

# The Psychology of Colonial Violence

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## COLONIAL VIOLENCE

It is an odd but telling fact that until very recently the question of colonial violence has not figured much in the narratives of the British Empire. Surely no imperial historian would deny that violence was part of empire history. But I think it true to say that most commonly the issue of imperial violence has been safely confined to the categories of war, or an occasional “scandal” of empire ignited by an over-enthusiastic use of force. Yet, as I discovered (to my surprise, I must admit) in the Cape Colony archives whilst researching the British-Xhosa encounter in the nineteenth century, the presence of violence in empire cannot be reduced to the margins of its history. In those archives it was impossible to ignore the atrocities and the everyday violence that accompanied the expansion of British rule over the Eastern Cape. This was often “unofficial” violence; it was the violence of settlers against Indigenous peoples. And it was baked into the everyday experience of empire, at least in the

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early stages of settler colonial states, and often for much longer. When I turned my own research gaze away from the Cape and towards the other settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand during the same period of the early nineteenth century, it was impossible to ignore the presence of the same kind of violence I had glimpsed in the Cape.<sup>1</sup>

If it is true that imperial historians have not typically highlighted settler violence as central to the experience of making empire, local historians of empire have long been aware of the phenomenon. What Elizabeth Elbourne referred to some years ago—adopting the phraseology of the humanitarian discourse of the 1830s—as “the sin of the settler” was familiar to those who worked in the colonial archives. This is particularly true in the case of Australia. Many years of official and unofficial silence, when histories of Australia carefully avoided or sanitized the degree of violence in its past, were broken in the early 1980s as national historians such as Henry Reynolds, and local researchers such as P.D. Gardener and Lyndall Ryan carefully documented the extent of settler violence.<sup>2</sup>

But once this happened, a storm of political and academic controversy—what became known as the “history wars”—broke over the findings of this research. In a sense, this was hardly surprising. The evidence of a deeply embedded tradition of violence against indigenous peoples sharply contradicted the dominant Australian sense of a benign national identity. The idea that the country had “another past”, in the words of Raymond Evans, was hard to take, and the fires of controversy were stoked when the would-be historian Keith Windshuttle mounted an extensive assault on scholarly integrity of those who had presented evidence of the violence. This set off a long and bitter controversy that became a national political issue in which historians who pointed to this aspect of Australia’s past were tagged as “black armband” purveyors of a disloyal past. Thankfully, it is unnecessary for an outsider such as myself to venture into that particular political and historical morass. Now that the dust has settled down, the claims of scholarly deception about frontier conflict have been effectively dismissed, and the presence and the scale of settler violence have been amply documented as an undeniable fixture in Australian history.<sup>3</sup>

Whether the extent of the violence was the same in other parts of the British empire is not clear. And what determines its local differences is also unclear. It may be particularly sharp, for example, where pastoralist settlers compete for land with hunter gatherers. What is evident, however, is the intimate association of violence with the making of empire

wherever it is experienced. And significant studies of frontier violence are beginning to appear for other areas of the British world. Major studies of frontier violence in South Africa have appeared, for example. It is a topic that is now attracting some attention in the largest settler colony of them all—the United States. The everyday violence of the State in colonies like Burma and India has been delineated. In New Zealand, where the degree of casual violence was, perhaps, less common than it was elsewhere, it has still proved necessary to rescue the brutality of the various frontier wars from the hush of posterity.<sup>4</sup>

Let me first define the key features of this violence, as I treat it here. First, it was quotidian, almost everyday in character, and personal. It was outside of the big-event violence like the Indian uprising of 1857. It was the kind of violence Elizabeth Kolsky has documented for India as being “an intrinsic feature of imperial rule” but which has also been “one of the empire’s most closely guarded secrets”. Evidence of such incidents can be found in official and unofficial records; in newspapers, and in published memoirs. This violence was primarily driven by the *settler* community, and it possessed a personal quality even when conducted by collective groups. Violent episodes ranged from set-piece battles between settler posses and indigenes, to informal parties of settlers going off hunting native people, to the individual murder of settler or aborigine in their isolated, lonely homestead.<sup>5</sup>

Second, its demographic impact on the Indigenous populations could be profound. The greatest efforts to delineate this have been in Australia. But reliable statistical measures have proved difficult to achieve and controversial. Estimates of the base indigenous population which suffered the violence are, of course, largely guess work; the records of violent incidents themselves are scanty and often unreliable. It has taken considerable ingenuity on the part of historians to come up with reasonable figures even for a region such as Queensland which was universally acknowledged to be a killing ground in the nineteenth century. But to give an idea of how the numbers have proved difficult to comprehend, in 1972 Henry Reynolds estimated a toll of 5000 indigenous people killed in Queensland. By the early 1980s this estimate had doubled, and the most recent total, after careful reconstruction of available records, is about 60,000—which is twice the number that Reynolds had thought was the total of indigenous peoples killed in all of Australia between 1788 and 1900. Looking at another area of Australia, one authority has estimated that such violence killed 11% of the indigenous population

in the Port Phillip (Melbourne) district in 1836 alone. In the case of Tasmania where the Indigenous population in 1800 was about 5000, it is estimated that about 1000 were killed by settler vigilante groups mainly between 1823 and 1831. And this dismal catalogue could be continued.<sup>6</sup>

Third, the relationship of this kind of violence to the State and to *State* violence was tangled. It was a violence that did not *necessarily* emanate from official policy or organs of the State. Even when committed by officers of the State, it frequently possessed a personal rather than an official quality. It was a category of violence that was racial, social *and* imperial, but which often stood outside the sphere of the State. Indeed, it was often hidden from the State for fear of legal sanction. The point is that at this historical moment of the early nineteenth century, the State did *not* have a monopoly on violence that was linked to imperial rule. Nor did it necessarily have clear legal guidelines or signposts to arbitrate its actions. This was one reason why the State's use of salutary terror as a strategy of punishing recalcitrant or troublesome natives was often—if not always—accompanied by detailed explanations and exculpations that were designed to reassure the Colonial Office and others of the necessity of such violence.

It is important to remember that colonial violence was not the same over time. Certain patterns and structures characterize the different periods of imperial rule. During the early nineteenth century state structures were frail and rickety. In this context, as Julie Evans has quite brilliantly argued, the condition of lawlessness *became* the law and it was precisely within this zone of legal anarchy that settler sovereignty was established. Governors and others were frequently incapable of imposing the kind of order they might have wished. Indeed, in the colonies of the southern seas, a viable network of legal institutions and policing capabilities was not fully established until the mid-century. Only then was the State in a position to claim the sole right to exercise of violence. Its subsequent failure to smother the tendencies to vigilante violence did not reflect the weakness of the State, however, but rather its appropriation of this practice from an earlier time.<sup>7</sup>

And the final quality of this violence that I wish to highlight was its sheer brutality, reflecting what Aimé Césaire referred to as the de-civilization and brutalization of the colonizer. Again there are many gruesome tales of atrocities packed into the colonial record. But let us just note briefly the popularity of decapitation as an expression of colonial rule in this period. Tattooed Maori heads were reported sold as “objects

of curiosity” in Sydney in the pre-1840 period. One early settler in Van Diemen’s Land killed an indigenous man, took the wife for a sex slave, and made her wear her ex-husband’s head around her neck. Even the Colonial Office, which was by this time accustomed to receiving reports of such events, could hardly believe their eyes when they read the account of this outrage. They were even more outraged when a few years later the Xhosa chief Hintsa was not only shot down in cold blood, his ears were cut off and his head *may* have been, too. Even if his head remained where it belonged, there were plenty of Xhosa skulls adorning settler homes around the Eastern Cape—and plenty in museums and other places in Victorian Britain where, of course, they were the raw material for phrenology and other “scientific” speculations.<sup>8</sup>

The question is: how are we to historicize and understand such episodes of colonial violence? Obviously, we can see them as the dark underside of empire, as reflecting its racial orderings and ideology. But the relationship of violence to the ideologies of empire is more complicated than that and deserves a deeper analysis. Thus, I think that this violence was as much prior to and constitutive of racial ideology rather than *just* following from it. As we shall see in the case of Indigenous Tasmanians, violence was crucial to justifying, even proving, a racial order of essential, inborn difference. Similarly, although we can argue whether colonial violence was exterminationist, even genocidal, it is still necessary to explain how the social dynamic of genocide was generated.<sup>9</sup>

This leads me to the analytical frame I will foreground here. It revolves around two questions. First, what were the interiorities of this form of colonial violence? What were the settler perceptions of the violence they perpetrated against indigenous peoples? How may we understand its behavioral and psychological dynamic? And secondly, to shift to a broader time frame, what do these subjectivities tell us about the problem of liberalism and empire? How was its presence reconciled with the idea that the British Empire was a liberal empire that operated on the principles of justice and freedom? How was the violence explained in the wider narratives about empire? This is particularly pertinent since violence is a constant theme of empire and the particular violence that I highlight here occurred at what one might call the humanitarian moment of the early nineteenth century when a discourse of humanitarianism shaped and framed colonial policy. How this violence was contained, explained and normalized in value systems both at an individual level and more broadly in the culture might then have lessons for the

question of how liberal societies explain the violence of imperial expansion. Indeed, as I shall suggest, I think the way colonial violence was handled in this period had an enduring impact on imperial culture in the British Empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>10</sup>

### ANXIETY AND FEAR

Understanding the interiorities of this colonial violence has to begin with its *personal* character. Indeed, violence frequently flowed out of such personal intimacies, particularly because colonial intimacies in this period were often *disordered* and *unordered*. The most obvious example of this was the sexual exploitation of native women. When settlers were killed by Aborigines, it was almost always because there was a personal attachment or grievance, and frequently this was sexual. Settlers paid no attention to the indigenous ties of attachment and felt free to use violence to secure their sexual partners. Thus Truganini, the celebrated indigenous woman who became one of George Robinson's guides on his "Friendly Missions" to bring the Tasmanian Aborigines into captivity, was first introduced to Western civilization when she was kidnapped by sealers. Her Tasmanian "husband" desperately swam out to the boat that was carrying her, managed to grab the gunwale only to have his grip released by an ax cutting through his fingers. On the same occasion, her mother and uncle were also murdered.<sup>11</sup>

Obviously this incident (like the question of sexual exploitation more widely) reflected the arbitrary violence that the settler could exercise over the native. But did this describe the settlers' subjective assessment of their power? Hannah Arendt's meditation *On Violence* reminds us that "violence appears when power is in jeopardy". And the twentieth-century literature on the psychology of massacre and genocides has demonstrated how a subjective sense of vulnerability and weakness on the part of the perpetrators is essential for such violence to occur. I want to suggest that there was a close association in early settler society between fear and violence. Fear might seem a counter-intuitive quality to explain colonial violence, which is typically taken to reflect the assumption of imperial arrogance. But there is considerable evidence of a fearful vulnerability pervading early colonial society. Indeed, one might say that settler consciousness was riven with fear. The sociology of settler fear was, however, split and bifurcated. At a global level settler power was infinite because in the final analysis it could call upon

the boundless resources of the imperial State. But ironically Indigenous peoples almost certainly had a greater awareness of this than the settlers. For at the local level, settler power *felt* much more qualified and ambiguous. Early pastoralists in Australia were sometimes unable to keep employees because of their fear of indigenous attack. And this clearly reflected a deeply rooted aspect of early settler life. Henry Reynolds has remarked how Australians lived in fear of Aborigines well into the twentieth century, even in towns.<sup>12</sup>

Those who were in intimate contact with both sides of the frontier recognized this at the time. E.J. Eyre, for example, writing of his experiences as an explorer in South Australia, reported how “cowardly most of the men are in reference to the blacks. With the exception of Baxter and one other man, I could not depend upon one of them, nor do I believe, now that the blacks have actually been seen, that any men of the party except those two would go ten miles away from the camp if offered £100.” Indeed, he recounted with some amusement how, on one occasion returning to his camp from a scouting trip, he found men in great alarm, loading carbines, who claimed they were being hunted by a mob of Aborigines. But what they were responding to was only “three poor frightened blacks running as hard as they could away from two men and nearly out of sight....the fact was now evident that the moment my men saw a black face, they ran as fast as they could in one direction and the blacks in the opposite one—each mutually afraid of the other.” And George Robinson, whose expeditions to the Tasmanian Aborigines took him all over that island, told similar stories. Memoirs from pastoralists and others confirm this; they frequently describe how being alone on the sheep run was dominated by fear about hostile blacks who could not be seen but who were still felt to be surrounding and watching. Indeed, the stillness only made things worse and as one pastoralist put it, “such occasional sounds as did occur made me start involuntarily. I felt my life was in danger and I remained very much on the alert, and in a very prepared state of mind for fighting.”<sup>13</sup>

A long account of an incident in New South Wales that extended over several months in 1840 and 1841 suggests the tangled atmosphere of tension, vulnerability and violence that confronted many settlers as the new pastoral areas were opened up. In this case, the settler was ultimately named for indiscriminately shooting Aborigines possibly in conjunction with the mounted police. But prior to that there had been two attacks on his homestead and a series of harassments that included invading his kitchen,

demanding food and jostling, which only ended when he waved some pistols at them. Anxiety and fear were trigger emotions at more celebrated violent encounters such as Risdon Cove in Tasmania in May 1804 where the first clash occurred between Aborigines, a small army unit and settlers. And at the Myall Creek massacre in New South Wales in 1838 (when seven convict shepherds tied up, shot and hacked to death 30 Aborigines) whites in the district felt as if they were “in an enemy’s country” and, even with firearms, continued to feel vulnerable and unsafe.<sup>14</sup>

The idea that settler colonialism contained the qualities of fear and vulnerability has not been entered into the imperial historiography of empire. It is not surprising, however, that it is more commonly recognized at the local level. Thus, as Australian historians came to uncover the “culture of terror” that composed frontier society in this period, they also recognized that this mirrored an equal terror within settler mentality itself. Settlers were trigger happy because they saw themselves as exposed in an alien land and vulnerable to the superior power and knowledge of the aborigines. It was as if they existed in a veritable Hobbesian world surrounded by a natural wilderness whose dangers were reinforced by their exposure to human threats from people they could not understand.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, anxieties of this kind were a wider theme of empire than the settler world alone. It is interesting to reflect on George Orwell’s account of his feelings around shooting a rampaging elephant in Burma to realize that anxiety in one form or another was a common imperial experience. As Orwell told it, the episode pushed to the surface the subjective, psychological tensions of Empire and “gave me a better glimpse...of the real nature of imperialism”. The dominant emotion that came to his mind at being put in the position of having to shoot the elephant was anger. He was angry at the squalid dirty work he was expected to do for empire. But he was also angry at the Burmese who were carefully watching his every move to see how he behaved, and aroused his racist distaste for the “evil-spirited little beasts who tried [every day, he claimed] to make my job impossible”. And he would have felt the “greatest joy in the world...to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest’s guts”.<sup>16</sup>

Anxiety and fear contained another subjective component that is also counter-intuitive to how we typically think of the hegemon of empire, and that is the way Indigenous peoples were endowed with enormous power in the settler imagination. Ironically, this was perhaps especially



true of those who were the most helpless victims of the imperial juggernaut. At the height of the Black War against the Tasmanian Aborigines, it was generally accepted among the settlers that the very existence of the colony itself was threatened, even though the Aborigines were being killed at an alarming rate. Their seeming ability to effortlessly meld into the topography, suddenly re-appearing when their victims were at their most vulnerable generated a sense that they were endowed with a super-human cunning and guile. During the period when “roving parties” were engaged in tracking natives supposedly to bring them into protective custody, there were accounts of natives being spotted, tracked and disappearing only to re-appear out of nowhere and set upon individual members of the roving party who had returned to their homes.<sup>17</sup>

The paranoid anxiety that was fed by real incidents of indigenous violence reflected the basic ignorance about indigenous societies that pervaded settler society. Most convicts and free settlers in Van Diemen’s Land, for example, never saw a Tasmanian Aborigine. Most had no direct knowledge about them, and what knowledge was available was largely anecdotal rumour (as was likely the case elsewhere). But of course this served only to increase their ominous power. To the settler on the ground, the silent and invisible world of the indigenes was mysterious, unknown and incipiently threatening. What was *known* about the local inhabitants was unstable. Systematized, classified, anthropological, historical and racial categories that would enable settlers to “understand” and explain (however incompletely) their indigenous neighbours had not yet emerged, or were in the process of formulation. And this created an *emotional volatility* in the way settlers looked at Indigenous people. Early settler literature is rent with the anxieties that this produced. So, for example, George Moore, an early settler in Western Australia in the 1830s, records the fluctuating rhythm of his feelings about the local natives. When their behaviour conforms to his expectations of how universal man would behave, the entry is benign and “humanitarian”. When the signals have switched and they do things that seem to come out of a moral no-man’s land, the entry is tense and hostile.<sup>18</sup>

Ignorance not only spawned fear, it also spawned faulty readings of what certain actions or signs meant. This was particularly true when settlers and others encountered large or small groups of Aborigines. Many of the major eruptions of frontier violence suggest that confusion and inability to decode behaviour were actively present in the colonial minds. Thus, even when there were determined intentions *not* to get into armed

conflict, clashes could still easily occur. One such incident occurred on the Rufus River in South Australia in 1841. In this case, a team of settlers and police had been put together under the command of Matthew Moorhouse, the humanitarian Protector of Aborigines, with the deliberate design of *avoiding* conflict—much to the grumbling discontent of settler voices in Adelaide. Nevertheless, a shooting match erupted precisely because whites interpreted certain moves by a group of Aborigines as threatening and were unable to understand what was being said by their parlaying group.<sup>19</sup>

Ignorance and lack of understanding also acted on subjective perceptions of indigenes to drain empathy from those who might otherwise be sympathetically inclined towards native peoples. Such people—and the Western Australia settler George Moore would be an example—found their sympathies severely challenged by behaviour that contradicted everything that they thought they knew about human behaviour. Different notions of property ownership were a common cause of dissonance between what a settler might *want* to feel about the Aborigines and what he was *led* to believe. Such was the case of George Lloyd, an early Tasmanian settler who prided himself on his decent treatment of the local Aborigines. He was, for example, very liberal with his distribution of food. But then some of his potatoes were stolen. How was he to understand this? It led him to believe that they would *rather* steal, since had they asked he would have gladly given. And, of course, he assumed that for their part the aborigines *knew* this about him.<sup>20</sup>

Ignorance also fostered another feature of the psychology of colonial culture at this point in time: its tendency to project onto the Indigenous peoples the motives, feelings and nature of the colonizers themselves. The colonial record of this period is full of such reversals in which the indigenes are endowed with exactly the behavioural traits that are being deployed against them. This is, of course, a well-known psychological mechanism that allows the mind to assign blame for an atrocity onto the victim itself. Yet in the case of early settler society, it reflected a subjectivity that easily cast the settler in the role of victim. Settlers saw themselves as surrounded by a hostile physical environment, beleaguered by predatory indigenes *and* in addition denied protection by missionary inspired humanitarian policies of government. Some argued that this was to blame for the violence against the Aborigines and for the secrecy with which it was surrounded. It is not surprising then, that settler consciousness on this issue tended towards projective identification in which

the actual victim was the settler, not the massacred Aborigine. I think we can see this process operating in big and small ways in this period. The narrative that was developed in 1856–1857 by the colonial authorities in South Africa about the Xhosa cattle killing projected onto the chiefs the conspiratorial frame of mind of Sir George Grey and others who were plotting to use the supposed threat it posed to the colony to finally destroy the Xhosa polity. And the terrible atrocities at Myall Creek in NSW were justified by projecting onto the Aborigines exactly the kind of beings that were acted out by the white perpetrators.<sup>21</sup>

These attributes did not go unnoticed at the time. Some close observers of settler violence, such as the Aboriginal protectors, developed sophisticated understandings of it. There is a quite remarkable minute by James Stephen in 1841 where he comments on an episode of settler violence reported by the Governor of New South Wales. This was hardly the first time the Colonial Office had received such reports, so there is a note of pessimistic weariness that leaps out from Stephen's comments on the dispatch. But his remarks also reveal a penetrating insight into the *psychology* of settler violence from someone who lived in a pre-Freudian world. Stephen noted how the essence of the problem of racial conflict flowed from the hatred "with which the white man regards the black". And this hatred was driven by fear and,

from the consciousness of having done them great wrong and from the desire to escape the pain of self-reproach by laying the blame on the injured party. For these and such like reasons the black man is the subject of aversion so that in the most atrocious case imaginable a Jury acquitted the white criminals and the great body of the colonists took part with them. I know not what can be done or wisely attempted for the protection of these miserable people.<sup>22</sup>

Stephen is here articulating how projective identification allowed denial of responsibility for acts that were contrary to the normative values of society. But this was a psychological reflex that operated extensively in empire. Thus, narratives were invented about the threats posed by the native people to the security and safety of settlers, which served to justify violence as a defensive, pre-emptive strategy. But these narratives were based as much upon rumour as upon fact—although they typically always had a factual element to them—and they actually reflected the violence that colonialists were willing to perpetrate upon the indigenous

peoples rather than the reverse. As Michael Taussig has put it, a kind of colonial mirror-effect was instigated “which reflects back onto the colonists the barbarity of their own social relations, but as imputed to the savage or evil figures they wish to colonize”.<sup>23</sup>

This was not the only psychological impulse that we can identify as underlying colonial violence, although it may very well have been the most important. There was also what is known as blindsight where one side of the brain does not admit to what another side of the brain knows very well has happened or is true. It seems probable that something like this must have been in operation amongst “humanitarians” who were implicated in the very atrocities of empire that they condemned. Let us take the case of George Robinson the famous “protector” of the Tasmanian Aborigines whom he sought to rescue from the violent attentions of the settlers in the early 1830s. After three arduous treks into the interior, Robinson persuaded, cajoled and coerced the remaining Tasmanians to move to the settlement at Wylabenna on Flinders Island in the Bass Straits. There he watched them begin to die off, one after the other, primarily from lung infections. Yet at no point during this process did he reflect on his responsibility for their plight; he continued to hold fast to the belief that he had rescued and saved them from a fate worse than death. Blindsight is one psychological mechanism that allows those who are implicated in atrocities to continue to live without overpowering shame or guilt. Such techniques were essentially strategies of individual coping that deserve more attention than they have so far received from historians concerned to understand the imbrication of humanitarian mentalities and colonial governance.<sup>24</sup>

But what about the mechanisms that were used in the wider culture and society to explain colonial violence within the context of liberal values and prevent its presence from destabilizing the idea of liberal empire? This is a particularly relevant question to ask of the early nineteenth century, since it was the one moment when the claims of empire to be a liberal and liberating force reflected a genuine ideological position. It was the moment when the dominant (though, of course, not the only) discourse on empire stressed the potential reconciliation between the competing tensions and claims of Indigenous peoples and settlers. We can loosely call this a “humanitarian” policy since self-conscious humanitarians propagated it. Our hindsight that this promise was doomed to failure has led us to reduce our understanding of humanitarianism almost to caricature. Nevertheless, it deserves to be taken seriously as the

animating theme of policy both in the Colonial Office and in those areas of the empire that are discussed in this chapter. It is not helpful to suggest that it was a gross hypocrisy, or that it reflected the pious obscurantism of nineteenth-century evangelicalism, or even that it was a mere strategy of governance. More interesting are the mechanisms by which colonial violence was contained and explained within the context of this ideology. What was it in the broader culture that created the moral indifference that allowed violence to thrive?<sup>25</sup>

### LIBERAL EMPIRE AND VIOLENCE

In order to understand this, the place to start is to return to the State and violence. Obviously, the imperial State had a wide armoury of policies to regulate Indigenous peoples: one was what Sir John Craddock, writing from the Eastern Cape to Lord Liverpool in 1812 called “a proper degree of terror”. By which he meant the use of salutary violence to bring native peoples into line, or intimidate them into the necessary degree of respect for the colonial presence. Whether this was the first time such a notion had been formulated as a kind of policy statement is not clear. It would hardly be the first time that disciplinary violence was used as a strategy of rule. But it does seem to be the case that such a notion became normalized as a means of policy from this point. Undoubtedly, this was partly because the idea of salutary terror was consistent with the nineteenth-century notion that severe punishment was integral to behavioural reform, that a just measure of pain was necessary for the modification of criminal conduct.<sup>26</sup> It is not surprising that this perspective was part of colonial governance. This was why even the most humanitarian-minded official was prepared to admit its necessity under certain circumstances. After all, it had been similar humanitarians who had been involved in prison reform in the United Kingdom.

Certainly salutary terror was the most common justification for State violence in the period. It was how the evangelical humanitarian Sir George Arthur justified execution of two Aborigines in 1826 when the Tasmanian Black War was heating up because, as he explained, it “would induce them to a more conciliatory line of conduct”. Sir George Grey used it as his excuse in 1846 for kidnapping and illegally shipping off several Maori chiefs to exile in the penal colony of Maria Island, Tasmania. Salutary terror was a purging violence; it was intended to induce good behaviour in the future and thus allow the business of Christianizing

improvement to get on. It was also a disciplinary violence that could be held over the heads of indigenes to keep them in line. This was how George Robinson used it on his ‘friendly missions’ to the Tasmanian Aborigines when he warned them that failure to accept his prescription for their survival (of removal to the islands in the Bass Straits) would mean that they would be exposed to the uncontrolled violence of the settlers.<sup>27</sup>

Salutary terror was the point at which State violence legitimized settler violence. It normalized coercion as a necessary part of the pacifying, civilizing process. It cleared the way for the beneficent forces within the imperial mission. This is certainly how people like Arthur and Sir George Grey squared it with their consciences. There is an interesting little vignette in the memoirs of an Australian pastoralist writing of the 1840s where he tells the story of a disciplinary expedition against a sheep stealing tribe which resulted in several deaths and the capture of one man whom he allowed to think was to be hanged, even though it would not have been judicially proper. But the scare had its reformatory effect: “ever after he and I were the best of friends, as he ascribed his release entirely to me. And his tribe also reformed regarding sheep stealing, having been intimidated by the little police exhibition!!” Thus, when the history of these years came to be invented in the later nineteenth century, the bracing effects of salutary terror on the unruly natives was recorded as a beneficent gift from a stern but caring settler community and imperial regime.<sup>28</sup>

And this brings me to the second consideration of how violence and the norms of liberal society were reconciled: the enduring theme of silence. We know that history is full of silences and that silence is not simply a matter of emotion. It is also true that silence is not the same as forgetting. Colonial violence, for example, is not so much forgotten by its perpetrators as shrouded in a blanket of cultural denial. Thus, Dutch colonial violence in Indonesia was known and even part of public awareness at the time. But it was not admitted as part of what the Dutch Empire was all about. And the same is surely true of violence in the British Empire, where its absence from the historiography represents the separation of its presence from the main story of what the British Empire was.<sup>29</sup>

Silence, then, is an historical construct, and as such there are different regimes and protocols that govern its operation over time. Thus, one of the signal features of settler violence in the early nineteenth century was that it was openly admitted and talked about *in the public sphere*.

The playwright, William Moncrieff, for example, staged a London play in 1831 about the violence against the Tasmanian Aborigines. Colonial officials and commentators were fully aware of the extent of casual settler violence. They viewed it with horror and concern because of the challenge it posed to the possibility of a humanitarian policy for empire. But if the violence of race relations on the frontier was admitted in the public discourse, in the *private* discourse of the frontier the practice of *silence* was already deeply implanted in settler culture. This silence was enough to stymie the imperial State when it did rouse itself to try and fulfil its often declared principles of extending to the Aborigines the protection deserved by all subjects of Her Majesty. So, an official policy of avoiding violence coexisted with the settler practice of arbitrary savagery. Thus, an overlander party in the spring of 1841 from New South Wales to Adelaide led by Alexander Buchanan was involved in the quite unnecessary killing of several Aborigines—after seemingly rejecting their peaceful overtures—including a well-known local chief. A few days later the party met up with Governor George Gawler and the explorer Charles Sturt, who were engaged on a mission of conciliation to the Aborigines. They asked if the overlanders had experienced any trouble with Aborigines: “we told them they had been pretty quiet except at the Darling they had annoyed us a little. Did not say we had shot any.”<sup>30</sup>

From studies of atrocities in the twentieth century we know well enough the phenomenon of group silence enforced by the power of collective pressure. The conditions of the frontier at this moment in time fostered a sense of informal group solidarity, which also served to protect perpetrators and to enforce silence. Memorialists admitted this to their private diaries. Thus, Henry Meyrick, writing of Victoria in the 1840s, noted how blacks were hunted down, men women and children “shot whenever they can be met with. I have protested against it at every station I have been in...in the strongest language, but these things are kept very secret as the penalty would certainly be hanging.” But he admitted to a growing moral indifference himself. There was a time he recorded when “my blood would run cold at the mention of these things, but now I am become so familiarized with scenes of horror from having murder made a topic of everyday conversation...If I could remedy these things, I would speak loudly though it cost me all I am worth...but as I cannot I will keep aloof and know nothing and say nothing.”<sup>31</sup>

Silence and various forms of denial serve to shield moral indifference. But they were not the best protections for an empire whose ideology

continued to project itself as carrying progress and development in its train. And for this, it was necessary to develop narratives that allowed the violence to be contained and explained within the discourse structures of liberal society. Such narratives involve the construction of a story that will fit the known facts, but serves to displace responsibility away from the belief system that is being challenged, in this case, the civilizing nature of the imperial process itself. An example of how this worked is provided by the development of a believable narrative to explain the racial violence against the Tasmanian Aborigines.<sup>32</sup>

Towards the end of the Black War against the Tasmanian Aborigines in 1830, Lt. Governor Sir George Arthur set up a committee to develop both an account of the previous six years or so of violence and to make policy recommendations. The committee was composed of liberal minded members of Hobart's elite, chaired by the local leading cleric. The committee looked back over the previous 30 years and developed a narrative that gave full recognition to the violence of the settler community. It reported cases of women being thrown onto fires and natives being hunted like game on horseback. But it consigned such violence to the lawless past of the early settlement when free settlers had not yet displaced the convict element in the colony. "It would indeed appear that there prevailed at this period too general a forgetfulness of those rights of ordinary compassion, to which as human beings, and as original occupants of the soil, these defenceless and ignorant people were justly entitled. They were sacrificed in many instances to momentary caprice or anger." Indeed, there was to hand an identifiable under-class of convicts and sealers who lived in the islands of the Bass Straits whom the committee could blame for the violent history of white-Aborigine relations. This version of events, however, conveniently ignored the fact that most of the violence had taken place following the arrival of large numbers of free settlers in the 1820s.<sup>33</sup>

And even whilst it was exposing the atrocities of the convicts and the settlers, the committee offered an historical narrative that centred evidence of the treacherous and untrustworthy nature of the Aborigines themselves. Thus, "insulated or unprotected individuals have never been perfectly secure"; they were always subject to the volatility of indigenous behaviour, which could switch from friendly to hostile without a moment's notice. The treacherous character of the natives was accepted. Even with the most friendly interactions, there remained in the character of the natives "beyond all doubt...a lurking spirit of cruelty and



mischievous craft" which led to the murder of stockkeepers whom they fell in with, in out of the way places, and who had given them no provocation. And even though the government had consistently insisted on the need to treat the Aborigines with humanity and kindness, such efforts went ill-rewarded by the Aborigines who "have lost the sense of superiority of the white man, and the dread of the effect of firearms which they formerly entertained and have of late conducted their plans of aggression with such resolution as they were not heretofore thought to possess and with a caution and artifice which renders it almost impossible to foresee or defeat their purpose." It was at this point that martial law became necessary, and at this point also that a policy of hunting down the Aborigines by roving parties of settlers was justified. By the same token this also vindicated the "conciliatory" policy of indigenous people's removal to islands in the Bass Sea where disease and infection rapidly shrank their numbers to a mere handful. So in the end the committee could conclude that violence came not from discrete and clear individual wrongs that were done to them by the particular individuals involved, but "from a wanton and savage spirit inherent in them and impelling them to mischief and cruelty". Although this was a narrative that contradicted everything that such humanitarians knew and were prepared to admit, this was the narrative that was absorbed into British culture. It was the default position whenever the uncomfortable issue of the Tasmanian Aborigines was raised.

What we see here is a very common feature in the way self-consciously "civilized" societies handle actions by their members that transgress the self-proclaimed values of that society. Blame for the situation is transferred away from the perpetrator to the prey itself. In this case the convenient presence of sealers and convicts served to carry the weight of imperial responsibilities. But ultimately it was the Tasmanians themselves who were to blame. It was the cunningly treacherous nature of the indigenous character that forced the imperial power—much against its humanitarian will—to implement policies that allowed for precisely the same kind of personal violence that had been identified as the original cause of racial suspicion and hostility in the first place. In a wider frame, such a narrative served as a model for the way violence could be explained as an unavoidable by-product of the colonial encounter. This was not, however, the place where humanitarians started. Their initial assumption as they confronted the colonial encounter was that violence was a product of discrete conditions that could and should be removed.

Such narratives showed them that this was not necessarily the case and, therefore, allowed their consciences to be reconciled to the proximity of barbarity.

Having made this reasoned case, the committee then slipped easily into the rhetoric of settler fear and panic. It pronounced that the “total ruin of every Establishment is but too certainly to be apprehended unless immediate measures can be devised for suppressing the system of aggression under which so many are suffering”. All other measures of forbearance led by a conciliatory government have failed and now decisive measures of military repression were regrettably necessary. It may have been true that the natives were first led to this path of action by the outrages committed on them, which were “a disgrace to our name and nation and even to human nature”. But now the natives are visiting a revenge, not on the perpetrators, but on the innocent, even women and children.<sup>34</sup>

The narrative that was developed here was a narrative of *displacement*. It was also a narrative that served the purpose of de-humanizing the Aborigines so that violence against them could be more easily reconciled with normative moral values.<sup>35</sup> The psychology of colonial violence was full of such strategies. Another favourite trope was the way indigenous violence showed no discrimination between innocent and guilty. Eighteen months after the Aborigines Committee made its report, news arrived of the murder of two settlers, Captain Thomas and Mr. Parker, who were known for their liberal humanitarian views of indigenous people with a record of treating them well. These men had been murdered, it seemed, because they trusted too much and were lured into a deliberate trap. One of these settlers was the brother of the Chairman of the Aborigines Committee itself. The predictable result was a fevered outcry in the organs of settler opinion. These murders were like petrol thrown onto the fire of settler fear and vulnerability. They were the final element in the construction of this narrative. If such men could be murdered, it was clear that the Aborigines were too far-gone in savagery to allow any other policy but that of repression, which now became an accepted wisdom throughout the settler society.<sup>36</sup>

A narrative explanation of colonial violence was, therefore, constructed in the public discourse of the early nineteenth century at the same time that it was silenced in the private discourse. But by the late nineteenth century the ordering of this regime of silence was reversed. Now it was settler culture that was prepared to admit violence and

imperial culture that denied it. By 1870s, the settler generation wanted to leave their stories to posterity, and a developing nationalism demanded foundational narratives. In this context, silence about violence at the local level (and I am speaking now mainly of Australia, but I think it also applies to South Africa) was replaced by narratives that sought to integrate it into a wider narrative about national identity that pitted the hardy pastoralist settler against the harsh and challenging environment of the bush. Violence was sanitized in this process; it could not be denied, but it could be coded and re-contextualized as the product of the rough and difficult circumstances of the frontier. In the process many false arguments were created that are still being swatted down. One of the most audacious claims that began to be heard in this literature, and which still frames much historical discussion, was how policies designed to “protect” indigenous people were themselves responsible for the violence and did more harm than good. Even a governor like George Grey came in for condemnation for his “weak policy” of trying to restrain and contain settler violence!<sup>37</sup>

But if this was true at the local level, in imperial culture more generally a silence descended in the late nineteenth century to supplant the more open acknowledgements of 50 years before. Although the story of the Tasmanian Aborigines was not forgotten—thanks to a few local historians who strangely continued to foster the spirit of early nineteenth century humanitarianism—it was fitted into dominant narratives such as the “vanishing races”.<sup>38</sup> Of course, this was a way of avoiding facing the violence that produced the vanishing. And these stories are to be found in the works of late nineteenth century writers such as Charles Dilke and Anthony Trollope as they circulated the empire writing official narratives for a popular audience. Nor of course did the continuing violence of the frontier in Australia get more than an occasional notice in the halls of power in London. So when Aimé Césaire and other early post-colonial thinkers announced the inherent violence of colonialism in 1950, it was in a way a *re*-discovery.

And so we return to where I began in this chapter. Until the recent past British culture learnt to treat this kind of colonial violence as aberrational, as something that was essentially out of the ordinary. Naturally, as Caroline Elkins and others have recently reminded us, those who made policy had a more sanguine view of the uses of violence. But the founding generations of imperial historians did not treat violence as of much account. Nor for that matter have more recent general histories. There is

no supplementary volume on violence in the *Oxford History of the British Empire*, for example.<sup>39</sup> But if it has tended to get erased from the imperial historiography, violence has sprung to prominence in the local historiographies of Australia in particular—as the various works cited in this chapter testify.

This is a lead worth pursuing. And not only to put the historical record straight, but also because it provides a way to enter into the history of emotions that was engaged in empire. It suggests that making empire was full of anxiety, fear and doubt and it reveals the *fragilities* that were part of the empire project. It is useful also as a way of teasing apart, in close detail, how it was that liberal society coped with and explained the violence that was integral to its engagement with empire. And this, of course, is a problem that is with us still.

## NOTES

1. A start has been made to put violence into the narrative of empire by Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Kim Wagner, 'Going Native: Colonial Informants and Contentious Intimacies', North American Conference on British Studies. Little Rock, November 2015. Richard Price, *Making Empire. Colonial Encounters and Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
2. Elizabeth Elbourne, 'The Sin of the Settler: The 1835–36 Select Committee on Aborigines and Debates Over Virtue and Conquest in the Early Nineteenth Century British White Settler Empire', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial Studies*, 4.3 (2003); Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1982); and *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987) were two of the earliest studies to document the extent of frontier violence. P.D. Gardener, *Gippsland Massacres. The Destruction of the Kurnai Tribes 1800–1860* (Warragul, Vic.: West Gippsland and Latrobe Valley Community Education Centre, 1983). More recently, Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten Wars* (Sydney, N.S.W.: NewSouth Publishing, 2013). For other characteristic examples see the following pieces by Lyndall Ryan, 'Settler massacres on the Port Phillip Frontier, 1836–1851', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 34:3 (September 2010), 257–273, 'Massacre in the Black War in Tasmania 1823–34: a case study of the Meander River Region, June 1827', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 10:4 (December 2008), 479–499, 'Settler Massacre on the Australian Colonial Frontier 1836–1851,' Philip Dwyer, and Lyndall Ryan (eds), *Theatres of Violence. Massacre, Mass*

- Killing and Atrocity throughout History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 94–109. Timothy Bottoms, *Conspiracy of Silence. Queensland's Frontier Killing-Time* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2013).
3. Raymond Evans, 'The country has another past: Queensland and the History Wars', and Lyndall Ryan, "'Hard Evidence": the debate about massacre in the Black War in Tasmania', in Francis Peters-Little, Anne Curthoys, and John Docker (eds), *Passionate Histories myth, memory and Indigenous Australia* (Canberra: ANU E Press, Aboriginal History Monograph 21, 2010). Tom Griffith, 'The Language of Conflict', in *Frontier Conflict. The Australian Experience*, Bain Attwood and G.S. Foster (eds) (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2003), 135–149. Keith Windshuttle's major challenge to the extent of frontier violence was *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume One: Van Diemen's Land 1803–1847* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2002).
  4. Mohamed Adhikari (ed.), *Genocide on Settler Frontiers. When Hunter-Gatherers and Commercial Stock Farmers Clash* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2014), has important essays on South Africa and also Tasmania, Canada and the United States. For South Africa see also Nigel Penn, *The Forgotten Frontier: Colonist and Khoisan on the Cape's Northern Frontier in the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), and Susan Newton King, *Masters and Servants on the Cape's Eastern Frontier, 1760–1803* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For India, see Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For Burma see Jonathan Saha, 'A Mockery of Justice? Colonial Law, The Everyday State and Village Politics in the Burma Delta, c. 1890–1910', *Past and Present*, 217 (November 2012), 187–212. For the United States see, Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land. Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2006) and Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide. The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016). James Belich, *The Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict. The Maori, the British, and the New Zealand Wars* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986); Vincent O'Malley, 'Inglorious Dastards: Rangiaowhia raid and the 'great war for New Zealand'', *The Listener* (New Zealand), 25 February 2017.
  5. Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India*, 1–2, 9.
  6. And this is not to take account of the cultural impact, which I will not address here. For discussions of the difficulties of making accurate counts of the violence see Richard Broome, "The Statistics of Frontier Conflict," in Attwood and Foster, *Frontier Conflict*, 88–98 and Raymond Evans and Robert Ørsted-Jensen, "'I cannot say the numbers that were killed": Assessing Violent Mortality on the Queensland Frontier', Paper Presented to the Australian Historical Association, 33rd

- Annual Conference, University of Queensland, 7–11 July 2015 [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2467836](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2467836), accessed 27 February 2017. Henry Reynolds, in *Forgotten War* (Sydney, 2013) 133–134. See also the very important work of Ian D. Clark, *Scars in the Landscape. A Register of Massacre Sites in Western Victoria, 1803–1859* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Studies, 1995) who has uncovered 103 separate killing sites in Victoria most of which occurred between 1838 and 1842; Robert Foster and Amanda Nettelbeck, *Out of the Silence. History and Memory of South Australia's Frontier Wars* (Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press, 2012); Bottoms, *Conspiracy of Silence*; Ryan, 'Settler Massacres on the Port Phillip Frontier, 1836–1851'.
7. The relationship of the law to this type of violence is another big question that I shall not address here. There is a large and growing literature by legal scholars relevant to these points. But of particular relevance to this argument are Julie Evans, 'Where Lawlessness is the Law. The Settler Colonial Frontier as a Legal Space of Violence', *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 30 (2009), 3–22; Evans, 'Colonialism and the Rule of Law: The Case of South Australia', in Barry Dunstall and Godfrey Graeme, *Empire and Crime 1840–1940* (Cullompton, Devon: Willan, 2005), 57–77; Diane Kirkby and Catherine Coleborne (eds), *Law, History, Colonialism: The Reach of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).
  8. Aimé Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York, 2000), 35; Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, CBE1/111, *Committee for the Care of Captured Aborigines. Minutes of Meetings. 17 February 1830–18 September 1832*, 9 March 1830, 24–25. It was a common practice to sever the heads of aborigine prisoners, especially perhaps those who had led an effective guerrilla war against the settlers. For an example see, George Fletcher Moore, *Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia* (London: M. Walbrook, 1884), 206. For Maori heads sold in Sydney, see, British Parliamentary Papers, *Select Committee on Aborigines*, 1837, Report, 16 along with other gory details. For Hintsa, see Premish Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa. Post Apartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009), 31, 55–58, 131–132. For the collection of skulls, see Andrew Bank, 'Of "Native Skulls" and "Noble Caucasians": Phrenology in Colonial South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 22:3 (Sept 1996): 387–403; Tom Lawson, *The Last Man. A British Genocide in Tasmania* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 165–171.
  9. For colonial violence as genocide, see, Lawson, *The Last Man*; Colin Tatz, 'Colonial Genocide in Australia', *Journal of Genocide Research*,

- 1:3 (1999), 315–352; A. Dirk Moses, ‘Genocide and Settler Society in Australian History’, in *Genocide. Critical Studies in Historical Concepts. Volume III. Colonial and Imperial Genocides*, A. Dirk Moses (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2012), 140–181. Adhikari (ed.), *Genocide on Settler Frontiers. When Hunter-Gatherers and Commercial Stock Farmers Clash*. And for a good discussion of this issue see Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War*, 138–158.
10. The complicated relationship between humanitarianism and violence is addressed in Penny Edmonds and Anna Johnston (eds), ‘Empire, Humanitarianism and Violence in the Colonies’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 17:1 (Spring 2016).
  11. Kolsky, *Colonial Justice*, 9: ‘white violence vividly revealed the disorder and terror brought through colonial contact’; Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, 75–84. For the Trugannini story see, Hon. Mr. Justice Crawford, et al., *The Diaries of John Helder Wedge 1824–1835* (Hobart: The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1962), xliii.
  12. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, 1969), 56; Thomas Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers. Being a Series of Papers on the Early Occupation of the Colony, the Aborigines Etc. Addressed by Victorian Pioneers to His Excellence Charles Joseph LaTrobe* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 219; Reynolds, *Frontier, Aborigines, Settlers and Land*, 3–31, 174; James Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land* (Melbourne, Victoria: Black Inc., 2008), 38, 194–197, 284, 289. On fear more generally as an element of social violence see, Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy. The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 6, 42, 225; Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Volume I. The White Man’s World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 119–126, 146; Kim Wagner, ‘“Treading Upon Fires”: The “Mutiny” Motif and Colonial Anxieties in British India’, *Past and Present*, 218 (February 2013), 159–197. For an example of settler fear in the French colony of New Caledonia see, Adrian Muckle, ‘Killing the “Fantôme Canaque”: Evoking and Invoking the Possibility of Settler Revolt in New Caledonia 1853–1915’, *Journal of Pacific History*, 37:1 (2002), 25–44.
  13. Edward M. Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria Then Called the Port Phillip District from 1841 to 1851* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1883), 51–54; Edward John Eyre [Edited with introduction by Jill Waterhouse], *Autobiographical Narrative of Residence and Exploration in Australia 1832–1839* (London: Caliban Books, 1984), 136–137; N.J.B. Plomley, *Friendly Mission. The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson* (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Association, 1966), 174, 524, 537, 865–867 for representative examples. Schwarz, *Memories of Empire*, 119 for a nice example from Queensland.



14. See, CO 209/309 New South Wales. *Original Correspondence Despatches*, April–June 1841, ff. 70–95. There are many accounts of the Risdon Cove massacre, at which up to 50 Indigenous people were killed. See Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1995), 76–77; Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, 37–41. For the Myall Creek massacre see M. F. Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–86* (Sydney, 1979), 46–47; R.H.W. Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists. Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830s and 1840s* (Sydney: University of Sydney Press, 1974), 34–40; Michael Sturma, 'Myall Creek and the Psychology of Mass Murder', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 9:16 (1985), 62–70.
15. Barry Morris, "Frontier Colonialism as a Culture of Terror." *Journal of Australian Studies*, 16, no. 35 (2009): 72–87; Sturma, "Myall Creek and the Psychology of Mass Murder."
16. 'Shooting An Elephant', <http://www.online-literature.com/orwell/887/> accessed 6 June 2012; Ranajit Guha, 'Not at Home in Empire', *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (Spring, 1997), 482–493.
17. Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 865–66, 'They could not believe it...[the man was watched and on] his departure...[the natives] concealed themselves from the party and murdered him on his return.' Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, 194.
18. Marie Fels, 'Culture Contact in the County of Buckinghamshire, Van Diemen's Land 1801–11,' *Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Papers and Proceedings*, 29:2 (1982), 47–79, on the generally peaceful relations of the first decade or so of contact. Moore, *Ten Years of Eventful Life*, 199–200, 211–218, 226–228, 380, 385, for representative examples. The experience parallels the missionaries' inability to read the signs recounted in my *Making Empire*, Chaps. 4 and 5. The importance of rumour as a means of political communication is another aspect of the ignorance of this phase of colonial relations. I do not have space to deal with that here.
19. For this very interesting incident, see Amanda Nettelbeck, 'Mythologizing Frontier Violence: Narrative Versions of the Rufus River Conflict, 1841–1899', *Journal of Australian Studies* 23.61 (1999), 75–82. And for just one example of how cultural mis-readings could lead to violence see, Charles Bonny, 'Autobiographical Notes', Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch, *Proceedings 1901–1902*, 5, 89.
20. Cassandra Pybus, *Community of Thieves* (Port Melbourne, 1991), 50–55; see also Moore, *Ten Years of Eventful Life*, 120, 198–200, 211–216, 343.
21. See *Making Empire*, Chap. 11. For Myall Creek see, Michael Sturma, "Myall Creek and the Psychology of Mass Murder." See Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial. Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), for how knowledge about atrocities is processed and



- suppressed. This is a general feature of colonial society that has been (unsurprisingly) noticed more by those subject to its rule and culture than the perpetrators themselves. See, for example, O Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban. The Psychology of Colon Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy. Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1983).
22. For such a protector see Geoffrey Grainger, 'Matthew Moorhouse and the South Australian Aborigines, c. 1836–1856', (BA Honours Thesis, Flinders University, 1980). CO 201/309, New South Wales. *Original Correspondence Despatches April–June 1841*, ff. 63.
  23. For a good example of this process, see Michael Taussig, 'Culture of Terror—Space of Death. Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26 (1984), 494–495; Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 33–34, for the same theme in Queensland.
  24. For Wybalenna see N.J.B. Plomley, *Weep In Silence. A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement* (Sandy Bay, Tas.: Blubber Head Press, 1987). For the concept of blindsight, see Cohen, *States of Denial*, 6.
  25. We have only just begun to de-construct this period and the complicated and multi-faceted phenomenon of humanitarianism. The policies and work of colonial governors such as Grey and Arthur have to be seen in the light of their humanitarian sensibilities. For this see, Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance*. See also, Saliha Belmessous, *Assimilation and Empire. Uniformity in French and British Colonies, 1541–1954* (Oxford, 2013); Elbourne, 'The Sin of the Settler'; and Amanda Nettelbeck, "'We Should Take Each Other by the Hand": Conciliation and Diplomacy in Colonial Australia and North West Canada', in Kate Darian-Smith and Penelope Edmonds (eds), *Conciliation on Colonial Frontiers. Conflict, Performance and Commemoration in Australia and the Pacific Rim* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 36–53. For the recognition of the violence of colonial dispossession at the time see Saxe Bannister, *Humane Policy; or Justice to the Aborigines or New Settlements* (London: T. & G. Underwood, 1830).
  26. Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain. The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750–1850* (London: Macmillan, 1989).
  27. Ben MacLennan, *A Proper Degree of Terror. John Graham and the Cape's Eastern Frontier* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians; or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land* (London: Low, 1870), 76. Salutory terror was not used only against indigenes, of course. Arthur used it in Tasmania as part of the strict disciplinary regime

- of his convict policy. See Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, 168–169, for Arthur's judicial reign of terror in the mid-1820s. There are many examples of salutary terror as the justification for State led violence, such as the Pinjarra expedition in Western Australia. See Reynolds, *Forgotten Wars*, 55–56; and Pamela Statham, 'James Stirling and the Pinjarra', *Studies in Western Australian History*, 23 (2003), 167–194. The hopes that salutary terror would effect reformation were always doomed to be disappointed as some people realized this at the time, see J.E. Calder's comments on Arthur's use of it in *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits Etc., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania*. (Hobart, 1875), 45. On Sir George Grey and the Maori convicts see Maori Convicts, 'Documents 1846–1847', Turnbull Library, MS 0714; Amanda Nettelbeck, 'Mythologizing Frontier Violence: Narrative Versions of the Rufus River Conflict, 1841–1899', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 23.61 (1999), 75–82; and Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 178, for the combination of conciliation and terror as a strategy.
28. Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*, 198–206; and John Wraithall Bull, *Early Experiences of Life in South Australia* (Adelaide: E.S. Wigg & Son, 1884 [reprint 1972]), 127, 309, are examples of the normalization of salutary terror as part of the civilizing process—how it was necessary to create dread in the minds of the aborigines in order to establish a safe place for the lives and property of the settlers.
  29. On the Netherlands see, Paul Bul, 'Colonial Memory and Forgetting in the Netherlands and Indonesia', in Bart Luttikhuis and A. Dirk Moses (eds), *Colonial Counterinsurgency and Mass Violence. The Dutch Empire in Indonesia* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 261–281. For the complicated issue of silence and its relationship to emotions and historical experience see, William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 52–53, 132–134.
  30. Alexander Buchanan, 'Diary of a Journey Overland from Sydney to Adelaide with Sheep, July–December 1839', Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch, *Proceedings*, 1921–1922 (Adelaide, 1922), 72–76. For the way regimes of silence were reflected in the various phases of the historiography of the Tasmanian tragedy, see Lyndall Ryan, "'Hard Evidence": the debate about massacre in the Black War in Tasmania', in Peters-Little et al., *Passionate Histories*, 39–50.
  31. The play was, *Van Diemen's Land. An Operatic Drama in Three Parts*, F.J. Meyrick, *Life in the Bush (1840–1847). A Memoir of Henry Howard Meyrick* (London: Nelson, 1939), 136. This code of silence has a history, too, of course. After the Myall Creek massacre of June 1838 for which seven white settlers were convicted and hanged, the code of silence

- became much tighter. See P.G. Gardner, *Through Foreign Eyes. European Perceptions of the Kurnai Tribes of Gippsland* (Churchill, Vic.: Centre for Gippsland Studies, 1988), 31. This code of silence was not peculiar to the antipodes. Arthur had encountered it in Honduras when he tried to bring the white settlers there to brook for their brutality against the slaves. See Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance*, 51.
32. See Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue*, 74 et al. for an intelligent discussion of this.
  33. In fact, the Bass Straits sealers do not seem to have been an inherently violent community. See Patsy Cameron, *Grease and Ochre. The blending of two cultures at the colonial sea frontier* (Launceston, Tas.: Fullers Bookshop, 2011). To humanitarians, however, they were a disordered community without law or religion that was all too symptomatic of the frontier-like quality of the Empire in the southern seas at this point in time.
  34. Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, *Aborigines Committee, Report 19 March 1830 CSO1/1/332/7578 Vol. 17*, 54–56, 70–74. See Lawson, *The Last Man*, 122 for the way this narrative goes into British culture and re-appears whenever Tasmanian Aborigines are discussed.
  35. Such narratives were also developed, of course, for specific events. In the case of the Myall Creek Massacre, this happened immediately through the reporting of the trials of the 11 men accused of the massacre in the *Sydney Herald*. See Rebecca Wood, 'Frontier Violence and the bush legend. The Sydney Herald's response to the Myall creek massacre trials and the creation of colonial identity', *History Australia*, 6:3 (2009), 1–19. And for the psychological dynamic involved in this kind of displacement, see Harris, Lasana T. and Susan T. Fiske, 'Dehumanized Perception: A Psychological Means to Facilitate Atrocities, Torture, and Genocide', *Journal of Psychology*, 219:3 (2010), 175–181.
  36. CO 280/30, Van Diemen's Land. *Original Correspondence. Despatches* (September–December 1831), 25 October 1831 Arthur to Goderich for an extremely interesting dispatch in which the Lt. Governor establishes this also as the official narrative of his administration's Aborigine policy. Reynolds, *Forgotten War*, 9–13; James Erskine Calder, *Papers Re the Aborigines of Tasmania*, Mitchell Library, A597, 'Report on the Deaths of Captain Thomas and Mr. Parker'; Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, 289. It was now felt that 'there could be no safety for the British while any Aborigine remained on Van Diemen's Land'.
  37. For a very good example of this see Bull, *Early Experiences of Life in Australia*, 69–72, 74–75; and also the essays in Thomas Francis, edited by C.E. Sayers Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers. Being a Series of*

*Papers on the Early Occupation of the Colony, the Aborigines Etc. Addressed by Victorian Pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph LaTrobe* (reprint Melbourne, Vic.: Heinemann, 1969). For a full discussion of this issue see Foster and Nettelbeck, *Out of the Silence*, Chaps. 5 and 9; Gardener, *Gippsland Massacres. The Destruction of the Kurnai Tribes 1800–1860*, 95–96; Gardener, *Through Foreign Eyes*, 20–21, 105–107. And for the way violence was normalized in the discourse of the State and politics in the later nineteenth century, see Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue*, 121–123, 130–132.

38. Thus, see Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, which is a quite remarkable account, sympathetic towards the Aborigines and clear-eyed about British violence, but which also repeats the official narrative that the violence was largely a product of degenerated Britons. And for the vanishing races, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings. Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races 1800–1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003).
39. There is however an essay by Jock McCulloch on ‘Empire and Violence, 1900–1939’, in Philippa Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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