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Settler Colonial Biopolitics and Indigenous Resistance: The Refusal of Australia's First Peoples "to fade away or assimilate or just die"

Sheila Collingwood-Whittick

I understand the contemporary colonial project as one that has continued unabated from the time of the landing and invasion by the British in 1788.

—Irene Watson, "In the Northern Territory Intervention"

[T]he historical time that that we thought was past turns out to structure the contemporary field with a persistence that gives the lie to history as chronology.

—Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life*

As Australian historian Paul Bartrop observes, "People rarely, if ever, consider Australia as a site of genocide. It is seen as the lucky country, a land of mateship and the notion of the 'fair go,' a thoroughly egalitarian society in which all get their share and no one is treated unfairly."¹ This construct is, of course, an aggregate of all the myths that Australia's colonizers have invented to screen out memories of the nation's genocidal past and mask the genocidal ethos of its settler-colonizing present. For underlying, and in absolute contradiction with, the smooth, aseptitized, liberal-humanist facade that contemporary Australia presents to the world, is the panoply of biopolitical practices by means of which its Anglo-Celtic population has, since the earliest days of colonization, endeavored to "control" the continent's First Peoples.

A senior lecturer in postcolonial studies at Stendhal University in France until her retirement in 2012, SHEILA COLLINGWOOD-WHITTICK continues to explore, publish, and speak about the subjects of research to which she has been intellectually and passionately committed since the 1970s.

Since the acquisition of Indigenous land is, as Patrick Wolfe argues, the *sine qua non* of settler colonialism,² the dispossession of Australia's Indigenous peoples was destined from the outset to be a bloody process, land being precisely what is both central and sacred to Indigenous lifeways. Forestalling the guilt attendant upon the massacre of peoples who were simply resisting the theft of their ancestral territories, the first settlers justified their actions through discourses which "removed Aborigines from the European's sphere of moral custody."³ Constructing "primitive" peoples as morally and intellectually defective, closer to animals than civilized human beings, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century racial theoreticians provided timely support for "the crudely homicidal eliminationism"⁴ on which the success of Australia's colonization would rely. For if, as the men of science suggested, the life of a "savage" was a "life devoid of value," the extermination of Native tribes who obstructed colonial expansion could hardly be regarded as cause for moral censure. From their arrival on the continent, then, British settlers felt authorized to regard the Indigenous inhabitants as, to use Giorgio Agamben's term, "bare life."⁵

A century later, when most of the continent's exploitable land was securely in colonial hands and the Indigenous population had been culled to within sight of extinction,⁶ an increasingly confident settler-colonial society began to feel that the thanatopolitical practices of frontier days could be abandoned in favour of less sanguinary options. It is with the more insidious, less blatantly genocidal Aboriginal policies emerging towards the end of the nineteenth century and continuing to the present day that the following discussion is concerned.⁷

Drawing on a combination of recent Australian historiography, theoretical writings on biopolitics, and two works of Indigenous Australian fiction, this article will discuss the biopolitical orientation of a settler-colonial nation that has, since its foundation at the beginning of the twentieth century, contrived to maintain the continent's Indigenous peoples in a state of exception. The main arguments I shall develop are that:

(1) settler-colonial Australia's biopolitical objectives are most strikingly evidenced today in the incommensurably high rates both of Indigenous juvenile incarceration and Indigenous child removal.⁸ To quote the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, "Since Prime Minister Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008,⁹ the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children placed in out-of-home care has increased by 65 per cent";¹⁰

(2) despite the multiple, transgenerational traumas they have suffered as a result of the biopolitical practices designed to eliminate them, the Indigenous peoples of Australia have not only resisted their planned extinction, but are still fighting to live according to their own cultural values;

(3) the two novels discussed in this essay—Alexis Wright's *Plains of Promise* (1997), and Kim Scott's *Benang* (1999)—constitute eloquent examples of Indigenous resistance as well as presenting both an historically accurate exposé and an unmitigated indictment of the biopower to which Indigenous Australians have been subjected since the beginning of colonization.¹¹ Both novels either won or were shortlisted for important literary prizes and have received a great deal of critical attention.

In order to clarify the position from which I speak, I wish to make three additional points. Firstly, while both Mark Rifkin and Scott Morgensen develop impressive analytical frameworks to explain how the “state of exception” functions within settler colonial biopolitics, the angle of approach in both these discussions differs in certain significant respects from the one I take here.¹² Rifkin’s analysis, based mainly on the Native American experience of the “state of exception,” cannot, I think, be used as an exact template for understanding the situation in Australia, where no treaties have ever been proposed to Indigenous peoples, much less signed. Morgensen’s essay, which seeks to demonstrate how white settler colonialism has come to universalize Western law, is, on the other hand, much wider in its scope and more ambitious in its theoretical outreach than is my own enquiry here. This article’s more limited aim is to expose the seamless ideological continuity that links settler-colonial Australia’s biopolitical strategies deployed in previous centuries to the nation’s present use of mass incarceration and child removal—to name but two nationwide policies. The effect of these linked strategies is the same: to prolong the “state of exception” to which the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations have been consigned since the British invaded their continent.

Secondly, though I have leaned heavily on recent Australian historiography in preparing the ground for this article, I am not entirely persuaded that the clinical, distantiated eye of the non-Indigenous academic historian can alone produce either the fullest view or the deepest understanding of the interface between the genocidal habitus of settler-colonial societies and the unflinching will to survive of land-based Indigenous peoples threatened with extinction. When considering the atrocities that settler-colonial states have committed against Indigenous peoples, it is neither salutary nor even possible to maintain the kind of Olympian aloofness, the willed “theoretical and methodological indifference” to historical facts that historians, eager to affirm the scientific nature of their discipline, sometimes claim.¹³ I make no apologies, therefore, for interweaving information drawn from historical sources with the experiential knowledge on which two authors of Aboriginal descent base their respective fictional narratives of Indigenous lives.

Finally, though little of what I have to say has not already been said in other forms and in other fora, I firmly believe in the usefulness, the moral obligation, even, of repeating the facts pertaining to ongoing biopolitical measures that, I argue, continue to be aimed at eliminating Australia’s Indigenous peoples. For my hope is that, since Australia is at once nervous about and jealous of its international reputation, the more international opinion is informed of the state of exception in which Indigenous Australians remain confined in the twenty-first century, the greater will be the pressure on the modern nation to renounce the biopolitical rationale that has been the cornerstone of its Aboriginal policy for more than two hundred years.

THE BIOPOLITICS OF INTERNMENT OR “LETTING DIE”

As Australia’s six British colonies became self-governing during the course of the nineteenth century, “each developed its own policy for dealing with its Aboriginal

inhabitants [and] each enacted special bodies of law which set Aborigines apart from the larger population of colonial citizens in a separate legal category.”¹⁴ What had originally been an ad hoc strategy deployed to justify the early settlers’ extermination of Indigenous peoples thus became, over time, the foundation of the exclusionary politics settler-colonial Australia developed to deal with the survivors of frontier massacres.

In 1900, the relegation of the Indigenous population to a state of exception was explicitly enshrined in two sections of the Australian Constitution Act. Section 51(xxvi) stipulated that: “The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws . . . for the people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws,” while section 127 specified that, “In reckoning the numbers of people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted.”¹⁵ As Michael Griffiths spells out, then: “The biopolitical regulation of Aboriginal Australians up to and including the period of assimilation can be understood as a sovereign state of exception in which Aboriginal peoples were separated from the populace in general.”¹⁶

Given that the “blacks” had been dispossessed of all the land their colonizers deemed worth having, one might imagine that, by the beginning of the twentieth century, a society that was always quick to reference its “Christian” values would have felt some slight prick of remorse at the plight of people it had reduced to physical and spiritual destitution. Instead, repulsed by the sight of mentally disoriented and, sometimes, diseased refugees living close by them in camps that “always threatened to spill over their boundaries . . . to unsettle, to intrude” (*Benang*, 117), the residents of white towns in Western Australia, for instance, clamoured for “the Aboriginal ‘menace’ [to] be swept from their districts.”¹⁷

And while, due to their diverse histories and demographic composition, each colony/state reacted somewhat differently to the insalubrious fringe camps, most colonial authorities, yielding to the pressure of public hysteria, responded by expelling and interning the deracinated Natives.¹⁸ The special bodies each state government had initially appointed for the ostensible protection of the Native population,¹⁹ thus became increasingly involved in the implementation of policies destined to purge Australia of the unwanted residue of Indigenous tribes.²⁰

“Natives” presenting signs of disease were at risk of being arrested by the police, separated from the rest of their community and forced to march in neck irons to lock hospitals or leper colonies where they languished for years. In the north of Western Australia, for instance, Aborigines judged (often mistakenly) to be suffering from venereal disease were banished to bleak, uninhabited islands where, undernourished, deeply disoriented, and overcome with despair, many of them died.²¹ Healthy Aborigines, on the other hand, were rounded up all over Australia and forcibly transported to stations, settlements, missions, or reserves—invariably in remote locations—where, irrespective of clan affiliations or language groups, large numbers of them would remain interned for the rest of their lives.

Writing of the experience of Indigenous peoples banished to Palm Island on the east coast of Australia, Deirdre Tedmanson describes the sites in which the Queensland government held “disruptive natives” under the Aboriginal Protection and

Restrictions of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 as “non-places,” “‘reserves’ designated as zones for the ‘orderly’ containment and control of the ‘savages’ [where] [t]hey served time in the liminal space between ‘bare life’ and death.”²²

The fact that “governments spent virtually nothing on establishing or maintaining these reserves” meant that the living conditions of internees often fell far below what was necessary for their physical survival.²³ Yet, as Elizabeth Strakosch and Alissa Macoun remind us, though “[e]limination can be physical, [it] need not be. It can also involve assimilating [Indigenous peoples] into white society in ways that sever connections to their Aboriginality.”²⁴

Typical of the accommodation arrangements that severed inmates’ connections to their Aboriginality in these “non-places” was the systematic segregation of parents and children—a strategy that, in precluding normal family life, ensured the discontinuity of cultural transmission between one generation and the next. In addition to the “highly structured” spatial organization and “linear configuration” that characterized their architecture, missions and reserves typically functioned, suggests Claire McKisley, to disorient and undermine the very different “temporal order” at the heart of Indigenous cultures.²⁵ “Time,” she points out, “was moderated by systems of bells and the day was carved into segments for work, prayer, schooling, sleep and so on. In this sense, the regulation of the residents’ daily activities as well as the spatial layout of the reserves was part of both the colonising process and its idiosyncratic local expressions.”²⁶

In view of the high mortality rates resulting from abysmal sanitary facilities, the chronic malnutrition from which most inmates suffered, the administrative practices that were calculated to destroy the very foundations of Indigenous lifeways, and the often physically and psychologically abusive behavior of their managers and staff, one might legitimately suppose that the real function of these carceral institutions was simply to “let die” a population that the social body of white Australia had expelled as waste.²⁷

Kim Scott’s *Benang* and Alexis Wright’s *Plains of Promise* both record with historical exactitude what it was like to live in the “state of exception” to which Aborigines were (and, as I later argue, still are) banished by settler-colonial Australia. Published in 1999, a mere two years after the findings of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission inquiry into the Stolen Generations were made public, *Benang* articulates the same anguish that permeates the brief biographies related in the *Bringing Them Home* report.²⁸ More importantly, it exposes the biopolitical rationale behind the regulatory powers the settler-colonial state accorded itself to suppress populations whose cultural traditions it neither understood nor valued.

Before writing *Benang*, which is in many respects an autobiographical work, Scott spent five years conducting research in the state archives of Western Australia. Determined to give as comprehensive a view as possible of his Noongar family’s experience of life under the biopolitical regime of settler colonialism, Scott ransacked the welfare files of his own ancestors and relatives, delved into reports of parliamentary debates on the “Native Question,” examined submissions to the 1934 Moseley Royal Commission on the treatment of Indigenous people, scrutinized the various acts voted for the purpose of regulating every detail of Indigenous life, and pored over the

writings of A. O. Neville, West Australia's infamous chief protector of Aborigines and an arch proponent of eugenicist theory.²⁹

The autobiographical fiction that results from Scott's detective-like investigation of West Australia's archives splices key elements of his personal and family history with innumerable passages (often quoted verbatim) borrowed from the written documentation the author unearthed during his forensic excavation of what, in effect, are the incriminating records of the state's biopolitical operations. The juxtaposition of these two contradictory discourses elegantly demonstrates the startling hypocrisy behind the rhetoric of welfare and social improvement used by colonial authorities to justify practices that were, in reality, calculated to be genocidal in their effect.

Like Scott himself, *Benang's* narrator, Harley Scatt, not only has access to his white grandfather's voluminous archives on Western Australian biopolitics, he is also privy to his Noongar relatives' oral recollections of the periods they spent interned in government reserves during the first half of the twentieth century. Though no explicit comparisons are ever drawn, narratorial depictions of the circumstances leading up to, and the ideology behind, Indigenous people's incarceration in these establishments implicitly refer the reader to the iconography of the Third Reich.³⁰ I am thinking, for example, of the description of Australian policemen callously rounding up Aborigines who are destined for internment, a scene in which terrified families are transported by rail in stock cars to unknown destinations; or the observation that Aborigines were "driven to the settlement like animals" (91).

In the same way, the old men's memories of existence inside the biopolitical space of the reserve immediately invite comparisons with that of "pariah populations" in Nazi Germany.³¹ For, like the concentration camps to which those whose lives were deemed "unworthy of being lived"³² were deported by the S.S. in the 1930s and 1940s, living conditions in many of the sites where Indigenous people were interned were inhuman.

Invariably located between the rubbish tip and the "shit dump," lacking piped water and devoid of anything resembling adequate sewerage arrangements, the camps in which Harley's relatives are confined are identical in every detail to the government settlements described in recent decades by a new breed of Australian historians.³³ Nourished on slops served by "shaven headed" young women "dressed in hessian and flour bags" (331), crammed together in "tiny huts, shabby tents, shelters made of packing cases, of flattened kerosene tins, of hessian-cloth-boughs-bush" (317-8), the internees clearly have little chance of surviving "the ravages of disease, despair and death that, Haebich reminds us, "swept through" such carceral institutions.³⁴

Equally damning of the institutionalized existence to which so many Aborigines were condemned in twentieth-century Australia is the portrait Waanji novelist, Alexis Wright, paints of the fictive Mission of St Dominic's in *Plains of Promise*. Mirroring the historical circumstances in which the earliest victims of Aboriginal Protection were incarcerated, the first generation of internees at St Dominic's are "herded like a pack of dingoes into a holding pen" (9) and housed in corrugated iron huts lined up in rows with one tap for every 200 people (11). Not surprisingly, St Dominic's (in common with many of the places of confinement in which this initial phase of biopolitical

regulation unfolded) proves to be a breeding ground for social chaos, psychic trauma, and the contagious diseases arising out of endemic squalor.

As well as exposing the abject material and psychological conditions that prevailed in such “Christian” establishments, Wright’s novel constitutes a fierce denunciation of the sovereign-like power that mission administrators in Australia commonly wielded over the Aborigines whose lifeways they sought to extinguish. In keeping with his real-life counterparts, Errol Jipp, St Dominic’s chief missionary, has “absolute, all-encompassing authority” over the mission’s more than 800 inmates (31). Deciding who marries whom (31, 70, 121, 125); isolating “half-caste” children from the rest of the community to prevent their cultural contamination; “forb[idding] parents to teach their children their own languages” (91); banishing “uppity” Aborigines to penal colonies or leprosaria located on remote islands (31);³⁵ and punishing petty misbehavior with twenty-four hours in a tiny, dark, airless lock-up (38), the punitive control Jipp exercises is little different from that within the remit of any white reserve manager during that era. Moreover, like a significant number of these administrators, Jipp has no compunction about sexually assaulting little girls in his care.³⁶

Cultural and Biological Absorption

Notwithstanding the thanatogenic environment that characterized many of these internment centers, colonial authorities eventually found themselves confronted with an unexpected development. Not only had the “full-blood natives” failed to die out, as anticipated, in the *mouroirs* in which they had been sequestered, but contrary to all predictions, by the beginning of the twentieth century Aborigines of part-white ancestry were becoming increasingly numerous. Thus began “an official panic which, over the following half-century, engulfed the continent.”³⁷ In 1886, alarm at the financial burden of having to maintain the rapidly growing “coloured” population led the Victorian Parliament to pass legislation commonly referred to as “The Half-Caste Act,” which ordered that adults of mixed descent be expelled from government-funded institutions and sent into white society, where, it was argued, they would eventually become assimilated. Predictably, all this policy achieved was to create further fractures within already damaged Indigenous family groups. In other states, the Indigenous identity of people designated as “half-castes” was officially denied without their ever receiving any of the support they would have needed to survive in a society that remained contemptuous of their cultures.

If the “half-caste” problem did not become a matter of national concern until the mid-1930s, during the following twenty years assimilation would become “the dominant Indigenous affairs policy in all mainland jurisdictions.”³⁸ More brutally, child removal and reproductive engineering—policies that had been enthusiastically championed by Aboriginal Protectors A. O. Neville and Cecil Cook at the initial conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities in 1937—were, at different junctures and to varying degrees, practices in which all states and territories throughout Australia engaged. As Kerry Carrington explains, the forcible separation of children of mixed descent from their Indigenous families was a form of “bio-power” that insulated

Indigenous youngsters from “the corrupting influences of their ‘savage’ forbears and assimilated [them] into white society.”³⁹ Just as importantly, since the children were invariably despatched to locations at great distances from their home territories, the process was designed to ensure the loss of their connection to the land.⁴⁰ Thanks in large part to the international success of the film *Rabbit Proof Fence*, and the worldwide media coverage given to Kevin Rudd’s apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008, Indigenous child removal from the early twentieth century onwards is the face of Australian biopolitics that is best known to mainstream publics outside Australia.⁴¹ It is, however, far from being the only biopolitical operation carried out by settler-colonial authorities over the last century. In the limited space available, therefore, it is on the biopolitical projects that are less well-known to non-specialist, non-Australian publics that I propose to focus.

At the end of the nineteenth century, legislation was enacted in most states allowing “Natives” of mixed descent to be, on the fulfilment of certain conditions, exempted from the draconian laws that controlled the lives of their full-blood Aboriginal kin.⁴² The “Faustian bargain” these select “half-castes” were being offered was, to quote Wolfe, to “have our settler world but lose your indigenous soul.”⁴³ For, to obtain an exemption certificate, they were required to abandon their traditional lifeways and sever all contact with their Indigenous community, family included.⁴⁴ Failure to comply with these conditions could lead to the withdrawal of exemption rights, a fine, or even a prison sentence.⁴⁵ Even more radical than this attempt to obliterate Indigenous cultural identity, however, was the plan proposed at the beginning of the twentieth century to *biologically* eliminate Indigenous peoples. As Katherine Ellinghaus has found, “Emphasis on biological absorption was more conspicuous in some states than in others, but . . . it dominated the strategies that white Australians devised to rid themselves of their ‘Aboriginal problem.’”⁴⁶ The argument advanced by proselytizers of reproductive engineering was outrageously simple: if the Native strain polluting Australia’s gene pool was to be filtered out, “black blood” must be prevented from re-entering the more diluted bloodstream of “half-castes” and “quadroons.” The ideal of whiteness the nation strove to embody was, by contrast, judged to be less contaminated by the admixture of “half-caste” blood, whose impact was likened to “that of a small stream of dirty water entering a larger clear stream. Eventually the colour of the smaller is lost.”⁴⁷

Marriages between full-blood or dark-skinned Aborigines and lighter-skinned partners were subsequently prohibited in states where the policy of “breeding out the colour” was embraced as *the* Final Solution to the “Aboriginal problem.”⁴⁸ By the same token, “miscegenation” between light-skinned Indigenous women and girls and white settler males was actively promoted in some states, if not all.⁴⁹ In the Northern Territory, where the cohabitation of non-Indigenous men with Indigenous women was more commonplace than elsewhere in Australia, marriage between white males and females of Indigenous descent was even advocated as a kind of prophylactic measure. On the one hand, argued the territory’s chief Aboriginal protector, Dr. Cecil Cook, it would prevent the moral climate of the territory from degenerating further. On the

other, it would improve the physical health of the white population by reducing “the at present high incidence of Skin Cancer in the blonde European.”⁵⁰

Examining Australia’s social-Darwinist racial engineering project in relation to the function of Sister Kate Clutterbuck’s Home for “quarter-caste” children in Parkerville, Western Australia, Quentin Beresford and Paul Omaji draw attention to the Anglican nun’s unabashed approval of the idea of “breeding out the colour.” Indeed, on the question of marriage partners for her “quarter caste” girls, Sister Kate had, she once informed A. O. Neville, a clear preference for white men over male “quadrooms.”⁵¹ Illustrating, as it does, how diabolically neatly the scheme to biologically absorb Indigenous peoples dovetailed into the policy of removing “half-caste” children from their natal milieu, the point made here is a crucial one. As genocide scholar Robert van Krieken states, children of Anglo-Aboriginal descent were not “simply being removed to be educated and acculturated into the ways of white Australia; they were, in fact, being removed because they were prime candidates for sexual relationships or marriage with whites.”⁵²

One example *par excellence* of the perverse ingenuity of those charged with the realization of Australia’s biopolitical objectives is that of the apprenticeship schemes for young “half-caste” females devised by several Aboriginal Protection Boards during the first part of the twentieth century. As a new generation of mainly feminist historians has exposed, after being forcibly removed at puberty from their Indigenous families, the abducted girls were subsequently indentured into domestic service in white homes where, as was both well-known and explicitly acknowledged by government officials, the risk of sexual abuse and impregnation by their white masters was extremely high.⁵³ Rendered unavailable for reproductive purposes within Indigenous communities, the bodies of young domestic servants were, in effect, being placed at the disposal of their white male employers. Far from being the unfortunate consequence of lack of foresight, the pregnancies that followed were, Victoria Haskins suggests, precisely the outcome that white authorities had contrived to achieve.⁵⁴

Enthused by the heady discourse of race and blood, mating and breeding out, segregation and miscegenation that dominated the landmark conference of 1937, the chief protector of West Australia openly indicated the biopolitically programmed nature of the pregnancies that so frequently occurred among Indigenous girls in indentured service. Moreover, with the benefit of hindsight we can see that three of the five clauses used in the United Nations Convention of 1948 to define the term *genocide* are clearly applicable to the *modus operandi* Neville describes.⁵⁵ How such genocidal strategies impacted (and continue to resonate in) the psyche of Indigenous people is a central concern in both of the fictional works discussed in this article.

Author Kim Scott, a Noongar man with firsthand experience of what it means to be the “end product” of Australia’s cultural and biological absorption policies,⁵⁶ brings raw pain and a controlled anger to the portrait he paints of his fictional alter ego, Harley.⁵⁷ Raised by his white grandfather (an A. O. Neville doppelganger, obsessed with his own personal project of producing “the first white man born”), Harley, like the real-life victims of the Stolen Generations, has been deliberately disconnected from his language, his culture, his Noongar kin, and the primordial link with country that

provides Indigenous peoples with the grounds of their being in the world. Physically disabled, emotionally disfigured, bereft of familial and territorial moorings, and ontologically adrift, Harley plunders the lexica of fragmentation, emptiness, separation, and loss to express the torment of his condition.

In Wright's *Plains of Promise*, the ongoing psychic legacy of Australian biopolitics is evidenced in the experience of Mary, daughter of Ivy, a motherless Aboriginal girl whom Jipp raped when she was fourteen years old. Separated from Ivy at birth and given up for adoption to a couple of white, middle-class city-dwellers who live thousands of kilometers from her birthplace, Mary can, nonetheless, be counted as one of the "lucky" members of the Stolen Generations. Unscathed by sexual abuse, well cared for and educated, she is, on the surface at least, a strong, intelligent woman with a successful professional background and comfortable financial means. And yet, behind the functioning persona Mary presents to the world, is a lost and damaged soul. Extirpated from her biological family, severed from her Native culture but also estranged from the society into which her adoptive parents introduced her, Mary has been voided of identarian substance. "Like a wasted spore, inconsequential, she float[s] about unconnected" (282). One further variant of the profound existential dis-ease afflicting the victims of twentieth-century biopolitics is that described by Kathie, a mission inmate whom Mary interviews when she goes in search of her own Aboriginal mother at St Dominic's. Unlike Mary, Kathie was removed from her family milieu when she was old enough to have memories both of her birth mother and of her Aboriginal culture. The inconsolable chagrin that blights her life is the experiential knowledge that disculturation is a transmissible disease, one that she has ineluctably passed on to her children: "I could never give my children the law, the language of their mother's country. I saw them become alcoholics in this place. . . . I couldn't give them their past. They lived with the fear of the unknown. They have no future and I cry for them, because they cannot go back to their country" (275).

In both *Benang* and *Plains of Promise* the "socially engineered" individuals produced by the biopolitical measures settler-colonial governments have repeatedly used to eliminate Indigenous cultures from the Australian landscape, are portrayed as casualties of what Wright refers to as "an undeclared war" (74).⁵⁸

AUSTRALIAN BIOPOLITICS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

One of the most striking facts to emerge from a major opinion poll conducted by Hugh Mackay in 1998 was that, on the eve of the twenty-first century, white Australia still viewed the nation's Indigenous citizens as belonging to the state of exception to which they were first consigned by settlers in the frontier era. "Indigenous people," reports Mackay, "were not really included in any consideration of social class and status by white Australians: they were either off the bottom of the scale, or in a separate category altogether."⁵⁹

Infected by the same spirit of denialism endemic to all settler-colonial societies, Anglo-Australians seem unable or unwilling to acknowledge that the appalling conditions in which many Indigenous people cling on to life today directly reflect the *ongoing*

impact of biopolitical schemes employed in earlier periods. Yet few non-Indigenous Australians can honestly claim not to know that, in Indigenous society, levels of physical and mental health, education, employment, housing, economic circumstances, and family well-being are all dramatically inferior to those they enjoy themselves. Nor can any sentient citizen be ignorant of the catastrophic statistics for Indigenous life expectancy, anomic suicide, self-harm, alcoholism, and substance abuse (all recognized symptoms of transgenerational trauma) that are regularly published by researchers and reported in the national press.

Nevertheless, what W. E. H. Stanner referred to as the “eyelessness [of settler colonial Australians] towards the moral foundation of Australian development,” “the suffocation of conscience”⁶⁰ means that governments of all political persuasions can always count on massive public support whenever they resort to the kind of throwback policies that I address below.⁶¹ Biopolitical measures have, in effect, always constituted the default solution in a society that construes the very existence of Indigenous peoples as a problem.⁶²

Juvenile Imprisonment

Over the past few decades mandatory sentencing laws have been passed by several state jurisdictions in Australia. Consequently, and in absolute contradiction with the recommendations laid down by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991, a hugely disproportionate percentage of the Indigenous population is still being systematically imprisoned for mainly minor offenses.⁶³

Commenting on the 2009 parliamentary report on Indigenous incarceration and health acknowledging “the grossly over-represented population of Indigenous Australians within the correctional system,”⁶⁴ journalist Chris Graham points out that the rate of Indigenous Australian incarceration is five times higher than “the jailing rate of black males in South Africa at the end of the Apartheid era (1993).”⁶⁵ Even more shocking, however, is the assertion by professor of law Thalia Anthony and professor of criminology Eileen Baldry that, according to “the best available international data,” Indigenous Australians are the most incarcerated people on the face of the earth.⁶⁶ The Human Rights Law Center and Human Rights Watch, UNICEF, Amnesty International Australia, and the UN Special Rapporteur Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, are among the many observers who have expressed grave concerns about the overrepresentation of Indigenous Australians in prison. As Tauli-Corpuz says, “[it] is a major human rights concern. The figures are simply astounding.”⁶⁷

What is particularly worrying about these “astounding” figures, however, is the very high percentage of Indigenous youths they include.⁶⁸ For while “Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people are on average 13 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous Australians” overall, the ratio is a great deal more dramatic when it concerns Indigenous youth alone.⁶⁹ For instance, Amnesty International Australia data for the year 2013–14 shows that “Indigenous young people were 26 times more likely to be in detention nationally” than non-Indigenous youths. In Western Australia, the figure was 53 times higher, with young Indigenous people constituting “an average 78% of the

youth detention population.”⁷⁰ In the Northern Territory, Indigenous juveniles made up a staggering 96 percent of all young people in detention.⁷¹ Even in Victoria, where the number of young Indigenous people in detention is only a third of the national rate, Indigenous youths are “still 11 times more likely to be in detention than their non-Indigenous counterparts.”⁷² Finally, Australia’s utter failure to respond adequately to the urgent recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991 is clearly evidenced in the findings of the Australian Institute of Criminology in 2016, which stated that “The rate of incarceration of Indigenous juveniles in 2013 was 42 percent higher than that recorded in 2003.”⁷³

Since “according to state and territory criminal legislation, the age of criminal responsibility in all Australia is 10 years old,” the term “juveniles” used in relation to Australian incarceration figures refers to young people between the ages of 10 to 17.⁷⁴ In its 2016 report, Amnesty International Australia emphasizes that, “Despite comprising only 6% of the population of 10 to 17-year-olds, Indigenous children make up over half of the youth detention population in Australia.”⁷⁵ Even more damning, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare revealed that for the June quarter of 2016, “90% of Indigenous young people in detention were aged 10–17.”⁷⁶

In 2007, a code of conduct spelling out the conditions that need to be respected in the event of juveniles being held in detention was drawn up by Committee on the Rights of the Child as part of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child. Among the committee’s numerous recommendations, the following are all regularly flouted in Australia:⁷⁷

- (1) A minimum age of criminal responsibility not less than 12 years old.
- (2) Anyone under 18 years old at the time of the alleged commission of an offense must be treated in accordance with the rules of juvenile justice.
- (3) Incarceration should only ever be “a measure of last resort.”⁷⁸
- (4) Children must not be held in detention in an adult prison or other facility for adults.
- (5) Restraint or force must not be used unless the child poses an imminent threat of injury to him- or herself or others, and, then only when all other solutions have failed. Restraint or force must never be used as a means of punishment and, when deemed necessary, should only ever be used “under close and direct control of a medical and/or psychological professional.”⁷⁹

If incarcerating thousands of Aborigines today is, as I argue, the contemporary equivalent of the nineteenth-century policy of herding Indigenous people into reserves and missions, sentencing unconscionably high numbers of Indigenous juveniles to imprisonment can be compared to the twentieth-century child removal policy which interned Indigenous infants and youths in state-run institutions. In both instances, the biopolitical function detention serves remains unaltered: all that has changed is the type of establishment in which Indigenous people are being incarcerated. Today’s Indigenous juveniles, who are being confined in increasing numbers to “non-places, spaces, where [they] cannot integrate meanings, traditions or symbols,”⁸⁰ are, in common with their nineteenth- and twentieth-century predecessors, the victims of a violent process of disculturation. The majority of them are also, like the Indigenous

girls indentured into domestic service a century earlier, being removed from society at an age when they are at the height of their reproductive potential.

Most importantly, like the Indigenous people held in reserves and missions in an earlier era, a very significant number of Indigenous prisoners are dying in custody. Many of these deaths are due to lack of appropriate medical care or the failure of responsible agencies to follow their own prescribed procedures.⁸¹ A significant percentage of deaths, particularly among the younger age groups, are self-inflicted.⁸² AIC data for the period 1999 to 2013 shows, for instance, that the number of Indigenous prisoners committing suicide in the 17–19 years age group was approximately three times higher than that recorded for non-Indigenous prisoners. In the 20–24 years age group, the figure for Indigenous suicides was more than double that for non-Indigenous suicides.⁸³

According to the new database created by *The Guardian* newspaper, “147 Indigenous people have died in custody” over the past decade alone. Some of the dead were children.⁸⁴ More than half of the dead prisoners had not even been found guilty.⁸⁵ In 1991, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody made 338 recommendations to help reduce the unacceptable number of Indigenous Australian deaths in custody. Today, two and a half decades later, despite the soaring rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people dying in prison, most of those recommendations remain unimplemented.⁸⁶

Indigenous Child Removal

In addition to the increasing incarceration of Indigenous children as young as 10 and 11 in prisons and detention centers around the country, over the last two decades there has been a significant rise in the rate of placement of Indigenous children in Out of Home Care (OOHC). A mere nine years after the Rudd Apology, *The Family Matters Report for 2017* warns that the situation today is even worse than it was at the time when the *Bringing Them Home* report into the Stolen Generations was released over twenty years ago:

[In 1997] many Australians were shocked to learn that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children represented 20 percent of children living in-out of-home care . . . Now, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up approximately 36 per cent of all children living in OOHC, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC is almost 10 times that of other children, and disproportionate representation continues to grow.⁸⁷

If nothing is done to change this situation, “the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care will,” the report asserts, “at least treble in the next 20 years.”⁸⁸

Looking at the data for the year 2015–16 in the Northern Territory, we find that almost 90 percent of children placed in OOHC were of Indigenous descent.⁸⁹ Removal statistics in other states and territories of Australia are not so excessive, nor are they homogenous, but all of them are unacceptably high. And as the report’s

authors emphasize, regardless of how disproportionate they might be, Indigenous child removal rates are not, in themselves, the only issue at stake. A further cause for alarm is the increasing tendency to isolate Indigenous children in care from their cultural backgrounds—a trend that flies in the face of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, first implemented in 1983 for, among other things, “the purpose of enhancing and preserving Aboriginal children’s sense of identity through the prevention of out-of-home care [and] ensuring culturally connected placements.”⁹⁰ Nowadays, however, “the incidence of indigenous children in out of home care is rapidly increasing and has reached critical levels [w]ith only 66 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with child protection measures being placed within their family, kin and community in 2016.”⁹¹

The biopolitical intention that produced the Stolen Generations is also evidenced in Northern Territory legislation passed on February 18, 2015, which allowed non-Indigenous foster care parents to apply for “permanent care orders” enabling them to become the legally recognized parents of any Indigenous child in their care. For as researcher Padraic Gibson made clear at the time:

The birth family will have no opportunity to have these orders overturned once they are finalised. Unlike similar orders in other jurisdictions, if the child is Aboriginal, there will be no enforceable obligation on their new family to ensure the child remains connected to their Aboriginal community and culture. There is also no obligation on the court to ensure that the biological family is present when orders are made, or even that they are aware that proceedings are taking place.⁹²

That Gibson’s concern on this matter is both well-placed and well-founded is amply confirmed by *The Family Matters Report 2017*, which states that “54 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s case plans did not contain any consideration of the child’s cultural identity, while 24 per cent of children did not have a case plan at all.”⁹³

To grasp the significance of such developments for Indigenous people it is imperative to understand both the historical and contemporary backgrounds against which they are taking place. Not only do contemporary Indigenous child removals replicate the brutal biopolitical control that wrecked Indigenous families for generations less than half a century ago, but the alarming increase in placing Indigenous children in OOHC is occurring within a decade of Kevin Rudd’s solemn pledge to the Stolen Generations that, “This Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.”⁹⁴ Further, the flagrant disregard for the maintenance of cultural connection by the state authorities that are separating large numbers of Indigenous children from their families today is manifesting itself in an era when it is an accepted tenet of child-care philosophy that “culture—which embodies knowing one’s identity, being able to live your culture and being connected to community—is the most powerful and resilient factor, along with education, in protecting and nurturing our children.”⁹⁵ If, then, as Clare Tilbury indicates, state governments in Australia are not only placing greater numbers of Indigenous children with “unrelated, non-Indigenous carers” but are also maintaining those children in non-Indigenous care for longer

periods, there seems to be little to differentiate the intentionality driving contemporary practices from that which produced the Stolen Generations.⁹⁶

In light of the plethora of information available today on the nurturing power of culture for Indigenous peoples, the growing tendency of state authorities to place Indigenous Australian children in non-Indigenous care seems suspiciously like a deliberate attempt to undermine the precarious hold on life to which extreme poverty and the transgenerational trauma resulting from white settler colonization have already condemned these youngsters. For not only do contemporary child removal practices repeat, they also deepen the impact of earlier biopolitical processes that, in banishing Indigenous Australians from their traditional homelands and exiling them for life in missions and reserves, led to “the breakdown of traditional family or societal structures, feelings of loss and despair and the social dysfunction that afflict some Indigenous communities.”⁹⁷

Children who are separated from their communities, communities that cannot do other than look on helplessly while their children are removed are, I argue, being as effectively disabled by white settler biopower as previous generations were.⁹⁸ The draft report of the recent inquiry into *Disability, Care and Support* appears to confirm this hypothesis. Compared with non-Indigenous Australians, the authors inform us, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people suffer from significantly higher rates of disability, chronic disease, and child mortality, while experiencing lower levels of life expectancy, educational attainment, income, employment, and access to disability support services.⁹⁹ They also, Tauli-Corpuz observes, suffer from “feelings of powerlessness, loss of culture and lack of control over their lives,” all of which explains why “suicide rates . . . are escalating at a shocking rate and are double that of non-Indigenous Australians.”¹⁰⁰

EXEMPLARS OF RESISTANCE TO AUSTRALIA’S BIOPOLITICS: *PLAINS OF PROMISE* AND *BENANG*

In their different ways, the two novels that I have chosen constitute sustained and passionate affirmations of Indigenous ways of being and seeing that highlight the main points I seek to make in this article. In *Plains of Promise*, Wright repeatedly underscores the parallel existence and continuing Indigenous observance of customary tribal law in defiance (and under the unseeing eyes) of white authority (8–9, 37, 40, 125). *Plains of Promise* is also a celebration of Dreamtime temporality and of “land and the powers that tie people to land.”¹⁰¹ Seeking to “explore the gift of our true inheritances . . . of our lives before the invasion, our culture in spite of the invasion,”¹⁰² Wright challenges non-Indigenous understandings of the world with visions of a temporal order and human interactions with place that fly “above the bitterness of pure logic and rational thought.”¹⁰³ To that extent, non-Native readers are regularly forced to recognize their perceptual incompetence, their inability to negotiate meaning in a narrative that, Alison Ravenscroft observes, “positions itself in another epistemology.”¹⁰⁴ And that, as Ravenscroft underlines, “is among [the novel’s] accomplishments rather than its failings.”¹⁰⁵

Forged from life experiences dissimilar to those of Wright, Scott envisions Indigenous resistance to the assimilatory agenda of settler colonial biopolitics from a different angle. Whereas Wright focuses on the refractory epistemology that, mission propaganda notwithstanding, continues to structure the mind-set and determine the actions of the traditional inhabitants of her natal Gulf country, Scott foregrounds the everyday striving of dispossessed Noongars to keep alive the fundamental principles of their precolonial cultural inheritance. The stories Harley's uncles recount are all, in essence, the same story—one that valorizes the indomitable spirit of a small group of Aborigines struggling to maintain their ontological integrity by keeping family together, following the ancestral cycle of seasonal displacements on which nomadic subsistence economies depend, and, above all, by preserving their links with Country.

My concluding observations on *Plains of Promise* and *Benang* focus on one short passage from each work. Both of these passages, I argue, constitute an apodictic exposition of the sheer vacuity of white Australia's self-justificatory discourse on the biopolitical methods it has consistently applied to the "problem" of the continent's Indigenous inhabitants. Both of them are at once masterly representations and eloquent expressions of Indigenous resistance. By representing the resilience of Indigenous culture, these two scenes systematically and effectively debunk every baseless settler-colonial claim: that Indigenous Australians, earmarked from the earliest day of colonization for annihilation, are no more than savages, a doomed race incapable of resisting "progress," helpless before the superior power of a higher order of humanity, less-than-human beings whose archaic, worthless culture is expendable.

The first scene is from *Plains of Promise*. It describes the "routine walk" taken by a group of "full-blood" Aboriginal elders, illustrating with consummate sardonicism the impotence of the colonizer when faced with the unshakable resistance of people both strengthened by and certain of the value of their traditional culture. In addition, it is a compelling demonstration of what Donaldson refers to as Aborigines' "continued assertion of their own temporal order against standardized metric time."¹⁰⁶ On reaching a patch of open ground that overlooks Errol Jipp's garden, the old Aborigines, "[t]heir faces mapped by the deep gorges of great wisdom and knowledge of their traditional homelands," settle down without a word to watch the sweating white man mow his lawn (19). Destabilized by the sense of inalienable belonging radiated by the group of elders, Jipp, for whom land is mere inert matter waiting to be transformed, experiences their inactivity as an intolerable irritant that he does not have the psychic resources to ignore. "Red-faced with exhaustion, he tries not to notice the old men. *But he does*" (20; my emphasis). The elders, for their part, "sit there silently, separately, until midday. Then they get up and walk back again over the scorched dusty track. Empty handed. Independence intact. Another successful protest against whiteman's time" (20).¹⁰⁷ Wright magisterially communicates in this scene both the Indigenous Australians' rejection of the futile industry the white man expends in seeking to impose his proprietorial mark on what can never be owned, and the settler's destabilization on recognizing that the "natives" not only have no interest in emulating his behavior, but they scornfully reject it.

The passage from *Benang* brings the novel to a close. Even though Harley's white grandfather has continually hammered into him the superiority of his European lineage, Harley learns to prefer a radically different set of values by following the old Noongar tracks to which his Aboriginal uncles introduce him. As the stories of his blackfella kin enable Harley to recover the genealogical links, the all-important connections to ancestral territory that his white grandfather almost succeeded in obliterating, Harley feels healed and at peace, finally, with himself. From this position of newfound serenity, he speaks back to the assimilatory process that has caused him so much grief:

Speaking from the heart, I tell you that I am part of a much older story, one of a perpetual billowing from the sea, with its rhythm of return, return, and remain. I offer these words, especially to those of you I embarrass, and who turn away from the shame of seeing me; or perhaps it is because your eyes smart as the wind blows the smoke a little toward you and you hear something like a million million many-sized hearts beating, and the whispering of waves, leaves, grasses. . . . We are still here, Benang. (495)

The image of cyclicity that reflects Harley's identification with Noongar ways of seeing celebrates an epistemological tradition in diametric opposition to the linear logic of progress on which settler-colonial ideology is founded. Notwithstanding the lyrical cadences of this final passage, the combative message it conveys is unmistakable. Indigenous peoples, it reminds us, are not only heirs to a culture that stretches back into time immemorial, they are also the transmitters of an environmental ethics designed to ensure their culture's continuity. "Benang," as Scott informs us, is the Noongar word for "tomorrow" (464). These two passages—or indeed Indigenous writing generally—impress upon non-Native readers how utterly *unimpressed* Indigenous Australians are by the touted superiority of Western culture. For the majority of Indigenous people, Europeans' veneration of historical "progress," the primacy of reason, the accumulation of wealth, work, the sacrosanct individuality of an atomized human self, are anathema. Equally aberrant is whitefellas' disrespect for ancestral wisdom, their ignorance of and disdain for nonhuman species, their baffling insensibility to the spirit of country, and their vision of the natural environment as an inexhaustible store of exploitable, extractable resources.

As the world tries to get to grips with the seemingly inevitable catastrophe of anthropogenic climate change, the ecologically pathological society of settler-colonial Australia has every reason to rethink the biopolitical practices by means of which it has continually sought to rid itself of Australia's Indigenous peoples. For, as Mark Levene and Daniele Conversi argue in a recent essay, the scientific and technological development, in which European peoples take such pride "and which, in the short-term, has favored 'our' Western-led planetary predation," has also led to "the possibility of total human extinction."¹⁰⁸ And while Indigenous subsistence societies are likely to be very badly affected by the worldwide ecological crisis, Western consumer societies may well be even more vulnerable to its devastating consequences.

To survive, then, whitefellas in Australia—as indeed, whitefellas the world over—will have to learn to accept other understandings of their environment. For it is in their own interests henceforth not only to listen to “interlocutors who can articulate an entirely different epistemology of human relationships to each other, as to nature,” but also to affirm their solidarity with the very peoples their biopolitical practices were intended to destroy, and to acknowledge that “climate resilience is founded on both [their] own recovery of *native*, practical skills and on that pre-Anthropocene virtue called the ‘moral economy.’”¹⁰⁹

CONCLUSION

As Julian Burger notes, “Indigenous peoples are survivors.”¹¹⁰ Thus, despite the incalculable damage that the “Aboriginal policies” referred to in this essay have inflicted on Indigenous communities, Australia’s biopolitics have nevertheless failed to achieve their primary objective. Not only have the continent’s First Peoples succeeded in thwarting the colonizers’ will to physically “disappear” them—as Harley says, “We are still here”—they are increasingly engaged today in manifesting their defiant attachment to a mode of being in the world that Anglo-Australia has spent almost 230 years trying to destroy. It is the extraordinary persistence of Indigenous Australians’ refusal to “quit being who they are” that I want to underline in concluding this discussion.¹¹¹

Not surprisingly, in the more remote, less “settled” areas of Australia where traditional practices are more easily maintained, Indigenous peoples’ identification with their land and culture remains resilient. Yet even in urbanized Indigenous communities, where the impact of assimilation policies is most in evidence, the memory of territorial origins and former lifeways constitutes both a solace and a source of psychic empowerment for many Indigenous people. For, as Stanner noted in 1958, although Aborigines have proved their adaptability by “taking into account” aspects of the settler-colonial worldview, they still have no desire to “un-be” who they are.¹¹² It is worth noting that Stanner’s view was emphatically confirmed by a psychiatric survey of Aboriginal “adaptability” carried out in 1970. “The findings of this investigation were,” asserts Edmund McMahon, “striking and unexpected” since what they showed was that “neither acquisition, nor emulation of Western ways ha[d] interfered with the old beliefs.”¹¹³

Ironically, the state of exception to which Indigenous Australians have been relegated for more than two hundred years has had the effect of sensitizing them both to their sociocultural difference and the strength that inheres in their unique lifeways. Resisting the prospect of being obliterated by what they see as the egocentric, materialistic, hierarchizing, eco-cidal ethos of mainstream neoliberal culture, many of them today are, as Stanner pointed out almost fifty years ago, searching for “who and what their people were before the long humiliation,” for “a way of restoring self-esteem, of finding a new direction for the will to survive.”¹¹⁴

Most clearly reflected in the dramatic political protests they have been staging since the beginning of the twentieth century,¹¹⁵ Indigenous Australians’ rejection of the “sovereignty” of the settler-colonial state currently also manifests itself in the fierce hostility with which they consistently respond to state governments’ sporadic attempts

to erode their land rights; in recurrent protests against deaths in custody; in increasing opposition to the federal government's placatory proposal to hold a referendum on Constitutional recognition;¹¹⁶ and in their challenge to the hegemony of English language use "for the transaction of everyday business" in Australian parliaments.¹¹⁷ It is also vigorously expressed on a number of other, less directly political, fronts. There is, for instance, a growing "homelands" or "outstation" movement that aims to reconnect Indigenous peoples with "country."¹¹⁸ Indigenous language regeneration programs are springing up and thriving as Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, young and old, seek to develop closer ties with their origins.¹¹⁹ And the culture that has for so long been stigmatized by settler-colonial Australia is now being proudly represented in painting, music, dance, theater, cinema, and, most effectively, as I have tried to show, in literature.

Appropriately, much of this new creativity is being channeled into exposing the ruthless biopolitical objectives that white Australia has pursued throughout its history and into vigorously challenging the discourse used to justify such objectives. Irrespective of the different domains or vehicles in which Indigenous resistance expresses itself, however, the message it carries is invariable. Essentially, it is that articulated by Indigenous activist Sol Bellear in an opinion piece published in *The Guardian* in 2014. In it, Bellear warns: "We will never capitulate. We will never assimilate. You can come to that realization now, or in 100 years. But the determination of Aboriginal people to control Aboriginal lives will never end."¹²⁰

If the Indigenous inhabitants of the continent their colonizers call Australia have managed to survive thus far—not just as the faint biological trace of otherwise extinct peoples, but as culturally distinct human beings who assertively self-identify as Indigenous—it is, in fact, because, as both *Plains of Promise* and *Benang* demonstrate, and Mick Dodson explains, "We have never totally lost ourselves within the other's reality. . . . Our peoples have left us deep roots, which empowered us to endure the violence of oppression. They are the roots of survival, but not of constriction. They are roots from which all growth is possible. They are the roots that protected our end from the beginning."¹²¹

NOTES

The phrase "to fade away or assimilate or just die" quoted in this article's title is from Deborah Bird Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004), 66.

1. "The Holocaust, the Aborigines, and the Bureaucracy of Destruction: an Australian Dimension of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, no. 1 (2001): 76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520120037716>. Contrary to the "people" Bartrop refers to, Indigenous Australians have no doubt that post-invasion Australia is a site of genocide.

2. "Nation and Miscegenation: Discursive Continuity in the Post-Mabo Era," *Social Analysis* 36 (1994), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23171805>.

3. Alison Palmer, *Colonial Genocide* (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2000), 63.

4. Patrick Wolfe, "Structure and Event: Settler Colonialism, Time and the Question of Genocide," in *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 103.

5. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford University Press, 1998), 134, 138.

6. For a more comprehensive discussion of this point than I am able to provide here, see Penelope Edmonds and Jane Carey, "Australian Settler Colonialism over the Long Nineteenth Century," *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, ed. Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini (London: Routledge, 2017).

7. See Katherine Ellinghaus's discussion of this question in "Biological Absorption and Genocide: A Comparison of Indigenous Assimilation Policies in the United States and Australia," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 4, no. 1 (2014), <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp/vol4/iss1/5>.

8. As Wolfe points out, it is only the modalities of settler colonialism that change, and those but slightly; see "Structure and Event," 120–21.

9. Full text can be viewed at the Australian Government website, <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people/apology-to-australias-indigenous-peoples>.

10. Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, "Media Release 4 February 2015–Community Meeting on the Crisis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Removals," <https://www.snaicc.org.au/media-release-4-february-2015-community-meeting-crisis-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-child-removals/>.

11. Alexis Wright, *Plains of Promise* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1997); Kim Scott, *Benang* (Fremantle (Perth): Arts Centre Press, 1999). For all subsequent references to the novels, the page numbers will be cited parenthetically in the main text.

12. Mark Rifkin, "Indigenizing Agamben: Rethinking Sovereignty in Light of the 'Peculiar' Status of Native Peoples," *Cultural Critique* 7 (Fall 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1353/cul.0.0049>; Scott Lauria Morgensen, "The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now," *Settler Colonial Studies* 1 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2011.10648801>.

13. See Thomas Buckley, "Suffering in the Cultural Construction of Others: Robert Spott and A. L. Kroeber," *American Indian Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1989): 440, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1184526>.

14. Jon C. Altman and William Sanders, "From Exclusion to Dependence: Aborigines and the Welfare State in Australia," Discussion Paper 1, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (Canberra: Australian National University, 1991), http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1991_DP01.pdf.

15. See Australian Constitution 1900 (Sydney: University of Sydney Library, 1997), <http://adclibrary.usyd.edu.au/data-2/fed0062.pdf>.

16. Michael Griffiths, "Need I Repeat? Settler Colonial Biopolitics and Postcolonial Iterability in Kim Scott's *Benang*," *Postcolonial Issues in Australian Literature*, ed. Nathanael O'Reilly (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2010), 161. For a fuller discussion of this and related issues, see Michael Griffiths's essay collection *Biopolitics and Memory in Postcolonial Literature and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2016).

17. Anna Haebich, "Clearing the Wheat Belt': Erasing the Indigenous Presence in the South-west of Western Australia," *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 280.

18. As Haebich reports, in Western Australia, "Politicians and government officials were bombarded with petitions, deputations, and letters insisting on the permanent segregation of the [fringe-dwelling Aboriginal] families in farming settlements distant from the towns"; *ibid.*, 273–74.

19. In principle, these *soi-disant* "Aboriginal Protection Boards," established from 1869 onwards, were responsible for the welfare and the health care of Indigenous peoples, as well as for ensuring the education of their children.

20. As Lorenzo Veracini reminds us, "all settler projects are foundationally premised on fantasies of ultimately 'cleansing' the settler body politic of its (indigenous and exogenous) alterities."

Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: MacMillan Palgrave, 2010), 33.

21. See Ernest Hunter, "Stains on the Caring Mantle: Doctors in Aboriginal Australia Have a History," *Medical Journal of Australia* 155 (December 2–16, 1991): 780–81; and Sven Lindqvist, *Terra Nullius: A Journey through No One's Land* (London: Granta Books, 2007), 109–10, 114–15.

22. Deirdre Tedmanson, "Isle of Exception: Sovereign Power and Palm Island," *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 4, nos. 2/3 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1108/17422040810870042>. As Alison Palmer reminds us, the Act referred to here "remained the dominant policy in Queensland until the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Affairs Act of 1965 . . . although British subjects [Aborigines] were denied virtually every civil right that had been extended to whites"; Palmer, *Colonial Genocide*, 74.

23. Quentin Beresford and Paul Omaji, *Our State of Mind: Racial Planning and the Stolen Generations* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 1998), 70.

24. Elizabeth Strakosch and Alissa Macoun, "The Vanishing Endpoint of Settler Colonialism," *Arena Journal* 37–38 (2012): 43–44.

25. See Mike Donaldson, "The End of Time? Aboriginal Temporality and the British Invasion of Australia," *Time and Society* 5, no. 2 (1996), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X96005002004>.

26. Claire Mclisky (with Lynette Russell and Leigh Boucher), "Managing Mission Life, 1869–1886," in *Settler Colonial Governance in 19th Century Victoria*, ed. Leigh Boucher and Lynette Russell (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015), 128–29.

27. N. B. Paul Havemann asserts that "the designation of people as redundant, as surplus, as human waste are [sic] the inseparable accompaniment of capitalist economic growth and of colonisation and order building"; see N. B. Paul Havemann, "Denial, Modernity and Exclusion: Indigenous Placelessness in Australia," *Macquarie Law Journal* 5 (2005): 59, http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv.php?pid=UQ:12447&dsID=mb_pre_07.pdf.

28. The "Stolen Generations" is the expression most frequently used in Australia to designate children of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who were forcibly removed from their families by state authorities. *Bringing Them Home* is the title of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (1997), https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/pdf/social_justice/bringing_them_home_report.pdf.

29. Commenting on the driving force behind Indigenous explorations of settler-colonial annals, Narungga poet Natalie Harkin suggests that the compulsion "to destabilise and subvert the white-supremacist 'archons'" stems from the knowledge that "These records are our memories and lives; material, visceral, flesh and blood. The State wounds and our records bleed"; see Natalie Harkin, "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives: Memory in the Blood," *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature* 14, no. 3 (2014): 3, 4, <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/JASAL/article/view/9909/9798>. As Kim Scott himself recognized in an interview, "Reading that stuff as an Aboriginal person is damaging and hurtful, and makes you wild"; ATSIC News, "What Does it Mean to Be Aboriginal," February 2000, http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/41037/20050516-0000/www.atsic.gov.au/news_room/atsic_news/February_2000/what_Does_It_Mean_To_Be.html.

30. Kim Scott openly acknowledged his use of the Holocaust trope shortly after *Benang's* publication in a conversation with Ramona Koval. See "Ramona Koval Interviews Kim Scott, Co-winner of the Miles Franklin Award for *Benang*," *Australian Book Review* 222 (July 2000): 48. In Australia, any comparison between the Indigenous peoples' experience of colonization and the Holocaust is dismissed as preposterous by most settler-colonial Australians, intellectuals included. Yet, apropos of the biopolitical measures introduced in the 1940s by West Australia's Department of Native Affairs,

Mike Donaldson observes, “the Chief Protector of the Department, freely conceded that they were used nowhere else in the world, except in Nazi Germany.” Donaldson, “The End of Time?” 12.

31. Stephan Feuchtwang, “Images of Sub-Humanity and their Realization,” *Critique of Anthropology* 26, no. 3 (Sept. 2006): 262, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X06066579>.

32. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 138.

33. See, for example, Henry Reynolds’s *Nowhere People* (Camberwell (VIC): Penguin, 2008), or Anna Haebich’s *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970* (Fremantle (WA): Fremantle Press, 2008).

34. Haebich, “Clearing the Wheat Belt,” 277.

35. On the use of islands off the coast of Queensland as prisons to which “Aboriginal people deemed “malcontents,” of “troublesome character,” “larrikin,” or “wanderers” could be “removed . . . from the mainland,” see Tedmanson, “Isle of Exception,” 149.

36. The commissioners who authored the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (*Bringing Them Home*) write that, “Stories of sexual exploitation and abuse were common in evidence to the Inquiry” (168).

37. Wolfe, “Nation and Miscegenation,” 112.

38. John Chesterman and Heather Douglas, “‘Their Ultimate Absorption’: Assimilation in 1930s Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 81 (2004): 58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443050409387937>

39. “Punitiveness and the Criminalisation of the Other: State Wards, Unlawful Non-citizens and Indigenous Youth,” *Somatechnics* 1, no.1 (2011): 35, <https://doi.org/10.3366/soma.2011.0004>.

40. See Haebich, “Clearing the Wheat Belt,” 274.

41. Directed by Philip Noyce, *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002) was based on Doris Pilkington Garimara’s book *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* (1996) in which she recounted the forced removal of her “half-caste” mother, aunt, and another young relative to the Moore River Native Settlement in Western Australia in 1931.

42. For details, see Ellinghaus, “Biological Absorption and Genocide: A Comparison,” 69; and also Katherine Ellinghaus, “The Moment of Release: The Ideology of Protection and the Twentieth-Century Assimilation Policies of Exemption and Competency in New South Wales and Oklahoma,” *Pacific Historical Review* 87, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2018.87.1.128>.

43. Wolfe, “Structure and Event,” 114.

44. Exemption certificates were colloquially referred to as a “dog-tags” by Indigenous Australians.

45. See Russell Hogg, “Penalty and Modes of Regulating Indigenous People in Australia,” *Punishment and Society* 3, no. 3 (2001): 363, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1462474501003003002>.

46. Katherine Ellinghaus, “Absorbing the ‘Aboriginal Problem’: Controlling Interracial Marriage in Australia in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries,” *Aboriginal History* 27 (2003): 186, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24054267>.

47. Quoted as an epigraph on the opening page of *Benang*, this appeared in the *Daily News*, October 3, 1933.

48. For a thorough examination of this policy, see Russell McGregor’s “Breed Out the Colour or the Importance of Being White,” *Australian Historical Studies* 120 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610208596220>.

49. McGregor observes of this “perverse proposition” that “now miscegenation would be managed”; *ibid.*, 286.

50. Taken from a letter of Cecil Cook quoted by Tony Austin; see “Cecil Cook, Scientific Thought and ‘Half-Castes’ in the Northern Territory 1927–1939,” *Aboriginal History* 14, no. 1–2

(1990): 115, <https://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p72191/pdf/article058.pdf>. Worth noting here is Ernest Hunter's observation that "The conjunction of medical and political interests was reinforced by the appointment of doctors to the concurrent positions of Chief Medical Officer and Protector of Aborigines, Dr. Herbert Basedow and Dr. Cecil Cook being perhaps the best known examples. This combination conferred almost absolute control over the lives of Aborigines"; Hunter, "Stains on the Caring Mantle," 780.

51. Beresford and Omaji, *Our State of Mind*, 44.

52. Robert van Krieken, "The Barbarism of Civilization: Cultural Genocide and the 'Stolen Generations,'" *British Journal of Sociology* 50 (1999): 307, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.1999.00297.x>.

53. See, for example, Shirleene Robinson, "We do not want one who is too old': Aboriginal Child Domestic Servants in late 19th and early 20th Century Queensland," *Aboriginal History* 27 (2003): 177, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24054266>.

54. Victoria Haskins, "A Better Chance, Sexual Abuse and the Apprenticeship of Aboriginal Girls," *Aboriginal History* 28 (2004): 53, <https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/aboriginal-history-journal-volume-28>.

55. See Commonwealth of Australia, *Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, Held at Canberra, 21st to 23rd of April, 1937* (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1939), 12, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-52771316/view?partId=nla.obj-88456768#page/n0/mode/1up>. See also clauses c, d, and e of *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1948, https://www.oas.org/dil/1948_Convention_on_the_Prevention_and_Punishment_of_the_Crime_of_Genocide.pdf.

56. See Elizabeth Guy, "Kim Scott in Conversation with Elizabeth Guy," *Westerly Magazine* 41, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 9, https://westerlymag.com.au/digital_archives/westerly-413/.

57. Koval, "Ramona Koval Interviews Kim Scott," 48.

58. The development of "ethnopsychiatry" in the 1950s was "no mere academic enterprise, but a discourse for the management of changing identity. . . [It] took its place as a developmental technology marrying progress and order, 'part of the "human engineering" necessary for the modern frontier;" see Edmund McMahon, "Psychiatry at the Frontier: Surveying Aboriginal Mental Health in the Era of Assimilation," *Health and History* 9, no. 2 (2007): 30, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40111574>.

59. Newspoll, Inc., Saulwick & Muller, Inc., and Hugh Mackay, "Public Opinion on Reconciliation: Snap Shot, Close Focus, Long Lens," in *Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, ed. Michelle Grattan (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2000), 47.

60. W. E. H. Stanner, "The History of Indifference Thus Begins" (1963), in *The Dreaming and Other Essays* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2009), 119–20.

61. As Patrick Wolfe asserts, "settler colonialism is relatively impervious to regime change"; see "Structure and Event," 120.

62. According to Strakosch and Macoun, "While the definitions of the specific nature of this problem rapidly change, there is an underlying recognition that the existence and character of Aboriginal people constitute some sort of ongoing political difficulty and that government, rather than citizens, is expected to 'do something about it'"; see "The Vanishing Endpoint," 44.

63. Significantly, the most striking of parallels exist between the extraordinarily high rate of imprisonment of Indigenous Australians and the US's current "stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control" of African Americans; see Michelle Alexander, "Introduction," *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 4. Alexander's observation that this phenomenon "is designed to warehouse a population deemed disposable" (*ibid.*, 18), is echoed in fact, in a recent report on the Northern

Territory corrections system by Keith Hamburger, the former head of Queensland Correction Services Commission. Referring to Don Dale youth correction center in Darwin, the inmates of which are almost exclusively Indigenous, Mr. Hamburger describes it as a “human storage facility.” See Helen Davidson, “Don Dale Run Like a ‘Human Storage Facility,’ NT Royal Commission Told,” *The Guardian*, December 5, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/dec/05/don-dale-run-like-a-human-storage-facility-nt-royal-commission-told>.

64. National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee, *Bridges and Barriers: Addressing Indigenous Incarceration and Health*, 2009 (rev. ed. 2013), 1, http://www.atoda.org.au/wp-content/uploads/revised-bridges_and_barriers1.pdf.

65. Chris Graham, “We Jail Black Men Five Times More Than Apartheid South Africa,” *Crikey*, July 2, 2009, <http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/07/02/we-jail-black-men-five-times-more-than-apartheid-south-africa/>.

66. Thalia Anthony and Eileen Baldry, “FactCheck Q&A: Are Indigenous Australians the Most Incarcerated People on Earth?” *The Conversation*, June 6, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/factcheck-qanda-are-indigenous-australians-the-most-incarcerated-people-on-earth-78528>.

67. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “End of Mission Statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz on Her Visit to Australia,” <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21473&LangID=E>.

68. See Kelly Richards, “Trends in Juvenile Detention in Australia,” *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* no. 416 (Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, May 2011): 1–8, 3, <https://aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi416>.

69. Shalailah Medhora, “Indigenous Australians Suffer ‘Health and Justice Crisis,’ Doctors’ Group Warns,” *The Guardian*, November 25, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/nov/25/indigenous-australians-suffer-health-and-justice-crisis-doctors-group-warns>.

70. Amnesty International, *A Brighter Tomorrow: Keeping Indigenous Kids in the Community and out of Detention in Australia* (Amnesty International Australia: Broadway (NSW), May 2015), 15,

71. https://www.amnesty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/A_brighter_future_National_report.pdf. *Ibid.*, 15.

72. *Ibid.*, 16.

73. *Australian Crime: Facts and Figures: 2014* (Canberra (ACT): Australian Institute of Criminology, 2016): 1–90, 82, <https://aic.gov.au/publications/facts/2014>.

74. Amnesty International, “Heads Held High: Keeping Queensland Kids out of Detention, Strong in Culture and Community” (Amnesty International Australia: Broadway (NSW), August, 2016), 13, https://www.amnesty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Heads_Held_High_-_Queensland_report_by_Amnesty_International.pdf.

75. *Ibid.*, 5.

76. “Youth Detention Population in Australia 2016,” Bulletin 138, December 2016 (Canberra (ACT): Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016), 9, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/fe88e241-d0a2-4214-b97f-24e7e28346b6/20405.pdf.aspx?inline=true>.

77. Committee on the Rights of the Child, Session 44, Jan–Feb. 2007, “General Comment No. 10 (2007), Children’s Rights in Juvenile Justice,” United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, April 2007, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.10.pdf>. For full details of how and to what extent Australia contravenes these and other CRC recommendations, see Amnesty International’s report *A Brighter Tomorrow*, 15.

78. Amnesty International Australia draws attention to the fact that “Between June 2013 and June 2014 Indigenous young people were 23 times more likely to be in *unsentenced detention* on a per

capita basis. . . . On average 58 per cent [. . .] of all Indigenous young people in detention from June 2013 to June 2014 were *unsentenced*"; Amnesty International, *A Brighter Tomorrow*, 31 (my italics).

79. On July 26, 2016, *The Guardian* reported that an Australian TV program, *Four Corners*, had shown "footage of children in detention [at Don Dale juvenile detention center in the Northern Territory] being abused, hooded and bound in a manner likened to Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay." Among the shocking images broadcast was that of 17-year-old Indigenous detainee Dylan Voller, who could be seen "hooded and tied in a restraint chair for two hours." Helen Davidson, Paul Karp, and Elle Hunt, "Abu Ghraib'-Style Images of Children in Detention in Australia Trigger Public Inquiry," <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/jul/26/abu-ghraib-images-children-detention-australia-public-inquiry>.

80. Tedmanson, "Isle of Exception," 151.

81. Nick Evershed, Lorena Allam, and Calla Wahlquist, "Calls Intensify for Government to Act on Indigenous Deaths in Custody," *The Guardian*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/aug/29/calls-intensify-for-government-to-act-on-indigenous-deaths-in-custody>.

82. Ashleigh Baker and Tracy Cussen, "Deaths in Custody in Australia: National Deaths in Custody Program 2011–12 and 2012–13," *AIC Monitoring Reports* 26 (Canberra (ACT): Australian Institute of Criminology, 2015), 11, <https://aic.gov.au/publications/mr/mr26>.

83. See "Figure 3: Self-inflicted Deaths in Prison Custody by Age Group and Indigenous Status, Australia, 1999–2013," in Matthew Willis, Ashleigh Baker, Tracy Cussen, and Eileen Patterson, "Self-Inflicted Deaths in Australian Prisons," *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* no. 513 (Canberra (ACT): Australian Institute of Criminology, 2016), 7, <https://aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi513>.

84. *The Guardian*, "Deaths Inside: Indigenous Australian Deaths in Custody" (database), <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/ng-interactive/2018/aug/28/deaths-inside-indigenous-australian-deaths-in-custody>.

85. Calla Wahlquist, Nick Evershed, and Lorena Allam, "More Than Half of 147 Indigenous People Who Died in Custody Had Not Been Found Guilty," *The Guardian*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/aug/30/more-than-half-of-147-indigenous-people-who-died-in-custody-had-not-been-found-guilty>.

86. See Change the Record, "Review of the Implementation of RCIADIC—May 2015," <https://changetherecord.org.au/review-of-the-implementation-of-rciadic-may-2015>.

87. "Introduction," *The Family Matters Report 2017*, 5, <http://www.familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Family-Matters-Report-2017.pdf>.

88. *Ibid.*, 3.

89. *Ibid.*, 40.

90. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "End of Mission Statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur."

91. *Ibid.*

92. Pdraic Gibson, "Removed for Being Aboriginal. Is the NT Creating Another Stolen Generation?" *The Guardian*, March 4, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/04/removed-for-being-aboriginal-is-the-nt-creating-another-stolen-generation>.

93. *The Family Matters Report 2017*, 64.

94. See "Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples."

95. Victoria State Government, Commission for Children and Young People, *Annual Report 2015–16* (Melbourne: September 1, 2016), 38, <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/corporate-documents/CCYP-annual-report-2015-16.pdf>.

96. Clare Tilbury, "The Over-Representation of Indigenous Children in the Australian Welfare System," *International Journal of Social Welfare* 18, no. 1 (2009): 61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2397.2008.00577.x>.
97. "Disability within the Indigenous Community," in *Disability, Care and Support*, Productivity Commission Inquiry Report no. 54, vol. 2 (July 31, 2011), 11.2, 538, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/disability-support/report/disability-support-volume2.pdf>.
98. See Karen Soldatic, "Postcolonial Reproductions: Disability, Indigeneity and the Formation of the White Masculine Settler State of Australia," *Social Identities* 21, no.1 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2014.995352>.
99. "Disability within the Indigenous Community," Productivity Commission Inquiry Report no. 54, vol. 2, 11.2.
100. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "End of Mission Statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur."
101. Alexis Wright, "The Politics of Writing," *Southerly* 62, no. 2 (2002): 13.
102. *Ibid.*, 19.
103. *Ibid.*, 20.
104. Alison Ravenscroft, "What Falls from View: On Re-Reading Alexis Wright's *Plains of Promise*," *Australian Literary Studies* 25, no. 4 (2010): 78, fn12, <https://doi.org/10.20314/als.564e7a4418>.
105. *Ibid.*, 72.
106. Donaldson, "The End of Time?" 3.
107. Interestingly, Edmund McMahon describes the behavior of a rebellious Aboriginal station hand, Musselly, whose resistance to settler authority expressed itself in his "habit of *sitting unoccupied* on the woodheap" (my italics). Yet, as he points out, this apparently inoffensive action "alarmed white observers"; McMahon, "Psychiatry at the Frontier," 37.
108. Mark Levene and Daniele Conversi, "Subsistence Societies, Globalisation, Climate Change and Genocide: Discourses of Vulnerability and Resilience," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 18, no. 3 (2014): 283, 281, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2014.914702>.
109. *Ibid.*, 293 (my emphasis).
110. Julian Burger, *Report from the Frontier: The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 5.
111. See Mick Dodson, "The End in the Beginning: Re(de)finding Aboriginality," in *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writings by Indigenous Australians*, ed. Michelle Grossman (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 40.
112. "None of the many hundreds of Aborigines I have studied at first hand," W. E. H. Stanner observed, "impress me as already or likely to be 'incorporated,' or 'absorbed,' or 'assimilated' into the surrounding system of Europeanism." See Stanner, "Continuity and Change among the Aborigines" (1958), in *The Dreaming and Other Essays*, 147.
113. McMahon, "Psychiatry at the Frontier," 39.
114. W. E. H. Stanner, "The Boyer Lectures: After the Dreaming" (1968), in *The Dreaming and Other Essays*, 217.
115. For a brief history of Indigenous protest, see the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies webpage on "Activism," <http://lryb.aiatsis.gov.au/activism.html>.
116. See, for example, Shalailah Medhora, "Indigenous Protesters Reject Plan for Constitutional Recognition," *The Guardian*, January 26, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jan/26/indigenous-protesters-reject-plan-for-constitutional-recognition>.
117. See Helen Davidson, "Indigenous MP Ruled Disorderly for Speaking Warlpiri Language in Parliament," *The Guardian*, February 18, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/>

feb/18/indigenous-mp-ruled-disorderly-for-speaking-warlpiri-language-in-parliament. For further information on this issue, see Jacqueline Battin, "Indigenous Languages in Australian Parliaments," AIATSIS blog, May 21, 2018, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/news-and-events/blog/indigenous-languages-australian-parliaments>; see also Noel Pearson, "Mind our Language: Why Indigenous Languages Should Be Spoken in Our Parliaments," *The Monthly*, April 2016, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2016/april/1459429200/noel-pearson/mind-our-language>.

118. Interestingly, as Michael J. Chandler and Christopher Lalonde have shown, it is the ineradicable memory of and attachment to ancestral territories that gives Indigenous societies the force to fight back against the corrosive experience of discontinuity that biopolitical schemes seek to produce. See "Cultural Continuity as a Hedge against Suicide in Canada's First Nations," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 35, no. 2 (June 1998), <https://doi.org/10.1177/136346159803500202>.

119. No doubt reflecting the experience of the author himself (who is deeply involved in the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project), Kim Scott's latest novel, *Taboo* (Sydney: Pan MacMillan Australia, 2017), offers an extraordinarily unvarnished and perceptive picture of the many difficulties encountered but, ultimately, the indispensable sense of self-worth that can be discovered by Indigenous Australians who embark on cultural regeneration programs.

120. Sol Bellear, "Aboriginal People Must Not Negotiate with Politicians Who Assault Their Land Rights," *The Guardian*, November 6, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/06/aboriginal-people-must-not-negotiate-with-politicians-permitted-to-assault-their-land-rights>.

121. Dodson, "The End in the Beginning," 38, 42.

