More Than Lust in the Dust:

M.C. William Willshire's writings and frontier journey as a demonstration of traditional culture

Masters by Research
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Neil Anthony Boyack
Student # s4576321

Moondani Balluk – Victoria University

Senior Supervisor - Dr Gary Foley
Secondary Supervisor – Professor David McCallum
Initial Secondary Supervisor – Dr Edwina Howell

Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers please note - the following work contains names and images of deceased peoples.

Table of Contents:

Student Declaration:

I Neil Anthony Boyack declare that the Master by Research thesis entitled *More than Lust in the Dust: M.C. William Willshire's writings and frontier journey as a demonstration of traditional culture* is no more than 65,000 words including quotes and exclusive of tables, references, appendices, and including the relevant fiction element. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

…colonization and decolonization are simply a question of relative strength

Frantz Fanon - The Wretched of the Earth

…to get in the way of settler colonization, all the native has to do is stay at home.

Deborah Bird Rose

'I happen to know that there is no creature so relentless as an old man in pursuit of a young woman'

M. C. William Willshire, 1896.

List of Images:

Abstract:

My research investigates and analyses the four published works (between 1888-1896) of South Australian Policeman, Mounted Constable William Willshire (1852-1925). This Masters by Research thesis project will include a theoretical exegesis, based on the written works of Mounted Constable William Willshire, as well as a creative, fiction component based on Willshire's life, his writings and history.

Previous research on this colonial character almost exclusively focuses on Willshire the rogue policeman, the murderer, however there is little understanding of the role Willshire played as an early contact figure, observer of Aboriginal people, or novice anthropologist; nor is there clarity around his relationships with the Aboriginal men, women, and the clans he worked and fraternised with. I have focussed my research and energy on the cultural information Willshire compiled in written form, in conjunction with structures connected with Aboriginal Law, traditional culture, kinship and Country. Through these filters I evidence and speculate on the traditional roles and responsibilities Willshire adopted, the new technology and materialism that came with him, as well as the need for Aboriginal colleagues to culturally respond to the presence of Willshire, the stranger, the policeman, the male, the writer. It is vital to acknowledge that Willshire learned culture and language on-Country as an initial black-white contact point and in somewhat reciprocal relationships, over significant periods of time and on datelines that predate anthropologists Walter Baldwin-Spencer, Frank Gillen and Carl Strehlow. Using Willshire's texts as a central focus I explore other actors and enablers connected to Aboriginal cultures and Country common to Willshire within the study timeframe. Taking note of Willshire's haphazard methodologies in approaching the collection of anthropological information and storytelling I will enquire into his contemporaneous influences, and the overarching frameworks that manifested in his attitudes to the Aboriginal and political world he enters as a policeman. This will support a sense of environment and dimension belonging to the study period, as well a sense of public thought and understanding about Aboriginal people in a time where Social Darwinism was as much an enabler for a brutal colonisation as it was an influencer of government policy, fuelling grass roots racial stereotyping that is still pervasive. I provide three likely, public, literary figures of the study period and

compare their written work, their impact, and their influence on Willshire and mainstream culture. It will also be important to explore the operation and behaviour of early Australian anthropologists such as Baldwin-Spencer, Gillen and Strehlow. These men were peers and fellow Central Australian community members at one time or another with Willshire. They had relationships within Aboriginal clans and cultures well known to Willshire. The trends, themes, and narratives in Australian literature and writing, in the lead-up to and during the study period are also important factors in shaping this timeline, as they assist in fuelling Willshire's fantasies of becoming a writer, a legend, a man of importance, and this mindset accompanies Willshire throughout his adventures, journeys and relationships with Aboriginal women.

The creative exegesis element of my thesis will allow me to explore and speculate on the mental state of characters, their actions, dreams, experiences, motivations, and emotions as they respond to, and exert, the pressures of invasion and radical cultural change. Importantly the fiction element of the project adds another creative process to the breadth of the thesis.

As a white writer and researcher, I am sensitive to my place in the ongoing life of a modern colonial society. At no time will I be assuming an Aboriginal standpoint. Willshire will be the vessel for the fiction, yet the Willshire character remains a strong conduit to and from Aboriginal actors, as well as an imposing, deadly symbol of settler colonial society. Whilst based on historical fact, and on Willshire's rambling writings, I note the variables and fallibilities involved in fictional speculation such as interpretation and assumption. These are counterbalanced however with a detailed historical archive that demands respect for Indigenous epistemology, and documented frontier lives. The complexities at the heart of this fictional element revolve around defining and rebuilding the relationships between Willshire and his Aboriginal colleagues; and reimagining and applying them in a way that engages, and weaves a strong narrative about an important period on the Aboriginal timeline.

<u>Introduction</u> – Neil Boyack, 2020.

Others who have written about Mounted Constable William Willshire, such as Professor Amanda Nettelbeck, Professor Robert Foster, Peter Vallee, Professor Sam Gill, and Professor Richard (Dick) Kimber are varying in their treatment of him, usually citing his police record as a basis for their work and comment. Nettelbeck and Foster are particularly scathing of Willshire, using his ugly, brutal service record, and his murder trial as the basis for their outstanding, thoroughly researched 2007 book *In the Name of the Law: William Willshire and the policing of the Australian Frontier* (Wakefield Press). Nettelbeck and Foster focus on Willshire's crimes against Aboriginal people, his bloody place in history, his ego, his unpredictable behaviour and his writings connected to his police service; yet they avoid the visceral cultural connections between Willshire, Aboriginal colleagues and communities. Peter Vallee's 2008 book *God, Guns and Government* (Restoration Press) offers a slightly broader focus unearthing esoteric photographical material, whilst to some extent exploring Willshire's relationships with Aboriginal men and women. Vallee confirms Willshire is a "combo" (a white man living with an Aboriginal woman) resident in Central Australia, and to a lesser extent, in the Victoria River District. Vallee's body of work does not explore Willshire's cultural connections with Aboriginal colleagues and clans yet shows strong interest in his writings, and influences, which blend with Willshire's personality and his police service record, making him a character like no other in Australian history. Interestingly, Vallee unpacks evidence connected to Willshire's economic management and status as a senior police officer in remote locations, which offers an economic angle to Willshire's personal and professional motivation. Vallee has done some excellent work around connecting Aboriginal actors within Willshire's life and ecology.

Professor Sam Gill's 1998 work *Storytracking* (Oxford University Press) probes the quality of Willshire's connection to traditional people and culture by contrasting cultural, linguistic and scientific connections that the founding fathers of Australian anthropology Walter Baldwin-Spencer, Francis Gillen, and the German missionary Carl Strehlow established with Aboriginal informants and associates throughout their fieldwork. This focus is important, as all these men shared common Aboriginal cultural groups in their research, field work, police work, missionary work, and personal relationships, yet each had theoretical, religious or social caveats. Professor Richard

Kimber argues that Willshire gets sharp attention because he 'wrote so much more than any other police officer of the era, having three small pamphlets published, means that he has often been selected for special criticism' (Kimber,1991,p16). There were others present at the time, Kimber points out, who were 'even more ruthless' that include 'pastoralists and other settlers' (Kimber,1991,p16). Another writer qualified to contextualise the landscape of Central Australia prior to Willshire arriving and beyond, is academic, author, and Arrernte cultural specialist and linguist Theodore Strehlow (son of Carl Strehlow). Whilst Theodore Strehlow's career ended in public disgrace, professional embarrassment and a betrayal of Arrernte people, his 1969 work *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* contains the most detailed, dramatic and authoritative description of the inter-tribal massacre at *Ipmengkere* (IB-ma-nga-ra) between Matuntara and Arrernte clans in the study area (*Native title to be recognised on Henbury station,* 2018). This was an immense cultural event that foretold the murder of Nameia at Willshire's Boggy Hole police camp in 1890, drawing Willshire into a cultural response, which ended in the murders of Donkey and Roger (Ereminta) a year later at Tempe Downs Station, and a murder trial that was a catalyst for black and white relationships in the Central Australia frontier.

Whilst it is easy to be seduced by the terror of Willshire's police record, this matter has been attended to plentifully by the authors I have referred to. The object of this thesis is to position Willshire in a cultural context, through his written works and the nature of his policing role in a traditional society and the colonisation process, but also through Indigenous responses to Willshire's incursion which reveal structures, processes and forms of traditional culture, kinship, spirituality and Law. Another aspect of this thesis raises the probability of love between Willshire and his Aboriginal female companions. "Love" in this thesis has a traditional human connotation; a situation where one person recognises the other as a partner, a trusted consort and confidant, in a relationship where consensual intimacy exists, and where personal autonomy is present. Obviously, there are no love letters to evidence this claim, but there does not need to be. It is known that Willshire was fluent in language and ensconced in clans belonging to Native constables and their communities. A range of eyewitnesses' place Willshire with female Aboriginal companions routinely, the most public of demonstrations being a sighting in Adelaide. This is not a contentious claim to make considering the significant period Willshire spent policing, living, touring, dreaming, killing, in Central

Australia, and in the Victorian River District. It is not unreasonable to believe and support the notion of love between Willshire and his female Aboriginal partners. It is acknowledged that these Aboriginal women would have been attendants to Willshire in some way or another, certainly adopting aspects of servitude. Yet there are other aspects within Willshire's writing and beyond that suggest more personal connections and public displays of companionship. Through Willshire's writings and his journey, functions of traditional culture emerge, as does the ancestral landscape and the motivations of Aboriginal men to join Willshire's cohort as policemen. In this way it is also possible to flesh out some of the lives of key Aboriginal actors. Willshire's journey reveals much about the response of culture to colonisation, its mechanisms, its ancient yet contemporary powers to absorb and incorporate new phenomena and species through Aboriginal means of thought. This important and versatile element of traditional culture is critical in understanding the relational, connected nature of culture, both in traditional and contemporary contexts. Using cultural frameworks as a guide, it can be evidenced that Willshire's cultural connection to Aboriginal colleagues and Country is meaningful. This is more than what many might *want* to believe; it is uncomfortable, but cultural placement creating a functional relationship it is what Aboriginal tradition demanded. Willshire's cultural connection is utterly plausible when considering time spent building relationships with Aboriginal men and women faithful to the ways of the kinship framework, and the reciprocal fundamentals of day to day living that are key elements of culture. This thesis does not look to redeem Willshire, but looks to plot his life, movements, and the lives and movements of Aboriginal stakeholders around him by detailing living culture in action within a critical timeframe for many Aboriginal cultures.

Part 1 (Exegesis): Chapter 1 of this thesis begins with the murder of an Aboriginal (Arrernte) man, Nameia, at Willshire's Boggy Hole police camp (January 1890). Nameia is the father of Native trooper Larry who was one of Willshire's closest Aboriginal allies and contacts. The assassination of Nameia sets up a broad cultural backdrop which becomes fundamental in the personal and police aspects of Willshire's life, simultaneously revealing much about traditional culture. Illustrating this act also establishes a key baseline for the political and cultural climate in Aboriginal clans and communities that Willshire is, by this time, unavoidably connected to as an actor and contributor. An important ancestral area, Boggy Hole is only 30 kilometres away from

the Hermannsburg mission on the Finke River (*Larrapinta*). Hermannsburg is another central and active element in Willshire's story, and the lives of Arrernte people and other Aboriginal clans.

Chapter 2 sets a scene for the creation of Alice Springs and colonisation in the "*Mparntwe*" region between 1875-1895. White incursion in this area was a definite but gradual catalyst for cultural change at a time where Aboriginal people could lead mostly traditional lives and cherry-pick from white culture when, or if needed. The white population of pastoralists, miners, bushmen, doggers and drovers was small, but their presence placed new demands on Aboriginal clans forcing adaptation strategies that came with white contact. Sex between Aboriginal women and white men had an immense impact on the immediate Aboriginal population and would forever more. Sex was its own economy, fuelling colonisation and the white presence on the frontier in many respects. In Aboriginal culture sex could be transactional, but coercion and abuse became standard acts for revenge killings and cyclical violence that could spiral out of control. Sex is fundamental to Willshire's story and the stories of the Aboriginal men and women who worked and fraternized with him. As cattle were speared in revenge and response to land and resource theft, Aboriginal men were actively "dispersed" to a point where guerrilla war ensued. Willshire used this backdrop to his advantage, making the most of inter-tribal rivalries for the benefit of the policing mission, and for personal gain. The strength of traditional culture becomes an unexpected protective factor for Willshire as he finds himself an actor and contributor within culture but also on the front line of contact and frontier war.

Chapter 3 explores the operation and recruitment of different Native police forces throughout the colonies focusing on Port Phillip (Victoria), Queensland, and Central Australia. Contrasting the function of Willshire's Native trooper cohorts with the operation of other forces highlights commonality, considerable differences, and major cultural impacts on Aboriginal men and their families. Working as Aboriginal guides and trackers Indigenous men and women display indicators of agency, motivation, and cultural etiquette in response to white incursion onto Country. Used to help piece together the Aboriginal mindset connected to Willshire's Native trooper cohort, these aspects beckon a meditation on the mental landscape of the traditional Aboriginal male who is operating as a Native trooper, covering new technological ground and breaching traditional territorial and ancestral boundaries, whilst trying to maintain

strength and mandatory commitment to clan, culture and ancestors. This reflection is useful in briefly shifting a focus onto the genesis of a broader Aboriginal consciousness within the Native trooper cohort, something that is not possible to fully explore within this project but nonetheless a key facet of Aboriginal identity both within the study period and in a contemporary setting.

I argue that Willshire's second recruitment drive results (post the Daly River recruitment) in a Native trooper cohort, in particular, that differs greatly from the Queensland template as it is drawn from local Aboriginal men who will police locally, engage with relatives, and known communities allowing a combination of police work, personal freedom and traditional roles to merge. Through traditional and local knowledge of landscapes and politics, Native trooper recruits can read environments, avoid unnecessary conflict, potentially saving Aboriginal lives, and the life of their cohort leader Mounted Constable William Willshire. The geographical situation of the Heavitree Gap (*Ntaripe*) police station is important in demonstrating Aboriginal motivation to join Willshire's police cohort. It is close to Emily Gap, or 'Anthwerrke', which is 'possibly the most important place in the whole region' where 'caterpillar beings of Mparntewe [Alice Springs] originated' (Brooks,1991,p4). The demands of traditional responsibilities, protection and maintenance of these critical cultural sites compelled local Aboriginal men to become involved with Willshire and policing. There were also dividends for Aboriginal clans that came with new alliances. These included foreign animals, firearms, food, power, and technology, all funnelled through the ancient framework of reciprocity. Another benefit for Aboriginal men who became police meant that they were not targets of police. This offered Aboriginal recruits greater power to protect and act in their own interests, adding value to their clans through creating alliances in the white world. In this environment and over time Willshire forms personal and professional bonds with his police co-workers, and strong love interests with Aboriginal women. Here the personal-professional boundary breach is inescapable, foisting cultural responsibilities onto Willshire. The historical record shows that Willshire is absent for long periods of time with trusted Aboriginal colleagues and in some of these periods he makes no notes, underscoring Willshire's regular motivation to simply do what he wanted, when he wanted, and with whom he wanted. I argue that in these periods Willshire finds a personal freedom and a deeper commitment to his Aboriginal companions, their culture, their land, and his lovers. In

his writings, his emotional and spiritual freedoms unfurl in an, at times, spectacular personal journey of realisation, but they coexist with his outspoken negative rants on all matters interracial. This is consistent with the erratic, moody tones, and changes throughout all Willshire's texts, reflecting the mental makeup of this complex colonial character.

Chapter 4 suggests the modes in which traditional culture as a process, and a living, breathing framework is used to incorporate Willshire, to manage and control him at some level. I look at the tenets of culture, but also at the idea of economies that drive traditional Aboriginal culture (internal, external, moral), giving examples of other alien invaders and life forms, such as the donkey, camel, cat, horse, buffalo, pig, and cane toad looking at how Aboriginal clans and cultures have adopted and incorporated these life forms through largely cultural means and within territorial contexts. These incorporation strategies are based on the pervasively relational logic and worldview endemic to culture that was applied to white strangers like Willshire, who become an active, reciprocal, and cultural participant in Aboriginal life and community.

Chapter 5 explores narrative and discourse around the public construction of Aboriginal people in the lead up to Federation through the 1880s and 1890s, politically, culturally, socially, and scientifically. Revealing much about extreme racial views within the white mainstream, building an image of the Australian Aborigine was informed by Social Darwinism, a strong and convenient influence that dominated the emerging science of anthropology, which itself, was underpinned by academic monopolies and the power of professional cliques and networks. Anthropology contributed to the creation of unfair, unhealthy, and damaging public notions of the Aboriginal male and female allowing and justifying white colonisation to dominate and dispossess Aboriginal people for decades to come. The mainstay of Australian anthropology at this time was the globally influential celebrity anthropologist Walter Baldwin-Spencer, who at one time considered M.C. William Willshire to be an expert on Arrernte culture. As a formidable and influential academic and biologist, he orchestrated schisms between many within the Indigenous cultural research establishment, driving a wedge between his chosen few and those who subscribed to theories different from his own. The main target of Baldwin-Spencer was the Hermannsburg missionary, cultural analyst, and linguist Carl Strehlow, but there are also other lesser-known casualties.

Exploring the place of white women in pre-Federation culture also gestures to the standing of Aboriginal women. The inability of the Australian male to accept their wives, daughters, sisters and mothers as individual thinkers, contributors and decision makers is a harsh irony when highlighting the power behind the idea of the "white woman" in remote regions, where Aboriginal women and white men were active in sexual liaisons, in regular "combo" relationships and arguably "communities". These "combo" relationships are key to Willshire's life, his story, and this project. These relationships are at times, loving, obviously sexual, and are interweaved with cultural threads and extreme contradictions, that could only exist in an environment dominated by Aboriginal thought and logic connected to the traditional vision. Willshire had long standing relationships with at least two Aboriginal women, together, and apart. Most of the evidence that connects Willshire to his Aboriginal lovers is found both in his writing and the subtext of his writing, largely driven by his ego, his libido and the freedom he discovered living with Aboriginal people on the frontier. Some other sources, including photographic artifacts, offer clear, public, insight into Willshire's frontier lifestyle and extreme fondness of, and relationships with Aboriginal women. The public nature of some of this extremely personal evidence content is startling, and cuts to the heart of the contradiction that was William Willshire. Whilst I note the agency of Aboriginal women is a critical subject at any time, let alone within a contact or frontier setting, it is a subject that demands its own investigation, exploration and terms of reference - something that this project has no scope to do. In this pre-Federation period, *The Bulletin* magazine is a conveyance for much social and cultural debate. Through referencing *The Bulletin*, male and female, commentators can be identified as influences on mainstream culture at this time, influencing Willshire. I explore the roles of three significant writers and public personalities within the period between 1880 and 1900: showman and government advisor Archibald Meston, writer, poet and explorer Ernest Favenc as well as writer, journalist and explorer Arthur Vogan. These men were all "frontiersmen" and explorers. They influenced Willshire because they cast themselves in the pioneer mold, but they also had influence over mainstream press, politics, thought, literature, and social commentary, especially on ideas of how Australians see themselves as conquerors of an Indigenous people. The colonisation process manifests itself in many of these elements, most pervasive being the myth of the pioneer-bushman who is a popular character in Australian literature in the pre-Federation period. I argue that Willshire, the archetypal pioneer bushman,

indigenises himself in real life, through usurping skills, knowledge and elements of the Aboriginal persona creating the formula for an Australian mainstream hero, who appears as “Oleara” in his fictional writing. A physical manifestation of this usurping of skills and intelligence is embodied in all of these writers, but also in the actions of Willshire, and many of the anthropologists referred to within this project.

Chapter 6 focuses on Willshire’s erratic, and erotic, novella *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* (1895). I argue this work is an obvious dedication to his Aboriginal lover “Chillberta” (Nabarong) but that it also stands as a body of work dedicated to himself as a bushman and pioneer hero figure, as well as an affirmation for the many other Aboriginal women he encountered and saw as worthy of his love and carnal attention. It is also my contention that Willshire saw this particular work as an opportunity to become part of a literati, and a bona fide attempt at becoming a writer in a pioneer-myth format that was trending in Australian literature. *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* can be taken as a truth, for Willshire, in my view. This work is as much a dedication, a love letter, to Aboriginal women as it is a record of Willshire’s time living a frontier lifestyle. Based both in Central Australia and the Victoria River District this is a text, I argue, that projects Willshire’s own desires combined with selected facts and occurrences. Whilst it is not obvious in his self-centred writings, becomes that there is a more personal collateral damage for anyone who is connected to Willshire. Native trooper colleagues who have worked with Willshire for years, and enjoyed established relationships on male, cultural, and social levels, follow him to the Victoria River District, and are abandoned by him.

Chapter 7 concludes the theory element of the project in asking the question - *what use is Willshire?* I look at whether Willshire can be merely considered an erratic, unhinged, murderous, colonial policeman or possibly a novice ethnologist whose writings offer valuable fact and context for a serious reflection on colonisation. There is no doubt his unique life as an opportunistic, white, racist, policeman is unforgivable and absolutely flawed. This is the life that other writers and researchers have concentrated on, almost solely. There are other manifestations of Willshire however: his open love for Aboriginal partners or “wives”, with whom he fathered children, his deepening knowledge and connection to Aboriginal culture over time, his acceptance by and of Aboriginal culture, his relationships with Aboriginal police colleagues with whom he shared inescapably personal experiences. I ask what Australian history

would be without his writings, his life, and where the worth of Willshire's work can be found.

Part 2 (Creative Project) *The Abattoir at Night* is the fiction component to this thesis. It is made up of four sections being a mix of micro-fiction, poetry, narration, and story. Using foils such as dream sequences, faux journal entries, the historical record, and others within the Willshire story allows me to speculate and expand on the mental landscape of Willshire, but also, the lives of those around him. The frame of fiction allows ideas to be pushed, imagined, and tasted. The title of the creative element comes from Willshire's job as a nightwatchman at the Adelaide abattoir, where was employed for eighteen years, after he resigned from the police force in 1908. He worked in this role up until his death in 1925. In this setting the Willshire character (Walter Waxman) looks back at his life, meditates on his experiences with Aboriginal people, his Aboriginal wives, women, children, men, the desert. It is far from nostalgic and more of a nightmare for the Willshire character; taking into account the unexpected death of his own twelve-year-old daughter, "Victoria River Willshire". Writing Willshire's ego helps rationalise his decision making and his relationships with Aboriginal people, the constant pressure of colonisation, and the white world that he returns to post-frontier life. As a white writer I have sought editing advice, the objectivity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous supervisors, and I have been extremely careful to not try and replicate or enact the views and personalities of Aboriginal people. I am not a white person telling an Aboriginal story. I am inspired by Aboriginal people and cultures, by Country, by the Aboriginal vision, but I understand my place as an active supporter and witness. I am also inspired by elements of Willshire's life, his dismissive approach to risk, the priority of his personal autonomy over accountability for authority. Another source of motivation is Willshire's Aboriginal colleagues, their stories, their roles, the positions they occupy in history; real Aboriginal pioneers finding themselves between cultures for the first time, their thought processes, and the impacts of their decisions on their communities and families. The culture, knowledge and responsibility they carry, just being who they are and where they are, is personified by the pressure they are under to adopt new roles and act in white interests in a world that is changing. These men are incredible on that score alone, beginning the struggle for cultural survival at a point of contact with Willshire.

On a more technical aspect it is important to note there are various spellings of Aboriginal clan names and languages connected to clans, as well as place names. Sometimes the name of clan language and the name of the clan people, who use that language, are interchangeable. This is common in Australian written history. At times the English name and the Aboriginal name for a landmark are interchanged, and vice versa, for example “Running Waters” is ‘Irbmankara’ (Kenny,2013p155). Confusion can also come from quoting references that contain older spellings of landmarks, or, clan names with contemporary spellings of these landmarks for example; the contemporary Aboriginal spelling of “Irbmankara” is *Ipmengkere* [IB-ma-nga-ra] (*Native title to be recognised on Henbury station,*2018). At times, the clan or culture proper noun is used for the language noun, and vice versa, for example Luritja, or Loritja, can be called Kukatja or Matuntara (who are South Luritja people also) and are interchanged at times through confusion, or localised familiarity (*Native title to be recognised on Henbury station,*2018). These nouns are sometimes created by other Indigenous clans to delineate another specific clan, from their perspective. This skew is a common, and universal issue for researchers, historians, and writers, but not necessarily for Indigenous clans, as they know exactly who they are and where they are. There are numerous examples of this within the Australian historical record. The contemporary spelling of an Aboriginal clan and culture proper noun commonly differs from spellings contained in referenced texts, usually after going through its own unique evolution of spelling created by explorers, anthropologists, settlers and the like, who have used a largely phonetic mode to begin with. Arrernte, for example, is spelt in several ways; Arunta, Arunda, and Arrernte. Another example of this occurrence is taken from this thesis. For the Anmatyerr people (modern spelling) north of Alice Springs in the Barrow Creek area; Nettelbeck refers to this clan as ‘Unmatjera’ and Kimber as ‘Anmatjera’ (Boyack, 2020,p31). When quoting a referenced text, I use the spelling within the text and when writing on a specific group I use the modern accepted spelling.

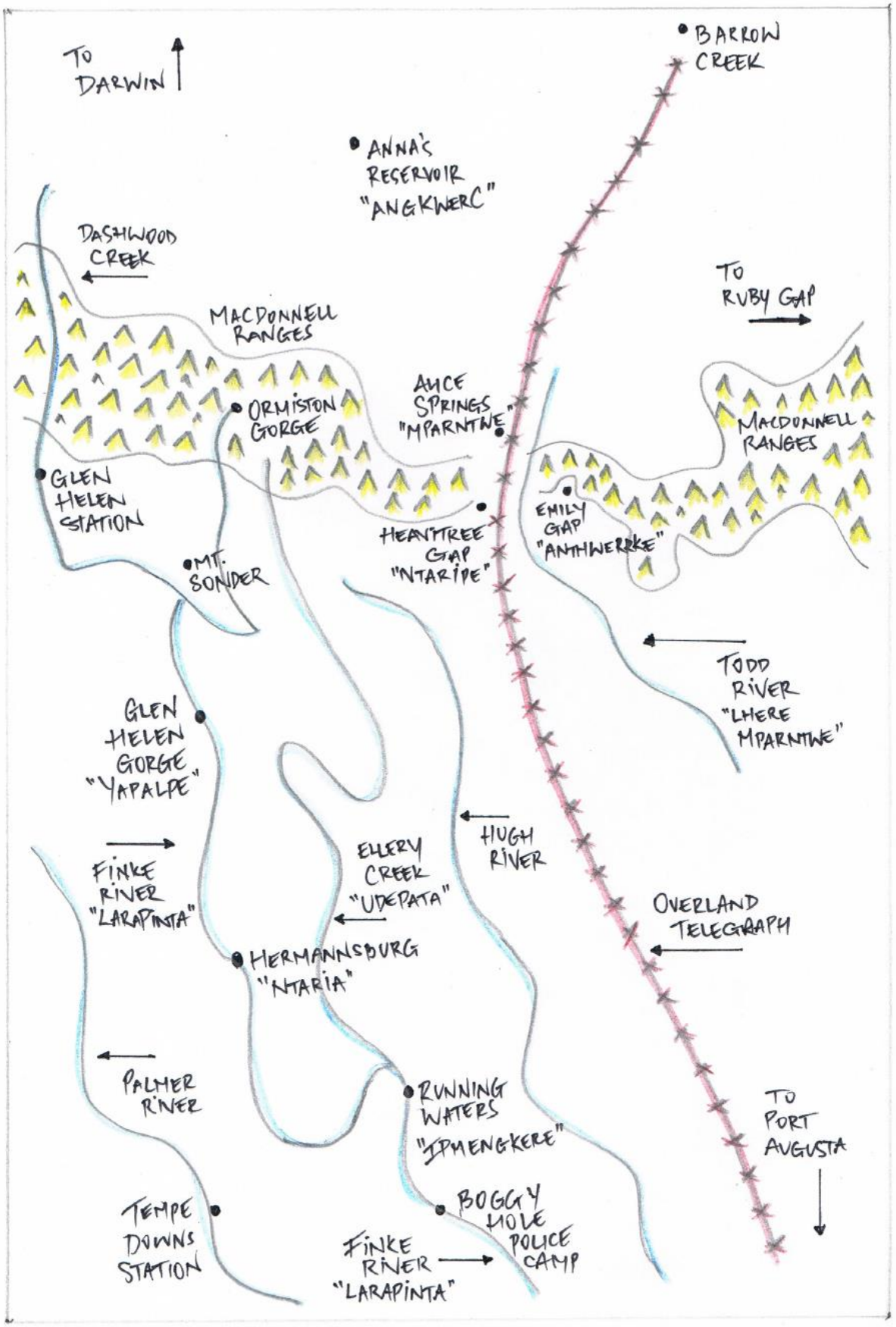
I also propose using a capital “C” when using the word “Country” in describing the territory of a specific, or non-specific Aboriginal group. The concept of Country is not merely land, it is a fundamental and broad yet unique cultural concept of bedrock importance, and thus comes closer to a proper noun, compared to common noun. Moreton-Robinson puts it thus; the ‘ontological relationship’ connected to the

Aboriginal concept of Country 'occurs through the intersubstantiation of ancestral beings, humans, and land; it is a form of embodiment' (Moreton-Robinson, 205,Loc529). Arrernte Country, for example, is a specific concept connected and meaningful to a specific cultural group, pertaining to a unique physical, spatial, spiritual, and geographical boundary. When we talk "country" belonging to a more general, less specific context, for example, country town, country mile, dry country, country cousins the word has a much less specific, and more general meaning. It is also extremely important to acknowledge that I use the past tense much of the time when describing certain aspects of Aboriginal culture and belief, as well as people who are now deceased. This thesis is a broadly historical work, and whilst it explores events that are passed; using a past tense does not mean that traditional beliefs are not present in clans and communities presently, especially when referring to Aboriginal ceremony, beliefs and values. I try and use the present tense to reflect this where possible and logical to do so. Using past tense in this work assists in maintaining historical continuity, yet it is strongly acknowledged that many cultural and other practices, and beliefs present in Willshire's time, continue to be practiced and relevant today, and will be passed on.

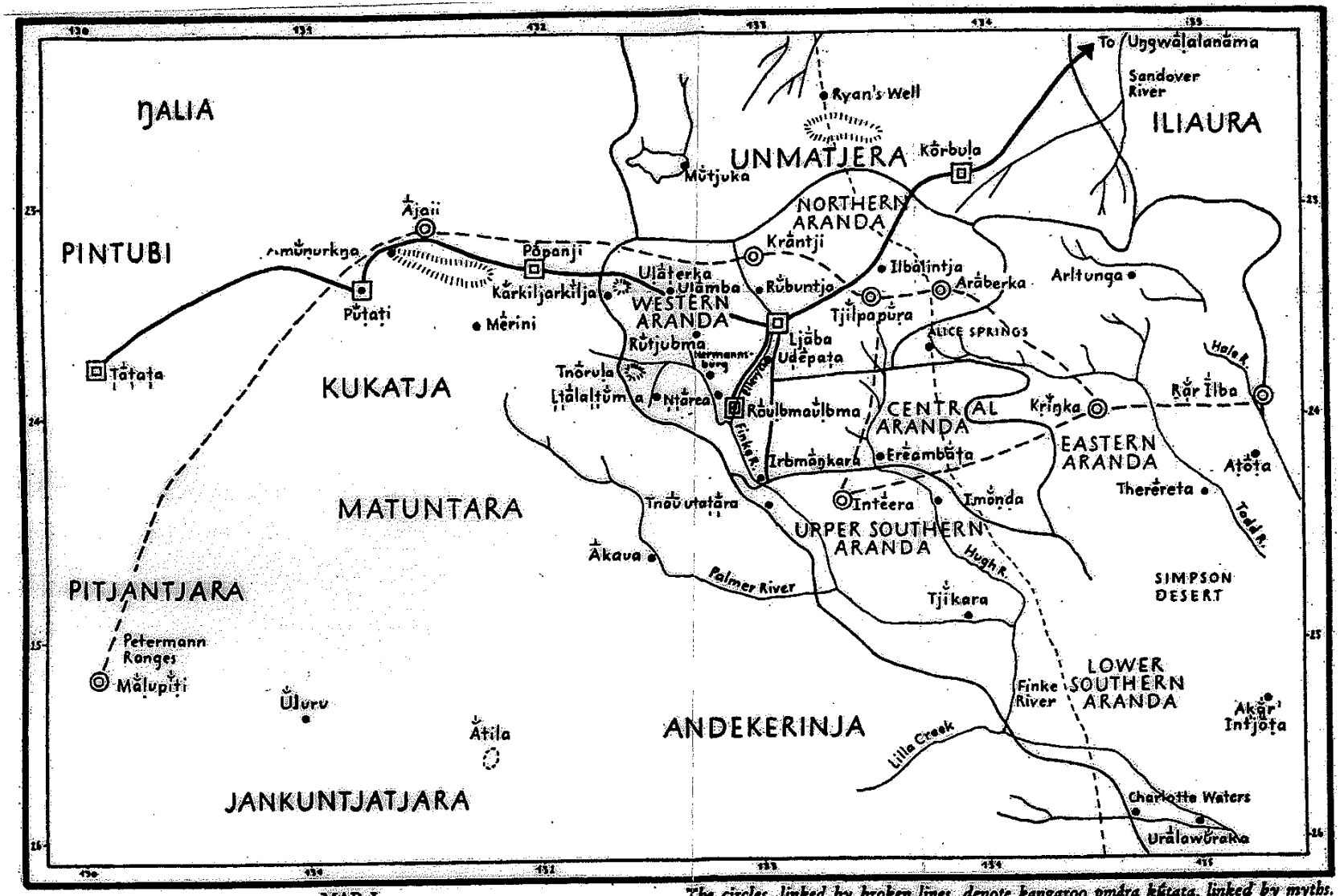
Throughout most reference texts the words *tracker* and *trooper* are used interchangeably, and I would suggest that this has occurred since Aboriginal people started assisting, rescuing, and guiding whites on Country. I would also suggest that, at times, roles have been unclear because of this interchangeability. Whilst a "Native trooper" may have been observed tracking, he may have been referred to as a "tracker", or "black tracker" or, all three titles at once for example. There are however different meanings connected to these terms although the role of tracking, for example, is common and can be hard to separate much of the time. PhD author, and former Northern Territory police officer Bill Wilson, states that 'true' trackers 'as opposed to native police officers or native constables, did not often engage in violence towards their own people' (Wilson, 2000,p340). Wilson also suggests that Aboriginal trackers were a regular, indeed, mandatory feature of most police duties within the study period, yet they were hired in a more ad-hoc, job to job manner, and not officially sworn-in like salaried Aboriginal police constables, who were 'serving at the lowest rank' (Wilson, 2000,pVI).

In writing this work, both the theory and the fiction, I acknowledge the Aboriginal clans, communities and cultures including the Arrernte constellations, Katiti, Lorijta, Katkatye, Billinara, other related clans, and Aboriginal individuals, whose cultural and community information forms a backdrop to this work. I acknowledge that these Aboriginal cultures and peoples have been studied, gazed at, watched, observed, used, and described, for scientific and other purposes ever since white invasion. I hope this work is of value to Aboriginal clans and people, adding worth to the corpus, the story, and the heritage of communities, families and Country. I hope this work highlights the unique lives that Aboriginal troopers lived, and I also hope this work assists white people to gain a deeper understanding, and interest in, the structures and systems that make up the multilayered, ancient yet contemporary world of Aboriginal culture in Australia; a land that was never ceded, home to cultures that are cherished and used to guide our lives, and our world. I would also like to acknowledge the Jaara people belonging to the Kulin nation (Victoria), on whose land I live and dream, and on whose land, I created this body of work.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude and thanks to the outstanding person who is Dr Gary Foley; someone who has always been encouraging, honest, knowledgeable, funny, and inspiring. An immense debt of gratitude and thanks also goes to Dr Edwina Howell, whose detailed, thoughtful guidance I have listened to intently, and whose intellect and conceptual powers have also informed and inspired me. Can I also acknowledge the learned feedback and guidance of Professor David MacCallum whose sharp observations, and suggestions, have assisted me greatly in finishing this project. I would also like to thank others in my social and professional world passionate and willing to discuss, consider, recognise and fight for Aboriginal justice and culture; your ongoing commitment to discussion and action, whether around the fire, the barbeque, the office water cooler, on the streets, or in the classroom is life affirming. Listening, learning, and acting in support of Aboriginal justice and self-determination is a life journey, and a daily thought.



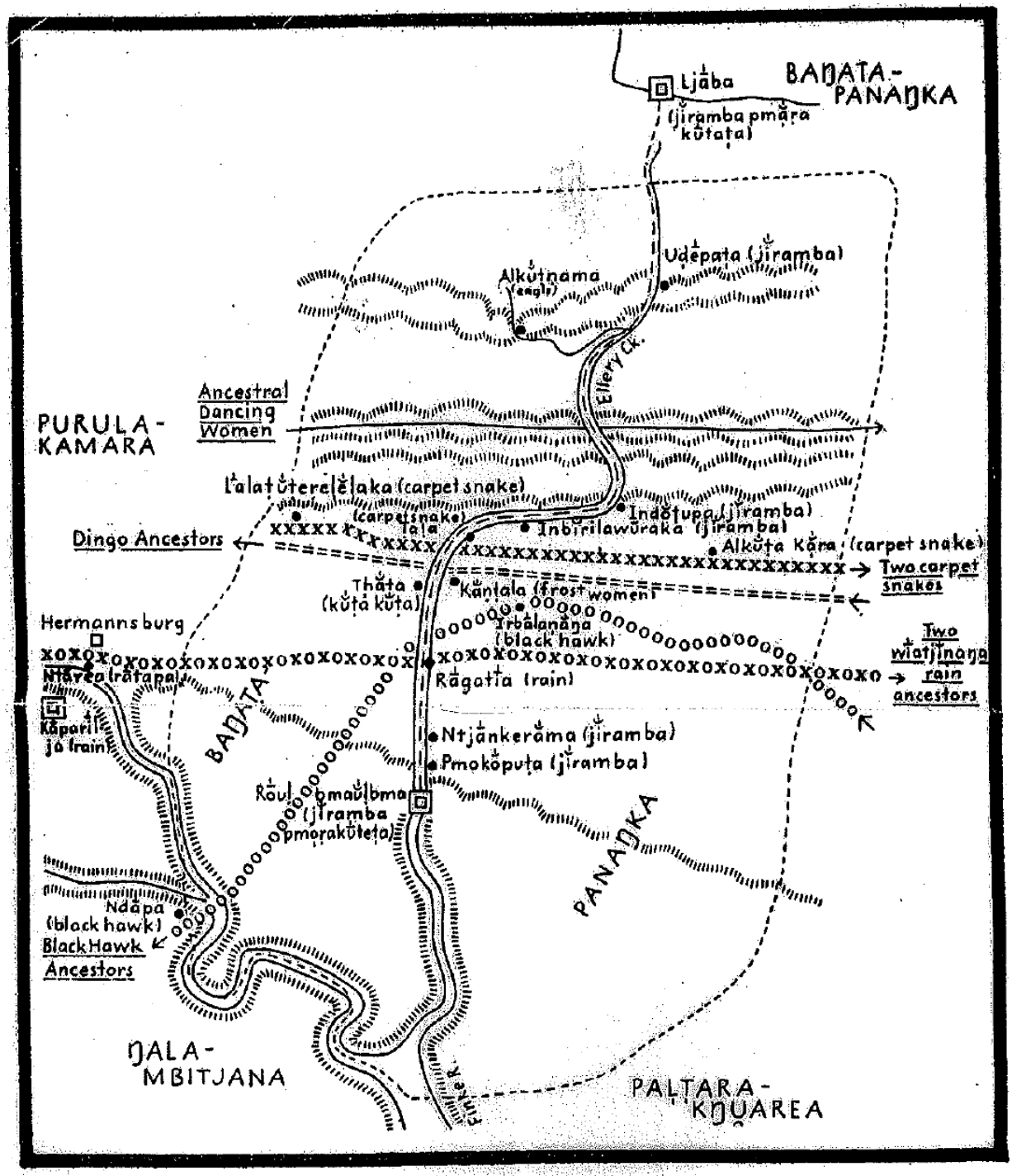
Map of study area – *Mparntwe* region – not to scale – map by Neil Boyack 2020 ©



MAP I.

The circles, linked by broken lines, denote kangaroo pmara kŭtaţa, linked by myths.
The squares, linked by fat lines, denote honey-ant pmara kŭtaţa, linked by myths.

Arrernte Ancestral Myth Map I – (Strehlow, T.1978) p56



MAP II.

Totemic Map of the Baŋata-Panaŋka Njiŋaŋa Section Area.

The trails of wandering totemic ancestors are shown by special signs: dancing women ———, carpet snakes xxx, dingos = = =, rain oxoxo, black hawk ooo, honey ant —. Their directions are indicated by arrows. Totems of all centres appear in brackets after the place names.

Arrernte Ancestral Myth Map II – (Strehlow,1978, p57)

1:

Prologue:

Boots on the Ground, Spirits in the Sky:

Boggy Hole, Northern Territory (South Australia) January 9th 1890

Fire and night brought a reflection on all the things Nameia had experienced throughout the hot January day. Here on the banks of the Finke River "*Larapinta"* at the Boggy Hole police camp, Nameia silently considered the different sounds of the men strewn about the site settling into the evening and shaping themselves around their own night-fires. Nameia recognised the nearby outline of his son Aremala (Native constable Larry) who had been recruited by Mounted Constable William Willshire as part of the Alice Springs trooper cohort. He was glad to be with his son at Boggy Hole, on the boundary of Lower Southern Arrernte country and Matuntara country. But here he was near *Ipmengkere* (IB-ma-nga-ra) a hallowed place where many of his family and clan had been murdered 15 years before (*Native title to be recognised on Henbury station,*2018*)*. He could remember the light of that day, the long shadows of the evening, running from his attackers. Life and death hung in his mind; the give, the take, the way the ancestors ordered the world and created Law. Looking to the eternal order of the stars sharpening above the camp, he felt the reassurance of gravity as well as the deep sadness and grief that haunted this place. He felt the presence of strong Law, and he knew the stealth and patience of old warriors, their drive for revenge, their solid commitment to obligation.

There was no real security in being camped with police here at Boggy Hole. Maybe the dogs would go off to warn of attackers, but old warriors were smarter than camp dogs, their slow footsteps definite, thick, and gentle, like a dance, they could float over the ground. As night grew cold and hard around the camp, the heat of the day left the red earth. Hidden in the desert blackness searching eyes observed the small orange glow of Nameia's campfire at the police bivouac. The Boggy Hole police camp fell into slumber and settled as Matuntara warriors ghosted closer to the camp using the forlorn sounds of night birds to blanket any disturbance. Tired men were cuddling themselves with their blankets, snoring, their dogs were still, the horses quietly feeding. When the

heavy cold rose from the desert earth it woke Nameia and he sat up to rearrange the wood in his fire. A burst of flame shot for an instant, sharply illuminating his face, and in keeping with the power of darkness Matuntara spears fired silently out of the desert night piercing Nameia's body without fuss. As the camp awoke around him, naked men came to life fumbling after weapons yelling half words with broken sleepy voices and letting rifles off into the sky. Nameia laid quietly facing spirits in the stars, bleeding to the small sounds of scattered, crackling coals near his ear, he knew this feeling would come one day. Yet this was more than a death. More than a murder. It was an act of cultural duty connected to the *Ipmengkere* event 15 years before that had triggered an ongoing cycle of vengeance endorsed by tribal elders.

Called Running Waters by whites, *Ipmengkere* was an extremely important place for clans and communities in the region. Related to the Tempe Downs area (the venue for corresponding revenge killings in 1891) by the travels of snake and cormorant ancestor beings, *Ipmengkere* was 'at the intersection of Western, Southern and Central Arrernte territories and a short distance from Matuntara territory' (Gill,1998,p65). The water is permanent and comes from a spring based in the Finke River, making the immediate area rich in vegetation, wildlife, and food, and thus it is a repository of ancestral stories and Law. Law was embedded in the land by the creation beings. Law created a framework of rules to live by, and this is the matrix that offered understanding to the existence of people inhabiting Country, as well as a rationale for 'how country works' (Bradley,2015,p18). Elders endorsed the punishments of those who deviated from Law. If elders themselves were seen as transgressors (as judged in Nameia's case) it was up to 'members of other totemic clans whose ceremonial centres were linked with the *pmara kutata* ["everlasting home"] of the guilty men' to make a raid upon the offending group to deliver just punishment (Strehlow,1969,p37). This was the narrative that Nameia's death was enmeshed within.

This assassination implicated Willshire who, by now, with his Native trooper colleagues, was part of a related cultural group needing to create a violent, appropriate response. Such a measure would have been demanded and expected by Aboriginal police colleagues, one being Aremala, the aggrieved son of the deceased. This response came a year later, and landed Willshire in court, charged with the murders of Roger (Ereminta) and Donkey at Tempe Downs station. This payback, perpetrated by Willshire and Native trooper colleagues, had little to do with a police operation in

apprehending the murder suspects of Nameia. This event had more to do with the result of a feud between Willshire and Roger (Ereminta), over Willshire's Aboriginal lover, Nabarong, who was Ereminta's first wife (Heidenreich to Swan Taplin, 1890).

All those present at the Boggy Hole police camp suspected Ereminta, a well-known Muntantara man, as Nameia's assassin. Native troopers were able to confirm this by identifying the Matuntara killers by their footprints; another routine feature of Aboriginal policework which no doubt, became a truly unique development for consideration within the machinations of colonial criminal law, predating fingerprinting technology. Peter Vallee, author, researcher of William Willshire and the history of Central Australia, suggests that it is probable Willshire had initially stolen the wife of Ereminta, which, from Ereminta's perspective, and that of his Matuntara tribesmen, must have enhanced an already strong justification for Nameia's assassination (Vallee,2007, p184).

Strehlow writes knowing 'Nameia had been the father of his native constable Aremala was undoubtedly' very welcome as it handed Willshire, and other Arrernte constables broad scope for revenge; all being stakeholders connected to the *Ipmengkere* massacre by virtue of clan relationships (Strehlow,1969,p45). 'Even better, that this had been a Matuntara raid executed upon a Southern Aranda camp' as Willshire knew it would 'for this very reason deeply offend his other Aranda native constables' offering an automatic cultural consent for further action (Strehlow, 1969, p45). As a brazen raid on Willshire's official police camp, committed by suspects known to Aboriginal troopers present, and on their Country, Nameia's murder was personally and professionally offensive to Willshire. The raid highlighted the deadly stealth and efficacy of Aboriginal skill and the vulnerability of all who lived in this time and place. 'Willshire knew well that the two tribes were at enmity & took delight in acts of violence against each other' (Heidenreich to Swan Taplin, 1890).

White bushmen, pastoralists and stockmen possessed a superficial, observational, racist tainted, knowledge of Aboriginal life in Central Australia. The void of knowledge, experience and fact around Aboriginal culture and people was created by poor-quality reconnaissance in league with a mainstream terror of Aboriginal people. Willshire's knowledge of Central Australian languages, Country, culture, and Law was better than any white man that had ever come before and must have been for a long time after.

He could flit between languages and cultures mid-sentence, explaining the nuance of one world to the other and so on. It is certain that he introduced new concepts (helpful and not) to Aboriginal interlocutors, but also experienced a conceptual enlightenment from the Aboriginal world allowing him a clarity that delivered a deeper cultural familiarity. Willshire spent significant and exclusive periods with Aboriginal men, women, and groups, in extremely remote regions. Through need, convenience, and cultural etiquette he was introduced to the norms and customs within traditional operations of Aboriginal life. Over time he became a cultural participant. He describes some of these aspects of Aboriginal life as an early contact figure in the region in his books and pamphlets: *The Aborigines of Central Australia* (1888 and 1891 – 2 versions), A *Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* (1895) and *The Land of the Dawning: Being Facts Gleaned From Cannibals In The Australian Stone Age* (1896). It is reasonable to assume that there is much Willshire experienced and did not put to paper, yet he wrote and published enough to allow an unpacking of his life and experiences.

His professional experiences as a lone white, with only Aboriginal colleagues and company became inescapably personal as he waded deeper into the Aboriginal world; he cultivated relationships, built alliances, friendships, enemies, and partnerships. These experiences extended his knowledge, allowed inclusion, and created a cultural acumen with which he could access and understand Law at a level far beyond white peers. This cultural knowhow was an asset that allowed Willshire to add significant value to the colonisation mission whilst giving him a latitude that no other police officer enjoyed. Interestingly, Moreton-Robinson suggests that the 'ontological' relationship with the land Aboriginal people lived with was not destroyed by colonisation (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, Loc529). Willshire's life with Aboriginal colleagues may be demonstrative of a coercive collusion, where the benefits of traditional culture were mimicked and used as active tools for ongoing colonisation and memorialised as such. Bonds with Aboriginal colleagues impressed upon Willshire the life-giving value of Country to Aboriginal people, but he also discovered a personal, emotional, and mental freedom and this is evident in his writings.

This revelation offered Willshire a vulnerable space in which to reflect upon the futile diversions and constructs propping up his capitalist, colonial, Western world, in contrast to the logic and order of an ancient traditional culture where everything was

related. In such a harsh climate survival was difficult, labour intensive and life-threatening at times, requiring police cohorts, and related Aboriginal clans, to act in cohesion with one another, as families, teams, and in partnerships to avoid unnecessary conflict and to share resources for mutual benefit. An expected master-servant relationship emphasised by Willshire's whiteness and police status is easy to assume, yet I would argue this status is diminished by the value contained in the powerful information and practical cultural knowledge Aboriginal colleagues delivered to Willshire. Information that not only brought an enhanced protection layer to Willshire's personal wellbeing, established trust, and at times, deadly, efficacy to policing in such a vast and difficult terrain. Historian, author and Willshire expert Professor Amanda Nettelbeck suggests Willshire's approach to facilitating white law was predicated on 'an assumed atmosphere of warfare' and the 'strategic engagement' of a 'recognised enemy' dealt out on a 'discretionary basis – and importantly, on an anticipatory basis – in the service of Aboriginal pacification' (Nettelbeck, 2004, p192). This violent approach to policing, compared with his clear periods of personal discovery are symbols of the walking, living, contradiction that was William Willshire.

Willshire's own motivations for wanting to capture cultural information stemmed from a legitimate curiosity fuelled by the ego of someone who desperately wanted to be accepted as a cultural expert and author in the image of an Australian pioneer-explorer. If 'I could begin again, I should choose my profession "Journalism"' (Willshire, 1896,p79). He states in his 1896 work, *The Land of the Dawning* that his 'book has been written for the purpose of supplying information to the Australian Natives Association, also for Mr. J.G. Frazer [author of *The Golden Bough*], A.A., F.R.G.S., Trinity College Cambridge, England who asked, through the Commissioner of Police (Mr.W.J.Peterswald, J.P.) for such information regarding "Uncivilized or semi-civilized peoples"' (Willshire, 1896,p3). He goes on, stating that 'this book was not written for straitlaced people, but for those more practical sort of beings who call a spade a spade, and look on the swarthy tribes of Australia as human beings susceptible to teaching. The natives of the Victoria River country are uncontaminated, and still in their pristine vigour' (Willshire, 1896,p4). When in Central Australia, his motivations are similar as the 'manners, customs, rites and language of an aboriginal race which dies out wherever the white man obtains a firm footing, are matters which

well deserve attention and recordance' (Willshire,1888,pp3). Interestingly with regard to Aboriginal people of the Victoria River District (Billinarra) Willshire states, notwithstanding pervasive white assertions of oncoming Aboriginal extinction, that 'the aborigines will hold out for the next two hundred years; civilization has not yet stepped in' (Willshire, 1896,p67).

Arriving in the Victoria River District region in 1894 offered Willshire a unique opportunity as a writer and novice ethnographer to 'show the customs, religions, and superstitions of an uncivilised people living in a prolific land – a race of blacks about whom no one has written and living in a region in many of the isolated parts of which no one has been' (Willshire, 1896,p7). White influences had come before Willshire in the Central Australian region, but not in the Victoria River District where Willshire felt that 'not one living aborigine belonging to the Gordon Creek could speak a word of English when I arrived there on the 14th of May 1894' (Willshire, 1896, p80). As for learning and transcribing the language of the Victoria River District, Willshire claims to be the first white person to have transcribed Billinarra language, and states of this task that 'I won't exhaust your patience by going on with the Victoria natives' dialect; but can you really imagine that it was a pleasure to me to learn it? I can assure you it was' (Willshire,1896, p58). 'It is a most cuphonious *[sic]* language, and I have spent hours and hours, year after year, listening to its pleasant and agreeable sounds, and when I began to speak it myself the natives of both sexes took great pains with me in the pronunciation, and many a good laugh they had at my expense' (Willshire,1896,p80).

Aboriginal people of the Central Australian landscape had seen explorers like John McDouall Stuart (1815-1866) in six Central Australian expeditions between 1858 and 1862, and Ernest Giles (1835-1897) in three expeditions between 1872 and 1875. Other venturers included John Ross (1817-1903) who led exploration confirming the route of the Overland Telegraph in 1870, William Christie Gosse (1842-1881), and Peter Warburton (1813-1889). 'By far the most common reaction' to whites was 'fear and avoidance', but the opposite was the case when camps were set up for extended periods (Hartwig, 1965, p247). Whilst bestowing European names on Indigenous landmarks and sacred sites with the stroke of a pen, most explorers were on the move through Country, such were constraints around time and life-giving resources, as well as commitments to the funding and timelines of investors and publishers. Explorers were always climbing to the top of hills and mountains looking for water, smoke,

assistance, and intelligence. Whilst Aboriginal curiosity was intense for these covered-up white men, their animals and technologies, Aboriginal families were keen to get strangers off Country. Mervyn Hartwig, researcher, author and doyen of Central Australian history, states that on the rare occasions where Aboriginal people did approach Stuart's party the motivation was 'curiosity and acquisition' alongside suspicion, with Aboriginal warriors being seen 'examining the tracks left by the party' (Hartwig,1965, p244). Aboriginal people stayed hidden much of the time. 'The Aborigines early fear of Stuart had probably been largely replaced by a fear lest he become a permanent intruder and a desire to prevent this from happening' yet Hartwig asserts that Stuart was 'more willing to resort to force and less willing to make careful and time consuming efforts at conciliation' (Hartwig,1965, p246). Giles entertained three Aborigines at his camp on 19th June 1874 and they 'departed with a pair of pliers' (Hartwig,1965,p249). When Giles was coveting water and skirting sacred sites however he was attacked a number of times by Western Arrernte, Matuntara, and Pitjantjatjara clans (Hartwig,1965,p250). Hartwig suggests that explorer peers of Giles such as Warburton and Gosse encountered no such aggression from Aboriginal people, partly because they traversed more open country where surprise attacks were made difficult, but also because Giles 'was brought up in a rougher school for the treatment of Aborigines than either of his rivals' (Hartwig,1965,p251). Most whites came to the Central desert region with a preconceived 'belief in progress and the superiority of their own culture' and that Aborigines were 'treacherous and murderous' alongside a 'conviction that Aborigines were doomed to extinction' (Hartwig, 1965,p255).

Hartwig asserts that Giles, steeped in Darwinian tradition, was a 'good example of a person who believed in the superiority of his own culture and the inevitable extinction of Aborigines' (Hartwig,1965,p255). In Central Australia Aboriginal 'men and women, and most of the older children, knew not only the tracks of all the regular human residents of their home region, but also those of all animals and birds that existed in the interior' (Strehlow,1967,p8). Now for the very first time they were 'discovering boot marks and hoofprints' which 'startled and scared them' (Strehlow,1967,p8). Strehlow suggests that modes of white exploration were extremely similar to those 'adopted by roving bands of avengers when they were stealing their way through hostile country in order to surprise and slay their unsuspecting victims'

(Strehlow,1967,p9). White explorers failed to realise that Indigenous Australian tribes 'like all human beings everywhere in the world' regarded their Country as their home, and that they would 'naturally resent the intrusions of uninvited strangers' (Strehlow,1967,p9). Aboriginal travellers knew to avoid sacred sites and to observe strict rules when entering the territories of their neighbours. It was important that family groups and clans within Country boundaries stayed in touch with smoke signals to prevent the inconvenience of surprising other groups. Visitors 'coming from outside groups had the duty to announce their approach in the same way', signifying their peaceful intentions with smoke (Strehlow, 1967, p10). If a camp came within sight of visitors they 'would sit down, place their weapons with their backs turned towards the camp of their hosts waiting for some of the local men to come forward and welcome them' (Strehlow, 1967,p11).

Soon after the first white exploration parties came the inevitable white incursion impacted the Centre yet 'with few exceptions' Hartwig states 'relationships between Aborigines and Europeans working at the telegraph stations or bringing supplies up the line were peaceful' (Hartwig, 1965,p261). Aboriginal people 'occasionally, borrowed wire from the telegraph line or smashed insulators and used porcelain chips as cutting tools or spear heads' (Hartwig,1965,p263). This was the setting for the arrival of Mounted Constable William Willshire. His motivations were based on a significant stay in Central Australia. Transferred to Alice Springs in 1882, by the time of Nameia's death in1890 Willshire's relationships with Native constable colleagues at times resembled the friends, enemies and kin and skin relationships Native constables entertained in their personal lives and clans, such was their familiarity. Willshire's knowledge of culture was strong enough to work in Aboriginal circles without much guidance, being augmented all the while through traditional reciprocal channels to which Willshire was an established contributor.

The power of the constabulary was remote and unsupervised, offering Willshire extraordinary authority. Having access to such an influential person whose white-economy goods quickly became essential to Aboriginal wellbeing, also catapulted the importance of Aboriginal troopers. 'The mounted constable in central Australia commonly represented the entire justice system' having to 'bear the praise or the wraith of those whose interests' they affected (Gill,1998,p56). This theatre offered Willshire an unexpected, unthinkable professional, and personal freedom which he

used to write his books, cultivate relationships with Aboriginal men and women, kill his enemies, father children, and live as a white man in a black world, largely unchecked by colonial authority for his entire tenure as a desert policeman.

2:

Death, a Way of Life:

The Alice - danger, chaos, and colonisation in action

It is reasonable to assume that during the 1880s most Aboriginal people in and around the *Mparntwe* (Alice Springs) region could vividly recall life before whites; when cultural rhythm was in-sync with what the powerful caterpillar ancestors, *yeperenye*, *utnerrrengatye* and *ntyarike*, had created at the beginning of time. Aboriginal people were usually more concerned with their own lives than those of the white interlopers. Arrernte people had experienced intermittent white exploration before the building of the Overland Telegraph through their Country, completed in the early 1870s, yet white incursion was still incremental. Still, this gradual invasion and colonisation had started to undermine traditional cycles, demanding adaptation, and cultural compromise for the immediate future. Professor Richard "Dick" Kimber, historian, teacher, and elder of Central Australian folklore states 'the increasing pressures on the Aborigines were the same pressures that had been recognised further south during earlier pastoral settlement' (Kimber, 1991,p9).

Whilst the Aboriginal population of the *Mparntwe* region was trying to understand the motivations of invaders, the white population in the Central Desert was sparse. The immense template of colonisation broke into Aboriginal homelands with huge cattle stations, and a Lutheran mission, with stock herds flowing into the area 'in the period 1873-1884' (Kimber,1991,p8). Cattle stations managed by small groups of white staff covered massive tracts of Aboriginal land and included Undoolya Station 'on which the Alice Springs telegraph station and Heavitree police camp' were situated (Willshire,1888,p7). Other stations included Idracowra station, Owen Springs, Mount Burrell, Bond's Springs, Anna's Reservoir, Glen Helen, Erldunda Springs, and of course Hermannsburg, the German Lutheran Mission (Willshire, 1888, p7). Cattle had an immediate impact on the health of Country. Researcher on Arrernte, author and Emeritus Professor, Diane Austin-Broos writes in her outstanding 2009 book *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past,* 'rapidly, cattle began to subvert the environment, and the arrival of rabbits further undermined the grasses that fed and anchored a plethora of

species on erstwhile Arrernte land' leaving an increased reliance on 'flour and tea—the one to satisfy appetite and the other to suppress it'; such were the 'indexes of new and tantalizing powers' (Austin-Broos, 2009,p15). An 1881 census of white people in the area 'showed that there were seventy-nine males and three females between Barrow Creek and the 26th parallel' yet this population increased markedly when prospectors came to the district looking for "rubies" and gold around 1885 (Hartwig, 1965,p345).

Pressures on local Aboriginal populations were 'dramatically increased in Central Australia with the short lived ruby rush, the longer term but fluctuating gold rush, and the railway line construction from Warrina to Oodnadatta' all of which occurred between 1886-1890 (Kimber, 1991,p17). With development came more white people. Some were itinerant workers, others solo adventurers seeking excitement, some were running from the law, responsibilities, relationships or escaping city life for an almost uninterrupted seclusion. New settlements brought new opportunities for those motivated by commerce or scams, selling sly grog, rustling cattle, or operating as "spelers". Travelling with a deck of cards and dice, "spelers" were self-reliant and 'especially conspicuous at race meetings' but never 'widely tolerated' as they were 'regarded by some as a parasite on his fellows' (Hartwig, 1965,p348). Those employed in an official capacity made up the seasonal pastoral work force on cattle stations as cooks, shearers, drovers, blacksmiths, and labourers, in the off-season they took up jobs as teamsters, and cameleers.

Some were employed as police of course. Other more solitary souls led 'the hermit life of a dogger' selling dingo scalps for a government bounty, or trading goods and services with Aboriginal clans (Hartwig, 1965,p347). Dogging was an early contact occupation that drained a traditional resource and brought Aboriginal and white people together physically and economically. The 'colonists' bureaucratic reframing of dingo as vermin because of their threat to lambs, sheep, and other monetised animals commodified dingo skin (Young,2010,p91). Soon, scalping and shepherding became 'interlinked occupations for Aboriginal people around the Central Desert stations' (Young,2010,p98). "Doggers" became busy and popular trading partners with the Anangu peoples (Central Western Desert), paying Aboriginal hunters to capture and scalp dingo in return for clothes, sugar, flour, tea, and tobacco (Young, 2010,p93). This economic development was a glimpse into the future for traditional life. Diana

Young, socio-cultural anthropologist and curator writes that before the ‘advent of doggers, pups were a delicacy that Anangu cooked in their skins’ being considered *kuka wiru* or ‘lovely meat’, yet these skins offered access to cash and ‘settler goods’ which challenged the traditional status quo (Young, 2010, p93). In this isolated white community supplying alcohol was seen as a public service. Sly grog shops were welcomed in nearly all sections of the community without question even after the granting of an official liquor license to ‘‘Billy’ Benstead of Alice Springs’ to run the Stuart Arms Hotel (Hartwig,1965,p349). Horse racing, the main social event of the region, was extremely compatible for sly grogging activities. Communities formed their own turf clubs which included the ‘MacDonnell Range Turf Club’, Barrow Creek and Charlotte Waters (Hartwig, 1965,p360). Disposable income for workers in the pastoral industry came through favourable conditions and profit for the stations they worked for. Horse racing provided the small pastoralist community an opportunity to come together, drink and gamble, ‘a year’s wages away’ and ‘attempt to banish a twelve month monotony’ (Hartwig, 1965,p360). Turf clubs were abandoned however in the late eighties when the region descended into severe drought, which decimated a significant portion of the pastoral industry in the area.

With cattle taking up Country and strangling traditional resources the violent Aboriginal response was predictable. Obscured from ‘the machinery of justice’ this volatile environment encouraged ambivalence to the ‘shooting of cattle-killing Aborigines’ as well as an almost open acceptance of “comboism” - the cohabitation of white men and black women (Hartwig,1965,p350). Whilst missionaries spoke out strongly against “comboism”, Kimber suggests that here ‘the Old Testament and Darwin’s theory of evolution joined forces in a righteous and comforting way’ for the missionaries (Kimber, 1991,p5). Sex, whilst an indispensable part of life for Aboriginal and white worlds, symbolised a clash of cultures. Some whites were targeted with violence ‘unwittingly incurring the penalty of death by aboriginal law’ through coercing Aboriginal women into sexual relationships (Hartwig, 1965,p406). This was a common occurrence and the source of numerous skirmishes and revenge killings, yet well within cultural scope, in the eyes of Aboriginal avengers. West of Alice Springs the advocacy and selflessness of Lutheran missionaries at Hermannsburg was conditional through total commitment to Christ and their holy book. Missionary energy for replacing the beliefs and cultures of the traditional people was strong. Certainly, pastoralists and workers

were vulnerable, and made insecure in this ‘marginal land’ through economic risk, yet missionaries came with a comprehensive, divine inspiration that drove them through almost insurmountable privations to establish their mission at Hermannsburg. This diverted missionary attention from a meaningful engagement with Aboriginal people; prioritising labour intensive toil resulted in weak relationships with their misunderstood Aboriginal flock, which over time led to a strong contempt for Aboriginal culture (Hartwig,1965,p354). Expecting Aboriginal people to simply abandon deeply rooted, life-affirming cultural practices with a simple trade of belief systems was always going to be impossible.

But there were other forces at play. In such a harsh environment easy-to-get and reliable food was an irresistible draw for Aboriginal people to sojourn at Hermannsburg. As pastoralism and new mining initiatives took up ‘Arrernte land in the south, east, and the north’ only the ‘inhospitable desert in the west’ was without attention pushing many of the Arrernte and Luritja constellations into Hermannsburg for food and safety, creating a mix of neighbouring cultures on site (Austin-Broos, 2009,p15). At times the small mission station became a refuge from the chaos and destruction that ‘poorly disciplined pastoralists’ and ‘a constabulary prepared to use force’ brought with them (Austin-Broos, 2009,p15). But over time it become clear to the German Christians that the Aboriginal commitment to their traditional culture was primary. This left the missionary ‘faith in the capacity of Aborigines for eternal salvation’ shaken, with force becoming the only way to maintain a small Aboriginal brethren of converts together (Hartwig, 1965,p354). Of the treatment Missionaries doled out to Aboriginal people Willshire made claims that Missionaries had chained women to logs, and stated that the Missionaries had once come to his camp ‘with long whips & revolvers looking for a few harmless lubras’ who had decided to leave Hermannsburg (Willshire to Swan/Taplin, 1891). Vallee suggests ‘the mission had become a prison for the Aboriginal Christian women’ and even worse, missionaries ‘were in alliance with violence of police and the Aboriginal men to contain the women into a kind of conduct that they regarded as more appropriate for heathen-Christian women’ (Vallee,2007,p183).

Not only did Aboriginal clans want to keep a distance from white ways and communities, they wanted to strike back and disrupt the cattle business of white invaders. Aboriginal warriors initiated as much damage as they could by killing cattle

with spears, rocks, guns and knives, creating problems for a critical industry that underwrote the white economy and future growth in the region. Many more cattle were speared than required for eating needs. Alongside Aboriginal cattle killing, white cattle thieves fed an emerging black economy, driven by the increase in population to the area through a mining boom in 1885. Cattle thieves serviced miners with meat from well-fed cattle that would otherwise have to be hunted, stolen, scavenged or bought. Hartwig suggests cattle thieving was encouraged and normalised beginning 'in a small way in the eighties' soon after being 'widely accepted and even esteemed' by much of the local population (Hartwig, 1965,p349). Along with police, pastoral workers, and rogue bushmen, cattle thieves represented yet another group within the white Frontier maelstrom that were a threat to Indigenous wellbeing in what had become an extremely unpredictable environment, notwithstanding a police presence.

In April of 1879 Mounted Constable John Charles Shirley (1856-1883) was appointed the first police officer to Alice Springs based at the telegraph station. Being 'adjacent to the Alice Springs water hole' the first police station was a canvas tent, situated four kilometres north of the town centre (*Heavitree Gap Historical Police Station*, 2000). Prior to this, the *Mparntwe* area had been patrolled by constables stationed at the Peake and Charlotte Waters telegraph stations to the south, and Barrow Creek telegraph station to the north. Mounted Constable William Willshire joined the South Australian police force on January 1st 1878. In 1880 he was stationed at Mount Barker, at Melrose in 1881, and in August of 1882 he was transferred to Alice Springs, where a year later he had the task of searching for the bodily remains of a missing search party mounted by MC Shirley. Willshire recounts that Shirley's search party of 'six' was reduced to two survivors, 'Mr Giles, who is now telegraph station master at Tennant's Creek, and Barney' the black tracker (Willshire,1888, p4). 'I had the melancholy duty of searching for the bodies finding and burying them after a search that lasted a fortnight' (Willshire, 1888,p5).

The "mulga wire" not only carried news and gossip between Aboriginal clans and white communities, it passed on the stories of death and destruction ahead of the ever-spreading white colonial presence, injecting fear, anxiety and intense curiosity into Central Australian Aboriginal communities. On 22nd of February 1874, whilst 'Stapleton brought out his violin' and played a tune for his co-workers around sixty Kaytetye men launched a surprise attack on the Barrow Creek telegraph station, 272

kilometres north of Alice Springs (Hartwig, 1965,p265). Resulting in two white fatalities, this clash was to become a baseline event for black-white relationships and interactions in the region beyond the next decade. The dead included Canadian station master James Lawrence Oliver Stapleton and John Frank, with Willshire's own historical reportage of this event stating that 'Si Jim' the Chinese cook was present, and that an Aboriginal youth known as 'Jimmy' who was a 'black boy from the Peake' was also injured seriously (Willshire, 1888,p29). 'Jim, was grazed on the head by a spear, and received several scratches on the body, besides getting a spear through his fingers' with some of the spears being headed with 'flint, and others with wooden barbs, and some plain pointed' (Willshire, 1888,p30). In the six weeks following this attack, four punitive raids were led by notorious Aboriginal pacifier and veteran police officer, Mounted Constable Samuel Gason who was present at the Barrow Creek attack. The using of white stockmen, and others who were not police, as members of punitive expeditions demonstrated that 'nearly all white people' were drawn into a 'kind of authorised police vigilante role' creating a vicious, warlike atmosphere (Kimber, 1991,p10).

Hartwig questions the integrity of M.C. Gason pointing out that 'for two months a strong and angry party with a virtual mandate to shoot Aborigines on sight had ridden over the country surrounding Barrow Creek, and no arrests were made' (Hartwig,1965, p274). These raids resulted in an official, reported, Aboriginal body count of 11, whilst other reports suggested Aboriginal deaths numbering between 50 and 90 (Nettelbeck/Foster, 2007,p7). Related to the Barrow Creek attack Willshire wrote that the 'natives had been troublesome' having 'occasionally' cut the telegraph wires, set fire to telegraph poles, and attempted to spear the station horses, even though they had been gifted 'old clothes and some rather damaged flour' (Willshire,1888,p29). Willshire reported that the 'Barrow's Creek' telegraph station had 'no doors and the windows, though protected by iron bars, were not glazed' and that 'a little hill adjacent afforded a vantage ground whence spears could be thrown into the open, central quadrangle' with gun turrets being placed so high in the rock walls as to be 'practically useless' (Willshire, 1888,p28). His write-up of the attack suggests that during the initial conflict the only Aboriginal casualty was 'the loss of a man who was seen to fall to a rifle bullet' but still 'the natives did not cut the wires, which was what the beleaguered party most feared, nor did they spear any of the horses' (Willshire, 1888,p31). Willshire

underlines his Barrow Creek attack epilogue in a collegial way by ignoring what he must have known about M.C. Gason's revenge party murders, adding ; 'now there is an effective native police contingent in the heart of the continent, it is certain that murderers could not escape with similar impunity' (Willshire,1888,p32).

Aboriginal tribal politics in the area were dominated by the monumental 1875 massacre perpetrated on the Lower Arrernte by the Matuntara. This event carried immense cultural weight resulting in the brutal deaths of an estimated 70 Aboriginal men, women and children at *Ipmengkere*, close to Boggy Hole, on the Finke River (Strehlow,1969,p38). This event was, as Kimber put it, a 'major' inter-tribal Aboriginal guerrilla war that was 'waged, totally independent of any aspects of telegraph station, pastoral or other white settlement' (Kimber,1991,p9). The death of Nameia at Willshire's Boggy Hole Police Camp in 1890 was directly related to the *Ipmengkere* killings. Whilst this inter-tribal massacre is shocking in its scale and brutality, it stands as an excellent, and unique traditional example of the complexity, depth and intricacy existing within Aboriginal culture, values, beliefs, politics, and Law in the region. In order to satisfactorily outline the extensive detail and significance of this particular event I have summarised T.G.H. Strehlow's description, quoting extensively from his outstanding 1969 work, *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* in which he captures the episode with authority and drama. It is very important to note however that Theodore Strehlow writes in a flamboyant and over-wrought style, assuming all manner of knowledge in the characterisation of his subjects. It is also just as important to note that this event in Aboriginal history is not represented in as much written detail anywhere else. T.G.H. Strehlow was undoubtedly a knowledgeable, practised, and important individual owning an outstanding linguistic acumen relating to Arrernte culture; he was also a 'missionary, academic' and 'literary figure' which was a combination that no doubt influenced the construction of his work in which he sought action and drama decorated with cultural knowledge (Gill, 1998,p74).

In 1875 a 'sudden catastrophe overwhelmed the local Aranda group of Irbmangkara people'; based on a story alleging senior and 'highly respected' elders from the Upper Arrernte area committed sacrilege by offering 'uninitiated boys men's blood to drink from a shield into which it had been poured for ritual purposes' (Stehlow,1969,p36). This form of sacrilege was 'particularly detestable' as it was one of the Arrernte's most sacred rites (Strehlow,1969,p37). Important Aboriginal figures spanning a range of

clans were undecided on the allegations. Western Arrernte leadership groups dismissed the story ‘with indignation as an empty fabrication of malicious lies’ (Strehlow,1969,p37). To others, the Matantura (south west of Arrernte Country) in particular, the story seemed farfetched, yet they believed it as truth, possibly to ‘satisfy some private grudges’ for ‘sacrilege was an offence always punishable by death’ (Strehlow,1969,p37). The Matuntara leadership group initiated the push for revenge, yet it was difficult to recruit avengers as many ‘were linked by personal kinship ties’ and ‘no man could be compelled against his wish to kill his own kinsfolk’; still, a party of ‘fifty to sixty’ warriors was assembled (Strehlow,1969,p37). This “tnengka” was ‘a body of men who could overwhelm a whole camp’ by means of an open attack in broad daylight (Strehlow,1969,p38). So it was that late one afternoon, the “tnengka” split into three groups and lay in wait for the clans people who were returning from hunting, to meet at the southern-most water hole of *Ipmengkere* (named Urualbukara) ‘four miles below the source of the springs’ (Strehlow,1969,p38). When the sun was low the waiting warriors ‘rushed in like swift dingoes upon a flock of unsuspecting emus’ the massacre being complete in a few minutes (Strehlow,1969,p39). All bar the infants were clubbed and speared to death, the infants needed to endure the pain and suffering of their limbs being broken so they could die naturally as was the custom (Strehlow,1969,p39).

The attackers prodded all bodies with spears to make sure everyone was dead. When everything was quiet and the killers had left the scene, a woman rose cautiously carrying her young baby. Quietly she made her way to the nearby bulrush thickets for cover and from there she made her escape north where she knew there was another camp of ‘Irbmangkara folk’ (Strehlow,1969,p39). Meanwhile an unwanted surprise confronted the predominantly Matuntara killers after leaving the massacre site, with Nameia, and his clan-mate, Ilbalta, returning late from the hunt of the day. At seeing the attackers, some of whom were personal relatives spears and boomerangs rained down on the beleaguered Arrernte men in a storm of ‘frenzy and alarm’ bringing Ilbata to ground and claiming him as a fatality (Strehlow,1969,p40). Nameia however ‘proved unexpectedly fleet footed’ even whilst sustaining a spear in one leg, he stopped, collected some of the spears that had missed him and counter attacked his pursuers who could all see the smoke from fires of other clan camps Nameia was heading for

(Strehlow,1969,p40). The killers had no choice but to let Nameia go and return to their Country and await the response.

The story of the massacre spread throughout nearby Aboriginal communities quickly. Mourning rituals began, as did the important matter of revenge, initiating the important matter of who the avengers were going to be. The chosen men were put through special ritual thought to offer heightened skills in evading spears and stalking victims. This specialised group named “leltja” referred to ‘avengers who had to move stealthily through hostile territory in order to kill isolated individuals who had left the security of their main group camps’ (Strehlow,1969,p41). The leader of this revenge party was of course Nameia. Hunting down the murderers would be a time consuming man by man job, picking the right moment and then laying low ‘between kills’ so as not to cause alarm; the “leltja” ‘would have to live off the land in hostile territory’ (Strehlow,1969, p41). Three years passed and the successful “leltja” party returned completing its mission without casualty, but the world they left behind had completed changed, as white man had ‘invaded’ their land during their ‘long and dangerous absence’ (Strehlow,1969,p42). Friends and family ‘were overjoyed to see their courageous kinsmen return’, their ‘spare and gaunt forms’ evidence of the extreme hardships they had endured (Strehlow,1969,p43). Exhausted from years of violence and killing, it was hoped that this would be the beginning of a peaceful period, but this was of course not the case, for Nameia was to be the next death in this cycle of vengeance one evening at Boggy Hole police camp.

The 1884 Aboriginal attack on Anna’s Reservoir station in Anmatyerr Country, about 160 kilometres north of Alice Springs was the stage for further violence mounted by ‘a large group of Unmatjera men’ who set alight the thatched roof of a station hut severely wounding station hand Thomas Coombes who suffered numerous spear wounds; his fellow station hand and saviour Harry Figg suffered severe burns yet manufactured an escape (Nettelbeck & Foster, p16, 2007). Kimber states that some of this group of warriors were ‘almost certainly Western Aranda’ having ‘affiliations with the Anmatjera’ but also having experience in cattle-killing matters and ‘avoidance of reprisal parties’ (Kimber, 1991,p11). The pressure on the land and resources was immense at this time with stock numbering in the thousands needing water and grass. ‘It might have been virgin country from a pastoral viewpoint’ easily reached thanks to ‘fortuitous rains’ but it was Country with very few long lasting water sources ‘in the midst of a droughty

spell' (Kimber,1991,p10). The main reason for this attack according to Kimber, suggests Coombes and Figg were guilty of raping an Aboriginal child (Kimber,1991,p11). After this attack M.C. Willshire found himself leading his first deadly, punitive raid in the region. Alongside Mounted Constable Charlie Brookes, several Aboriginal trackers, the Anna's Reservoir station manager and station hands, the group formed a formidable, no doubt determined, and well-armed revenge party (Nettelbeck & Foster,2007,p17).

Willshire states that captured Aboriginal women 'gave us the information we wanted' and police surrounded an Aboriginal camp of 'sixty Unmatjera' where the police officers killed two Aboriginal men, wounding three others in a dawn raid (*Retribution for the Anna's Reservoir Outrage,*1884). After this initial reprisal, and whilst en-route back to the Alice Springs Police camp, Willshire's party came across 'a fat cow just killed, with thirty three rough mulga spears sticking in her' as well as other groups of Anmatyerr men who, in evading arrest, drew fire from Native troopers who killed a number of Aboriginal suspects including 'Slim Jim, Boko, Clubfoot, and Jimmy Mullins' all of whom were wanted for cattle-spearing offences (*Retribution for the Anna's Reservoir Outrage,*1884). 'Willshire galloped up to Clubfoot, and whilst dismounting was felled by a blow from his boomerang' (*Retribution for the Anna's Reservoir Outrage,*1884). A site east of Anna's Reservoir or "*Angkwerl*" known as 'Blackfellow Bones Hill' which it is believed to be a 'site where numerous Aboriginal people were killed in reprisal attacks after' the attacks at Anna's Reservoir (McCarthy, 2008,p8). An interesting and rare observation was made by Willshire in these exchanges noting former Native trooper 'McBeth who went with the party, had belonged to the police and had been stationed in Orroroo and Blinman' (*Retribution for the Anna's Reservoir Outrage,*1884).

These revenge killings were symbolic of the intensity of conflict in Central Australia around the theft of Aboriginal traditional resources and the brutality of white incursion. Aboriginal dispersal, chaos, revenge, and arguably an incident-by-incident genocide informed the push for colonisation, as evidenced by gangs of rag-tag whites actively targeting Aboriginal organisation whilst institutionalising a growing hate for all Aboriginal people in the Central Desert region.

Two months after Anna's Reservoir, and whilst MC Willshire was absent, working with his initial recruitment of Native troopers well north of Alice Springs, the November 1884 killings of three Aboriginal prisoners at Glen Helen occurred under the deadly watch of Mounted Constable Erwin Wurmbrand. Purportedly the brother of 'Leo Graf Wurmbrand, Major General, Imperial Army' of Austria, MC Wurmbrand had been sent up to Alice Springs from the Peake as a reinforcement for Willshire following the spearing of cattle at Glen Helen station (*The Reconstructed Downer Ministry*,1893). Wurmbrand and trackers, soon to be Native constables, 'Dick, Jemmy, Tommy, Charley and two settlers William Craigie and James Norman' set about hunting down suspects (Nettelbeck & Foster, 2007,p28). Receiving intelligence from 'missionary Schwarz' at Hermannsburg that three offenders were there, MC Wurmbrand apprehended the Aboriginal suspects for the attempted murder of station hands McDonald, Schleicher, and Miller, arresting and 'heavily' chaining them together (Hartwig,1965,p398). Following the Finke River back to Glen Helen, the prisoners allegedly attempted an escape, whilst chained together, where MC Wurmbrand shot them (Nettelbeck & Foster, 2007,p29).

On the 10th January 1890, in a meeting of enquiry set up by the YMCA to discuss the abuses of Aboriginal people in the interior, Missionary Schwarz of Hermannsburg, stated that when he was informed of this grisly murder, he went to investigate himself claiming he found the three aboriginal men dead in chains (*The Condition and Treatment of the Aborigines*,1890). On page 31 of the Adelaide Observer, dated 11th January 1890, Schwarz reports that he spoke to the 'policeman' (MC Wurmbrand) after this incident, and that the constable stated he was merely doing his duty, adding that if Mr Schwarz behaved in the same way as the chained prisoners, he too would have been shot (*The Condition and Treatment of the Aborigines*,1890). Shortly after this incident M.C. Wurmbrand pursued other alleged offenders nearby in the Mount Sonder area where he came across another Anmatyerr camp, he lead a surprise attack at dawn killing four Aboriginal men who reportedly resisted arrest (Hartwig, 1965, p398). Wurmbrand's posse eventually returned to Alice Springs 'with a tally of seven aboriginal deaths' and no arrests (Nettelbeck & Foster, 2007,p29).

This incident highlights an endemic police culture of avoiding the laborious and time-intensive necessity of prisoner transportation to local cells and courts far to the south in Port Augusta. Long desert rides were an essential part of policing and the provision

of “justice”. Transporting officers had to maintain the captivity of offenders, care for them, and run the risk of being attacked by Aboriginal clans along the way. Hartwig suggests that it was easier for police to shoot offenders much of the time than to arrest and transport them (Hartwig, 1965, p248). In the 1887 Northern Territory Police Journal there is a passage that demonstrates just how easy it was to dispose of any prisoner considered not worth transporting, or possibly too dangerous to transport. It is worth quoting at length: ‘at 11.a.m the aboriginal prisoner Jacky’ was taken from the camp ‘to ease himself being escorted by N.C. Peter, when within about 200 yards he picked up a mulga stick and made a blow at Peter & hit him across the head and escaped, Peter came back, and MC Willshire and NC Archie, Collins saddled up three horses and went rapidly on his tracks and overhauled him ascending the range’ where ‘he was told repeatedly in his own language to stop’, he was ‘fast disappearing’ and it being considered that ‘none in the country would be safe’ unless “Jacky” was caught ‘MC Willshire gave instructions to the trackers’ to shoot, whereby ‘NC Archie shot him through the right side, the ball entering close to the heart’ (Willshire,1887,p101). This is a demonstration of the power the constabulary wielded in the desert. Yet it is a duplicitous twist; that pastoralists would sometimes cover for Aboriginal offenders, or suspects in their employ as ‘attendance at court involved considerable expenditure’ and ‘could result in the loss of a station hand and his billet’ as such ‘settlers were reluctant to lay information against Aboriginal offenders as long as they were in a position to take the law into their own hands’ (Hartwig, 1965,p248).

From the mid 1870’s when intensive cattle stocking had been initiated in the Central Desert area, there was virtually no regulation surrounding the death and disruption the small, aggressive, well-armed white population inflicted upon Aboriginal communities. It was a guaranteed heavy-handed reaction to revenge initiatives by Aboriginal warriors against whites and property. In addition to this high risk environment, all the influences and elements attached to white settlements and commerce came to *Mpartnwe* including: alcohol, drugs, clothing, food, technology, sex, disease, and the notion of private property. These elements arrived wrapped in a colonial capitalist ethos that impacted Aboriginal traditional life forever. Within a decade, the fiercest frontier battles between black and white, many of which were led or supported by police, had subsided into a patchwork of isolated skirmishes. Of course, the history of conflict on the Central Desert frontier records only a handful of incidents, deaths,

and battles. It is certain that many more were hidden and remain unannounced, fading through the sands of time by colonial stewards of history. It is also certain that some of these unknown crimes have been kept alive in stories within family and clan groups to the present day. Aboriginal people did not see natural justice for their losses, their dispossession, because the only justice available to them was Western and white. The different manifestations of conflict belonging to this period must be accepted, in a broad sense, as a period of war, something Willshire was aware of, and took part in.

Heavitree Gap Police Station- circa 1890's- Aboriginal police personnel unknown- from WH Tietkens journal- http://archival.sl.nsw.gov.au/Details/archive/110036659

Aboriginal constables at the Alice Springs (Heavitree Gap Police Station) circa -1890's- W.H. Tietkins journal - http://archival.sl.nsw.gov.au/Details/archive/110036659

3:

Aboriginal Police in a time of War:

Foreign objects, and a changing Aboriginal consciousness

From his Alice Springs base, Mounted Constable Willshire recruited locally to establish two Native Police corps. Initially, there was a call to recruit in November 1884 responding to the Daly River mine murders, 1400 kilometres north of Alice Springs, near Palmerston (Darwin). Four white miners were killed by Aboriginal perpetrators at which 'authorities decided to form a Native Police corps in Central Australia' (Willshire,1888, p5). Willshire recorded that he 'succeeded in organizing and getting under full control this corps' taking the 'native troopers through to Port Darwin' and working 'them on the Roper and Daly rivers for ten months' (Willshire,1888,p5). A year later this troop had established itself and Willshire handed command over to 'M.C. Power' and he returned 'to the Alice' where Willshire relieved MC Wurmbrand who had been left to manage the Alice Springs Police Camp (Willshire,1888,p5). Ominously, this initial Native Police corps was disbanded 'within eighteen months' as 'three of its members had died from colds and pulmonary complaints' and the remaining members were homesick; Hartwig suggesting that its 'utility had scarcely justified its expense' (Hartwig, 1965,p423). Willshire would acknowledge valuable lessons from this failure as the growing pastoral presence was beginning to impact traditional Aboriginal life, requiring a more prominent police presence in and around *Mparntwe*.

Willshire enjoyed strong and broad support for raising a local Alice Springs based Native trooper corps to quell the now regular cattle killings and to confront sustained Aboriginal guerrilla warfare. Supporters for this initiative included local pastoralists and police leadership but also Willshire's future nemesis, Francis Gillen (1855-1912), who was stationed at Charlotte Waters telegraph station between 1875 to 1892. Community educator, academic and former manager of the Australian Federal Police Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit, Jo Kamira, asserts that gaining control of the threat that Aboriginal warriors presented to pastoralists and their economic prosperity was critical, and that this risk was managed by 'Native Police whose job

included repression of any Aboriginal resistance; assistance in the removal of people from their lands and enforcement of squatters possession' (Kamira, 1999, p4). In this light Willshire's second recruitment drive was approved by South Australian Police Inspector Brian Besley (1836-1894) and Police Commissioner William [von] Peterswald (1829-1896). Raised in 1885 Willshire 'organised another corps of black troopers consisting of six regularly paid' constables 'with a number of *pro* and *tem* auxiliaries, there being about 200 natives camped regularly at the Heavitree' police station (Willshire, 1888,p5). Populated with Aboriginal men aged between 17 and 26 the Alice Springs Native Trooper cohort initially contained men from the areas of Charlotte Waters (Lower Arrernte), Undoolya (Central Arrernte), and Macumba (Lower Arrernte). As seen in some of Willshire's tableau postcards of bush and hunting scenes, younger Aboriginal recruits are adolescent, without tribal scarification - a routine cultural trait in their parents. This is an important development. Representing initiation, mourning, decoration, status and other important cultural events personalised to the individual, cicatrices helped tell the story of a person's life experience, and where they belonged.

With political knowledge around tribal alliances and politics gleaned from his recruits, Willshire could take advantage of biases and underscore the personal and economic benefits policing brought to these young Aboriginal men destined to lead lives different from any of their ancestors. Willshire would have warned new recruits of the consequences of desertion or being 'dismissed' effectively making anyone an enemy of the police, and 'doomed to lead a restive life' if not worse (Hartwig, 1965,p426). Willshire's initial attitude towards Aboriginal colleagues was positive, remarking 'though my duties often called me away for hundreds of miles, and I was quite alone, so far as Europeans were concerned, I never found the slightest inroad made on the stores, it being quite sufficient to leave a blackfellow in charge' (Willshire,1888,p5). Over time Willshire's Native trooper cohort became more autonomous with their deeper personal connections. In 1886 Native constable Archie (Coognalthika) 'was left alone in charge of the police station, and later that year, and in 1887 he made patrols on his own or with another Native Constable to Undoolya, Owen Springs, Hermannsburg and Bond Springs' (Vallee, 2007,p248). Reflected in the disjointed narrative throughout all his written works this positive attitude waxed and waned, and included recognition of traditional Aboriginal culture as unique, alongside pleas for

long-term Government benevolence for remote Aboriginal people. At other times, Willshire was scathing, usually of Aboriginal men, but never so of women. 'The women are good, but the men are bad' (Willshire,1896,p6). Sex and violence being common denominators of frontier life, it must be assumed that those Native constables closest to Willshire enjoyed a level of camaraderie and a personal closeness that was built up over unique life experiences in remote regions. There can be little doubt that Willshire had close relationships with some of his Aboriginal colleagues whom he trusted to keep his secrets, and back his, at times, brutal, police actions.

In order to best illustrate the socio-cultural climate in which police recruitment was conducted it is essential to understand and acknowledge the unwavering emotional, mental, physical and spiritual bonds Aboriginal people had (have) with living Country and how ancestral genesis dictates responsibilities and personalities. Theodore Strehlow, academic, ethnologist, researcher, Arrernte expert, and author suggests that in the Arrernte world, in and around *Mparntwe*, every facet of the landscape 'represented the work of supernatural beings who had become reincarnated in their own persons' (Strehlow,1969,p39). Thus, every Arrernte person knew themselves, in part, as a reincarnation of the creators, and the spirit beings. The songs individuals inherited through their totem 'were accepted as compositions by the supernatural personages' (Strehlow,1969,p16). Having a totem (belonging to something) meant taking possession of privately owned specific personal knowledge in the form of verses and songs knowing that an 'important function of time-bound man' was to 'assist in the sustaining process of a world that had begun in Eternity and that was continuing without any changes into Eternity' (Strehlow,1969,p39). 'Aboriginal people derive their self-identity from the land', an identity that is pre-ordained by connection to a specific place (Rose,1995,p7).

Everything and everyone living on Country is related and 'the rights and responsibilities of individuals to particular estates are passed on to successive generation through a variety of systems of descent inheritance' (Rose, 1995,p8). The tribal and magical superstructure permeating the traditional Aboriginal world is a boundary in all senses: geographical, mental, cultural, physical and spiritual. 'Individual identity is so closely associated with the landscape that the one can act on the other' (Morphy,1995,p198). This structure places demands on individuals, clan, and community, around defined cultural responsibilities connected to a contained

geography which informs and reaffirms both personal and public mythology. 'The landscape is redolent with memories of other human beings' where ancestors experienced the same scents, sounds, and flavours as those who are living (Morphy, 1995,p188). The Aboriginal landscape was (is) a spiritual map explaining the genesis of people and Law. Theodore Strehlow's hand drawn 'Totemic' maps which are 'the trails of wandering totemic ancestors' communicate this concept beautifully and effectively (Strehlow1978,p57). It is no surprise then, that when Willshire began his police recruitment drive Aboriginal men acted with curiosity, obligation and opportunity driven by a deep-seated protectiveness and responsibility attached to their clans and Country. Involvement in activities that may have threatened the wellbeing of the cultural status quo and critical sacred sites was only natural for local men obligated to maintain cultural integrity and Law. Sacred sites are a 'physical manifestation' of spirit ancestor creation activities and responsibility to protect these sites is inherited through relationships within family, clan and Country (Rose,1995,p9). Protecting and maintaining sacred sites is prioritised, forming 'a focus for the aspirations of Aboriginal people' (Rose,1995,p9). Another assumed Aboriginal responsibility was the safety and wellbeing of visitors on-Country. Even through Willshire had been present since 1882, he was still a visitor, still alive, and growing in his influence.

Landmarks in the *Mparntwe* area like Heavitree Gap (*Ntaripe*) and Emily Gap (*Anthwerrke*), were critically important sites for Arrernte people. Alice Springs author and Aboriginal researcher David Brooks states 'Anthwerrke' or Emily Gap, is 'possibly the most important place in the whole region' where the 'caterpillar beings of Mparntwe originated' (Brooks,1991,p4). The region in and around Heavitree Gap Police camp contained other important ancestral and spirit beings such as the 'wild dogs, euros, travelling uninitiated boys, two sisters and kangaroos' (Brooks,1991,p5). Kimber underscores the importance of water in this area, stating that 'the majority of waterholes in the range were visitable by men, women and children but' waterholes at Heavitree Gap and Emily Gap as well as 'the other great spiritual waters' were 'considered so powerful in their totemic spirituality that only initiated men' could visit' (Kimber,2001). Strehlow highlights the expectations around conduct relevant to these highly sacred sites. Many gorges within the MacDonnell ranges contained sacred waterholes that 'could not normally be approached on pain of death even by the local population', only 'male initiated members of local totemic clans' could enter the area,

and even then, there needed to be an a special ceremonial occasion (Strehlow, 1967, p9). Men were not permitted to camp at these sites 'nor could they – in the Aranda-speaking area at any rate – eat any meals at them' or hunt animals, with 'all weapons' to remain 'beyond the limits of such areas' (Strehlow,1967,p10). Acknowledging these cultural restrictions and rigid responsibilities I would suggest that living Country compelled Aboriginal men to become engaged and involved in joining Willshire's ranks. Other attractions to a policing role were access to white technology and animals, increased personal status and prestige, augmenting broader clan wellbeing in reciprocal terms. Another attraction to Willshire's recruits was access to the white economy, of which the most influential factor was reliable food. Dr Allison Cadzow researcher, academic and author on Australian exploration and Aboriginal service in Australian defence forces, suggests that 'seeing family and relations appears to have been a key motivation' for many trackers, guides and police, alongside gaining new knowledge, experiences, or visiting country for 'seasonal resources and for marriage/inter group arrangements' (Cadzow,2016,p112).

Another strategic opportunity emerging for Aboriginal men joining police ranks was the possibility to educate Willshire, and other whites, in the basics of culture. From an Aboriginal perspective this was necessity to a point, and certainly led to influence for Aboriginal troopers who were knowledgeable men. Educating Willshire also supported bringing Country to life for him, potentially creating a new sense of worth and value within a deeper understanding of Aboriginal structure and operation. Making someone "kin", or giving someone a skin name, was also an Aboriginal led decision, being decided upon at the appropriate time. This was another way of offering an interloper belonging, responsibility and connection to the immediate landscape. Even if culturally superficial, tying an outsider to the land introduced a level of inclusion, and became a strong sign of goodwill, possibly making it easier for Aboriginal men to manage newcomers. Factors front-of-mind for Aboriginal men against joining the police force initiated pointed reflection. Concern about one's own reputation within the broader clan or community would have been important with troopers' actions being judged by relatives and others, which may well have impacted on the family or clan of any police recruit. Simply by virtue of Aboriginal men not being in the force, they were probably regarded with greater suspicion by police members, if not being actively targeted. Being a Native trooper demanded a juggling act as the role took time away from

traditional life creating disruption to cultural duties, ties and responsibilities. Policing tasks undermined valuable labour for foraging and hunting from the family and clan, imposing greater labour requirements on others, although this may well have been rolled into police duties, especially with access to a horse and a gun. Time taken to labour as policemen, with journeys lasting days and weeks, was time deducted from social and visual engagement with elders and family groups. This interaction was heavily relied upon to maintain storytelling and traditional, face to face, information sharing which underscored the broader clan culture and key social structures like the kinship matrix.

For most, joining Willshire's cohort created a fracture in the previously solid circle of ceremony and Law set down by the ancestors. The recruitment of Aboriginal police was a significant development on the Arrernte and broader Aboriginal timeline in *Mparntwe*. Dr Ian Keen, Honorary Associate Professor at the Australian National University, is an author and lecturer on Aboriginal economy and kinship systems. He states that in the Aboriginal world 'the sense of self is determined not by engagement in the capitalist division of labour, but by birth into a family' where one fishes, hunts and spends the day with kin; this represents a 'manifestation of production' in a traditional sense (Keen,2010,p11). White technology had impacts on traditional lifeways both in mode and time. With a horse and a gun, a man could hunt alone, travel quicker, without a spear, or a hunting party, to surprise or flush out game, and to return to camp quicker, covering more ground, and possibly securing a wider variety of game. The effect of hunting alone in this manner may have eliminated beneficial, or culturally important, clan chatter and dialogue. For the first time Central Australian Aboriginal men, who were now Native constables, found themselves cherry-picking elements of black and white cultures to suit their immediate needs, and balancing the needs of their clans and families.

How these immense changes to traditional culture were personally internalised is impossible to know, yet storytelling and education of younger Aboriginal people coming through clan ranks was no longer based on the suite of traditional ancestral stories alone. White man had arrived, and Aboriginal storytelling traditions needed to incorporate the white presence, his animals, and his effects. These alien features had to be addressed in order for storytelling traditions to maintain integrity, let alone relevance and educative power. One immediate challenge for an Aboriginal

constabulary working on, or near, Country was the ever-present challenge of arresting and imprisoning Aboriginal suspects who were connected as kin or by culture. How Aboriginal troopers justified their roles and actions to their chained up Aboriginal prisoners is fascinating to contemplate. Some prisoners may have been clansmen, distant relatives, known senior men, medicine men, or traditional enemies of Native trooper clans. This certainly exposed abuses of power based on traditional rivalries. This scenario would not have been a consideration for Aboriginal troopers working off Country, where there was no kith, kin or cultural familiarity. Willshire's initial Arrernte recruitment of Native Constables working further north near Darwin would have experienced the stress and anxiety of working off Country.

These experiences were different to the stresses experienced by Willshire's second Alice Springs troop who were based in and around the *Mparntwe* region. It is probable that Aboriginal troopers baulked, or refused, to arrest kin and relatives. Doubtless, certain situations required delicate management, especially in the light of evidence suggesting Native constables used their position to advantage when their traditional enemies were being pursued. It is easy to accept, even to expect, that Willshire in concert with Native Troopers colluded with situations to avoid cultural embarrassment and compromise, especially once Willshire was a more permanent fixture and better understood tribal politics. Co-opted by colonisation manifesting as police actions the journey from traditional Aboriginal man to policeman was a transference of skillsets in action, an ever-moving adaptation and changing of criteria for Aboriginal individuals and clans in a context of frontier survival. 'In many instances the hero became murderer, and the murderer became hero, whether he was an Aborigine or a drover' (Kimber,1991,p8).

Newly recruited Aboriginal men found themselves servants much of the time but gained valuable knowledge of the white world. Understanding the parameters of the white world assisted in protecting the traditional world. Intracultural exchange and knowledge sharing were also possibilities amongst troopers from different clans and cultures, extending individual consciousness and cultural knowledge. This was important within Willshire's recruitment of Indigenous men, as they were local men, policing and working locally for the most part. This went against the pattern of recruitment modes in other Native Police forces within the colonies, most notably Queensland, but also later in the maturity of the Port Phillip Native Police force.

The recruitment, operation and effectiveness of other Native Police forces throughout Australian colonies is important to explore here as they offer useful comparisons to Willshire's Alice Springs operation but also highlight contrasts of cultures and Country. Native Trooper cohorts were in some form or another raised throughout all Australian colonies. In 1848 Frederick Walker, the first Commandant of the Native Mounted Police in Queensland (prior to separation from New South Wales) scoured the Murrumbidgee area of New South Wales to recruit Aboriginal men as troopers, finding an abundance of men. Walker wrote that in 'the present force of fourteen, there are men from four tribes, each speaking different language' (*Native Police,* 1850). Aboriginal recruits were 'to articulate and embody in a highly visible form the rights and powers of the absent sovereign' whilst conquering Aboriginal societies as well as pacifying 'continued resistance to the colonial rule' (Pedersen,1999,p23). In her detailed 1988 work *Good Men and True,* researching the Native Police of Port Phillip, author and historian Marie Fels states that 'more than 140 men served as police' and 'there were three separate and distinct corps, each one with its own rationale – 1837,1839 and 1842' (Fels,1988,p3).

Victorian Aboriginal troopers were lauded for their discipline and work on the Goldfields, especially around Ballarat and central Victoria. Author, researcher and Professor of History at Federation University Ballarat, Dr Fred Cahir states of the Victorian Native troopers that 'it was the tracing of individuals or parties of people who were lost in the bush which was the most publicly celebrated task which trackers were predominantly called upon to perform throughout the gold period' (Cahir,2012, p48). Port Phillip Aboriginal troopers did not have a reputation for excessive violence, more for reliability and discipline. Bill Wilson, former Northern Territory police officer, academic and researcher argues in his detailed thesis *A Force Apart* states that the 'origin of policing in Queensland differs markedly from the South Australian experience' with Wilson suggesting that Aboriginal constables in Queensland were used 'as shock troops and expected to be violent towards other Aboriginal people' (Wilson, 2000, p338). Queensland Aboriginal troopers created a fearsome reputation for violence against Aboriginal people and were cast in this role as such. This was a positive thing for the white mainstream as reported in the Maitland Mercury and Hunter River Advertiser, Thursday 15 July 1880; 'it may seem an easy thing for troopers armed with rifles to attack and defeat a mob of aboriginals, but the spears of the blacks

of tropical Queensland, with the aid of the wummera are most terrible weapons, and carry almost certain death with them at a hundred yards', facing 'a shower of them' or chasing down 'those who are capable of hurling them with almost scientific precision' requires 'courage'(*The Black Trackers and the Kelly Gang*, 1880). White officers trust 'them hundreds of miles from settlements, and obtain from them an insight into bush life and tactics which no other people could provide' (*The Black Trackers and the Kelly Gang*, 1880).

Research Fellow, historian and author of *The Secret War: A True History of Queensland's Native Police* Jonathan Richards, states bluntly that for the Queensland Aboriginal constables, 'killing was their business' (Richards,2008, p2). Queensland Aboriginal constables were recruited from areas hundreds of miles from patrolled regions, even sometimes as far away as Echuca on the Murray River in Victoria (Wilson,2000, p52). This is an important difference to Willshire's Alice Springs recruitment drive which invited Aboriginal personnel from on, or near, Country for the most part. The 1861 Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly into the 'Native Police Force' in Queensland mandates that 'Troopers in all cases, should be recruited from districts at a distance from those in which they are likely to be employed' (Mackenzie,1861,p3). With Queensland Native Troopers being so far from kin, and working off Country, they were liberated from cultural obligation, and no doubt directed and encouraged to destroy "myall" Aboriginal people. In Queensland 'there is overwhelming evidence that the force undertook violent dispersals of Aboriginal people' (Wilson,2000,p53).

This profiling of Queensland Native Mounted Police was again clarified, or fortified, in the press, especially when Aboriginal police from Queensland arrived to hunt the Kelly gang in Victoria; 'when starting in the pursuit, the natives strip to the waist, and they usually subsist with the wild tribes' yet 'Lieut. O'Connor, however, denies them the prerequisite of eating the bodies of the vanquished bushrangers, although most of the natives of northern Queensland, to which these men belong, are cannibals to the extent of eating enemies slain in battle' (*The Kelly Gang*, 1879). With anecdotes like this it is easy to see why the Queensland Aboriginal police deserved such a fearsome, almost mythical, reputation in Victoria, but for Aboriginal people in Queensland, the Native Police symbolised 'Native policy, invasion and dispossession' (Richards,2008,p5). Port Phillip Native Police may have worked off their homelands

regularly, but were initially, recruited from inter-related cultural groups within the large geography of the Kulin Nation (Boonwurrung, Waddawurrung, Wurundjeri, Dja Dja Wurrung, Taunwurrung). This gave familiarity, and importantly, a sense of permission to Victorian Aboriginal troopers when accessing lands within the Kulin nation.

On Country it was important for Aboriginal leaders and headmen who were police to be strategic as their actions were under scrutiny from relatives potentially affecting their status and power in the traditional Aboriginal world. Within the Kulin nation of clans Port Phillip Aboriginal Trooper recruits 'worked among people who were their friends and relatives of friends' however in 'Gippsland, they were traditional enemies of the local people' (Fels,1988,p57). Upon safely returning from the Country of enemies and strangers' confidence in leaving one's homeland grew, and anxiety dissipated, altering the consciousness of the individual and the clan. The Aboriginal recruits from Port Phillip 'were all young and influential within Aboriginal circles' and included leaders from Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri clans as the mainstays of initial recruiting (Fels,1988, p55). 'Nangollilobel, known as John Bull or Captain Turnbull' was the leader of the 'Konung-Willam' clan within the Wurundjeri and a senior man who was guardian of the Mount William stone quarry which yielded the much traded, hardy greenstone, he was also an ancestor of Port Phillip Native Trooper and Wurundjeri leader Barak (Fels,1988,p55). Other members of the force like "Yanki Yanki" had experienced an incredible journey as a result of different stages of white incursion. He was a Boonwurrung 'Westernport man who had been captured by sealers in the early 1830's, taken to Preservation Island in Bass Strait, from there he escaped to Launceston, took passage to the Swan River in Western Australia' then 'returned to Port Phillip via Adelaide' (Fels,1988,p55).

Port Phillip Native Police worked in all areas of Victoria, from the Wimmera to the Western district, throughout Gippsland and the Murray district, and throughout central and coastal districts. Travelling through foreign Country, beyond Kulin Nation territories, 'without the facility of a kin network and without the status of a messenger' was common and represented a high risk activity notwithstanding the use of horses and firearms (Fels,1988,p57). Like Willshire's Native Trooper cohorts, wives and families sometimes stayed with their husbands as they toured and patrolled. In the Port Phillip Native Police families were fed from an official ration. This demonstrated an understanding of the importance in maintaining Aboriginal kinship links and the high

value of reliable and easy food which enhanced employee retention. Willshire, who was funded by government to provide rations to troopers, took it as a given, that families connected to Aboriginal constables needed to be fed. Aboriginal wives of troopers in Port Phillip were 'confident and assertive in managing the interests of their families' demonstrated by lodging complaints for 'white money' when a constable's pay was late (Fels,1988,p69). In the Port Phillip force there were cultural concessions with leave granted for Aboriginal police to attend to major ceremonial duties and activities, especially in summer months (Fels,1988,p62). This is another element of employer recognition of the importance of culture in Aboriginal lives, again, no doubt connected to employee retention, yet also a reflection of how integral an Aboriginal constabulary was seen in the process of colonisation and economic growth in Port Phillip.

It was clear that Aboriginal personnel held specific information critical to the future success of the colony, and this may be why the Aboriginal-European partnership within the Port Phillip Native Police force appears to be, for the most part, professionally honest and equitable. Another important cultural and legal allowance was the fact that Aboriginal evidence was inadmissible in court. This meant that 'traditional native business' may have been treated as private by police command, especially if there were no European witnesses or firearms involved relating to incidents coming to the attention of police (Fels,1988,p105). This allowed a heavy thread of traditional life to continue unabated, simultaneously revealing a sense of cultural autonomy connected to the lives of Aboriginal troopers, whilst demonstrating a general police reluctance to act against their own. Fels states that there existed a 'corporate solidarity' between police, and ex police, which also worked in the favour of retired Aboriginal Constables (Fels,1988,p105). There are instances where Aboriginal troopers refused to act against Aboriginal perpetrators. Fels writes 'it was a powerful position the Corps enjoyed, to be able to refuse to act and to get off so lightly' (Fels,1988,p105).

It should be noted that the Port Phillip Aboriginal police were not servants cleaning out the horse stables and procuring food for superiors. They were kept busy with numerous tasks that included carrying dispatches, acting as orderlies, searching for Europeans lost in the bush, escorting distinguished Europeans, chasing bushrangers, providing the pomp and circumstance for formal events in the social life of Melbourne, guarding shipwrecks from plunder and searching for survivors' (Fels, 1988,

p62). Receiving a firearm for personal and professional use was no doubt a powerful motivator. Not only did Aboriginal police use firearms to maintain order, they 'shot lyrebirds to trade for cash' and sometimes annoyed 'polite society' by firing their weapons to express feelings of 'sheer exuberance, or disappointment in love' (Fels,1988,p76). Aboriginal men were noticed spending 'much time cleaning guns' fastidiously, but besides their outstanding tracking and hunting skills, they were noted for the gentle care of animals, which was recognised by the highest ranks in the force. Possibly reflecting a traditional approach to animal life forms and the relational nature of culture, horses shared the lives and experiences of Aboriginal constables. Travelling '2500 miles on patrolling duty in the winter of 1843' Port Phillip Constables did not lose a horse (Fels,1988,p80). The incorporation of these sentient beings into the cultural landscape was in keeping with the traditional Aboriginal vision.

Whilst the Aboriginal voice is hard to find in white historical records much of the time there were Aboriginal complaints about 'the effects on their skins of military clothing' notwithstanding the issue of high cavalry boots decorated with spurs feeding the Aboriginal acumen and bias around European class (Fels, 1988, p80). These particular boots were exclusive to mounted constables and were more expensive and of a better quality than boots issued to foot police. Another fashion and status symbol is demonstrated by all Port Phillip Aboriginal troopers sporting 'moustachios' at a time 'when mounted police generally were allowed to wear them, but foot police were not' (Fels,1988,p77). This is seemingly minor, but reflects a knowledge related to class distinctions, fashion, and status attractive to Aboriginal leaders and constables, connected to influence and wealth. The Native Mounted Police of Queensland were also said to have noted a connection 'between clothing and money as the physical expressions of a labour agreement and continued service' (Wallis & Burke, 2016).

Fels states that the history of Aboriginal men joining the Port Phillip Native Police work is not 'a history of tracking' but a 'deliberate co-operation in formal police work' demonstrating that 'Aboriginal men willingly joined with Europeans in policing work in Port Phillip'(Fels,1988,p71). Clearly, there was no rejection of Aboriginality, but a dedication to the social contract belonging to the mission of policework, which coincided with motivations to maintain traditional culture, and to be at the forefront of what was happening on Country. Being an Aboriginal man and a policeman was not hypocritical, duplicitous, or deceitful; it was manageable. Motivations are clear; as in

Willshire's native trooper cohort, Aboriginal men needed to become involved in order to look after Country but also to add value to their clans and alliances. In the time of the Port Phillip force and Willshire's Native trooper cohorts, there 'is no cultural collapse' as life 'is being lived according to old imperatives' (Fels, 1988, p101). Managing two worlds, with two sets of rules and expectations created different outcomes. 'Though they could not have foreseen their future' Port Phillip Aboriginal recruits 'possessed a considerable amount of experience of European notions of order, reciprocity, justice, and the procedure of law enforcement' (Fels, 1988, p55). Port Phillip and Central Australia troopers seem to be in positions where white invasion had not yet significantly affected culture and Country within their periods of operation. There was room, indeed a necessity, for whites to respect and encourage culture and ceremony on Country in order to harness the extensive, essential Aboriginal skillset for the benefit of colonisation. Fels states that historically 'it was only when the Aboriginal way of doing things collided with the European that evidence of the Aboriginal way enters European records' (Fels, 1988,p102). As in the case of Central Australian Aboriginal troopers, and in the case of the Queensland Native police 'being native did not clash with being a policeman' especially 'in the case of the foreign other' (Fels,1988,p106).

Academic, author, and Reader of History at Australian National University (1949-1987), D.W.A. Baker states that for Aboriginal people, generally, there was certainly a fear of unknown Country and unknown Aboriginal people (Baker,1998,p38). Looking at Aboriginal guides and advisors connected to Major Thomas Mitchell for example, many guides were temporary because they 'would never take Mitchell beyond the country they knew well' (Baker,1998,p38). This is a common Aboriginal modality experienced by exploration parties working their way through different Aboriginal territories throughout Australian history. Interestingly, being an experienced military man, Mitchell surmised that 'myall Aborigines would naturally regard those who accommodated themselves to the white men in the same way as he would regard a soldier who deserted to the enemy' yet this is an erroneous assumption based on a white sense of loyalty connected to white military traditions, and an implied assumption that there was, broadly speaking, a shared Aboriginal consciousness and unity across all clan groups or a "nation" (Baker,1998, p40). Within, and prior to, the study period, such a concept is an impossibility. The strong aversion and fear many Aboriginal

guides and troopers had of foreign Aboriginal clans certainly shows a consciousness that included neighbouring clans and relevant others but underscores the solid protective strength of a clan's own traditional belief in Law, and the intense personal nature of one's own relationship with Country and kin than any lack of universal Aboriginal consciousness. The territorial nature of the clan's cultural landscape dictated personal meaning, value, spiritual belief and self-worth. As such it is reasonable to assume that all native troopers suffered significant fear and anxiety as they negotiated their new roles and ventured into unknown Country for the first time, leaving kin, language, songs, knowledge, and personal responsibilities.

Whilst Willshire must have realised through the failure of the Daly River response that Aboriginal constables did not fare well away from their homeland, and that productivity and longevity was maximised on, or near, Country he still encouraged Native troopers Jim, Larry and George to go with him to establish the Gordon Creek Police Station in May of 1894, in the Victoria River District, well north of *Mparntwe* (Willshire,1895). Willshire recounts, my constables 'appear to be seized with nostalgia – home sickness' and 'unless I keep them busy with an exciting life this disease of the emotions will assert itself and develop into an uncontrollable longing to breathe the air of the locality where they first saw daylight' (Willshire, 1896, p54). Such was the battle for each Aboriginal constable who was living off Country for the first time or maintaining distance from Country and their families for extended periods. In the Victoria River District period, at a time where Aboriginal employees of pastoralists, and Native troopers, were restless and absconding (and at times returning), Willshire notes regular instability. In the same week that he expressed surprise that Native Constable Jim 'had cleared out', he noted concern over long serving police partners and confidants Larry and George, which must have been a deeply worrying sign for him (Willshire,1895). The 'boys Larry and George are in a bewildered state & seem to have lost what little sense they once possessed they seem confused & I do not know what [illegible] they may dream in the dark. I am calm and considerate to them, watching and trusting they will remain. There is something hanging in the atmosphere that so far I have failed to discover' (Willshire ,1895).

In a long passage in the Timber Creek Police Journal, Willshire writes with a sense of personal disappointment; 'I allowed them a lubra each & fed & clothed them all' and of Native Constable Jim, a less stable presence in the police cohort, who appears then

disappears, Willshire asserts; ‘had he told me he wanted to go to alice springs I should have let him go at the end of the month’ (Willshire,1895). Willshire reports that one of his closest Aboriginal allies Larry, said of Jim that all he wants is ‘more sleep & more lubras’ (Willshire,1895). The pressure seemed to be building on Willshire at this time, and he looked to be losing influence over the small cohort of homesick Aboriginal constables. The Victoria River District was a ‘rough place with treachery all around you’ Willshire stated and when ‘blackboys belonging to the country turn out with firearms, matters are getting tropical’ (Willshire,1895). Willshire notes on numerous occasions relating to Native Constable Jim, Native Constable George, and even Native Constable Larry, a trusted, long-time collaborator, that there was a growing unrest and uneasiness. They had worked off Country in the Victoria River District with Willshire for nearly eighteen months and were no doubt missing Country, clan and community. They accompanied Willshire to the Victoria River District in a context of trust, collegiality, and in the hope of matching the energy and adventures they had enjoyed in the desert no doubt. But there is a sense of betrayal that sets this behaviour in motion. Willshire writes in the Timber Creek Police Journal, Tuesday 26th of March 1895 that ‘I was pleased to see that the Inspector had recommended my transfer south’ (Willshire, 1895).

This transfer would have taken months to finalise, but the approval had come was less than a year after he had arrived in the area. Before this was recorded, Willshire may have spoken of his desire for a transfer to Native Constable colleagues. It is assumed, in small talk around the fire, these men shared a lot, including their future desires and goals. They would have all shared their own future pictures at times. No wonder these Arrernte men were sick of the Victoria River District. The countdown to Willshire leaving was on, with no clear plan for his trusted Aboriginal allies, this long-term team was breaking up. Willshire was leaving them, officially, and they were risking their lives off Country, in a uniform that was a target for local Aboriginal men, and a symbol of something they now knew contributed to an uncertain future for Aboriginal kin. This must have been very hard to take. The transferrable nature of traditional skills and abilities adapted riding, shooting, and tracking gave confidence and a strong role to Aboriginal men leaving Country for the first time, yet nothing could replace the irresistible bonds and attachment to the homeland, especially if local Aboriginal clans were hostile and saw Aboriginal outsiders as targets at any time. It is interesting to

ponder the views of Larry, George and Jim relating to Willshire's transfer south, and how they saw the meaning of their roles in this context. It is reasonable to assume they saw Willshire's transfer as a betrayal. Whatever the emotional landscape of this period, the Willshire transfer meant their extraordinary relationships and adventures were coming to an end.

Collaborating with the invaders by actively and violently opening Country up to abet white interests places Aboriginal constables as turncoats at a glance. In a historical sense this view is consciously white however, adding weight to the colonists' own self-aggrandised, and arrogant acceptance of the dominant culture, simultaneously fuelling an anachronistic Social Darwinist view of Aboriginal culture. Arguments suggesting that Aboriginal police were 'traitors' Fels states 'are mostly restricted to the Queensland corps' such is their reputation for brutality, but even then, Queensland troopers were mostly off Country and culturally irrelevant to the people they may have been harming (Fels,1988,p3). Simply accepting this characterisation assumes that all Aboriginal constables possessed a sense of universal Aboriginal consciousness similar to a modern sense of Aboriginal solidarity and awareness. Aboriginal troopers connected to the study period, and beyond, had no way of placing their own actions within a broader Aboriginal mental framework or wholistic cultural, or colonisation context. Notwithstanding the early effects of invasion, a group or clan consciousness was restricted to *known* beings which included individuals, clans, spirits beings, neighbouring communities, trading partners, and all those who inhabited Country, including ancestors, on which culture and worldview was almost entirely built implying a finite knowledge base.

Whilst ancient Aboriginal trade routes gave connection to, and stories of, clans that may have otherwise not known each other through goods and materials, a sense of broader consciousness must have been faithfully bound to Country boundaries. National Museum curator, and anthropological specialist, Aldo Massola states of trade routes that whilst clans 'maintained contact with even the most outlying groups' neighbours traded goods to neighbours, who were not necessarily the 'original manufacturers' making it impossible to know the extent and breadth of numerous clan idiosyncrasies across a large geographical area (Massola, 1973, p127). D.W.A. Baker argues that Aboriginal guides and troopers 'were making, in their own different ways, personal adjustments to accommodate themselves to the coming of the white

man' whilst recognising the reality of a new economic life and opportunity as well as maintaining culture as best they could (Baker, 1998,p50). Baker also argues that the 'antipathy shown by the hired help of the squatting districts towards the myall Aborigines' indicates 'a lack of Aboriginal community' in a broader sense (Baker, 1998,p49). Fels points out that the word "traitor" is 'a word best avoided in cross-cultural enquiry because it implicitly freezes the past' (Fels,1988,p4). 'The description as traitors and murderers does not fit the evidence discovered for Port Phillip' rather, it suggests 'the men who joined the police extended their cultural repertoire' and managed two sets of rules for two cultures that were mutually exclusive at the time (Fels,1988,p6). Indigenous attraction to the Port Phillip Police Corps is a 'calculated move based on assessment of the indigene's power situation within pre-contact society' (Fels, 1988,p5). Notwithstanding regional differences, using a general cultural framework, based around common denominators of kin, clan, Law and territorial Country, this logic could be applied universally with regard to recruitment, and employment of Aboriginal men as policemen within the study period, across Native trooper cohorts.

One can only try and imagine what was going through the mind of Aboriginal witnesses, and victims experiencing for the first time the new order of white law through the actions of Aboriginal constables. With Native police cohorts being 'encouraged to participate in revenge expeditions' it is interesting to speculate on the mental, and cultural impact created by their new occupation (Kamira,1999,p3). Being 'made criminals by virtue of their race' native police found themselves in-between; with power, and without, possessing personal, traditional knowledge that was meaningful on Country, but of no use in foreign lands; arresting and attacking Aboriginal people that were known, and unknown, with traditional rivalry, and without, being autonomous and free of white supervision at times, yet a servant of whites at other times (Kamira, 1999,p5). Trying to imagine the mindset behind decision making of Aboriginal constables as participants in violent conflict against other known Aboriginal rivals, in a time where traditional culture was visceral is intriguing. This must have been a regular occurrence for Willshire's troop who were recruited locally and were no doubt relatives, associates, or rivals of local groups or clans they encountered. It is certain that violent exchanges occurred between traditional rivals in this context. The murder of Donkey and Roger (Ereminta) on 22 February 1891 is an extreme example. This incident was

motivated by both personal factors for Willshire, but also it links with the assassination of Nameia by Ereminta. Yet there are other instances noted by Fels, specifically traditional rivalries between Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri against Gunaikurnai in Victoria, as well as Muntantara against Arrernte in Central Australia (Fels,1985,p57). Hartwig argues that it was no surprise that Aboriginal troopers were 'prepared to shoot other Aborigines' as they were 'recruited, equipped and supervised' to do so (Hartwig, 1965,p426).

It is important to acknowledge structural violence connected to policing utilised by Willshire and his Aboriginal colleagues if we are to interpret Willshire's relationships with Aboriginal men and women. Violence was something that he and the Native trooper cohort did together, something they identified with, something that protected Willshire, his beliefs, his wellbeing. Violence was a routine, safe space for Willshire and his Aboriginal colleagues most of the time. Violence was one measure of a man's value as a policeman and his efficacy as an Aboriginal warrior. It was also an accepted gauge of a broader masculinity that manifested as order and respect between men, and especially important for any prospect of sex in a context of men feeling confident and attractive around Aboriginal women. Willshire observed that once Aboriginal men had fought in ceremonial or other battles, 'upon their return to their camp they are made much of by the women' revealing an underlying female influence connected with violence or warrior behaviour (Willshire, 1896,p14). Frantz Fanon has a more therapeutic take on violence used by colonised peoples stating at 'the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect' (Fanon,2001,p74). Thus, I would suggest, in a cultural context, violence needs to be recognised as an element of agency in the makeup of the Aboriginal male at this time, but also for Willshire as a man, in the company of men.

Violence could offer a sense of control within a clan, or disarray in an enemy. In the broader clan framework violence was a currency, a necessity, an activity that underpinned Law, from one person to another, or as a self-inflicted, personal act. Violence is seen as a legitimate option as both a coercive and protective feature of ceremony, tradition and tribal unity. It is a pre-ordained function, and used to defend the self, the group; it is an expert set of skills utilised by Aboriginal experts, internally, externally, to purposely punish, warn, maim, or kill. Seeing the Willshire's police

cohorts as common spaces where Aboriginal and white men worked together on the same goals and missions, violence, both black and white, became a bridge between the Aboriginal world and the white world; clarifying, accommodating and complimenting black and white roles, and masculinity.

In a climate of fear, war and change, skills and knowledge from the white world were valuable to the black resistance, adding value to the clan's ability to remain, to protect itself, to predict the behaviour of whites and to either engage or avoid accordingly. An understanding of police tactics was very helpful to those who wanted to fight. From a white perspective 'the prospect of Aboriginal troopers turning against their colonial masters was a frontier nightmare' (Richards,2008,p142). Willshire makes a fleeting note of a former Native constable who was once in the South Australian Police Force 'Mcbeth' but the reference raises curious questions rather than offering any useful information (*Retribution for the Anna's Reservoir Outrage,*1884). There is little evidence around the journey of former Aboriginal police employees returning to the cultural fold. It is assumed that if an Aboriginal trooper deserted the force whilst on Country, it would be a much safer situation, than a desertion whilst in foreign lands. Desertions connected to Native Police in Queensland were more prevalent than in other forces, and these took place mostly off Country (Richards, 2008,p120).

Richards suggests that 'concerns with finding sufficient recruits, retaining them, and keeping them supplied with sufficient stores to prevent mass desertion, presented as ongoing problems for officers commanding detachments of Native Police' (Richards,2008, p120). Considering many Queensland Native Police were off-Country it was no wonder 'runaway troopers were a perennial theme in the Commissioner of Police's Annual reports from 1863 to 1900' (Richards, 2008, p161). Ironically, squatters desperate for labour protected runaway troopers from the 'recapture missions' of the Queensland Native Police leadership which forced Queensland authorities to reconsider their approach to recruitment; approving 'remissions of sentences for Aboriginal prisoners who agreed to join the Native Police' (Richards, 2008, p126). Richards provides a sobering example of this stating 'five, who had been serving long sentences for violent crime robberies, were sent to the remote Somerset settlement in Cape York Peninsula in 1870' yet soon deserted 'taking guns and ammunition' (Richards, 2008,p166). Armed Aboriginal escapees must have had a spinetingling effect on settlers and communities, creating the

prospect of a revolt, or at least, the real possibility of high-risk conflict with guns and ammunition. For armed Aboriginal men, there might have been a sense of the odds being even, or motivation for a bolder liberation from their predicament.

Kamira states that 'authorities and colonials were actually scared of a people whose bush craft and survival skills were so vastly superior to theirs they believed it gave them superiority over Europeans' (Kamira, 1999, p3). Employee retention of Aboriginal policemen remained a major challenge. Having such a bedrock attachment to one's own Country, arguably made it easy to view "foreign" Aboriginal lands as worthless and expendable as there was no cultural or personal connection or responsibility. Yet being off-Country for extended periods was incongruent with well-established Aboriginal traditions and must have been a significant mental and emotional battlefield facing each individual. There were however exceptions to the common problem of desertion in the Queensland police force. A number of Aboriginal constables committed themselves to the police force for extended periods. The longest serving trooper for the Queensland Native Mounted Police was "Jacky Styles" who served for 21 years, from 1852 to 1873 (Wallis & Burke, 2018). Other troopers in the Queensland force, namely, "Paddy", "Robin Hood", "Warbregan" and "Geewar" all served for at least 13 years (Wallis & Burke, 2018). Some Aboriginal police were from the same district, and some from the same family, which engendered a sense of kin and belonging. The Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser from 15th of September 1864 reports that 'one of the old troopers, while sauntering through Echuca the other day accidentally met his father' and the emotional scene was of 'a most affecting nature' with the Aboriginal trooper and his colleagues 'being mere youths' when they were first recruited by Captain Walker (*The Maranoa Election*, 1864). Careers in the Native Mounted Police of Queensland arguably offered some Aboriginal men 'a partial sense of belonging and family' that may have otherwise been taken from them (Wallis & Burke, 2016). Pre-existing relationships with white recruiting officers offered some sense of safety or even protection for Aboriginal men in joining the force, especially in a context of openly racist colonies that had no ongoing economic opportunities for Aboriginal people, other than tracking, begging, or servitude.

The reputation of the Queensland Native Mounted Police being reliable and established performers was an attraction to Victorian authorities when hunting down Ned Kelly and his gang in 1880. Described as a 'credit to any force', they 'were

members of various tribes located in the south and north of Queensland' and were recruited 'when they were quite young' the eldest being '24 years of age, and the youngest about 18' (*The Black Trackers and The Kelly Gang,* 1880). 'Some of the them have been in the force seven or eight years, during which they have seen some very active service, and over and over again demonstrated their capabilities as trackers' (*The Black Trackers and The Kelly Gang,* 1880). 'Their bravery was undoubted, for it was proved by conflicts with Chinese rioters in the north of Queensland, and with mobs of predatory and murderous aboriginals' (*The Black Trackers and The Kelly Gang,* 1880). The effects of Queensland Native troopers acting in Victoria were salient.

Veteran member of the Victorian Police Force between 1852 and 1896, eventually becoming the Inspecting Superintendent, John Sadlier saw policing develop and modernise over decades in Victoria. He writes candidly, and beautifully, in his 1913 book, *Recollections of a Victoria Police Officer* (Penguin). It is interesting to note his views on the capacity of the Victorian Police Force, in a context of importing the Queensland Aboriginal 'Black trackers' to bring the Kelly Gang to heel; 'what had been done by trained and disciplined aborigines in Victoria in the early days had been forgotten' (Sadlier,1973,p210). The outstanding reputation achieved by 'Henry Dana's native troopers' ceasing in 1852 had been 'forgotten or probably never heard of' by the police forces in Victoria of 1878 (Sadlier, 1973, p210). At the height of the Kelly Gang's activity Sadlier stated that, bushrangers had 'put away from their thoughts all resistance on the part of the average citizen' and it was suggested by Superintendent Francis Hare that the Queensland Mounted Troopers would be able to impact the situation (Sadlier,1973,p210). Sadlier states that with the introduction of the Queenslanders 'the effects on the movements of the Kellys were remarkable' and much 'beyond what was desired' (Sadlier,1973, p211). During 'the fifteen months that followed the arrival of the black trackers, the Kellys were never seen on horseback' which was 'wise' but Sadlier asserts did 'nothing to greatly add to their reputation as bold and adventurous outlaws' (Sadliers,1973,p211). Sadlier reports first hand, the amazing feats of the Queensland police, being able to read foreign bush and soil so effectively as to discover a 'sweat mark' and the 'mark of a spur strap' where an assailant had stopped to drink from a creek, as well as long distance vision where they 'pointed one day to the opposite side of a swamp more than a mile wide' claiming there

‘were two horses with saddles on, tied up to a fence’ (Sadlier,1973,p215). None ‘of us whites could see either the horses or the fence’ (Sadlier,1973,p215).

Whilst under orders most of the time I would argue, Native troopers, through their actions set a tone of fear for Aboriginal interlocutors, being the first uniformed, ostensibly colonised, Indigenous role models whose actions added a new layer of risk to an already raided and ransacked people. In recognising Aboriginal autonomy and will, Richards surmises that ‘the high rate of desertions by recruits suggest that many budding troopers quickly realised what their new uniforms and guns meant’ underscoring a sense of regret in the discomforting elements of their policing roles (Richards,2008,p122). The desertion rate may also indicate an emerging awareness of broader future thinking connected to Aboriginal individuals, families, clans and communities in a quickly changing world. Routine desertion also poses questions, and contrasts of those Aboriginal troopers who maintained positions in the force for extended periods. There must have been an acceptance of the role, a sense of satisfaction within the job, a place in the white economy, a belonging that reveals adaptation through the forced journeys and choices many individual Aboriginal men and women experienced within the colonial landscape. ‘At least a portion of those recruited’ to the Queensland force, ‘were raised from childhood in European households, since the kidnapping of Aboriginal children was a standard part’ of frontier life, with some kidnappings ‘conducted directly’ by the Native Mounted Police of Queensland ‘after their parents or family had been killed’ (Wallis & Burke, 2016).

Willshire’s Native trooper cohort offered access to the prism of Aboriginal thought, handing Willshire an understanding of the regional politics, patterns, and lifeways of Aboriginal clans they worked to support, and disperse. This critical local knowledge and cultural nuance is something that eluded the Native Queensland cohort through their own recruitment policy. Connection with Country and communities enhanced more potent communication pathways between Willshire and Aboriginal colleagues. This created unavoidably personal relationships and efficacy in removing Aboriginal bushcraft and tactics as a threat in these areas, by arrangement, negotiation, or force; and ironically heightening the prospects of peaceful solutions in a brutal environment. At some point for Willshire, the Aboriginal world enmeshed him as a cultural participant. I argue Willshire consciously blurred professional and personal boundaries and was comfortable with this mix. His personal connection to Aboriginal colleagues

bore reliable information exchange, possibly assisting to avoid Aboriginal deaths that may have otherwise been accepted as a collateral damage of colonisation.

Whilst police work and the Aboriginal skillset were resolutely linked, D.W.A. Baker proposes three categories for non-police Aboriginal tracking and guiding roles, that were still relevant and present during the lives of colonial Native police forces (Baker, 1998, p36). These categories reveal Indigenous agency and response to white incursion, as well as Aboriginal decision making around white requests for guidance through Country. Baker suggests there were three main functions for Aboriginal advisors engaged by whites, being 'passers on, camp followers; and, professionals' (Baker, 1998, p36). Professionals, Baker states 'agreed to do a job for a set price' showing their independence by sometimes just 'walking off the job' if the agreement become an unfair exchange (Baker, 1998,p37). 'Passers on' assisted whites through their territory as quickly and quietly as possible, not wanting conflict, whilst 'camp followers' did a mixture of everything, based around timelines, Country, and resource availability convenient to them (Baker, 1998,p37).

Whilst Baker's examples are drawn from a range of Aboriginal guides working across decades and with a number of explorers, this categorisation presents as a useful criterion linked to Aboriginal responses to white incursion, and as a contrast in areas where there was no Indigenous engagement in law enforcement roles. Equally effective and influential both Aboriginal men and women took tracker and advisor roles on. Historian and author, Catherine Bishop, and Associate Professor of History Richard White suggest that 'usually but not always men' were 'guides, interpreters, negotiators, collectors, hunters, providores, cooks, servants and stockmen, their multiplicity of roles similar to that of other members of the expedition, whether European or Indigenous.' (Bishop & White, 2015,p32). Where guides 'vanished or unexpectedly departed an expedition' delegates 'had their own agendas and terms of interaction' (Cadzow, 2016,p97). Inter-Aboriginal 'alliances with white explorers could also open up the potential for conflict between groups, making it a risky role to take on' (Cadzow, 2016,p106).

Exploration tasks could be bloody and violent, but were routinely risky at least, as well as physically and mentally demanding. Baker's simple categories imply an economic matrix dominated by convenience, fairness, and connection to Country. This is

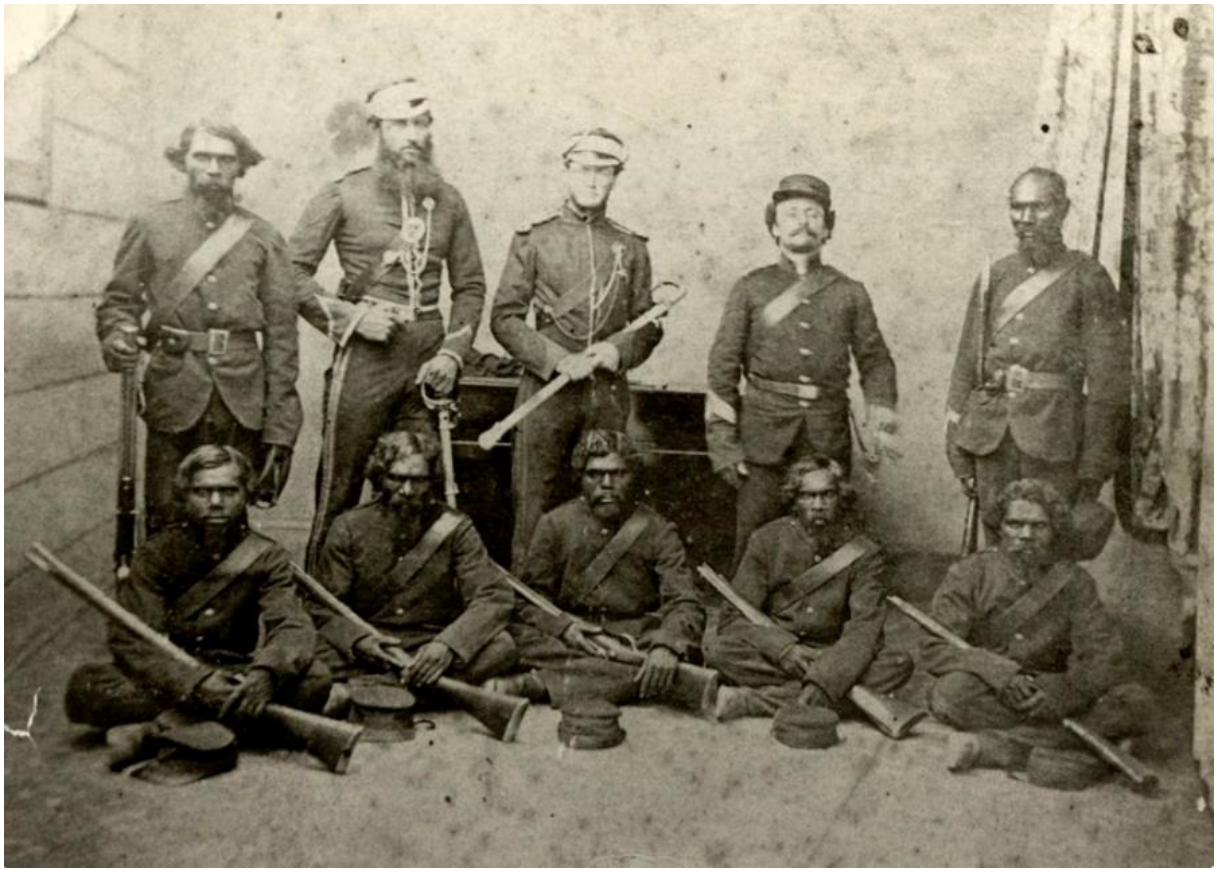
somewhat corroborated by labour-employment history experts, and authors, Professor of Economics, Robert Castle, and Emeritus Professor and professional fellow Jim Hagan who argue that desertion, abandonment or "Walkabout" 'became a weapon against the settlers as Aborigines removed their labour at times most inconvenient to the employer' (Castle & Hagan, 1998, p27). These circumstances demonstrate a commonality in terms of Aboriginal responses to white requests for tracking and advisory assistance, showing an 'unwillingness of the Aborigines to accept white society except on their own terms' casting Aboriginal labour as most effective in 'areas where there were few whites' and greater cultural stability (Castle & Hagan, 1998, p30).

Earning a wage and having access to the white economy came with its own problems but it was an exceedingly attractive benefit police work offered for Aboriginal men. Port Phillip Native Police received the 'magnificent pay of 1.1/2 per diem' (Withers,2013). Aboriginal members of the Queensland Native Mounted Police, received 'eighteen-pence a day, to cover their feeding and clothing' (Select Committee of the Native Police Force, 1861, p94). Aboriginal people in the service of the Crown, Wilson states, 'were not well paid' with 'a tracker in 1908' paid '£156 per annum' and by '1911 that salary had dropped to £55 per annum' (Wilson, 2000, p337). In a marked difference between colonies, Wilson suggests that Queensland Native police were paid '£36 per annum in 1887' (Wilson, 2000,p337). Trackers imported from Queensland to hunt down the Kelly gang in 1879 it was reported received '£3 a month, with uniform and quarters, but out of the money they have to contribute something towards the cost of their rations' (*The Black Trackers and the Kelly Gang*,1880). With regards to police pay and conditions Vallee suggests 'the largest streams of gold to which a frontier policeman had access sprang from their association with Aborigines as trackers and native constables' (Vallee, 2007,p159). Willshire's allowances almost matched his salary, with Aboriginal troopers in Willshire's cohort earning twenty-one shillings per week 'paid directly into Willshire's bank account' (Vallee, 2007,p158).

None of Willshire's supervisors had a presence in Central Australia, and it is quite possible that the Native Constables attached to Willshire were not acquainted with their entitlements. 'The member in charge of the station they were attached to usually fed the trackers' charging them some of their wage for the food they ate, or at times for a contribution to the hire of a private cook, 'leaving the tracker with a little over half

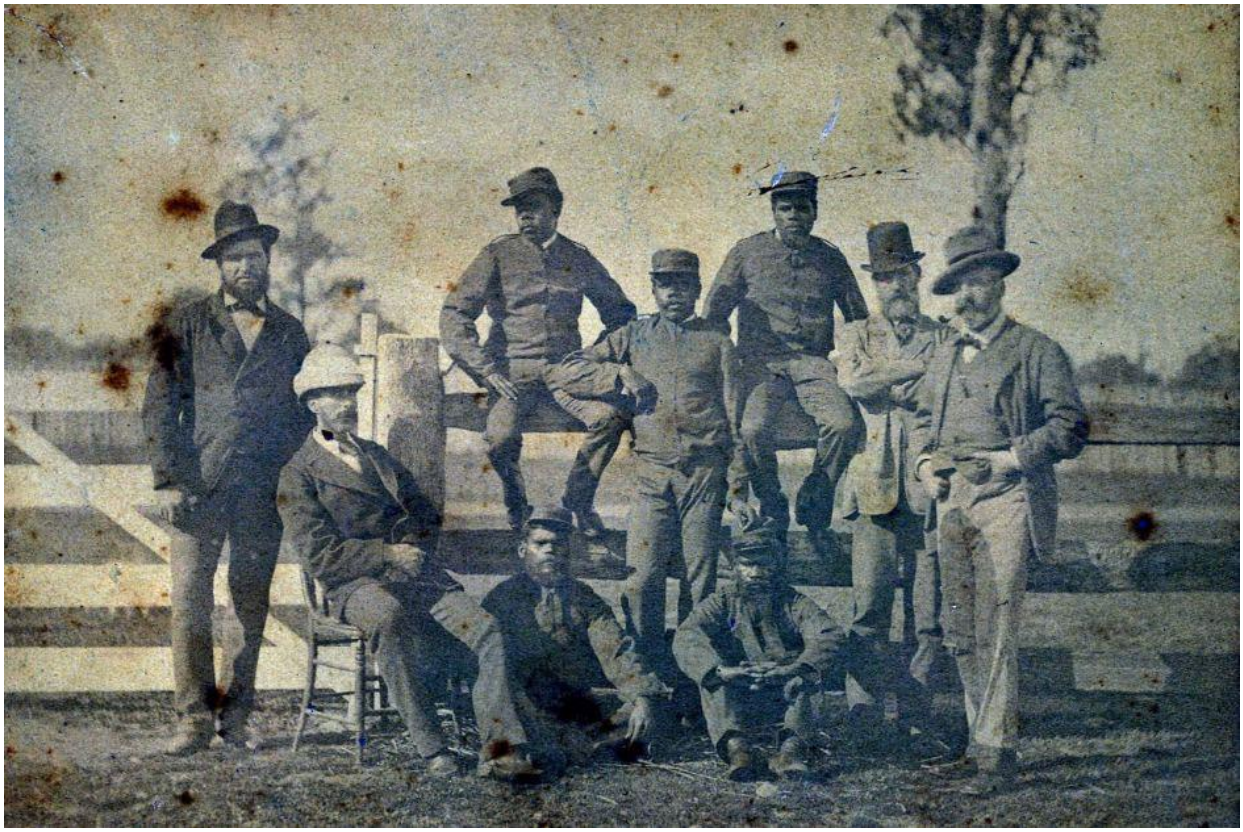
of his pay to spend as he wished' (Wilson, 2000,p338). These funds were usually spent on clothes – which became an economy of their own - extra food, or to distribute among relatives. Occasionally 'police provided trackers with *ex-gratia* financial support' yet Aboriginal members of the police force 'risked their lives' whilst being ill housed, never officially recognised, and used as servants for the most part (Wilson,2000, p339). In light of the dangers and ramifications however Vallee argues that Central Australian Aboriginal men were keen to fill any vacancies that came up within Native trooper ranks (Vallee, 2007,p158).

There were rewards other than money for Aboriginal troopers under Willshire's splintered supervision including a horse, firearms, regular food, prestige, sex, grog, clothing, travel, certainty around living conditions, and I would argue, a sense of excitement that came with Willshire's headstrong and unpredictable personal behaviour, which benefitted Native constables on numerous occasions. Creating alliances and gaining knowledge on how the white world operated were tangible, immediate benefits valuable to Aboriginal policemen and their families, offering strength in an uncertain and compromised world. 'Deprived of their land without compensation, the Aboriginal people had only their labour to provide the means of subsistence' (Castle & Hagan,1998, p32). Aboriginal labour opened-up Australia to whites. Guides, trackers and native constables were a 'model for how Australians felt Aboriginal people should be' and this extended to the roles of Native troopers who to the white mainstream, were misleading symbols of a colonised people assisting the invaders to settle and dominate (Bishop & White, 2015,p51). As such Aboriginal police, guides and trackers could be considered by the mainstream as a helpful, separate class of Aboriginal compared to rest of the Indigenous population, and over time this distinction is emblematic of the Aboriginal nether-world designed by a white mainstream that, at times, strongly criticises cultural autonomy or eulogizes assimilation.



Members of the Queensland Native Mounted Police photographed on 1 December 1864 at Rockhampton. In the back row from left to right are Trooper Carbine, George Murray, an unknown 2nd Lieutenant, an unknown Camp Sergeant and Corporal Michael. In the front row from left to right are Troopers Barney, Hector, Goondallie, Ballantyne and Patrick. (negative no 10686). Queensland State Library.

Native Police Encampment, Ballarat 1853, William Strutt- http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/image/native-police-encampment-ballarat-1853 State Library of Victoria



The Native Mounted Police sent after the Kelly Gang. From left: Senior Constable Tom King, Sub-Inspector Stanhope O'Conner, Barney, Johnny, Jimmy, Jack and Hero, Victorian Police Superintendent J Sadlier (arms folded), and Victorian Police Commissioner, Captain Frederick Standish. Note: "Sambo" a Corporal in the Native Mounted Police of Queensland, was a part of this cohort, but died of lung congestion whilst in Victoria prior to this photograph - source State Library Queensland

Mounted Police and Native Constables, circa 1890- source unknown (Flickr – accessed 6/1/2020) - https://www.flickr.com/photos/hwmobs/albums/72157682747198264

Port Phillip Native Police - 'Cohunguiam [and] Munight' Courtesy of the La Trobe Collection [with mustachios] – Source: State Library of Victoria H88.21/112

'Port Phillip Native Police in formation', William Strutt, 1850 - Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Victoria

‘Native Police’, ST Gill, 1864- image no. 3049.8-4, National Gallery of Victoria

4:

Keep your enemies closer:

Cultural management and incorporation of feral species and, a policeman.

The range of options belonging to Aboriginal consciousness, meaning the believable, the possible, or the occurring reality, were (are) built around Indigenous perceptions steeped in long established relational structures, detailed by spatial, spiritual, mythological, time-honoured natural and supernatural aspects. Thus, Aboriginal consciousness allowed a versatility of thought and conceptual logic in explaining and justifying unique events. This differs significantly from Western thought where unique events need to be scrutinised through the values governed by a more finite universality contained in constructs such as class, race, gender, science, individual rights, private property, and religion. These ideas are reinforced by a sense of individual entitlement coming through ubiquitous, maturing post-modern and capitalist influences.

Further management of the secular "reality" in the Western world comes through the separation of spiritual beliefs and the esoteric from bureaucracy and law, through legislative and constitutional means. Whilst religiosity was a highly pervasive trait of the white world within the study period, a strong sense of rationality was also present, championing science (including anthropology) as a more reliable, factual source of knowledge compared with easily undermined superstitions of religious authority and traditions. Influential social theorist, political economist, philosopher and writer of the period (and well beyond) Max Weber suggested that Western capitalism had become a victim of its own rigid rationality, routinely celebrating the mundane in favour of being open to the mysteries of human life and in doing so limiting the potential for human thought (Weber, 2005,pXIX). In his monumental work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber accuses capitalistic bureaucracy of a cultural arrogance based on a puritan rationality that severely limits human thought and perception; to demonstrate this he quotes German philosopher Johann Goethe, "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved" (Weber, 2005, p124). Within the study period, influences such as this encouraged an insurmountable epistemological barrier between Indigenous and non-indigenous cultures in Australia, emphasising a white

control of measurement, definition, and synthesis, with an ever-present overlay of Social Darwinism.

It is a criticism of anthropologist and academic Dr John Bradley that 'Western ways of knowing are so strongly orientated towards the linear' and the empirical they help 'support the hegemony of what might rightly be called scientific materialism' which was of course, in the study period, dominated by an anthropology instructed by Social Darwinism (Bradley, 2015, p1). Aboriginal thought had no such barriers. When coming across a white person, or camel tracks, or a horse for the very first time Aboriginal people may have been alarmed, and confused, but thought processes were open, and able to normalise such experiences in a succinct manner using mediating frameworks informed by Country and culture, such was the strength of belief. Austin-Broos suggests that 'the Arrernte's gift for homology through metaphor; for locating the likeness in events and disparate acts' allow the incorporation of strange events or phenomena into 'known experience' (Austin-Broos, 2009, p31). In order for Western belief to create a manageable and logical understanding of Aboriginal cultures, mainstream logic looks to compartmentalise thinking connected to Aboriginal being, as it does in separating all parts of life (science, nature, religion, law) leading to clichés and assumptions that reiterate Western thinking as superior and non-negotiable. Western interpretation of Aboriginal cultures, especially within the study period, were so heavily saturated in overarching theoretical and religious frameworks, they were in effect, justifying the parameters and strict operation of those very frameworks, rather than seeking to identify any other possible mode of culture; it was almost as though Aboriginal culture existed only for the purposes of these frameworks.

Dominating Western thought, and daily life, capitalism is the essential narrative central to metaphor. Austin-Broos argues that Arrernte economies were conceptualised with 'the market as social imagery', with kinship structures being influential, contrasting different cultural priorities and views between black and white worlds (Austin-Broos, 2009,p268). Austin-Broos uses the word 'imaginaries' to describe coping, logic, and storying mechanisms the Arrernte world utilises to incorporate change into traditional culture (Austin-Broos 2009,p265). One 'imaginary' is the ownership of pre-settlement ancestral 'imaginary tracks' and 'sociality focussed on place and relatedness' in which 'ancestral travel, geography, and daily practice' mingled alongside one another in the real world (Austin-Broos, 2009,p265). Hand drawn maps of these ancestral tracks

have been created by T.G.H. Strelow relevant to Arrernte highlighting the mythological life embedded within geographical Country (Boyack, 2020). The introduction of Christianity challenged this this thought process which tapped into the strong sense of religiosity within traditional Aboriginal society. Even though early missionary efforts at Christianising the Aboriginal population were largely ineffective, the Hermannsburg Mission and Christianity had a deep and lasting effect on the world of the Arrernte as symbols of white fracture, change and spiritual development (Austin-Broos,2009,265).

In terms of religious belief, the Arrernte idea of 'conception provides a vivid passage between worlds' creating imagery and dialogue that are magic and real at once (Austin-Broos, 2009, p268). In the Arrernte world 'conception beliefs and practices' accessed the transcendental or 'the external and enduring beyond everyday' being 'firmly grounded and emplaced through ancestral travels that created a filigreed system across a region' demonstrating different realities, and conceptual versatility available to the individual (Austin-Broos, 2009,p267). Willshire suggests that the turning over of ideas and phenomena was regular within the company of his Aboriginal colleagues, as they were 'not at a loss for words, for in their own language they speak upon all subjects' with 'the dusky Australian' having 'a name for everything, real or imaginary' (Willshire,1895,p17).

Deborah Rose Bird states that for 'many Aboriginal people, everything in the world is alive: animals, tress, rain, sun, moon, some rocks and hills, and people are all conscious'(Bird,1996,p23). Aboriginal people live with Country, talk to it, think about it, listen to it, love it, feel sorry for it; they hear Country. 'The spiritual world is immediately experienced because it is synonymous with the physiography of the land' (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, Loc573). In daily life within family and community there is 'a desire to be participating in the realness and eventfulness of living country' (Rose, 2005, p302). Just being with Aboriginal men for such extended periods, and showing an interest in cultural and other matters, Willshire must have had access to Aboriginal stories behind the creation of life and Country. The many cultural observations captured in his writings are varied but worthy. Some are subtle, sacred, or routine parts of life. Only someone who was present, and allowed to be present, for significant periods may have picked up on. Willshire came to understand that the people and the landscape were in a relationship, and that ceremony was a mediator. 'Country tells you: the proposition prioritises country's communication, and positions human

responsibility as knowledgeable action in response to country. Human action is thus both directive and responsive' (Rose, 2005, p300).

It is fascinating to conjure the scene; Willshire's initial contact and police recruitment drive, the first meetings with Aboriginal men and communities, how Willshire engaged Aboriginal people, how he explained and conveyed the expectations of a police officer and the vagaries of white law (Willshire's version), wages, conditions, rights, responsibilities, instruction in the use of firearms, the general do's and don'ts. Willshire was an intimidating figure; a policeman who commanded attention, and through fear at least, demanded respect, making the most of his resources with opportunism and strict control of the critical bargaining tool, the food supply, with which he coerced, seduced, and cajoled Aboriginal workers and the local community. The landscape of Central Australia with its scarce water, deserts, gorges, escarpments, and bluffs, would have given Aboriginal troopers numerous opportunities to contrive a silent, accidental death for their commanding officer Mounted Constable William Willshire. It is certain Native constables, their clans, and communities would have willed his death at times. Of course, this did not occur.

Those Aboriginal men, who were in best place to deliver a death blow to Willshire may have considered the wide-ranging Aboriginal experience of terror reigning down in revenge for white deaths at Daly River, Glen Helen, Anna's Reservoir, and Barrow Creek. This would have been enough to think twice about murdering a white man, let alone a police officer. This tolerance, or support, of Willshire demonstrates a level of trust between Willshire and Aboriginal constables, or at very least functional relationships. Willshire's years working alongside Aboriginal people in dangerous and remote areas needs to be recognised as unique and significant, and a two-way experience for Aboriginal constables. It is important to remember that Willshire was one of the first white people to stay put in the *Mparntwe* and Victoria River District regions for extended periods. Most other whites travelled through territory quickly or distanced themselves from the Aboriginal world inviting only very conditional, usually exploitative relationships with Aboriginal labourers and communities.

In this respect Willshire is, I would argue, an underrated contact figure. His useful ethnological information was 'gathered during years of close study and communion with the natives, and from a more intimate acquaintance with "wild" blacks than

relationships enjoyed by either explorers or even pioneer settlers' importantly predating the presence of Baldwin-Spencer, Gillen and Strehlow (Willshire, 1888,p8). His relationships with Aboriginal colleagues, and other Aboriginal men and women he socialised and fraternised with must have been cordial for the most part. Such a level of personal interaction identified the cultural need to place him as kin at some level. This possibly offered Willshire protection against assassination from his most trusted Aboriginal allies, and their relatives, at least; but Indigenous strategy tying him to groups and land would also allow him a layer of protection from outside the immediate circle. Of course, traditional enemies of clans that Willshire, over time, became connected to culturally and relationally, may well have lost an effective protective layer overnight when he departed. It is fascinating to meditate upon but impossible to know how tribal concerns may have intertwined with clan politics when Aboriginal men returned to the traditional fold post-Willshire. Some of this information may well live on through family stories and knowledge sitting with the relatives of Native troopers in the contemporary Arrernte world.

Whilst the study period saw some major change in and around *Mparntwe,* systems of reciprocity fundamental to clan and cultural wellbeing were highly operational, giving Aboriginal people a sense of continuity of Law connected to Country. With a clear responsibility to take care of this white man, now living with them on-Country, Arrernte men within Willshire's troop were faced with cultural responsibilities. An example of a specific Aboriginal cultural conundrum would have been deciding on Willshire's relational classification, a basic cultural tool within Aboriginal cultures. 'One of the distinguishing features of Australian social organisation is it's so-named classificatory system of kinship, whereby a given term may extend to other people, including genealogically distant kin and even strangers' (Kelly & McConvell, 2018,p21). Once it was clear that he was staying indefinitely, a skin name, or classificatory name for Willshire must have been one of the first decisions resting with Aboriginal colleagues. Author and Pintupi-Luritja language expert and translator John Heffernan states 'early contact relationships with non-Aboriginal people were rather uncomfortable for Aboriginal people since it was unheard of for a person not to be 'something' (ie: not to have a skin classification)' (Heffernan & Heffernan, 1999,p160). In order to work alongside Willshire Aboriginal men would have been obligated to ensure he belonged to someone (kin) or something (totem), and thus a skin name probably would have

been provided allowing cultural placement. Giving interlopers a skin name was ‘a mechanism Aboriginal people have employed to make their dealings with non-Aboriginal more comfortable for themselves’ (Heffernan & Heffernan, 1999,p160).

Veronica Perrule Dobson, Eastern Arrernte woman, translator, educator, botanist and author states that non-aboriginal people can be given a skin name; ‘if you become part of an Arrernte family you can get a skin name that matches how you’re related to them’ or ‘if you get to know some Arrernte people well, they might decide among themselves at some point what skin name is appropriate’ (Dobson & Henderson, 2013, p19). Unfortunately, Willshire does not give any information around a skin name, or cultural tag, within his writings, yet Aboriginal etiquette must have required it, if not initially, then certainly once he was an established fixture, and had formed relationships. Receiving a skin name would not have entitled Willshire to anything but social status enabling cultural placement. McConvell delineates difference between a ‘clan’ being a group with rights to land and intellectual property through descent, compared to ‘people of a skin category’ who are ‘not collective owners of anything’ but play an important role in connecting social layers and reciprocal relationships (Kelly & McConvell,2018,p2). Chillberta, (Nabarong) Willshire’s Aboriginal companion and sweetheart in *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* named him ‘Oleara’ (Arrernte meaning “string”); Oleara was someone who became ‘well known all through the country’ (Willshire,1895, p12).

At the time of Willshire’s naming, in the story, he was making nose pegs for camels with string and wooden stakes (Willshire,1895, p12). Maybe “string” is a clue to Willshire’s cultural incorporation, his placement, his standing. In the classificatory system used by Aboriginal clans and people Dobson states that ‘everyone is described as a relation of some kind in traditional Arrernte culture, even if they are not directly related to you through blood or marriage’ (Dobson & Henderson,2013, p95). Using the cultural template as a baseline, circumstances dictate that once whites participated in an exchange, or a transaction, a relationship was established, and white participants were, at some level, introduced into the cultural network as trading partners and reciprocal actors, even unwittingly. This may have been achieved through donating food or clothes, offering goods for fair trade, looking to negotiate a deal for short term Aboriginal labour, or accessing Aboriginal women for sexual services.

Considering a lack of clear written or historical evidence, it is useful to use the structure of culture and kinship to help position Willshire inside, and outside the Aboriginal world. Assisting this deduction, it is useful to look at the economies driving the tenets of exchange, reciprocity and obligation *within* Law, and culture, as Willshire would have been exposed to these influences directly. These daily moving parts of operational Aboriginal culture are multifaceted, and can, broadly speaking, be applied to most Australian Aboriginal clan cultures notwithstanding regional and other idiosyncrasies.

Dr Ian Keen, author and lecturer on Aboriginal economy and kinship systems, categorises elements of Aboriginal economy to account for all manner of community transactions including the domestic, material, epistemological and metaphysical (Keen, 2010, p4). The *moral economy* is related to an individual's personal and totemic responsibilities to Country; the cultural duties, songs and rituals one owns as private property, male or female. The largely predictable *internal economy* of continual reciprocity and obligation to the tribal group is revealed over time and steeped in traditional patterns and established Law, yet connected to daily tasks, roles, and gendered division of labour. Then there is the less controllable *external economy* where elements are forced in and traded out of the cultural landscape, reflecting the absorbent versatility of Aboriginal culture. The external economy included all new elements that came with white incursion needing recognition and justification through Aboriginal means of thought. Pervasive within this multilayered economic rationale was the ubiquitous custom of reciprocity. The reciprocal nature of Aboriginal culture was key in enabling Indigenous economies and Law to live and breathe. Dr Robert Schwab, Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, argues that Aboriginal people 'operate in a social universe, not in isolation' and that 'it is important to recognise that reciprocity is a core element in the organisation of Aboriginal communities' (Schwab,1995,p13).

By being present, Willshire was forcing his way into the Aboriginal world. He needed to be absorbed and managed culturally, physically, and somehow placed within the cultural order of things. Notwithstanding the destructive pathos that came with Willshire, he added value to those cultural economies he had transactional contact with. Willshire brought food, goods, technology, strategy, labour, alliances, and I would argue he brought a male, warrior-like behaviour congruent with traditional Aboriginal society he enacted as a policeman and as an individual. Willshire was also

a curious and interested student of culture as evidenced by his written works. This no doubt assisted him in fast-tracking his own communication skills, and possibly allowed him a more complete acceptance from Aboriginal police constables and their relatives. Schwab reminds us that 'sharing is a political act' in the Aboriginal world, and 'Aboriginal people are, in general, protected by and benefit greatly from the generosity of members of broad-ranging kinship systems' (Schwab,1995, p13). Schwab states with regard to the reciprocal nature of Aboriginal relationships and kin that 'to deny the demand is to deny the relationship' (Schwab, 2015,p10).

There was a key responsibility on Aboriginal stakeholders to be proactive in extending pertinent local information to Willshire, as a protective measure for Country. Reciprocity extended to goods and knowledge that sought to ensure Willshire was somewhat culturally prepared for interaction with Country and community; Willshire's wellbeing, as a visitor on-Country, was also a factor to consider for Aboriginal stakeholders. It was in the Aboriginal interest to make sure Willshire had relevant cultural information in preventing accidental offence to other Aboriginal people and clans, and in preventing inadvertent damage to sacred sites which may have created unnecessary, deadly, conflict for local Aboriginal clans and Willshire's troop. This did not mean that Willshire abided by this guidance, but it certainly gave him strategic options. With the wellbeing of Country in mind this cultural knowledge was as important to Willshire from a policing perspective, as it was to the Aboriginal messengers communicating it.

Through a police transfer, as an instrument of the Crown, Willshire imposed his presence on the Arrernte community. He was an interloper on Country and one of the few whites in the region at the time. It is important here to appreciate and focus on the relational foundation of Aboriginal culture and vision. Looking at the cultural incorporation of foreign life forms and elements in comparable Aboriginal contexts both in and beyond the study period offers an important demonstration of cultural operation and response to new life forms both human and non. Whilst Willshire was required to be present in *Mparntwe* and had resources, there is an intersect between cultural justification connected to the survival stories of shipwrecked whites who were also interlopers on Aboriginal land. For hundreds of years Aboriginal clans have adopted white castaways into their ranks. Seeking value for investment in caring for, or healing someone that would yield an extra warrior, an extra resource, Aboriginal people

incorporated and explained the appearance of white strangers through cultural means. When exerting valuable effort on strangers, Aboriginal decision makers in these situations certainly must have had clan wellbeing at the front of their minds. There are numerous examples of whites living with and contributing to Aboriginal clans for significant periods, as accepted, sometimes esteemed members of the social fabric revealing broad cultural flexibility. William Buckley (1780-1856) is the most famous example, being cared for and inducted by the Wathawurrung people of the Kulin nation in Victoria for over 30 years. An escaped convict, Wathawurrung people believed Buckley 'to be the returned spirit of one of their recently departed dead' naming him 'Murrangoork' or 'Ghost Blood' (Pascoe, 2007,p22). Buckley had Aboriginal wives and was granted immunity from tribal battle.

Similar to many Aboriginal clans and communities the belief system within the Kulin Nation of Victoria was that the 'sprits of the dead sometimes reappeared as white wraiths' (Pascoe, 2007,p22). Other shipwreck victims or escaped convicts living with Aboriginal clans include Eliza Fraser (1798-1858) who lived with the Badtjala people, as did John Graham (1800-1837) Fraser's Irish rescuer; George "the flying barber" Clarke (1806-1835) lived with the Kamilaroi people, Narcisse Pelletier (1844-1894) with the Uutaalnganu people, James Morrill (1824-1865) with the Juru people, Barbara Thompson (1831-1916) with the Kaurareg people, James Davis (1808-1889) with the Gubbi Gubbi people, and John Wilson who died in 1800, voluntarily lived with the Dharug people; Lieutenant Governor David Collins states in his colossal, detailed recollections of the fledgling Sydney colony that Wilson flitted between cultures and that the 'tribe with whom Wilson associated had given him a name, Bun-bo-é, but none of them had taken his in exchange'(Collins,2003,p341). These stories are all individual, but all have a prevailing commonality.

The adoption or inclusion of unknown white people into the tribal fold highlights cultural demand, versatility and mechanisms underscoring the critical nature of balance between labour invested, and maintenance connected to clan wellbeing and survival, with the overarching imperative of available on-Country resources. It also highlights the relational foundation of everything in the Aboriginal world; physical, spiritual, natural and supernatural. Through various circumstances these white people were on Country and cultural etiquette demanded they be categorised in order to be managed. Whilst some of these factors informed Willshire's cultural induction and inclusion, he

was a police officer and had power. He was not a desperate castaway looking for support, although much of the time he was extremely vulnerable to risk at the hands of Aboriginal warriors and clans whom in reality could have ended his life at any time. Willshire had no alternative but to trust the guidance and leadership of his Indigenous colleagues, especially early on in his tenure.

Highlighting economics and the key question of clan sustainability on Country, it is valuable to unpack the worth of the individual to group wellbeing, as well as threats to individual wellbeing, which ultimately threaten the clan. Willshire's worth in terms of goods and labour gave him a high value to Aboriginal co-workers and their relatives as long as he was active in the reciprocal framework. Willshire's power as a threat to clan sustainability must have also been obvious through his possession and access to technology, the immense power represented by his uniform, but also his lack of basic cultural knowledge which highlighted the potential for fatal errors and misunderstandings. Group wellbeing and function are fundamental to the Aboriginal lifeway, highlighting the serious nature of clan numbers in relation to environment, especially in those arid areas where resources are routinely scarce. Clan health gave the energy that connected the cultural and ceremonial status quo, and on occasion, this energy needed to absorb external pressures, whilst maintaining cultural shape. Using the resources of living, breathing Country there was always adaptability and inventiveness, but no room for waste, or a reduction in labour and contribution for any significant length of time.

Regarding Aboriginal population control and self-management, the balance between clan wellbeing and resources available on-Country was key. Alan Gray, scholar of Australian Indigenous demography argues that in the pre-contact Aboriginal world, the population was largely static (Gray,1983,p49). Gray states with the data available on pre-European settlement Aboriginal population there existed a high birth rate and a high death rate, 'so it can readily be agreed that a long-term balance between birth and death rates is the only assumption that is compatible with the evidence of long human habitation of the continent' (Gray,1983,p49). Gray's probable mathematical assumptions are logical when married with human survival needs, and overt Aboriginal sensibility towards supply and demand connected to Country wellbeing prompting seasonal movement within Country. This equation also highlights the serious need for any new phenomena, including the birth of a new child, or any foreign challenge

being carefully managed within the traditional framework averting compromise to the group; the group defining the clan mythology and raison d'être.

Willshire may have, at times, been a violent threat to those clans that were not aligned with him, but the benefits that came with him meant he was worth the effort to his allied Aboriginal colleagues. Congruent with the reciprocal framework, Willshire brought and offered resources that benefitted Aboriginal colleagues, their clans, and relatives. Culture justifies and requires inclusion of Willshire the interloper. Incorporating new elements such as white escapees and castaways, feral animals, and external phenomena naturally over time created a hybrid economy that 'required initial transformations of Indigenous economies, but hybridity also involved Aborigines maintaining essential elements of their traditional ways of life' (Keen,2010,p9). Willshire was incorporated into the cultural landscape to a meaningful degree, representing a positive economic and cultural unit that could be called upon to support clan and culture wellbeing when required.

Examples of foreign elements, phenomena and beings incorporated into Aboriginal storylines, and mythology are many. Dr Ian Keen social researcher and academic writes that European clothing for Aboriginal people 'in turn had its own particular value, becoming essential as both part of the person and an item of trade in ritual' (Keen, 2010,p11). In this way, an 'economy of surfaces' developed, 'linking skins with clothes' (Keen, 2010, p11). In terms of materials Aboriginal people were early post-contact adopters of iron, glass, and porcelain for skinning, carving and to add efficacy to weaponry. Similar in mode to managing white interlopers, cultural responses to feral animal incursion and introduction are important as they demonstrate culture in action, and how the passing of time connected to space increased the value of any species living on Country. Looking to the history of European invasive feral species in-league with more contemporary evidence we see the journey of the camel in the Central Desert as a worthy living example demonstrating Aboriginal cultural flexibility. The camel is an animal that has crept into storylines through the relational worldview of Aboriginal people in conjunction with the health and wellbeing of Country. Traditionally, stray camels became a resource on Country, being 'speared for meat, hair and fat' (Vaarzon-Morel & Edwards, 2012,p67). When Aboriginal people began working for 'Afghan cameleers and learned how to handle camels for transport' camels became an important travel option for remote people, with many 'Western desert and

southern Arrernte people' using camels to augment a traditional bush existence whilst riding camels to hunt, trade and move camp (Vaarzon-Morel & Edwards, 2012, p67). Some Aboriginal people had close relationships by keeping camels as pets over time, believing that the 'camel had earned its place in central Australia' (Vaarzon-Morel & Edwards, 2012, p68).

Although not associated with Dreaming times or as ancestors camels have symbolised another important story for many Aboriginal people, being connected to Christianity through nativity stories as the 'Jesus animal' (Vaarzon-Morel & Edwards, 2012, p68). Religious significance belongs to both the camel and donkey, another feral interloper, through bible stories taught at missions, giving these animals a role and a 'special status' in some areas (Rose,1995,p108). Whilst there are a range of views within Aboriginal communities and individuals on the matter of feral animals, their management, cultural role and connection, traditional structures have allowed the transformation of the camel into an animal that is connected to Country by simply living on Country, and becoming connected to clans and their families. Indigenous being is 'grounded in a relational worldview that emphasises the interdependence of nature, sociality and culture' stressing the 'importance of social relationships to the maintenance of ecological health' (Vaarzon-Morel & Edwards, 2012, p66). Entwined with personal and public memory, the camel is an actor within stories connecting specific areas, family histories, elderly relatives and the deceased. Importantly, in Aboriginal eyes the camel is its own being, but like everything, *belongs* to Country. It is a common Aboriginal view that 'no-one owns feral animals, they belong to the land on which they live' which in turn belongs to Aboriginal people (Rose, 1995, p111).

Whilst well north of Alice Springs on Jawoyn Country, the introduction of the water buffalo did not significantly impact the landscape until periods beyond the prevalence of camels, rabbits and donkeys in desert regions, the Jawoyn people have applied the same cultural mechanisms to accept buffalo as a part of their ongoing, growing mythology; again demonstrating the ancient, yet contemporary ability for culture to incorporate new phenomena whilst retaining a stabilising bedrock. The buffalo has served the Jawoyn people as a valued meat source ever since its introduction, reducing 'the potential for conflict among the large numbers of Jawoyn people who have rights to this resource' through traditional ties to Country (Robinson et al., 2005,p1388). Buffalo also carry value in human memory and family histories

connected with long term employment appearing in the stories of old people from when they were hunting buffalo and working on cattle stations.

Unlike the camel, the buffalo ‘has become enmeshed with other Aboriginal Dreaming beings whose travels and presence are embedded in the identity of, and connections between, Jawoyn people and country’ (Robinson et al., 2005, p1388). Emeritus Professor David Trigger, academic, researcher, and specialist in Aboriginal land tenure, suggests that ‘relationships among individual animals are construed according to the usual idiom of kinship regulating relations among human; thus buffalo are represented as sentient and social beings’ (Trigger, 2008,p635). Professor of Anthropology at the Advanced School for Studies in the Social Sciences, with 20 years of experience researching Western Desert communities, Laurent Dousset reminds that linguistically ‘in most, if not all, languages, social categories not only include and classify human beings but also mythological figures or natural species that each sit in one of the available classes’ (Dousset, 2018, p51). Thus, in culture the personality of the Buffalo has been characterised by its unpredictable nature and ‘infused with a mystique’ that demonstrates ‘an unusually charismatic creature’ (Trigger, 2008, p634). Horses are also prevalent on the Country of the Jawoyn.

The Jawoyn people have a ‘close attachment’ and a ‘tolerance for high densities of horses’ and their negative environmental impact on Country (Robinson et al.,2005, p1388). On Jawoyn Country horses are treated like ‘bush pets’ and never eaten; many have individual names, the horses themselves being seen as ancestors of those who carried grandparents and relatives in old times (Robinson et al.,2005, p1388). In this respect, and common to Aboriginal cultures within Australia, place and space, or totemic geography, take precedence over time. ‘As people grow older they are socialized into a world where everything of significance in their lives can be associated with named places or referred to in ancestral terms’ and thus the social and the environmental are ‘presented as an ancestral world’ (Morphy, 1995, p197). Pigs, however, create cultural difficulty for Jawoyn. Another introduced species that range widely over Jawoyn land pigs tear up Country by “pig rooting” with the Jawoyn feeling that pigs do not ‘know how to live with others in country’ (Robinson et al.,2005, p1389). Pigs are responsible for a ‘highly conspicuous gross physical disturbance’ to Country as well as intimidating and chasing away other animals (Robinson et al., 2005, p1389). The Jawoyn have wrestled with the management of pigs on Country. The

pig has never really found a place in culture, yet tolerance of feral animals as connected to people and Country is ‘consistent with Aboriginal concepts of cyclical generations, whereby descendants are also ancestors’ (Robinson et al., 2005, p1388).

With cats being introduced into the cultural web Deborah Bird Rose reminds us that ‘human beings extend their knowledge through access to the behaviour of animals’ and that this is particularly relevant to an Aboriginal worldview and knowledge of Country (Rose, 2005,p297). Possibly emerging from shipwrecks on the coast of Western Australia in the 17th century, or not, ‘Aboriginal people consistently maintain that cats have been in central Australia’ well before white people arrived and that they possess their own ancestral storyline (Rose,1995,p109). The cat, alongside the rabbit, became ‘an important component of diet in many areas’ with some claiming the cat had ‘medicinal qualities’ (Rose,1995,p108). For the Western Desert Mardu ‘Spinifex People’ the ‘the feral cat Dreaming forms part of the totemic landscape’ whilst still being a food source, a pet, and a known predator of native species (Trigger, 2008,p632).

Jill Bough, academic, researcher and donkey devotee suggests that in general, ‘Aboriginal people are far more accepting of an animal species that has proved its worth and lived for generations on the land’ (Bough, 2006,p394). Donkeys were introduced to Australia as pack and haulage animals coming ‘into wider use with the opening up of Central and Western Australia in the 1860s’ (Bough, 2006,p33). Grazing without fences was the standard in Central Australia and over a vast area donkeys found themselves abandoned when pastoral properties and mine leases were deserted, and when desert transport moved towards mechanisation. Inhabiting numerous Aboriginal territories, the donkey became valuable to Aboriginal clans and communities. Donkeys assisted Aboriginal families as a beast of burden, and as transport for people over long distances being ‘hardy, surefooted’ and coping ‘well with rough tracks’ whilst being self-sufficient as ‘versatile foragers’ (Bough, 2006,p391). Sharing the hardship of white incursion made life more bearable for Aboriginal people in difficult periods of cultural and economic change, servitude, and slavery with donkeys being a source of meat, and a comforting and friendly playmate for children often being approachable and tame. Another major benefit for Aboriginal users of donkeys was that they ‘usually stayed close to camp at night’ creating a trusting and reliable presence (Bough,2006,p391). Ultimately, the donkey connected itself to

community life through sharing labour, living and staying on Country, in turn becoming part of community life and earning its place on Country.

Robert Nugent, film maker, researcher, and one-time environmental officer with the Central Land Council, in 1988 produced a highly regarded, succinct survey entitled, *Some Aboriginal Attitudes to Feral Animals and Land Degradation*. This body of work has been referenced widely, and corroborates similar research by Bruce Rose, David Trigger, Deborah Bird Rose, and Petronella Vaarzon-Morel. Nugent reiterates a special status for donkeys, stating that in the Christian schema donkeys in the Western Arrernte lands have developed a 'strong spiritual and religious significance'; they are connected with a belief that Country will go "bad" if they are culled (Nugent,1988,p7). Nugent states that older Hermannsburg people remembered 'times when the country went dry after the mission attempted to shoot out the donkeys', an experience that underscored beliefs around mass killings connected to the donkey's right to live on Country (Nugent,1988,p10). Deborah Bird Rose emphasises that Aboriginal values and beliefs subscribe to 'the underlying proposition' that 'the life of most living things is for others as well as for itself' (Rose, 2005,p296).

Whilst rabbits were in plague proportions soon after their introduction, and spread to the Central Desert quickly establishing themselves as a reliable and good food source, it has been difficult to find cultural, or specific storylines for the rabbit, as it has for the sheep, cow and the ox. Rabbit 'embryos rated with nightingales' tongues in the feasts of ancient Rome' yet the 'surprising fecundity of the rabbit in Australia debased' it as 'fine eating' and a sport for 'the squire' forever (Rolls, 1984,p8). Rabbits certainly have always been utilised as a food source across numerous Aboriginal groups however their faeces, like Kangaroo droppings, is also utilised as an excellent fire starter, important when moving camp. Whilst over time the horse, camel, cat, donkey, and buffalo have earned the right to live on Country entering Aboriginal mythology at some level through memory and story connected to space, and at times ancestors, Rose states that a cultural quandary arises here as 'not all feral animals are without a Dreaming, and it is not clear that all species of native animals have a Dreaming' (Rose,1995,p117). Nugent states that a wholistic responsibility exists for all on Country; 'traditional ownership of country also extends to the ownership of the feral animals on that country' (Nugent,1988,p13). The placement of feral animals in family and community histories reveals cultural dimensions and the relational nature of the

Aboriginal worldview connecting these animals to Country. After a short period, Willshire, no doubt, was incorporated into culture at some level, thus being tied to Country, and the people he was closest to. Over a more significant timeframe Willshire became intimately attuned to traditional culture and was a willing cultural participant; the umbrella of culture allowing Willshire's presence, his contributions, his relationships and the use of culture for his own benefit.

In Yanyuwa Country, 1200 kilometres north of *Mparntwe*, the Indigenous response to the cane toad invasion is worth consideration. A more contemporary situation, it demonstrates traditional culture in a contemporary setting, and highlights discussion that may have been common to other clans who have accepted more established feral species. Introduced to Australia in 1935 from Hawaii cane toads were used to combat sugar cane pests the scarab beetle (Cameron, 2020). Dr John Bradley, researcher, academic, author, Yanyuwa community member and fluent Yanyuwa speaker has explored and written about the ancestral genesis and maintenance of Yanyuwa Country in collaboration with Yanyuwa people over decades. His experience includes the creation of digital productions to preserve the traditional repository of specific gendered languages connected to Yanyuwa culture.

In a religious context the Yanyuwa feel the cane toad plague is 'an invasion by a creature with no Law; it has no song, no place to fit within existing structures' (Seton & Bradley, 2008,p213,). This presents a significant problem for Yanyuwa. Bradley concurs with the relational aspects of culture stating that Indigenous 'resource management involves the management of people, the spiritual world, resources and the environment in complex interrelationships' (Seton & Bradley, 2006, p208). The cane toad drowns out 'the sounds of familiar species' and 'the stench of dead piles of cane toads and dead animals rotting after contact with toads' make Country 'unhealthy' (Seton & Bradley, 2004,p212). These physical manifestations of cane toad presence and behaviour interrupt traditional cultural creation processes, and challenge mechanisms of cultural incorporation. The 'negotiability and interconnectedness of Indigenous Law' is demonstrated through an example where a Yanyuwa man sees the cane toad through the prism of his own totem claiming his frog ancestors are being hurt when local children are killing cane toads, and he implores the children to stop; even though Bradley asserts, the 'cane toad is beyond connectedness: it remains disconnected from Yanyuwa culture and life' (Seton &

Bradley,2004,p214). The cane toad has been responsible for serious destruction and the ruin of ecological systems and rhythms used to design and narrate ancient Yanyuwa mythology and stories. Loss of cultural repetition and social productivity has occurred for Yanyuwa women who have 'ceased hunting goanna and blue-tongue lizards because this primary economic activity was seen to lose its worth' due to the cane toad decimating these species (Seton & Bradley, 2004, p215).

Not only has this changed traditional patterns of behaviour, it has also broken a cycle for younger Yanyuwa girls and women coming through clan ranks looking for cultural nourishment from older women who used this hunting time to teach, chatter and mentor. The cessation of traditional hunting practices effectively alters an established path for younger women; a journey older woman had enjoyed. Rose states that 'a great deal of information is coded into ecological patterns, so a large part of Aboriginal people's knowledge is based on observations of ecological patterns' yet the cane toad has not been absorbed into story or accepted on Country (Rose, 2005, p297). Dr John Bradley reminds us that 'Country, in Indigenous thought, is not self-managing and animals rely on human ritual activity for survival and fecundity' yet the cane toad is an exception to this (Seton & Bradley 2006,p217). 'It is such devices as song and the related landscape and ritual, which people perceive as transforming agents, that gives the lived life an order' which in turn allows generations to pass from 'mortal form to spiritual inhabitants of the landscape' (Seton & Bradley,2004, p213).

The cane toad does not appear in 'song and body design' proving it has been overlooked culturally (Seton & Bradley, 2004,p213). Bruce Rose states of his work with Central Australian communities, there is a 'recognition' that 'introduced animals do not have a Dreaming' but this did not affect animals that did and for 'Aboriginal people there appears to be no incompatibility between native animals and introduced animals using the land together' (Rose,1995,p45). Perhaps the greatest challenge to Yanyuwa is the health of Country, connected to the damage the cane toad causes. Nugent reports that Central Australian people 'usually praise' their Country, and for an Aboriginal person to say that 'bush food was not available' would be 'tantamount to admitting' that Country is sick (Nugent,1988, p20). Dr John Bradley asserts that on Yanyuwa land, as in other places, 'some feral species are regarded' as 'belonging on and to country through Dreaming associations or because of their utilisation of the landscape and its resources (a natural thing all species do)' (Seton & Bradley, 2006,

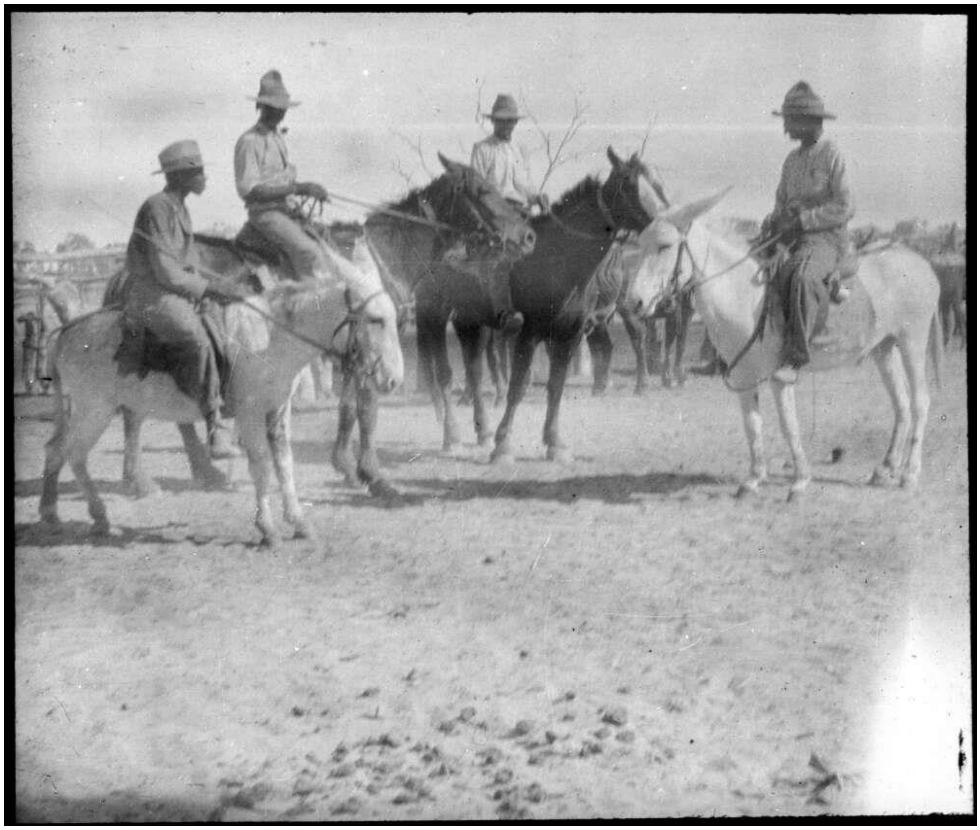
p208). Consistent with the views of Central Australian clans, 'feral animals are not only seen to be utilising resources on country, they are also viewed by Aboriginal people as a resource *of* country' (Seton & Bradley, 2006, p208). It is certain that between the time of first incursion and the time of understanding, or even accepting, that white people were staying on Country forever, including Willshire, Aboriginal clans and cultures used these same thought processes and negotiations to justify, include, suspend, avoid or incorporate all those things that made Country at any one time.

Willshire needed a traditional tag in order to fit into a cultural category; he needed to be related to something, or someone. Identifying a synthesis point of Aboriginal culture and mythology by using examples of introduced species, and new phenomena sees the case for Willshire being incorporated as kin, or skin. Certainly, the proposition is largely circumstantial yet, it is probable, logical and inescapable when on Aboriginal controlled Country, at a time when traditional culture was powerful and prevalent. Relational bonds were allotted, then strengthened within Willshire's Aboriginal networks over time through professional relationships, personal experiences and intimate relationships with Aboriginal women. Willshire's own personal interest in Aboriginal culture gave him an openness, uncommon at the time, augmenting these connections and offering him an authenticity through robust paths of communication with Aboriginal colleagues. A growing reliance on the reciprocal backdrop lent itself to a deeper knowledge and personal commitment to his closest Aboriginal allies, as well as their relations and communities. Once basic cultural knowledge became routine, a deeper knowledge became possible.

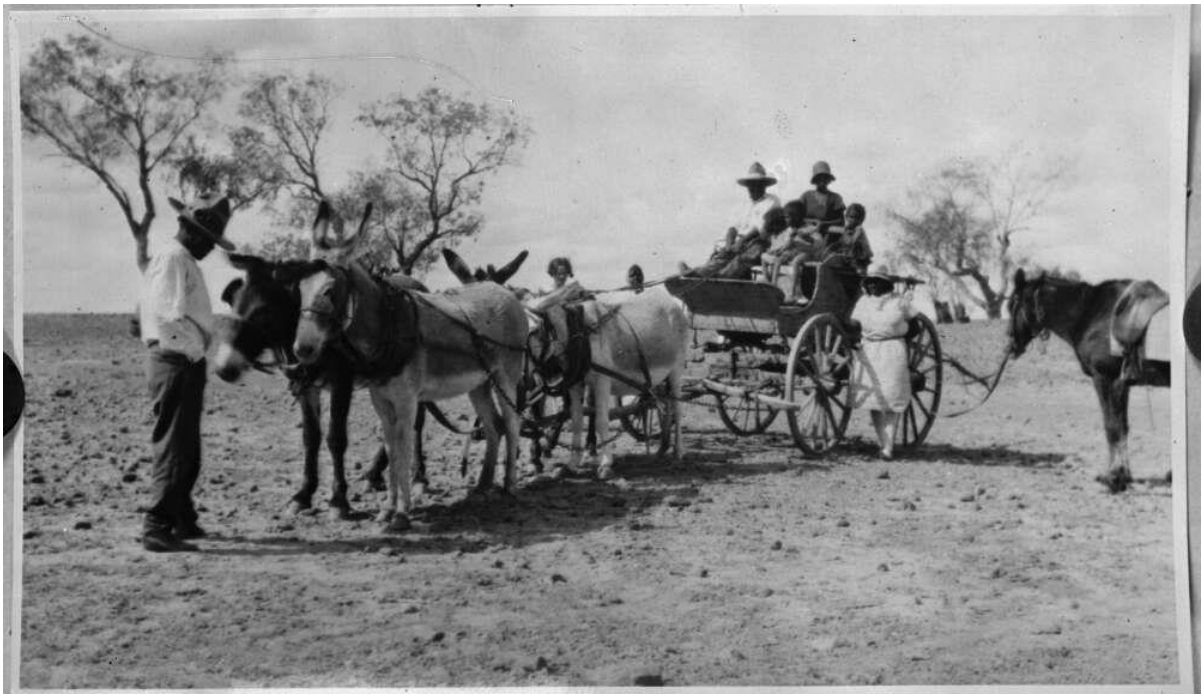
Like the new phenomena and introduced species that, one day, appeared on Country, Willshire was culturally identified, and became woven into the fabric of the group. His policing took priority, but no doubt was rolled into cultural responsibilities as well as an ongoing pursuit of sex and other activities, evidenced by his writings, and his extended, noteless, off-track journeys with his hybrid Aboriginal clan. This suited Aboriginal colleagues, who no doubt coupled the professional and the cultural by visiting relations and undertaking cultural responsibilities where they could. Keen states that family and the relational foundation of the Aboriginal world 'tends to override commitment to employment, and paid work' which impose 'less of a moral obligation for non-Aboriginal people' (Keen, 2010,p12). Willshire and his Native

trooper colleagues, over a period of years, shared life together in a world that was new for both.

"Two Men on Donkeys" – State Library of South Australia, Hermannsburg Collection, 1900



Men on Donkeys- Diamantina area 1912 – (John Flynn) http://nla.gov.au:80/tarkine/nla.obj-142446199



Aboriginal family with wagon and donkeys – North Australia Patrol- 1937 (John Flynn) http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-142503978/view

Water carting with camel and cart – Mid North Flinders ranges 1910- (Arthur Trengove) SLSA:Prg-1480-1-157

“Young Aboriginal people donkey riding” [B53626] – 1932 State Library of South Australia

5:

From a Social Darwinist Mist the Australian Self Emerges:

The bushman disperses, fleeces and forgets the native while indigenising himself

In the build-up to the end of the nineteenth century and Federation numerous cultural forces combined to form a national discussion that linked Australian identity and Australian independence. Art, literature, politics, science, economics, class, sport, indigeneity along with other influences came together to meld an imagined public picture of the national-self, and an idea of a unique Australian culture, or 'national mystique' (Ward, 1965,pV). This included the public construction of the Australian Aboriginal, who they were, where they were positioned and how they fitted in to their own, now capitalist, white dominated, colonial Australia. A shared sense of isolation, even pseudo exile, was unifying, liberating, for the white population whose colonies were maturing, and distancing themselves from the class norms and traditions that structured English social systems. A dissipation of shame from now established families coming from convict stock was morphing into a sense of legitimacy while the romance of the frontier 'was becoming the theme of popular late-colonial adventure fiction' as 'a contested frontier was just opening up in central Australia' (Nettelbeck, 2004,p191).

Dr Jean-Francoise Vernay, Franco-Australian literary historian, writer, critic and academic points out that the 'adventure novel was particularly *en vogue* from 1880 to 1900' coinciding with the crystallising of a national psyche and influencing the writing of Mounted Constable William Willshire (Vernay,2016,p43). As the population of Australian "native" born colonists succeeded numbers of those born elsewhere, a sense of homegrown pride, even arrogance, began to assert its dominance within public dialogue. Pangs of nationalism were powerful, however haunted and shamed by the common sight of sick, poverty-stricken Aboriginal families and groups, the survivors of the colonist onslaught of murder, rape, disease, and war. No matter how heavily the Indigenous presence was controlled, uprooted and run down by the tailored violence white bureaucracy endorsed, Aboriginal people were ever-present for whites to behold as they gazed into the reflection of a nationalist mirror searching for an identity they could call their own. Rolled in with the messages of Social Darwinism

were notions of the *noble savage* and the *brutal savage* keeping Aboriginal people 'in a suspended state of either elevated purity or perpetual evil' whilst leaving room for a feigned concern around an assumption that the Aboriginal race was dying out (Gardner,2016). With the entire 'Indigenous population believed to be hostile' the 'taciturn bushman', a stock character in the adventure–explorer novel, was canonised (Vernay,2016,p43). This is where the 'true Australian spirit' came from argues Vernay; 'the back of beyond' rather than along the Australian coastline where the bulk of the population lived (Vernay,2010,p42).

The bush was now the yardstick 'Australians used to measure mateship' with fiction set in rural and remote regions that 'were no longer synonyms for hardship and desolation, but places of reflection and communion with Mother Nature' (Vernay, 2016,p36). Through his writing and his actions, Willshire built himself in this image. Firstly, through his novice observations and word lists, then in his outlandish novella *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* (Willshire,1895). Willshire saw himself as one of these 'bards of nationalism' living an adventure in the vast geographies of Aboriginal Countries, capturing the cultural, but also dreaming, writing, demonstrating that pioneers in "the bush", did not need British endorsement for their freedom of thought, actions and voice (Vernay,2016,p30). Willshire, like many others, saw himself as a new breed.

Contempt for Aborigines increased with white contact. Visual experiences were what whites kept in their heads; there were no Aboriginal voices invited or allowed to be heard. Bludgeoned into the margins and ravaged by European diseases, Aboriginal people were gifted the cast-off clothes of poor whites; the health and 'physical appearance of urbanised Aborigines deteriorated' seeming 'more unclean' than the 'healthy uncontacted Aborigines' belonging to remote regions (Hartwig,1965,p416). Clothing was fundamental as a 'weapon of coercion in the colonising process, forced upon naked Aboriginal people in order to civilise and subdue them' but is also proved a vehicle for racist assertions around Aboriginal people possessing no aesthetic or ambition (Karskens, 2011,p4). Moreton Robinson states that 'Indigenous people were considered a primitive people, nomadic, sexually promiscuous, illogical, superstitious, emotive, deceitful, simpleminded, violent, and uncivilized' (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, Loc3111). Aboriginal people threatened whites with a 'complex mix of fear, pity and distaste' writes Emeritus Professor Tim Rowse; 'a fear of being robbed of precious

provisions and stock; a pity for Aborigines lost pride and independence; a distaste for their abject mendicancy' (Rowse, 1990,p143). As Robert Henderson Croll, writer (at one time for *The Bulletin*), adventurer, bushwalker and naturalist put it, the white discards Aboriginal people were forced to clothe themselves with 'transformed them from kings to beggars; the borrowed rags were an ass's head upon the natural man' (Croll,2014). Whilst Aboriginal people adorned their bodies 'in unique and personally distinctive ways connected to their culture, their stories, their Law' the naked body was seen as 'evidence of poverty and depravation by whites, with the act of giving clothing to Aboriginal people seen as a Christian kindness' (Karskens,2011,p10).

On the fringes of white society, the *known* Aboriginal was seen every day, begging and living a hand-to-mouth existence dependant on charity, and opportunism, whilst being caricatured in mainstream press and art. The *unknown*, "uncontacted" Aboriginal was perceived as especially dangerous going hand-in-glove with a fear of unsettled areas heightening the anxiety of "vulnerable" white. Vernay suggests this fear influenced a defining move in the development of colonial literature and culture; 'in spite of a natural world judged hostile and unrewarding writers of this period turned away from the urban environment and culture and reconstructed nature and the rural world' which included the original inhabitants cast as a life-threatening risk needing to be overcome (Vernay,p36,2010). Yet the complexity and diversity of Aboriginal cultures would have been difficult to communicate to a willing audience, let alone a poorly educated and aggressive mainstream, many of whom were fighting for their own economic and social survival whilst being absolutely certain of the extinction of the Australian race. Whites couldn't conceive of Aboriginal people being anything else but homogenous, mono-linguistic, and from the "stone age". Only those whites who studied and lived with Aboriginal clans such as Strehlow, Baldwin-Spencer, Gillen, Willshire and others had any meaningful cultural understanding, and even then, it was qualified with theory, filtered with interpretation, translated and communicated in dumbed-down prisms of whiteness, forming racist collective-nouns that became common slang used by science and abused by the general population.

The vehicle for the discussion on national identity was print media. The 1880s and 1890s saw the emergence of 'radical journals' such as '*The Bulletin,* Louisa Lawson's *Dawn* and the short-lived *Republican* in Sydney, the *Clipper* in Hobart, the *Tocsin* in Melbourne, the *Worker* and the *Boomerang* in Brisbane' and other publications

inspired within the zeitgeist of nationalist sentiment ‘closely interwoven with republicanism’ (Davies,2010). The principal of the publications was *The Bulletin.* Established in 1880 it published, developed, and promoted Australian writers heralding “Australia for the White Man” just below its masthead.

Vernay suggests that *The Bulletin* to a large extent was responsible for the ‘rise of a national consciousness’ with its peak circulation being 80,000 readers who were increasingly literate and politically active (Vernay, 2016, p3). Writers and artists like Henry Lawson, A.B. “Banjo” Patterson, Norman Lindsay, Louisa Lawson, Miles Franklin and later Barbara Baynton all contributed to *The Bulletin.* One of the Bulletin’s target readerships was the Australian Natives' Association, or ANA, (Willshire was a member) which aspired to find a true, national identity. The ANA’s ‘influence was strongest in Victoria, the home of the organisation’ its presence most prominent in the Ballarat region during the 1880s and 1890s (Sunter, 2001,p42). Some of its priority policies were environmental conservation, reserving parks for the people, protecting spa waters and the Murray River, enhancing Australian defence, social welfare which included the institution of pensions, a white Australia and free trade (Sunter,2001,p43). The ANA wanted to foster pride in being Australian by promoting the study of Australian literature and art in school, campaigning for the protection of native species, and establishing 26 January as ‘Australia Day’, but also using Aboriginal place names and initiating a ‘Made in Australia’ movement (*Australian Natives’ Association,* n.d.).

Whilst economic depression gripped the population the ANA was a public vehicle and verbal outlet that fired a desire for change. Victorian based, the ANA was open to all other Australian colonies and had a membership of around 17,000 at one time (Sunter,2001,p43). Within political activist ranks *The Bulletin* focused on pushing republicanism and the Imperial connection, expressing hostility towards the monarchy and aristocracy as a powerful combination of aspirational and real factors (*Australian Natives’ Association,* n.d.). ‘Because the ANA was first and foremost a benefit society, offering sickness benefits in an era when there was no welfare state, its appeal was to young working men-clerks, artisans, and labourers’ (Sunter,2001,p42). The influence *The Bulletin* had over Willshire was overt. The Adelaide Observer, Willshire stated, ‘is a good paper we all know, but the *Sydney Bulletin* holds the proud sway over all Australian print productions. It not only reaches the combos and the stockmen of Central Australia, but it reaches lepers on isolated islands, light-house keepers that

are difficult to approach, and wild aboriginals have used its red cover as the salient point of their costume' (Willshire,1896,p71). *The Bulletin*, Willshire heralded, 'is a bold, straightforward paper, that writes without fear or favour about any particular, and is handed from one man to another until all around discuss its contents' as it is 'without the slightest doubt , the very best all-round newspaper in the Southern Hemisphere, and must have on its staff some real live artists, whom the Almighty has endowed with more brains and method of using them than the men employed on some of those ranting, canting rags, who would if they could hang a man for shooting a treacherous, bloodthirsty native who pursues a solitary traveller to his nights' encampment' (Willshire, 1896, p72).

Whilst female voices found space in important literary platforms as authors and writers, men dominated the public political face of discussion and debate around national identity leaving the role of women largely unannounced. Miriam Dixson, author, researcher, feminist and academic argues compellingly in her watershed text *The Real Matilda,* that socially and culturally the push for national identity meant little for women (Dixson,1978,p21). Dixson suggests Australian women had settled into a 'uniquely low' standing with a self-concept that was 'curiously impoverished' demonstrated by community involvement being sparse compared to other colonies and democracies of the time (Dixson,1978,p213). Compounding this, the working-class male population exhibited broad, deep issues of self-confidence and mental anguish. Unable to 'compensate for their own feelings' of low self-worth, any acceptance of female initiative or autonomy was 'too mutilating' to comprehend and male emotional limitations were rationalised with domestic violence and alcohol abuse (Dixson,1978,p103).

Fencing-in the female reality was the virtue of mateship, a "sacred", male-only escape, seen as a major element of Australian national identity; it was 'an institution grossly antipathetic to women' (Dixson, 1978,p157). Professor Penny Russell, feminist, social historian and writer specialising in manners, race, class and colonisation suggests that women were excluded from 'central social relationships and from a national mythology which emphasised masculinity' (Russell, 1993,p28). Lacking power in the 'public world' women sought 'influence and validation in the private sphere' of the family home, connecting the servitude of lower class white women and the slavery of Aboriginal servants to a social rung that identified itself with a spotless and orderly

home (Russell,1993,p28). Houses were important emblems of white civilisation and order. The home represented oppression for women yet became transitional in forming a sense of female role and belonging within the period. *Goenpul* woman, feminist, author, academic and commentator Aileen Moreton-Robinson asserts in her 2015 work *The White Possessive* that colonisers sense of home and belonging was based on 'ownership as understood within the logic of capital' underscored by the 'legend of the pioneer' which offered a comfortable justification for dispossession of Aboriginal inhabitants alongside the use of enforced Aboriginal servitude in white homes (Moreton-Robinson, 2015,Loc355).

Working to maintain extreme standards of cleanliness, women staked their claim to making that part of the new land, their home or shack, civilised (Russell, 1993,p30). 'The geraniums at the doorstep of the selector's hut, the billies and the frying pans, sanded and scrubbed like silver and ranged on the wall of the miner's tent' were a 'poignant testimony to the devotion with which women carried out the mammoth task' (Russell,1993,p29). Whilst it was a solitary life, many 'pioneer women responded with exuberance to the challenge of a harsh environment', whilst at the same time, Dixson argues, men from all walks of life, professional and not, shared a 'profound unconscious contempt for women' which they weaved into an Australian ethos (Dixson,1878,p188). With unending space and distance labour opportunities of remote Australia gave men permission to leave their women. They explored, worked, travelled, hunted, drank and kept each other's company conversing with in an ever-developing vernacular, spending extravagant amounts of time to find themselves, either at the pub, or swagging by themselves in the silent bush. Their women were waiting; they expected.

Barbara Baynton stated that women lived in 'a bush where horror is scarcely redeemed by any human value' such were the sexualised and predatory behavioural norms of the male (McLaren, 1989,p55). This reality, in league with the perceived dangers of the bush and Aboriginal people were mythologised by male and female writers of the time. Baynton herself wrote chillingly and poignantly of women's hardships and experiences in nightmarish bush settings in revealing and outstanding short stories like *Squeaker's Mate* and *The Chosen Vessel* (which appeared in The Bulletin in 1896). In the dead silence of country night 'she waited motionless, with her baby pressed tightly to her, though she knew that in another few minutes this man with

the cruel eyes, lascivious mouth, and gleaming knife would enter' (Baynton,1900, p63).

Victorian-era attitudes to hygiene, perfection and purity were ever-present in the maelstrom of late nineteenth century culture, and they needed to be if the colonisation process was going to succeed for white invaders. Creating angst and hate against Aboriginal people, who represented "the other", whilst maintaining strict racial division and fear, were essential ingredients to white domination of the Australian landscape and the dispossession of Aboriginal people. The purity of the unsullied, black Aboriginal had been compromised by aggressive, criminal, white sexual and geographical incursion, resulting in the birth of many unplanned children and the creation of a fresh branch of extensive government administration, which initiated a complex system of oppressive and ludicrous racial categories with which to rule. Defining the "half caste", "quarter caste" and "quadroon" was critical in grinding Aboriginal people into what the mainstream assumed was extinction. This assumption dovetailed into the Social Darwinist convenience of the period, which did not anticipate such strong population growth coming from frontier sexual encounters. Wolfe asserts that 'white men's sexual exploitation of Indigenous women produced offspring who, growing up (as they almost invariably did) with their maternal kin, could be accounted native rather than settler' (Wolfe,1999,p29).

Willshire was an hyper-aggressive critic of inter-racial relationships saving his harshest vitriol for "half castes" who were a 'disastrous discovery' and a 'spurious compound of white and black parasites of a poisonous nature arising from a momentary sense of joy with a naturally uncivilised wanton' (Willshire,1896, p4). Willshire would not be silent on this topic further stating "half castes" ended in 'the bastard gift of a shameless nature, conjecturally condemned' (Willshire, 1896,p3). Yet his public demeanour obscured his not-so-secret yearning, passion, and open relationships with Aboriginal women. The construction of the Aboriginal man had been forged with the violence, aggression, war, resistance, death and salvation found in the newspaper editorials and in the diaries and journals of explorers; the Aboriginal woman was hidden in a deeper mystery. Sullivan argues the Aboriginal woman was seen 'of little desire to anyone' yet in reality she was 'subject to the desire of everyone' effectively suspending Aboriginal 'women's sexuality within the imagination of White People' (Sullivan, 2017,p397).

Emblematic of the xenophobic traits feeding and stratifying the nationalist discourse was the dominant framework of British anthropology, the scientific vehicle for Social Darwinism. Championed by celebrity explorer, academic and biologist Walter Baldwin-Spencer, along with collaborator and man-on-the-ground, Frank Gillen, or "Spencer and Gillen" as they were known, they 'became central figures in international anthropology' with contemporary peers and experts using their fieldwork and research as a baseline to 'illustrate their theories' whilst acknowledging their enquiries as 'major contributions' to anthropology (Kenny, 2013,p1). Their fieldwork had influence internationally. For 'Durkheim, the Arrernte realized primordial religion; for Freud, the beginnings of morality' and 'in their hands, the "Arunta" rapidly became Europe's icon of the primitive, the people on whom the West could project its own theories of genesis' (Austin-Broos,2009,p20).

Baldwin-Spencer's particular interest in biology gave his work an added legitimacy and evolutionary emphasis (Kenny, 2013,p3). Not only did the texts and fieldwork of Baldwin-Spencer and Gillen help influence and shape Government policy with regard to control and movement of Aboriginal lives (and arguably still do), they influenced views of various other influential thinkers such as Sigmund Freud (as in *Totem and Taboo,* 1913), creating a benchmark for the importance of Australian anthropology, scientific enquiry, even the emerging practice of psychoanalysis. But Baldwin-Spencer drove a competitive wedge between his group of hand-picked peers and thinkers and those who did not agree with his theories. This empowered him as the puritanical, supreme anthropological authority on Australian Aboriginal people and it was a position he used to pontificate, and discredit others in the field. Baldwin-Spencer's biographer, esteemed Australian archaeologist and academic Emeritus Professor John Mulvaney states 'the most violent character assassination during those forthright times involved Baldwin-Spencer' motivated by 'jealousy, a desire to monopolise knowledge of a region, or fame in being the first to communicate it' (Mulvaney,1993,p115).

Baldwin-Spencer enjoyed a mentor-like relationship with one of anthropology's global authorities, 'classicist and comparative religionist' and author of the landmark text *The Golden Bough*, James Frazer (Austin-Broos,2009,p19). Baldwin-Spencer's influence extended to influencing Frazer to 'expunge' any reference to Carl Strehlow, Baldwin-Spencer's main threat and target, from *The Golden Bough* (Veit,1990). Whilst

referenced and acknowledged by theorists in his home country such as 'N.W. Thomas, Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss' the painstakingly detailed work of the towering figure of German Lutheran Missionary and linguist Carl Strehlow (1871-1922), was consigned to obscurity and 'nearly unrecognised' in Australia and elsewhere (Kenny, 2013,p1). Baldwin-Spencer's brand of Social Darwinist anthropology espoused a top-to-bottom scale of human understanding, capacity, culture and refinement, at odds with German thinking which was not 'committed to an ideology of racial superiority' instead maintaining 'no one race or people was superior to another' professing the unity of humankind (Kenny, 2013,p4). Xenophobic hostility towards the German Lutherans of Central Australia contributed much to the overlooking of Strehlow's fieldwork and translations. Strehlow's efforts included the Bible in Arrernte (1919), and also in 1904 'an Aranda Service Book, *Galtjindintjamea Pepa Aranda Wolambarinjaka* which included 100 German hymns translated into Aranda and some of them set to Bach's church music' (Kenny, 2013,p28). Diane Austin-Broos also suggests that at a practical level 'owing to the common inability of British ethnographers to read German, Carl Strehlow's work is less well known, and was more easily criticised (Austin-Broos, 2009,P19). But Carl Strehlow wasn't the only worthy scientific rival Baldwin-Spencer white-anted.

Robert Hamilton Mathews (1841-1918), a professional surveyor, self-trained and self-funded novice anthropologist, worked with different Aboriginal groups and clans in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Matthews was a prolific researcher, writer and a believer in cultural diffusion linked with German ideas, rather than the overarching framework of Social Darwinism. This position alone gave Mathews an alumni and a readership 'in Germany and Austria' fuelling 'the scepticism about the theories of Spencer and Gillen' that he shared through correspondence with Carl Strehlow (Thomas, 2007,p228). Biographer of Baldwin-Spencer, veteran historian and academic, Professor John Mulvaney claims that during the closing years of the nineteenth century there were many anthropologists 'who felt dissatisfaction with the evolutionary approach to Aboriginal culture' (Mulvaney, 1990,p43). These included Germans in the field such as Friedrich Ratzel, Leo Frobenius, and Robert Graebner who all identified with '*Kulturkriese,* or the Culture-circle', which proposed 'geographical and temporal analysis at its heart' (Mulvaney, 1990,p43). Researcher, academic and author of RH Mathews' biography, *The Many Worlds of R.H.Mathews*,

Martin Thomas, suggests that ‘Mathews’ reputation was severely diminished by the campaign of his Melbourne-based adversary W. Baldwin Spencer, aided and abetted by Spencer’s close friend, A. W. Howitt’ (Thomas, 2007,pXI). Baldwin-Spencer, in concert with colleague, explorer and ethnologist Alfred William Howitt (1830-1908), again, used his influence with James Frazer to ensure the fieldwork and writings of RH Mathews would never be supported in *The Golden Bough*, to which Frazer agreed (Thomas, 2007,p8).

Doubts raised around “tainted” Aboriginal sources were a mainstay of Baldwin-Spencer’s criticisms of both RH Mathews’ and Carl Strehlow’s fieldwork and in this way, Spencer ‘stigmatised the long-settled communities of eastern Australia - the areas where Mathews worked in person - as anthropologically clapped out’ (Thomas,2007,p8). In order to maintain his anthropological ascendency Baldwin-Spencer ‘dispatched numerous epistles damning Mathews; the latter sent pleas for recognition, often to the same people’ (Thomas, 2007,p9). Whilst Willshire was not part of their high-profile academic stoush, he was regarded as an expert on Aboriginal cultures by many. Regarding his mode of information gathering Willshire relied on the empirical and focussed on observations and experiences that he found personally interesting, rather than applying a pure, broad, Social Darwinism lens. Willshire writes; ‘now and again the reader will come on a chapter of true aboriginal life, recorded as the result of actual observation by the author, as well as items recited on the testimony of the aborigines’ (Willshire,1895,p7).

It is extremely important to note that Carl Strehlow, Walter Baldwin-Spencer and Frank Gillen, worked with the same Aboriginal groups belonging to the Central Australian Arrernte constellation of clans, as well as surrounding clans in the region, all within a similar time bracket. Willshire worked with, lived with, and observed many of the same Aboriginal groups. Through professional means he arrived in the same region well ahead of the others. Differences in practice were fundamental, however. Willshire was a novice ethnologist who became an expert through experience, curiosity and a disciplined information gathering regime; his remote post and his profession demanding that he work closely and personally with Aboriginal colleagues, creating stronger relationships than would be the case with a visiting anthropologist. Strehlow’s ‘route to empirical anthropology was traced through German philology, the German Romantic Movement, Humboldtian cosmography, history and comparative

geography' whilst Baldwin-Spencer 'came through Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and other evolutionists', with his views weighted by professional expertise in biology, simultaneously raising the profile of biology in anthropology (Kenny,2013,p6).

Much of the Australian-British establishment saw the original Central Australians as representatives of an early and inferior stage of human development and narrated them as such. The central concern of the Germans was 'language, and the mythic corpus that was seen to be culture's main manifestation', unlike 'the British anthropological tradition, which dominated Australian discourse, German anthropology was largely based on a humanistic agenda, and as a result it was anti-evolutionist, anti-racist and anti-colonial' (Kenny,2013,p4). Different schools of thought and academic heritage led to different priorities and method, which Baldwin-Spencer helped make academically political. Baldwin-Spencer and Gillen championed the use of 'natural science as method using the taxonomic process of collecting, describing and identifying specimens' whilst Strehlow studied language as the centre of culture, 'it's semantics, syntax and semiology to specify a social life and its oral traditions' (Kenny, 2013,p6).

Strehlow, Baldwin-Spencer and Gillen were all hyper-sensitive, and overtly subjective about how pristine and authentic their Indigenous informants were. This measure of scientific integrity is important as it qualified and endorsed the credibility and legitimacy of field work. Spencer accused Strehlow of gaining all his information from 'Christianised aborigines' (Gill,1998, p114). Interestingly Baldwin-Spencer and Gillen valued Willshire's fieldwork 'highly' at the time it was published (Vallee,2007, p155). Mulvaney states that 'it has been attested' that Baldwin-Spencer was a fully initiated tribal member of the 'Arunda' yet 'neither Spencer nor Gillen made such extravagant claims' although 'classificatory relationships were assigned' (Mulvaney & Calaby 1985,p175). Baldwin-Spencer was outspoken on the importance of purity of sources, claiming his informants, were 'unspoilt' and 'authentic' rather than Strehlow's informants who 'conflated Christian doctrine and tribal tradition' (Mulvaney & Calaby,1985,p391).

Baldwin-Spencer claimed the same of fellow anthropologist and one time close colleague Alfred William Howitt (1830-1908), accusing Howitt's informants of being 'detribalised' and infected by the teachings of Christianity (Mulvaney &

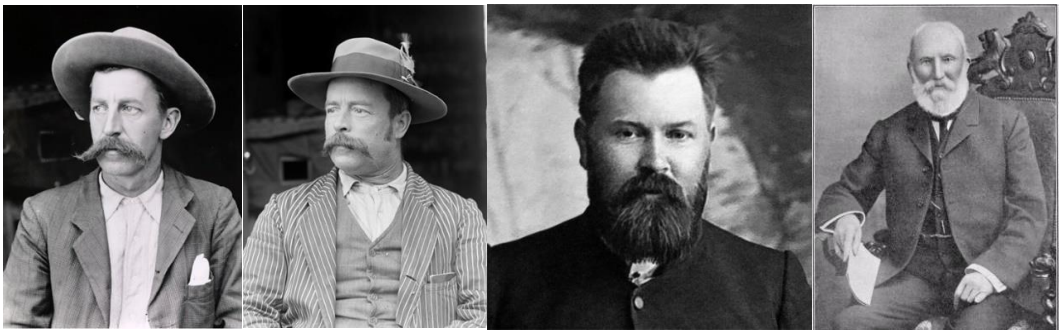
Calaby,1985,p394). Baldwin-Spencer 'disparaged Strehlow's informants but his own were safely beyond questioning' and in this sense 'Spencer was the classic example of the proprietorial anthropologist' claiming the Arrernte people as his own (Mulvaney & Calaby, 1985,p379). For Baldwin-Spencer, Strehlow, Matthews and others working with Aboriginal cultures at the end of the nineteenth century it would have been difficult to find an Aboriginal clan not impacted and affected by white ways; this idea itself made possible by Social Darwinism. Mulvaney suggests these anthropologists and ethnographers 'cajoled their way into the secret life of their informants' assuming objectivity and white entitlement 'which justified generalising their scraps of information into comprehensive general propositions'(Mulvaney,1993,p106).

Whilst in 1899 Baldwin-Spencer and Gillen created the 'most substantial corpus of ceremonial photographs from Australia' in *The native tribes of Central Australia* it is interesting to note that 'both of the photographers were keen to exclude European materials' from their photography, notwithstanding 'many of their subjects would have almost certainly worn European clothing' (Peterson,2006,p17). Interestingly, this outstanding collection of images, along with their detailed commentary contained in *The native tribes of Central Australia* contradicted the views of Baldwin-Spencer and Gillen suggesting Arrernte people did not possess the sophistication to partake in complex associations between ceremonial belief and reality, or, religion (Peterson, 2006,p17). Further, it is interesting to note that 'Spencer did not speak Arrernte and Gillen's aboriginal language capabilities were limited' yet Willshire was fluent in Arrernte and other clan languages, as was Strehlow (Gill, 1998,p96). Emeritus Professor Sam D. Gill, researcher, theologist, academic and author, argues in his fascinating book of 1998, *Storytracking: Texts, Stories and Histories in Central Australia* that much 'criticism has, and must, be made of this limitation to their ethnography' (Gill, 1998,p96).

For Baldwin-Spencer, James Frazer's ordered framework of man's stages of development and thinking (magic-religion-science) was the baseline for all life, and he stood to lose professional, social and historical standing if he admitted that 'there was anything religious about the aborigines' (Gill,1998,p102). Carl Strehlow lived for, and by, another immovable overarching framework that flavoured all of his work; he felt strongly that 'all the aborigines needed was to be led into the light of Christianity' (Gill, 1998,p102). Barbs flew back and forth between Baldwin-Spencer and Strehlow, up

until Strehlow's death in 1922, which left Baldwin-Spencer the opportunity to shape the history of the previous two decades with his influence and manipulation. Whilst Baldwin-Spencer and Gillen made it a regulation mode of their enquiry to observe, and sometimes, be a part of ceremony, Strehlow never attended any 'traditional cultural events, and he did not permit Christian aborigines to attend them' (Gill, 1998, p118). Further to this Strehlow promoted the 'abandonment of traditional culture as necessary to the introduction of Christianity' (Gill,1998,p114).

This obvious impediment to Strehlow's research gifted Baldwin-Spencer a soft target, as Baldwin-Spencer 'despised the mission enterprise because it refused to allow aboriginal people to continue their practice of this magical stage of their cultural development and because it introduced religion, albeit Christianity' (Gill,1998,p118). 'Spencer's interest in aborigines waned in correlation to the degree in which they ceased to practice precontact cultural forms' which underscores the power of his belief and commitment to Social Darwinism (Gill,1998, p118). Ultimately Baldwin-Spencer's efforts were connected to how advanced, or primitive, a culture was on the scale of human cultural and social evolution, or as Frazer puts it, 'the movement of the higher thought, so far as we can trace it' from 'magic through religion to science' (Frazer,1987, p712).



Academic ascendency through the dominant paradigm of Social Darwinism
- L to R: Walter Baldwin-Spencer, Frank Gillen (accessed 23/11/2017 - http://spencerandgillen.net/spencerandgillen) , Carl Strehlow (accessed 23/11/2017 http://reformation.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/persoenlichkeiten-der-reformationsgeschichte/carl-strehlow.html , and RH Mathews (National Library of Australia)

Personalities, and politics aside, the adventures and fieldwork of these founding fathers of Australian anthropology was bound up in a greater narrative that helped flesh out the developing Australian soul. Vernay argues pertinently that the physical hardship belonging to the myth of the solo pioneer and explorer 'became an allegory of the psychic journey' of national introspection (Vernay,2016,p4). Prior to becoming a policeman Willshire had been a drover. He thrived in the isolation of Central

Australia, building his 'heroic' self-image through his writing, which was distinguished by traits of marginality and solitude whilst being committed to *the quest* and cutting to the 'heart of Australian pre-occupation' (Vernay,2016,p7). Willshire's extensive patrols, off-map travels (in and out of uniform) demonstrated a passion for exploring, wandering, carefree and uncomplicated sex, physical strength, and survival abilities whilst growing his knowledge of Indigenous bushcraft, and culture. The emerging, hallowed aura of the Australian bushman pioneer was an entity that had mimicked, then relieved, Aboriginal men of their knowledge and unique skillsets to create a pale skinned, inferior replacement, fitting the white, Australian outback genesis.

Willshire was one of the many bushman living in remote regions, indigenising himself. These themes are especially present in Willshire's novella, but also in his ethnographical works. Nearly every Australian exploration initiative undertaken by whites since 1788, was presumably accompanied or consulted by, Aboriginal guides or trackers, yet by Willshire's time, self-sufficiency was the glittering prize of the Australian bushman linked with ideas of personal and national independence. To take on the harsh Australian landscape and live by wits, knowledge, exploiting a natural synergy with the land, (like Aboriginal people) became a form of purity on its own. A mainstream, and extremely influential exponent in pushing the solo bushman-pioneer narrative and the romance of the frontier was writer, explorer, journalist, and poet Ernest Favenc (1845-1908). Academic, author and historian Catherine Bishop, and Associate Professor and author Richard White suggest that Favenc was 'instrumental in crystallising the romance of Australian exploration in mainstream culture' (Bishop & White,2015,p52).

A contemporary of Willshire's, Favenc used a 'deliberate' Social Darwinist stance to 'almost single-handedly' create 'the canon of notable explorers' complete with 'inclusions and omissions, peppered with forthright opinions' that were dismissive of Aboriginal efforts in opening up country and keeping whites alive most of the time (Bishop & White,2015,p51). Favenc intimated in all of his writings including fiction, poetry, and journalism 'that mixing too closely with Aboriginal people would lead to the white race's degeneration' (Bishop & White,2015,p51). Aside from reputations built by Aboriginal skills and performance alone, such as the Native troopers with the Port Phillip force for example, many explorers and other whites shared meaningful personal relationships with Aboriginal guides, some having openly friendly ties that expressed

warmth, praise and thanks for the skills and companionship of Indigenous colleagues. These included an admittedly paternalistic Major Thomas Mitchell, a household name in the colonies at the time. Yet Favenc's exclusion of a meaningful Indigenous contribution in his history of exploration reflected 'a far more deliberate social Darwinism than many of his peers' (Bishop & White,2015,p52). Having an authentic profile as someone experienced in the bush gave Favenc traction in the mainstream as the authority on Australian exploration. Favenc's 'interpretation dominated explorer historiography' openly minimised Aboriginal roles in the 'unfolding mythology of the lone hero and the pioneer' purposely positioning Aboriginal guides as possessions of white master figures, and ludicrously stating that Indigenous knowledge was 'of little assistance to Australian exploration' (Bishop & White, 2015,p52).

Favenc made these claims knowing full well that Aboriginal people had no real voice in the matter, and there would be no hint of criticism. In the preface of his magnum opus, *History of Australian Exploration 1788-1888*, Favenc writes the 'reader has but to consider the immense area of country now under pastoral occupation, and to remember that each countless subordinate river and tributary creek was the result of some extended research of the pioneer squatter, to realise this' (Favenc,1888). Favenc dedicates this mammoth text to the emerging country of Australia, which he hopes will be a 'prosperous, contented, and self-governing community' (Favenc,1888). Other written works by Favenc include *The Explorers of Australia and their Life Work* (1908), as well as works of short fiction, poetry, children's books, and novels, one of which being *The Secret of the Australian Desert* (1896), which speculates on the death of Ludwig Leichardt in a world containing a "lost civilisation". In this work, rather than using Aboriginal Australians, Favenc invents an 'ancient partly civilised race' which allows him to "civilise" Indigenous people through subjective sketches with his own pen, essentially scrubbing Aboriginal people out of the national picture (Favenc, 1895,pV). It is no surprise that Favenc's illustrations of the "ancient partly civilised race" resemble traditional Aboriginal archetypes strongly. Favenc's volumes on exploration were regarded as the supreme authoritative text within the study period and well beyond, even though they militate against widely known and acknowledged Aboriginal involvement in exploration, policing, tracking, guiding, and rescuing white invaders.

Another prominent influence contributing to a mainstream image of Aboriginal people was Archibald Meston (1851- 1924). Also a contemporary of Willshire's, Meston was described as a 'journalist, historian, politician, protector, ethnologist, orator, crocodile hunter, athlete and explorer' (McKay & Memmott,2016,p1). Growing up in Ulmurra, New South Wales, he was exposed to Aboriginal cultures as a young child, and when he turned 19 he spent six months Queensland 'rambling through country districts' (Stephens, 1974). As much as anything else, Meston was a showman. His jack-of-all-trade knowledge allowed him to use the business model of public lectures and large-scale public performances to produce a theatre of Aboriginal cultures on stage. Meston picked up on a market fuelled by curiosity and the information void of city dwellers relating to Aboriginal cultures. In 1891, copying the travelling "Wild West" shows from America Meston raised a troupe of Aboriginal men, women and children drawn from Queensland and the Northern Territory.

This thrown-together clan populated Meston's 'Wild Australia Show' which built itself in the image of the travelling American shows like Frank Carver's 'Wild America', Harmston's 'American Circus' and 'Wirth's Wild West Show' (McKay & Memmott, 2016,p3). Many of the American "Wild West" shows toured east coast Australia in the 1890s with their performances being circus-like in their scale, using horsemanship, cowboys, Native American imagery and faux ceremony, as well as a tableaux of frontier violence to format performances emphasising a history based on the shared story of colonisation (McKay & Memmott, 2016,p3). Meston's Wild Australia Show came together in 1892 and included a nostalgic 'tableau of the massacred swagman' which evoked pity and rage at once in impressionable colonial audiences (McKay & Memmott,2016,p5).

Recording well attended performances in Brisbane and Sydney, the Melbourne leg of the 1892 tour of the Wild Australia Show saw Meston and his business partner argue and fall out, leaving the show in disarray, as well as the 30 strong Indigenous troupe who found themselves without wages and keeping company with Victoria Police being 'left destitute in Fitzroy' (McKay & Memmott, 2016, p5). Meston's reputation was impervious to this embarrassing blow and he maintained a vocal and respected presence in different influential spheres of society, including Government, through which he had a direct effect on the Aboriginal population.

Like many of Meston's peers, ideas of purity and contamination, dominated his views and activities. Rejecting the pervasive Social Darwinist ideology that foretold Aboriginal extinction, Meston pushed a complimentary view based on racial and social purity, where Aboriginal people were dying due to 'exposure to alcohol, opium and other urban vices' (McKay & Memmott,2016,p2). Meston's admiration for Aboriginal people only extended 'to those who were fine physical specimens and as yet uncontaminated by the vices of civilisation' and he had no use for 'tobacco smoking blacks' living on the fringes (McKay & Memmott,2016,p2). Meston made his debut as a showman in September 1891 by 'presenting two lectures on Aboriginal ethnology at Brisbane's Theatre Royal' with part of the proceeds going to the 'Bribie Island Mission' to which he had a supportive and logistical connection (McKay & Memmott,2016, p3). An advertisement in the Queensland Punch dated November 1st 1892 calls Meston 'the well-known Queensland writer and Explorer' being 'the greatest Living Authority on the habits, Customs, Dialects and general Ethnology of the Australian aboriginals' (McKay & Memmot,2016,p187).

Meston was significant as a contributor to the public discourse on Aboriginal people, and his views, no matter how misguided and inappropriate fed a willing public all along the Australian east coast with his well-attended lectures and events. Alongside having seven children Meston's physical and administrative output was prolific being involved with commerce, business, events and politics specifically affecting in one way or another the whole Aboriginal Queensland population. 'Meston's activities also highlight the narrow line of demarcation that existed at the time between ethnology and entertainment, enabling him to claim scientific credibility for his observations of Aboriginal life that were mostly more sensationalist than accurate' (McKay & Memmott,2016,p1). Yet his input into Aboriginal affairs led the 'colonial government to enact the *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897* – an item of legislation that has since come to be regarded as the epitome of Aboriginal oppression' (CadetJames et-al, 2017,p37).

Using his popularity as a platform for his views on Aboriginal welfare, Meston was a supporter of reserves to which Aboriginal people 'could be moved to protect them from civilisation's vices' (McKay & Memmott, 2016,p6). Meston's most monumental brainchild is the audacious, living, breathing, arch of Aboriginal people, created to celebrate the 1901 royal visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall. This outlandish,

surreal, and thought-provoking visual production brings together his showmanship, business acumen, and his overt paternalistic view of Aboriginal people.

Another colonial writer, explorer, adventurer who contributed to the pre-Federation public profile of Aboriginal people was Arthur James Vogan (1859-1948). Author of the 1890 fictionalised travel-adventure-memoir, *The Black Police: a story of modern Australia,* Vogan was born in England, immigrating to New Zealand as a child. Arthur Vogan found himself drawing on the same subject matter and social interests as Ernest Favenc and William Willshire, which he used to drive his narrative and populate his writing. Vogan also saw himself as an adventurer as much as a writer, having an intersection with Meston, with a strong focus of his work is being based in Queensland, where Meston had influence over Government policy relating to Aboriginal affairs. Vogan is described as 'atypical of those who advocated better treatment of the Aborigines' as he was not an 'urban-based' liberal or clergyman; more an 'outdoor type' (Cryle,2009,p21).

Certainly, Vogan built a self-image from the same frontiersman-like mentality possessed and championed by Favenc, Willshire and Meston. Unlike Willshire, and Favenc however his approach to recording and writing was realist in style, blunt, and unromantic, aiming for shock value rather than political justification. Vogan is not overly influenced by Social Darwinism in his observations; he is more interested in human behaviour connected to the growth of the colonies. His writing observes injustice, highlighting the see-through ethical standards of the colonial life relating to any sense of equality, and the battle of colonists to survive economically, and socially, at the deadly expense of the original inhabitants. Vogan had the experience of living in two colonised countries where Indigenous cultures and peoples were prominent, their plight political. This may have given him a more thorough perspective on the colonisation process, and how a Western, market based, white culture affected traditional cultures.

Trained as a surveyor, he was also a journalist and illustrator with the Auckland Star and the Bay of Plenty Times in New Zealand. In 1885 Vogan settled in Sydney, and travelled to New Guinea, a journey funded by the Geographical Society of Australasia (*Historic Photographers of Pittwater,* 2018). Soon after this he followed his thirst for adventure working as a cattle drover travelling through Queensland to Alice Springs.

This journey offered valuable social experiences of a fledgling colony and economy and gave him much material for his book. Detailing Vogan's own explorations, observations and experiences of Australian colonies, the heart of his book *The Black Police* narrative belongs to the treatment of Aboriginal people, and the use of Aboriginal police, particularly in Queensland. Vogan prefaces his book; thus, 'in the following story I have endeavoured to depict some of the obscurer portions of Australia's shadow side. The scenes and main incident employed are chiefly the result of my personal observations and experiences; the remainder are from perfectly reliable sources' (Vogan,1890,p26).

The Black Police is filled with real characters and conversations found in bars, public houses, cafes, droving cattle and is intertwined with personal reflection and opinion inflected using fictional characters. It represents itself as a sort of historical dark tourism. On the recruitment of an unidentified young Aboriginal servant girl, Vogan records a conversation in a public house where he hears that 'she was only about six years old then, and had got her leg broken above the knee with a bullet. She'd have got away' but 'the dogs found her in a hollow log' (Vogan,1890,p44). A woman tending the bar in response states 'what's wanted here is a Black war like they had in Tasmania' (Vogan, 1890,p42). Vogan observes Aboriginal people he comes into contact with stating that they 'stalk, rather than walk, as they move about, with long, from-the-hip strides and the slightly-made, calf-less leg; the brilliantly-expressive yet bloodshot eyes' (Vogan,1890,p90).

Vogan's observations of relations between Aboriginal people who appear to be unknown to each other are also insightful and correspond with the experiences of other explorers, adventurers, and police observations, especially with the reputation of the Queensland Mounted Native Police. 'As a member of an alien tribe, Carlo returns the hatred of the station blacks with interest' (Vogan,1890,p155). "Carlo", is mentioned again as the flogger of 'Dina' and another Aboriginal woman who are being punished for unknown misdemeanours; 'the yells and screams' are 'heard down by the stockyard, where the boss is standing admiring their graceful, naked bodies as they writhe beneath the lash wielded by the brawny Carlo' (Vogan,1890,p156). Vogan also records a description of the uniform of the Queensland Aboriginal Police emphasising that it is an icon and 'consists of a linen covered shako, blue-jacket garnished with red braid, and white duck trousers; brown leather gaiters reach to the "boy's" knees, and

he wears an old pair of his master's enormously long spurs on his "Blucher" boots' (Vogan,1890,p171). As he is 'in marching order', a brass cartridge belt, containing Snider cartridges, is slung, after the fashion of a 'sergeant's scarf', around his body (Vogan, 1890,p171). Inspector Puttis of the Queensland Native Police is described as 'a small, well-made man, wearing enormous spurs (nearly a foot in length), and habilited in the semi-uniform of an Inspector of the Queensland Black Police' and as he 'marches into the room' he is 'immediately noisily welcomed by all the men present' (Vogan,1890,p145). Inspector Puttis demonstrates the colonial attitude towards Aboriginal people, reflecting a consensus; 'no missionaries, no Black Police very soon. A Black War, like they had in Tasmania, would soon result. No more niggers for us to disperse' (Vogan,1890,p178). Recording this dialogue as an interested bystander Vogan is an important, neutral, interlocutor, underscoring the legitimised racism and hate towards Aboriginal people contained in the capitalist situation of the settler-invader.

Through capturing what he has heard and seen in Australian colonial life, Vogan's text both questions, and confirms colonial culture, whilst being a sort of investigative journalism at the same time. He certainly does not hold back reporting his experiences, with the reader getting a sense that Vogan himself would prefer not be involved in some of the tawdry verbal exchanges, as there is no way he could, or would, change the minds of those present, nor would they listen if he tried. Highlighting the violent and brutal brand of racism endemic in the colonial culture, Vogan shows a racism that is not exclusive to Aboriginal people but spread to other cultures used to build the colonies, in particular Pacific Islander and Chinese. Through his 'Slave map of Australia' Vogan illustrates the "blackbirding" trade whereby South Sea Islanders, "kanakas" are coerced to leave their Island homes and toil in the cane fields (Vogan,1890,p387). The burgeoning Trade Union movement is not immune to his criticism, with Vogan accusing the Union movement of being blind to the specific forms Australian slavery and maltreatment of Indigenous people stating 'Trade Unionism, has not risen against this slave business. Chinamen and kanakas are hounded down by the Australian working-man' for 'beastly immorality, combined with Oriental diseases' when these 'are things to be avoided in a young colony' a place where 'all men should be healthy voters and thinkers' (Vogan, 1890, p223).

Similar to Willshire's appeals to the South Australian government on how he would improve the lot of Aboriginal people, the main fictional foil in the book, 'Claude Angland', suggests that if he had his way 'no attempt will be made to force civilization or education upon the adult natives, as this never has any practically good results' (Vogan,1890,p387). 'The children and young natives will be brought up apart from the adults. Infanticide, which is now the rule, not the exception, amongst station blacks, will disappear as the natives are granted protection, a means of earning food, and relief from the burden of keeping their offspring' (Vogan, 1890,p387). He broaches the question of interracial relations in a partisan tone, stating 'any white man making one of these girls his wife will obtain a quantity of land and small amount of capital' (Vogan, 1890,p388). This is interesting as Vogan's book, almost in total, is a checklist of racist rants, comments and deeds actioned by whites who are dedicated to wiping out, or waiting for the extinction of, Aboriginal people. Like Willshire, Vogan reproduces newspaper pieces to illustrate and evidence his themes. One of the reproductions is the below limerick penned by "BACCA" originally published in an 1889 edition of the South Australian *Lantern*. It reveals a level of racial hate that is sickeningly casual, institutionalised, and emphatic (Vogan,1890,p215).

"oh it's only a nigger, you know;
It's only a nigger, you know;
A nigger to wallop, a nigger to slave,"
To treat with a word and a blow."

" It's only a nigger, you know;
A nigger, whose feelings are slow ;
A nigger to chain up, a nigger to treat
To a kick, and a curse, and a blow."

" It's only a nigger, you know;
It's only a nigger, you know ;
But he's also a brother, a man like the rest,
Though his skin may be black as a crow."

[By]" BACCA."

It is unclear whether including this poem is a form of protest that holds a mirror up to the colonist reader. In the epilogue of *The Black Police* the reader is exposed to reproduced letters "to the editor" that appeared in *The South Australian Register,* on the 16th December 1889, from writers named 'Gauntlet' and 'Veritas' (Vogan,1890,p390). The placement of this material is a device also used by Willshire in his work *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* . These letters are used as a demonstration and a contemporary commentary on the brutal and inadequate legal apparatus of the colony. They bookend the fiction and with eye-witness account and politically moderate opinion, highlight the presumption of innocence assumed in the cherished standard of natural justice, theoretically accessible to all British subjects. The letters act as a scathing criticism demonstrating the depraved, inhuman and lawless reality doled out to Aboriginal prisoners of the time, especially in remote areas, such as Willshire's domain. This is compounded with a reminder that Indigenous languages remain unrecognised by the court system.

It is worth quoting at length. 'Here then is the case of a man, who under English law, which considers a man innocent till proven guilty, tortured for about a fortnight with needless precautions. He is then tried in a language he does not understand, even his solicitor confessing in open court his inability to communicate with his client' (Vogan, 1890, p390). With regard to the charges brought against the Aboriginal man in this case, the writer 'Veritas' in a letter entitled 'The Condemned Aboriginal "Jackey"', is obviously familiar with Central Australian life, and he remonstrates, suggesting that it would be almost impossible to find a legitimate suspect in such an environment that was this particular Central Australian crime scene. 'In conclusion I would ask how the police don't know the existence of the several sly-grog shops around the scene of the murder. These are the cause of much debauchery amongst the aborigines, the cattle drovers along the road supplying the wherewithal' (Vogan,1890,p390).

Another letter writer 'Gauntlet,' goes on to say 'The atrocities practised upon the natives in various parts of Australia— sometimes in retaliation for treacherous and barbarous acts committed by them, but very often without any such excuse—have been horrible, and even now it is undeniable that there are some who think as little of enslaving or even shooting a black as of killing a mangy dog. This certainly cannot be said of all run-owners. Even in the far interior there are men who have gained the confidence and goodwill of the aboriginals by treating them with kindness and giving

them fair payment for what they do. There is too much reason to believe, however, that the system of compulsory service' or, as Gauntlet describes it, of '" downright slavery", accompanied by cruelty, does prevail. The protection professedly afforded to the natives in remote portions of the country is a protection only in name' (Vogan,1890,p390).

'Gauntlet' continues that in one particular court case 'the prosecution had immense advantages over the accused' (Vogan,1890,p390). Noting the date and geography from where the prisoner was transported, it was a probability that Willshire knew of, or had something to do with, the subject of the article. *The Black Police* differs from the works and narratives of Meston and Favenc, who like Willshire, validate a necessity around frontier violence and racism in order to achieve colonisation, whilst weaving a romantic view that assures white readers of future security connected to the deadly process. Favenc, Willshire and Meston are focussed on the growth, and development of the white world, and how their own personal and heroic experiences contribute to the archive of national independence and Australian Federation. Vogan is accepting of his observational role, whilst being curious and questioning of the white world and its journey.

There are two brief reviews of Vogan's book available. One at the time of release, the other historical. In 1892 the *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* states that 'Mr Vogan aims at too much in his Australian story' and that 'the main purpose of the writer' was to 'denounce the atrocities committed against the Aborigines (*Reviews,* 1892). Not to mention that 'the book is by no means pleasant reading' (*Reviews*,1892). Seventeen years on in 1907, *The Black Police* is revived and reassessed by the Brisbane *Truth* suggesting that 'A.J.Vogan's book "The Black Police" is a work that never received the recognition which it deserved' (*The Black Police,* 1907). The reviewer is possibly reflecting on the devastation that Aboriginal people have suffered between 1890 and the publishing of the article, stating that 'the author thus deals with the doings of white dispersers'(*The Black Police,* 1907). Vogan has no loyalty to any political bent, he is unashamedly brutal, and does not couch the racist, jarring truth of the time in any specific political context.

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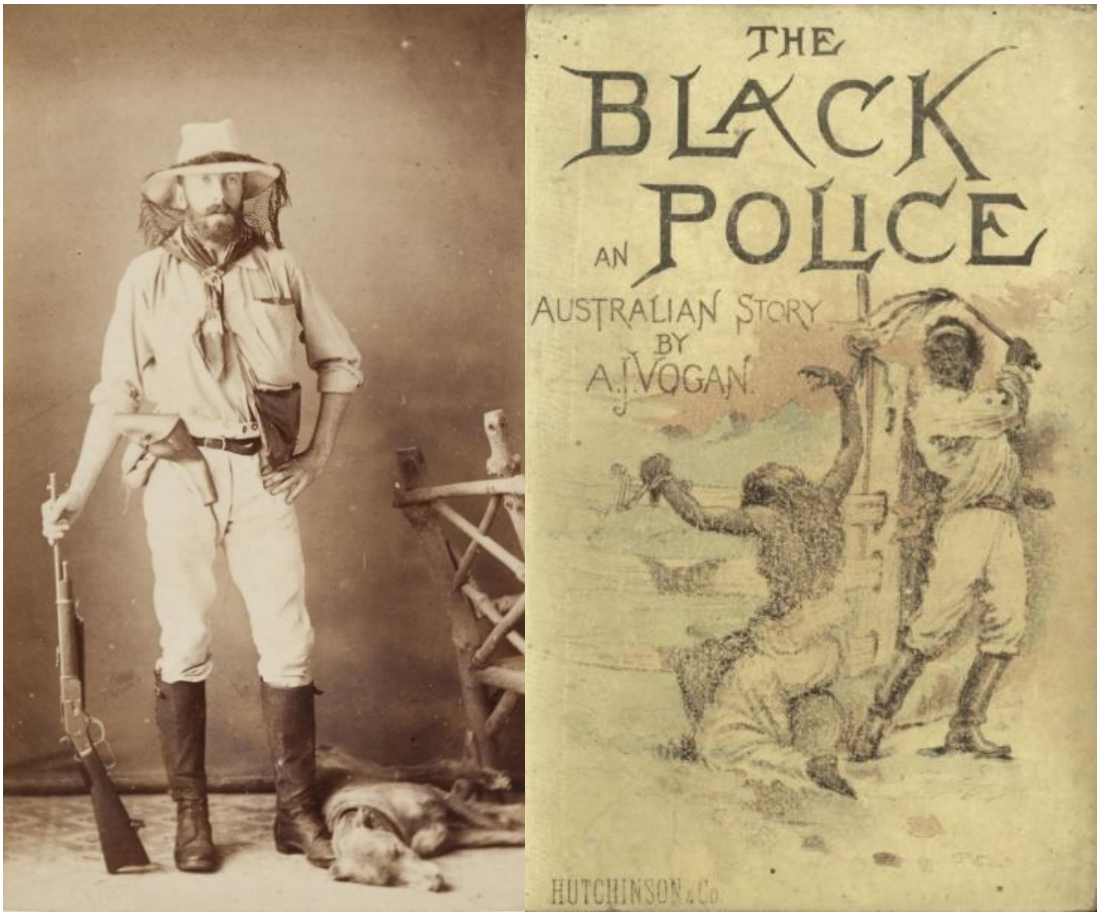
From: The Queensland Punch, Nov 1,1892 (Mckay & Memmot,2016, p187)



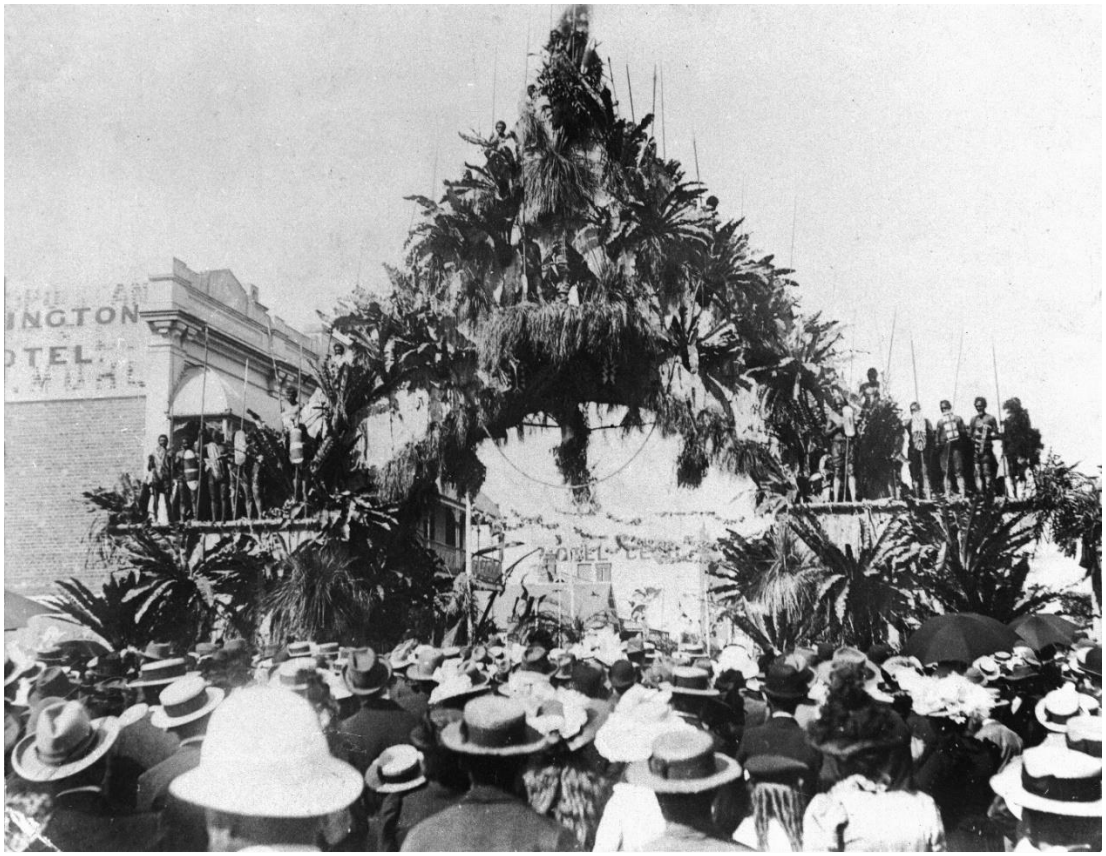
New Zealander A.J. Vogan, a self-styled Australian outback explorer, adventurer, and author of the explosive 1890 work *The Black Police,* with cover showing an Aboriginal constable flogging an Aboriginal woman: Image of Vogan from State Library of NSW (a8338001h).

Not afraid to don the black tights, Archibald Meston in fine fettle demonstrating his familiarity with Aboriginal weapons
Sources –Left: The State Library of Queensland – Right: Queensland Museum

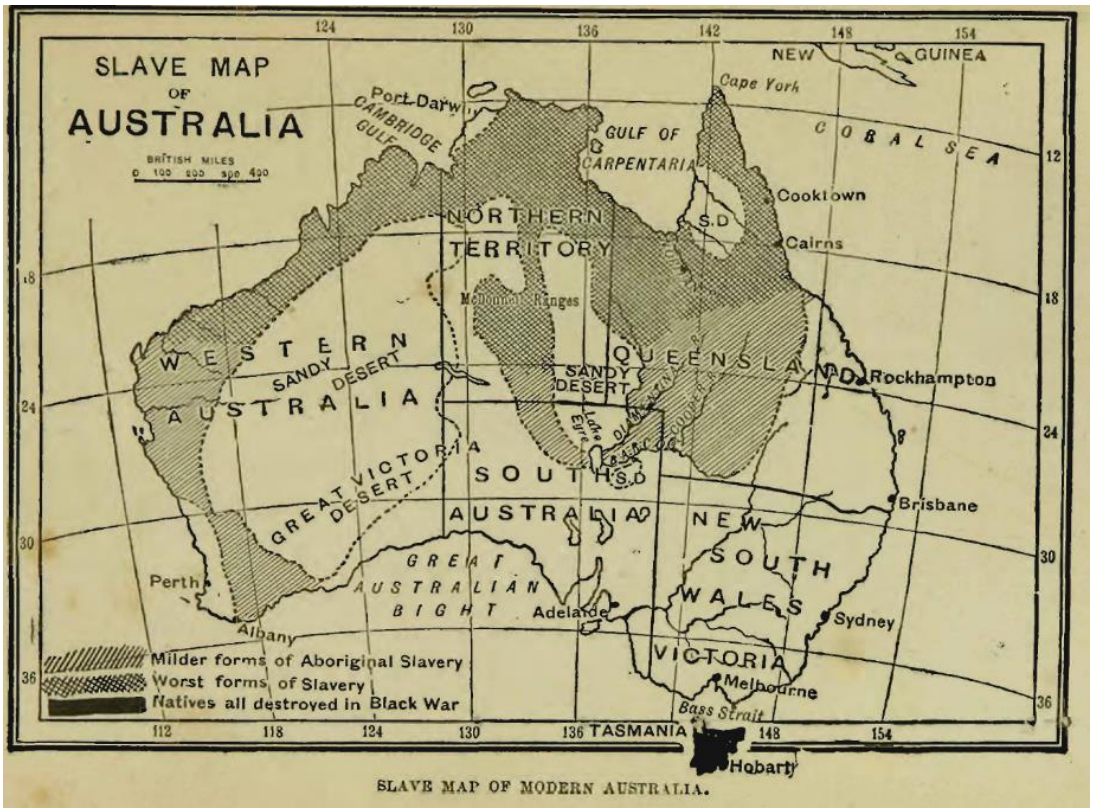
Favenc's 'ancient, partly civilised race' looking fairly similar to Indigenous Australians (Favenc,1895,pI)

Above: Tableau for promotion of Meston's Wild Australia Show – A Native trooper killing stationary Aboriginal attackers (Gallery Booklet and website)- photo originally from Charles Kerry/UQ Anthropology Museum Collection.

A Christmas postcard of Archibald Meston's Aboriginal cast from the Wild Australia Show that toured Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

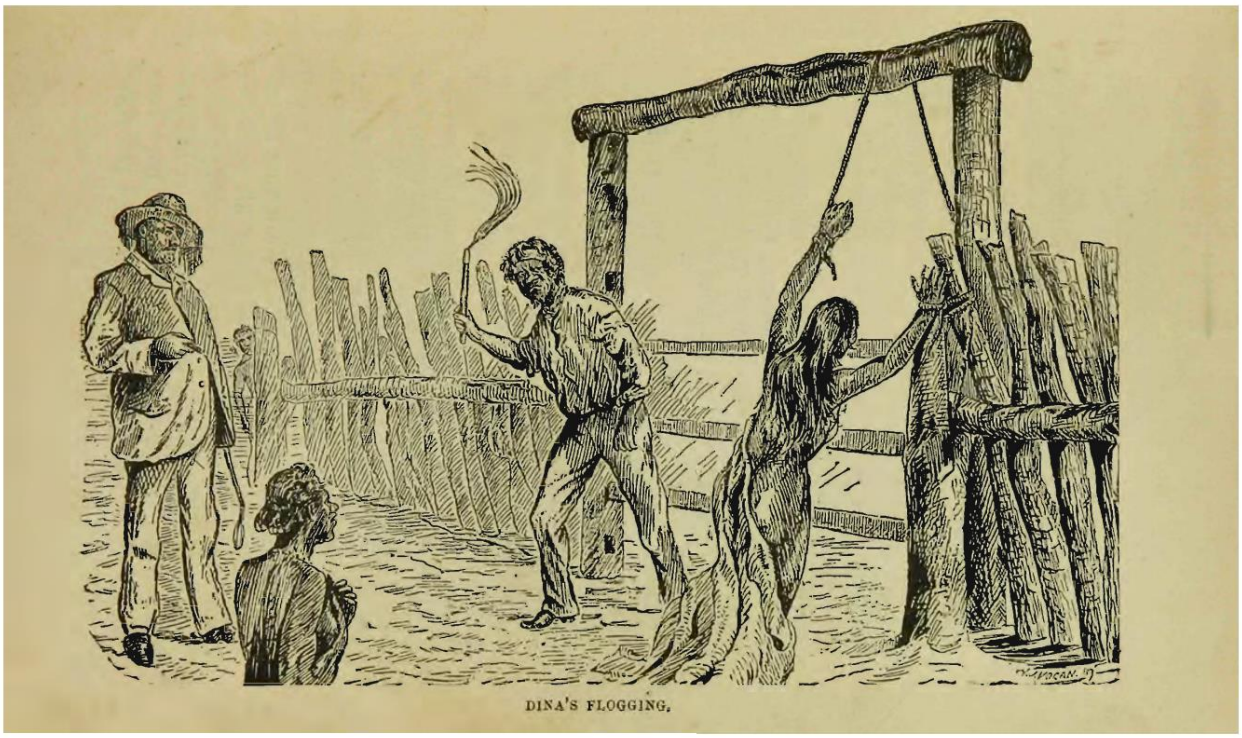


A living, breathing production: Meston's Aboriginal Arch, an immense white production of Aboriginal Australia, was erected for the visit to Australia of the Duke and Duchess off Cornwall 1901 (John Oxley Library, SL QLD, Negative # 149581)



SLAVE MAP OF MODERN AUSTRALIA.

AJ Vogan's slave map of Australia, from *The Black Police* (Vogan,1890,p387).



"Dina's Flogging" from *The Black Police* (Vogan,1890,p157)

6:

Truth in Fiction:

Love and sex in a time of colonisation

Based on extensive police and personal experiences with Aboriginal men and women in the remote Australian bush, Willshire was keen to contribute his fictionalised memoirs to the archival corpus that was forming the reference library of pre-Federation Australia. Written during Willshire's time in the Victoria River District (1894 -1895) but largely based in the landscape of Central Australia, *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* was born from Willshire's off-map journeys with his hybrid Aboriginal band, their families, and his lovers. There was no police or personal journals kept for his journeys in the periods between 15 July 1888 to 30 August 1888, and 14 October 1888 to 20 December 1888 (*A Policeman's Lot*, n.d.). There were no notes for Willshire's lengthy absence in 1889 either, even though some of this time was spent on official police business.

These journeys were at a time where Willshire's personal life was prioritised over policing, where his relationships with Aboriginal women, and men, were championed in the name of adventure, lust, and the untrammelled freedom he had become accustomed to. In the year 1889 Willshire was spotted in the Adelaide central business district by Alice Springs store holder, Wesley Turton, chaperoning a young Aboriginal woman, along with other Aboriginal colleagues (Turton to Swan & Taplin,1891). Between May 1889 and August 1889 Willshire's movements and whereabouts were 'unknown' to his superiors, yet between January and April 1889 Willshire was on legitimate police business in the 'pursuit' of an Aboriginal witness for an outstanding matter throughout the Musgrave Ranges (Valee,2009,p168).

Some of this time, no doubt, was also used to order and manage new supplies and equipment for Willshire's own project, the new Boggy Hole police camp; a place where Willshire had one, maybe two Aboriginal wives, sharing his life. Using paid time for multiple purposes was nothing new to Willshire. By now, with social and cultural roots partially in the sands of Central Australia, he had a broad range of personal and policing responsibilities to complete, yet such a shoddy lack of accountability was in line with Willshire's self-governed record keeping standards. Willshire's senior,

Inspector Brian Besley, was prompted to demand retrospective log entries and notes for the period Willshire had been silent, almost the entire year of 1889. Willshire put up a 'whining resistance' to Besley's requests, yet after a period of stonewalling agreed to recreate a police journal from the establishment of Boggy Hole police camp as of August 3rd 1889 (Vallee, 2007,p168). This represents a significant concession from police command to a head strong, inattentive Mounted Constable, and demonstrates Besley's weariness in debating a pigheaded officer, based hundreds of miles away via letters and telegrams.

The dates of Willshire's secretive tours of 1888 represent abnormal timeframes to be absent from his police post and away from settled areas. There are no notes, no journal entries, no letters, no hints. There are only his books. Notwithstanding July and August being winter months, albeit it in a region in drought, these are significant periods to be deprived of reliable sources of food and water in such a remote, Aboriginal dominated region. These excursions came at a time where Willshire is 'less concerned to avoid work than to preserve his secret life' (Vallee, 2007,p168). It must be assumed that Willshire's Aboriginal colleagues had significant input into the planning and execution of these journeys. Even with his now excellent bush skills and local knowledge at their best, it is hard to imagine Willshire self-sufficient for periods of this length. Knowing the seasons, the route, the Country for such undertakings was critical. It is without question there must have been a heavy reliance on Aboriginal hunting, tracking and management skills to economise pre-packed supplies, and ensure survival on these noteless forays.

These journeys, undertaken only with other Aboriginal men and women, underscore his high level of trust and comfort in his Aboriginal colleagues, as well as a significant degree of collusion, being off duty for so long in such an unaccountable fashion. The risky and obscured nature of these journeys fit strongly with Willshire's taste for adventure, his penchant for writing, fiction, daydreaming, his active indulgence in sex, but also his desire to simply do what he wanted to do, whenever he wanted to do it. 'As a youngster, I imbibed a love for roaming in solitary places – a desire I shall never lose' (Willshire, 1895,p33). The scenes for these off-track rovings are captured in the pages of *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia*. Willshire, or "Oleara" (Arrernte for "string") as he is named, describes his band; 'among the fourteen natives who accompanied me on the trip west were four men, four women, two babies and

four girls; named Ernuity (turkey), Okerry (green), O-lon-ga-ra (palm), Nor-reely (zig-zag)' (Willshire, 1895, p32). His own character, Oleara, is a bona-fide member of this, near all-Indigenous group of traveller-adventurers. Oleara is sometimes a leader, sometimes a group contributor, sometimes an observer, and in some scenes, he is a dancer, and lover of Aboriginal women. Interestingly, at times Willshire assumes a second person viewpoint in this work, where he talks from a group perspective to the reader, communicating a sense of ownership over the subject of collective cultural knowledge by using the pronoun 'we'; for example, 'we have a poison bush in the sandhills called Chilla' where 'we pick a handful' then 'we put them in a small hole of water where we know emus drink' and 'we watch' until 'the emus have taken a drink' when 'they become giddy' and are easy to despatch (Willshire, 1865,p20). Willshire makes clear that 'the other civilized boys who belonged to Oleara's party also carried young women with them on this memorable trip. *Nolens volens* they would come; they would follow in spite of any and every objection, and as for Chillberta, to her it was a picnic, and at any price she would insist on being one of the party' (Willshire,1895,p16). Using terms like "we" in league with the phrase 'my migratory tribes', in describing his band of travellers, Willshire, a white man in a black world, essentially indigenises himself (Willshire,1895,p9).

Whilst there are no notes, or journals for these real-life off-track explorations there is striking eye-witness testimony that makes it possible to track some of the movements of Willshire and his Aboriginal colleagues. A document that can assist in placing Willshire within the unclear 1889 timeframe is the 1890 *Report of Messrs. Swan and Taplin on their Visit to Finke, & c., Mission Stations* which 'inquired into the charges and counter charges which have been made as to the treatment of the aborigines of the southern part of the Northern Territory by police, pastoralists and the missionaries' (Swan & Taplin, 1890, p1). Henry Charles Swan (1834-1908) and Charles Eaton Taplin (1857-1927) were appointed by the South Australian Government to collate evidence and investigate relevant personalities implicated in regular Aboriginal contact and alleged abuse, many of whom being linked to Willshire. With twenty one witnesses giving evidence over a period of weeks, Swan and Taplin investigated allegations made by missionaries concerning police 'which had been published in the press' alongside 'counter allegations' made by Willshire (Nettelbeck & Foster, 2007,p83). Whilst the enquiry focussed on violence towards Aboriginal people from

missionaries and police in the Alice Springs region, it inadvertently shed light on the characteristics of an unknown frontier “combo” society.

Evidence and testimony confirmed suspicions relating to Willshire and his companionship with Aboriginal women, but also his carefree attitude to taking leave from the police force. Alice Springs storekeeper, Wesley Turton revealed that in the ‘middle of last year’ (1889) ‘I was in Adelaide’ and ‘I met M.C.Willshire, two native trackers and a lubra, I spoke to them, I knew them all’ (Turton to Swan & Taplin, 1891). This fits with Willshire’s calendar of 1889 and his journeys between May and August of that year. Turton’s testimony is illuminating, stating that he ‘met them first looking in the J.M. Wendt jewellers’ shop in Rundle street and on another day in King William Street. The woman was dressed in female attire’ yet ‘I have not seen any women going about in this way with the Police’ (Turton to Swan & Taplin, 1891). The scene that Turton describes demonstrates Willshire’s open and public confidence with what must be perceived as an unguarded relationship with a young Aboriginal woman, possibly Nabarong (Ereminta’s first wife) or Chantoogna. Fellow Swan-Taplin enquiry contributor George Heidenreich, a Lutheran minister, and initial Superintendent of Hermannsburg Mission, asserts Willshire had come between Ereminta and Nabarong by showing a strong interest in a relationship with Nabarong (Heidenreich to Swan & Taplin, 1891).

Turton, saw Willshire ‘twice in the central retail streets of Adelaide’ accompanied by an adolescent Aboriginal woman and two Native police (Vallee, 2007,p168). Crystallising the Turton testimony was Willshire’s sometimes police colleague Mounted Constable Robert Hiller, who stated that he had seen Willshire within this timeframe. ‘Willshire had come twice to Port Augusta on duty’ (a necessary stop on-route to Adelaide from Alice Springs) and he was in the company of an Aboriginal woman who was dressed only in a ‘man’s shirt’ (Hillier to Swan & Taplin, 1891). The evidence tendered to the Swan Taplin enquiry from Mounted Constable Robert Hillier went deeper, penetrating the personal life, and truth, of Willshire with descriptions of his relationships with Aboriginal women, further corroborating Heidenreich’s statement linking Willshire to Nabarong and thus Ereminta (Roger).

Hillier states Willshire ‘had two black boys (trackers) and a lubra. The lubra was not the wife’ of either Aboriginal trackers (Hillier to Swan & Taplin, 1891). ‘I distinctly say

the Lubra' with Willshire 'was not the Lubra of any of the black trackers whilst I was in his camp at Alice Springs' furthermore 'Willshire was in the habit of taking lubras about with him' (Hillier to Swan & Taplin, 1891). Willshire himself stated, in a written submission to the Swan-Taplin Enquiry that 'the Missionaries don't like white men that take lubras about with them & keep them as their mistresses' (Willshire to Swan & Taplin, 1891). The detailed evidence of Willshire, and others, contributed to this enquiry showed an awaiting readership of politicians, police, religious leaders, social advocates, pastoralists and public figures the complexities in colonising such remote, Aboriginal dominated regions; the report also showed an open acceptance of Aboriginal women as partners by some of the official men who lived there. It is assumed that Willshire knew this report would be read by a range of public stakeholders connected to his wellbeing and professional development. This report may have been a release of pressure for Willshire, somewhat normalising, and naming, a practice that was now established, a "combo" life he was sick of hiding, making him even more relaxed and composed with regard to his public relationships with Aboriginal women.

Other meaningful evidence offering clues to Willshire's relationships is photographic. In January 1888 Port Augusta photographer James Taylor (1846-1917), took two tableau photographs of Willshire, with Native troopers Jack, Billy, Undudna, Undiah, Chckylia, and Ardahkee, and Mounted Constable Wurmbrand. The photographer was re-creating a scene from May 1887, where M.C. Wurmbrand had arrested two Aboriginal murder suspects near Erldunda in the *Mparntwe* region. Yet in the photographs Willshire is the lead figure of authority. Author, historian and academic, Professor Amanda Nettelbeck states that Willshire was not even present at Erldunda at the time of these particular arrests (Nettelbeck & Foster, 2007,p66). Knowing how rare it was for Willshire and Wurmbrand to transport prisoners, Nettelbeck is also suspicious of the real reason for Willshire's trip to Port Augusta for a photo shoot; proposing the underlying goal of that particular journey may have been for Willshire to deliver the manuscript of *The Aborigines of Central Australia* (1888), to his Port Augusta publisher (Nettelbeck & Foster,2007,p64).

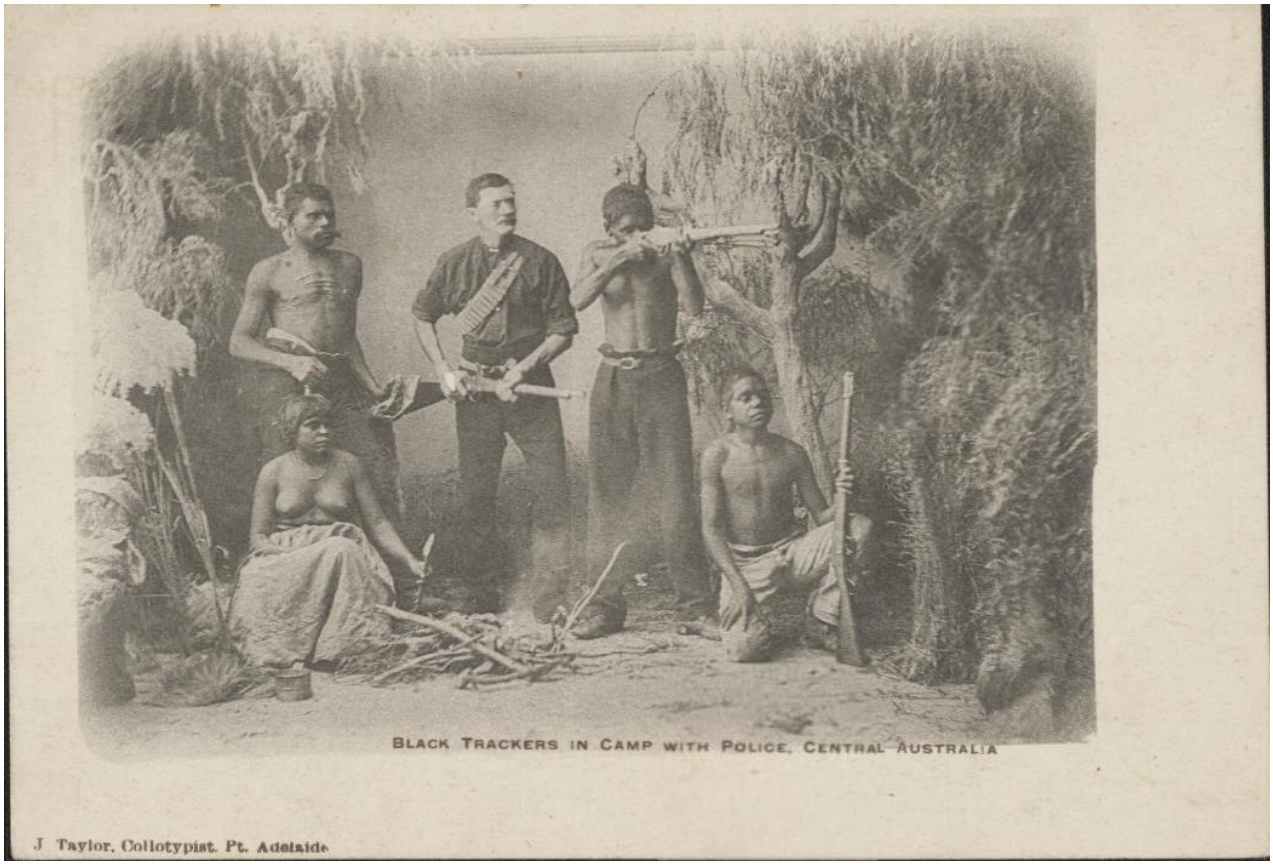
In Taylor's photographs Willshire is driving force behind the activity, the drama, whilst the arresting officer, M.C. Wurmbrand, buries his head as if he does not want to be recognised, or present in the picture. How much creative direction Willshire had into

stage managing the scene is unknown, yet it is reasonable to assume, with his sizeable ego present, Willshire contributed his own ideas, making sure the male-pioneer profile he wanted to espouse was portrayed. This assertion is corroborated by an article under the heading 'The Centenary of Australia' drawing attention to this photograph in the January 24th issue of the Port Augusta Dispatch; the opportunity to be a part of commemorating a centenary of colonisation whet Willshire's appetite for fame, offering him some sort of role in the story, and credit for helping tame the wilds of Australia (*The Centenary of Australia,* 1888). Corporal 'Chiklyia' 'points out to M.C. Willshire a smoke, which he perceives in the distance marking the camp of the hostile blacks' (*The Centenary of Australia,* 1888). It is hard to imagine Willshire not having some input into the written article either. James Steele, academic and researcher focuses on this very imagery as part of his 2014 Dissertation, *Photography and history, culture and identity* through the Australian National University. Steele states that 'Taylor's tableau does convey the complicity between the European and native police' but it is also a 'naturalising' of the 'European occupation of the continent' (Steele, 2014,p72).

Aboriginal actors in all images look relaxed in their roles. It would be valuable to know what Aboriginal beliefs and views on photography were at the time, if any, and if there were any objections, or attractions. In another tableau creation a year later in 1889 the same photographer, James Taylor, lists his studio on this work as 'Pt. Adelaide', not Port Augusta; this fits neatly with Willshire's Adelaide visit (*Black Trackers in Camp with Police,* 1889). Willshire is pictured again, this time with a female Aboriginal associate alongside Native troopers (*Black Trackers in Camp with Police*, 1889). It is unclear what commemorative reason Willshire, or the photographer, had for taking this 1889 picture. The black-shirt picture certainly confirms Wesley Turton's placement of Willshire and his young Aboriginal female friend in Adelaide in 1889, yet these pictures as a collection are valuable evidence corroborating Willshire's familial relationships with Aboriginal colleagues. In the 1888 pictures Willshire is the dedicated policeman, but in the 1889 picture he is not wearing police uniform. He is dressed in black like an independent hunter or bushman, leaning forward waiting for his Aboriginal colleague to shoot at the target.

The female Aboriginal guide is prominent to Willshire's right, gesturing toward, and focusing on the subject of the pursuit; she is encouraging the activity. Vallee suggests

this woman is Chantoonga, the mother of Willshire's daughter Ruby (Vallee,2007, p185). This is another conscious move by Willshire to communicate the truth of his world, the way things are in his reality. Willshire wants the world to know that he is an adventurer, a bushman, and that he enjoys an enviable, exciting, Australian life. Being comfortable and familiar with Aboriginal people, men, and women, throws an immediate, welcome focus onto him as a unique and emerging breed; an expert in Aboriginal cultures, a man who is a pioneer, someone who has tamed the outback.



More of a bushman than a cop: tableau photographic evidence of Willshire's Adelaide trip in 1890: with Aboriginal colleagues in the J.Taylor Port Adelaide studio, including a female, most probably Nabarong (or Chillberta) – National Library of Australia Bib# 6646001
https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/6646001

Left to right: Jack; Billy lies prostrate, MC Willshire, Corporal Chickylia, Ardahkee, Undudna, MC Wurmbrand, Undiah
Photograph: James Taylor – 1888 (State Library of South Australia- Image #B44610)
https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+44610/continue

Left to right: Undiah, MC Wurmbrand, Undudna, Ardahkee, Corporal Chickylia, MC Willshire, Jack; Billy lies prostrate
State Library of South Australia Image #B13496
https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+13496/continue

It is interesting to briefly recall the scientists and anthropologists who worked with the same clans and groups as Willshire. Baldwin-Spencer, Gillen and Strehlow all lay claim to meaningful relationships with senior Aboriginal men, based on information gathered from them. None of these men are as personally familiar with their Aboriginal colleagues, or "subjects", as Willshire however, or as vulnerable as Willshire is within his Aboriginal relationships. Baldwin-Spencer, Gillen and Strehlow did not *live* the lives of their Aboriginal informants. Their motivations were governed by overarching frameworks existing in a world of academic and religious corroboration, a hierarchy of mutual congratulation where capitalist ends were always at the forefront. Willshire lived, learned, and contributed to the lives of his Aboriginal colleagues on Country, travelling Country with essential local knowledge, alongside Aboriginal colleagues who, it is clear, were their own masters for significant periods even in the company of Willshire. *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* (1895) captures these moments; the closeness of personal relationships, the ever-changing and inspiring geographical landscapes, the routine familiarity with the men around him. This work also gave Willshire a platform that served a few functions.

It was an opportunity to humanise his adventures with the remote Aboriginal peoples he had fleshed out in his earlier ethnological works; people who were not faceless, wooden subjects of study, but characters with warmth, movement, voice, idiosyncrasies, and beauty. It was also a vehicle for Willshire to cast himself as a sexualised Australian-bushman-pioneer who had ventured into an Indigenous world, survived, and come out as an expert authority on Aboriginal cultures. The book was also an effective way of highlighting himself as a useful contributor to the history of the colony in contrast to the negative press his murder trial had brought both him and the police force a few years earlier in 1891. It is reasonable to assume that Willshire also harboured hopes of a literary career with this book as it was an ambitious, fictionalised, monumental departure from the previous recording of cultural observations and language. Giving public readings in cigar-smoke filled rooms or discussing matters of culture with influential gentleman, Willshire imagined his name being used in the same sentences as others like Favenc, Baldwin-Spencer, Gillen and other anthropologist bushmen household names. He may well have imagined a serialised version of his book being published in his favourite magazine *The Bulletin.* Reproducing newspaper articles and published letters supportive of his trial acquittal Willshire used *A Thrilling*

Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia as a way of emphasising his innocence – a subject that followed him to his grave. This gave Willshire a sense of having the last, selective, word on the matter whilst taking steady aim at certain individuals, such as his nemesis Frank Gillen (Willshire,1896,p24).

Personal vendettas and politics aside, *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* is Willshire's testament to personal enlightenment and emotional freedom revealing truths about the nature of Willshire's relationship with himself, his Aboriginal colleagues, and the Australian landscapes that he came to understand and adore. The fictional aspect of Willshire's writing allows a speculative freedom he can never explore or enjoy in his previous pseudo ethnological works. *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* stands as an extraordinary one-of-a-kind relic and dedication from Willshire to his Aboriginal lovers. In Australian literature such a gushing, public tribute from a white man to a black woman is exclusive to Willshire. His saccharine descriptions of Aboriginal women as beautiful, attractive, mysterious, and desirable wholly defy convention and expectation, contradicting the negative, pervasive ideals of Social Darwinism.

Even though Willshire can never be considered a trailblazing advocate for Aboriginal causes, some of his writing related to Aboriginal women rails against everything colonisation and Social Darwinism espoused. Willshire makes no secret of his fascination of young Aboriginal women, based on lust, and habitual, obsessive, female objectification, yet, I submit there is compelling evidence of legitimate love, companionship and adoration for individual Aboriginal women who were treated as wives in a cultural sense. I argue Willshire was in love for a significant period and that *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* is reportage of actual events blended with a projection of desired imaginings, fantasises, but also, an emphatic written monument from Willshire to his Aboriginal lovers; an epitaph to his murdered lover Nabarong; something he needed to do knowing his white world would not permit his desire for Aboriginal women as partners or love interests. It is there for all to see, for all time. It is worth quoting in full Willshire's honey-dripping dedication to Chillberta, the Aboriginal guide-cum-heroine in *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia*, who was: 'A light-hearted girl, who loved the free air of the ranges and the excitement of the chase. When dark clouds overshadowed our trackless way, the

sunbeams of her heart dispelled adversity; when surrounded by scenes of the deepest historical interest and scenes of desolate wilderness, I was assisted to record items of aboriginal lore, that will be handed down to posterity. When apprehensive of native hostility by my whilom foes, in the mighty centre of a mighty realm, she did not desert me, but returned with my party into civilisation on the Finke River, and died as she lived, chaste as the morning dew, she has now gone to that undiscovered country, from whence no traveller returned' (Willshire,1895,p4).

Beckoning the pioneer myth, Willshire uses this work to mimic those that have influenced him like Favenc; the poet, journalist, bushman, explorer who 'Willshire greatly admired' (Vallee, 2007,p171). 'Travelling for many years with blacks only, hardened by disappointment, travelling by night a wild, devious, and untrodden track to reach water I once knew, to find the hole dry - these are the experiences that make the bushmen of Australia' (Willshire, 1895, p8). Willshire's writing style in *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* jags from a standard fable telling format, into patches of detailing traditional cultural information and word lists, punctuated by ranting and political opinion, with a regular dose of voyeuristic sexualised soft-porn, or what some would class as fitting into the romance genre. 'The subject is a rough one' Willshire admits, stating that 'the author himself is a rough diamond' which hints at all sorts of indiscretions, including his behaviour with Aboriginal women (Willshire,1895, p6). Willshire sets his white readership up for his amorous adventures, affirming piously that 'immorality does not begin until immorality is committed' yet in the very next line he qualifies his experiences stating 'no-one is infallible' (Willshire, 1895,p6). Maybe this is a human moment for Willshire; one of the few, where he comes as close to shunning his white world as he can, with a 'black gin as a guide' (Willshire, 1895,p7). His almost-apology here implies a sense of personal guilt, and that he is, or has been, caught between two incongruent worlds.

In the narrative Willshire (or Oleara) is an adventurer-cum-policeman with Chillberta being one of his three main Aboriginal female companions. The other Aboriginal women selected for special attention, 'Marmer-truer', and 'Nor-reely', are subjects of Willshire's personal scrutiny but do not receive the same one-eyed dedication as 'Chillberta', who 'died as she lived' as 'chaste as the morning dew' (Willshire, 1895, p1). *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* must have been considered

literary taboo and pseudo-erotic at the time of publication. Possibly aimed at a core audience belonging to Willshire's social and professional networks the reception this work received publicly is impossible to gauge as there appear to be no available book reviews or opinion pieces connected to the work. The spectrum of distribution this text received and how available it was on a retail or public basis is also unknown. From a critical perspective Willshire's writing is overwrought, highly manicured, repetitive, and dull. Perhaps this explains why this work was not reviewed; especially in a context of the outstanding writers being published at the time in *The Bulletin.*

Due to the inconsistent voice within the narrative, it is assumed that no appropriately qualified person assisted Willshire in editing his work. Willshire manages to iron out dynamics that may have had potential in the storyline with a ball-by-ball description of his self-esteem, his ego, his sexual presence, his manliness, his politics and his strong feelings for Aboriginal women, Aboriginal culture, and the outback life. This tiresome overwhelming word-weight however, makes his occasional admissions of personal discovery jump from the page, these being written with a genuine honesty, passion and I would argue heartfelt truth. His position as a superior, paternalistic, patriarchal being is also plain for all to read. His blurred descriptions of sex and women spike throughout the text, going beyond adoration into a predatory and perverted realm; Chillberta, is 'a maiden whom nature had endowed with a most sweet disposition', 'comely and amiable' she was 'budding into womanhood' (Willshire,1895, p9). In a standard fashion, he describes regular sex between Native trooper colleagues and Aboriginal women, stating that 'there were several other girls besides Chillberta, but none so prepossessing; yet all were amorously inclined. Some of them were of irregular shape or poor looking; nevertheless, Oleara's civilized blackboys took to them very kindly and helped them to that with which nature has endowed them' (Willshire,1895,p13).

At one point in the story Aboriginal hosts gift Willshire (or 'Oleara') 'a virgin of sixteen summers, which in accepting, was a marriage, and the blacks thought it was consummated and perfected by Oleara because Chillberta ate with him' but as Willshire qualifies thinly, 'she slept by herself' (Willshire,1895,p13). Mixing a sense of new nationalism with voyeurism Willshire writes 'I laid down to sleep in this glorious southern land, under the Southern Cross, and, by the glare of the fires, I could see the athletic natives of both sexes enjoying themselves' (Willshire, 1895, p40). After

Willshire (Oleara) himself dances naked and painted-up in an non-specific ceremony, he describes 'Marma-truer, who in her pensive languor, looked seductively beautiful and, with many others, encored me; in fact, one lubra threw a bunch of wild flowers to me' (Willshire,1895,p32). Later Willshire (Oleara) can't help but notice 'the graceful undulations of the bewitching Marma-truer, who went out with the others to get quandongs' (Willshire, 1895,p41). It is certain that Willshire was a sexual participant in these situations. Noor-rely, another female guide along the journey was an exceptional standout for Willshire (Oleara) who suggests 'they were all good blacks' still 'the palm for beauty must be given to Nor-reely, for she was the flower of the family, and the most talkative' (Willshire, 1895,p33). Sleeping with Aboriginal women offered by the Aboriginal "chief" 'seemed only consistent and natural' to the white fellow as 'he had been long accustomed to aboriginal love and doctrine' (Willshire,1895,p12).

In the end, Willshire (Oleara) leaves his Aboriginal friends, kin, lovers and they are devastated; assuming this white man, who had shared so much life with them, and was culturally connected to them, was going to be part of their band, their kin, forever, which was arguably and believably, a possibility Willshire seriously wrestled with at one point in time. 'They were surprised and would not believe it; they thought I was going to wander about with them for the rest of my natural life' yet 'I am indebted for the happy times I have experienced, and for the positions I hold under the Crown' (Willshire,1895,p42). As a white single male, who had spent significant time in the Central Australian desert and other remote regions living only with Aboriginal clans and communities there must have been broader colonial pressure socially, and certainly from within Willshire's own family to marry. Considering the regular and strong evidence of Willshire's Aboriginal female infatuation, it is intriguing to contemplate and imagine discussions between Willshire and his female Aboriginal partners around domesticity or breaking off their relationships. Someone so self-centred would have been entertaining the best strategy for himself. It must have been difficult for him to imagine simply slipping away, especially in those moments when he felt most connected to his Aboriginal partners Chantoonga and Nabarong.

These things would been going around and around in his head no doubt, although there is no mention of this emotional environment in *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* other than his dedication. As an underdeveloped and over-confident

writer, Willshire perhaps was not equipped to approach such valuable subjects, although, at times, he comes close. Honestly applying his emotional freedom to his adoration of the physical landscape, somehow, he communicates a status no other white, but himself, or ironically, Frank Gillen, could have ever imagined. Those special moments in the text are obscured by the horrible heaviness of boredom in the wordy bulk of his work. *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* reports Willshire's sexual observations of others, as well as his own real life risqué sexual activity, but if Willshire thought he was writing himself as an unforgiving, pioneer-bushman, he is undermined by his own desires as a poet and a vulnerable romantic, albeit holding a smoking gun and a neck chain. Such is the complex, pathological man that is Willshire. 'This is not the first time I have found myself in undreamed of solitudes, such as my wildest aspirations never sought' (Willshire,1896,p32). Had his police transfer not been approved, Australian literature may well have received another instalment to Willshire's fiction bibliography, and Australian history may have had an open polygamous relationship between a South Australian policeman and an Aboriginal woman, or women.

If there isn't already enough in Willshire's writing to make direct and solid connections between Willshire and Aboriginal women, we have eye-witness accounts that confirm intimate relationships. This is not in doubt. Willshire carefully codifies his writing ensuring it pays homage to the sexual and personal satisfaction he experienced with Aboriginal women, but it also records his truth; physical, emotional, and historical. He wants his place in history. Whilst clear, documented evidence is rare, Willshire's writings, the testimony of others, and importantly the traditional framework of Aboriginal cultures, assists to confidently inform a firm picture of his circumstances.

For Willshire, a good knowledge of Aboriginal kin and culture gifted him a strong sense of personal, mental and social freedom within Aboriginal circles and the wide-open land. There was broad trust between Willshire and his Aboriginal colleagues. If he worried about having a rock smashed into his head whilst he slept, he didn't write much about it. One of the few recollections that belies this was experienced when in the Victorian River region. In his final written work, *The Land of the Dawning* (1896) specifically focussed on his time within Billinara Country and surrounds, Willshire states that 'I had never allowed wild natives to walk behind me before, and I can only account for it in this wise – that being in their midst so much I must have got careless

and have trusted them too much this time. In those few moments I nearly lost my life. There is some sort of satisfaction in knowing that the treacherous fellow disappeared like an apparition before the revolver was quite emptied' (Willshire,1896,p52). In *Mparntwe* Willshire was more comfortable with Aboriginal troopers, but in the Victoria River District, 'I do not know the moment when I may be attacked, and it is not much use keeping a lookout for blackfellows, because your own boy can come up behind and tap you on the shoulder and tell you he requires a bit of tobacco without you having noticed him anywhere near about' (Willshire, 1896,p7). Willshire could flit between the black and white worlds socially and linguistically at will, for his own benefit, but also to assist his Aboriginal colleagues. In *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* he saw himself as a white character in a black fairy tale. He had stumbled into an organised, structured, layered, and rich culture almost unknown to the white world, where over time, he had become part of the fabric and exerted influence. It was a land where everything was supplied, including uncomplicated sex; 'above all, here is freedom, in its, truest, grandest form, emancipated from the restrictions of feudalism, no fence of wire, no dominating, crushing landlordism, no game laws, land laws; but a spot unfettered, divinely free' (Willshire, 1895,p42).

Willshire is exultant at times; 'I lie, and revel in the thought that here I could remain, all that there is to me of life' (Willshire, 1895,p42). And later in his time, in the Victoria River District, on Billinarra Country, he states 'what a sense of freedom one experiences standing on high ground, with nothing above but the pure, glorious sky, and far spreading view of the country below, with here and there a gleam of water where the river winds, till the whole melts away in the distance against the far western sky; but nearer still, among the pandanus palms, the light blue smoke from the aborigines camp curls up through the deep foliage' (Willshire, 1896,p13). Notwithstanding the hardships and the 'unholy desires' of Aboriginal people Willshire states he 'liked the life, enraptured by scenes of desolate wildness; of picturesque beauty, gorge and glen where the wild holly and oranges wafted their perfume over the camp for the weary white-fellow' adding that 'savage life stripped of all its fictitious ornaments has its natural and entrancing beauties' (Willshire,1895,p8). The power of the Aboriginal woman was ever-present for Willshire who routinely describes his impressions; 'out from their flower-festooned alcoves came the brilliant bevy of

blushing maidens' resembling a 'galaxy of dusky virgins' and possessing the 'charm of wild Australian loveliness' (Willshire,1896,p61). His emotional response to the time and space he discovered in the Aboriginal world triggered reflection and meditation on the constraints of his own white society. His placement in this setting gave him the time to contemplate. European airs and graces weaved the social fabric of the white world together, but in Central Australia and the Victoria River District they were meaningless and added nothing other than a basic reference point for proper English, but even then, the Australian vernacular was emerging, like the pioneer myth, being hammered into shape by the harsh environment that dominated everyone in it.

Whilst Willshire had access to numerous Aboriginal women, and openly travelled with Aboriginal female companions, an influential element remained absent from the landscape he inhabited: the white woman. Anthropologist, researcher and cultural consultant Dr Myrna Tonkinson suggests white women, or the idea of a white woman, was a powerful gatekeeper for social norms in remote areas, and an emphatic reminder of the values and beliefs central to colonisation (Tonkinson, 1988,p33). 'Darwin, as with Port Essington, was an instant town with white women present from the beginning' yet 'south of the permanent waters and the masses of people of the Top End, the individuality of each person was marked, and the distinctiveness changed with the vegetation' (Kimber,1991,p2). 'White women, perhaps because of their very absence, were idealised as the embodiment of the best in White society' (Tonkinson, 1988, p33). The safety of women was of such 'paramount concern' the arrival of Jenny Ross, 'wife of the Undoolya Station manager' in 1885, was an important symbol of change in Aboriginal and pioneer settler relationships (Kimber,1991,p18).

The unpredictable attacks and open warfare between black and white became smaller, more manageable tussles. White men entering relationships with Aboriginal women were departing from the values and beliefs of the white world, 'their degradation' being 'irrevocable' with white women being the indisputable sexual standard (Tonkinson, 1988, p31). Willshire regularly observed the open nature of Aboriginal sexual activity suggesting 'like Henry VIII they like a change of women; consequently, take young girls to satisfy their unholy desires, and the prime movers in these iniquitous proceedings are the profligate old men' (Willshire, 1895,p22). Ethical standards manifesting in the white woman were a reflection of patriarchal control, yet 'among

other reasons for the opposition to marriage or cohabitation of White men and Aboriginal women was the notion that black-white liaisons constituted an insult to White women' (Tonkinson, 1988,p31). Contrasting his experience of Aboriginal women with the standards of the white women, real or imagined, Willshire states that 'immorality is only an error, and it would be well for those haughty daughters of society if their hearts were as pure and their lives as blameless as those of the untrammelled maidens of the forest and dell' (Willshire,1896,p46). Willshire is duplicitous however, stating, 'I believe it to be a fact that there are some white men who remain sensuously infatuated with what they intellectually despise' whilst suggesting 'physical courage in ancient times was considered the chief virtue; now it is particular moral excellence and chastity in white women, but wild lubras and black trackers have no such word in their vocabulary' (Willshire,1896,p48).

The power of the white woman as an influence in and around *Mparntwe* is still evident as late as 1929. John William Bleakley (1879-1957), shipping master and one time Protector of Aborigines in Queensland, penned a Federal Government report, *The aboriginals and half-castes of Central Australia and North Australia,* stating that 'one good white woman in a district will have more restraining influence than all the Acts and Regulation' (Bleakley,1929,p27). Yet, even though it was assumed the presence of white women would assist in eradicating black-white liaisons on the frontier, black women were still 'expected to be available to White men willy-nilly' (Tonkinson, 1988, p34). Relationships of 'mutual affection and respect did occur' between black and white 'but were the exception' with 'ample evidence' suggesting that 'men of all classes turned to Aboriginal women' (Tonkinson,1988,p32). Dixson suggests Australian women 'in their ordinariness, their humanity' absorbed and sustained 'the sexual jealousy of white women for native women' (Dixson,1978,p191). "Black Velvet" was something Anglo-Saxon women 'could not provide even when they were present' (Dixson,1978,p197). With relations between white men and black women living in 'extensive popular knowledge' and folklore rather than the historical record Tonkinson suggests that even when white women came in numbers to remote regions there was no disappearance of these sexual relationships only greater efforts to conceal them (Tonkinson,1988,p34).

There was little need to be concerned; even if frontier society 'had conventions that militated against lasting and equal relationships between Black women and White

men' (Tonkinson, 1988, p30). Willshire did not have to worry about being judged by the white wife of a local pastoralist, or any white female visitors, because there weren't any. This made living the life of a "combo" less complex for Willshire. 'Fellow-comboes no doubt felt a sense of camaraderie' being a community consisting of all manner of frontier dweller including policemen, drovers, cameleers, station owners, pastoral staff, and miners; all white, and for the most part understanding the social repercussions of such liaisons (McGrath,1984,p241). Aboriginal men would often approach the newly arrived white man in the area stating 'you wanhum lubra me fetchem up piccaninny time' (Willshire to Swan & Taplin, 1891). Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies and cultural researcher Sam Gill, states that the immense cattle runs and stations of Central Australia were decimated by extended drought and that they were replaced 'in the mid-1890s by rugged individuals operating on a small scale' often combining pastoral duties with mining operations (Gill,1998,p62). Many of these situations 'formed working partnerships with their female aboriginal companions' whom were as important to their physical survival, as well as their emotional, personal and professional survival (Gill,1998,p62).

To be a "combo" was to also embody an economic act in the name of dispossession as Sullivan suggests the 'white men's need for sexual servicing was pivotal to the economy of the colony' (Sullivan,p398,2017). Kimber states that 'there was a degree of steadying' in many relationships between black and white, even if they were based on inequality (Kimber,1991,p20). To declare love for an Aboriginal woman at this time 'threatened exclusion from all white society, even on the frontier' depending on the influence one held (Vallee,2007,p169). This is consistent with Willshire's life, which was full of contradictions; his views on interracial relationships and the "half caste" belied his extensive personal relationships and infatuations with Aboriginal women. 'The black girls take the keenest delight in forbidden pleasures' (Willshire, 1896,p15). Yet Willshire was part of a greater colonial irony. He was not the only 'gin-jockey', 'burnt cork', or 'gin-crank' having regular sex with Aboriginal women (McGrath, 1984, p238). Historian, academic and author Professor Patrick Wolfe concurs 'the sexual element of invasion contradicted the logic of elimination' as 'the behaviour of the individual colonizers was bound to negate the interest of colonization' (Wolfe, 1999, p30).

One-time Superintendent of the Finke River Mission (Hermannsburg) George Heidenreich reports that Willshire and Nabarong lived together in Willshire's 'own hut for a considerable time. I have myself seen Ereminta's former wife [Nabarong] in Willshire's hut, & that she appeared from her deportment to be "master" of the house' (Heidenreich to Swan & Taplin Enquiry, 1891). Willshire 'had for some years sought' to eradicate Ereminta (Roger), as he had strong feelings for his first wife Nabarong (Heidwieich to Swan & Taplin Enquiry, 1891). This makes sense and brings the story of Willshire the lover, the policemen, the ethnologist, and the murderer together. Vallee asserts that 'Willshire had stolen' Nabarong, Ereminta's first wife, and lived with her at Boggy Hole Police Camp for an extended period (Vallee,2008,p184). Vallee also suggests that Willshire's 'ménage at Boggy Water' at the end of 1890, comprised of 'at least two wives' being Chantoonga, the mother of his daughter Ruby and of another older girl named Lil, who may also have been Willshire's', and Nabarong, who is the basis for Willshire's character of Chillberta in *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* (Vallee, 2007,p185).

This polygamist arrangement fits neatly with Willshire's ego, his total patriarchal comfort, and his immersion into elements of culture as a clan participant. A rare photograph taken by South Australian Government Geologist HYL Brown in 'July or August 1890' offers a sense of the population of the Boggy Hole Police Camp and may well contain the main characters in Willshire's life at the time (*Willshire with Aboriginal associates at Boggy Hole*, 1890). Peter Vallee's suggestion in relation to Willshire's Aboriginal lovers proposes that at some point after the events of the Swan Taplin enquiry had come to an end Nabarong was abducted from Willshire's police camp at Boggy Hole, by her Aboriginal husband Ereminta, and murdered (Vallee,2008,p248). Nabarong's removal from Boggy Hole by Ereminta was verified by Coognalthika (Archie) who was a cultural confidante, and the greatest repository of Aboriginal information in the life of William Henry Willshire (Vallee,2008, p248). This act of murder was 'intolerable' for Willshire, and he set himself on revenge which led to the murders of Donkey and Roger (Ereminta) in 1891 (Vallee,2008,p249). This was of course made more infuriating and insulting to Willshire by Ereminta's assassination of Nameia at the Boggy hole police camp.

This 1890 event in particular was an enraging taunt to Willshire. Vallee suggests it would have 'seemed undignified to Willshire's white peers that a white man should be

so imbalanced by the loss of a black woman' yet this element of passion and rage, fits neatly into the motivation for the murders of Donkey and Roger (Ereminta), a key chapter in the misadventure, and motivation of Mounted Constable William Willshire (Vallee, 2007, p249).

For Native trooper colleagues, and for Willshire's female partners, life was a balance; a daily mix of the traditional and the new, camp to camp, season to season, sometimes body to body, job to job, story to story, discussion to discussion, and ceremony to ceremony. As well as being sexually active with Aboriginal partners, Willshire was a ceremonial participant. This is significant, and more that can be said for other white anthropologists officially researching and studying the same Aboriginal clans. This ceremonial activity confirms a belonging, and a two-way cultural acceptance relating to Willshire's status as kin within his multi-cultural group. 'On some occasions I discarded my habiliments, painted my bread basket with red ochre and charcoal, just to be in the fashion, and to please the natives. At the special request of some male aborigines, on one occasion, I stripped, and they painted me all over with red ochre and charcoal, and stuck feathers and down on my chest, and then marched me to the corroboree' (Willshire,1895,p31).

Willshire cannot resist but to praise his own performance. 'I did not expect to see such a large audience present, but, when it came to my turn to stamp down the race to where the black beauties were sitting, I blushed beautifully, I must have appeared supremely attractive. I noticed the ladies could scarcely restrain their genuine admiration' (Willshire, 1895, p31). Willshire details his performance further with his routine brand of self-adulation. 'I reappeared on the stage at the special request of a deputation of ladies and gentlemen indigenous to Central Australia. I had to be readorned with more feathers and gum leaves, the rudder part had to be painted by an artist; the whole aspect of the things seemed, at first, ludicrous in the extreme, but it was not so with the natives' (Willshire,1895,p32). It would be valuable to know totemic themes or designs used by Aboriginal artists to paint Willshire's body, or, if indeed there was a design reserved for strangers being managed on Country.

Professor of anthropology Nicolas Peterson states of Central Desert ceremonies when 'feather down in used, in place of plant down, it shimmers in the slightest breeze making it seem the decorated person is radiating power' (Peterson,2006,p18). There

is no reason to think that this event did not occur. Logically, it did, and cuts to the heart of Willshire's proximity to a deeper understanding and acceptance of, and in, traditional culture. Willshire is careful however to throw some safety features into his fictional text for any future social situations or interactions with readers, or, future intimate partners (such as his wife Ellen) as he states thinly 'I nearly succumbed to their seductive charms' (Willshire,1895,p32). Dressing his cultural knowledge up as yet another convenient coincidence with Chillberta in *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia*, Willshire (Oleara) uses the traditional Arrernte moieties (Perula, Aponunga, Pultarras, Commaras) as a way to officially allow the courting fictional characters to become companions. He reveals that 'when Oleara found out Chillberta was a Perula he said he was an Aponunga. Oleara took in the situation – he was up to the business – and Chillberta laughed heartily. It suited her to be on intimate terms with an Aponunga. Oleara was then eligible for a Perula lubra although he was a white man, and with such desirable company the ship must sail well' (Willshire,1895, p18).

A white woman 'considering marriage to a repatriating frontier white man did not wish to hear that she followed his common-law Aboriginal wife or mistress' or that he had the life-long souvenir of a sexually transmitted disease as a result (Vallee,2007,p169). Professor Ann McGrath researcher and academic focussing on colonial and other interracial relationships states that white men, like introduced foods 'were not subject to the same taboos' as bush tucker making transactions, and relationships possible more predictable allowing Willshire to maintain his relationships and "migratory tribes" over long time frames, and distances in the scrub (McGrath,1984,p247). In this light, it is intriguing to ponder the position of Willshire's future wife, Ellen Sarah Howell, who married Willshire in 1896, only one year after the release of *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* and in the same year *The Land of the Dawning* was published.

Willshire must have been an active, parochial, conversationalist within all his professional, writing, social and other networks, naturally drawing Ellen into view at times. The marriage to Ellen could well have been convenient, obscuring inuendo connected to Willshire as a "combo" and allowing his controversial life to merge into a level of normality. Taking nothing away from the potential for a mutual love and attraction between Willshire and his new wife however, the author cannot know the nature of this union. It would be reasonable to assume however, Ellen Howell could

read, and even if not, that she knew of Willshire's legendary exploits as a writer, policeman and adventurer in the desert. Reading through his back catalogue, especially *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* and discussing his lengthy career, Ellen Howell may have had some acutely personal questions of her husband.

The grievances Willshire had with Francis Gillen are obvious. Gillen played a leading role in his arrest, and trial for murder in 1891, yet Willshire openly implies Francis Gillen was a fellow "combo". Willshire stridently emphasises that 'men would not remain so many years in a country like this if there were no women' (Willshire, 1896, p18). He implicates Justice of the Peace, Magistrate and ethnologist Francis Gillen, when he states that 'a country J.P. once was so gullible' as to believe the allegations against Willshire; 'he tried hard to get me dismissed' but 'it did not come off, to the chagrin of the aforesaid forensic fledgling' (Willshire, 1896, p22). Strongly asserting Gillen's relationship with an Aboriginal woman, Willshire states that 'I never meddled with Long-haired Rose at Charlotte Waters' (Willshire,1896,p87). '"Long-haired Rose" at about the 26th parallel of south latitude will have to speak the truth some day' (Willshire,1896,p22). The 'country J.P.' who has 'the double chin, the stomach, and the short, fat legs that convey him around the allotment' failed in his attempts to find Willshire guilty of charges, with Willshire stating that 'I will now leave him in his blissful ignorance, and go back to the vast receding sombre glens – to the valley of the Katherine - with the aborigines, who are absolutely immaculate when compared with *****!' (Willshire,1896,p24).

The thoroughly researched and detailed 1997 book release *My Dear Spencer: The letters of F.J. Gillen to Baldwin Spencer* by Professor John Mulvaney, Alison Petch and Professor Howard Morphy claims that 'Frank Gillen enjoyed his whisky and was an inveterate gambler' yet there was 'no hint of his consorting with Aboriginal women' appearing 'in any sources' (Mulvaney et al, 1997,p20). It is unknown why Mulvaney, Morphy and Petch, all academic and research veterans, have totally ignored Willshire's reference to Gillen. This may well be because Willshire is an ugly and unpalatable character in Australian history. Maybe they feel Willshire's work is too rough, egotistical, and obscure to be worthy of reference. In any case the question hangs in the air, and can only be answered by these researchers, who may be protecting the legacy of the Australian legend that is Francis Gillen; another white man

in a black world. Willshire's comments about Gillen as a "combo" go beyond inuendo and break the code of silence belonging to the "combo" community, a culture of its own in Central Australia. As loathed as he is by researchers, historians, and academics, many of Willshire's observations, activities, and views are in writing, on paper, in picture, and on the public record. They are relevant, unique, and deserved of attention, even if only as points of interest, or contrasts to other actors in history of the same time and place. I contend that through his black, and white, networks Willshire possessed outstanding, and expert local reconnaissance, and must have possessed solid information relating to "combo" elements in white lives through the constant chatter of the "mulga wire". In what could be considered a self-loathing tone, Willshire suggests that, like himself, Gillen may have fathered children to Aboriginal women; 'the father of some of these half-castes may be, in some cases, a Justice of the Peace, or some low-lived man who passes his time away in the bush, with no other ambition than a black woman for his partner through life' (Willshire, 1896,p35).

It is not shocking, nor unrealistic to assume Gillen had relationships with an Aboriginal woman, or women, it is viable and probable. Willshire, the "combo" offers that Aboriginal women are 'fond of riding about from place to place, and will show their husband many new waters, and the haunts of the wild aborigines in the very locality they were born in' (Willshire, 1896,p35). An Aboriginal woman 'piloting a white stranger to their secret caves' and giving away traditional secrets is very 'distasteful' to her kin, and she is aware that her kin may 'kill her and cook the carcass' if she returns to the fold; knowing this, Willshire claims, 'black girls, as a rule, will come to white men of their own accord' (Willshire, 1896,p36). Yet the lure of reliable food and white technologies introduced into the circle of reciprocity encouraged Aboriginal knowledge exchange, cultural investment, and triggered kin and cultural responses with the core, ancient, purpose of protecting Country and Law. Sex and companionship in a high-risk environment were part of this transactional life where relationships and alliances could make a person safer and potentially make one's clan stronger under invader pressure. This was something Willshire recognised and thrived upon.

Willshire with Aboriginal associates at Boggy Hole, “July or August 1890”. Taken by Government Geologist HYL Brown. (Catalogue SAM AA41, AP5403). State Records of South Australia

Presentation ink stand, made by master silversmith JM Wendt, in Adelaide 1889 - another possible attraction for Willshire and his Aboriginal girl-friend to view through the JM Wendt shop window in Adelaide in 1890

NAMES OF ABORIGINES—MEN AND WOMEN—IN THE EMPLOY OF W. H. WILLSHIRE, ON THE FINKE RIVER.

APONUNGAS.	*PERULAS.*
Women.	*Men.*
Ar-til-ka	Yed-na-ca
Rhan-gee-nie	Chupa-inna
Nee-punta	
Hee-yow-a-dee	
Ole-ga-lene	
O-ticha	

APONUNGAS.	*PERULAS.*
Men.	*Women.*
Rem a-lie	Nap-er-oon
A-cork-nil-shi-ga	Ole-a-mun-ika
Hyn-ga-Gyn-ga	Ty-hung-a
	Al-ba-binnia
	Ni-mi
	Youda
	Nap-berry
	Ar-rin-illia qui

The observer will note by the classing of the above, that an Aponunga woman must have a Perula man for her better half, and a Perula man must take unto himself an Aponunga woman according to their tribal laws, the offspring of an Aponunga mother are Commaras, and the offspring of a Perula mother are Pultarras. By securing their spouses in the above order, they are eligible and qualified for each other.

PULTARRAS.	*COMMARRAS.*
Women.	*Men.*
Cumber-nil-yer-qui	Chick-illia
Ole-munda	Jorra-ja-rinya
Ad-mooka	Ol-deara-booka
Chant-oonga	Quolpa

PULTARRAS.	*COMMARRAS.*
Men.	*Women.*
Um-put-ima	Tuck-a-rin-ya
Taig-wa	Quiet-umba
	U-bee-in-ica
	Earby-abba
	Hong-boi-tee
	Oura-ka-lerriga
	Ar-rat-rer-ka
	Nuck-a-dilly.

By the above classification, the reader will observe, that a Pultarra woman *must* have a Commarra man for her husband, and a Pultarra man *must* take a Commarra woman for his wife, and the children of a Commara mother are Aponungas, and the children of a Pultarra mother are Perulas. It is proper and desirable and characteristic of their customs and laws, that they should take their wives in that order, to prevent in breeding and incest.

Page 68 of *A Thrilling Tale of Real Adventure in the Wilds of Australia* mentions Nabarong "Nap-er-oon" (Chillberta) and Chant-oonga, who was probably the mother of Willshire's children: note the relevant traditional moieties he uses to facilitate traditional relationships in *A Thrilling Tale.* (Willshire,1895)

7:

Conclusion

Space is the Place:

what is gained from Willshire's writings?

Memory is a bridge for knowledge. Memory is personal, and public. It is undeniable, and uncontrollably morphing over time. Deborah Bird Rose writes that so 'much of the culture of Central Australian people is an elaborate mnemonics of place' (Rose, 1990,p136). The ongoing renewal of culture, history, and mythology is embodied in human energy spent actively remembering and retelling stories. Pictures and experiences from memory stratify storytelling and ceremony, metamorphosising people and stories into transcendence, a thing that is both human and beyond human. The acceptance of new phenomena affects consciousness and evolves culture; 'memory and negotiation are means by which people continually create themselves' (Seton & Bradley 2004,p213).

In this way we can see William Wilshire's journey, his writings, revealing culture and the operation of clans that have their own unique, individual genesis maintained and embodied by the Aboriginal people Willshire worked with, loved, hated, and killed. The very same Aboriginal people that used culture as a bedrock template to guide hundreds of generations of families through environmental upheaval, though the critical layers and maintenance of the Aboriginal reality and vision, through invasions, dispossession and disease; the very onslaughts perpetuated by Willshire. A much-maligned marker on colonial, and Aboriginal timelines I would argue Willshire is an important colonial contact figure of Central Australia, and the Victoria River District. His expressive infatuation with Aboriginal women is unique in Australian literature and written Australian history. Willshire's novice field work, and word lists, appear early in the fieldwork timeline of Australian languages both for the Katiti people of the Lake Amadeus area, the Arrernte of *Mparntwe*, and the Billinara people of the Victoria River District. As a police officer operating with virtually no oversight, Willshire was a powerful person who instilled fear in others. He presided over murders and massacres of Aboriginal people; he was the embodiment of colonisation in bloody action.

As an egotistical author Willshire writes negatively of the Aboriginal person in general, in step with developing Social Darwinist stereotypes of the time, although some of his closest allies and supports are Aboriginal men, whom he shared many secrets and personal experiences with. At other times he shows striking vulnerability as a writer, treating the men he is more personally acquainted with warmly and gently. He also candidly describes the personal and emotional freedom he uncovers in the remote Central Australian and Victorian River District landscapes, prompting a questioning of his white world. His unsupervised lifestyle combined with the Aboriginal schema made it entirely possible for Willshire to imagine departing his white world; this was of course fuelled by his love for his Aboriginal partners. Whilst in the company of Aboriginal colleagues, friends, lovers, Willshire reaches a greater understanding of himself, a more profound appreciation of traditional culture, the concept of Country, and how it includes and incorporates him and connects all things. He appreciates that he is something small in a much larger world.

Aside from displaying his modes of policing, and his ego, the subtext of Willshire's writings raises the profiles of Aboriginal colleagues, and their largely unrecorded lives. The motivation of Aboriginal men to join Willshire's troop demonstrates the realities of colonisation alongside the demands of traditional culture, centred around protecting Country. The consciousness of Aboriginal men recruited by Willshire was altered through their experiences as police, their struggles in adaptation, working off Country, building relationships with whites, as well as maintaining culture in the face of colonisation and experiencing things their ancestors could never have imagined. This element itself needs to be recognised as a contributor to an early fundamental shift towards a broader Aboriginal consciousness, as recruitment of local Indigenous men broke the circle of culture and that of their clans and families. These are very important events on the Aboriginal cultural timeline. They offer meditation on the provenance of contemporary Aboriginal consciousness and the nature of traditional society in a context of a skittish modern capitalist white mainstream that engages in supporting Aboriginal goals only when convenient.

Willshire's writings also create curious questions around the towering figures behind the genesis of Australian anthropology, not so much in a comparative fieldwork research sense, but in a way that screens how Australian anthropological epistemology crystallised. Willshire was a novice who was disciplined and enjoyed

his own fieldwork. He was also an opportunistic policeman seduced by the sniff of adventure and the lure of women. He was not as thoroughly organised and methodical as those pioneer anthropologists who came with frameworks and theories later. Australian anthropology has William Willshire as a small footnote, if that, and only then through his association with the esteemed Francis Gillen, who made headlines by bringing Willshire to trial for the murders of Donkey and Roger (Ereminta). Willshire's startling misdemeanours shroud his expertise. Willshire claims knowledge connecting Gillen to a "combo" life, but history has chosen to allow Gillen latitude. This tenuous personal connection however is qualified enough to add a deeper intrigue to the Aboriginal clans they have in common, justifying shining a light on the biases, overarching frameworks and the toxicity of a political academia that helped create Australian anthropology. Willshire's open infatuation with Aboriginal women invites a closer look at sexuality in a context of frontier realities, as well as speculation on the warmer more equitable relationships.

To ignore this sometimes ugly, brutal, story is to ignore the beauty and complexity within the operational mechanisms of Aboriginal Law, culture, kin and Country, the wonderful story of cultural survival, and in the same vein, future possibilities around a decolonisation narrative. According to Kimber and Vallee, Willshire had a daughter, Ruby, or maybe two daughters, with Chantoonga, one of his longer term Aboriginal wives (Vallee, 2007,p185). The birth Willshire describes attending in his last written work *The Land of the Dawning* is curious. 'One lubra gave birth to a child on this occasion, just as easily as if it was an everyday occurrence. No-one seemed to take notice of her but me' (Willshire,1896, p43). Traditionally, an all-female affair, birth usually occurred in privacy at a prearranged camp site. The circumstances around this scene are unknown but Willshire was present at this birth, implying that this was a woman he cared for; 'there I was in the wilderness acting the midwife' (Willshire,1896,p43). There is more than just sex between Willshire and Aboriginal women.

In judging any value or worth in Willshire's writings to Aboriginal communities, and Australian history, the reader needs to imagine his books, and his person, never existed. Would there be a hole in the contact histories of the Central Australia, both black and white? Would there be a loss of traditional information relevant to Arrernte, Billinara, Katiti people, and others? I argue there would. Willshire is an exception. He

is an exceedingly unique individual in Australian history, made so through his published writings and his rare journey, his individual closeness to Aboriginal women, his multidimensional relationships with Aboriginal men, his incorporation and acceptance into the cultural framework, his living of life with Aboriginal people, his learning of language on-Country. Willshire is entwined with monumental moments in Aboriginal lives in Central Australia and the Victoria River District; meaningful, destructive, and extraordinary. He leads Aboriginal men and women off Country. He observes and captures elements of traditional culture and daily life that are important in understanding relationships between people, Country, and spirituality. So many explorer journals, diaries and scientific texts offer clinical, empirical observations and descriptions of Aboriginal actors as a measured and observed people, as minor stakeholders in their own story on Country.

In this time and place most whites did not stay put for very long. Life was too hard, too marginal, explorers had investors, timelines, government departments and publishers to appease. The detailed work of Baldwin-Spencer, and Gillen, both towering figures of Australian anthropology is outstanding, in its detail, depth, understanding, method, and a commitment to curiosity and theory, but their experiences as white information collectors and researchers do not surpass Willshire's deep, personal exposure to culture, ceremony, and relationships. Nor does the immense intellect, fastidious brilliance and data gathering prowess of Carl Strehlow, whose work is still largely unpacked, and unknown. Baldwin-Spencer and Gillen could not speak the Arrernte language effectively whilst Carl Strehlow the missionary was fluent yet did not witness ceremony, deliberately. None of these internationally influential figures lived life with their subjects. Their motivations were similar, but were underpinned by different frameworks, alongside the values and beliefs they had invested their lives in; the very things that made their theories on Aboriginal culture conditional. Willshire, on the other hand was a curious student, a jotter and questioner.

Therefore, Willshire is an important figure, and his written works are worthy of note. He was a coloniser but was not driven by science or religion, more by ego, lust, power, the pioneer myth. Willshire's relationship with Native Trooper "Archie" (Coognalthika), for example, was constructed as they covered thousands of miles together. In times of risk, they needed to look out for each other, and at other times, no doubt, they engaged in debauchery, as well as serious personal discussion, some cultural, some

relational. In the vast silences and miles of the central desert landscape, they were men who were speaking as men, in a language that was native only to that area. Coognalthika was Willshire's protector and minder in a time and place that was important for all Arrernte and other clans in Central Australia. I would argue Coognalthika was a guardian allowing Willshire to live. Peter Vallee suggests that Coognalthika 'knew Willshire better, perhaps, than any person alive' (Vallee, 2007, p248). Willshire observed first hand, the damage his culture caused Aboriginal people on the frontier; 'in such a prolific soil the natives are happy and contented; their progeny come with nature's regularity, but with the advent of the white man with his grog, pickles, sauces and contaminating disease maternity ceases, and our boasted civilization ends by exterminating them' (Willshire,1895,p15).

If the cultural, social, and historical information contained within Willshire's writings is not useful because there is little research method or order, at very least they offer a timeline reference, a body of work that acts as a historical and cultural contrast, extending the understanding of clan life, colonisation, history, and Aboriginal family history. Professor Sam Gill argues that 'given the historical setting and Willshire's background, his ethnographic contribution was significant' yet Gill cannot point to a single reference that acknowledges Willshire as an ethnographic source (Gill, 1999,p75). Willshire's work demanded that he travel extensively, mostly with Aboriginal colleagues, a lone white, to unexplored and remotes areas, whereas 'Gillen's access to Arrernte culture was primarily through the aboriginal-English speaking Arrernte' (Gill,1999,p75). Willshire learned language, over long periods from Aboriginal colleagues who were on Country both in Central Australia and in the Victoria River District. Strehlow's informants came to him, in the compound of Hermannsburg, converted Christians. He did not witness or condone ritual, and he was open with his biases against traditional culture.

Willshire not only 'encountered a much broader spectrum of aboriginal *[sic]* peoples than the others and more in situ' but it could be argued, Willshire's writings are more faithful to the Arrernte culture by virtue of the fact that he came earlier, and he had stronger ties and was kin-active, in ceremonial life and culture (Gill,1999, p75). A useful purpose for Willshire's journey could well be to deduce a path to assist in decolonising the future of Australia, or finding a definition for decolonisation. 'Colonising societies require a characterisation of indigenous mores and interests if

the colonisers are to make sense of their own action towards those they displace, employ, kill and look after' (Rowse,1990,p132).

It should be reiterated that Willshire's journey is not recognised here as a fantastic voyage. Yet his history, and his writings are of valuable interest, and a vehicle for the revelation of traditional culture at an important time for Arrernte and other clans. They do not contain weather observations, or technical geographical or topological information. They are a striking oddity in the archive of Australian, Aboriginal, and colonial history. It would be easy to incinerate Willshire and his writings, but I argue that by doing this we erase a patchworked cultural storehouse, a nuance that does not appear in any other colonial stories of the time. If we do not acknowledge his existence and the value of his work, we ignore the Aboriginal women Willshire was infatuated with, and had children with. We lose their voices and images, their experiences in the disorder of frontier existence. He writes Aboriginal women in a light no other white man dares to write. He describes young Aboriginal women in terms identified with ideas of Western female beauty. Examples of this are peppered throughout his writings; 'she was a superlatively beautiful girl, with abnormally beautiful proportions.' (Willshire, 1896, pp57).

These may well be the writings of a pervert, a predator, or someone in love, but Willshire committed these thoughts to written, published works showing a vulnerability which is one of the few qualities to be found, at times, in his work. If we refuse to look into Willshire's world, we disrespect the Aboriginal stories connected to the men who worked with him in the police force, those who travelled with him on his unrecorded explorations, and who shared what must have been similarly inconceivable Aboriginal experiences in new lands; an unlikely introduction into colonisation. There is some use for Willshire's works as cultural reference points for the Arrernte and Billinara relevant to colonial timelines. We can utilise the structure of kinship and traditional culture as templates to guide us in reconstructing a sense of Aboriginal perspective in Willshire's story, to place him in the Aboriginal story.

This is something no-one else researching Willshire has done with any depth. Whilst he remains an evil man, Willshire was a meaningful participant in Aboriginal life. In history he is nothing without Aboriginal people. Aboriginal culture and people have given his life and his writing a meaning, a standing, a relevance, a time, and a

space. Without these unique cultural contributions, he is nothing but a crooked police officer who created a self-styled kingdom in the service of the Crown. It would be easy to fall into the trap of delivering Willshire some sort of redemption, calling him a pioneer, some sort of maverick, a bigot with a heart of gold, but this is not the case; even though, for a time, he seemed to have found everything he ever wanted within the Aboriginal world.

In a post-modern Australia differences between Aboriginal, and mainstream Australian cultures are recognised, and need to be, to maintain distinct cultural identities that prohibit assimilation, and promote Aboriginal longevity. There is clarity to be found in the bedrock tenets of Aboriginal cultures. These cannot be compromised. This the earth we stand on here. These are forever, now. Sadly for the most part, the Indigenous cultural intricacies that upset and annoy mainstream policies, rules and regulations are left unarticulated and unexplored by a largely apathetic, self-interested, population fed on clichéd, unauthorised, white-centric historical information; sometimes delivered by communicators who don't have the awareness and acumen to recognise the nuance, the depth, or vastness of Aboriginal cultures.

The rage goes in circles, with many timid white people not knowing where to stand, not wanting to get involved through a fear of being offended, or offending. But in the end, they do not really have to have get involved because they possess a cherry-picked white Australian pioneer history that buries itself and settles deep within the consciousness of the populous. It lies undisturbed, immovable, an ancient shipwreck, still, quiet; home to the endless everchanging preface of Australian history. Willshire's story and his writings, like many other texts in Australian history, highlight and personify this immense gap between Aboriginal knowledge of Country, and the history of the land the coloniser calls home. Willshire learned that a relationship with Country is personal, and public, and that he was accepted as an interloper on Country. Yet traditional culture is positioned in a place that is too difficult to access for the mainstream, because white people need to sit still, be patient, selfless, and listen attentively. This awareness and focus are difficult to achieve as the individualistic priorities of the mainstream are found within the self, within the business of personal economic safety, and social status.

This is not a criticism of mainstream capitalist culture; it is a fact. It is easier to rely on the ancient shipwreck of Australian history, where the values and beliefs of Australian anthropology were forged. Willshire's writings are found in the shipwreck, but they offer unique evidence of a time and a space that is important to Aboriginal people, as well as a contrast to our common history. 'Both altruism and cruelty have actualised the interests of the dominant culture' (Rowse,1990, p132). Willshire's tones, and moods show a person who is possibly unhinged, corrupt, yet his relationships with Aboriginal men and women, show startling autonomy, and personal vulnerability. Willshire believes himself a poet, and his reaction to the loss of Nabarong, his Aboriginal wife, is Shakespearian.

The most important outcome connected to Willshire's writings is that traditional culture is revealed through his journey. Willshire simply writes what he sees most of the time, yet his writings beg a prompt for what is not seen, what isn't written. He was a stranger, a trespasser, an unforeseeable circumstance that demanded a cultural response. Culture demanded incorporation of him at some level, a management tool which gave him a routine cultural tag that tied him to an ongoing role in the continual flow of universal reciprocity, the demonstration-in-action of a relational world. His absorption through cultural means allowed the clan, and the community to remain focussed, strong, and vital. Like the feral animals that earned their place on Country over time, Willshire lived with Aboriginal colleagues, learned language on Country, was a student, and a contributor, as well as a drain. His journeys in Central Australia and the Victorian River District created relationships that are a testament to the flexibility and parameters of Aboriginal Law. His activity with local Aboriginal men, took them off Country for the first time, challenging, and I would argue affecting the traditional Aboriginal consciousness forever, bringing with it a new mindset for Native troopers, their clans and families. When Willshire arrived, culture demanded protection of Country, the place where Aboriginal people came from, where he was a stranger but was welcomed, and felt he belonged.

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A ·–	J ·–––	S ···	1 ·————
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C –·–·	L ·–··	U ··–	3 ···––
D –··	M ––	V ···–	4 ····–
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The Abattoir at Night

Neil Boyack

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1: Code Travels Ancestor Space

Telegraph wire pulled tight cuts the desert wind - hooked onto leaning wooden poles still bleeding sap – gravity drags them closer to desert ground - as they line up slack and skirt distant blue ranges with thirty whispering kites overhead - long roll of unfurling thunder – spiritdouble language - a place where spiritdoubles walk – in the air - dissolve - into the ground - as nicotine stained fingernails of the Magistrate telegraph station master - tap out the Morse – he clears his throat and his lips move under his extensive moustache that reeks of tobacco – messages are travelling in the wire - *we need assistance – blacks everywhere - I am bleeding - I am dreaming - they have set fire to the grass – white rape – black birth - smell of singed kangaroo skin is hard to clean from hands - more tobacco – more rum* - the inspector says in response : *disperse them all – give them blankets - axes – grog - we are here forever now - make sure you tell them this* - the Magistrate's Aboriginal wife Jane waits patiently outside - she can be seen from the backdoor – on her land - existing in the sounds of creaking trees that govern each thought – Jane can see the back door of the telegraph station from her wurley in the dry riverbed – she reads the wind with her nose, her eyes, her skin - Jane smokes one of the Magistrates's half done cigars as she attends to her long black hair- in a broken shard of mirror - just like he asked her to – with his gift of a tortoise shell comb – from Harrods (with which he has combed dead flies from horse manes) – as he rattles out the messages and crosses them off his list he is loving Jane's long hair and is playing with it in the pre-dawn blush - as he rattles out his messages in dashes and dots he reassures his bankers who are skittish about his investments - feeling for the fresh bottle of brandy in his waist coat anxiety dissipates - tonight is arranged with his Jane – involuntary images - attack - black desert men waiting in knots - behind clumps of spinifex - six here - four here - on knees with spears – waiting – chattering - in whispers - hunting euro & the white man - sign language silence between groups as telegraph wire slices the air above and makes heavy low hum in building desert sandstorm – spiritdouble language - as blood breath spurts through the nose of a dying bull kangaroo – the perfect fatal blow comes with ancestral gratitude - the new language travels through the wire – against the wind - splits the land - all the way to Port Augusta – and on to Adelaide - in clicks and lightning forks - Night Parrots browse a sweet spot crushing tiny desert seeds in the dry grass.

*

The Finke was in flood - Tealeaf & Trigger scampered up the purple red rock face & led Mounted Constable Waxman and the horses to an old cave - where they found the celebrity anthropologist/ the Magistrate/ the German Missionary – hammering out a compromise on magic ceremonies & taboo – an idea for a chapter in the new book - requested by a chorus of international psychoanalysts – doubling as Government policy to iron the blacks out – in the

apartment-like cave the German had an agnostic vision/a dirty/ secret/filthy/ habit of his - and saw Freud smoking his cigar greeting the mailman who was handing a thick envelope to him from Australia containing valuable details of the human mind – they talked loud in the ancient cave trapped by the flood – they spoke over the noise of moving water that filled every space on the earth – white men watched the black men make a fire - & took notes - & made sketches - as they were seated in thick silent sand - on ancient tools/teeth/bones – blood and yellow clay painted walls that tasted of iron/salt - taste of forever - tasted of men from ten thousand years before Christ – they were all bored & restless looking at the small fire - sitting cross legged – Waxman hums *Jim Jones at Botany Bay* to himself – the last of the rum led to a slow clap stick and hum from Tealeaf – who stated he was thanking ancestor spirits for the water - bare foot dance from Trigger to respect the cave spirits that were sheltering them - solemn/personal/lost/wonderfully/in his head – the celebrity anthropologist watched Trigger and he burst out in thought - *science tells us this is magic* and boasted a view of Swanston street trams from his Melbourne University office - this language/wall paintings/ are magic /he claimed – these dances - science affirms - are magic – the portly German had his hands in the pockets of his jacket as flakes of blood fell from the rock wall as he sneezed – Tealeaf and Trigger were leaning into the cave wall smoking their pipes – Tealeaf said his ancestors were older than the white God – he said white men /white God/ came late to Country – white things are too late here – he asked the celebrity anthropologist/where is this God of yours right now? – twirling his immense moustache the celebrity anthropologist was lost in the sound of moving water – *he is everywhere trooper/and no-one knows where he is.*

*

Kitty used the shoe polish to shine the white policeman's saddle – the smell of the polish took the Constable to his father's school – where he read poetry - fell for its scent - tasted corporal punishment/whiskey/horses/blood as a teen – but the sound of wind pushing at the top of the breakfast fire was talking in another language - an ancient desert poem demanding recognition – he had the tools to know it was scared – his bare feet buried themselves in pure red riverbed sand as they lay together on his picnic rug – he knows dingo traps have been abandoned here in sand – he has found black men walking with traps that have snapped on their toes - and past Kitty's shoulder he sees the initials of men scratched into a tree - dead men who wrote with feather and ink/in a living tree - a bark canoe scar - the tree drinking in the desert song of the flame – the tree shadowing them as they lay on the picnic rug - the desert drinking the man – later – he puts the bottle to her lips and she drinks - rum kisses - riverbed in the moonlight with night dogs - drinking from a bottle almost too cold to hold – from a bottle that will be smashed – used as spear tips – to carve wood and to shave faces – to grieve – now - up early – pre dawn waves of cockatoo raking screech - picking Kitty's pubic hairs from his teeth – hunting then - the heat of the gun barrel melts the frost of morning - carry the

warm gun in bare feet on frosted earth – stalking game on silent feathers that cover the cracked desert rock – a perfect world - Waxman makes a fresh meat breakfast for his Kitty – before she wakes – he kisses her feet before pulling the end of the blanket down to cover her – the frost is heavy this morning - tiny ice crystals settle on the wilderness side of the blanket– she is warm under the blanket - Kitty's eyebrows are permanently concerned – her lips are succulent - never dry – a sip of water will last her 6 hours – and she knows where to get it – she looks at flying birds to find food – sees invisible lizard tracks in the sand and knows why – he only ever uses the good cup for Kitty's billy tea – fresh damper for the journey – made by him – a pleasant surprise - whisper her awake before sun finds her face – Waxman is thankful – his cold dawn hands cup a hot mug - *if I am killed while I sleep – I am on her Country - ants will take me bit by bit – dingos will reef me – crows will peck me - keep me here forever with her.*

*

Years later - still glowing from the low key registry office wedding - Dotty sits in the Waxman's Adelaide backyard on a rope swing – the one Walter Waxman fixed to the gum tree with hammer and nails /lovingly - a wedding present to *them* - to last 50 years – Dotty dangles in the clearest South Australian dappled light - reading Walter's writing she wonders after Bilyum/the Aboriginal princess - she imagines Bilyum wearing a Virgin Mother blue blanket in the family kitchen wiping down the dinner table - her messy hair - silently moving breakfast dishes from the table to the sink with her magic digging stick wand - Dotty imagines a nervous conversation with Bilyum in her head - a practice run - *you must come to my house as a servant - you must tell me what Walter says at night/in his sleep – you must tell me what it was like to be naked near him - with him - we lie in separate beds - Walter visits sometimes in the afternoon before he leaves for nightshift/ I am in the sewing room/that is the darkest room/ in the house/ he looks at me and unbuckles his belt/ then leaves like he has heard a suspicious noise in the front yard - I am quiet/awake/waiting/threading the needle - when Walter sleeps during the day he talks in a language I do not recognise – demanding/yelling/sobbing/sniggering - in a language I do not understand* - Dotty wants to wake him as he lashes out in his dreams /punching/in the midday bird noises – knocking Dotty's tooth out/ scratching a cheek/ pinning her down by the back of the neck/talking another language - waking later in the clearest South Australian light - at afternoon tea – the time before he leaves - Dotty turns her wedding band around her finger - Dotty asks him what he dreamt about in his sleep - he says he can't remember – then gently attacks - *Crikey Luv!...in those days any black could just slit your throat in ya sleep…no wonder there's pictures in me head* - tapping his boiled egg brightly with no knowledge of his cracked and bloody knuckles - at the kitchen table with a tea spoon he has owned since childhood – the spoon that went with him everywhere in the desert – the spoon he stirred Kitty's tea with - looking at his knuckles - Dotty is behind him at the wood stove - lit and rumbling for the hours of her lonely day marriage quarantine – sitting in the dark wood kitchen/dead house/ wood fire rumble - she looks at his ears - there is a scar behind the left/a boomerang strike – she read about this in his

book - her hands leave her apron to touch his even shoulders yet his meticulously combed hair entrances - *Is there something the matter dear?* he asks.

*

Dotty hears Bilyum in every Aboriginal woman in Rundle Mall - all the white shoppers stop when the black voices screech at concerning/inconvenient levels - black women fighting each other over a sleeping man/with broken bottles - shoppers go back to shop windows apples/potatoes/butter - black women asking for tobacco/bread/penny - swiping broken teethed black women away like flies/Dotty only ever imagines the prettier black women in her house - she wants to invite Bilyum into her bedroom – Bilyum can wash her hair - Bilyum can dress her – layer by layer – she wants Bilyum to tell her stories of falling asleep on sand in moonlight – and translate what Walter says in dreams – Dotty wants to breathe the same air as the woman that Walter loved/loves - Dotty has not seen Walter naked – sex is dark and led by him – his advances are a unpredictable - like closing eyes and standing up in a moving steam train - like children eating chocolate cake with both hands – no revulsion - Dotty can see Bilyum sitting on her bed neatly – her black hands clasped in her lap – she can sit there listening/watching the white man talk in his sleep - in her language - *how can I get him to love me Bilyum?* – Bilyum in the lovely Adelaide afternoon pulling something from her mouth/a zebra finch/she brought it all the way from the desert/ throw it into the air of the room and watch it look for somewhere to land – round and round - Dotty wants to ask Bilyum what it's like to be in love - but she is afraid of blackness – *can black women fall in love?* – afraid of breath/touch/presence/warmth – *I can be your mother Bilyum- don't you want that girl? - girl? – are you listening?*

*

Bilyum remembers waking up to her mother's choking/lightning shaped chesty sounds - from behind the striped blanket that hung across the inside of the canvas tent on the ruby fields - there were three white men there around her – two were kneeling/like they were praying or eating her naked body- one of the whites had an almost full body of hair – like an animal – he pointed a revolver at me and cocked the hammer/licked his lips/cleared his throat - his pointless erection came from a thick bed of black animal hair - quivering/dribbling - packed Johnnycakes/knife/teacup/in a blanket and ran - to find someone – no-one - hail on my back that day in the desert just outside Junktown - saw poor sick white people around fire to the south of Dream Reef - clothes were falling off them - and they were hungry - firelight made faces silent and orange – healed pox holes in skin filled with shadow - missing teeth/butchered words - a man with his lips too far left/closed eye/sat there in his breathing sound - a woman played tin whistle and sang of wild horses and revenge – tin whistle woman let me sleep in her lap as I was only a small girl that had shared her Johnny Cakes - running her carrot fingers through my hair - giving me pictures of what mother's did for daughters - but her wooden lips woke me/ kissing my ear/ her carrot fingers between my legs - ran away

with nothing – into the blackness - back to Junktown ruby fields - back to my mother/the tent/both gone – and in the sand there I was alone – in the hail that became high white waters – the thickest water - a little body – that no-one could hear - floating away.

*

The Magistrate makes the sign of the cross and addresses his crucifix with a brandy breath kiss – he makes a neat circle with stolen cutting stones on the wurley floor between him and Jane - Jane's almost windproof wurley is made with roo skins and old pants and mulga and telegraph wire off cuts - for a moment they realise the reverent silence of dawn in the dry river bed - no flies yet - the many compartments of the Magistrate's waistcoat make mystery for him/and Jane – there are holes in the bottoms of all the pockets – and there are stones/stone tool flakes/ coins/ a pencil/fallen into the waistcoat lining - he whispers to Jane again in heavy stiff brandy breath/ stuttering with his pidgin Arrernte - encouraging more of her secrets – closed lip kiss to her ear as he plays with her long hair and stares consciously at the skin colour of her ear lobe - the black woman looks past her toes out of the wurley into riverbed dawn – thin smoke of cooking fire - crows in a dead tree – she whispers the names for all the spirit beings/every mountain/creek/ river/ all things/ living/ dead/real / magic – *smoke turns leaves into medicine - fire turns people into meat – mountains over there are a man and a woman making love/see/*she says/*her lips, her breasts/every morning with the sun* - the Magistrate's attention is acute - his throbbing erection slides away in pulses - he looks at her mouth as she releases treasure and he records new information in his pocket book with a stubby pencil - he will send this new information to his Melbourne University confidant as soon as possible - for the purposes of synthesis - a cutting edge that will confirm the facts and allow a cherry picking of the left overs – that will make entrancing vignettes dedicated to friends and family at fundraiser suburban parlour recitals - Jane is the first Charlotte Waters woman to ever smoke a cigar – the Magistrate writes this in his pocketbook/for his pocket book – found in another pocket of his waistcoat – his Irish whispers to Jane: *we whites are here forever now/do you understand this?* – she asks if there will be a wedding ceremony - he dare not write this - some sugar and brandy – to celebrate their anniversary – she offers the Magistrate a necklace of kangaroo teeth to keep for all time - maybe he will take his socks off one day – and feel the red sand with his feet – outside at the cooking fire the Magistrate places his whip and an scratched up old revolver on a rock as he pours fresh billy tea into Jane's mug - the steam rises in the frozen morning and envelopes his face - in the dry riverbed at dawn - he is on one knee as he attends her.

*

An Aboriginal man is seated cross-legged - in communion with small dawn fire – unbuttoned check shirt - ragged pants - worn out to leg length – bare feet - he is cooking lizard - there are creeping police boots in silent sand - a clean sharp rifle crack - that bounces and ricochets' in the deep dry creek bed

- where a man runs – from the bouncing bullet - a crooked trench creek bed with sand/rock/native grass/tracks/animal eyes looking from holes as thick as fists – the bullet is catching him as he runs over worn grinding stones unmoved for 200 years - those at the nearby cattle station suspect a morning hunt - killing a wounded bull – or a snake - rifle cracks break open breakfast time at the cattle station – the empty bucket sound of police boots running in sand - bracketed by keys on a chain – black men fall sideways - on soft ground one knee and can't walk – another rifle crack – another - another - black men tell their sleepy bodies to get up and run – confused - their bodies don't work – clean bullet holes in neck/shoulder/chest – voices become bigger and daylight disappears behind smoky eyes – the head policeman gets his knife out and pulls a limp black man by his hair - words coming through teeth as he squeezes as hard as he can - about a wife and daughter – *this is what you fucking get cunt* - slits his throat three times and the blood pours out onto the sand that drinks – and wells – Waxman puts his knife in his boot again – after stabbing the sand to wipe it - one axe was sharper than the other as both Native constables were chopping wood for the fire - sweating February faces at 7am - fire removes the faces of the dead men and pushes them into the sky - their arms and hands recognisable for a while - before they lose structure - the wind is through the flames - a desert language that is talking - morning sun up now - smoke travels into the air with the faces of men in it – the Native police mutter to each other in language - wind pushes the fire towards the policemen wherever they move - they are poking it with sticks – listening to it crack and hum - sweating - smoke in the eyes - the white voice gives direction in language - the black silence entranced by the story of everything in fire - *just cut more wood for the fire* - black burnt bodies and bone rubble - smouldering - for wind and sand to protect/overrun - small animals will come to bone rubble and take what they need - teeth survive the fire - iron clasps/brace clasps/belt buckle – bullet shells stuck in the bodies – gently fall to earth though the flames from the ribs/the shoulder/the neck - the head policeman is entranced by the fire - scratching at his face capturing the pictures for his own purposes - then lost in the satisfaction of the kill - his head – a day dream – where he is riding his horse like a pioneer drover holding the reigns jumping a fallen log and plunging into a black hole where he loses his stomach – freefall in the black world where sacred snakes are floating with broken glass/heavy mulga throwing sticks that will smash his eye in if he does not move/the floating arms of the black women are dancing - nightmares in little naps - where he wakes with a start - his mother crowning him with a wooden spoon - his father letting go of his hand at the Port Augusta dock - when he fell into the sea - between the boat hull and the pier.

*

2: Secret Patrol

Horse Blood

No-one had the energy to hunt. In a block of setting sun coming through the gap we killed one of the horses and drank some blood then cooked the meat. Chestnut horse carcass was a splatter of red-black-purple on the clean sand of "Udepata" the Ellery Creek bed. Blood sank into the earth slow and thick and dried in clumps that the dogs ate. Night-sounds of their mouths opening, closing. Our satisfied bodies sank into the sand. White man dream; falling through a featherbed floor, Native troopers left their bodies and travelled through the trees until the morning.

Secret Waterhole 1

The next breath seemed impossible, like the next. Tealeaf and Trigger led the white policeman to the secret waterhole, where they knew there was relief as loose skin moved over horse ribs, the cracks in the slack mouths of horses became more painful, dryer, with a final froth from a lack of water. Dust on the tongue, sand in the wind, whipping the ears, getting in between loosening teeth. Waxman was lost in his heated head; a vision where rock tasted of salt and birds could piss in flight and it might taste like brandy and he might catch some with his mouth as he rode. Silent ragdoll men rocking with grinding horse gait, side to side, scraping their knees on jagged rock passages of shaded gorges, so cool they would get the shivers, sending their bodies into paralysis, holding onto saddles with the last strings of forearm strength, as horses drove towards the smell of mossy water. Then the patrol entered a neat circle of red sand, at its centre a bed of ancient untouched reeds, twelve feet high, in small pools of mossy water. Waxman's legs would not work, and he fell from his horse onto the sand and crawled under the cover of the great round rocks where he slept in phlegm crackled whispers, moans were thoughts, echoed in rotting kangaroo stink as a homeless chanting wind wiped at the white face. Days later he was awake and shivering, crawling to the fire, where the black men were seated in a sea of stars.

Secret Waterhole 2

Cross legged, Tealeaf shovelled sand with his hardwood hands. Waxman woke to the sound with his eyes closed. From a distance it looked like Tealeaf was pecking the earth with his nose but the water seeped up reliable as thirst, and the white man crawled from underneath the rocks to the little wet hole (drag marks in the sand) where the black men stood over him with hands on hips. He sipped like he was breathing in smoke and coughed at the dirt-water in his throat through a handful of dead grass. Dragging himself back into long shadows under the red round rocks he listened to the language of bad water in his stomach with chattering zebra finches. Ant noises. Sand noises. Cloud noises. The spoken dusk.

Spear Through the Neck

Tealeaf saw the deceased first, from a mile away, nailed to the telegraph pole, with a spear through the neck. When the police got closer, they saw how the sun had peeled layers of skin from bones, the face mashed into a hole. The boots of the deceased were gone, as were his pants. It could have been old Ralp Finsley the dogger, who had been missing for a couple of months, or one of three ruby prospectors who hadn't been seen for a while. The earth at his wrinkled bony feet was all scraped out from digging, thrashing around, scooping to pull, to scratch, to give himself comfort, to free himself, but the spear was firm in the telegraph pole, like it had been hammered in. To save a grain of finery from further depravation, Waxman spat on the deceased's wedding band to loosen it from his stubborn bloated ring finger, saying his favourite jeweller in Adelaide could melt the ring down and make a new ring for Kitty. He cut the finger off with his shears and put the ring in his saddle bag.

White Beast

Not wanting to disturb the morning desert peace, he gave quiet instructions, the white beast, cradling his gun in the growing pink-yellow-blue dawn. Aboriginal troopers were close to his face, eating his whispers, mesmerized by the flecks of dandruff in his hair, and the kangaroo meat breakfast on his breath, the widening of his eyes, orderly combed hair, moustache trimmed and controlled like the pictures of other white men in the magazines he sometimes read. Whilst ambling through the desert on horseback, the Native troopers spoke of the amount of time he spent in front of his little mirror, the one he used to shine light into caves looking for cattle killers, the same mirror he propped up on rock shelves, or on his saddle - where he would adjust the standing horse to the best morning light making sure he scraped every bit of stubble from his face.

Rock Language

The dull hoofs of police horses sounded like shovels in dry riverbed sand. In concert with saddle squeak, it was a demented music. Flies in earholes, mouths, covering all things, resting on human skin, on tiny human hair, landing, travelling, feeding, breeding, infecting. There were no straight lines in this part of the desert range, only rocks as big as stoves, steamboats, hay sheds, protruding from the sand, controlling direction. South east. North. South. East. South. West. Zebra finches packed the sharp long shadows in split heavy red rock walls of the range: mick mick mick mick mick mick. Hard sun crushing the life-weight of the men, the horses; burning shapes and razors into skin through the holes in torn uniforms. When they came to came to a gap in the ancient ranges the black men knew of the power here and they dismounted, giving their weapons to Waxman and sitting cross legged on the sandy earth, in the shadows of their still horses. They watched the white policeman enter the reverent soft-sand-space of the gap where the remaining water was cold, where the rocks either side of him were decorated with white, ochre, yellow oblongs and squares and stripes. Afternoon heat penetrated purple animal hearts, pumping hard, strangling gravity, leaving blood and bone to boil. Tealeaf and Trigger sat and watched Waxman on his horse walking through the gap, waiting for horse spirit to fall dead; waiting for the policeman to fall into fire.

Zebra Finch Language

Swaying like drunken men roped to their horses; they rocked and slipped sideways on their saggy mounts. Horses solemn in desert heat like a drumbeat. You need to bury yourself in the sand Waxman… to stay cool… Trigger said it with his eyes almost closed to the flies in his harsh old-Law whisper. But Waxman was sinking in sand-dreams of floating black arms of desert women, on his horse, hunching forward, nodding and snoring, nose half full of sand, dried snot, noise of saddle-squeak-heat-coma, the zebra finches a blunt pick tapping at his head, somewhere near his ear, then far away. Heat of the day smothering the horses, pushing their eyes closed as they walked, bodies whipped by sand-dust, the circling flies. Behind his eyes Waxman fell backwards into deeper purple blankness, his body holding his loose head as it bobbled side to side slowly with horse gait. Tealeaf and Trigger knew they could let Waxman wander into their vast Country that owned everything, they knew that Country would portion his skin and bones to ants and dingos and eagles; fifty human pieces into fifty crevices; but the Zebra Finches told them to protect; mick mick mick mick mick mick because no-one would ever believe that the white policeman died sleeping on his horse.

Earshot

Leaving the city of whites they are back in the desert where Anka rides ahead within earshot of Waxman. The white policeman is transfixed by the young black woman riding a white horse in nothing other than a man's shirt towards ancient desert ranges scored horizontal, marking the time of a seabed, cut with purple, blue shadows resting on pure red desert earth. The hoofs of Anka's horse go silent when they find the riverbed sand. In the shade of an immense stand of redgum, and in her quiet, sugar language she is telling Waxman how the ranges came to be, and what the earth is feeling. She speaks like this in the dark when they cannot see each other. Waxman traces her face with his fingers finding her lips, ears, hair. In the city of whites, Anka took his arm and they strolled Rundle Mall as a couple, stopping to gaze into the jeweller's window, where silver aboriginal men were hunting silver kangaroo, emu, with silver spears on a silver cup.

Eagle Language

Waxman climbs the rocky red ancient range by hand and foot, and he is high above the earth; so elevated it is easy to lose balance; the wind is cooler than the desert floor way below, the gusts of wind push at him and he holds his hat, and pulls his shirt closed, as he looks down to the miniature desert floor below. Wedge Tail Eagle that is circling shoots a lightning bolt into Waxman's eye and he wakes with a start with breadcrumbs and ants in his moustache. Flies attack his mouth, and there is a goanna's head in the billy.

Legless Lizard Language

Tealeaf and Trigger build their small fire away from the white man who slept mumbling and rocking and itching his crotch, arms, neck. Moonless night thick, heavy, fire the only light in the world. Sky telling a story in slow thunder somewhere far away. Later in the deepest silence of ice desert black ghosts float over spinifex-sand-rock ground and set the horses free with a hand signal, then they tuck the white man into his swag with a hacked and stained horse-blanket-rag. Black ghost man takes a legless lizard from his police coat pocket, skin all tan, eyes black. Patting its head with his thumb whispering a chant, monotone with peaks, no drawing breath, sent it to sleep. He slides the lizard into the open mouth of the white policeman who coughs for a moment and then turns onto his side in acceptance. The black ghosts saw the lizard burrow and move into the white man's throat and gently they pushed themselves from the earth and drifted into the night above.

Secret Patrol 5

When there was nothing for days, we drank our urine and horse blood. Cutting a vein above the front leg with a razor, pinching the skin to stop it and start it, hot blood spurted onto our searching lips; black beards soaked with blood-iron; satisfied sleep, faces all bloody, bloody hands and mouths open in afternoon shade heat. Faces painted with blood.

Stone Knife

Trigger gave me the stone knife and I paid him in ammunition. The V-shaped scar in his forehead was a woman; the edge of a stone knife; fight noises, punch noises, breath noises, human cavity noises; stomped, crushed. Death drum. He danced and sang this to me in his police uniform. They know their country alright. I simply could not do it without them but I would never tell them this.

Frost Language

Quiet frost rose to meet my ear. Yips of dingoes somewhere way away, made the silence deeper, filling my body with cold air. A slight wheeze in the chest then empty. In silent lightning flashes, the splattered horse on the sand; the last pack horse to eat. I slump against the base of an ageless creaking tree in a riverbed waiting in lightning flashes for rain; my knife heavy as an fire poker. In flashes of ongoing lightning from behind me I see my humanness in this place of rock and sand; too powerful for any man.

Pubic Hair Dream

At dusk naked lubras found us wood collecting and the female smell handled something deep inside me. They tiptoed silently in the sand around me humming, chanting slowly, a sugar sound, drawing on me with index fingers, clean spit circles in dust skin, whispering black songs they took me to the ground and cradled me like something pitiful, like they were singing a disease away, their fingers in my ears, mouth, nose, biting my forearm, chanting the chant without stopping for breath like I had the power to give immunity from the bruises, the blood, of white ways. I fell into the female slumber-smell-sound, sinking into their earth, their voices, breathing their breath, wishing for their song to erase my life. Nipple in the crook of the thumb, breathing night frost and pubic hair stuck in my teeth by the fire. Painted skin with mud and ground rock gets into the wrinkles of the hands, the cock, makes the white skin reptilian, makes me someone else, another body, amongst the black men; white into their songs; sound of clicking wood cuts through heavy clink of old police neck chains.

Ceremony

An artist painted me in ochre stripes, feathered me, my cock. The rhythm and sound invited simple, delicate, dance steps, hard-again, soft-again. I went somewhere else in my head; far away from the things that had happened in my life, to things that had never happened, away from my skin, a meeting in the air. When I understood the rhythm I lost my consciousness and stomped the earth as hard as I could and lifted my knees as softly as I could in a place where I could hear birds breathing, dogs walking on sand, the kangaroo grazing in the night, a silent chasm where my hands and feet curl up with the morning frost.

Knife Gift

I was sharpening the knife, a thirteenth birthday present from my father; at a time of day where blue-yellow dawn and firelight worked together in the small round mirror I use to throw light into desert caves when looking for cattle killers. I picked my teeth clean under the last of the moon, itself a blade. Soon in the quietest time on earth, horse-hoofs clacked annoyingly; tortured desert stone sounded like broken-pottery. Three of us all in silhouette on the night side of the MacDonnell ranges beautifully still; the shaded rocks on the hill were sentinels waiting to spear us. I smelt the smouldering campfire as the oiled rifle came easy-heavy from my saddle beneath, thumb on the hammer instinctively. We dismounted, after shitting horses. No such thing as sound sliding the boots from our feet absorbing dagger edges of desert floor moving neatly over miniature marsupial footprints that have been sung, adored, painted. We crawled on hands and knees towards the lumps of people around the grey string of smoke, cradling our rifles.

Fingernails
Painted-up by small fire light, bare bottom in the sand, in the air, her low-pitched whisper absorbs my breath noises. The man in the moon emotionless with jelly skin-wobble, every poke and thwap. A bitter pinch of scent, my fingernails made love hearts either side of her anus, blue birds flying under her breasts and stars behind her ears. Like I was a bullock hacking a tree from the earth. Rising and falling on me, scars on her breasts, shoulders, offered my mouth confusion, contemplation, her hair with implements of bone, dried eagle beak. Her father, her family, not far away, waiting for an outcome.

Black Arms
In the moving-rust-sand I remembered seeing a half dozen severed black arms on the ground; they were taken off just below the shoulder and they rose from the earth in front of my eyes and moved together at the elbow joint.

Saint
I saw myself from above, the pose of a hunter, self-talk of stoicism, it was easy to give mercy, rifle pressed against my cheek. I am worth more than other whites here. I am a saint here in the desert.

Enemies
Deep hollow in the tree is a safe place for spirits as they knock gently from the inside. They use me to slay their enemies. I use them to slay mine. I wake with a start; feeling for my pistol; fire almost dead.

Spirit Crows
Spirit crows came before sunrise and I heard them speak, Raaaarkarrrrrrrrriiiii Aaaaarrrwwwwwkkkku Aaaaaaaaarrrkk Aauuurrrwwwwww . Morning light with gentle wind from the purple ranges through desert pines. Smell of burning grass. Horse jerky stuck in teeth. Sounds of a woman and baby breathing close to my ear. When there is silence, I wait. Crows cannot help but have the last word.

3: Purity Monologues

Pure
pure rock
that is purposely cracked

pure blood
that forks on the hand and is spilt

pure breath
that is given and taken and shared in the frozen night

pure sperm
that is hot from body to body

pure skin
that white men stare at consciously as a flock of cockatoos is disturbed in the night

pure water
that is found and must be

pure spirit
that is present in everything in this place

pure fire
that cleanses everything

there is no other fire
only pure fire that burns
through skin
through bones
pure life of a pure sadness that emerges
the rules of colonisation descend to ruin
pure white
pure black
in pure sand
pure desert
in pure night

I take my police shirt off quickly and bite her ear lobe as gently and forcefully as I can
she reaches into my body through my skin and sounds come from my mouth that I cannot stop

Spirit Double
My bare feet over rock
make no sound
but this earth knows
where I am
I see my painted face in the still water
I lower my face to drink from the rock well
my double
I am double

Dick
black hoods white
white in black
black hides red/purple/veins/imperfection/stains/on white
black absorbs the heat
some of the black penises of the Native men are large
some small
mine is in between
I can't help but get erections
when the black man who paints
gently brushes my dick with earth colours
giving me the right to enter

Desert
brown snake
thick as a forearm
hunting
the earth was made for the snake
the snake
this is the Country of the brown snake

Rock
living rock has time
the rock waits for water
holds water
the rock shades the zebra finch
where tiny feathers fall
the rock provides shelter
protecting from the wind
far above the spinifex plain
there is a campfire in the rock shelter
the spit and blood of old men
their paintings are safe
in the rock shelter
the land is alive

Frost
frost stiffened his limbs
and hardened the clarified moon through colossal tree branches
laying at the base of the ancient tree
great heads of leaves formed branch shadows
across his body
there were only patches of his body in light
frozen still
hands held up
circling the moon
imagining a claim
the body of Jesus Christ
does not belong here
the moon is a cutting tool
that skins the animals
and bleeds the vein
scraping the land clean

Butter
blackfellow no butter
whitefellow plenty butter
Tealeaf whispers this
late at night when we are in a fire trance
through dried meat lips
his hardwood knife-hands are lifeless by his side

Moths
night birds are tree branches
moths look for light
existing in their dark
lizards are part of the smooth bark
waiting for an ant
night birds drop tiny bones from above him
there is still meat remnants on the bones
scratching his skin roughly
though his moustache
he is anchored to the earth
at the base of the tree
with tiny bones falling onto him

Rockhole.
the Magistrate looks out the window
of the telegraph station with cracked lips and whiskey headaches
did her get married yesterday to Jane?
he can't recall
50 feet from the back door
the waterhole is full
reflecting the stern blue sky
50 feet from the back door
instead
he updates superiors with Morse
and shits in a bucket in the corner
covering the stench with *The Bulletin*
his broken language will not stop
a shower of Native spears
if he steps out the backdoor

Spiritdouble - 1
the mountain range is in purple-blue-black shadow
the plain is clear
other than shrubs and rocks
that can break the wind
we are safe camping here and having a fire
there are two women walking towards me
in front of the dusk sun
there are two women holding a goanna by the tail
then one

Old Woman
we found an old woman
in a cave who
could not or
would not talk
cracks in her dry feet from
frost spirits
I offered her the last of my piss-water
from my canteen
she was weightless
with small feathers in her hair
and a necklace of animal teeth
she looked into me
seeing everything
I was ever going to do
and knew me
to be worthless

4: The Abattoir at Night

Shortening days of late Autumn. Spirit crows call to Waxman at sunset and rouse him from his nap that starts every shift. Hearing becomes acute in red abattoir silence. Single grains of sand cannon into the window. In waking-half-sleep-disorientation a muscle of wind lifts a loose corner of Sunday evening corrugated iron – a detailed grey sound that is a lone desert poem. Discipline of shoe polish rises from old police boots, then the salt-and-vinegar of the roughhewn wooden bed head stuffed into his nightwatchman's' cabin. It makes him hungry. Dissatisfied. Laying in his bed he moves the thin curtain aside to see a few crows perched on the cast iron gates of the abattoir. They are waiting for him to sit on his tree stump, where he talks to them.

Barefoot, with shirt, braces, pants, Waxman sits and talks to the crows in desert language as pink, purple, sand colours filter the evening light. The crows have come from the desert to speak to him. They are different from the swollen, slack, abattoir crows that feed on drying blood, broken bones, and tear at fresh cowhide. They are cleaner, blacker, thinner. In language, Waxman asks them if his dead daughter is with them; somewhere. He conjures her 12-year-old face changing colour, submerged in cold blue water that filters the clearest South Australian light, life draining away, as men above, explode into salt water with their clothes on, rabbit hide hats floating, Willow Ruby Waxman cannot breath, as the hands of men grab her roughly and drag her to the surface (her hair, her dress, her ear), she cannot breath, but feels the warmth of the sun on her skin before she flags into unconsciousness. He asks the crows if his Willow Ruby Waxman is in their Country now. He asks them if she is becoming Country. He asks them to look for her. The crows stare at Waxman, feathers almost red in last strings of orange afternoon light. They caw in long scratchy sweeps, avoiding an answer. Once he thanked his white God out loud for a moment just after sleep, where disorientation obscured the death of his Willow Ruby. But the pain is always present, and he must divert, run, cut, pinch himself to dislocate his thoughts for even a minute. He knows the journey of the pain in his body; it begins in his stomach, then, like someone pinching sunburnt skin, it moves up to the chest, a creeping frost, a bitter-tea taste under his tongue near the back of his mouth, shortening his breath, choking him, dominating him. Waxman pinches the inside of his bicep waiting for pain to wipe his head clean but the pictures hang; how they sketched cats together in the Adelaide house, with coals from the cold fireplace, how Willow Ruby asked him what books the little black girls used to read in the desert, how he kissed her open palm and then closed her fingers like wrapping a present.

The crows have gone to their secret homes. He lays in his nightwatchman bed in the dark as rust metal drones from heavy iron gates are battered, loosened, rattled by desert night winds punching otherness into his mind. The repetitive wind-groaning builds and falls, and is the song of his dead daughter, bustling towards his other desert daughters in slow, definite dance gestures of womanless black arms that float in the air and move with the clicks of old mulga boomerangs. No bodies. Arms of desert women floating in the air, all in a line - the fingers of the arms touch the invisible

shoulders, then forearms lower themselves facing the sky, the open palm outstretched. The nightshift makes it difficult to remain awake and Waxman sinks into the illogical purple behind his eyes. A cold packet of air spurs a shiver through his body. He feels the very tips of Willow Ruby's hair trace his lips, and he lurches to catch the accidental feather touch, the air, with his hands, his open mouth, sinking in blank crying of abattoir rust. Soon, he wakes again, to the nightwatchman's quarters. Waxman stares at his facial skin in the mirror; he knows there is a man there. He looks hard into his reflection to locate his spiritdouble; he speaks desert language as he combs his hair carefully. Trimming his moustache gently, intently, he is looking closely at his nostrils wondering if anyone ever notices that one nostril is bigger than the other: one ear higher than the other; he pushes his index finger into his neck, next to his windpipe, for a pulse. He places the nightwatchman's cap on his head slowly, perfectly, slightly angled. Taking pride in the bright gleam of white fabric above the black patent leather peak doesn't last. He investigates the mirror pointing his chin like the captain of a ship as he buttons his black uniform, then he moves to his bed and reaches under his pillow gathering the keys to the many gates of the abattoir. From this angle, he looks to every corner of the mirror for a sign of someone else, his spiritdouble. The black arms of the desert women are floating and beckoning him. He feels safe with them; the floating arms. He feels for the knife in his boot and attaches the keys to his belt, rehearsed. But he is again waylaid by his moustache. He attends his moustache in lantern light, whispering desert songs in language to himself. Then, patrolling the blood-soaked-rotting-skin-animal-terror-abattoir perimeter in a pristine uniform, he could be selling ice cream, or steering a paddle steamer on a Murray River pleasure cruise for dignitaries, but he has a full kerosene lantern stepping through the pools of drying blood and manure reflecting moonlight, afraid of losing desert songs. Cattle waiting in the yards to be slaughtered are quietened by night; they are still, sleeping, dreaming, waiting.

Reading his morning paper sitting on his tree stump, there are swords of early sun that warm the side of his face. Waxman looks to the desert, past the edge of the town, into the wild lands, from his wooden stump. There are guttural rasps of dawn camels, echoing through dry riverbeds. He reads in the fresh ink that the celebrity anthropologist and the Magistrate, are on another speaking tour for their new book on Aboriginal magic and taboo. Waxman remembers the dirty fingernails of the Magistrate tapping out Morse at the telegraph station; through the window he could see the small fire in the dry riverbed, only a little way away, where the black woman Jane was smoking a cigar and hugging herself with a new blanket in the cold wind. Jane cooked the Magistrate's lunch, just outside the hut made of roo skins, mulga, hair rope, camel skins. Waxman had seen Jane out with her digging stick before sunrise, when he was bringing in the horses; he saw the Magistrate light his pipe out front of their wurley, filling his journal with her songs in the smoke of the cooking fire. Jane had a full set of teeth, the Magistrate had five. Sounds of an empty stomach as he rattles the newspaper into shape and considers the smell of his armpits. He touches his moustache to find gravity and whispers to his darling daughter. There is no other smell but the abattoir.

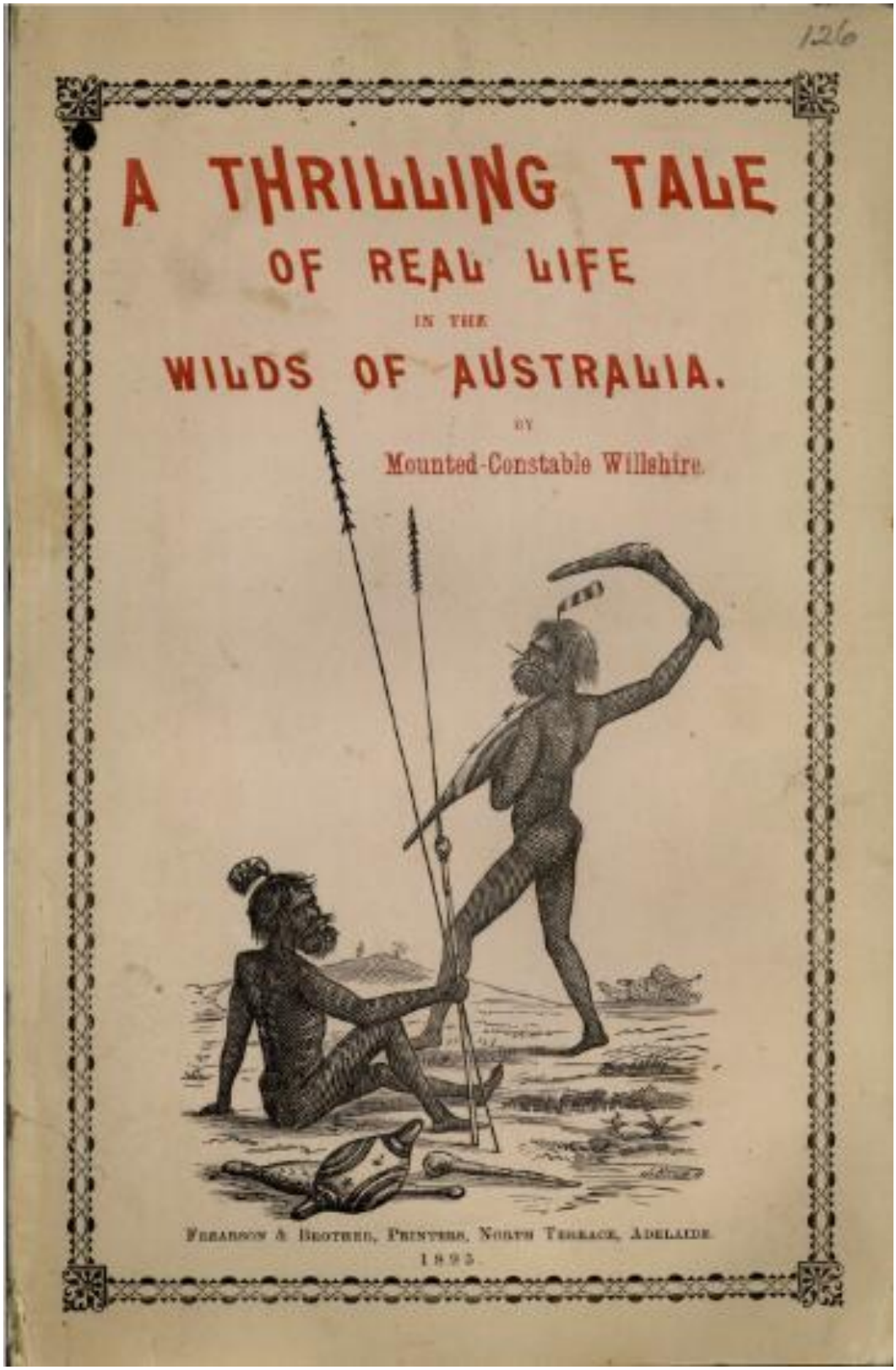
The next evening, he arrives to hear the dusk crows, through the abattoir clatter and smoke. He prefers the peace of the nightshift, the last hour of each working day, the animal ripping machines shut down, one by one, and the dirty, smelly, bearded men leave in groups. He has no-one to talk to accept his daughters. Watch the night. Wait. He greets the ghosts that come, the ones that inhabit innocent Aboriginal men and women travelling quickly through tree-tops and over ranges, gaps and silent riverbeds to be with him in his small nightwatchmen's hut with a fresh cup of tea. The handle of his knife is worn with use: the blade is getting thin. It has cut wood, throat, rope, animal, and fire has made it red hot. It cut that lock of Kitty's hair that he has in his nightwatchmen hut. He smells this hair and squeezes his groin. He smells her hair and waits for something to happen. Nothing. Soon he is asleep in his hut, his spiritdouble leaves his body through twitching electric fingers. Thrashing, like his head is caught in a canvas bag. Waxman endures recurring dreams filled with the damage he has done to others; acts that have offered purpose, anchor, ego. Acts that divert him from looking at himself. Smell of dry grass campfire smoke and jolt of smashing bones punctuated by the sounds of sex. Aboriginal women with bandaged arms laugh nervously in gun smoke; laugh at his white body, his white prick. There are unfamiliar voices narrating the pictures in his head. He is tied to a chair on the edge of a desert bluff, thirsty, the ropes are tight around his wrists.

Wait.

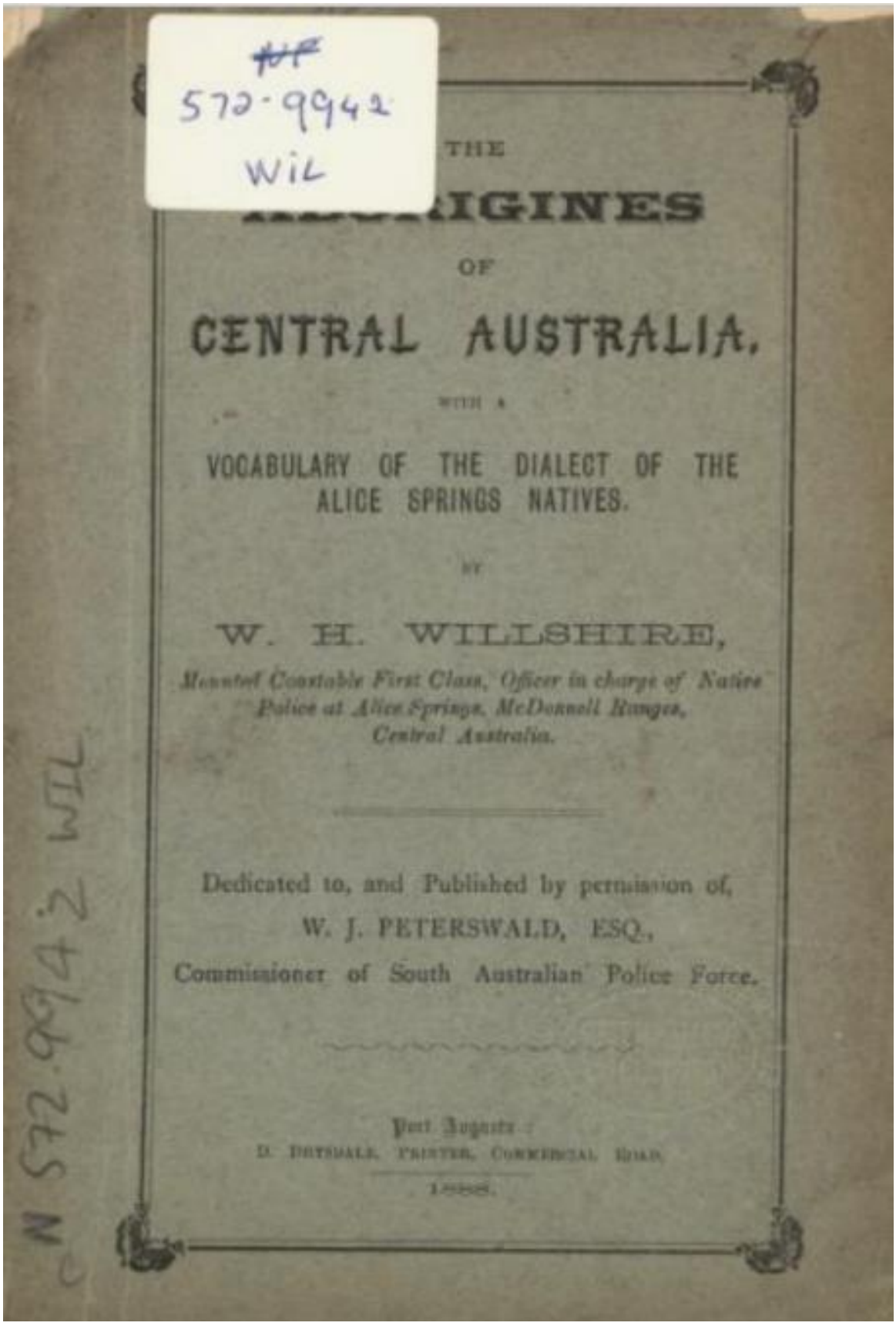
Wait.

Be quiet.

His hands are jerking in the dark, his fingers curled and stiff as he endures his dreams:



Cover art – *A Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia,* 1895



Cover art – *The Aboriginies of Central Australia,* 1888.

The Land of the Dawning

BEING FACTS GLEANED FROM CANNIBALS IN THE AUSTRALIAN STONE AGE.

By W. H. WILLSHIRE,

Mounted Constable, First Class. Officer in Charge of Native Police.

Gordon Creek Natives, Pilie-nurra Tribe.

W. K. Thomas & Co., Printers, Grenfell Street, Adelaide.

1896.

Cover art- *The Land of the Dawning,* 1896.

Mounted Constable William Henry Willshire - Timeline of occurrences

1852 - WW Born- 10 March – Adelaide
1874 - Barrow Creek massacre – 22 February
1875 - *Ipmenkere* inter-tribal Massacre
1877 - Hermannsburg German Lutheran Mission established – 4 June
1878 - WW Joined police – 1 January
1880 - MC J Shirley posted to Alice Springs
1882 - WW posted to Alice Springs – August
1883 - Death of MC Shirley – 7 November
1884 - Daly River Cooper Mine Massacre – 3 September
1884 - Glen Helen murders – 13 November
1884 - WW First Native Trooper cohort – addressing Daly River massacre
1885 - Alice Springs - Heavitree Gap police camp established (moved from Telegraph Station)
1888 – William Willshire *The Aborigines of Central Australia – Kaititi language list* published
1885 – WW Second Native Trooper cohort
1889 - Boggy Hole Police camp established - August
1890 - Death of Nameia at Boggy Hole – 9 January 1890
1890- Swan /Taplin Enquiry published
1890 - James Frazer *The Golden Bough - first edition* published
1890 - Ernest Favenc *History of Australian Exploration 1788-1888* published* different intro/wordlist
1890 - Arthur James Vogan *The Black Police* published
1891 - Death of Roger (Ereminta) and Donkey – 22 February at Tempe Downs Station
1891 - William Willshire *The Aborigines of Central Australia - Arrernte language list* published
1891 - WW trial - 23 July
1892 – Archibald Meston's "Wild Australia Show" on tour
1892 - Frank Gillen appointed Alice Springs telegraph station master
1894 - WW arrives at Gordon Creek (Victoria River District) – 14 May
1894 - Baldwin-Spencer and Gillen meet Horn Scientific Expedition (May-August)
1894 - Carl Strehlow arrives at Hermannsburg – 12 October
1895 – Willshire posted south to Port Augusta – approved by Police Inspector Paul Foelsche
1895 - William Willshire *A Thrilling Tale in the Wilds of Australia* published
1896 - William Willshire *The Land of the Dawning* published
1896 – Willshire posted to Port Lincoln
1896 - WW married to Emma Howell – September (Port Lincoln)
1899 - Spencer/ Gillen *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* published
1900 - James Frazer *The Golden Bough - second edition* published
1905- Willshire posted to Marree
1906 - James Frazer *The Golden Bough - third edition* published
1907 – Willshire posted to Warooka
1907 - Carl Strehlow *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stamme in Zentral-Australien* published
1908 - WW resigned from police force
1908 - WW employed as nightwatchmen at Metropolitan Abattoir Adelaide
1909 - WW daughter "Victoria River Willshire" dies
1912 - Frank Gillen dies 5 June 1912
1922 – Carl Strehlow dies – 20 October – Horseshoe Bend
1925 – Willshire dies - 22 August – Adelaide