and subordinated groups and peoples on the other. An unfortunate outcome of this trend was stories, ‘In which the oppressed (Aboriginal people, women) appear only as historical objects, passive victims in a narrative of doom and destruction, glory and despair... from which neither side of the colonial or gender encounter can find anything to be proud of nor to aspire to (Curthoys 1993, p. 174).

This resonates with Saunders’ contention that Aboriginal women’s history researched and composed by white historians, has concentrated upon white destructiveness. In contrast, Aboriginal women have told their own stories, with an absence of bitterness, that attest to the tenacity of black endurance, the retention of Aboriginal culture despite massive white destructiveness and a general triumph of the human spirit (Saunders, 1995, p.24).

In addressing this problem there has been a shift towards focussing on agency, ‘especially the points of view, actions and resistances of subordinate groups’ (Curthoys, p. 174). Relating this discussion to my own exploration of intercultural relations at the Central Australian frontier, it must have been, for the newcomers, extraordinary and sometimes extremely lonely. There were few white people, spread sparsely across vast areas. Despite being accompanied, presumably, by a sense of cultural superiority, they were often alone amongst people who belonged to each other and the land that they were on. In correspondence to the Chief Protector of Aborigines in 1916 Ida Standley wrote ‘The children have been most kind and obedient and my happiest hours in Alice Springs have been spent with them’ (NAA CRS F5 H174).

On the other hand, despite the marginalised and powerless position they held politically, Topsy and the children had each other and somewhere nearby were their families and the lives and country they were born to. In contrast, Ida Standley was a long way from home. To what extent did she rely on the Indigenous people for company and support? What of their ways, either consciously or inadvertently, did she adopt?

Martin Nakata (2007) addresses this thinking in his theories of intercultural relations. Nakata speaks of a contested place between the two knowledge systems, the cultural interface, that exists in post-colonial space. Here things are not clearly black or white, Indigenous or Western. In this space, he says, ‘are histories, politics, economics, multiple and interconnected discourses, social practices and knowledge technologies which condition who we all come to look at the world, how we come to know and understand our changing realities in the everyday, and how and what knowledge we operationalise in our daily lives’ (Nakata, p. 9).

Vicki Grieves (2009) disputes this, saying that such an approach sees colonial interface as a place of equal human and overwhelmingly individual interaction and that this approach is not cognisant of the reality of the social, economic and political factors at play.

The sentiment is echoed by Curthoys (1993) in her contention that, ‘If we go too far in stressing individual or group initiative, we lose sight of the massive differences in power and resources between colonisers and colonised and...risk portraying the poor and the oppressed as self-determining, probably happier than those who so powerfully but uneasily dominated them’ (Curthoys, p.174). Time will only tell what my research unearths about the agency of

the inhabitants of the Bungalow and surrounds compared with the whitefellas in their positions of political power. Or perhaps it will reveal nothing in which case my views can only come from theory and educated speculation.

In a paper that offers protocols for writing about Aboriginal people, Huggins (1994) offers the observation that:

The best books written about Aboriginals by non-Aboriginals are by those who have some relationship and friendships with Aboriginal people. Having a respect and knowledge of Aboriginal culture, history, social issues and what was happening to Aboriginal people in the era in which they are being written about is imperative to how one writes the Aboriginal characters and situations (Huggins, p.12).

Huggins recommends a consultative approach, use of Indigenous resources, feedback from relevant Aboriginal individuals and organisations and that the material have an empowering nature.

I feel confident that my approach is sound and meets the guidelines offered by AIATSIS, Huggins, Heiss and others. Further, I intend to establish a reference group, of relevant Indigenous people, who can offer guidance and support to the integrity of my work.

2.2.3 JUDGING THE CHARACTERS OF HISTORY

There are of course descendants of the main non-Aboriginal protagonists in the story whose sensitivities must also be considered. The actions and opinions of historic figures can be repugnant to us down the track and out of line with what we grow to consider as fair and normal. What do we do with the feelings we have towards such people and the ways in which they conducted themselves?

Through all the years I talked and wondered about Ida Standley, I wanted to like her. I wanted her to be a hero, someone I could be proud to know and somehow feel connected to. We have in common our profession, our sole parent status, our gender, our positions in the settler class, and presumably a commitment to Indigenous Education, albeit a century apart and approached from rather different pedagogies. A storyboard outside the original, heritage school in Alice Springs tells us that Mort Conway, one of Ida's original charges and an inmate of The Bungalow, referred to Ida, later in life, as 'a woman and a half.'

Early in my PhD research, it became apparent that the children of the Bungalow were children of the stolen generations. Except for the children of Topsy Smith and Maria McDonald, the original residents who lived there with their mothers, the bulk of the children

who subsequently joined them were forcibly removed from their Aboriginal families in the bush under the old furphy that they were being neglected and brought, against their will, to be raised at the Bungalow. The purpose of this was to separate them from the ‘true blacks’ from whom they were supposedly ‘entirely different’ (NAA A1 1930/1542) and train them up to take their place in the lower echelons of civilised society, as domestic servants if they were females and farm hands if male.

The commissioners of the National Enquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, looking back at such practices, concluded that:

For individuals, their removal as children and the abuse they experienced at the hands of the authorities or their delegates have permanently scarred their lives. The harm continues in later generations, affecting their children and grandchildren. (HREOC 1997, P. 4)

In his subsequent apology and as recorded in Hansard, Prime Minister Rudd said:

The hurt, the humiliation, the degradation and the sheer brutality of the act of physically separating a mother from her children is a deep assault on our senses and on our most elemental humanity. (Rudd 2008, p. 167)

First there was the removal of the children from their families. Then there was the abuse they experienced. In referring to the Bungalow, other government officials wrote damningly: ‘of the monument of disgrace’ (Austin, 1993, p.63) and ‘the pathetic little home’, that was ‘primitive’ and ‘totally inadequate.’ (Austin, p. 72)

There is no evidence of Ida Standley having a problem with the removal of those children and their ‘imprisonment’ for the remainder of their childhoods, away from kith and kin. Nor is there any evidence of Ida showing any concern about the squalor and hardship in which the children grew up. The thing that she was publicly critical of was that the children of the Bungalow had access to their families at all. In a letter to the Northern Territory Chief Protector of Aborigines in 1916 Standley wrote, ‘What it takes 5 years to build up is undone by the black influence in 5 minutes’ (NAA CRS F5 H174).

When I read that small but powerful line, in the early stages of my research, it shattered my illusion of Ida Standley being a hero of mine and someone I could be proud to know. I went on, in the same letter to read the line referred to earlier that the children had been kind and obedient and she spent her happiest hours in Alice Springs with them.’ Clarence Smith, one of the original child residents of the Bungalow, in conversation later in life, said of Mrs Standley, “She was a very nice lady” (Smith, 1988, p. 3). Maybe she wasn’t so bad after all.

Or maybe measuring Ida against some scale of goodness wasn't a useful approach.

In her examination of the atrocities of frontier wars on the Hawksbury River 1794 – 99, Grace Karskens (2009) asks, 'How do we explain such brutality? Is it possible to explain it? Is there any logical way, any way of grasping it, making it part of the known (Karskens, p.461)? Karskens contends that in the novel *Secret River*, Grenville attributes such atrocities to innate personal evil, an approach Karskens sees as inadequate. A more useful, historic approach, she considers, is in historicising the actions of ancestors so that we may better understand how such things could have happened. To do this we need to carefully reconstruct, as best we can, the context, the place and the action: to retrace journeys and listen carefully to what was said (Karskens, p.462). In doing so, argues Tom Griffiths, 'Atrocities might be recognised as more than acts of personal evil, but also as symptoms of social and cultural history (Griffiths, 2015, p.15).

2.2.4. REPRESENTING THE PAST AS A WAY OF KNOWING

How, to whom and for what purposes are historical stories (in whatever format) told? How do historians seek to achieve, what effects in their historical representations? These are some of the questions Mary Fulbrook addresses in *Historical Theory* (2002).

'Most historical works will have a variety of purposes,' Fulbrook offers, 'To inform, instruct, arouse emotional involvement, invoke sympathy, entertain and persuade' (Fulbrook, p. 146). The historian is far from being a human photocopier or camera. Rather, 'the historian is the creative intermediary between selected elements of the past and selected audiences in the present; and we would hardly be likely to have any interest in history if this were not so' (Fulbrook, p.162). It is a point reinforced by Curthoys and Docker in *Is History Fiction* (2010) in that, 'The historian does not assume or claim omniscient knowledge, or suggest that the historical sources can be read and presented as if the past is speaking in the present, unassisted' (Curthoys & Docker, P.6) This does not, however, as Fulbrook points out, 'preclude a simultaneous commitment to getting the story right, at least in the sense that historians have a duty to try not to get anything wrong' (Fulbrook, p. 152).

All our smaller stories are tiny parts of a larger shared whole, and all are fragments that together make up the vaster canvases of our shared past (Haskins 2006). Similarly, in accounting for the style she adopted in *Tracker* (2017), to tell the story of Tracker Tilmouth, Alexis Wright notes, 'Sometimes it is the little stories that people tell that are the most potent,

and when fragments of remembered stories are placed together, they combine to create a truer and fuller portrait than a single story on its own (Wright, p.13).

This notion of smaller stories together making up a vast canvas of our shared past is one that I will incorporate into the structure of my creative artefact.

2.3 LITERARY STUDY

Having considered many aspects of the ethics of the project and its scope, how, in a literary sense, do I choose to tell it?

2.3.1. LETTING THE TRUTH STAND AS A GOOD STORY

As Belinda Castles (2014) ponders in her analysis of how Ross Gibson in *26 Views of the Starburst World* (2012) and Kate Grenville in *The Lieutenant* (2008) used the same historic data, of William Dawes and his relationship with the Eora of Sydney along with his relationship to the Empire, to create two entirely different works of literature:

How best to reach across the distance that divides us from that time and those people, with all we know about what came afterwards? How do we tell this story? (Castles, p4)

In 26 Views of a Starburst World Gibson uses what he refers to as a ‘compositional approach’ (Gibson, p.vii) that is a unique blend of history, academia, biography, philosophy, linguistics and techniques of fiction along with a lyrical writing style, to analyse Dawes’ notebooks and paint a compelling picture of the man’s curious life and times. It is a style, explains Gibson, that is ‘designed to help you knock your analytical thinking against your intuitive rumination’ (Gibson, p. viii).

Various others have offered descriptions of the style of *26 Views*. It lies ‘somewhere between the conventional scholarly treatments and the fictional reworkings which the notebooks have so far received’ (Nugent 2013, p.296). It ‘subtly undermines our expectations for a critical or scholarly text. There is no single, central argument or contention, no finite conclusion’ (Noske 2015, p.15.1). It is ‘deliberately fragmentary and dispersed non-fiction’ (Griffiths 2015, p. 16). It ‘performs the rare feat of conveying, moment by moment, the drama of intellectual discovery, which is, ironically, so difficult for novels’ (Falconer, 2012).

In this ‘drama of intellectual discovery,’ Gibson presents the historic evidence and relevant critical theory then invites us to join with him in rumination and speculation, for that which we do not know for sure. It is a technique I intend to develop for myself, in a way that suits the aims and style of my own creative artefact.

In *26 Views* the content of the story is reflected in the structure and language of the book. As Gibson explains:

To account for what he (Dawes) learned, we need a mode of writing – roundabout, relational, a tad restless and unruly – that can bring us toward some states of mind that are not biographical, psychologically focussed or conclusive. We need a literary mode that affords us access to some ‘environmental’ or communal mentalities that reach beyond the bounds of single, sovereign subjects; and we need some project that is at odds with the assertive and individualistic urges of colonialism. (Gibson, p.18) Similarly, in *The Argonauts* (2015), Maggie Nelson uses a non-binary, non-conventional literary style to explore the non-binary, non-conventional nature of her relationship with her life partner. Memoir, theory and poetry are brought together in what has been described as, ‘A non-linear essay that happens to be 143 pages. Without chapters and sub-headers, it reads like a collage of ideas, some just a paragraph long, while others are a page or two’ (Hagan, 2017, p. 39). On the first page Nelson introduces us to the notion of the limitations of language with, ‘I had spent a lifetime devoted to Wittgenstein’s idea that the inexpressible is contained – inexpressibly! – in the expressed’ (Nelson, p.4). She follows this up with a sentence that stands as a paragraph that is poetic and prophetic, ‘It is idle to fault a net for having holes, my encyclopedia notes’ (Nelson, p. 4). Throughout *the Argonauts*, Nelson expounds on the events and themes of her own life by bringing in theories and philosophy from a range of intellectuals, artists and writers. The theorist is either mentioned in the text, as in the example above, or their name appears in the margin, then Nelson, having dropped the idea in, moves on. No bibliography nor reference list are provided. *The Argonauts* is playful and profound. It defies simple categorisation which is also a dominant theme of the narrative. Content and style are married.

Stephen Muecke defies genre too, in *No Road* (1997). It is a hybrid text which includes travel log, memoir, theory, poetry, letters, anecdotes, historical enquiry, personal speculation and Aboriginal oral narrative (Slater, 2008, p.352) into a work that ‘proposes that if Australia is to become a post-colonial land we must change the stories we tell and the way we tell them’

(Slater, p. 353). Muecke uses *No Road* to both tell that story and, in the style of telling, to demonstrate the points he is making.

26 Views, *The Argonauts* and *No Road* are works of fictocriticism. They are stimulating and ground-breaking in many ways that include the presence of the author in the story; the way the content is expressed through language and structure; the hybridisation of genre in each work; and the way each author draws on theory to highlight aspects of the drama of their own story. There is much I can draw on from these and other ficto-critical works in the shaping of my own creative work.

A different style of creative non-fiction but one in which the author/researcher also places herself in the centre of the enquiry and brings the reader along on her journey of discovery is seen in *Stasiland* (2002) by Anna Funder. It tells the story of ordinary people who got caught up in the East German totalitarian state years. More than that, it is ‘a personal exploration of the reality of psychological terror (Josephe & Mueller, 2009, p. 67). The two sets of experiences, those of *Stasiland* citizens and Funder are juxtaposed by the author, in present tense, dramatizing her research journey, her discoveries and how she is affected by both. This goes right down to a hangover and injuries suffered into which Funder draws, right from the outset:

I am hungover and steer myself like a car through the crowds at Alexanderplatz station. Several times I miscalculate my width, scraping into a bin and an advertising bollard. Tomorrow bruises will develop on my skin, like a picture from a negative. (Funder, p. 1)

Throughout *Stasiland*, Funder intersperses the immediacy of her experience with commentary:

The Stasi was the internal army by which the government kept control. Its job was to know everything about everyone, using any means it chose. It knew who your visitors were, it knew whom you telephoned, and it knew if your wife slept around...Laid out upright and end to end, the files the Stasi kept on their countrymen and women would form a line 180 kilometres long. (Funder, p. 5)

She then transports the reader back in time, through oral accounts told by people who she meets during her research. One such person is Miriam Webb who told Funder about her treatment by the police after her attempted escape, at the age of sixteen, over the wall:

One in a while I'd look at the eye in the peephole as he was hitting the door and I'd think, "Why don't you just piss off for a change?" and keep dozing. Then he'd come in, shake me, and take the mattress off the bench so there'd be nothing left to sit on.

They really make sure that I didn't sleep. I can't explain how kaput it makes you.
(Funder, p. 25)

Writing in the first person and moving between the present we are writing in and the past we are writing about makes a clear declaration about the author's position as the interpreter of the history. The technique also represents fluidity in notions of past, present and future and the impact they have on one another, as expressed by David Lowenthal in his book, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*:

The past is not dead...it is not even sleeping. A mass of memoirs and records, or relics and replicas, of monuments and memorabilia, lives at the core of our being. And as we remake it, the past remakes us. We kick over the traces of tradition to assert our autonomy and expunge our errors, but we cannot banish the past, for it is inherent in all we do and think. (Lowenthal 1985, p. xxv)

My aim is to write a history of the Bungalow using techniques of creative non-fiction to explore and represent the conceptual and theoretical frames in which it sat. It will be a yarn, full of atmosphere and imagery; a literary version of the expansive arid lands of Central Australia and the society that inhabits them. The work will be informed by theory whose presence will interrogate and critique the events of the story. Where there are empty spaces in the historic record, I will engage with speculation and invite the reader along on a journey of enquiry. The words of historic characters, found in oral histories and written records will be used to create atmosphere and enable them to speak for themselves. My position as the author / researcher, someone who has spent much time being moved and shaped by the landscape, the people and the ongoing effects of colonisation in Central Australia, will be made clear. The story I tell will be warm and sometimes humorous while at the same time dealing with a multitude of complex issues of Australis's history. In the spirit of making meaning from fragments, each chapter will stand alone. Alongside and in between chapters will be vignettes, maps and photographs. Together these will present a scholarly, ethical, historically accurate treatment of the Bungalow that will in turn resonate with Australian cultural history more broadly.

2.4 CREATIVE PRACTICE

Through the practice of creative writing I calculate:

- What more I need to research in terms of history and theory;

- The meaning of my research. The deeper meanings and connections emerge as I write and in the thinking spaces in between writing. They in turn feed what I go on to write;

How to write. To understand how I wanted to write my creative artefact I wrote. I had notions of the content and the style, but it is only through my practice of writing that I was able to develop a style that resonated with me. I have then studied other literature and drawn on literary criticism to articulate and further develop my own unique and suitable style of writing.

3. Research Methodology and Design

If he had wanted to advance a thesis, he would have written an essay (like so many others he has written). If he has written a novel, it is because he had discovered, upon reaching maturity, that those things about which we cannot theorize, we must narrate. (Bondanella, cited by Avieson 2008)

The words are attributed to Bondanella but were later claimed by Eco himself, on the dustjacket of the Italian version of Eco's *Name of the Rose* (Avieson 2008).

My aim is a literary exploration of the Bungalow and its contexts using techniques of creative non-fiction, accompanied by an exegesis. History books have been written and offer much including background material for my task at hand. Novels have not been written although a small number of fictive interpretations exist, mostly as movies.

How creative-based literary practice can enable a new understanding of post-colonial frontiers is the research question that is emerging as central to my study. As Brad Haseman points out in a discussion of what constitutes Practice-led Research:

There is a 'problem' (often several problems) – but its definition will emerge during the research and it may well be that it is only in the final stages that a practice-led researcher will articulate and explicitly connect the problem with the trajectory their research has taken. (Haseman 2007)

My overarching methodology is Practice-Led Research which Carol Gray defines as:

Research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners. (Gray 1996, p.3) And from the UK Council for Graduate Education report:

The practice-based doctorate advances knowledge partly by means of practice.
(Frayling 1997, p. 12)

I appreciate the inclusion of ‘partly’ in this latter definition. My research for this Bungalow project is partly led by practice and reflection on practice and it is also partly led by historic and literary research which feeds into my practice. Resemblant of the cycles that comprise action research, my project is one of practice-led-research-led-practice.

In doing practice-led research, a bricolage of methods is engaged. The bricoleur works, ‘Within and between competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms... To do so they must read wisely, to become knowledgeable about a variety of interpretive paradigms that can be brought to a problem (Stewart 2001).

The methods I engage within the framework of the practice-led methodology include archival research and making sense of archival data; literary analysis and ethnography.

3.1 ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Archival research is an iterative process in which archival material is organised and meaning is given. The significance of the archival material continually shifts during the process of investigation, with the repeated reconsideration of older data and the constant infusion of the new. (Hill 2011, p. 65) Questions raised by Hill in relation to assessment of archival data, that hold particular relevance for my research are:

How might the archival “strip” be otherwise organized for my purposes? For my work this means, how might the archival material I am discovering be useful in my creative writing and how might I incorporate it into my creative artefact?

Also, what is missing from the record? The voices I have largely been finding as I access Australian Government archives are largely the voices of the white men who were employed by and represented the government. What is missing to a large extent are Aboriginal voices, the voices of women, the voices of other minority groups such as the Middle-Eastern cameleers, the Chinese and the ordinary people, getting on with each other and getting on with their lives, often influenced by but sometimes despite mainstream ideologies and decrees. Reading what those men said about other groups, reading against the grain and into the silences provides insights. Perspectives from other than the white men in charge can be gained from oral histories, journals and letters.

3.2 LITERARY ANALYSIS

The texts I choose to analyse, that will inspire and inform my own creative artefact are selected on the basis of their historic content, the method of construction and/or their literary quality. There are many that I am sure will continue to emerge as this project proceeds.

Other works inspire me with their poetics, the crispness of their writing, the simple yet profound ways they tell their stories or the ways they have written up their research to compile a work of art.

3.3 ETHNOGRAPHY

The most common ethnographic approach is participant observation. The ethnographer becomes immersed in the culture as an active participant and records extensive field notes (Web Centre for Social Research Methods). This is something I have done for nearly three decades in Central Australia, immersing myself in the culture, learning about the people and their past, taking notes, incorporating my learnings into written works and presentations.

I am also planning to conduct semi-structured interviews with descendants of inmates of the Bungalow. Interviewees I have identified include Gordon Briscoe, a child born of an inmate of the Bungalow who has written his own memoir about the effect of government policies on him and his family throughout the late nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries; Linda Smith, a descendant of Topsy Smith who has painted award winning art about Topsy; and Owen Cole, a descendant of Topsy Smith who has memoirs of her from when he was a child. I will take direction from those initial interviewees as to who else I might approach. From those Aboriginal descendants I would like to find out about family recollections as well as reflections on how those times have affected their families intergenerationally.

I also intend to trace and contact descendants of Ida Standley and Robert Stott and conduct semi-structured interviews with them. As for the Aboriginal descendants, I would like to find out from them what stories have been passed on about Standley and Stott from their time in Central Australia and what significance that holds for their descendants.

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5. Ethics Clearance

My application for ethics clearance was submitted at the end of 2017. It is an application for low level clearance and I am expecting it to be processed early in 2018.

6. SAMPLES OF CREATIVE PRACTICE

(the referencing in these samples is inconsistent. I haven't decided yet how I will present the references)

Sample 1

THE POSSIBILITIES INHERENT

No-one seems to know what time Topsy Smith got to town. It's a trifling detail really, compared to so many of the others. It's just that I want to know everything.

I want to go there and live amongst that whole fiasco that was frontier Central Australia early last century when the town was just getting going.

"No you don't," my daughter insists. "Imagine the racism.

Imagine the sexism." She's got a point there, no doubt.

But it's more than that. It's the simplicity of that outback life: wide open spaces, time to be. It's the possibilities inherent in that cultural interface and the potential for understandings about how that past has shaped our present. I don't want to go there because I think it's any better. I want to go there because it upsets me.

Imagine it now: Topsy and the younger children on the truck; the older ones with the herd of goats bringing up the rear. Jolting along rough desert tracks that were cut by wear and tear through the semi-arid landscape; of mulga bush, of spinifex grass, dry sandy river beds and bushflies. Crunch. Buzz. Crack.

Penetrating light.

Craggy ranges of solid, sun-baked rock.

The whole scene overlaid by that vast dome of pure blue sky.

Imagine those bush kids with their grounding and their goats. Were they wearing shoes? Did they brush their hair? Did they call the goats by name as they herded them along towards a shared and unknown future?

Their time of arrival will depend on whether they camped along the way or made the journey in one fell swoop, from Arltunga to Stuart in a day. You can do it these days in an hour and a half, along those sleek outback highways, with the windows of your Prado firmly sealed and the air-conditioner pumping. Or you can wind your windows down, let the desert air toss your hair around, Warumpi Band pounding from the playlist.

Listen to me/I'm from the bush/I'm talkin to you/From the bush.

Either way, there's a lot more choice these days than when Topsy was around. There was no state administered stipend. No compassionate leave. *Get to a town and get some help with the kids or starve.* That's pretty much how they rolled back then.

Topsy wasn't always Smith. She married a Smith, name of Walter. He was of Welsh descent: goldmining at Arltunga, providing for his wife and their eleven children. He appeared to be doing the right thing Walter. Plenty of those other itinerant blokes back then used Aboriginal women for the one thing then ditched them.

Gins they called them. And *lubras*. And much worse too. They fucked them, made fun of them, dispensed with their husbands then took for the hills.

It would seem by 1914 the worst of those killing times were over but intercultural relations of various kinds continued.

Walter Smith (1866 - 1914) died at the mines. He was buried at the crossroads at Arltunga. In its heyday, about ten years earlier, the little goldmining town with the eastern Arrernte name had supported about two hundred people. By 1914 most of them had moved on.

It was dangerous and back-breaking tough at the mines. Availability of water was one of the defining features of life and there certainly wasn't enough to spare on separating out the gold, as is the preferred method in

rainier lands. In this desert version of gold mining, the ore was crushed by battery and livings were squeezed out.

In town, Topsy went to Sergeant Stott. He was a burly Scotsman with enough responsibility for ten. He had been expressing official concern about those who were commonly referred to as the ‘half-caste’ children that were springing up in numbers around the region. In line with colonial thinking of the time, Stott believed those children needed a place to grow up, away from the influence of the full blacks where they could be taught and trained up to be half useful. Topsy’s arrival with her mixed-heritage kids gave Stott some live subjects to work with.

He erected a tent as crisis accommodation, on a plot of land directly across from the police compound, then wrote to the administrator in Darwin, recommending that the land be set aside for the ‘half-castes.’ Permission was granted for a permanent shelter to be built.

No-one seems to know what time Topsy Smith got in to town. It was somewhere in late May 1914. But there’s a lot about what went on that we can know.

Sample 2

INTRODUCED SPECIES

I climb high in Central Australia and look out, and back, to the people who have been cradled by these lands in the thousands of years until now.

Frank Yamma, singer-songwriter and descendant of the First Pitjantjatjara people, captures the profound simplicity:

Standing on the sand dunes

Watching over¹

¹ Frank Yamma and Piranpa *Sand dunes*

I see dark figures stalking prey across rusted grasslands, women grinding seeds for home-baked bread, kids digging yams in the creek.

My time spent with the descendants of those first people triggers my imagination and helps me now to know, in some way, the human foundations of the country that is my home.

The Indigenous population was spread across the desert wilderness which was as packed with language groups as are the most densely bordered parts of Europe. It was like a gigantic patchwork quilt of nations laid across uneven ground, with a new patch every couple of hundred kilometres. There were, and still are, the Warlpiri people who spoke Warlpiri and belonged to the Warlpiri lands, the Anmatyere people who spoke Anmatyerre and belonged to the Anmatyerre lands, the Arrernte, the Luritja, the Pintubi, Pitjantjatjara, Kaytete, Waramungu, Mardi, Nganantjarra, Yankunjatjara and so on.

One of the most charming and vital aspects of Central Australia is that many of these languages live on. The oldest living languages on earth. You can hear them on the radio and bouncing around the streets. They are written these days too, from collaborations that require linguists, native speakers and chocolate. To record the word just right, the native speaker puts chocolate in their mouth and says the word. The linguist has to look at where the chocolate ended up in the mouth to understand where the tongue went and what sounds, therefore, were made.

For thirty thousand... forty thousand... who knows how many thousand years, these people were moulding their creativity and continuity around the contours of their homelands, mindfully ensuring that their propriety was not at odds with their perpetuity. Across an ice-age, across a ten thousand-year drought, standing shoulder to shoulder with mega-fauna; they made it work. The First Nations people of the great land downunder, including those of the arid interior, turned resourcefulness into an artform. There wasn't much, when they put their collective minds to it, that they couldn't figure out, or find a use for. They're not the oldest living culture on earth for nothing.

Each language group was divided into smaller family groups: much like the turn out you'd expect at an extended Christmas gathering. There was old great-aunt Kinyariya and her second husband; grandad and Uncle Jarnpu withered and wise like the seeds in an Acacia pod; mum and all her cousin-sisters who collected the yams and berries and sugar bag and juicy lizards and grubs that make up the majority of the feast. There's Jungarrayi with his new sweetheart from the neighbouring tribe and the plethora of second cousins twice removed who, in the authentic Central Australian way, you know as your brothers and sisters.

Dad's not here; he's over the hill, keeping his eye on the advent of the biggest shit storm in collective memory.

It was in 1862, fifty years before the story of The Bungalow begins, that John McDouall Stuart rode his sorry arse, into the party. Perhaps that's unfair. Despite his scurvy and his gammy hand, his trachoma and his penchant for the hard stuff, Stuart was amazing. There are reasons he stands tall in memory as one of Australia's great explorers. He pushed on...just a little bit further...just a little bit harder...half-starved... in tatters... parched and pain-ridden. Most of us, long before, would have about-faced, put our tails between our collective legs, and slunk back into Adelaide, triumphant despite defeat for the wildlands we faced but could not conquer.

Not our Stuart. As if in some ultimate cross-country challenge, he traversed the continent from south to north, tagged the top-end coast, then retraced his footsteps to fall across the finishing line.

First place.

While his tenacity as an explorer was exceptional, Stuart's attitude to the Indigenous people was not. 'The Black' was how he referred to the Aboriginal man who travelled with him on the first leg of his journey and camped with him at the end of each long day, potentially keeping him company, maybe alive. Or sometimes with just a slightly greater twinge of proprietorial familiarity he wrote 'Our Black.' There is nowhere it seems, in the annals of Australian history, where 'Our Black's' name or identity is recorded. This, too, is unexceptional.

Samples of Stott's journal entries in reference to 'the black' illustrate his position:

About three-quarters of an hour afterwards I came suddenly upon another native, who was hunting in the sand hills. My attention being engaged in keeping the bearing I did not observe him until he moved, but I pulled up at once, lest he should run away, and called to him. What he imagined I was I do not know; but when he turned round and saw me, I never beheld a finer picture of astonishment and fear. He was a fine muscular fellow, about six feet in height, and stood as if riveted to the spot, with his mouth wide open, and his eyes staring. I sent our black forward to speak with him.

Friday 25 June 1858 Yarraout Gum Creekⁱ

We can only imagine what must have been going through the mind and muscles of this fine fellow as he stood, rooted to the spot, face-to-face with what was presumably the most perplexing and dangerous thing he had experienced in all his days.

A couple of months later when 'his black' up and left him Stuart revealed a distinct ignorance of how Aboriginal society worked:

Our black fellow left us during the night; he seems to be very much frightened of the other natives...He was of very little use to us, and I wish I had sent him off before, but I thought he might be useful in conversing with the other natives when we should meet them.

Tuesday 3 August 1858 Good Countryⁱⁱ

The 'blacks' have never been one conglomerate mass, one big happy family. They have separate nations, separate languages, a complexity of protocols and customs, of allegiances and trespass laws. I suppose Stuart was never made privy to that information and neither did he ever think to ask. Interpersonal relationships wasn't one of his strong suits.

Stuart battled his way across the Great Southern Land... Through drought:

The journey today has been very rough and stony. Not a drop of water have we passed to-day, nor is there the appearance of any on before us. I shall be

*compelled to fall back to-morrow to the water of last night. Friday 26 April
1861 Morphett Creekⁱⁱⁱ*

Through flooding rain:

At about 8 p.m. it began to rain, and continued the whole night, coming from the east and east-south-east. It still continues without any sign of a break. The ground has become so soft that when walking we sink up to the ankle, and the horses can scarcely move in it. At sundown there is no appearance of a change. It has rained without intermission the whole of last night and today. I do not know what effect this will have on my further progress, for now it is impossible to travel. The horses in feeding are already sinking above their knees. Tuesday 4th June 1861 Chain of Ponds^{iv}

Through horseplay:

It is late before we can get a start to-day, in consequence of one of the horses concealing himself in the creek. He is an unkind brute, we have much trouble with him in that respect; he is constantly hiding himself somewhere or other. Tuesday, 23rd April 1861 Bishop Creek^v

And general hardship:

The horses look very bad today; I shall therefore give them three or four days' rest. It is very vexing, but it cannot be helped. The water here will last about ten days. I shall cause another search for more to be made; I myself am too unwell to assist. Yesterday I rode in the greatest pain from the effects of my fall, and it was with great difficulty that I was able to sit in the saddle until we reached here. Scurvy has also taken a very serious hold of me; my hands are a complete mass of sores that will not heal, but, when I remain for two or three days in some place where I can get them well washed, they are much better; if not, they are worse than ever, and I am rendered nearly helpless. My mouth and gums are now so bad that I am obliged to eat flour and water boiled. The pains in my limbs and muscles are almost insufferable. Kekwick is also suffering from bad hands, but, as yet, has no other symptoms. Tuesday 15 May. 1860. Centre.

When he finally limped back into Adelaide in December 1863, Stuart offered up a journal into which he had etched in pencil the details of the journey and a chart of his path through the country.

In conclusion, I beg to say, that I believe this country (i.e., from the Roper to the Adelaide and thence to the shores of the Gulf), to be well adapted for the settlement of a European population, the climate being in every respect suitable, and the surrounding country of excellent quality and of great extent....I see no difficulty in taking over a herd of horses at any time.

There is an Arrernte term, *interteke-irreme*. It refers to following along in one line and stepping in each other's footsteps, presumably thus minimizing your collective impact on the land. In a sense that's what the immigrants did, following Stuart's tracks into Central Australia and beyond. Unfortunately, minimizing their collective impact wasn't one of their motivating forces.

They came with cattle, the precious flesh of colonial cuisine, crashing their way across the desert floor, sucking the substance out of waterholes.

They came with camels, the ships of the desert, that swayed along, loaded down with all the things that are required by people from a culture that is invested in living beyond its means.

They came with a book that they held as gently as the old folk held the tjuringa, the rock art and the stories. The book held stories too, of a new Deity, determined to be heard above all others.

They came with guns: essential vocabulary in the language of domination.

And seeds: they spread their seeds.

Dick Kimber, whose knowledge of Central Australian history is recognised as unrivalled,^{vi} and whose approach is measured and generous, estimates that until the beginning of World War II, there were generally less than 1000 "white" people and

Afghans (most of them men) in an area of one million square kilometres which has Alice Springs as its focal point. As well there were probably 4000 or so Aboriginal people in relatively close contact with the newcomers, and an equal number of Aboriginal people who had little or no contact with the ‘whites’ and Afghans.^{vii}

That’s until the beginning of World War II. In the first decades of contact, from the 1870s, there would have been less than a couple of hundred ‘white’ people and ‘Afghans’ (who originated from a range of middle regions and not just Afghanistan) as well as a very small number of Chinese. In those early years they were pretty much all men. The only women around were Aboriginal women, going about their business and adapting as best they could.

It was a vast and sparsely populated land.

Sample 3

SERGEANT STOTT ON TRIAL

When an enquiry was held into Sergeant Stott’s conduct, in 1917, the people of the district rallied in his defence. Sergeant Stott! The conductor of enquiries; the go-to man; the firm hand of the law.

It was a small and tight knit community. People fell out and people had favourites, the way we do. But it is in such rural communities that the great Aussie paradigms of mateship and loyalty and standing by your own kind, originated.

As Roving Reverend Plowman told the enquiry:

I’m not surprised to hear the people in the district considered Stott a good man for the district. I know their psychology. They will shield a man in preference to putting him away.²

Either that or the plaintiff was entirely out of order and the charges were, as

² NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 17 Judge Bevan’s report of enquiry into charges made my ex-MC Kelly against Sergeant Stott of Alice Springs

Stott called them, ‘a litany of lies.’³

Stott had thirty-four years of service as a Northern Territory police officer tucked under his belt by then. The last six of those had been in Alice Springs where he was earning a reputation as the unofficial king.

Judge, jury and jailor; sub-protector of Aborigines; keeper of the Stuart Town Gaol for an extra ten pounds per year; Clerk and Bailiff of the Local Court for an extra fifteen⁴; officiating registrar of marriages; first aid officer; administrator of summary justice (a clip behind the ear, a swift kick up the behind); works manager; distributor of rations to the natives: there wasn’t much, in the management of the town, that Stott didn’t take care of.

Mounted Constable Kelly arrived to take up duties under Stott in March 1917. He stayed a few months, under sufferance it seems. On day two, at Stott’s suggestion that he would be more comfortable once he’d brought his wife up, Kelly replied:

*I would not bring my wife into this country.*⁵

It’s hard to know if Kelly’s discomfort eased during the months he managed to stay. Did he marvel at the exquisite wilderness he brushed passed during his official patrols? Did he wonder at his unique position at the vanguard of Centralian frontier history? Did he have even an inkling that, in a century’s time, we would stick our beaks into police journal entries made both by and about him and pour over his official correspondence; such as the letter he sent to Inspector Walters, dated 3 September 1917?

In that letter, Kelly told Walters:

*I tried hard Sir, to stay at least 12 months because of the liability of refunding fares, but when I could get no prospect of transfer, I could only resign.*⁶

Poor old Kelly: The Alice was clearly not his pannikin of bush tea.

³ ref

⁴ NAA: A1, 1911/20305 Page 2 Memo from Dept External Affairs Melbourne to Acting Administrator Darwin, 30 December 1911

⁵ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 71 Stott’s letter to Judge Bevan

⁶ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 21 Kelly’s letter to Inspector Waters

The allegations that Kelly went on to spell out in his letter were:

1. That Sergeant Stott is a bully and indulges in bullying the men under him
2. That Sergeant Stott is a drunk
3. That Sergeant Stott uses his men not for police work but as private servants
4. That Sergeant Stott did not allow Kelly the use of the police horses in his search for Moyle but instead made him use the camels
5. That Sergeant Stott uses the police paddock for running his private stock to the detriment of the police horses
6. That Sergeant Stott keeps prisoners in jail for the full term of their sentence for the sake of the 15/- a week allowed for their upkeep
7. That Sergeant Stott does not allow the police buggy to be used in cases of emergency as was intended though he uses it for his own private use and on one occasion claimed travelling allowance as on patrol
8. That Sergeant Stott does not provide the blacks with rations allowed by the Aboriginal department but gives them to his private boys
9. That Sergeant Stott ill-treats and bullies the sick blacks
10. That Sergeant Stott ill-treats the half-castes in the Bungalow who work for him
11. That Sergeant Stott never should have been given any authority either over whites or blacks
12. That Sergeant Stott accepts bribes and does not do his duty by those who do not give him such bribes.⁷

As the Inspector of Police in Darwin, Walters was responsible for the supervision and control of police across the Northern Territory.⁸

Kelly's complaints led to an official enquiry that spanned several days in the lead up to Christmas, in the hot dry December of 1917, when the average daily temperature reached 36.7 degrees and not a drop of rain fell for the month.⁹

Judge Bevan came down from Darwin to conduct the hearing and interviewed, "Nearly the whole of the residents of the district as they had all come in from the outlying country for the holiday."¹⁰ He received a number of written statements as well.

⁷ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Pages 20-22 Kelly's letter to Inspector Waters

⁸ NAA: A1, 1911/9647 Page 15 Memo from Atlee Hunt, Department External Affairs to Commissioner of Police Adelaide

⁹ Bureau of Meteorology Australian government Monthly Rainfall Undoolya viewed 12/10/17
http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/ncc/cdio/weatherData/av?p_nccObsCode=139&p_display_type=dataFile&p_startYear=&p_c=&p_stn_num=015623

¹⁰ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 11 Bevan's letter to Dr Gilruth, NT Administrator, 6 Feb 1918

The ‘whole of the residents of the district’ according to Bevan were, of course, by and large, the white folk. Aboriginal people greatly outnumbered settlers in the great Red Centre in the early 1900s but they didn’t officially count. They existed in a kind of whitefella no man’s land, a wait and see place, a limbo. They had the body parts of humans, that was plain to see. They could do the deed and reproduce cross-culturally so were on the same playing field. But in the eyes of the colonisers they were simple and heathen and the jury was out about whether they could ever be civilised to the point of being useful. The more common assumption was that they would fade out.

Nevertheless, a few Aboriginal witnesses were called to the stand.

The forty-five who testified included:

Station managers and pastoralists -

Fred Raggatt from Glen Helen Station, Samuel Nicker of Ryan’s Well;
Louis Alex Bloomfield from Blood Creek; William Coulthard of Tempe
Downs Station; Harry Benjamin Walkington; Aaron Meyers; Robert
Henry from Hamilton Downs and Robert Harold Lake of Arltunga;

Mounted Constables –

Charles Noblet from Arltunga and John Mackay from Alice Well;

Storekeepers –

James Baker and George Wilkinson;

Missionaries –

Carl Strehlow from the Lutheran Mission, Hermannsburg and Robert Plowman from
the Presbyterian Church;

Postmaster from the Alice Springs Telegraph Station -

Frederick Alfred Price;

A linesman on the Overland Telegraph Line –

Keith Frances McDonald;

Pastoral manager and former policeman –

Edward Henry Kunoth;
Licensee of the Stuart Arms Hotel –
Leonard Browne;
Schoolteacher -
Ida Standley;
Daughter of Ida Standley and wife of Leonard Browne –
Vivian Browne;
Police trackers -
Tom and Sam;
Domestic help employed by the Stotts – Edie Powell
and Kitty Williams; Bungalow gardener –
Jimmy Raka.

What is illuminating, beyond the details of the hearing itself, is the light they shed on life at the time. The documents that range from type-written reports; to short, concise telegrams resemblant of the modern tweet; to barely legible scribblings on scraps of paper, are all sitting up neat and straight, on the website of the National Archives, waiting to be of service. A trip to the relevant file number is journey to a place I can only ever visit in my mind. Through screen after screen I click, scouring the digitised documents for their details and their essence; in a constant quest for greater intimacy with this place that taunts me with its ultimate unavailability.

The town was assembled on the land of the Mparntwerinye people, a sub-group of the Central Arrernte. The land chosen for the initial site was on the western floodplain of Lhere Mparntwe, the Todd River. It is a predominantly dry river bed of crunchy sand that meanders its way across the desert plain: tranquil in its dry state, imposing in flow. The designated floodplain was carved into 104 urban lots and auctioned off in Adelaide. Settlers have been complaining ever since that when the Todd River flows it floods their town. That is what you get for building your town on a floodplain. Any Mparntwerinye could have told you that!

Lots 48 and 49, at the intersection of Hartley and Parsons Streets, were set aside for governmental use. It was there, between 1907 and 1909, that the new gaol and police compound were built.¹¹

The police quarters, palatial for their time and place, comprised a four-room stone cottage complete with passage, kitchen and bathroom. The roof of corrugated iron would have heated the place up spectacularly during the long, hot, lazy days of Summer where the temperatures hover around 40 degrees Celsius and laconicism becomes a survival strategy. The building materials were sourced locally except for the iron; standard roofing material of the day, which was walked up, strapped to camels. An eight-foot wide veranda skirted the building. To complete the police compound, a stone office and courtroom were built adjacent to the house. In the dusty yard was a 39 foot well.

The gaol was tucked in behind that on the western side; a squat rectangular fortress of cemented stone, topped with the same roofing material.

Although not specified in any of the documents, we can assume the enquiry was held in the courtroom.

Did witnesses place their right hand on the bible? Was a bible even present? God nary rates a mention throughout the entire transcripts of proceedings. Were the sessions open to the public, offering a rare opportunity for entertainment in a town where people watched the clouds roll in? Stott was present at times, cross examining the witnesses. Other than that, were the sessions *in camera*, with evidence being shared between Judge Bevan and each witness?

ACCOMMODATING KELLY

For Kelly's month in town he boarded with Stott because, according to his version of events:

Immediately upon arrival at Alice Sergeant Stott said that if I batched with him I would have to have meals at his place, and pay for them, compulsory, or I could board with him entirely, which I did for peace. I was told I must do either of these if I wished to keep my job.

In response Stott said that was, "Almost too ridiculous for comment."

¹¹ The First 104 Lots

The Sergeant's version of the accommodation question was spelt out in his letter to the enquiry that I find too infused with character not to quote from directly:

March 23 last at 1 pm Constable Kelly arrived at Alice Springs for Oodnadatta per mail camels, reported himself for duty, Kelly arrived almost in a state of collapse, he attributed his condition to Camel riding, Myself and wife left sorry for him, Arthur Neal ex Mailman, now at Undoolya Stn can confirm Kellys condition when he arrived at Alice Springs.

Invited Kelly to have dinner with us, during the whole afternoon Kelly slept in a lounge under verandah.

During same evening in conversation informed Kelly, that his place of residence was Heavitree Gap Police Station, but that on account of his indisposed condition, he could board with us for a few days until he felt stronger, that we had no spare room, in the meantime would have to share with two of my sons ages 10 and 12 years, otherwise could board at Hotel, Kelly said what do they charge at Hotel, informed him thought 30/- or 35/- per week (Hotel is situated about 200 yards from police station) Kelly replied if convenient prefer boarding with you. At this time our youngest child aged 3 years was blind suffering from eye trouble.

About one week later child's eye became worse. Mrs. Stott's time was

fully occupied nursing child, we were then making arrangements to send wife with child to Adelaide for Medical aid.

Mrs. Stott wished to know whether Kelly intended going to Heavitree Gap Stn, that on account of sick child, she had no time to supervise cooking etc., Without Kelly, lubras could do our cooking for the time. I immediately spoke to Kelly, put Mrs. Stott's position before him Kelly left went to Heavitree Gap returned in the course of an hour. I said to

Kelly what do you think of your quarters...

I said you can see how we are situated, a sick child, no spare accommodation, besides we have to depend on lubras to do cooking. Kelly replied I am quite satisfied to share room with boys, that Dohy (meaning the principal lubra in the kitchen) seemed a good capable girl, that he would not make much difference being in the house. After

further conversation with my wife, agreed to board Kelly, viz., Board and washing 20/- per week whilst absent on patrol 1/- per diem for rations.

According to Stott, Kelly was 'quite satisfied with that'.¹²

THE CATTLE KILLING BY NATIVES IS NOW NOTHING LIKE AS
FREQUENT AS IT USED TO BE¹³

On April 19 Kelly went on a patrol of the Western district along with Tom, an Aboriginal tracker. It was a nine-day round trip of 236 miles through countryside so majestic that people have been saving up for years, ever since, to have a taste.

Such patrolling was standard police duty. The role was to visit key settlements in the bush, in this case the mission at Hermannsburg as well as pastoral stations. As Stott later told the enquiry, of this patrol:

Had any report been made to Kelly by Settlers of western district his duty whilst on patrol was to investigate any complaints made if possible secure arrest of offenders.¹⁴

In preparing for this expedition, Stott instructed Kelly to take two pairs of handcuffs and also neckchain:

*so that he would be prepared to any case of emergency that may occur during patrol.*¹⁵

Any case of emergency, particularly of the kind that warranted cuffs and chains, would most likely involve the original people of the area. Chances are it would also involve cross-cultural variations in interpretation of ownership. From the perspective of the Indigenous people, the land was theirs or, more precisely, they were of the land, and they operated according to strict rules that governed who had access to what. On the other hand, the perspective of the white men was that the land was theirs for the taking and the cattle they had bothered to drive all that way and were making such an indelible mark on the countryside, were also exclusively theirs. The locals had better either get with the program or get lost.

¹² NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 71 Stott's letter to Judge Bevan 25 November 1917

¹³ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 68 Coulthard's testimony to Judge Bevan

¹⁴ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 73 Stott's letter to Judge Bevan 25 November 1917

¹⁵ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 72 Stott's letter to Judge Bevan 25 November 1917

Bullets were one of the early aids that proved invaluable in assisting the locals to do both.

According to Tim Rowse in *White Flour, White Power*, his examination of the role of rationing in the colonisation of the Indigenous folk of Central Australia:

*Those involved in killing thought that they faced a choice between the survival of their enterprise or the survival of the Aborigines.*¹⁶

As a consequence, it is estimated that between 500 and 1,000 Aboriginal people across Central Australia were gunned down between 1871-94.¹⁷

Doris Blackwell was a child in 1899 when her father accepted a posting as the Postmaster of the Telegraph Station at Alice Springs. She travelled by train with her family from Adelaide to Oodnadatta, as was the way, then the rest with horse and buggy. In Oodnadatta Doris recalls:

*A yard surrounded by a high fence made of samplings with a central post supporting a thatched roof. Chained to the post by their wrists were six or seven natives, who sat on the ground with their feet towards us. I have never forgotten the horror of seeing human beings thus chained, but worse still was the sight of their bleeding and swollen feet. They stare dumbly at us, perhaps aware that there was nothing we could do to alleviate their suffering. We were told that they had been caught spearing cattle on one of the big station properties in the Centre and were on their way to Port Augusta gaol to serve long prison sentences. A police trooper with two aboriginal trackers, all mounted, had brought the poor creatures from Alice Springs. The prisoners, chained together by their wrists, and at night by their ankles as well, had walked every step of more than three hundred miles to the railhead. In the years that followed I saw many natives in chains, but I was no less revolted on subsequent occasions that I was at Oodnadatta with this first glimpse of man's bestiality to man. The chaining of human beings, even to my young mind, seemed depraved and sadistic. Yet it was so commonplace that I cannot recall ever having seen aboriginal prisoners who were not in chains. Once or twice I saw men who had walked so far in lawful custody that they had no skin left on the soles of their feet.*¹⁸ *Depraved and sadistic.*

Man's bestiality to man.

Such expressions of empathy are uncommon in the public record of Australia's history, unhelpful as they are to the program of colonisation.

Imagine:

¹⁶ Rowse T *White Flour, white power* p 18

¹⁷ Kimber R *The end of the bad old days* p 10

¹⁸ Blackwell Doris & Lockwood Douglas *Alice on the Line* Rigby Limited Adelaide Sydney Melbourne Brisbane Perth 1965 pp26-27

‘Why are those men chained like that with their feet worn off?’ Doris asked, horrified.

‘They are nothing but thieves and savages,’ the man in the top hat replied. ‘And they feel no more pain than your average snake. No need to worry your pretty head about them.’

Doris looked away, blinking back tears of rage and planning how she could help those prisoners escape. ‘What’s the use of having a pretty head,’ she thought, ‘when you can have one that’s full of ideas?’ Seven Alternative Little Australians.

Another empathetic sample comes from Baldwin Spencer:

*It is not difficult to realise that it must appear exceedingly strange to the blacks that whilst the white man can shoot down the emus and kangaroos he, the blackfellow, is not allowed to spear the cattle.*¹⁹²⁰

Brilliant my dear chap. Spencer was a learned man, a biologist turned anthropologist who teamed up with Francis Gillen to earn himself fame with the most comprehensive study of native Australians ever. He later served as the administrator of the NT and Chief Protector of Aborigines and advocated for the removal of half-caste children from their mothers.

By 1917 the extreme brutality of the bad old days had abated. That’s not to say it hasn’t continued in all manner of insidious ways. Nevertheless, the bullets and brutal incarceration, along with the distribution of rations, proved smashingly successful as techniques of colonisation. Indigenous people, ravaged by the consequences of early frontier contact, were finding new ways to adapt.

In the six years following Stott’s arrival in Alice Springs he had charged and convicted eighteen individuals with cattle killing, in nine separate incidents.²⁰ This was a huge reduction from earlier times, as was oft made apparent to Judge Bevan, with statements such as this from William Coulthard:

*The cattle killing by natives is now nothing like as frequent as it used to be,*²¹ and this from Carl Strehlow:

*“I have made no complaints to you since my return in 1912 of cattle killing as there have been no instances that we know of in that time. In former years the natives out west were a nuisance but they were dealt with by the police and of late years have been of little or no trouble.”*²²

¹⁹ Spencer, Baldwin *Through Larapinta Land* 1896 p59 That stroke of genius came to Spencer during the

²⁰ Horn Expedition: the first scientific expedition to study the natural history of Central Australia. Spencer was the zoologist and photographer in that expedition. He and Francis Gillen went on to perform pioneering anthropological work on the native tribes of Central Australia. Later, as the most senior public servant in the

Little or no trouble indeed. Mounted Constable Kelly and Tracker Tom rode back in to town on 28 April 1917 at 4 pm and recorded in the police journal that all was quiet out west.²³

HIM BEEN LIE DOWN DEAD ²⁴

Little Mavis Stott, aged three, was suffering from an eye disease that required urgent attention in Adelaide. Her sight was in the balance. Sergeant Stott was preparing to take Mavis and her mum in the horse and buggy to Oodnadatta, when a report came in that Henry Moyle was missing. It was believed he had

Moyle was a bushman and top drinker who had recently passed through Alice, heading north. The main thing we know about Moyle is that he was ‘a big man and ugly when drunk,’²¹ which seems to be an unfortunate way to go down in history.

Stott directed Kelly to go with Tracker Tom and two camels and head out to search for Moyle. Stott would remain in Alice Springs to care for the one prisoner in gaol and keep the station open. A chap named Huddleston would now take Mrs Stott and her daughter to the train.²² Stott’s specific instructions to Kelly were:

If Moyle found insane arrest, If alright see that Moyle goes on, if suicided or dead examine body and bury. If left camp and gone with horses follow tracks for at least ten miles, if tracks found to be making a straight North along Telegraph Line Track and passed Burt Well need not follow, or if tracks making straight out in Easterly direction towards James Turner’s camp, follow tracks for at least 10 miles, if tracks not deviating needless follow further.²³

Kelly later complained about having to take the camels. He maintained that horses were faster and would have led to Moyle’s rescue. Although not mentioned in his initial report, Kelly squeezed into the police journal later, in different ink, that the camels were lame and not good for riding.

On the contrary, explained Stott, the camels were at the station and ready to go. Had Kelly waited for the horses to be caught and brought up from the police paddock, they would not have got away until next morning. As it was he was on the road within an hour of the report coming in.

²¹ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 15 Bevan’s letter to Dr Gilruth, NT Administrator, 6 Feb 1918

²² NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 71 Stott’s letter to Judge Bevan

²³ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 74 Stott’s letter to Judge Bevan

That there was anything lame about the camels used in the search was refuted by a number of witnesses. There were suggestions though, that there was something lame about Kelly's approach to the search.

Tracker Tom found Moyle eventually, along with Johnnie, a native man from Bond Springs station who told the enquiry:

*Follow him up a little bit more and we been see him there. Him been lie down dead.*²⁴

Johnnie went on to explain how he and Tom took the initiative of preparing the grave and laying the man to rest:

Kelly no more been there... Tom and me been cover 'em up Moyle, nobody been tell us, we been do it ourselves.²⁵

PRIVATE USE OF THE POLICE Paddock

The police paddock sprawled out across the flat land between the MacDonnell Ranges and the Undoolya Range. These days that same area hosts the sewerage ponds, the BMX track, the showgrounds and the RSPCA. It was two miles from the police station in town, five miles wide at the eastern end, three at the western end and five miles north to south. In 1917 it supported twenty-three police horses and two foals as well as Stott's personal forty head of cattle and two horses. Stott had been keeping his own stock in the police paddock since 1912.²⁶

Stott also had 500 goats and fifty sheep further out on private land, tended by shepherds. In December 1917, there were five prisoners that Stott fed by killing a goat each day or a bullock each fortnight. In Summer the preferred fare was goat, too hot, as it was, for killing bullocks.²⁷

It was unreasonable, Kelly argued, for Stott to keep his personal stock in the police paddock, to the detriment of the police stock. Stott testified that all stock were healthy and that it was necessary for residents to keep their own stock as there was no butcher in the town. Stott had

²⁴ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 48 Johnnie's testimony to Judge Bevan

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *ref*

²⁷ *ref*

shown the arrangement to the administrator the last time he had visited and the administrator had made no comment.

KEEPING BLACK BOYS

As well as keeping their own stock, for milk and meat, many of the settlers ‘kept black boys.’ In fact George Wilkinson kept goats which he killed for his black boys. Wilkinson said it cost at least ten shillings per week to keep each boy and could be as high as fifteen. That would include tobacco and clothes.²⁸ Robert Harris came into Alice Springs every fortnight or three weeks, from the station at Hamilton Downs. He said as a rule he got all the boys he wanted to help him on the station but at times he was ‘stuck for a boy’. He didn’t go into their camps, he said, but as far as the working boys are concerned, they live quite decently. He said it was sometimes difficult to get a boy who understands the work.²⁹

Keith MacDonald considered the condition of the Aborigines to be very good. He could get them to work, he said, never had one refuse and had always found them orderly and not given to petty thefts.³⁰

SERGEANT STOTT GOOD FELLOW BOSS ALRIGHT³¹

In about 1915 Edie Powell was brought in from the bush to the Bungalow with her ‘quadroon infant.’ According to Stott, Edie was in the habit of waiting until all the inmates including her child were asleep then heading out to have sex with men camping in Alice Springs. ‘Sleeping with’ Stott called it but we all know what that means when you strip away the Scottish niceties.

In January 1916 a man named Briscoe was fined five pounds for inducing Edie to leave the Bungalow. Soon after, Ida Standley and Stott decided it would be best to expel Edie from the

²⁸ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 31 Wilkinson’s testimony to Judge Bevan

²⁹ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 61 Harris’s testimony to Judge Bevan

³⁰ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 41 McDonald’s testimony to Judge Bevan

³¹ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 54 Kitty William’s testimony to Judge Bevan

Bungalow but retain her child. Edie would be employed by the Stotts as domestic help in their home.³²

Edie was, as Stott saw it, a wilful young woman who needed to be disciplined on some occasions. He had, as he told it:

*On various occasion given her a smack with my open hand on ear for her defiant misdeeds.*³³

One day when Ida Standley was at the hotel where she was living, Edie Powell approached her and complained about having been kicked by Stott. Vivian Browne, Ida's daughter, was present as well. Edie was crying and lifted her dress to show the injury. Ida could see nothing although Vivian remembered a bruise.

'Oh dear, oh dear,' said Ida, (as if they were living in some antipodean version of an Enid Blyton classic.) 'Go back and be a good girl.'

Edie went away as advised and when Ida saw her a few days later she asked 'Well Edie are you alright?'

Edie said she was and continued to work for Stott.³⁴ The implication of this evidence was that things can't have been that bad. At the same time, opportunities weren't great for Edie. In her testimony she explained that Stott had told her if she didn't go back to work for him he would send her up to Darwin.

*I didn't want to go to Darwin and that's why I went back to Sergeant Stott. He was a good boss except the two times he hit me.*³⁵

It was obvious through many of the testimonies that Stott administered first aid and that, in the words of Tracker Sam 'Plenty of blacks come up, get medicine, any time.'³⁶

Wilkinson relayed an illuminatory little story of a boy, Mick, who was treated for his sore leg for six months, by Stott, at the police station. He was not of good character, said

³² NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 83 Stott's letter to Judge Bevan

³³ *ibid*

³⁴ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 44 Standley's testimony to Judge Bevan

³⁵ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 63 Powell's testimony to Judge Bevan

³⁶ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 45 Tracker Sam's testimony to Judge Bevan

Wilkinson, and was seen chasing a young girl. Wilkinson complained to Stott who gave him a beating and told him to get out of Alice Springs.³⁷

Wilkinson went on to say that the natives in and around the Alice are:

*An orderly crowd. Most of the able-bodied natives apparently are employed. There are occasional instances of petty breaches of the law but on the whole the natives are a well behaved, well fed and well clothed crowd.*³⁸

Frederick Price told the enquiry he was a constant visitor to Stott's house and had always seen the half-castes treated with the greatest of kindness. On the whole, he said:

*the natives around the Alice were not ill-disciplined, the native camps around the Overland Telegraph Station were good and the camps at the Alice appeared to be alright.*³⁹

Fred Raggatt said he had never heard Sergeant Stott bullying his men nor ever heard any complaints from them. He also thought there had been an improvement in the conduct of the natives around the township.⁴⁰

RATIONS

On Saturday mornings the blacks gathered around, waiting for the bell or whistle to signify the distribution of rations.⁴¹ As Stott told it:

On an average seventy to one hundred old and infirm aboriginals receive from 2 ½ to 3 lbs flour, ½ a stick of tobacco every Saturday morning. Jim Raka and his lubra, bungalow vegetable gardeners, receive 1 lb tea, 3 lbs sugar, 15 lbs flour, 4 sticks tobacco weekly. An aboriginal named George, nearly blind and his lubra, camp at the Gap Police Station. When no surface water in paddock, George and lubra keep troughs full at well for use of 23 police horses, 5 cow camels, 1 bull and 3 calves, property of Lands Dept...George and lubra receive weekly 16 lbs flour, ½ lb tea, 2 lbs sugar, government rations...I further beg to point out during May and June of this

³⁷ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 32 Wilkinson's testimony to Judge Bevan

³⁸ ibid

³⁹ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 30 Price's testimony to Judge Bevan

⁴⁰ ref

⁴¹ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 28 Raggatt's written submission to the enquiry

year I had 7 aboriginals and their lubras engaged repairing McDonald Range track, supplied them with aboriginal rations, clothing etc.⁴²

According to Tim Rowse, rationing was a fundamental tool in the armoury of colonisation. The brutal force of earlier times gave way to this new form of social control that brought with it the added advantage of a casual labour force.⁴⁷

Whitefellas gave out rations, blackfellas received them, thus bringing the two groups into close proximity. At the same time, little communication or mutual understanding was required. The donors had their notions of what the rations were for and how they were to be received and used although this was more assumed than communicated. Aboriginal people had their own notions and went about their business as they saw fit, often to the frustration of the onlookers.⁴³ Such intercultural variances in interpretation continue to confound.

James Baker provides an example of this with his apparent frustration that:

*You can never get a boy to do anything. They are too independent to do any work. The old blacks who receive food from the station share it with the boys. They have been too well treated.*⁴⁴

What kind of an extended family was this in which grandfathers shared what little they had with the young fellas?

Baker went on to lament that:

*This season is a good season for Aboriginal food. They get their stomachs full and are not inclined for work.*⁴⁵

THE ALCOHOL QUESTION

When Stott was at home by himself, as a rule, he had two or three ‘nobblers’ a day. With company he might have two or three more during the evening. Unless he had company, he said, he never touched it after dinner. It would be ridiculous to describe him as ‘a bottle a day man,’⁴⁶ or a drunk as Kelly had done.

⁴² NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 78 Stott’s written submission to the enquiry ⁴⁷

Rowse, white flour, white power p 17

⁴³ Rowse, white flour, white power p 17

⁴⁴ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 63 Baker’s testimony to Judge Bevan

⁴⁵ ibid

⁴⁶ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 50 Stott’s testimony to Judge Bevan

Many witnesses vouched for Stott's temperate drinking behaviour. He imbibed in moderation, never went to the hotel and no one could ever recall having seen him drunk.

IN SUMMING UP

Stott wasn't without his adversaries. Robert Plowman fell out with Stott over the removal of the Smith children from Arltunga although later conceded that it was for the best. In Plowman's estimation however, Stott was:

A bully, he is overbearing to most people. He is not courteous. He is tactless. My boy told me that he used to hit him.⁴⁷

That's not bad coming from the roving reverend who publicly espoused treating the blacks like a good dog who, if he gets a sound thrashing for an error, will not be likely to repeat it.⁴⁸

James Baker in reflecting on the way Stott had spoken to him during a recent falling out reflected that:

*He must think he was talking to blacks of the NT*⁴⁹

Staines considered natives in and around The Alice to be very ill- disciplined and their living conditions unsavoury. He believed that the assistant constable had been kept too much in Alice Springs and the outlying areas hadn't been patrolled as much as they should. Nevertheless, he considered Stott a friend and was indisposed to believe any ill of him.⁵⁰

Despite those isolated instances, the vast majority of witnesses spoke in Stott's defence. The general opinion of the district, as far as Louis Bloomfield could gather, was that Sergeant Stott was a good man, capable of his business. Bloomfield had never heard anyone speak otherwise.⁵¹

⁴⁷ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 70 Ploughman's testimony to Judge Bevan

⁴⁸ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 17 Bevan's written report on the enquiry

⁴⁹ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 63 Baker's testimony to Judge Bevan

⁵⁰ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 140 Memo from Atlee Hunt, Secretary Home and Territories Department, to Judge Bevan

⁵¹ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 56 Bloomfield's testimony to Judge Bevan

Harry Walkington believed that the general public feeling as to the charges was that they were a ‘concocted lot of falsehoods.’⁵²

Robert Harris had been the jail warden until April 1914 and resigned when all the prisoners were all released. As far as he was concerned, ‘there couldn’t have been a better man in authority over whites and blacks,’ and the general opinion was that the charges were ‘a tissue of lies.’⁵³

Aaron Meyers was of the opinion that Stott was ‘too lenient with the blacks and half castes if anything. And that the general opinion in the district as to this report was that it was altogether wrong.’⁵⁴

Kunoth said that Stott was always ready to welcome people to his house for social reunions, sickness or otherwise and the people in the country come to him for anything and everything.⁵⁵

THE VERDICT

*After hearing the evidence of the various witnesses and inspecting the files, documents and records I am of opinion that the charges as a whole are without foundation, and that Sergeant Stott is completely exonerated.*⁵⁶ Judge Bevan from his final report.

Telegrams, congratulations and apologies for the whole sorry saga ensued.

And Kelly had to pay back the relocation allowance to which he would only have been entitled had he stayed at least twelve months.

ⁱ Page 11

ⁱⁱ p31 ⁱⁱⁱ

P273 ^{iv}

p302 ^v

p271

⁵² NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 59 Walkington’s testimony to Judge Bevan

⁵³ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 61 Harris’s testimony to Judge Bevan

⁵⁴ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 60 Meyer’s testimony to Judge Bevan

⁵⁵ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 67 Kunoth’s testimony to Judge Bevan

⁵⁶ NAA: A3, NT1920/204 Page 13 Bevan’s report on the enquiry 6 February 1918

7. Research Plan and Timetable

DATE 2017	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES
March to December	<p>Literary analysis – reading books, taking notes, studying form and content</p> <p>Historic research – archival research, note taking, analysis</p> <p>Study of theory – Engaging with theories, note taking, applying to other areas of my research</p>	<p>Have read and taken notes on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -books about the history of Central Australia -fictocritical books -Other inspirational works <p>-have read and taken notes from National archives, SA archives and NT archives in Alice Springs</p> <p>Have read and taken notes from a range of theories including</p>
March to May	Creative writing activities. Write, critique my writing.	Arrive at a style to pursue for my creative artefact
May to December	Work on creative artefact	Several chapters of creative artefact are written
May to December	Work on exegesis.	Make notes and draft sections of exegesis.
July – August	Develop a plan for creative artefact and exegesis	Draft plans are completed
September	Visit Alice Springs library, NT archives office and Old Hartley St school – research and note taking	Notes taken from a range of documents. Identification of other relevant documents that are available for research
Nov - Dec	Write ethics application	Lodged late December

2018		
Jan – March 2018	Prepare colloquium documents	Colloquium documents completed and presented
Feb – Dec	Continued literary analysis Continued historic research Continued study of theory Incorporation of all of these into my creative artefact	
March	Approach potential members about being on reference group	Reference group established
March - Dec	Continue to draft creative artefact	First draft of creative artefact is complete
March		Ethics approval granted
April – June	Prepare for emerging writers festival and Writing conference in London	Papers and other preparations are complete.
June	Attend Emerging writer's festival and present	Successfully present at emerging writers festival. Write paper about the festival and its value. Paper is accepted for publication
June	Present at Great Writing International Creative writing conference in London	Paper is accepted for publication
August	Field trip to Adelaide for historic research and to conduct interviews	Interviews and historic research completed for Adelaide
September	Field trip to Canberra for historic research	Historic research completed for Canberra
October	Field trip to Alice Springs for historic research and interviews	Interviews and historic research completed for Alice Springs
2019		
January	Attend Jaipur Writers Festival, note taking, networking	Write a paper on the festival for publication
February to May	Any further research conducted	All research completed
February to November	Work on second draft of creative artefact	Second draft completed
February to December	Work on exegesis	First draft of exegesis completed

April to August	Write paper for journal	Paper is accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journal by end of year
2020		
February to May	Work on final draft of creative artefact	Creative artefact is complete
May to July	Work on final draft of exegesis	Exegesis is complete
August		Submit