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Rex Ingamells and Ted Strehlow: Correspondences and Contradictions in Australian Settler Nationalism

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Abstract

The standard story of Australian national cultural development revolves around a fundamental conflict between the forces of empire loyalism or universalism on the one hand and Australian nationalism on the other. Yet this narrative structure neglects the complexities of the settler-colonial, as distinct from the colonial, situation. This article is premised on the proposition that the settler-colonial situation is conditioned by a triangular system of relationships involving settler, metropolitan and Indigenous agencies. In this schema, the settler is compelled towards both indigenisation and neo-European replication, while both trajectories are similarly founded on the prior displacement of pre-existing Indigenous populations. While at certain historical moments, exclusive emphasis on the settler–metropole relation may be maintained, at others the disavowal of the settler–indigene relation common to both sides of the “two Australias” divide is rendered untenable by changing circumstances. It is into such a moment this article aims to situate its subjects—Rex Ingamells and the Jindyworobaks—and it does so with reference to the correspondences between Jindyworobak indigenism and the indigenising settler nationalism evident in the “salvage linguistics” of Ted Strehlow. In doing so, the article aims to reveal the complexities and persistence of what it terms the settler predicament.

Introduction

Narratives of Australian national cultural development have often been organised around a dialectical interplay between the opposing cultural forces of settler-colonial Australia and metropolitan England. Such accounts, however, tend to neglect the complexities of the settler-colonial (as distinct from the colonial) situation and to thereby conceal the settler’s dual role as both coloniser and colonised. On the contrary, this article is premised on the understanding that the ongoing project of national cultural construction in Australia, as in other settler societies, is fundamentally conditioned by a triangular system of relationships involving settler, metropolitan and Indigenous agencies. This primary system of relations produces contradictory tendencies on the part of the settler population, impelling them simultaneously towards both indigenisation and neo-European replication. Crucially, *both* of these trajectories are founded on the prior displacement of pre-existing Indigenous populations.

This article aims to reveal the complexities and persistence of what it describes as the settler predicament—the necessity, for settlers, of becoming “indigenous” without becoming, or being able to become, Indigenous—and emphasises its ongoing implications for relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples. It does so by exploring the correspondences between the radical settler indigenism of Reginald Charles (Rex) Ingamells (1913–55) and the Jindyworobak poetry movement on the one hand, and the indigenising settler nationalism evident in the “salvage

linguistics” of Theodor George Henry (Ted) Strehlow (1908–78) on the other.¹ Under historical circumstances in which neither aspect of settler Australia’s primary system of relations could be comfortably or convincingly ignored, Ingamells and Strehlow worked—problematically, unsuccessfully, and in different cultural fields—to further settler society’s desire for indigenisation by promoting the appreciation and appropriation of a decontextualised, abstracted essence of indigeneity.

A Story of two Australias?

The standard story of Australian national cultural development has been structured around a conflict between the “two arch-opponents” of Australian cultural and political life: “the Anglo-Australian loyalists and the radical Australian nationalists”, the latter “creative, original and truly Australian”, the former “sterile, derivative and suburban”.² In this story of “two Australias”, Britain plays the part of “the mother country” (or parent oak), while Australia is the child (or seedling) that eventually and inevitably reaches maturity in the new soil.³ There have, of course, been dissenters from the nationalist imperative, and various nomenclatures have been used to describe the opposing critical traditions: “localists and universalists”, “democratic populists and Anglophile elitists”, “nationalists and internationalists”—even “Abos’ and ‘Pommies’”, as A. A. Phillips once suggested.⁴

Across the nationalist–universalist spectrum, national maturation is envisaged as ultimately and (usually) inevitably attained, or at the very least attainable, whether through conscious Australianism or by virtue of natural evolutionary growth. While the poles are arguably less than poles apart, perhaps the greatest affinity between these ostensible oppositions is that *both* sides of the “two Australias” divide, nationalist and universalist alike, function to conceal the nature and the complexity of the environment the national culture was supposed to be acclimatising to and becoming expressive of. Indeed, the persistent tendency to focus analytical attention on the divide itself operates as a diversion from the other, equally, if not more fundamental, aspect of Australia’s settler-colonial relations: that between settler and indigene.

As J. J. Healy has outlined, “an authentic consciousness trying to grasp the *distinctive* characteristics of European society in Australia would, sooner or later, find itself face to face with the Aborigine and the land”. While I remain hesitant to endorse Healy’s conclusion that “the dominant energies of Australian literature in the twentieth century have been directed towards the recovery of the Aborigine by the Australian imagination”, we might suggest instead that the figure of the indigene has operated sometimes as a structuring presence, and more often

¹ See Philip Jones, “Strehlow, Theodor George Henry (Ted) (1908–1978),” in *The Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/strehlow-theodor-george-ted-11792> (accessed 30 December 2019).

² Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Carlton South, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 261; David Walker, *Dream and Disillusion: A Search for Australian Cultural Identity* (Canberra, ACT: Australian National University Press, 1976), 205.

³ Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia: An Argument Concerning the Social Origins of Australian Radicalism and Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin, 1986 [1970]), 9.

⁴ See Brian Kiernan, “Cultural Transmission and Australian Literature: 1788–1998,” in *Studies in Australian Literary History* (Sydney, NSW: Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture, 1997), 70.

a structuring absence, in and on the national imagination.⁵ This has been especially, but not exclusively, the case for those on the national/ist side of the two Australias divide. The relative degree of confrontation and engagement (and, relatedly, embrace or rejection), or alternatively denial and disavowal, adopted by settlers in relation to the indigene has varied according to a shifting matrix of internal and external conditions. As Nicholas Thomas observes, “Indigenous reference has been far more conspicuous at certain times than others, but it has often been prominent, and has had paradoxical effects.”⁶

The terminology suggested by A. A. Phillips, cited earlier, is telling: he was not referring to a conflict, cultural or otherwise, between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the one hand and “Pommies” on the other. Instead, he was positioning settler nationalists as “Abos”, discursively arrogating to them a precursively evacuated indigeneity that simultaneously displaces and disavows the position of actual Indigenous peoples.⁷ Phillips’s terms were themselves appropriated from Philip Rahv’s famous 1939 essay entitled “Paleface and Redskin”, in which Rahv enacted a similar effacement of the Indigenous presence from the American settler-colonial scene in his account of what he characterised as “the ills of a split personality” afflicting “the national literature”. In Rahv’s schema, which mirrors, in general terms, the story of Australia’s own “split personality”, Henry James and Herman Melville are rendered “palefaces”, while Walt Whitman and Mark Twain are “redskins”: representatives of “a purely indigenous phenomenon”.⁸ Actually existing Indigenous people, on the other hand, are nowhere to be found.

This form of effacement, repeated ad nauseam in the literature concerned with either promoting or accounting for settler national cultural development in Australia and elsewhere, is not merely a historical, or a presentist, concern. As Alan Lawson contends, by focusing exclusively on settlers’ colonial position vis-a-vis their metropolitan antecedents, settler nationalisms routinely function as a “strategic disavowal of the colonizing act”⁹ and conceal the settler’s dual position as both coloniser and colonised. Universalist settler claims to metropolitan inheritance and European continuity have a similarly effacing effect in relation to the Indigenous peoples whose lands they seek to usurp. As John Docker points out, those belonging to what he

⁵ J. J. Healy, *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia*, 2nd ed. (St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1989 [1978]), 173, 2, 291 (emphasis in original). See Anthony Moran, “The Psychodynamics of Australian Settler-Nationalism: Assimilating or Reconciling with the Aborigines?,” *Political Psychology* 23, no. 4 (2002): 667–701.

⁶ Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 12.

⁷ I use the adjectives “Aboriginal” when referring specifically to mainland Aboriginal people and either “Indigenous” or “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” when referring to Indigenous peoples in Australia more generally. Correspondingly, I use “Aboriginality” and “indigeneity” to refer to the attributes, often glossed as “spirits” or “essences”, my subjects attributed to Indigenous cultures and their representatives, and which they then used, engaged with and appropriated for their common purpose of settler indigenisation. Generally, I prefer “indigeneity” because this is, I argue, the status that indigenising settler nationalists attempt to arrogate to themselves. Aboriginality, on the contrary, is rarely, if ever, engaged with or appropriated as a presumed identity for and of the settler; it is the province of Aboriginalism rather than indigenism.

⁸ Philip Rahv, “Paleface and Redskin,” *Kenyon Review* 1, no. 3 (1939): 253, 251, 254.

⁹ Alan Lawson, “Postcolonial Theory and the ‘Settler’ Subject,” *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 56 (1995).

termed the “metaphysical ascendancy” were—as much as their opponents in his “mythic struggle”, the radical nationalists—“equally desirous to secure and own the whole continent”.¹⁰

In addressing only the relation between the metropole and the (settler) colony, whether to insist on cultural/civilisational continuity, or instead on the inevitable unfurling of national cultural independence, standard narratives of Australian national cultural development thus neglect the complexities of the settler-colonial, as distinct from the colonial, situation. On the contrary, this article is premised on the proposition that the settler-colonial situation is fundamentally conditioned by a triangular system of relationships involving settler, metropolitan and Indigenous agencies. In this schema, the settler is impelled towards both indigenisation and neo-European replication, while both trajectories are similarly founded on the prior displacement, both literal and symbolic, of pre-existing Indigenous populations.

Sketching the Settler Predicament

In contradistinction to dependent colonialism, settler colonialism is characterised by the establishment of a permanent, albeit dynamic, triangular system of relationships comprising settler, metropolitan and Indigenous agencies. While settler relationships operate in multiple and dynamic ways, and there are other agencies involved, as Lorenzo Veracini has outlined, this system of relations produces “conflicting tendencies” for “the settler collective: one striving for indigenisation and national autonomy, the other aiming at neo-European replication and the establishment of a ‘civilised’ pattern of life”.¹¹

In Terry Goldie’s convincing account, indigenisation is defined as the process “through which the ‘settler’ population attempts to become as though indigenous, as though ‘born’ of the land”, and both expresses and addresses settlers’ desire to erase their “separation of belonging” from the land.¹² Yet in attempting to undertake a process of settler indigenisation and to thereby distinguish their own indigeneity, and that of their cultural products, from their European cultural inheritance, settler nationalists confront the limits imposed on this process by the necessity of maintaining the colonial authority and sovereign capacity they derive from this very inheritance.

Patrick Wolfe has characterised this contradiction, with a nod to Louis Hartz, as “the problem of the fragment: how to be British for the purpose of expropriating Australians and Australian for the purpose of independence from Britain?”¹³ The problem, in the terms adopted here, hinges on the question of how to become “indigenous” without becoming Indigenous.¹⁴ This amounts to a

¹⁰ John Docker, *In a Critical Condition: Reading Australian Literature* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin, 1984), 83.

¹¹ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 21.

¹² Terry Goldie, “The Man of the Land/The Land of the Man: Patrick White and Scott Symons,” *SPAN: Journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies* 36 (1993); Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 12.

¹³ Patrick Wolfe, “Nation and Miscegenation: Discursive Continuity in the Post-Mabo Era,” *Social Analysis* 36 (1994): 126. See Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, 1964).

¹⁴ To emphasise but hopefully not perpetuate the easy (and *technically* plausible) slippage between Indigenous and “indigenous”, which remains important for advocates of settler indigenisation today, I use the uncapitalised form “indigenous” (with quotation marks) to refer to the indigenised settler self/culture/identity that is the desideratum-in-common of the authors I focus on throughout this article, as well as many others before and since.

neither/nor equation in which attainment of identification with either of the settler's primary counterpoints (metropole or indigene) negates at the moment of its attainment the sought-after "thirdspace" of indigenised settlerness as a "transcending inclusion" of both aspects of the settler situation.¹⁵ Wolfe's "problem", which would call for a solution, is therefore really a "predicament", which has no solution and calls only for more or less plausible responses.¹⁶

Responding to the Settler Predicament

There are a variety of possible responses to this predicament. In the first instance, with regard to the settler-metropole relation, positions diverge along a continuum between the "omnipresent and competing dynamics" Gérard Bouchard describes as "continuity and rupture". These "extreme models", or "ideal types"—one perpetuating, the other repudiating, settler society's metropolitan inheritance—correspond to the polar positions characterising the "two Australias" divide.¹⁷ Relevant local examples range from the rejectionist extremes of anti-colonial nativism epitomised, perhaps, by the *Bulletin* of the 1890s, to the conservative Anglocentrism represented in the 1930s and 1940s by the likes of G. H. Cowling and J. I. M. Stewart, Professors of English at the Universities of Melbourne and Adelaide respectively.¹⁸ Of course, such positions are rarely, if ever, adopted or articulated in unadulterated form, and the history of Australian national cultural development features "a large range of intermediary positions and configurations" that have varied in response to both internal and external dynamics and historical conditions.¹⁹

The second relation, that between settler and indigene, simultaneously structures the preceding tension between the competing imperatives of "continuity and rupture", while also seeming to offer at least some settlers an apparent path towards its supersession. The variety of possible responses to this second relationship range from disavowal of either the sovereignty or significance of Indigenous peoples on the one hand, to a radical mode of indigenist appropriation on the other. These are the dual strategies Goldie has termed "*penetration ... and appropriation*", both of which aim towards the goal of settler indigenisation and to construct the conditions for imagining the unmediated encounter between the settler and the land towards which settler

¹⁵ Within the triangular relations of settler colonialism, indigenisation resembles a form of what Edward Soja refers to as "Thirthing-as-Othering", a "cumulative trialectics" that works towards the attainment of the "thirdspace" of indigenised settlerness, a "transcending inclusion" above and beyond—but consumptive of aspects of—both metropole and indigene. See Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, UK: Blackwell, 1996), 60, 61, 70.

¹⁶ On "problems" and "predicaments", see John Michael Greer, *The Long Descent: A User's Guide to the End of the Industrial Age* (Gabriola Islands: New Society, 2008), 22.

¹⁷ See Gérard Bouchard, *The Making of the Nations and Cultures of the New World: An Essay in Comparative History*, trans. Michelle Weinroth and Paul Leduc Browne (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 14.

¹⁸ On the *Bulletin*, see John Docker, *The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1890s* (Melbourne, VIC: Oxford University Press, 1991), especially 238–41. Docker casts doubt on received understandings of the "legend of the nineties" in general, and the *Bulletin* in particular, as standing for "the nationalist assertion of a single cultural identity or set of 'Australianist' values", and concludes, convincingly, that "what is often taken to be the nationalism of the Nineties was more likely to be anti-colonialism and anti-cultural imperialism".

¹⁹ Bouchard, *The Nations and Cultures of the New World*, 14.

colonialism ultimately strives.²⁰ The penetrationist tradition is similarly exemplified by the *Bulletin*, in which “each reference ... to the white Australian as ‘native’ or ‘indigenous’ is a comment on indigenization, regardless of the absence of Aborigines in those references”.²¹ More explicitly, its regular section entitled “Aboriginalities” had nothing whatsoever to do with Aboriginal people themselves.²² The appropriationist approach, on the other hand, is most easily identifiable in the explicit indigenism of Margaret Preston, and the main subjects of this article, Rex Ingamells and the Jindyworobaks.²³

These dynamics and the tensions they produce on the part of settler nationalists and settler universalists alike intersect in a variety of ways, reflecting the complexities of the settler predicament. And so when, in the late 1930s, Rex Ingamells founded the Jindyworobaks and advocated the appropriation of what he conceived as a remnant indigeneity as a strategy of settler indigenisation, the otherwise opposed universalist, anti-Australianist Alec Hope and the radical nationalist A. A. Phillips found common cause in attacking him and his appropriationist program on the grounds of a perceived lack of value in the Indigenous cultures from which the Jindyworobaks sought to borrow.²⁴ As Bruce Clunies-Ross remarks, the Jindyworobaks found themselves “attacked” on the one hand “by those who maintained the essential European traditions of culture in Australia and on the other hand by those committed to a different, and incompatible, view of the Australian tradition”.²⁵

A Moment of National Cultural Contradiction

While at times exclusive emphasis on the settler–metropole relation may be maintained, at other historical moments, the disavowal or denial of the settler–indigene aspect of the settler situation common to the nationalist and universalist traditions alike is either undermined or rendered untenable by changing circumstances. The nationalist surge of the 1890s, for example, was underwritten by social evolutionism and the “doomed race” ideal, which imagined an imminent future in which triadic relations would be resolved into dyadic ones.²⁶ Relatedly, the debate that raged between the opposing sides of the “two Australias” divide throughout the 1940s, 1950s

²⁰ Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 15; see Patrick Wolfe, “Islam, Europe and Indian Nationalism: Towards a Postcolonial Transnationalism,” in *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective*, ed. Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake (Canberra, ACT: ANU E-Press, 2005), 235.

²¹ Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 14.

²² Thomas, *Possessions*, 112.

²³ See Dan Tout, “Neither Nationalists nor Universalists: Rex Ingamells and the Jindyworobaks,” *Australian Humanities Review* 61 (2017): 1–26. I prefer the term “indigenism” to both Goldie’s “appropriation” and the translation of Said’s Orientalism into the Australian context in the guise of what has been termed “Aboriginalism” because it more accurately captures the settler-colonial dynamics I am concerned with here. If the latter works to make “the Other” speak, the former does precisely the opposite. On Australian “Aboriginalism”, see, for example, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (Sydney, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1991); Ian McLean, *White Aborigines: Identity Politics in Australian Art* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²⁴ See A. D. Hope, “Culture Corroboree [Book Review],” *Southerly* 2, no. 3 (1941): 28–31; Arthur A. Phillips, “Jindyworobak Review, 1938–48 [Book Review],” *Meanjin* 8, no. 1 (1949): 64–66.

²⁵ Bruce Clunies-Ross, “Survival of the Jindyworobaks,” *Kunapipi* 3, no. 1 (1981): 59.

²⁶ See Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1997).

and into the 1960s, largely in the absence of Indigenous reference, was facilitated by policies of forced biological absorption and sociocultural assimilation that envisaged a similar resolution of relations (the elimination of the indigene from the settler-colonial equation), albeit by different means.²⁷

The 1930s, however, in addition to being characterised by tensions in Australia's external relationship with metropolitan Britain in the aftermath of the First World War, the Great Depression, and under the shadow of the spectre of another imminent war, was a period marked internally by what Michael Griffiths has termed the "decreasing tenability" of the doomed race ideal.²⁸ According to Russell McGregor, from a population of under 10,000 before World War I and 11,579 in 1921, the loosely defined "half-caste" population exploded from 15,468 in 1927 to almost 24,000 by the time of the 1937 conference on Aboriginal welfare, which infamously concluded that "the destiny of the natives of aboriginal [*sic*] origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth".²⁹

This demographic transition brought settlers face to face with what Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra termed "the intractable conditions of [settler Australia's] foundation event"—the illegitimate invasion of Indigenous lands under the legal fiction *terra nullius*—since the notion that the demise of the Aboriginal "race" was inevitable and that the only task remaining was to "smooth the dying pillow" was irrevocably undermined.³⁰ Under these circumstances, Healy's "encounter"—between "an authentic [settler] consciousness", "the Aborigine and the land"—became if not inevitable, then at least much more likely. At this historical juncture, settler nationalists found themselves confronting the prospect of a persistent Indigenous presence within the settler nation and were forced to negotiate the triadic relations of settler colonialism rather than the dyadic ones of colonialism proper.

It is no coincidence, as Ellen Smith has observed, that it was in this period that "Australian cultural nationalism [became] explicitly invested in the Aboriginal figure, Aboriginal culture, and an Aboriginal past as aesthetic and cultural resources in the construction of a unique national identity".³¹ These investments were hardly widespread, and their influence and impact on either the self-conceptions of settler Australians or on the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should not be overstated.³² And yet such investments did occur, and the perceptible turn towards indigeneity within Australian cultural nationalism in the 1930s is

²⁷ This was the height of W. E. H. Stanner's "great Australian silence". See W. E. H. Stanner, "After the Dreaming," in *The Dreaming & Other Essays*, ed. Robert Manne (Collingwood, VIC: Black Inc. Agenda, 2009 [1968]), 172–224.

²⁸ Michael R. Griffiths, "Unsettling Artifacts: Biopolitics, Cultural Memory, and the Public Sphere in a (Post)Settler Colony" (PhD thesis, Rice University, 2012), 11. For a succinct summary of relevant external events, and the tensions they produced, see Stephen Alomes, *Australian Nationalism: A Documentary History* (North Ryde, NSW: Collins/Angus & Robertson, 1991), 202.

²⁹ McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, 134–35; Commonwealth of Australia, *Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities* (Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1937), 3.

³⁰ Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream*, 26.

³¹ Ellen Smith, "Writing Native: The Aboriginal in Australian Cultural Nationalism 1927–1945" (PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2012), 7.

³² See Adam Shoemaker, "Popular Perceptions of an Unpopular People, 1929–1945," in *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929–1988* (Canberra, ACT: ANU Press, 2004), 39–62.

revealing of the underlying dynamics of settler colonialism in Australia, which continue to condition projects of national cultural construction to this day.

It is into this historical-cultural context that this article situates Rex Ingamells and the Jindyworobaks, and it does so with reference to the intriguing, and instructive, correspondences between Ingamells's indigenism and the indigenising settler nationalism evident in the "salvage linguistics" of Ted Strehlow. In attempting to navigate the complexities of the settler predicament in historical circumstances in which neither aspect could be comfortably or convincingly ignored, Ingamells and Strehlow worked—problematically, unsuccessfully, and in different cultural fields—towards the inheritance of both civilisation and belonging that the status of indigenised settler ultimately represents.

Rex Ingamells and/as the Jindyworobaks

In the beginning was the word: Jindyworobak. It was Rex Ingamells and it was with him. Until he uttered it darkness covered the face of the waterless land. The word was light and it dawned. Australia was re-created. We enter a mythological world, but it is our own. We take possession of the magic that is our own. We are initiated men. This was the Jindyworobak creed.³³

As the quotation above suggests, in many ways Rex Ingamells *was* the Jindyworobak poetry movement, or at least its most powerful material and intellectual, if not creative, driving force. John Dally quotes Ian Mudie conflating the two: "All the time when I think about Jindyworobak, I go to say 'Rex' because the whole movement *was* Rex—there's no doubt about that ... He just dragged people along willy-nilly."³⁴ Similarly, Kenneth Gifford referred to Jindy and "Rex" as "the same thing" in a letter to Flexmore Hudson in 1944.³⁵ Ingamells was not shy about his centrality, writing to the editor, publisher and polemicist P. R. "Inky" Stephensen in 1941 that "I am indeed the mother, father and uncle and aunt of Jindyworobak".³⁶ The following discussion therefore focuses on Ingamells's own articulations of the movement's aims and intentions.

In his foundational statement of Jindyworobakism, *Conditional Culture*, Ingamells outlined the movement's aims as follows:

"Jindyworobak" is an aboriginal [*sic*] word meaning "to annex, to join" and I mean to coin it for a particular use. The Jindyworobaks ... are those individuals who are endeavouring to free Australian art from whatever alien influences trammel it, that is, to bring it into proper contact with its material. They are the few who seriously realize that an Australian culture depends on the fulfilment and sublimation of certain definite conditions, namely:

1. A clear recognition of environmental values.
2. The debunking of much nonsense.

³³ Brian Elliott, "Introduction," in *The Jindyworobaks*, ed. Brian Elliott (St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1979), xvii.

³⁴ Quoted in John Dally, "The Jindyworobak Movement: 1935–1945" (PhD thesis, Flinders University, 1978), 91–92.

³⁵ Kenneth Gifford, letter to Flexmore Hudson, 23 July 1944, Kenneth H. Gifford Correspondence, 1941–1944, MS 10098, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

³⁶ Rex Ingamells, letter to P. R. Stephensen, 7 July 1941, P. R. Stephensen – Papers and Pictorial Material, ca. 1905–1971, MLMSS 1284, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

3. An understanding of Australia's history and traditions, primaeval, colonial, and modern.³⁷

Ingamells “adapted” the term “Jindyworobak” from the glossary of James Devaney’s appropriately if inaccurately entitled collection of short stories, *The Vanished Tribes*.³⁸ According to Ingamells, Devaney had “assured” him that the originally hyphenated term “Jindyworobak”, glossed as meaning “to annex, to join”, belonged to an unspecified “Queensland tribe”.³⁹ Yet Devaney had apparently lifted the term himself from Daniel Bunce’s *Language of the Aborigines of the Colony of Victoria*, first published in 1851, where it was clearly attributed to “the Melbourne tribe”.⁴⁰ It is revealing how little interest Ingamells, along with Devaney before him, evidenced in the term’s etymology, the former explaining his appropriation on the grounds that it was “Aboriginal”, “outlandish according to fashionable literary tastes”, and possessed an “apt symbolism for its meaning ... denoting synthesis of our European cultural heritage with our Australian heritage”.⁴¹

Ingamells’s Jindyworobak ideal can be read as representing an original—if also highly problematic and almost entirely unsuccessful—strategy intended to supersede *both* aspects of the settler situation, and thus the settler predicament as a whole. In the first instance, he sought to synthesise Australia’s European inheritance with its now indigenous environment, rendering settler culture “indigenous” in the process. In the second, he sought to appropriate a decontextualised indigeneity towards precisely that end. Brian Elliott has suggested that in Ingamells’s view, “the need was to ‘annex’ or ‘join’ the white to the black, or the black to the white”, but the problem persisted: “it is not clear how”.⁴² While Elliott’s “jindi woraback” is between “white” and “black”, Ingamells’s is really between “man” and “land”, but the ambiguity is inherent in the very project of settler indigenisation and appears and reappears throughout Ingamells’ writings, as well as criticisms of the same.

Ingamells insisted, on more than one occasion, that “we identify ourselves with Australia, which is our Motherland, and English, which is our Mother Tongue. Our aim is synthesis, adjustment of the two, and our use of Aboriginal words is a legitimate contribution”, and he observed that “our traditions are twofold. Inextricably woven with the transplanted European culture are our experiences of the Australian environment”.⁴³ The framing of Ingamells’s desired

³⁷ Rex Ingamells and Ian Tilbrook, *Conditional Culture* (Adelaide, SA: F. W. Preece, 1938), 4–5.

³⁸ James Devaney, *The Vanished Tribes* (Sydney, NSW: Cornstalk, 1929).

³⁹ Rex Ingamells, “Jindyworobak,” *Jindyworobak Anthology* (1945): 63; Rex Ingamells, “Extract from a Letter to Miles Franklin, 16 March 1948,” in *The Jindyworobaks*, ed. Brian Elliott (St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1979), 221.

⁴⁰ Daniel Bunce, *Language of the Aborigines of the Colony of Victoria, and Other Australian Districts*, 2nd ed. (Geelong, VIC: Thomas Brown, 1859 [1851]), 2. On the issue of attribution, see R. Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria: With Notes Relating to the Habits of the Natives of Other Parts of Australia and Tasmania* (Melbourne, VIC: John Ferres, 1878); on Bunce as Devaney’s source, see R. M. W. Dixon, “Australian Aboriginal Words in Dictionaries: A History,” *International Journal of Lexicography* 21, no. 2 (2008): 129–52.

⁴¹ Ingamells, “Letter to Miles Franklin,” 221.

⁴² Elliott, “Introduction,” xxvii.

⁴³ Rex Ingamells, “Introduction,” in *Jindyworobak Review, 1938–1948*, ed. Rex Ingamells et al. (Melbourne, VIC: Jindyworobak, 1948), 21; Ingamells and Tilbrook, *Conditional Culture*, 17.

synthesis here is crucial. It does not entail the fusion of imported and “indigenous” (let alone Indigenous) cultures, but rather the reconciliation of the imported culture and its artefacts to its now indigenous environment. The Jindyworobak aim was to synthesise Australia’s European cultural inheritance with the Australian *place*, and only secondarily the “original good Australians” who functioned as markers of the spirit of that place and seemingly offered settlers the possibility of the unmediated encounter with their environment towards which the exigencies of the settler situation compelled them. Ingamells admitted as much himself, stating explicitly that the first of the Jindyworobak “conditions”—the “clear recognition of environmental values”—was the “most important”.⁴⁴

Cultural Correspondences and Contradictions

Michael Griffiths contends that “the history of literary nationalism in Australia ... corresponds with the biopolitics of Aboriginal ‘protection’, ‘absorption’, and ‘assimilation’”.⁴⁵ His analysis of the prevailing “biopolitical correspondences” between anthropology, the state and settler cultural nationalism in the period under examination here convincingly highlights several commonalities within and between these various settler-colonial agencies. Yet whereas one of Griffiths’s subjects, Xavier Herbert, was clearly representative of an important and long-lasting tradition of simultaneously absorptionist *and* indigenising settler nationalism,⁴⁶ Ingamells’s Jindyworobaks were also, and arguably much more closely, aligned with the anti-assimilationism of one of Ingamells’s early and most important influences, T. G. H. Strehlow.⁴⁷

Where Ingamells’s indigenism has been examined in relation to anthropological understandings, it has usually been to question his level of interest, ridicule the extent of his understanding, and/or relate his program of indigenist appropriation to the romantic strand of “imperialist nostalgia” exemplified by James Devaney’s *The Vanished Tribes* and its more famous counterpart, published in 1938, the year of the Jindies’s inception, Daisy Bates’s *The Passing of the Aborigines*.⁴⁸ Thus both man and mission have usually been interpreted as arising at and articulating the tail end of the social evolutionary paradigm, and the doomed race ideal along with it.⁴⁹ Aspects of these understandings certainly permeated Ingamells’s thinking, as evident in his assertion, for example, that Aboriginal culture had, “for the most part, died with the tribes”. Yet here, once again, the indigenising imperative is revealed in his immediately

⁴⁴ Ingamells and Tilbrook, *Conditional Culture*, 17, 5.

⁴⁵ Michael R. Griffiths, “Biopolitical Correspondences: Settler Nationalism, Thanatopolitics, and the Perils of Hybridity,” *Australian Literary Studies* 26, no. 2 (2011): 24, 30.

⁴⁶ See Dan Tout, “Encountering Indigeneity: Xavier Herbert, ‘Inky’ Stephensen and the Problems of Settler Nationalism,” *Cultural Studies Review* 23, no. 2 (2017): 141–61.

⁴⁷ In his 1948 retrospective on a decade of Jindyworobak, Ingamells credited an encounter with Strehlow at Hermannsburg in 1930–31 as having “begun my interest in the Aborigines” (“Introduction,” 11). While Strehlow subsequently suggested this meeting had never taken place, his support for the Jindyworobak program is not in question. See Dally, “The Jindyworobak Movement,” 47–48.

⁴⁸ Renato Rosaldo, “Imperialist Nostalgia,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 107–22; Devaney, *The Vanished Tribes*; Daisy Bates, *The Passing of the Aborigines: A Lifetime Spent among the Natives of Australia* (Adelaide, SA: The University of Adelaide Library, 2009 [1938]).

⁴⁹ See, for example, Robert Sellick, “The Jindyworobaks and Aboriginality,” in *Southwords: Essays on South Australian Writing*, ed. Philip Butterss (Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press, 1995), 102–15.

subsequent suggestion that “something of its spirit has been preserved”, the “assimilation” of which, he contended, would be “essential to the honest development of Australian culture”.⁵⁰

Spencer and Strehlow: Salvaging the Ig/noble Savage

The continuities and discontinuities between the evolutionist understandings that underpin the first part of Ingamells’s proposition, and the revaluations and motivations underlying the second, are instructive. If we take well-known antecedent anthropologist Baldwin Spencer and Strehlow as broadly representative of these two approaches, the differences between them can be rendered clearly with reference to Spencer’s early appraisal of Aboriginal culture and Strehlow’s subsequent riposte. The former’s description of Australia as “the present refuge of creatures... that have elsewhere passed away and given place to higher forms” is now infamous, as is his suggestion that “it has been possible to study in Australia human beings that still remain on the cultural level of men of the Stone Age”.⁵¹

On the contrary, in introducing his life’s work, *Songs of Central Australia*, in 1971, Strehlow wrote explicitly against Spencer’s view, insisting: “It is a pity that in the past there have been so few Australian students who were interested in cultural, and especially in linguistic, studies among the natives of our continent ... This neglect has not been merely accidental. It arises from the fact that not only the average citizen but also most anthropologists and missionaries during the nineteenth century regarded our aboriginals [*sic*] as constituting one of the lowest-standing human races in the scale of culture and development.”⁵²

In contrast to Spencer, Strehlow’s aim was to place “the Aranda on a spiritual level with other cultures”, to re-render Spencer’s subjects “as highly cognisant celebratory subjects, poets and artists of their life, makers of their culture, rather than doomed aspects of nature” and, in doing so, to “credit them with full humanity”. And yet, despite these clearly identifiable differences and Strehlow’s significant achievements towards his more positive ends, what Elkin described as Strehlow’s “literary liaisons” were as much practices of “salvage linguistics” intended to preserve Arrernte (Aranda) traditions for (settler) “posterity” as they were based on any real hope or advocacy for their continuity.⁵³

As his later critique of the Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) revealed, Strehlow’s chief concern was the “preservation of the most comprehensive *records* of traditional aboriginal culture [*sic*] ... so that their richness, interdependence, and intrinsic value could be understood *and appreciated by posterity*” rather than the preservation of Aboriginal culture, or indeed its living representatives, as such. It is indicative that Strehlow continued his critique by insisting that the “most significant” purpose of the AIAS was that of setting down and preserving its records of Aboriginal culture “in a form in which the possibility that this culture might

⁵⁰ Ingamells and Tilbrook, *Conditional Culture*, 17.

⁵¹ Quoted in David Carter, *Dispossession, Dreams and Diversity: Issues in Australian Studies* (Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education, 2006), 71.

⁵² T. G. H. Strehlow, *Songs of Central Australia* (Sydney, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1971).

⁵³ Quotes from Barry Hill, *Broken Song: T.G.H. Strehlow and Aboriginal Possession* (Milsons Point, NSW: Knopf, 2002). On Strehlow’s practice as a project of “salvage linguistics”, see Jones, “Strehlow, Theodor”.

contribute to the enrichment of our 'white' Australian way of life could be recognized".⁵⁴ In this, as Philip Jones's application of the term "salvage linguistics" implies, Strehlow's project shared some affinity with the "salvage ethnography" characteristic of much settler-colonial anthropology.

Like Spencer, Strehlow wrote in an elegiac mode, but he introduced two important innovations. Firstly, he extended the temporal scope of his, and settler Australia's, imaginative encounter with indigeneity without ultimately interrupting the teleological progression of displacement and replacement it entailed. Secondly, he promoted the revaluation of an Indigenous culture he simultaneously presented as already in the process of passing. The initial shift is a temporal one—from pure elegy towards what Hodge and Mishra have termed "premature elegy"⁵⁵—and it is *within* this shift that Spencer's denigration could be transformed into Strehlow's admiration without disrupting the ultimate (imagined) disappearance of the troubling, "authentic" Indigenous presence from within the settler nation.⁵⁶ The crucial difference between "premature" and pure elegy—one looking forward, the other back, but both focusing on the moment of the Other's demise—is precisely the (albeit fleeting) meeting the former implies, and the "act of conferral" such a meeting allows.⁵⁷ It is, I would argue, in this fleeting moment of encounter, but this moment only, that Strehlow's subjects were to be granted their "full humanity".

Strehlow's important modifications to the social evolutionary paradigm can be interpreted as responding anthropologically to precisely the changing circumstances this article emphasises: Indigenous demographic, if not cultural, continuity on the one hand, and the multiple crises of Australian settler-colonial modernity on the other. For Spencer, his subjects' status as "a Stone Age people ... doomed to extinction" rendered anthropology "of necessity elegiac, mourning the last vestiges of 'the Stone Age'"; however, demographic shifts combined with changing understandings of race led Strehlow to reimagine Indigenous disappearance in cultural rather than empirical terms.⁵⁸ As Jeremy Beckett observed, with explicit reference to Strehlow: "While Australia was told that Aborigines were not going to die out, it was also given to understand that Aboriginality was doomed. Timeless and unchanging, Aboriginal culture was incapable of co-existence with the modern world."⁵⁹ As late as 1963, Strehlow was contending that the "old Aboriginal world is now facing its final twilight". The task of the AIAS, along with

⁵⁴ Quoted in Tim Rowse, *Rethinking Social Justice: From "Peoples" to "Populations"* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2012), 50 (emphasis added).

⁵⁵ Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream*, 42.

⁵⁶ On the implications of "authenticity" for actually existing Indigenous peoples, see Patrick Wolfe, "Repressive Authenticity," in *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London & New York: Cassell, 1999), 163–214.

⁵⁷ See Deborah Bird Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004), 117.

⁵⁸ Quote from Patrick Brantlinger, "Notes on the Postmodernity of Fake(?) Aboriginal Literature," *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 4 (2011): 139.

⁵⁹ Jeremy Beckett, "The Past in the Present; the Present in the Past: Constructing a National Aboriginality," in *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality*, ed. Jeremy Beckett (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994), 201.

anthropologists more generally, was therefore to study Aboriginal culture “before it was too late”, so that what could be salvaged from it could be incorporated into the “national heritage”.⁶⁰

Exploring the Correspondences of Indigenising Settler Nationalism

The indigenising projects of Ingamells and Strehlow were ultimately almost indistinguishable from one another, even if they arose and were prosecuted in relation to different cultural fields. Like Strehlow, Ingamells sought to revalue Indigenous culture, and he subscribed to the equivalence Strehlow had attempted to draw between “the legends of the Luritja, Aranda and other tribes [*sic*]” and “those of ancient Greece” (and, like Strehlow, he was sometimes ridiculed and vilified as a result).⁶¹ Like Strehlow, Ingamells wrote in the “premature elegiac” mode, as Peter Kirkpatrick has observed.⁶² Finally, like Strehlow, Ingamells urged settler Australians to study what he too considered admirable but ultimately passing Indigenous cultures not, or not only, for the sake of such study in and of itself, or even necessarily out of concern for his nominated subject’s living representatives, but rather for its apparent potential to further the project of settler indigenisation.

Strehlow concluded *Songs of Central Australia* with an entirely Jindyworobak-compatible suggestion: “If we are to develop a literature which will appeal strongly to an Australian audience, then our future writers and poets will have to garb their verse and prose with new trappings that will harmonize with the Australian background against which we are living our own daily lives ... It is my belief that when the strong web of future Australian verse comes to be woven, probably some of its strands will be found to be poetic threads spun on the Stone Age hair-spindles of Central Australia.”⁶³

In 1977, when the recently deceased, self-professed “Last of the Jindyworobaks”, Les Murray, commended his predecessors for having been “on the right track” with their “really worthwhile project of fusing Aboriginal and European elements into a new and genuinely Australian poetry”, he titled and concluded his essay, “The Human-Hair Thread”, with reference to Strehlow’s closing lines. Describing “Aboriginal culture”, revealingly, as both “our greatest autochthonous tradition” and a “resource”, Murray claimed that “‘we’ can, and some of us do possess the land imaginatively in very much the Aboriginal way”. Ultimately, he admitted his “abiding interest” in “convergences” and endorsed “the slow moulding of all people within a continent or region towards the natural human form which that continent or region demands” as an indigenising project opposed to the “attitudes, the orthodoxy, of alienation”.⁶⁴ Ingamells would undoubtedly have approved.

Strehlow would himself have approved of Murray’s characterisation of him as having been “entrusted with the Aranda sacred verses in order that he might preserve them against the day

⁶⁰ Quoted in Beckett, “The Past in the Present,” 201.

⁶¹ Ingamells and Tilbrook, *Conditional Culture*, 16.

⁶² Peter Kirkpatrick, “Jindy Modernist: The Jindyworobaks as Avant Garde,” in *Republics of Letters: Literary Communities in Australia*, ed. Peter Kirkpatrick and Robert Dixon (Sydney, NSW: Sydney University Press, 2012), 109.

⁶³ Strehlow, *Songs of Central Australia*, 728–29.

⁶⁴ Les A. Murray, “The Human-Hair Thread,” *Meanjin* 36, no. 4 (1977): 550, 554, 569, 571.

when the old culture died out, at least in its old pure form”.⁶⁵ Strehlow quite literally saw himself as the inheritor, the “trustee”, of Aboriginal traditions, as both Tim Rowse and more recently Barry Hill have made clear.⁶⁶ Hill recalls Strehlow’s self-understanding as “a white custodian of Aboriginal culture ... as the recipient of all last things”. Yet Strehlow’s purpose, as much as it was cast backwards for posterity, was also, as Hill has it, “thrown forward”: *Songs of Central Australia* “was meant to embody more than the old songs of the old culture. It offered a promise—culturally speaking—of ... a reconciling future”.⁶⁷ Contrary to the implied emphasis on the settler–indigene relation carried by the term “reconciling” in Hill’s account, however, Strehlow’s hoped-for reconciliation was as much one between settler Australians and their environment—the “harmonization” of settler national culture with “the Australian background against which we are living our own daily lives”—as was Ingamells’s sought-after synthesis.

As early as 1935, Strehlow had written to Ingamells’ in relation to his first book of verse, *Gumtops*: “The Australian poet, if his work is to have enduring value, must cease to be a third-rate imitator of outworn European conventions and bizarre Western experiments in verse ... He must become, first and foremost, a *true native* of Australia, and cease to be a virtual stranger in his own homeland ... It seems to me ... that the poet of ‘Gumtops’ is one of these true ‘natives’.”⁶⁸ The indigenising implications of Strehlow’s endorsement are abundantly evident here.

Tellingly, when Strehlow finally published *Songs of Central Australia* in 1971, he did not provide “any precise details about when, where and from whom they had been collected”.⁶⁹ The resemblances between the abstraction of Indigenous language and symbolism from its cultural context underpinning Ingamells’ project of indigenist appropriation and Strehlow’s own are striking. As Jonathan Dunk recently remarked of Murray, in a comment that reveals the correspondences between the indigenising settler nationalisms of Ingamells, Strehlow and Murray alike, while the latter “claimed to respect a particular archival version of Aboriginal knowledge ... it was a purely historical or anthropological version which precluded a material acknowledgement or engagement with the ongoing realities of Aboriginal experience”.⁷⁰

It is significant that the renewed indigenising efforts of Strehlow, Murray and others emerged under historical circumstances in which both aspects of settler Australia’s system of relations were once again under simultaneous strain. The period beginning in the early 1960s was characterised by the end of empire, and Britain’s turn towards Europe at least in part precipitated

⁶⁵ Murray, “The Human-Hair Thread,” 570.

⁶⁶ Quote from Rowse, *Rethinking Social Justice*, xvi; see also Hill, *Broken Song*.

⁶⁷ Hill, *Broken Song*.

⁶⁸ T. G. H. Strehlow, letter to Rex Ingamells, 28 February 1935, Rex Ingamells Papers, ca. 1933–1952, MS 6244, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne. This letter appears to have been intended as a review of the collection, but as far as I have been able to ascertain, it remained unpublished.

⁶⁹ Sven Lindqvist, *Terra Nullius: A Journey through No One’s Land*, trans. Sarah Death, New ed. (New York: The New Press, 2007 [2005]), 168.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Dunk, “The Stump: Looking Back on the Republic of Murray,” *Overland*, 7 June 2019, <https://overland.org.au/2019/06/the-stump-looking-back-on-the-republic-of-murray/>.

a national identity crisis on the part of many settler Australians.⁷¹ At the same time, settlers were confronted by a resurgent Indigenous polity that had refused assimilation and even integration, and sought recognition above and beyond the symbolic status as “Australian” attained over the same period. The identity crisis experienced by many settler Australians at that time, just like the one experienced by some in the 1930s, can therefore be understood as a product of the conjuncture of tensions in *both* aspects of Australia’s settler-colonial relations. And as was the case in the earlier period, one possible, if hardly plausible, response that seems to have presented itself to *some* settler nationalists, Strehlow and Murray among them, was an indigenising one that sought to locate the solution to one crisis in the source of the other.⁷²

The Politics of Settler Indigenisation

Strehlow’s “salvage linguistics” were entirely compatible with Ingamells’s indigenism, and indeed with Murray’s inheritance of the same. And each of these varieties of indigenising settler nationalism can be read as conforming more or less to the approach to indigenisation that Goldie terms “appropriation”, entailing “the consumption enforced by the dominator of what belongs to the dominated”.⁷³ These projects certainly amounted to instances of “cultural appropriation” and were, therefore, as Goldie’s language makes clear, premised on “the elimination, or displacement, of the empirical indigene within civilization”.⁷⁴ At the same time, however, it remains the case that—to a limited extent and with ambivalent implications—“appropriation inevitably entails appreciation of that which is appropriated”.⁷⁵

The shift from outright rejection to tentative embrace (of an albeit decontextualised, symbolic indigeneity) both Ingamells and Strehlow sought to precipitate, despite its correspondence to a more generalised settler-colonial “logic of elimination”,⁷⁶ opens a path towards subsequent attitudinal shifts in relation to the historical indigeneity the project initially rejects. (This transformation is never complete, and the competing imperatives towards rejection and embrace always uneasily coexist.) In this respect, McGregor’s conclusion that Ingamells’s “level of cultural appreciation may have been naive, but his writings were expressions of respect—even veneration—for a cultural heritage that had long been belittled and disdained”, seems sound, and equally applicable to Strehlow as well.⁷⁷

Ingamells possessed neither the understanding nor the ability to innovate in the manner of Strehlow, literary or otherwise, and the lasting impacts of his indigenist interventions were

⁷¹ See James Curran and Stuart Ward, *The Unknown Nation: Australia after Empire* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2010).

⁷² On the (re)emergence of indigenising settler nationalism in the post-1967 period, see Anthony Moran, “As Australia Decolonizes: Indigenizing Settler Nationalism and the Challenges of Settler/Indigenous Relations,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25, no. 6 (2002): 1013–42.

⁷³ Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 15.

⁷⁴ Wolfe, *The Transformation of Anthropology*, 208; Russell McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011), 26.

⁷⁵ McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion*, 26.

⁷⁶ See Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409; Wolfe, *The Transformation of Anthropology*.

⁷⁷ McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion*, 26.

limited as a result. Strehlow's *Songs of Central Australia*, on the other hand, did subsequently help "to establish the Dreaming and the Aboriginal world-view as key concepts in an emerging Australian cultural identity".⁷⁸ Yet this process of nationalist incorporation is not an innocent one, and Strehlow's emphasis on the revaluation of Indigenous culture *in and for* "posterity" reveals that it was indeed a *historical* rather than a contemporary indigeneity that was to be appreciated, and preserved. The act of appreciation and appropriation he proposed does nothing, therefore, to undermine settler supremacy within or over the settler nation. Nor does it meaningfully disrupt the settler-colonial processes of displacement and replacement his and others' indigenising settler nationalisms ultimately work towards. On the contrary, the "veneration" of an authentic Indigenous culture imagined as already in the process of passing—as already in and of *the past*—forecloses the very possibility of its continuation.

Appreciation and appropriation are by no means contradictory, let alone incompatible, and both tendencies can and often do work together towards the ends of indigenising settler nationalism: the displacement and replacement of actually existing Indigenous peoples, who stand "in the way" between settlers and the land.⁷⁹ Far from an innocent act of appreciation, then, the revaluation of Indigenous culture proposed by Strehlow and endorsed by Ingamells and Murray can be read as fulfilling the requirements of the indigenising imperative by transforming the "remnant" culture from something to be rejected into a resource worthy of being absorbed. Under historical circumstances in which settler nationalist teleologies of displacement and replacement seemed to have stalled under the weight of demographic and political realities, indigenist appreciation and appropriation of an authentic but ultimately and inevitably passing Indigenous culture worked to re-enable and reinvigorate settler fantasies of inheritance and indigenisation.

At the same time, however, this does not necessarily preclude a coexisting sympathy or even empathy for the plight of Indigenous people themselves. As Rowse has observed, there always existed at least the "potential within Australian 'indigenism' to be sensitive to the actual, rather than merely the idealised, Aboriginal presence".⁸⁰ This was clearly the case for Ingamells, who expressed his hope that "our interest in the aborigines [*sic*] will ... prove to be not only a literary appropriation, but also vital for their welfare. We wish to deepen the existing sympathy with and understanding for them, which must precede legislation on their behalf".⁸¹

Indeed, in a move highly atypical within his historical-cultural context, Ingamells went so far as to recognise Aboriginal land ownership and the legitimacy of customary law, even expressing—albeit privately—the unpopular view that so-called "half-castes" were "a fine Australian type, who deserve attention".⁸² The contradictions of settler-colonial nationalism are rendered here both manifold and manifest.

⁷⁸ Jones, "Strehlow, Theodor".

⁷⁹ See Wolfe, *The Transformation of Anthropology*, 1.

⁸⁰ Tim Rowse, "Modernism, Indigenism and War: A Comment on *The Black Swan of Trespass*," *Australian Cultural History* 25 (2006): 42.

⁸¹ Rex Ingamells, "Editorial," *Venture: Jindyworobak Quarterly Pamphlet* 1, no. 1 (April 1939): 4.

⁸² Rex Ingamells, "The Original Good Australians," unpublished article sent to Kenneth Gifford, 14 February 1943, Kenneth H. Gifford Correspondence, 1941–1944, MS 10098, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

Conclusion

Others have recognised aspects of the settler-colonial underpinnings of the Jindyworobak program, with Judith Wright following Nettie Palmer in noting the affinities between Australian and South American literatures and the “split in ... consciousness” characteristic of writers in “new” countries. In her contribution to the 1948 *Jindyworobak Review*, Wright observed that “the Jindy movement was essentially an effort to get the problem into perspective ... and in fact the work of the outstanding Jindy writers has to some extent already broken the problem down”.⁸³ Wright subsequently suggested that the Jindyworobaks and their universalist opponents together “illustrated the double-sided problem of writing in Australia and the imitateness that kept us swinging uncertainly between ‘indigenous values’ and our European origins. The crux of the problem was that both factors were needed, but that it didn’t seem possible to bring them into creative reconciliation”.⁸⁴

Yet two is not three (and three is not all), and despite Wright’s attentiveness to (settler) Australia’s “double aspect”, these formulations collapse the triadic relations of settler colonialism into a dialectical encounter between the cultural forces of settler-colony and metropole. They thereby recapitulate Ingamells’s own attempt to construct an “indigenous” (settler) national culture through an unmediated encounter between “man” and “land”. While the slippage in Wright’s use of the term “indigenous values” here may be accidental, it could hardly be more consequential.

For Murray and critic Phillip Mead, on the other hand, the significance of Jindyworobak is located in the settler–indigene relation. Murray, for example, claimed that “the Jindies represent a creolising impulse in our culture”, while Mead recognised the Jindyworobaks as representative of a “continuing desire in the white Australian imaginary ... for a species of cultural–racial syncretism”.⁸⁵ These observations at least imply, even if they do not explicitly acknowledge, the centrality of the settler–indigene relation to the Jindyworobak program, as well as to the broader indigenising project of which they formed a part. They thereby avoid the common settler-colonial tendency to displace, deny and/or disavow the Indigenous presence altogether. Yet in the absence of an attendant awareness of and attentiveness to the settler–metropole contradiction as a structuring element and imperative behind settler approaches to creolisation, convergence or “cultural–racial syncretism”, a more complex and comprehensive picture remains excluded from view.

Throughout the course of Australian settler-colonial history, articulations and accounts of settler nationalism have tended to neglect the complexity of the settler-colonial system of relationships this article has emphasised. Yet they do not simply supersede the circumstances of their own production by failing or refusing to acknowledge them. The competing positions along the nationalist–universalist spectrum typically address themselves towards the tension between settler and metropole, while attempting to obscure from view the settler–indigene dialectic that

⁸³ Judith Wright, “Perspective,” in *Jindyworobak Review, 1938–1948*, ed. Rex Ingamells et al. (Melbourne, VIC: Jindyworobak, 1948), 72–73.

⁸⁴ Judith Wright, *Because I Was Invited* (Melbourne, VIC: Oxford University Press, 1975), 58.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Kirkpatrick, “Jindy Modernist,” 103; Philip Mead, “Nation, Literature, Location,” in *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. Peter Pierce (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 560.

incessantly unsettles them, or at least leaves them incomplete. Indeed, the entire narrative framework of “two Australias”, in which settler and metropolitan agencies proceed dialectically towards an inevitable moment of cultural synthesis and national maturation—whether for the purposes of national independence or metropolitan integration—operates precisely in the way Alan Lawson suggests: as a “strategic disavowal of the colonizing act”.

Confronted by the reality of 1930s Australia, Ingamells addressed himself towards the “neglected strand” of Australian nationalism⁸⁶—what this article has characterised as the identificatory dialectic between settler and indigene—in ways that attempted to grapple with settlers’ ambiguous and ambivalent situatedness as simultaneously coloniser and colonised. While his response was highly problematic, and his proposed “solution” neither comprehensive nor entirely convincing, it is nevertheless one of the distinguishing characteristics of his approach that it recognised the complexity of the settler situation, and attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to negotiate its complex terrain. In this, despite its extensive shortcomings otherwise, it has the virtue of revealing the dynamics of the settler predicament, so often concealed from view.

⁸⁶ Healy, *Literature and the Aborigine*, 165.