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John O'Leary

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### **Abstract**

We Owe Them all that We Possess': 'Native' Songs and Laments Nineteenth-century settlers, both British and American, wrote a considerable amount of verse about the indigenous peoples they, or earlier settlers, had encountered in the course of colonisation. Critical discussion has focused mainly on the major works they produced — pre-eminently on Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* (1855), which is accorded a literary as well as historical significance.<sup>1</sup> Much nineteenth-century verse about indigenous peoples was, however, of the casual or occasional kind, published, often pseudonymously, in newspapers, magazines and pamphlets, by poets of greater or lesser obscurity.<sup>2</sup> This body of poetry has received, generally speaking, little critical analysis, yet it constitutes an intriguing index of nineteenth-century settler attitudes towards indigenes. It is certainly worthy of further discussion.

JOHN O'LEARY

## Speaking the Suffering Indigene: 'Native' Songs and Laments, 1820–1850

### 'WE OWE THEM ALL THAT WE POSSESS': 'NATIVE' SONGS AND LAMENTS

Nineteenth-century settlers, both British and American, wrote a considerable amount of verse about the indigenous peoples they, or earlier settlers, had encountered in the course of colonisation. Critical discussion has focused mainly on the major works they produced — pre-eminently on Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* (1855), which is accorded a literary as well as historical significance.<sup>1</sup> Much nineteenth-century verse about indigenous peoples was, however, of the casual or occasional kind, published, often pseudonymously, in newspapers, magazines and pamphlets, by poets of greater or lesser obscurity.<sup>2</sup> This body of poetry has received, generally speaking, little critical analysis, yet it constitutes an intriguing index of nineteenth-century settler attitudes towards indigenes. It is certainly worthy of further discussion.

Casual or occasional verse about indigenes displayed considerable variety. One of the more striking forms was the ventriloquised lament, in which a settler poet spoke in the persona of an indigene about his or her sad plight. A good example is 'The Gin', which appeared in a Sydney newspaper in 1831. The poem's speaker, an Aboriginal mother, begins with an evocation of her Coogee surroundings, which are represented as a kind of antipodean Eden:

The gum-tree with its glitt'ring leaves  
Is sparkling in the sunny light,  
And round my leafy home it weaves  
Its dancing shade with flow'rets bright ('Hugo')

The poem's pastoral mood does not last, for the Aboriginal mother reveals that her husband has been seduced away by the dubious delights of Sydney. As night falls and a cold southerly gale develops — images, both, of the Aboriginal mother's comfortless existence — 'Toongulla's wretched child' accepts that her husband is not going to return to his family. Gazing sadly on her sleeping child, she concludes that she and her people 'have no hope but in the grave'. At this point the author steps in, appending a brief coda which invokes 'religion's aid' to shield Aboriginal people from the 'double storm' of physical and moral ill. 'Hugo' finishes with a heartfelt appeal to the poem's readers:

We owe them all that we possess —  
The forest, plain, the glen, the hill,  
Were theirs; — to slight is to oppress.

'The Gin' is a remarkable poem, as Elizabeth Webby has observed, notably in its artful appeal to white guilt and its carefully detailed description of Aboriginal life, which features the use of Aboriginal words (Webby 47). It is an example of the 'Aboriginal lament', large numbers of which appeared pseudonymously in colonial Australian newspapers in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, and which allowed colonists to voice their concern over a controversial aspect of settlement. These poems indicate that during the early phase of colonisation in Australia — a period characterised, according to some historians, by violent, genocidal confrontation — settler society was not completely unable to cast a critical light on its dealings with Aboriginals.<sup>3</sup>

Ventriloquised laments of this kind were not confined to Australia. In South Africa during the same period, the emigrant Scottish poet, Thomas Pringle, was publishing in newspapers and journals short poems such as 'The Captive of Camalú', which creates a pastoral vision of the earlier life of a young 'caffer or Ghonqua' before describing the destruction of his village and the murder of his family by the Boers who have forced him into servitude (Pringle 1834 70–74). More substantial is 'The Ghona Widow's Lullaby', in which Pringle draws on the traditions of the European Gothic to depict the night time dangers facing an indigenous mother and her child after an attack by settlers has decimated her tribe

The jackal shrieks upon the rocks;  
The tiger-wolf is howling;  
The panther round the folded flocks  
With stifled gurr is prowling (Pringle 1834 79)

Fortunately, the widow finds comfort in religion, confident that 'a Mightier Arm' will shield her and her child from harm. The happy ending does not diminish her suffering, however, nor put to rest the moral questions raised by the poem. Like 'Hugo' in Australia, Pringle was asking his society to confront uncomfortable truths about the treatment of indigenous peoples at a time when many — perhaps most — colonists preferred not to know the facts.<sup>4</sup>

In the former colony of the United States, too, poets were adopting the persona of the suffering indigene and ventriloquising his or her anguish in short poems published in local or special-interest newspapers. An example is Lydia Sigourney's 'The African Mother at her Daughter's Grave', in which a West African mother tearfully mourns the death of her child, the sole survivor of a raid by slavers (Sigourney 109–112). The African setting might seem to distance the poem from the concerns of its American readers, till it is recalled that at the time of writing the United States still practised slavery, and that there was a vast trans-Atlantic trade in human beings connecting West Africa and America. Sigourney's poem emphasises the humanity of the African mother, thus underlining the barbarity of the slave trade and the moral lacuna of American complicity in it.

Closer to home is William Cullen Bryant's 'An Indian at the Burial Place of his Fathers', in which a Native American is imagined returning to his father's grave and meditating on the changes white settlement has brought. As is often the case in these poems, an idyllic rural scene is initially evoked. At this point, however, Bryant twists the convention by making his Indian state his displeasure at what he sees. Colonisers, the Indian complains, have destroyed the forests where his people hunted; worse, they have desecrated Indian graves. America's first race can only retreat to a symbolically setting sun, pursued by a relentless tide of white settlement:

They waste us — ay — like April snow  
In the warm noon, we shrink away;  
And fast they follow, as we go  
Towards the setting day —  
Till they shall fill the land, and we  
Are driven into the western sea (Bryant 61)

Like Sigourney and the other poets discussed above, Bryant uses his poem to emphasise the suffering humanity of his indigenous speaker, and by extension the inhumanity of white treatment of Native Americans. Atypically, white agency in the destruction of Native American societies is not glossed over. White settlers actively 'waste' the Indians and 'drive' them into the Pacific, whereas a more usual trope for this period figured Native Americans as passively 'wasting away' through some kind of ineluctable, fated process.<sup>5</sup> Moral responsibility is sheeted home to where it belongs.

Laments of the kind described above were by no means the only form of ventriloquised indigenous utterance produced by settler poets at this time. In his 'War Song of Makanna', Pringle employs the rhetoric of Romantic Primitivism to voice the defiance of the 'caffer prophet' Makanna (Lynx), pursued by the British after his attack on Grahamstown in 1819 (Pringle 1828 95–96). The prospect of indigenous vengeance was likely to create an uneasy frisson in settler minds, and the indigene was in fact often seen to embody the uncanny, as Tim Fulford has shown in relation to depictions of Native Americans by English poets such as Coleridge and Wordsworth (Fulford 2006 12). This fascination with the indigenous uncanny lies behind another ventriloquised outburst of Pringle's, 'The Incantation', in which 'Makanna's widowed bride' pours her blood on the waters of a sacred stream and curses those who have persecuted her husband:

Thus the Mother's feelings tender  
In my breast I stifle now:  
Thus I summon you to render  
Vengeance for the Widow's vow! (Pringle 1834 56)

The Gothic atmosphere created by Pringle is echoed in an anonymous Australian poem with a similar title, 'Incantation Scene'. Here, three 'Weird Sisters' — clearly modelled on the trio in *Macbeth* — ritually curse the perpetrators of the

1838 Myall Creek massacre, which had seen the slaughter by stockmen of around thirty unarmed Aboriginals, including women and children ('Incantation Scene'). These poems of defiance and revenge, though fewer in number than the laments discussed above, are worthy of note, for they construct the indigene as active rather than passive, triumphant — if only in death — rather than defeated. Whether they truly permit the indigene to speak is a matter that will be addressed later.

Settler poets did not always ventriloquise indigenous voices. Often the lament for the dispossessed or suffering indigene was direct, as in Bryant's 'The Disinterred Warrior', Pringle's 'The Desolate Valley' or Henry Parkes' 'The Murdered Wild Boy', which offers a pathos-filled account — based, apparently, on a true story — of the torture and murder of a young Aboriginal (Parkes). Demands for better treatment of indigenous populations could be made straightforwardly, too, as in Sigourney's 'The Indian's Welcome to the Pilgrim Fathers', and in poems such as 'The Caffer' by Pringle, which displays a scathing indignation about the treatment meted out by colonists to South Africa's indigenous peoples:

He is a robber? — true, it is a strife  
Between the black-skinned bandit and the white...  
A heathen? — teach him, then, thy better creed,  
Christian, if thou deserv'st that name indeed! (Pringle 1828 146).

Settler verse about indigenes did not focus solely on themes of loss, revenge or abuse. Sometimes the idyllic prelude which often begins laments for dispossessed or suffering indigenes was expanded to fill complete lyrics depicting what settler poets imagined as the bliss of pre-colonial indigenous life. An example from South Africa is Pringle's 'The Kosa', which uses the language of nineteenth-century medievalism to depict the simple, happy life of Xhosa tribesmen as they drink mead, tell tales of war and go forth 'gaily' on the hunt (Pringle 1834 18–20). From Australia comes Eliza Dunlop's 'Native Poetry', in which Aboriginals are depicted according to the conventions of Romantic Primitivism as happy children of nature, who spend their time singing and dancing in the Virgilian shade of a 'karakun tree' (Dunlop 'Native Poetry').

'Native Poetry' is a translation of genuine Aboriginal songs, according to Dunlop; it is in fact one of a number of 'translations' of indigenous orature which settler poets engaged in (best-known are the numerous 'Indian death songs', which were written from the eighteenth century on and which form an extensive corpus of their own). While these 'translations' were often in fact pseudo-translations, or adaptations, rather than true translations, they do attest to a genuine (if rather naïve) interest in the culture and psychology of indigenous peoples at this period.<sup>6</sup> This 'capacity to recognise otherness in a positive sense' (Carr 166) is characteristic of many of the 'native' songs and laments examined here. In her 'Aboriginal' chant 'The Eagle Chief', for example, Dunlop informs her reader about the talismanic crystals that featured in traditional Aboriginal culture (Dunlop 'Eagle Chief'), while in poems such as 'Amakosina' and 'The

Coranna' Pringle depicts the customs of South African tribesman in peace and war (Pringle 1828 99–100, 120–21). While the anthropological substance of these poems should not be exaggerated — sometimes the detail is vague and general in the extreme — they can be seen as functioning as mini-ethnographies of peoples about whom the average early-nineteenth-century settler would have known very little.<sup>7</sup> They are examples of the liberal, outward-looking Romanticism that presented the Other as unfamiliar, but not alien (Fulford 1998 59).

#### **A FASCINATION WITH THE MARGINALISED: LITERARY AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

A number of literary traditions lay behind the poems described above. Virgil's first Eclogue had dealt with the theme of dispossession, as rustics driven from their native soil by civil convulsion complained about their loss (Virgil 20–27). During the Renaissance, the lament of the shepherd or nymph for a lost lover or former happy life had been a standard topos, the subject of innumerable poems and songs. The growth of Romanticism in the eighteenth century had fostered a taste for melancholy; in particular, it had focused an interest on solitary figures — mad people, the rural poor, homeless wanderers of various kinds — who existed on the fringes of society. These marginalised others could be European (an example is Wordsworth's 'Idiot Boy') but they could also be non-European, for Romantic writers were fascinated by indigenous peoples, especially Native Americans, who were conceived of as both exotic and sublime (Fulford 2006 4, 12). This fascination is expressed by Wordsworth in poems such as 'The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman', a ventriloquised lament in which an abandoned Indian mother faces her imminent death while mourning the loss of her child:

My journey will be shortly run,  
I shall not see another sun,  
I cannot lift my limbs to know  
If they have any life or no,  
My poor forsaken child! If I  
For once could have thee close to me,  
With happy heart I then would die,  
And my last thoughts would happy be.  
I feel my body die away,  
I shall not see another day (Wordsworth 61–70)

Wordsworth's poem brings us close, in theme and emotional timbre, to poems like 'The Gin' and 'The African Mother at her Daughter's Grave', and indeed many of the 'native' laments discussed here possess a distinctly Wordsworthian quality.

Warrior chants such as Pringle's 'War Song of Makanna' drew on different traditions, notably the Romantic Primitivism of Macpherson's Ossian poems and Scott's Border ballads. Add to these the tradition of the Gothic, whose brooding imagery was frequently employed to evoke the fate of the persecuted, abandoned tribesperson, and the taste for colourful exoticism fostered by poets such as

Byron, which delighted in depicting strange customs and rites, and it is clear that nineteenth-century settler poets had a rich variety of literary models, both Classical and Romantic, to draw on when they set out to depict the suffering or dispossessed indigene.

It would be wrong, however, to think of the 'native' songs and laments discussed here as mere literary exercises. Poets such as Pringle were motivated by a powerful sense of Christian duty, a legacy of the evangelical movement that had swept Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and which reached a peak in the 1830s (Stocking 240). Pringle himself was active in the anti-slavery crusade; Dunlop was the wife of a Protector of Aborigines, an office set up to shield indigenous peoples after a parliamentary select committee established in 1835 had collated damning evidence of atrocities in British colonies (Stocking 243). Each was committed, albeit in different ways, to ameliorating the lot of indigenous peoples, and each was capable, on occasion, of writing highly political poems that directly addressed the mistreatment of indigenes at the hands of settlers.<sup>8</sup> In the United States, a parallel evangelical movement, the Second Great Awakening, had inspired a wave of social activism in places such as New England. This had focused concern on (among other things) the mistreatment of Native Americans, notably the Cherokees, about whom Sigourney wrote a pathos-filled poem, 'The Cherokee Mother', as part of a carefully-orchestrated campaign to halt the tribe's removal west.<sup>9</sup> Nor were these activists (as we would now call them) parochial or limited in their scope. Sigourney, for example, along with the American missionaries whose endeavours she supported, was concerned that British imperial expansion into southern Africa was going to lead to a repetition of the inhumanities already inflicted on Native Americans in the United States. Her poem 'Cry of the Corannas' describes the dire state of South African indigenes wasting away from hunger and disease (Sigourney 64–65).<sup>10</sup>

While most settler poets were not as directly involved in reformist campaigns as Pringle, Dunlop or Sigourney, they shared nevertheless a common poetic discourse of imaginative sympathy designed (in Pringle's expressive phrase) to 'unlock the fountains of the heart' (Pringle 1834 8). This discourse had its origin in the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility, which had focused on feelings of melancholy, distress, refined emotionalism and benevolence (Barker-Benfield xix). While this cult could be inward-looking and passive, it had also possessed an outward, active orientation which had found expression in a powerful culture of humanitarian reform (Barker-Benfield xxvi). The verse under consideration here was a product of that reformist, humanitarian culture; it was written to enlist the sympathies of its readers for the purpose of producing moral and social change. It is 'engaged' writing, albeit ideologically conditioned in ways that will be discussed presently.

The discourse of imaginative sympathy had been developed especially strongly by early-nineteenth-century women writers such as Felicia Hemans and



Leticia Landon, as Isobel Armstrong has pointed out (Armstrong 377). Dunlop, Sigourney and the other female settler poets who wrote about the plight of indigenous peoples should be seen as belonging to this expressive tradition of women's writing.<sup>11</sup> But men, too, were capable of producing 'sympathetic' verse about suffering indigenes, notably men — like Pringle — who were professional humanitarians. This created an interesting cultural dialectic, in which what might be described as a feminine world of sensibility — composed of poets, women, humanitarians and the indigenes whose suffering they described — was implicitly opposed to an unfeeling, exploitative, masculine world of commerce, colonisation and empire. The 'feminine' character of this verse is underlined by its frequent use of the figure of the abandoned indigenous mother, for mothers, as many critics have pointed out, were central to the cult of refined domesticity that reached its apogee in the nineteenth century (Barker-Benfield 276). Male indigenes were sometimes depicted as suffering — a striking example is Pringle's well-known 'The Bechuana Boy' — but they lacked the psychic charge of the abandoned and suffering indigenous mother, torn from her hearth, bereft of her husband and nursing, most likely, a helpless infant.<sup>12</sup> The victimisation of these indigenous mothers at the hands of slavers, soldiers and settlers was carefully choreographed and obsessively focused on; it sent a powerful message to nineteenth-century readers about the evils of empire in which they were, to a greater or lesser degree, complicit.

#### **MOURNING, REPARATION AND THE ISSUE OF AGENCY: CRITICAL DISCUSSION**

As noted earlier, the verse considered here has received relatively little critical analysis. Traditional humanist criticism, with its focus on metropolitan literary traditions and 'important' (usually male) writers, had little interest in pseudonymous verse in obscure colonial newspapers, or verse by 'minor' (usually female) writers such as Sigourney or Dunlop. Postcolonial criticism has analysed various types of writing about indigenous peoples, focusing especially on issues of race and representation. Terry Goldie, for example, has identified certain recurrent stereotypes which figure indigenes as sexual, violent, oral, mystical and prehistoric, that is, past or dead (Goldie 15–17). David Spurr for his part has detected a tendency to idealise, naturalise, and eroticise indigenous peoples (Spurr 125–40; 156–69; 170–83). Such stereotypes and tendencies can certainly be found in the verse examined here. The 'native' song or lament by its very nature tended to present the indigene as past, or about to become past, just as it tended to idealise indigenous peoples, depicting them as noble and innocent.

Such analysis is invaluable, highlighting as it does the ideological underpinnings of much colonial writing about indigenes. As Malvern van Wyk Smit has pointed out, however, in relation to early South African writing, postcolonial criticism has unfortunately tended to distort discussion of this literature, replacing one 'univocal narrative of euro-centric imperial self-justification' with 'another master narrative (no less reductionist and no less binarist) of the passive exploitation or heroic resistance of the colonised, of the blanket perfidy of all settlers and colonial

agents, of the cultural obtuseness and imperialist complicity of all missionaries, and of the patronising ventriloquism of all colonial writers' (Smit 12).

Of the poets discussed here, Pringle in particular has suffered at the hands of postcolonial critics, in part because he occupies the dangerous position of being seen, traditionally, as the 'father' of English verse in South Africa (Calder 4). One of his most famous poems, 'Afar in the Desert', for example, has been described as exhibiting 'an exploitative colonial myth' of self-sufficiency in a new land and performing 'a crazy gloating' over a conveniently empty desert landscape (Voss 18–19). Pringle, Voss concludes, is little more than the archetypal white colonist, 'mounted, rifle in one hand, Bible in the other' (Voss 20).

Pained laments for the suffering or dispossessed indigene like 'The Gin' might be thought to escape this kind of damning diagnosis, but according to at least one postcolonial critic, their apparently innocent plaints are in reality sinister proleptic elegies that articulate a barely disguised genocidal death wish (Brantlinger 3–4, 59, 86, 119, 142). Less extreme — but still negative in its connotation — is Susan Scheckel's verdict that the numerous laments for the vanishing Indian that pepper nineteenth-century American writing constitute a 'habit of thought' designed to 'assuage guilt and assure continuity in the face of change' (Scheckel 37). Mourning of this kind acknowledges the fact of indigenous extinction, but its goal, Scheckel argues, 'is to commit what is past to memory, to allow the mourner to move beyond it' (Scheckel 37). The laments examined in this article are, according to this line of reasoning, carefully crafted psychological tools used by settlers to lay to rest the troubling ghost of the indigene.

While not wishing to limit the plurality of interpretations capable of being generated by these or any texts, I believe such readings are cynical, since they effectively accuse settler writers of universal bad faith towards the indigenous peoples they encountered. Such an accusation is patronising to say the least; it posits the 'cultural obtuseness and imperialist complicity' Smit, for one, does not find in the works of many early colonial South African writers (Smit 13). Rather than being set up as easy targets for a blanket ideological condemnation, Pringle and the other settler poets discussed here should, I believe, be granted the moral seriousness that their often oppositional and subversive voices deserve. These voices formed a strand in a larger language of anti-imperial dissent which Christopher Hodgkins, in his study of British colonialism, has identified as characteristic of English Protestantism as, over several centuries, it contemplated the excesses of empire (Hodgkins 2, 8, 137–38, 193–94, 198–202, 241). The dismay these poets felt at the treatment of indigenous peoples was, I believe, sincere. If, ultimately, it produced a textual rather than a real justice, it created nevertheless moving statements of sorrow and outrage. Rather than the murmurings of a murderous anger, or tools to ease the burden of guilt, these statements should be seen for what they were: as an attempt to alert colonial settlers to the injustice being perpetrated in the midst of their societies, as an effort to make reparation — to say sorry, in

however inadequate a fashion — for the all-too-obvious destruction wrought on indigenous peoples by colonisation.<sup>13</sup>

Ventriloquising the suffering indigene, or writing about indigenous suffering in the third person, as the poems discussed here variously do, does nevertheless raise awkward questions for the modern reader. ‘Hugo’, Dunlop, Parkes, Pringle, Sigourney, Bryant and the other settler poets quoted above could never really know the indigenous peoples whose suffering they described; what right had they to speak for oppressed subaltern others positioned on the margins of colonial societies? In assimilating indigenes into a European literary discourse, were they not performing an act of appropriation, however well intentioned? In speaking for indigenous peoples the way they did — in representing them again and again as the passive recipients of settler contempt or violence, as depressed, dying or dead — were these poets not simply re-inscribing them as victims?

These are legitimate questions for modern critics, but not ones, I believe, that can be addressed to nineteenth-century writers. The poets discussed here were people of their time; conditioned by an ideology of cultural and religious superiority, and impelled by a strong sense of moral obligation, they did not doubt their right to speak for suffering indigenes — in fact they saw it as their duty. Presenting their suffering in terms of a European literary tradition of pathos and lament was indeed a kind of appropriation, but as the discussion above has shown, it was an effective way — perhaps, indeed, the only way — to convey this suffering and so move the sensibilities of middle-class British readers, as Peter Kitson has noted in relation to the Abolitionist discourse of the period (Kitson 25).

By the same token, the tendency to image indigenous peoples as passive recipients of settler violence, as depressed or dying or dead, can be seen as a realistic response to the often grim realities of settler society. Portraying the indigene as victor rather than victim, as active rather than passive, was not in fact unknown — see for example, Pringle’s ‘War Song of Makanna’, discussed above, or the striking encomium of ‘Honi Heki’ (Hone Heke) by Tasmanian poet Bassett Dickson, which figures the Maori chief as a brave patriot, successful in his defiance of the British government.<sup>14</sup> But such positive portrayals could never be more than exceptions, in the light of the overwhelming military and economic advantage enjoyed by colonial settlers.

Given the facts of colonisation, the ‘native’ songs and laments examined in this article should be seen as realistic responses to real conditions, rather than as pallid literary exercises, or sly vindications of colonisation (Ackland 20). Without these poems, the suffering indigene would have been silenced, not merely because of the practical fact that at this period very few indigenes could write English well enough to articulate their suffering in literary form, but because the constraining discourses of the era, whether benevolent or malign, would have made it impossible for the voice of the subaltern indigene to be heard, as Spivak has proposed in relation to another colonial context (Morton 57–68). Considered

from the standpoint of the modern academy, ventriloquising the suffering indigene, or even writing about his/her suffering in a more distant third person, might be considered patronising, or worse. It was, however, the only option available to nineteenth-century settler poets who were determined to eschew the collusion that silence would have entailed.

#### SPEAKING THE SUFFERING INDIGENE — AN AFTERWORD

The liberal, fundamentally humane note struck in these 'native' songs and laments did not last. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the development of a more punitive approach towards indigenous peoples, both in America and the colonies of the British Empire, as the development of social Darwinism and the impact of events such as the Indian Mutiny hardened racial attitudes (Stocking 92, 107). As a result, the kind of verse examined in this article more or less disappeared from the pages of newspapers and magazines. If indigenes were written about at all now, it was in the unreal, hyper-Romantic manner typified by Kendall in poems such as 'The Last of his Tribe', or in the dismissive, 'comic' satire of pieces such as 'Black Lizzie' and 'Peter the Piccaninny' (Kendall 1869 60–61, Kendall 1880 25–32, 104–10). It was a sad declension, for the earlier 'native' songs and laments, for all their undoubted ideological conditioning, had provided a space where a genuine outrage and sorrow at the treatment of indigenes could be articulated, demonstrating in the process a real sympathy for the suffering indigene and a capacity — naïve but well-intentioned — to recognise otherness in a positive sense. These qualities mark the poems discussed here as special, I believe, and suggest that they should be the subject of further study.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The critical literature on *Hiawatha* is vast. For recent discussion, see Carr pp. 101–46, Bellin pp. 175–82 and articles by Jackson and Lockard.
- <sup>2</sup> The verse of the more popular poets was sometimes collected and published in book form at a later date. See for example Pringle, whose *Ephemerides* (1828) and *African Sketches* (1834) gathered up poems published in a variety of colonial and missionary newspapers and magazines, or Sigoourney, whose *Poems* (1834; after 1838 *Selected Poems*) collected examples of the numerous casual and occasional pieces she had published in newspapers, journals and pamphlet form.
- <sup>3</sup> See for example Patrick Wolfe, who sees settler violence towards Aboriginal people as systemic to colonisation, which in its initial phase he judges as violently destructive of Aboriginal society (27–29).
- <sup>4</sup> Pringle actively campaigned for better treatment of South Africa's indigenous peoples. His *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* (1834) is a detailed catalogue of the abuses suffered by San, Khoikhoi and Bantu at the hands of white colonists.
- <sup>5</sup> See for example Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the Indian agent and early ethnographer of Native Americans, who did much to shape mid-nineteenth-century perceptions of 'the Indian'. In his poem *Alhalla*, Schoolcraft described Native Americans as 'a broken link in the ethnological chain' (1) doomed by God's decree 'to melt before the white man's face' (54).

- <sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the interest shown in the culture and psychology of Native Americans at this time, see Carr p. 17 and Fulford 2006 pp. 149–50.
- <sup>7</sup> For a full discussion of nineteenth-century ethnographic verse, see O’Leary 2007a, O’Leary 2007b and O’Leary 2008.
- <sup>8</sup> See for example Pringle’s ‘War Song of Makanna’, which contains lengthy notes by Pringle detailing what he saw as the treachery of the British authorities toward the Bantu chief, and which was bitterly resented by his fellow settlers (Brantlinger 83–84). See too Dunlop’s ‘The Aboriginal Mother’, which was published in support of a spirited campaign to convict the stockmen responsible for the Myall Creek massacre. For a detailed discussion of Dunlop’s poem, see O’Leary 2004.
- <sup>9</sup> For a full discussion of Sigourney’s poem, see Brandon.
- <sup>10</sup> For detail about American missionary endeavours in southern Africa, and the extensive connections at this period between British and American missionary societies, see Porter pp. 351–57.
- <sup>11</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Dunlop’s place in this tradition, see O’Leary 2004.
- <sup>12</sup> Where a suffering indigenous mother was absent, she was sometimes created for the occasion, for example, by Dunlop. For discussion, see O’Leary 2004.
- <sup>13</sup> For a fuller discussion of the need to make reparation towards indigenous peoples, see Carr pp. 20–21.
- <sup>14</sup> Dickson’s poem compares Heke to a hero of ancient Greece (10), attributing to him Homeric qualities of courage and martial prowess (22). The main models for the Maori chief are in fact the revolutionary European nationalists of the 1840s (12).

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