6. Photography, authenticity and Victoria's *Aborigines Protection Act* (1886)

Jane Lydon

As Darwinism took hold among the global scientific community during the 1860s and 1870s, visitors to Australia such as the Darwinist Enrico Giglioli (in 1867) and Anatole von Hügel (in 1874) followed a well-beaten path around Victoria. Under the auspices of colonial officials such as Robert Brough Smyth and Ferdinand von Mueller, they pursued authentic Indigeneity and Aboriginal 'data' including photographs, which subsequently played an important role within their arguments about Aboriginal identity and capacity. This paper examines how photographs became a powerful form of evidence for Aboriginal people, in turn shaping global debates about human history and what Tony Bennett has termed the 'archaeological gaze' that characterised a new scientific world view.¹ In addition, given the dual interests of many colonial figures both in administering Aboriginal policy and in recording Indigenous culture, local applications of such ideas were influential in debates about managing Koories across the Victorian reserve system. In particular, emergent theories and their visualisation shaped policies, management procedures and legislation such as the *Aborigines Protection Act 1886* (Vic).

In this chapter I make two related arguments: I show first how the experience of visiting scientists to Victoria during the late nineteenth century, especially at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, shaped and was shaped by their view of Indigenous Australians and racial difference. Such experiences, and the visual records they produced, in turn affected larger schemes of human origins and progress. Second, I explore how such imagery in turn reinforced hardening notions of biological race, and assisted local administrators such as the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in arguing for specific notions of Aboriginality, eventually expressed in the 1886 'Half-Caste Act'.

These issues are exemplified by the work of German-born photographer Fred Kruger, who worked in Victoria over the second half of the nineteenth century, and that of the Italian Darwinist Enrico Giglioli, who visited Australia in 1867. Giglioli subsequently wrote two books about Australian Aboriginal people, and his work demonstrates both the impact of the theory of natural selection outside Britain and the global importance of Australian data – particularly imagery – in establishing the evolutionist schema.²

1 Tony Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism*, Routledge, London, 2004: 39.

2 For a comprehensive overview of Kruger's life and works, see Isobel Crombie, *Fred Kruger: Intimate Landscapes, Photographs 1860s – 1880s*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2011. For detailed consideration of Giglioli's career and impact see Jane Lydon, "'Veritable Apollos': Aesthetics, evolution, and Enrico Giglioli's photographs of

Australian Aboriginal people had played a significant role in Western conceptions of progress and civilisation since first contact with Europeans. Following publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859, such ideas only strengthened. By the early 1860s, scientific observers believed that the pace of extinction had accelerated and that several races, such as the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, were on the verge of disappearance. Scientific interest in Australian Aboriginal people stemmed from the view that living Indigenous societies provided evidence for prehistoric human life, and that Australians were survivors from humankind's earliest stages. Thomas Henry Huxley was the first to draw this ethnographic parallel in his 1863 exploration of 'man's place in nature', one of the first applications of Darwinism to humankind.

Figures such as Huxley, and archaeologists John Lubbock and Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers, were central to the emergence of a new scientific world view based on limitless 'vistas of time'. This new, shared understanding across archaeology and other disciplines (geology, palaeontology, anthropology) of a 'continuous unfolding of the past into the present' called forth intellectual procedures such as retrospective deduction.³ Crucial in this shift was the development of a systematic method for reading the past on the basis of the physical qualities of the artefact – what became known as the typological or comparative method – providing a new 'grammar for spatialising and temporalising the past'.⁴

Figure 1: 'Skeletons of the Gibbon. Orang. Chimpanzee. Gorilla. Man.'
TH Huxley.

Source: TH Huxley, *On the Relations of Man to the Lower Animals*, 1909: 50.

Indigenous Australians 1867–78', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 2013: 72–96.

³ Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*: 39.

⁴ Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*: 43.

An important dimension of this approach was the development of a distinctive visual rhetoric by influential figures such as Huxley and Pitt Rivers, which became the basic structure of natural history displays, showing successive linear transformation into increasing larger, more developed forms. Within this schema, the abstract concept of a human 'racial type' came to be seen as having concrete form, and although its definition was in fact highly subjective, anatomical measurement, especially of skulls, was seen as an objective means of classification and comparison. Increasingly, scientists across a range of disciplines advocated the application of the comparative method to humankind using the photographic 'portrait type', which made an abstract sense of human variation observable and real.⁵

Exchange between European theorists and colonial correspondents centred upon the procurement of Indigenous bodies and the interpretation of their supposed racial characteristics, and there was widespread agreement that Aboriginal bodies would provide evidence for 'ancestral relations between races that over time had come to exhibit morphologically distinct physical and psychological characteristics'.⁶ By the 1860s, technological developments within photography made portraits of Indigenous people available in the form of *cartes de visite*, produced by professional photographers as well as amateur practitioners. This availability contrasted strongly with the rarity of Australian artefacts and anatomical specimens. By 1870 Museum Godeffroy curator Schmeltz noted that skulls and skeletons from Australia were some of the rarest objects in Europe.⁷

Enrico Hillyer Giglioli (1845–1909) was a zoologist and anthropologist who is remembered as a founding figure of Italian science, as an early scientific observer, and as an avid institutional collector. His research regarding marine vertebrates and invertebrates, and to a lesser extent, birds, continues to be cited in these

5 Elizabeth Edwards, 'Evolving images: photography, race and popular Darwinism', in Diana Donald and Jane Munro (eds), *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts*, Fitzwilliam Museum, and Yale Center for British Art, Cambridge, 2009: 169.

6 Paul Turnbull, 'British anthropological thought in colonial practice: the appropriation of Indigenous Australian bodies, 1860–1880,' in Bronwyn Douglas and Chris Ballard (eds), *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750–1940*, ANU E Press, Canberra, 2008: 212.

7 Thomas Theye, "'... ein Blick für alles Bemerkenswerthe ...'" – einige wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Aspekte der Queensland-Photographien Amalie Dietrichs in der anthropologischen Sammlung des Museums Godeffroy', *Jahrbuch des Museums für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig*, Bd. 42, 2004, S. 161–280. Mit 46 Abbildungs-Tafeln.

fields.⁸ Scholars have also noted his legacy in the form of extensive natural history and ethnographic collections in Florence and Rome, as well as the objects he gave in exchange, now housed within institutions around the world.⁹

Figure 2: Enrico Hillyer Giglioli. [19--] photograph: b&w; 10.7 x 8.2 cm. Part of GM Mathews collection of portraits of ornithologists [picture], 1900–1949.

Source: National Library of Australia.

8 For example, Hitoshi Ida, Makoto Okamoto and Jiro Sakaue, 'Epigonus cavaticus (Teleostei: Perciformes), a new epigonid fish from Palau, western Central Pacific', *Ichthyological Research* 54(2), 2007: 131–136; G Bearzi, RR Reeves, G Notarbartolo-di Sciara, E Politi, N Cañadas, A Frantzis and B Mussi, 'Ecology, status and conservation of short-beaked common dolphins *Delphinus delphis* in the Mediterranean Sea', *Mammal Review* 33(3), 2003: 224–252.

9 For example, BJ Gill, 'The Cheeseman-Giglioli correspondence, and museum exchanges between Auckland and Florence, 1877–1904', *Archives of Natural History* 37(1), 2010: 131–149; ES Tiberini, 'Plains Indians artifacts in the E. H. Giglioli Collection of the Pigorini Museum in Rome', *European Review of Native American Studies* 4(2), 1990: 41–44.

His documentation of the Florence collection of artefacts collected on Cook's voyages also continues to be cited.¹⁰ However, in sharp contrast to the work of many nineteenth-century British scientists, Giglioli's accounts of Australian Aboriginal people, comprising two books illustrated with engravings, and associated archival and photographic documentation, have not been closely examined by Anglophone historians.

Giglioli attended the National College and Technical Institute in Pavia, and the Royal School of Mines in London at age 16, where he pursued his studies in natural science with Charles Lyell, Richard Owen and Thomas Henry Huxley between 1861 and 1863. As well as these links with British science, he was closely integrated into Italian networks, his father holding the first Italian Chair of Anthropology, instituted at the University of Pavia in 1860.

Returning to Italy in 1864, he attended lectures by Filippo De Filippi (1814–1867), who introduced Darwin's *Origin of Species* to Italy in that year, and established a department of comparative anatomy at Turin, perhaps the first in the new Kingdom of Italy to embrace the theory of evolution. Darwinism was rapidly taken up by Italian naturalists, and was widely influential across a range of disciplines. In 1865, De Filippi invited his student to accompany him on a proposed trip to circumnavigate the world, the 1865–1868 diplomatic and naturalists' expedition of the Italian warship, *Magenta*. However, Giglioli was forced to take over from his teacher when De Filippi died in Hong Kong in 1867.

Giglioli arrived in Melbourne in May 1867 and set out in search of 'authentic' Indigenous Australians. He visited Parliament and then the Mines Office, where he met its Chief Secretary and keen ethnologist, Robert Brough Smyth: 'He told me that the aborigines, of whom I had seen only a couple of miserable individuals in the streets of Melbourne, had almost disappeared from the neighbourhood of the city and the other centres of settlement', and advised him to visit the Coranderrk Aboriginal station, and then to go to Geelong, or Echuca on the River Murray, where Aboriginal people might be seen 'still in an almost independent state'.¹¹ He followed this advice, but was disappointed to encounter in the streets of Echuca 'troops of Aborigines', poorly dressed and intoxicated, who had gathered for the distribution of blankets.

10 See, for example, Adrienne L. Kaeppler (ed.), *Cook Voyage Artifacts in Leningrad, Berne, and Florence Museums*, Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1978.

11 Enrico Hillyer Giglioli, *Viaggio intorno al globo della r. pirocorvetta italiana Magenta negli anni 1865-66-67-68*, Maisner, Milano, 1875: 750.

He had greater success in Jaenganya, west of Echuca, and then Moama, where he 'had the pleasure on my walk of running into a family of aborigines who had kept their native appearance rather more', who were going from Lake Moira to Echuca. He described the scene and their camp, including their spears, skin cloaks and gunyahs, concluding that 'the scene was highly typical and amply rewarded me for my long journey'.¹²

Figure 3: Engravings 'Indigeni dei dintorni del lago Moira, New South Wales. – (Da fotografie.)' [Aborigines from the environs of Lake Moira, NSW (From a photograph).]

Source: EH Giglioli, *Viaggio intorno al globo della r. piroscafo italiana Magenta negli anni 1865-66-67-68*, Maisner, Milano, 1875: 772.

Excited and impressed by his first bona fide encounter with Indigenous people, Giglioli obtained a series of *cartes de visite* by Melbourne-based travelling photographer Thomas Jetson Washbourne (some via the Italian Consul, Cavalière Giuseppe Biagi), that were the basis for some of his published engravings.¹³

¹² Giglioli, *Viaggio intorno al globo*: 773–774.

¹³ These are held in the Pigorini, Rome, accession 4161. For identification as Dhudhuroa I thank Indigenous Elder Gary Murray for his advice.

Figure 4: 'Australiani della tribù di Moama & Echuca sul fiume Murray. Dono del comm. G. Biagi 1872 ed acq. a Melbourne Maggio 1867. Enrico H Giglioli.' (Australians of the Moama and Echuca tribes, on the river Murray. Donated by Consul G. Biagi 1872, acquired in Melbourne May 1867).

Source: National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography 'Luigi Pigorini', Rome.

These are held in the Pigorini, Rome. While this would make the subjects Yorta Yorta people, the woman is identified in Australian collections such as the State Library of Victoria as belonging to the 'Barwidgee Tribe', and so is rather affiliated with the Dhudhuroa. Following a well-beaten path, Giglioli took botanist Baron Ferdinand von Mueller's advice and went to Coranderrk, only 41 miles from the city, then numbering around 100 residents, of whom he noted: 'They occupied one good house (for young adolescents) and fairly well-maintained shacks, the inside walls of which were in most cases papered with cuttings from English and Australian illustrated journals, and photographs, greatly prized by these people.'¹⁴

He made his own photographic portraits of six of the residents. These included Derrimut (or Derremart or Terrimoot) (c.1810 – 28 May 1864), who was a headman or *arweet* of the Boonwurrung people. He fought in the late 1850s and early 1860s to protect Boonwurrung rights to live on their land at Mordialloc reserve. When the reserve was closed in July 1863, his people were forced to unite with the remnants of Woiwurrung and other Victorian Aboriginal communities and to settle at Coranderrk. Derrimut became very disillusioned and died in a Benevolent Asylum at about 54 years of age in 1864.

Giglioli noted that: 'Later I received from Dr Mueller an almost complete collection of photographic portraits of the aborigines and halfbloods living at Coranderrk which has been very useful to me in recalling my impressions.' This well-known series, originally comprising 104 portraits, was produced by botanical collector and photographer Charles Walter in 1865 in preparation for the 1867 Paris International Exposition.¹⁵ Although lacking scientific utility, these Victorian portraits were the foundation of Giglioli's collection of Australian photographic 'types', as I explore further.

On his return to Florence, Giglioli wrote up the zoology of the voyage of the *Magenta*, and in 1869 began to lecture in this field. Giglioli was to enjoy a long and distinguished academic career, becoming director of the Royal Zoological Museum in Florence in 1876. Like his mentor, Thomas Henry Huxley, marine vertebrates and invertebrates were his central research interest, but he was also a noted amateur ornithologist and photographer, and continued his research in the developing discipline of anthropology. In 1892, Frederick Starr of the University of Chicago surveyed the international anthropological scene and singled out Mantegazza and Giglioli as the two foremost Italian anthropologists of the day.

¹⁴ Giglioli, *Viaggia intorno al globo*: 773.

¹⁵ Jane Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2005.

Figure 5: 'Australiani della Victoria, tribù Yarra-Yarra. Acq. A Melbourne 1867. Enrico H Giglioli.' (Australians of Victoria, of the Yarra-Yarra tribe. Acquired in Melbourne 1867).

Source: National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography 'Luigi Pigorini', Rome.

Figure 6: 'Portraits of Aboriginal Natives Settled at Coranderrk, near Healesville; about 42 miles from Melbourne. Upper Yarra. Also Views of the Station & Lubras Basket-Making.' Charles Walter, Panel, 1866.

Source: State Library of Victoria.

Two books remain the major sources for Giglioli's Australian experiences and research: *I Tasmaniani: Cenni storici ed etnologici di un popolo estinto* (*The Tasmanians: The History and Ethnology of an Extinct People*) published in 1874,¹⁶ and the following year *Viaggio intorno al globo della r. pirocorvetta italiana Magenta negli anni 1865–66–67–68* (*Voyage Around the Globe on the Magenta*), with an ethnological introduction by the 'founder' of Italian anthropology, Paolo Mantegazza. These works express his profound engagement with European debates about race and humankind and the work of prominent scientists who had theorised about Australian data, as well as revealing an extensive knowledge of the Australian literature. As a zoologist, Giglioli's research relied upon the comparative method, an investigative philosophy that was well-established by the early nineteenth century, and which was an important plank underpinning Darwin's theory of evolution.

What was distinctive about Giglioli's account of mainland Aboriginal people in *Voyage Around the Globe* was his innovative use of photographic imagery

¹⁶ This book was based on a lengthy article he had contributed to the first volume of the *Archivio per l'Antropologia e la Etnologia* in 1871, the journal of the new Società Italiana di Antropologia e di Etnologia.

to argue against more senior colleagues such as French anthropologist Paul Topinard. His early application of the comparative method to the new medium argued for homogeneity within the Australian mainland population, as well as its distinctiveness, on the basis of photographic portraits. Giglioli's primary aim was to demonstrate sameness, or the 'ethnic unity', of Indigenous Australians, and to this end Giglioli drew upon his extensive scientific networks in assembling a collection of photographs of Aboriginal people from across Australia. As an evolutionist, for Giglioli, variations between the 'various strains of Australian Aborigines [*gentil*]' were determined by adaptation to environment – for example suggesting that good nourishment produced a fairer skin.¹⁷

Giglioli's research was influential in disseminating ideas across Italy about social Darwinism and human adaptation to environment. He closely engaged with British theories and the growing perception at this time that Indigenous Australians were an important element in the story of human origins. The 1860s was a decade of great visual ferment and photography was used to great effect in catering to European popular and scientific demand for Indigenous 'data' from the expanding frontier. Photography was a means of naturalising ideas about race and culture as Darwinism became scientific orthodoxy over the following decades. However, understanding the thought of scientists such as Giglioli works to undermine modernist scientific concepts of race by tracing the concept's normalisation and the ambivalence of visual meaning during the mid-nineteenth century, with the effect of revealing the contingency of racial categories in the present.

Fred Kruger at Coranderrk

My second example is the work of a German-born photographer, Johan Friedrich Carl Kruger, who went to Coranderrk during the 1870s and 1880s. During this decade, ideas about race began to narrow and harden, a transition traced by Friederich Kruger's more than 160 photographs of Coranderrk spanning almost two decades, which circulated as newspaper engravings, official and commercial albums, and as anthropological data, generating a wide range of sometimes competing meanings. This was an intensely political decade, and contradictory ideas about Aboriginality focused public attention on Coranderrk as a test case for Aboriginal policy – the humanitarian reformists supported the residents and their demands, opposing those seeking to close the station and resume its valuable farm lands.

17 Giglioli, *Viaggia intorno al globo*: 796.

Kruger's first photographs of Coranderrk appeared in the colonial illustrated newspapers, showing Aboriginal people undergoing cultural transformation – scenes of hop pickers, a fishing holiday or cricket. What is remarkable about these images and distinguishes them particularly from contemporary representations of a 'doomed race' is that they show Aboriginal survival. Gurindji photographer Brenda Croft, for example, sees them as reflecting Kruger's personal interest in and sympathy for the residents' situation, and she considers that 'he was closest to honestly depicting a rapidly changing lifestyle, and Aboriginal peoples' adaptation to those changes'.¹⁸ They reveal Aboriginal industry and vitality; change here could be understood as progress, with the implication of a hopeful future.

Aboriginal idylls

Kruger's picturesque views of Coranderrk stressed harmony, productivity and peace, assuring viewers of the residents' appropriation of a rural peasant lifestyle – as in one of Kruger's best-known images, the idyllic 'Fishing scene at Badger's Creek'. Engraved versions of this photograph appeared at least twice in early 1878, titled 'The Hop Paddock, Coranderrk, Victoria, from Badger Creek', and accompanied by an optimistic account of the Station, as an attempt 'to prevent the extinction of the aboriginal race', and teach 'habits of order and industry'.

Figure 7: 'Badger's Creek at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, c.1870–78', Fred Kruger.

Source: Museum Victoria XP 1934.

¹⁸ Brenda L Croft, 'Laying ghosts to rest', *Portraits of Oceania*, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1997: 13.

Figure 8: 'The Hop Paddock, Coranderrk, Victoria, from Badger Creek', *Illustrated Australian News*, January 1878, front page.

Source: National Library of Australia.

While stressing progress towards civilisation and discipline, almost despite itself the text dwells upon the Arcadian quality of this moment, describing how the Aboriginal workforce

are allowed occasional holidays, one of which they are enjoying as presented to our view. On such occasions there is no issue of rations, but that is immaterial, as the creek abounds with fish, and the aboriginals are expert anglers, and find no difficulty in supplying themselves with an ample quantity of food in a short time.¹⁹

Kruger was drawn to 'thoroughly domesticated' landscapes, unlike contemporaries such as Nicholas Caire and JW Lindt, who sought out scenes of picturesque wilderness such as the giant tree ferns and ash forests of the Dandenongs. Like 'Coast scene, Mordialloc Creek, Cheltenham', the Coranderrk 'fishing scene' is a gentle, lyrical celebration of Australian leisure.²⁰ 'Fishing scene' signals the advent of Aboriginal people enjoying an ideally tranquil, harmonious relationship with each other and with the landscape, yet clearly

¹⁹ *Illustrated Australian News*, 1 January 1878: 10.

²⁰ Isobel Crombie, *Victorian Views: Photographs of the Landscape 1850s–1920s*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1995: 4.

not leading a 'traditional', pre-colonial way of life. Their closeness to nature was emphasised, but at the same time, the fishing 'holiday' encouraged the 'sable labourers to persevere in habits of order and industry': the subjects' 'civilisation', marked, for example, by their European dress and their diligence, is the framing trope of the text.

In April, the *Illustrated Australian News* featured two scenes from Coranderrk's new hop industry based on Kruger photographs, titled 'The Hop kilns, Coranderrk' and 'The Hop grounds – Dinner Hour'.²¹

Hop cultivation became a particularly appealing theme at this time, representing an archetype of rural picturesqueness, and evoking a sense of nostalgia for the pre-industrial, European lifestyle it recalled. Scenes of hop-picking remained a popular subject in the colony's illustrated newspapers and tourist guides throughout the century. As one Melbourne writer mused,

the mere association of ideas recalls the charming fields of Kent and the pleasant scenes of harvest time ... It is the season of rejoicing. Bustle and animation is discernible on every hand. Nature never looks so beautiful and benignant. She pours forth with unstinted hand her barn of plenty, and all the land smiles like a garden full of the choicest products.²²

Figure 9: 'Hop Gardens at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, c.1870s', Fred Kruger.

Source: Museum Victoria XP 1933.

21 *Illustrated Australian News*, 18 April 1876: 52. See also MV XP 1932 which shows 'Hop Gardens at Coranderrk', a similar scene to XP 1933.

22 *Illustrated Australian News*, 31 March 1886.

To homesick immigrant eyes, hop-picking seemed the archetypal scene of European plenty. Settlers' nostalgia for home, combined with their own experience of the colony's rapid growth, gave a particular local inflection and poignancy to a larger modernist consciousness of loss amid a fast-changing world. This nostalgic sensibility, often couched in older, pastoral, terms, was a defining characteristic of Western responses to the effects of industrial capitalism from the early nineteenth century, as observers lamented the destruction of the natural environment and the rustic order.²³ For colonists, Melbourne's astonishing growth, particularly following the discovery of gold in the early 1850s, invoked a sense of dizzying change, as industry and progress flourished in what some colonists still remembered to have been a pristine wilderness peopled by 'savages'. It was an 'instant city' whose swelling population threatened to outrun government control, and many feared that the forces of chaos and anarchy would prevail.²⁴

A vision of agrarian stability was advanced against the uncertainty and fluctuations of gold-seeking, praising the moral value of the small farmer embedded in a fixed social hierarchy.²⁵ The increasingly urban population found refreshment in the picturesque Gippsland lakes, and the rainforests of the Dandenongs, and especially enjoyed arcadian scenes of 'pioneer' farmers leading productive lives of simplicity and contentment.²⁶

For a moment, in Kruger's picturesque views, a vision of Aboriginal arcadia flickered into existence, impelled perhaps by local humanitarians' hopes for their future, but also underwritten by an older European aesthetic. The notion of Aboriginal villages – combining European agrarian ideal with traditional skills such as fishing, involving above all a closeness to nature, assumed the form of an idyll, a charming scene of rural peace.

23 Christopher Wood, *Paradise Lost: Paintings of English Country Life and Landscape 1850–1914*, Barrie & Jenkins, London, 1988; Christiana Payne, *Toil and Plenty: Images of the Agricultural Landscape in England, 1780–1890*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1993: 27–28.

24 David Goodman, 'Making an edgier history of gold', in Iain McCalman and Andrew Reeves (eds), *Tailings: Forgotten Histories and Lost Artefacts of Australian Gold*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2001: 23–36; Graeme Davison, 'Gold-Rush Melbourne', in *Tailings: Forgotten Histories and Lost Artefacts of Australian Gold*, 2001; Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1978.

25 Goodman, *Gold Seeking*: 105–148.

26 See for example Tanjil, *Our Trip to Gippsland Lakes and Rivers, with new tourist's map, in colour*, ML Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1882.

However, as critics of the rustic idyll have often pointed out, its apparent peace and plenty were a fantasy of the disenchanted modern viewer, signifying a rural stability which had in fact long been disrupted by urbanisation and industrialisation.²⁷ British observers pointed out that the apparent harmony of hop-picking, in particular, masked its use of itinerant urban labour and its associations with vagrancy, promoting the old myths of rural happiness despite prevailing circumstances of social unrest and poverty.²⁸

Kruger's tranquil Aboriginal arcadias also worked to disguise the dispossession of the Indigenous people, expressing the humanitarians' vision of Coranderk as idyll, in which the residents would lead productive Christian lives as the colony's rural peasantry. But peaceful scenes of hop-picking were misleading as evidence for the community's stability, as I discuss further.

For example, although a commercial success, the demands of the hop-field and the constant attempts of the Board to hire European labour became a problem for the Aboriginal residents and their supporters, forcing them to work for profit rather than their own subsistence. More importantly, Kruger's views appealed to a yearning for return to a lost world of peace and harmony with nature, excluding as they do any reference to everyday modernity as experienced by the urban readers of Melbourne's newspapers. They constructed a fantasy which located the Aboriginal subjects in a country retreat, secluded from the present and its conflicts, denying their battle for autonomy.

Visual movement, a temporal narrative

Images such as 'fishing scene' also work in specifically photographic ways to affect the viewer. Kruger's views embody photography's mimetic impulse, creating an embodied sense of movement to embrace the object of vision, and constructing an intimate, domestic relationship with their subjects. The remarkable depth of field evident in many of Kruger's 'views', and notably in 'Badgers Creek, Fishing Scene', prompts a similar engagement with the image, a sense of movement beyond the picture's surface, into its heart. Kruger created this effect using a small aperture and short focal length, as well as the large plate format available by this time.

27 As early as 1856, George Eliot noted that 'idyllic literature' had always 'expressed the imagination of the cultivated and town-bred, rather than the truth of rustic life'. George Eliot, 'The natural history of German life', *Westminster Review*, 1856, reprinted in T Pinney (ed.), *Essays of George Eliot*, London, 1963; Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1973: 30–71.

28 See, for example, Payne, *Toil and Plenty*; Anne Janowitz, 'The Chartist picturesque', in S Copley and P Garside (eds), *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994: 261–281.

When we look at nineteenth-century photographs we should remember that what appears to be a flattened space stripped of perspectival depth was in fact often intended to be viewed stereoscopically, and even in the process of consuming still photographs, the 1870s viewer would willingly have succumbed to the magic of verisimilitude. Rosalind Krauss argues that the sensation of refocusing the eyes within the image, re-coordinating the eyes to fix on different points, is a 'kinesthetic counterpart to the sheerly optical illusion of the stereograph ... [a] physio-optical traversal of the stereo field';²⁹ like cinema, the isolated viewer is transported optically by a sensation of physical movement, travelling into the image.

As the viewer gazes, time passes almost imperceptibly, and the many complex elements of place, action and character begin to suggest a story.³⁰ Poring over a photograph is like diagnosing an illness, trying to understand the hidden story concealed by its surface. The spatio-temporal dimension opened up tells us of the people, their association and purpose, their relationship to the landscape. It tells a story of domestication, its Aboriginal fishers living in natural harmony with the landscape and each other. Although drawing the Aboriginal subjects into an intimate and familiar relationship with the viewer, this took a fundamentally paternal form, prompting a narrative which linked humanitarian hopes for an Aboriginal future to a nostalgic return to a European past.

Photographing Coranderrk's rebellion

However, in the context of local debates about the station's management, which prompted Aboriginal protest, government intervention, and widespread public interest, Kruger's views also participated in increasingly contested narratives about Coranderrk; on the one hand, that Aboriginal people were becoming successful peasant farmers, or alternatively that they were helpless children who needed to be controlled and disciplined, yet whose impurity rendered them unworthy of protection. This local conflict effectively ensured the destruction of the Aboriginal idyll, and in the eyes of their white audience, the residents' fall from grace.

Coranderrk's rebellion came to public attention in early 1876, when a headline in *The Age*, 'Coranderrk Hop Farm: Mr Green and Mr R. Brough Smyth', told a fascinated public about the authoritarian and unjust treatment of the residents, and their much-loved manager Green, by the Board. This was particularly

29 Rosalind Krauss, 'Photography's discursive spaces', in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985: 133, 136–137.

30 R Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections of Photography*, Vintage, London, 1993: 99.

newsworthy because only weeks before, the Board's secretary, Brough Smyth, had been suspended from his position as head of the mining department for his bizarrely dictatorial work practices.

However, this was just the first shot in the battle over the station's future; although hop cultivation had been a commercial success under the management of John Green and the Kulin, it became a problem in diverting resources away from basic subsistence and maintenance of the settlement, and to improve profits the Board sought to hire white labour. When the hop income was diverted to central revenue, the Board lost any incentive to support the station, and began to push to close it down.

Residents allied with humanitarian supporters (such as the Reverend Hamilton and wealthy philanthropist Anne Bon), agitated to work their lands without outside interference, and to protect their home. In the developing conflict between the Board and residents, personal links with the major newspapers – the reformist *Age* as well as the conservative *Argus* – in turn allied to opposed political factions, saw their arguments translated into polemical feature articles, attracting a wide readership and articulating different ideas about Aboriginality.³¹ A pro-Green view emerges strongly from an April 1876 review of the hops industry, giving him credit for its success, referring sympathetically to Green 'himself having been discharged under what many may hold to be rather harsh circumstances'.³² Kruger's images expressed the humanitarian vision of a hard-working agrarian community, domesticating their industrious, orderly Aboriginal subjects and incorporating the settlement into a stable colonial hierarchy.

Before and after: Board commission 1877–78

Perhaps it was the domestic quality of Kruger's first photographs from Coranderrk that prompted the Board to employ Kruger at a key political moment, as the residents' opposition to the Board and its goal of closing the station reached a climax. Between mid-1877 and mid-1878, Kruger was commissioned to produce a series of Coranderrk portraits.

31 Elizabeth Morrison, 'Black Wednesday 1878 and "the manufacture of public opinion" in pre-Federation Victoria', in A Curthoys and J Schultz (eds), *Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999: 36–55.

32 *Illustrated Australian News*, 18 April 1876: 52.

The residents' political campaign ranged from strikes and disputes within the station, to writing letters and petitions and even sending deputations walking 41 miles down to Melbourne to speak directly to Chief Secretary Graham Berry. As a result, in early 1877, a Royal Commission was appointed. It focused on future policy for the so-called 'half-castes' amid widespread criticism of the humanitarian segregationist position, and demands for assimilation. The Royal Commission endorsed the view of the Board at this time, that the so-called 'half-castes' lacked the capability to live independently of the stations, largely because of white prejudice. It recommended retention of the station.³³

So at this crucial moment, in response to public criticism and accusations of poor management, the Board mounted its own public relations campaign, aware of the need to represent itself in a positive light. It introduced a system of Visitors Books,³⁴ and commissioned a series of 36 photographs of the model Ramahyuck mission, in Gippsland.³⁵ Kruger's Coranderrk commission must have been conceived as part of this propaganda-gathering exercise, intended to lend weight to Board arguments regarding its effective management. Unlike the exemplary Ramahyuck, Coranderrk's appearance had by this time begun to attract criticism,³⁶ so instead of showing the settlement itself, Kruger recorded the progress the Aboriginal subjects had made, producing a sequence of portraits of 'civilised', well-cared-for residents.

But in this series Kruger created a structural relationship between individuals dressed in simulated 'traditional' garb, and those showing the same person in 'modern', European dress, prompting a narrative of evolutionary change. They suggest the effectiveness of the work of civilising through the juxtaposition of these opposed material and visual signs. While we do not know the original sequence of the images, this pairing is particularly consistent with respect to the adult women, such as Annie Reece. Annie Reece is also shown seated in an indoor studio setting, with her children and her husband James Reece, in a typical studio portrait pose.

33 Victoria, Royal Commission on the Aborigines (1877). 'Report of the Commissioners ... together with Minutes of Evidence': xii.

34 'expecting these to be useful propaganda in reflecting the views of observers who already had a kindly interest in the welfare of Aboriginal people'. Board for the Protection of the Aborigines Minute Book, 4 September 1878, National Australian Archives (NAA), Series B314, Item 3.

35 Coral Dow, "'In search of the picturesque': Aborigines and tourists in nineteenth century Gippsland', *Journal of Tourism, Culture and Communication* 2, 2000: 111–122.

36 The 1877 inquiry concluded that 'Greater attention might not improperly be paid to the appearance of the area surrounding the settlement – no effort has as yet been made in this direction. The effect of tidiness, and *per contra* of untidiness, on the Aboriginal mind is most important; the inculcation of tidiness forms part of civilization as well as discipline.' Royal Commission on the Aborigines (1877): x–xi.

Figure 10: 'Annie Rees and child at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, c.1875-76', Fred Kruger.

Source: Museum Victoria XP 1788.

Figure 11: 'Annie Rees with her children, Maryann and Charlotte, at Coranderk Aboriginal Station, c.1876–77', Fred Kruger.

Source: Museum Victoria XP 1787.

Others make the same transition. In all, there are 26 such pairings which conform to this formulation, and as a result, viewing the series prompts a narrative movement, as a specific, oppositional relationship is created between the uncivilised 'native', on the one hand, and the docile subject making satisfactory progress towards a European lifestyle on the other. Overall, however, a majority of portraits show the subjects in European dress. Of course by this time none of the residents would willingly have removed their clothes, being well aware of how they were viewed by whites.³⁷ The residents' concern to present a reputable appearance in this case coincided with the Board's.

37 In 1870 Robert Brough Smyth had refused TH Huxley's request for anthropometric data, stating that the Victorian Aboriginal people were 'not sufficiently enlightened to submit themselves in a state of nudity for portraiture in order to assist the advancement of Science. Indeed, they are careful in the matter of clothing, and if I empowered a photographer to visit the stations and take photographs with Professor Huxley's instructions in his hand, he would I am sure offend the Aborigines and meet with little success.' Letter from R Brough Smyth to the Chief Secretary, 17 May 1870, Office of the Central Board for Aborigines, Melbourne. Government House Adelaide, Huxley Papers, Imperial College London, Vol. XVI. Notes and Correspondence. Anthropology. Vol. 1. f. 117.

Figure 12: 'Sambo and Mooney at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, c.1875', Fred Kruger.

Source: Museum Victoria XP 1803.

Men such as Edward Mooney, appearing in one portrait with Matilda and their son, are also shown in traditional dress. The emphasis on weapons and fighting as exemplified by outdoor views of staged opponents holding clubs and boomerangs underlines the theme of savagery in these 'before' shots. However, there are a large number of exceptions to this evolutionary formulation. Portraits of men are not as consistently organised as those of women: men tend rather to be shown in *either* traditional *or* European dress, as if they had not bothered to change their clothes for Kruger. Tommy Avoca, for example, photographed 'indoors' in a suit, as well as in traditional attire outside, holds a boomerang

in both. Yet various contestations should be seen in the context of the political activism of the people of Coranderrk, which was producing political results at precisely this time.

'Real natives': Board commission 1883

Their campaign was successful in prompting another, parliamentary, inquiry into Coranderrk's management in mid-1881, reflecting the great interest the case aroused among the general public. Ominously however, the commissioners focused particularly upon the status of the so-called 'half-castes', perceived by some since the mid-1870s to be basically different from so-called 'full-blood' Aboriginal people.

Despite the 1877 Royal Commission's decision not to send 'half-castes' out to work, Board officials began to push for this policy, and it was provisionally adopted – for boys – in January 1879.³⁸ Yet even while the parliamentary inquiry was underway in late 1881, the Board fiercely debated this issue, its annual report arguing that 'half-castes' while 'sharp and cunning enough in small matters' would be unable to compete within settler society.³⁹ At this time, many observers noted that Coranderrk had a large 'half-caste' population, and critics attributed the unrest at the station to their influence; it became increasingly common to argue that the 'full-bloods' alone had a claim to government support, even by humanitarian supporters.

The inquiry criticised Board management of the station and recommended its retention. However, it also recommended that while the 'full-bloods' should be supported at the station, the 'halfcastes and quadroons' should be encouraged to leave to seek work as servants and labourers. This policy would subsidise Aboriginal support, and address the colony's labour shortage – but crucially, assimilation of the 'half-castes' into the white population would also solve the Board's problems in controlling these rebellious people.⁴⁰ Under strong official pressure the Board immediately began to formalise this policy.⁴¹

38 Diane Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, Laura E Barwick and Richard E Barwick (eds), Aboriginal History Inc., Canberra, 1998: 166.

39 Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, *Seventeenth Report*; July 1881 Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, 'Minutes', 6 July 1881, NAA Series B 315, Box 1, Item 1.

40 Michael Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria, 1835–86*, University of Sydney Press, Sydney, 1979: 194–98, 199–201.

41 The Chief Secretary, writing in December 1882 to the Board, directed them to reconsider their opposition to hiring out young 'half-caste' women, noting that '[t]he Chief Secretary desires the Board will be so good as to again consider the matter, more especially in regard to the half-castes and guardians of both sexes.' 15 December 1882, NAA, B 313, Item 201. A conference in August 1882 aimed to formulate such a policy: Report of the Managers' Conference, 18 August 1882, NAA, Series B313, Box 13, item 229.

The highly gendered nature of arguments about assimilation emerges from contemporary debates; it is evident that a profound fear of miscegenation underlies popular and official arguments, focusing on the Aboriginal women. The press consistently commented on the 'white' appearance of some residents as evidence for racial mixing, and deplored the creation of a pauper under-class.⁴² The accusation that the Aboriginal women were 'unchaste' was hinted at slyly or rejected with embarrassment by a society that did not openly acknowledge sexual exchange between black and white. While these slurs on the residents' morals caused some annoyance to the Board, it too saw the 'half-castes' as less authentic, and less deserving of support.

Again, at this key moment, the Board decided to obtain visual proof of the difference between the 'full-bloods' and 'half-castes'. In July 1883, Captain Page, Secretary of the Board, commissioned Kruger to make another series at the station.⁴³ Kruger was enthusiastic about this project, writing 'I think it is a capital suggestion of yours to have a Panorama view',⁴⁴ and 'I ... will agree to make you 12 or 15 large views of Station ... & *groups of the real natives*'.⁴⁵ Kruger's 'groups of the real natives' show people still living in *mia-mias*, using traditional artefacts, in strong contrast to his earlier portraits. 'Group of Different Tribes', for example, suggested that these people were still leading a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, and located the 'full-blooded' residents in the past.

There are eight views of this kind, establishing a temporal relationship with the altered, potentially civilised subjects of the earlier portraits. It is important to remember, however, that in the context of the entire Board series, this group provided a counterpoint to the dominant theme of civilisation, a contrast which served to underline the overall progress made under Board supervision. This correspondence participated in constructing the contradictory formulation of Aboriginality – still powerful today – whereby 'real Aborigines' are located in the remote past, leaving no room for change.⁴⁶

42 For example, Undated [c.March 1883], unsourced newspaper clipping, NAA, Series B313, Item 204.

43 Prompted in the first instance by Chief Secretary Graham Berry's desire to be represented at the 1883 Calcutta Exhibition. PROV, VPRS 3991, Chief Secretary, Inward Registered Correspondence, Part II, item Z4777.

44 'which I am confident I can obtain from one of the hills near the School, in eather [sic] 3 or 4 parts'. NAA, B313/1, Item 207.

45 Headed 'Geelong July 24. 83': NAA, B313/1, Item 207 (original emphasis).

46 Jeremy Beckett, 'The past in the present; the present in the past: constructing a national Aboriginality', in J Beckett (ed.), *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality*, Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1988: 191.

Figure 13: 'Group of Aboriginal people from Different Tribes at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, c.1870', Fred Kruger.

Source: Museum Victoria XP 1929.

Figure 14: 'Group portrait outside a dwelling at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, c.1870', Fred Kruger.

Source: Museum Victoria XP 1926.

These images provided visual evidence for the different appearance and capabilities of 'half-castes' and 'full-bloods', underpinning arguments about their differential treatment. The following year, 1884, the Board formally adopted a policy of 'absorption' or assimilation. The final blow came in 1886 when the *Aborigines Protection Law Amendment Bill* was passed, stating that

only 'full-bloods' and 'half-castes' over the age of 34 years were entitled to remain on the station.⁴⁷ Among the punitive clauses the Board had originally proposed was a provision empowering magistrates to decide 'on their own view and judgement' whether a person was Aboriginal or 'half-caste', suggesting that in the Board's opinion, this distinction was clearly visible to the eye.⁴⁸ The amended Act redefined Aborigines as 'full-bloods', 'half-castes' over 34 years old, female 'half-castes' married to 'Aborigines', the infants of 'Aborigines', and any 'half-caste' licensed to remain on a station.⁴⁹

This divisive move weakened the Aboriginal campaign, in part because the wider public now believed in a basic difference between the 'full-bloods' and 'half-castes', readily discernible on the basis of appearance. Kruger's 'real natives' participated in this work of documenting and defining Aboriginal people through the clarity and objectivity of photography. Sympathy for the residents as a dispossessed people fighting for their heritage, represented in a picturesque pastoral aesthetic, was undermined by a perception that they were in fact divided by an essential biological difference, in turn grounded in miscegenation. As demonstrated by Kruger's portraits which revealed their visibly different skin colour, their fall from grace marred the Aboriginal idyll, and the 'half-castes' were expelled from their Arcadia. As colonial attitudes respecting race became more rigid, images such as Kruger's were appropriated by contemporary scientific and popular notions of race, disseminating ideas about biological difference, and creating fixed visual types which stood for a race. These stereotypical meanings were to become the dominant way of understanding Aboriginal people over the following decades.

47 For discussion see John Chesterman and Brian Galligan, *Citizens Without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997.

48 *An Act to provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria 1869* (Vic), section 8; VPD, Legislative Assembly, vol 53, 15 December 1886: 2913.

49 50 Victoriae, no. 907 (1886), cited in Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria*: 197.

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