

Mythologising Frontier: Narrative Versions of the Rufus River Conflict, 1841-1899

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In the formation of Australia's regional identities, as well as in the stories and legends in which those identities are memorialised, colonial race relations pose an unsettling problem. It is an historical orthodoxy to say that South Australia has avoided that problem, at least in its circulation of a public image, because of a reputation for preserving better contact relations than earlier-founded colonies. Yet it is also broadly recognised that this reputation sits in tension with a history of extensive and (at the time) public conflict in what Mary Louise Pratt calls the contact zone: the territories on the fringes of colonial settlement, in which peoples previously separated by geographic, historical and cultural disjunctures are brought into interaction.¹ During the 1840s, as numerous historical studies have elaborated, this conflict was not only part of an unspoken settler culture in South Australia but also involved government-sanctioned actions against Aboriginal communities.

When violence erupted in April 1841 between overlanders bringing stock from NSW and the Maraura people of the upper Murray districts between Lake Bonney, Lake Victoria and the Rufus river near the two colonies' border, public attention was readily captured.² The previous year, settler anxiety about the potential for Aboriginal 'aggression' had been sparked by a case — the *Maria* massacre, in which twenty six Europeans from the shipwrecked brig *Maria* were killed by the Milmenrura people along the Coorong's coastline — which would later become mythologised as exemplary of the sufferings and risks of pioneer life.³ This much publicised case, which resulted in the illegal court martial and summary execution of two Milmenrura men, initiated a fierce debate about the perceived boundaries of colonial law, about the rights of Aboriginal peoples as British subjects and settler rights as British occupiers. These were vexed questions indeed, and they received all manner of vexed responses.⁴ The Rufus river events which followed the *Maria* events by only a matter of months challenged the new government⁵ to resolve an emerging crisis in relation relations which would only grow with the expansion of European/Aboriginal contact,⁶ and in this sense 1841 represents a key moment in the history of South Australia's image-making process.

My focus here is not so much the history of these events as it is the ways in which they have been narrated, initially in the contemporary records and then, a generation later, in the foundational narratives of the late nineteenth century. One of the first and most influential memoir/histories of the late nineteenth century which tells the story of South Australian foundation is John Wrathall Bull's *Early Experiences of Life in South Australia*, which proved to be a template for later South Australian pioneer memoirs and histories.⁷ Between the contemporary records of 1841 and Bull's version of those records thirty odd years later a fundamental difference emerges: whereas the contemporary views of contact and conflict were far from emphatic, competing as they do in interests, anxieties and even facts, Bull's *Early Experiences* offers a version of events that contains various embellishments

but a simpler moral outcome in its celebration of colonial success. The settling effect of Bull's regional memoir/history on a more unruly past has been enhanced ever since by its public acceptance as historical record. Despite its strong element of autobiography and more than a hint of the literary genre of adventure romance, *Early Experiences* quickly became received as a text of historical veracity, both in the years immediately following its publication and well into the twentieth century.⁸

This is not to say that the colonial records of 1841 offer a version of events any more true than Bull's narrative of 1878; there is plenty to suggest that those earlier documents are just as marked by omission and preference. Nor is it to suggest that history, literature and memoir should or can remain fully discrete projects. The point is not the degree to which the different versions of events deviate from the 'truth' but, rather, what the differences between those versions might say about the mythologisation and circulation of the colony's public image, particularly as the nineteenth century drew to a close and gave rise to a new form of nationalism. The mutability of these narratives raises the question of what is privileged and what unsaid, what is remembered and what forgotten, in the process of generating colonial history.

The events of 1841 have been the subject of numerous historical analyses in recent decades, but are worth briefly retelling here in order to consider more closely the different ways in which they were discussed in the government despatches, newspaper reports and colonists' diaries.⁹

In April 1841 an overland party led by Henry Field and Henry Inman was attacked by the Maraura people near Lake Bonney, leading to the dispersal of five thousand sheep and eight hundred head of cattle, and the death of at least one Maraura man.¹⁰ Governor Gawler, now in the last month of his governorship, took immediate action with the despatch of a combined police and volunteer party under the command of police commissioner Major Thomas O'Halloran to retrieve the lost property. The function of the expedition was primarily peace-keeping, but the major's journal, written *en route*, reveals his expectation of a more forceful kind of punitive action. Oscillating perpetually between the determination to avoid violence and the anticipation of dispensing it, the Major expressed the commonly held sentiment that only 'severe punishment' would be a deterrent to Aboriginal threats:

I think it possible that [the Natives] may dispute our passage ... should this prove the case I consider that I should be fully justified by every law human & divine in forcing my way through ... I shall be careful not to be the aggressor in any way ... tho the punishment ought to be severe to prove to them our power ... I think that a severe lesson to this fierce tribe would greatly conduce to the preservation of life hereafter.¹¹

The major's anticipation of an encounter was interrupted, however, when the party was compelled by the news of Gawler's recall to turn back. Frustrated by the return of the government-sanctioned expedition, a volunteer party of settlers set out to recover the lost property. Again, the publicly expressed purpose of this settler action was the recovery of the lost stock, yet the private diary of one of the participants, James Hawker, reveals a more confrontational intention: 'our only hope', James Hawker wrote as they travelled to the district, 'is that the blacks will stand in order that we may show them the use of *good* firearms'.¹² As Hawker hoped, a clash did eventuate between the Maraura and the settlers, and although expedition leader Henry Field's report to the governor's secretary is quiet on the

matter of Aboriginal deaths,¹³ Hawker's diary reveals that the settlers shot six to eight Aboriginal men during the course of battle, escaping with no serious injury to their own party. Yet this retribution seems not to have satisfied their sense of injustice; having been forced to retreat without recovering the stock, the settlers considered the expedition to be unsuccessful.

The administration of Governor George Grey was now established in Adelaide, and when the news arrived in late May that another party led by stockholder Charles Langhorne was on its way overland, two published appeals were made to the new Governor for aid towards a mixed volunteer and police expedition.¹⁴ In contrast to the last governor's belief in the effectiveness of quick punitive action, Grey's response was wary and equivocal. For a start, he expressed suspicion towards the colonists' suggestion that the police should be regarded as a security force to protect the interests and risk-bound enterprises of overlanders, as well as that non-uniformed volunteers with undeclared designs should move against the Aboriginal population. He also doubted that the attacks on overlanders were unprovoked. Above all, he emphasised that all Aboriginal peoples held the same rights of British subjecthood as did all settlers, and that 'to regard them as aliens, with whom a war can exist, and against whom her majesty's troops may exercise belligerent rights, is to deny that protection to which they derive the highest possible claim from the sovereignty which has been assumed over the whole of their ancient possessions'.¹⁵ He did sanction an expedition, which would be led again by Major O'Halloran, but on strongly conditional terms. Its primary function was to escort the overlanders to Adelaide. It would be accompanied by the protector of aborigines, Matthew Moorhouse, whose role was to 'act as protector and counsel of the natives'.¹⁶ No guns were to be fired, except when 'absolutely necessary' in self-defence.

Before the expedition could meet the overlanders, however, Langhorne's men and the Maraura had already clashed. Four stockmen had died in the fight, introducing into the series of events the precedent of European deaths. A number of Maraura men were also killed, but this information was absent in Langhorne's official report to O'Halloran and in O'Halloran's report to Grey, appearing only in Moorhouse's report.¹⁷ The new factor of white men's deaths — and, in accordance with Grey's orders, the impossibility of exacting revenge for them — brought a new level of frustration to the Rufus river tensions. The major's diary records his sense of anxiety born of impotence: the party's Aboriginal interpreters were, he repeatedly worried, 'nothing more or less than spies', and the governor's check on the use of weapons forced him to accept, without the usual capacity of retribution, the 'mocking' behaviour of treacherous natives from the river: 'Much disheartened ... I much fear that our trouble of the day, in allowing these fellows to escape without injury will do much future Mischief & make them more bold & daring than ever — They must now laugh at and Despise us'.¹⁸ The party returned to Adelaide, having recovered most of the stock but dispirited by the impossibility of exacting punishment.

The fourth and last expedition started from Adelaide in August after Grey received a settler's appeal to send armed protection to William Robinson's overland party, which would soon pass through the contested territory on its way to Adelaide. The death of four white overlanders during the last trip injected a new sense of urgency into the petition.¹⁹ Again wary of what he took to be settler demands for military-style retribution, Grey hesitated to commit government resources to a cause which

not only might 'involve alike the innocent and guilty, men, women, and children in its consequences' but also was 'a matter of private adventure, not of public utility'.²⁰ Pressed again he agreed to endorse an expedition to the Murray, but this time with fewer men than on the last occasion and commanded not by a member of the force but by the Protector of Aborigines Matthew Moorhouse. The Sub-Inspector of Police Barnard Shaw would take second command. The expedition's 'main object', he wrote to Moorhouse, was to prevent a collision between Europeans and Aborigines; he felt assured that Moorhouse would let pass no opportunity of establishing friendlier relations between the two peoples.²¹ Yet when the Moorhouse/Shaw party met Robinson's party on 27 August, it was to learn that the overlanders had been attacked the previous day and in defending the stock had killed five and wounded another ten Aboriginal men.

Within an hour of this meeting, the 'severe lesson' that O'Halloran had expected to administer during the first, frustrated expedition took place. The two European parties met a large Maraura group in a tense encounter on the banks of the Rufus river. Feeling vulnerable to imminent attack, Moorhouse abandoned attempts at mediation and gave up his command to Shaw. Without waiting for orders, the overland party opened fire, followed by the police party from the opposite bank of the river. From the Aboriginal group of men, women and children wedged between them, according to Matthew Moorhouse's report, nearly thirty were killed and many wounded.²² Once again, other records cast doubt on the estimations of Aboriginal deaths. In his memoir published in 1899, James Hawker writes: 'in after years, when I was residing on the Murray and had learnt the language of the natives, I ascertained that a much larger number had been killed, for Mr Robinson's men were all picked marksmen'.²³ When the party returned to Adelaide in September, Grey called an inquiry into the massacre. The resolution of the Bench of Magistrates, moved by Major O'Halloran (here in his role as Justice of the Peace), was that the party's conduct was 'justifiable, indeed unavoidable in the circumstances'.²⁴ In this way the conflict on the upper Murray frontier, which had dragged from April to August, was closed in the colonial records.

The Rufus river conflict remained, at least in the public written records, a closed chapter of colonial race relations until the publication of John Wrathall Bull's *Early Experiences of Life in South Australia* in 1878. Like other colonial memoirs offering an 'eyewitness' perspective on regional history, *Early Experiences* fulfils its author's declared intention to commemorate the pioneer culture of the recent past. In his preface to the first edition, Bull commends the book to 'the rising generation of colonists' in order that they should 'become acquainted with some of the hardships and dangers' faced by their forefathers and so take 'pride and satisfaction' in the potential of 'adding to the renown of our glorious Empire'.²⁵ This kind of appeal, which constructs the past as a bridge to the future, has a powerful theatrical dimension, particularly in the context of what Paul Carter has called 'imperial history'.²⁶ The self-conscious metaphor of history as a stage, on which the colonial actor 'blazes a trail' towards a future of progress and success, was a common feature of retrospective assessments of the early pioneer years, particularly in commemorative narratives such as Centenary publications.²⁷ This metaphor appears, too, in the preface to the first edition of *Early Experiences* by another well-known South Australian colonist, J P Stow, who offers an image of Bull as dramatist, creating a history imbued with 'a great element of romance'.

Certainly, there is nothing unconventional about the inclusion of 'a great element of romance' in a nineteenth century memoir/history. In a period when the generic boundaries between history, fiction and autobiography were less fixed than they would later become, the literary aspirations Bull brought to his foundational memoir were not uncommon. Bull's interest in the literary potential of the frontier as a dramatic subject was already apparent in the way in which he rescripted his son John's 1864 diary of an overland journey to the uncolonised north of South Australia. Intended as a chapter on overland experience (which doesn't eventually appear in *Early Experiences*), Bull refigures his son's often plodding and prosaic diary as an essentially literary document, a frontier adventure romance.²⁸

In *Early Experiences*, he brings a similar understanding of narrative drama and effect to the 1841 Rufus river records. His account is compiled from the documents available to him: the unpublished expedition diaries of Major O'Halloran and James Hawker, to which he had private access, and the Register's published records.²⁹ Most of these materials, in Bull's hands, are altered in ways that unify and celebrate the history of a receding frontier and the heroic substance of its European actors. The inconsistencies and conflicts of interest which those documents reveal are largely smoothed away by Bull's pen. What he records is a history which might not be any more or less 'true' than that of the original records, but which is less divided in its moral conclusions, and more closely framed by a desire to discover in the past the origins of an evolving pioneer legend.

It is not surprising, then, that Bull's account of the 1841 conflict focuses less on the causes of conflict than on the drama of the contested frontier itself. His unconcern with the causes of Aboriginal aggression is not based on a refusal to acknowledge European provocation, since *Early Experiences* contains several such acknowledgements of European injustices towards the Aboriginal population.³⁰ His uninterest in cause is more likely to spring from the fact that the function of a foundational memoir is fundamentally different to that of an historical record: its role is not to explain the emergence of conflict but, as Bull puts it, to 'present a succession of thrilling pictures of the sufferings endured by pioneers'.

The literary mode of this endeavour is established by the stylistic alterations which Bull makes to both published records and unpublished ones. In fact he goes further, taking a particularly compelling story from one source and attributing it to another, with elaborated detail enhancing narrative continuity and effect.³¹ Just as effectively, he injects into the diaries of O'Halloran and Hawker — his primary unpublished sources — a self-conscious stoicism. Where doubt or even self-irony appears in the diaries, it is excluded or replaced in Bull's account. While citing Hawker on the volunteers' expedition, for instance, Bull leaves out Hawker's rather uninspiring entry on 11 May: 'Took the wrong track, had some difficulty in finding the main one'. Hawker's concluding remarks — 'Our wish that the blacks might stand was thus disagreeably complied with, and our expedition completely knocked on the head' — are modified in Bull's version, which concludes with the more rousing words: 'We rallied three times, and kept our adversaries in check'.³² While Hawker's diary prosaically accepts a conflict of interest between Aboriginal and settler communities as natural and inevitable, Bull's revision of the diary adds to it the tone of colonial romance. Where Hawker describes the Maraura 'army' as a force equal to their own, Bull describes a demonised enemy, infusing Hawker's account with an element of gothic horror:

Hawker: We came into a small flat ... in which between two and three hundred blacks were collected ready to receive us (several of them were painted with white and red which they do when they are going to fight). Capt. Field ordered us immediately to form into line but several of the horses being restive from the yelling of the natives we found it impossible to do so. The moment we halted one of the natives threw a Spear into the ground this was immediately followed by one at Capt. Field which luckily glanced off a tree. Capt. Field shot the man who threw this Spear dead and some more shots were fired with success.

Bull (citing Hawker's diary): "The natives when met were in their war paint, with white bars on their bodies and limbs, giving them the appearance of skeletons. It was found that the horses would not steadily face them, the blacks also yelling in the most hideous manner".

Hawker's admission, too, that the Maraura party actually allowed the much smaller European party an avenue of escape ('[the] chief leader of this party ... motioned to us to go away which hint we were very glad to take') is absent from Bull's version of the diary, which, drawing on the published report of Henry Field from the *Register* of 29 May, lends rather more heroism to the party's retreat.

Bull's account of the third expedition, which absorbs two chapters, is both the most literary and the most obviously polemical of the accounts of the Rufus river events. A new factor had entered the story: although a number of Aboriginal men had met their deaths in encounters with the European parties, the third expedition saw, for the first time during these events, the deaths of Europeans. Whereas the outraged tone of the colonists' memorial to Grey of 1841 requesting the expedition was based on the perceived threat to their land interests, Bull, with the benefit of hindsight, infuses his account with a more potent form of moral injustice: the deaths of white men. *Early Experience's* Chapter 30, the first of two to deal with this expedition, is marked by a strong sense of narrative suspense: Bull lead his readers inexorably through O'Halloran's travels towards the revelation of the stockmen's deaths, and reserves the climax of the battle, as well as O'Halloran's discovery of one 'shockingly mangled' European corpse, for the next chapter.³³ When the body's discovery is finally described, Bull adds some embellished details ('masses of mangled bone, brains, and congealed blood'³⁴), presumably intended, and no doubt successfully, to excite further horror in the minds of his readers. The events following the body's discovery are drawn from Hawker's diary, but with the addition of the motif of Aboriginal treachery. Whereas Hawker's entry for 23 June simply notes that amongst an Aboriginal group swimming in the river were those 'who told us that the sheep were alive (&c)', Bull's citation is more provocative: 'The natives who had promised to give up the sheep were amongst the swimming niggers, thus proving their treachery'.³⁵

The edge of narrative drama in Bull's account is combined with a polemic against Grey, whose policy of non-violent intervention provokes Bull's contempt. Whereas the *Register's* editorial at the time called to colonists not 'to be led away by any harsh and unnecessary feelings of hostility to the Natives',³⁶ Bull's account a generation later is fuelled by a strong sense of moral certainty, and Grey's avoidance of punitive action condemned as a 'weak, tampering policy': 'it should have followed that subjects of whatever colour found in arms, and after committing such crimes as

these had, should have been promptly treated as subjects in revolt, and have been dealt with accordingly, constables' staves being left at home'.³⁷ This endorsement of colonial interests is also apparent, although less openly, in the way in which Bull represents Grey's sanctioning of a third expedition. Grey's response to the appeal for another expedition had contained three critical issues which become blurred in Bull's account. First was Grey's point that 'rights' of colonists to retaliate against Aboriginal 'outrages' do not in fact exist except in the wrong-headedness of colonists' 'excited feelings'. Bull naturalises the existence of settlers' punitive rights in his distinction between the 'wilful' (that is, unjustified) and 'necessary' (that is, justified) killing of Aboriginal people in the course of colonial settlement.³⁸ Second was Grey's insistence that Aboriginal peoples were due the legal rights that subjecthood under the Crown entailed. This point is effectively sidestepped by Bull with the phrase 'subjects in revolt': the state of revolution — caused, the phrase suggests, by Aboriginal aggression against the now naturalised occupiers — allows for punitive actions not normally sanctioned in the state of civil peace. The third critical point of Grey's response to be smoothed over in Bull's account was that government resources could not be held captive by the risk-bound interests of entrepreneurs. In Bull's account, Grey's warning to overlanders about injudicious behaviour on the frontier is rewritten as prompt support: the governor, he writes, 'expressed his readiness to promote the objects in view so far as the means at his disposal would permit'.³⁹

Bull's account of the massacre of the Maraura is anti-climatic after the previous chapters: in the scheme of his narrative, the third expedition, with its striking literary potential of the dead stockmen, is the climax of the drama, and the killing of some thirty Maraura men, women and children takes second place to that drama. His version of the massacre is compiled from Moorhouse's first report and extracts from the subsequent Inquiry.⁴⁰ These extracts are framed by Bull's own evaluative summary, which interprets the massacre as not only manoeuvred by the Maraura themselves ('a conflict took place, when the little army of blacks placed themselves between the two parties'), but also due to them ('and advancing to attack at length met with their deserts').⁴¹ In deflecting responsibility for the Maraura deaths from the Europeans who engaged in the shooting to the Maraura themselves, Bull follows the lead of the official inquiry. In its two resolutions of 22 September 1841, both moved by Major O'Halloran, the bench of magistrates' use of passive constructions deflects responsibility for the conflict away from the police party which, after all, had travelled over the border of its jurisdiction into NSW for the specific purpose of an encounter with the Maraura. First, the bench found 'that the conduct of Mr Moorhouse and his party was justifiable, indeed unavoidable in the circumstances they were placed under, and that much praise is due to him and them for the great forbearance the force evinced when placed under circumstances of the most trying nature'; second, it found 'that the Europeans on that occasion did not act with unnecessary severity against the natives when obliged to fire upon them'.⁴¹ This deferral of responsibility is further justified by appeal to the contemporary notion that quick punishment constituted an act of mercy towards Aboriginal people. The idea that speedy death was preferable to an inevitable slow decline allowed colonists to regard their punitive actions as not only justifiable but as positively benevolent. It was an idea enlisted even by Moorhouse at the Inquiry into the massacre in September 1841, and was readily available to Bull at a time when social darwinism was becoming central to popular ideology.⁴³ It is used by him in his presentation of Gawler's

summary executions of the Milmenrura men after the Maria massacre as a 'merciful' option, in the sense of preventing the risk of further, illegal settler retribution.⁴⁴ In contrast, Grey's warning of 1841 against colonists' unmonitored behaviour on the boundaries of colonised districts is neatly smoothed away.

Bull's account of Aboriginal/European conflict, with its revisions of earlier records, quickly became a natural source for other South Australian foundational narratives. That the former commissioner of police, Alexander Tolmer, intended his 1884 *Reminiscences* to be modelled upon Bull's book is indicated, somewhat churlishly, in his Preface: 'Shortly after the publication of *Early Recollections and Experiences of Colonial Life* [sic], by Mr J W Bull, I was repeatedly urged by friends to write my own reminiscences, instead of devoting my time to assist other authors'. As a member of O'Halloran's first thwarted expedition, Tolmer had more first-hand experience of the Rufus river events than Bull; yet in his account he takes his cue from Bull, replicating not only the structure of Bull's account but also directly copying his opening paragraphs.⁴⁵ James Hawker, whose 1841 diary of two of the expeditions had been a primary resource for Bull, also closely follows the pattern of Bull's account in his similarly named *Early Experiences in South Australia* of 1899. The result, by the turn of the century and arrival of Federation, was the creation of a cohesive and circular foundational history, one which became the source for twentieth century accounts of South Australia's contact history, and which smoothed over the disquieting tensions of the original records.⁴⁶

Early Experiences became a central text in incorporating Aboriginal/European conflict into South Australia's foundational mythology, but Bull's narrative is not without its own ambivalences. Given his justification of the Rufus river massacre and other killings as cases of 'necessity', one might think that Bull would not feel the need to say more.⁴⁷ Yet despite his own position as a successful colonist, the chapter following his account of the massacre reveals a nagging sense of doubt about the appropriation of Aboriginal land in aid of unfettered colonial expansion.⁴⁸ According to his son, Bull enjoyed the reputation of a humanitarian and maintained good relations with local Aboriginal communities,⁴⁹ and while *Early Experiences* justifies punitive action as a response to Aboriginal resistance, it also imagines a program for the expansion and improvement of Aboriginal land tenure.⁵⁰ Yet in the end, the remorse marking Bull's narrative, 'We had been received as friends, and now where are the original lords of the soil', is less than his commitment to the purpose and future of empire.⁵¹ In a direct address to the generations of that future, he advises: 'there remains plenty for you to do by crowning the edifice, in extending improvements over our vast, as yet unconquered regions, larger in extent than some European kingdoms'.⁵²

Finally, then, the humanitarian rhetoric of regret which closes Bull's discussion of the Rufus river conflicts is assimilated by a more celebratory mythology of foundation. As Roger Luckhurst, drawing on Lyotard, has put it in another context: 'In the apparent service of remembrance, memorial history is premised on a forgetting: by being too certain, too definite, too narrativized, it "closes the gap"'.⁵³ Certainly, the confident kind of memorial history that is exemplified by Bull's *Early Experiences* is premised on a forgetting which prevailed well into the twentieth century and which, many might argue, is yet to be adequately addressed.

Notes on pages 224-226

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- 1 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge, London and New York, 1992, pp 6–7.
- 2 R H W Reece has speculated that the Maraura, who would clash with overland groups throughout 1841, were exerting guerilla warfare on invading Europeans. RHW Reece, (*Aborigines and Colonists: Aborigines and Colonial Society in NSW in the 1830s and 1840s*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1974, p 25). Rick Hosking has since suggested, in the light of the archaeological uncovering in 1994 of an extensive cemetery in the region of the clashes, that the Maraura were protecting a site of critical cultural significance from the casual disrespect of overlanders Rick Hosking, ‘Can the Antipodes Meet? Simpson Newland’s *Paving the Way* and Late Nineteenth Century Ideas about the (South) Australian Nation’, unpublished seminar paper, Flinders University, 1996, p 21, citing Julian Cribb in *The Australian*, 11 May 1994, p 10.
- 3 As well as being retold, in numerous versions, in settler memoirs and stories, this event became immortalised in Simpson Newland’s popular historical fiction *Paving the Way: A Romance of the Australian Bush* (1893).
- 4 Letters to the *Register* newspaper over the next year document both approval of and outrage over the action, creating a controversy that divided the settler community. The suggestion even emerged from the Colonial Office in London that Governor Gawler, who had authorised the executions, could be tried for murder, although this never eventuated.
- 5 Shortly after the first violent event on the Rufus, in April 1841, Gawler’s administration was replaced by that of the younger George Grey. Although some in the colony speculated that Gawler’s handling of the *Maria* massacre had contributed to his recall, this is unlikely, since the recall was surely in process before he ordered the Milmenrura executions.
- 6 1842–43 would see a series of violent conflicts in the sparsely settled Port Lincoln district on the colony’s west coast.
- 7 John Wrathall Bull, *Early Experiences of Colonial Life in South Australia*, Adelaide, 1878.
- 8 See for instance its use as historical record as recently as 1989 in Alan Pope’s compelling account of South Australian colonial race relations, *Resistance and Retaliation: Aboriginal-European Relations in Early Colonial South Australia*, Heritage Action, Bridgewater SA, 1989.
- 9 For historical analyses of contact and conflict in the early 1840s, see for example Robert Clyne, ‘War with the Natives: from the Coorong to the Rufus, 1841’, *Journal of the Historical Society of SA*, no 9, 1981, pp 91–110; R Gibbs, ‘Relations between the Aboriginal Inhabitants and the First South Australian Colonists’, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia*, no 61, 1960, pp 61–78; G Grainger, ‘Matthew Moorhouse and the South Australian Aborigines 1836–1856’, MA thesis, Flinders University of South Australia, 1980; J Summers, ‘Colonial Race Relations’ in Eric Richards (ed.), *The Flinders Social History of South Australia*, Wakefield, Netley SA, 1987; and Pope, op. cit.
- 10 Deposition of Henry Inman, *Papers Relative to South Australia*, printed by William Clowes for HMSO, London, 1843, no 87/encl 1.
- 11 Entry 27 April 1841. Diary of Thomas O’Halloran, GRG 5/81 (microfilm), State Records Office of South Australia.
- 12 Entry 13 May 1841. Diary of James Hawker, PRG 201/1 (microfilm), Mortlock Library of South Australia.
- 13 Henry Field to George Hall, Governor’s Secretary, 20 May 1841. PRSA no 87/encl 4.
- 14 John Morphett, et al, to Grey, 24 May 1841. PRSA no 87/ encl 5. This petition and Alfred Langhorne’s letter of appeal were published alongside Grey’s response in the *Register*, 29 May 1841.
- 15 Robert Gouger for Grey, response to Memorialists. PRSA no 87/encl 6. Published in the *Register*, 29 May 1841.
- 16 Memorandum to O’Halloran and Moorhouse, 31 May 1841. GRG 5/83 and PRSA no 87/encl 8.
- 17 Moorhouse’s report of Charles Langhorne’s verbal account to the police party states that five Aboriginal men were shot dead by the overlanders. Moorhouse’s report to Grey, 30 June 1841, PRSA no 92/encl 2. News of these deaths does not appear in Langhorne’s official report to Major O’Halloran (22 June 1841, PRSA no 92/encl 3) or in O’Halloran’s report to Grey (27 June 1841, GRG 5/82).
- 18 Diary of Major T S O’Halloran, entries 22–23 June. GRG 5/81.
- 19 John Ellis to Grey, 23 July 1841. PRSA no 94/encl 2.

- 20 Grey's Minute to the Council of Government, 10 July 1841. PRSA no 94/encl 1.
- 21 Memorandum from Grey to Moorhouse, 3 August 1841. PRSA no 94/encl 7.
- 22 First report from Moorhouse to Grey, 4 September 1841, PRSA no 97, encl 1.
- 23 James Hawker, *Early Experiences in South Australia*, E S Wigg and Son, Adelaide, Perth and London, 1899, p 79.
- 24 Proceedings of the Meeting of the Bench of Magistrates, 20–22 September 1841. PRSA no 98/ enclosure.
- 25 Bull, op. cit., p 31.
- 26 Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*, Alfred A Knopf, New York, 1988, p xvi.
- 27 *ibid.* In South Australia the Centenary publications of 1936 are repeatedly marked by this metaphor, particularly in relation to the dominance of the colonist and the 'disappearance' of Aboriginal peoples. The *Royal Geographical Society Proceedings Centenary Supplement*, for instance, comments: 'Into the story, in a vague and shadowy way, came those pleasant, pathetic, nomadic people, the aborigines. As we occupied the stage they receded from it' (no 34, 1936, p 14). An article in *The Advertiser's Special Centenary Issue* (September 1, 1936) evokes the same image in reference to the colonist/Aboriginal relationship: 'These, then, were the people who flitted, like dusky shadows, across the background of a stage on which was enacted the drama of the settlement of the colony'.
- 28 John Bowyer Bull, 'Diary of an overland journey north of Streaky Bay for pastoral land, May–June 1864, with interpretative notes by John Wrathall Bull'. PRG 507/1, Mortlock Library of South Australiana.
- 29 These included Henry Inman's account of the initial conflict, Grey's instructions for the third expedition, Matthew Moorhouse's report on the massacre and the Inquiry's proceedings.
- 30 See, for instance, Bull, *Early Experiences*, op. cit., pp 54, 67, 71, 179.
- 31 Recounting the initial conflict between the Aboriginal and Inman's parties in his diary, Hawker tells the (privately circulated?) story of a shepherd who 'plays dead' in order to escape further attack, and who travels through hostile territory for a week with several spear wounds and with nothing to eat other than a dog's carcase. Bull attributes this story to Inman's published report, with some elaborated detail (pp 147–8).
- 32 Bull, *Early Experiences*, op. cit., p 156.
- 33 *ibid.*, p 163.
- 34 *ibid.*, p 165.
- 35 *ibid.*
- 36 *Register*, 6 July 1841.
- 37 *ibid.*, p 163.
- 38 See for instance Bull, *Early Experiences*, op. cit., pp 64–5.
- 39 Bull, *Early Experiences*, op. cit., p 157.
- 40 Published in the *Register*, 11 September 1841.
- 41 Bull, *Early Experiences*, op. cit., p 171.
- 42 Proceedings of the Inquiry, 20–22 September 1841. PRSA no 98/ enclosure.
- 43 *ibid.*
- 44 *ibid.*, p 131.
- 45 Compare Bull, *Early Experiences*, op. cit., p 146, to Alexander Tolmer, *Reminiscences of an Adventurous and Chequered Career at Home and at the Antipodes*, 2 vols, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, London, 1882, p 217.
- 46 The State Library, for instance, produced its own account of the Rufus river conflict in its 'Research Notes' series (no 36 by GHP, undated). With a clear emphasis on settler 'pluck', it directs readers to Bull's and Hawker's *Early Experiences* as historical records.
- 47 Bull, *Early Experiences*, op. cit., pp 65, 176.
- 48 John Bowyer Bull, 'Reminiscences', PRG 507, Mortlock Library of South Australiana.
- 49 *ibid.*
- 50 *ibid.*, pp 178–81. Although Bull's scheme for Aboriginal land title, based on the Poonindie mission township which was established in 1850, may rank him as a liberal thinker for his day, it is, inevitably, underwritten by an assimilationist agenda which does not challenge the invaders' rights to the land. Indeed, even as he provisionally declares the country as Aboriginal-owned (*Early Experiences*, op. cit., p 178), Bull assumes its availability to the colonial administration either for

distribution to settlers or for return to its traditional occupants. On the history of Poonindie, see Peggy Brock, *Outback Ghettos: A history of Aboriginal institutionalisation and Survival*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993.

51 *ibid.*, p 68.

52 *ibid.*, p 31.

53 Roger Luckhurst, “‘Impossible Mourning’ in Morrison’s *Beloved* and Roberts’ *Daughter in the House*”, *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, no 37, 1996, p 5.

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- 1 Guthrie, ‘Authority at Cherbourg’ in P K Lauer (ed.), *Occasional Papers in Anthropology*, no 6, University of Queensland, 1976, p 2; A Cambell et al, *The Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of Queensland*, Brisbane, 1958, p 18.
- 2 J P M Long, *Aboriginal Settlements: A Survey of Institutional Communities in Eastern Australia*, Canberra, 1970, p 95; R Kidd, *The Way We Civilize*, St Lucia, 1997, pp 54–6.
- 3 A Meston, ‘Monograph on the Aborigines: Past and Present Condition’, 14 November 1899; ‘Report on the Aboriginal Station Recently Formed on Fraser’s Island’, *QSA*, 31 March 1897; ‘Interview with Mr Meston’, unidentified press clipping (possibly *Queenslander*, March 1897), Hird Cutting Books, no 3, p 72, Oxley Memorial Library, Brisbane.
- 4 A Meston to Principal Under Secretary, 23 August 1897; ‘First Report on Western Aborigines’, 16 June 1897; ‘Aborigines, West of Warrego’ Report, 27 June 1897; ‘Monograph on the Aborigines’, 14 November 1899; ‘Aborigines Protection Act’ (Draft Proposals), August 1897. *QSA Col 140 & 141*.
- 5 *Queensland Parliamentary Debates (hereafter QPD)*, 15 November 1897, p 1539; *QPD*, 30 November 1897, p 1887.
- 6 *QPD*, 31 July 1901, p 225; *QPD*, 3 September 1901, p 594.
- 7 W E Parry-Okeden, Letter Book, 17 May 1898; police commissioner to under home secretary, 11 May 1898, *QSA Pol/JI5*, File: 389M; police commissioner to home secretary, 27 May 1898, *QSA Col 140*.
- 8 A Haldane, P M Herberton to under home secretary, 22 June 1898; H J Barber J P, Nocundra to A Meston, 4 July 1900, *QSA Col 140 and 142*.
- 9 A Meston to under home secretary, 18 April 1898; A Meston, ‘Fraser Island Aborigines’, 21 December 1899; ‘The Fraser Island Settlement’, November 1899 *QSA*, Col. 029 in-letter no 12487 of 1901 and Col 140. *Brisbane Courier*, 10 March 1900.
- 10 A Meston, Report 15 June 1898; Report on Queensland Aborigines to H Tozer 1896, *QSA*, Col 140 and Col 144.
- 11 *ibid.*, 10 August 1901.
- 12 A Meston, ‘Reports on South Queensland Aborigines’, 5 January 1897 and 10 August 1901, *QSA*, Col 142.
- 13 A Meston to under home secretary, 29 August 1900; A Meston to Home Secretary, 18 September 1900, *QSA*, Col 141 and 145.
- 14 W Roth ‘Annual Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1900’ *QVP* 1901, vol 4, p 1336; W E Parry-Okeden, Letter Book, 18 July 1898; Police Commissioner Report, 4 September 1901, *QSA Pol/JI5* Batch no 585.
- 15 *QPD*, 3 September 1901, p 613; *QPD*, 7 November 1901, p 1718.
- 16 *ibid.*, 8 October 1901, p 1139; A Meston to Commissioner of Police, 19 September 1900, *QSA*, *Pol/JI5* File No 389M; A Meston to home secretary, 15 February 1900, *QSA*, Col 144.
- 17 *QPD*, 31 July 1901, p 227; *QPD*, 8 October 1901, p 1138.
- 18 A R Edwards and P Wilson (eds), *Social Deviance in Australia*, Melbourne, 1975, p 3.
- 19 E Rubington & M S Weinberg (eds), *Deviance: The Inter-actionist Perspective*, New York, 1973, p 26.
- 20 T S Szasz, *The Manufacture of Madness*, New York, 1970, pp xxv–xxvi; A Liazos, ‘The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance: Nuts, Sluts and Perverts’, *Social Problems*, vol 20, no 1, 1972, pp 103–120.
- 21 P Rock and M McIntosh, *Deviance and Social Control*, London, Tavistock, 1974, p 45; Edwards, *op. cit.*, p 9.
- 22 Edwards and Wilson, *op. cit.*, p 8; Rubington and Weinberg *op. cit.*, p 9.