

Title: Post-war Migrants and Indigenous Australians: A History in Fragments  
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# **Post-war Migrants and Indigenous Australians: A History in Fragments**

## Abstract

Between 1947 and 1954 Australia's population rose from 7.5 to almost 9 million with more than half of this increase occurring as a consequence of a well-documented, systematic immigration program – generically labelled “populate or perish”. Maintaining the long history of an Anglo-Australia, almost half of these new arrivals were from the British Isles, however, for the first time in Australia's short history, over fifty percent of migrants were non-English speaking. The first to arrive were over 170,000 refugees from the displaced persons (DPs) Camps of Europe, followed by large numbers of non-assisted and assisted migrants from across continental Europe as Australia negotiated migration agreements with nations including Italy, the Netherlands, Greece, West Germany and Austria.

This article will examine the available fragments of encounters between these post-war migrants and Indigenous peoples. While both displaced persons and Indigenous peoples have been studied by historians as the objects of assimilationist policy, any relationship between these two groups has been largely ignored. This article will thus forge a connection between these disparate groups, in the context of White Australia, assimilation and mid-century settler colonialism.

**Keywords:** Migrant, Indigenous, Australian history

## **Main Text**

In a recent article, Ruth Balint and Zora Simic note that research into the history and experiences of Australia's post-war migrants is currently undergoing a resurgence.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, within the field of migration studies, there has been an increased appreciation of the use of interdisciplinary intersections and approaches, including new theorisations and methodologies.<sup>2</sup> Despite these ongoing endeavours there remain many significant gaps in the historiography of Australian immigration.

Over twenty years ago, anthropologist Ghassan Hage recommended the study of 'Anglo'-'ethnic'-Indigenous relations to investigate how Anglo-Australians are changed by their interactions with both Indigenous and ethnic communities and illuminate the ways ethnic and Indigenous communities influence each other.<sup>3</sup> In 1999, historian Ann Curthoys pointed out that the question of migrant and Indigenous connections, particularly under the umbrella of a 'post-colonial'

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth Balint & Zora Simic, "Histories of Migrants and Refugees in Australia," *Australian Historical Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/1031461X.2018.1479438, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Balint & Simic Histories of Migrants and Refugees, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ghassan Hage, "The limits of 'anti-racist sociology'," *UTS Review* 1, no.1 (1995), 79; see also John Docker and Gerhard Fischer, *Race, Colour and Identity in Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000), 34.

'multicultural' discourse, was under-researched, important and continuing.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Joseph Pugliese argued for a 'decolonising migrant historiography.'<sup>5</sup>

More recently, Indigenous academic Aileen Moreton-Robinson notes that the historiography of 'race' in Australia has focused on 'the racial oppression and discrimination of non-white 'others'', and "not the privileged subject position, structural location or cultural practices of whiteness".<sup>6</sup> Historian Ben Wilkie indicates that there has been little critical examination of white migrants in this respect and Francesco Ricatti argues that the "[t]he history of Italian relationships with First Nations people, in Australia", and by extension, we argue, the wider post-war European migrant cohort, "is still to be written".<sup>7</sup> As Sneja Gunew, an academic and child of post-war European displaced persons (DPs), explicitly asks: "Where are the histories and analyses of 'first contact', with th(e) many non-Anglo-Celtic settler others?"<sup>8</sup>

This article acts as a first attempt at forging connections between understandings, practices and discourses of mid-twentieth century settler colonialism in what historian Lorenzo Veracini has described as a triangular system of relationships in the Australian settlement project: British settlers,

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<sup>4</sup> Ann Curthoys, 'An Uneasy Conversation: Multicultural and Indigenous Discourses', in Ghassan Hage and Rowanne Couch, eds., *The Future of Australian Multiculturalism: Reflections on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Jean Martin's 'The Migrant Presence'* (Sydney, NSW: Research Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sydney, 1999), 281.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Pugliese, 'Migrant Heritage in an Indigenous Context: For a decolonising migrant historiography', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 23, no. 1 (2002), 5-18.

<sup>6</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), vii.

<sup>7</sup> Ben Wilkie, 'Unsettling History: Scots and Indigenous Australians', *Cable Magazine* (4 October 2017); Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, 71.

<sup>8</sup> Sneja Gunew, *Haunted Nations: The Colonial Dimensions of Multiculturalisms* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 22, 47.

exogenous non-British migrants, and Indigenous Others.<sup>9</sup> Often placed in regional and rural environments, continental European arrivals, like the Italians under consideration by Ricatti, were situated 'between the colonisers and the colonised, subaltern others' as they sought to understand their new home in a settler colony.<sup>10</sup> A rigorous analysis of connections between post-war migrants and Indigenous Australians should also ensure that these connections are now represented as transnational (and transcultural) encounters.<sup>11</sup>

This new approach is part of a broader scholarly agenda focusing on settler colonialism, as distinct from colonialism itself, and emphasizes the continuing nature of settler societies in national contexts, including the settler colonial nations of Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States.<sup>12</sup> As Patrick Wolfe makes clear: 'settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event'.<sup>13</sup> Research drawing on a similar theoretical focus to this project include works such as Parvathi Ramen's analysis of the Indian diaspora in South Africa and its continuing attempts to negotiate a place within the State, and Senka Bozic-Urbancic's book, *Tarara: The Cultural Politics of Maori and Croat Identity in New Zealand*, which examines Maori and Croatian connections, identity and memory

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<sup>9</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, 66.

<sup>11</sup> Kateryna Longley, 'The Fifth World', in Marko Pavlyshyn, ed., *Ukrainian Settlement in Australia: Fifth Conference, Melbourne, 16-18 February 1990* (Melbourne, Vic: Slavic Section, Monash University, 1993), 135; Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class* (London: Sage, 1995), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick Wolfe, 6; Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class* (London: Sage, 1995), 3.

in a postcolonial and multicultural context.<sup>14</sup> In Australia, Francesco Ricatti has used a framework of decoloniality in his wide-ranging study of Italians in Australia, addressing ‘the complex and unresolved question about the racial and colonial role played by migrants’.<sup>15</sup>

By highlighting and discussing a series of historical fragments this article will emphasize official narratives of assimilatory selective inclusion practices and the lived experiences of the post-war European migrants, who were often placed in remote camps and work sites away from the dominant culture and in proximity to Indigenous workers and their families. As historian Jane Lydon notes, ‘it is sometimes quite surprising to see the many ways that personal encounters contradict or transcend contemporary conventions of race’; we are attempting here to historicise fleeting moments of connection in order to add ‘potentially dissident sources of Australian history’ to the national narrative.<sup>16</sup> A further objective of this article is to interrogate cultural markers of memory, belonging and identity, in order to understand how connections with Indigenous Australia influenced both the post-war migrants’ sense of their place in the settler colony of

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<sup>14</sup> Parvathi Raman, ‘Being Indian the South African way: the development of Indian identity in 1940s’ Durban’, in Annie E. Coombs, *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and South Africa* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2006), 193-208; Senka Bozic-Vrbancic, *Tarara: The Cultural Politics of Croat and Maori Identity in New Zealand* (Dunedin, NZ: Otago University Press, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Francesco Ricatti, ‘The Emotion of Truth and the Racial Uncanny: Aborigines and Sicilians in Australia’, *Cultural Studies Review*, 19:2 (2013), 126.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Lydon, ‘Historicising Photography, Empathy and Human Rights’, *Vida: Blog of the Australian Women’s History Network*, <http://www.auswhn.org.au/blog/historicising-photography/>, 15 May 2017.

mid-century Australia, and wider discourse, including migrant complicity with the Australian settlement project.

## **Background**

This article focuses on a key moment in the rich history of Australia's settlement project.<sup>17</sup> Although European immigrants, including those directed to the Civil Alien Corps in the 1940s, had often worked in remote regions and in occupations which brought them into direct contact with Indigenous Australians, their overall numbers were small.<sup>18</sup> It was not until the post-World War Two mass migration program, when Australia looked to considerably increase its population and grow its economic base, that large numbers of migrant workers came into contact with Indigenous Australians. The Aboriginal population, estimated in 1950 at 80,000 – 1% of the national total – was small compared with the ever-growing numbers of migrants.<sup>19</sup>

The first post-war European migrants, in particular the large cohort of displaced persons (DPs), were the first truly mass intake of non-British migrants in the nation's history, and the first of Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell's 'New

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<sup>17</sup> We are here examining Australia in its national, post-federation context. For important work on non-British migration in the colonial context, see work including Julia Martinez & Adrian Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier: Indonesian Labour and Indigenous Encounters in Australia's Northern Trading Network* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015); Ruth Balint, 'Aboriginal Women and Asian Men: A Maritime History of Color in White Australia', *Signs* 37, no. 3 (2012), 544-554; and Penny Edwards & Shen Yuanfang, *Lost in the Whitewash: Aboriginal-Asian Encounters in Australia, 1901-2001* (Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> See for example Daniela Cosmini-Rose, 'Italians in the Civil Alien Corps in South Australia: The 'forgotten' enemy aliens', *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, No. 42, (2014), 43-52.

<sup>19</sup> Anna Haebich, 'Retro-assimilation', *Griffith Review* 15 (2007), 251.

Australians'.<sup>20</sup> Mostly from Central and Eastern Europe, the DPs although 'white', were 'foreign' (that is, not British). Their acceptance into Australian society was heavily reliant upon their being subject to a governmental system of control and containment, particularly in regard to employment, and the expectation that they would quickly assimilate into the Australian way of life.<sup>21</sup>

An active process of assimilation began in the European transit camps and continued on board ship with lessons in English and Australian customs and civics. On arrival in Australia, displaced persons (and later assisted European migrants) were initially housed in Reception and Training (R&T) centres, often located in ex-army camps in regional areas. These centres provided very basic accommodation, communal facilities, and time and space for the continuation of English lessons and ongoing training towards assimilation.<sup>22</sup> They also afforded a degree of governmental control over new arrivals during their early weeks and months in Australia. From these centres 'breadwinner' DPs, that is men, and women without children, were allocated to employment under a two year work contract which was a condition of the agreement between the Australian

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<sup>20</sup> The term 'New Australian' was first coined by Calwell, in the late 1940s. Use of the term was encouraged in order to replace the pejorative terms in use such as 'reffo' and 'Balt' and as a symbol of assimilation; however the term itself quickly took on a derogatory meaning. For a comprehensive history of the displaced persons in Australia, see Jayne Persian, *Beautiful Balts: From Displaced Persons to New Australians* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> The expectation of assimilation was not unusual in migrant and refugee receiving nations in the post-WWII period however, as Murphy argues, the rapidity and control over this expectation in Australia was unique. See HBM Murphy, "Assimilating the Displaced Person," *The Australian Quarterly* 24, no. 1, (1952), 46.

<sup>22</sup> See Joy Damousi, "'We are Human Beings, and have a Past': The 'Adjustment' of Migrants and the Australian Assimilation Policies of the 1950s", *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 59, no. 4 (2013), 501-516; Karen Agutter, 'Assimilation through Play: Migrant Hostel Play Centres in Post-War Australia', *International Journal of Play* 5, no. 3 (2016), 277-291.



Government and the International Refugee Organisation (IRO).<sup>23</sup> The men were classified as 'labourers' and the women as 'domestics' under what was essentially an indentured labour scheme which saw DPs sent to work in heavy industry, public utilities, agriculture, and domestic and hospital service, often in remote and rural Australia.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, families were often torn apart with dependent women and children sent to Holding Centres such as Wacol, Benalla and Uranquinty and workers generally transferred to government or employer provided workers camps, often hundreds or thousands of kilometres away.<sup>25</sup>

Today, displaced persons are often seen as the vanguard of the successful mass European migration programs to Australia during the 1950s and 60s, and as the unproblematic founding group of 'multicultural' Australia.<sup>26</sup> However, in the late 1940s and early 1950s the DPs faced a controlled system of work placement and, in parallel to Indigenous Australians, encountered an official narrative of assimilation. These European refugees, who were placed in rural environments as they sought to understand their new home in a settler colony, were the first mass 'ethnic' migrants to encounter Aboriginal peoples in post-federation Australia. Therefore they, and other early European assisted migrants, provide an ideal case study in which to examine official representations of Indigeneity,

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<sup>23</sup> Alexandra Delliou, "Displaced Persons, Family Separation and the Work Contract in Postwar Australia," *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no. 4 (2016), 418-32.

<sup>24</sup> Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 76-111; Egon Kunz, *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians* (Australian National University Press, 1988), 40-42.

<sup>25</sup> For more on the hardships caused by the dividing of families see Karen Agutter, "Displaced Persons and the 'Continuum of Mobility' in the South Australian Hostel System", in Kleinig, M.A. & Richards, E. (eds.), *On the Wing: Mobility before and after Emigration to Australia*, (NSW: Anchor Books, 2013), 136-52.

<sup>26</sup> Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 11; Jayne Persian, 'Bonegilla: A Failed Narrative', *History Australia*, 9:1 (2012), 64-83.

encounters at migrant camps and during the labour scheme, and to consider these encounters within the realms of memory and commemoration. This is a history in fragments, but one which we hope will push the scholarship towards further interrogation of these representations, encounters, and commemorative efforts.

### **Encounters: Official Representations of Indigeneity**

Well before displaced persons left Europe they were introduced to Indigenous Australians who featured heavily in the propaganda, promotional and assimilationist films, and other literature used in the European camps. Ukrainian-born Paraskevia Jacyshyn, for example, commented that the family's first impressions of Australia "were from a film we watched at the Camp – it showed crocodiles, indigenous people, snakes and dead animals in paddocks".<sup>27</sup> Luba Solowij noted that all that was known of Australia was that it was "far away and it had lots of snakes, spiders and 'coloured' people living there".<sup>28</sup> Oral testimonies collected for camp specific studies, such as Christopher Keating's work on the Greta Migrant Camp, contain references to migrant expectations of Australia and the Indigenous inhabitants based on pre-departure information, with one migrant anticipating that the aboriginals would greet her at the wharf, spears in hand.<sup>29</sup> The general lack of knowledge about Australia amongst European DPs, and the

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<sup>27</sup> Vasilos Vasilas, *In Search of Hope and Home: Stories and Photographs from the Ukrainian Journey to Australia* (Riverwood, NSW: 2015), 197.

<sup>28</sup> Vasilas, *In Search of Hope and Home*, 190.

<sup>29</sup> Christopher Keating, *A History of the Army Camp and Migrant Camp at Greta New South Wales, 1939-1960* (Burwood New South Wales: Uri Windt, 1997), 46.

confusion about the relationship between European settlers and Indigenous Australians that this pre-departure information caused, is also evident in Czech DP Vladimir Lezak Borin's autobiographical novel *The Uprooted Survive*, in which a character surmises:

in Australia there must be some European buildings, because there are many savage black people ... but also a few white people who went there from Europe to grow coconuts and dig for gold.<sup>30</sup>

As Ruth Balint's exploration of the publicity used in the DP camps in Europe states, booklets such as *Know Australia!*, (originally published for the British migrant but reproduced in German) was packed with information in a question and answer format with full page descriptions of 'aborigines' and 'half-castes' as 'one of the most primitive peoples in existence ... [with] no knowledge of metals or agriculture'.<sup>31</sup>

This thematic depiction of 'primitive' Indigenous Australians continued en route and is particularly evident in the pre-prepared lectures for ships' education programs. The aim of these lectures was to instruct new arrivals on all aspects of Australian life and continue the process of assimilation begun in European camps. Of particular note is the advice to the displaced persons that "you will not see any black fellows" as they are a wandering people who "cannot live where there is civilization". The lecture continued: only "if you travel on the long railway between Perth and Adelaide you will see this type of native. They eat food which people throw from the train and they beg for cigarettes and clothing. They are dirty and

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30 V L Borin, *The Uprooted Survive* (London: Heinemann, 1959), 112-113.

31 Ruth Balint, 'Industry and Sunshine' *History Australia* 11, no 1 (2014), 117.

dressed in old ragged clothes”.<sup>32</sup> Lectures were often accompanied by films about Australia which left lasting impressions on some DPs. Ukrainian novelist Dmytro Chub observed:

We were struck by the fact that these really were wild, stone-age people. A black, almost naked woman was digging white grubs out of the ground and threw them into the open mouths of her children, who sat around like baby birds waiting to be fed. And they relished the food. Later on in the film we saw Aborigines killing a snake, roasting it, and breaking it up into pieces – eating it. And we, who had not yet experienced Australian life, were disturbed by the prospect of having to live amongst these Aborigines.

For others, such as the Ukrainian Kolomyjec children, the films created a fantasy of future experiences, often influenced by notions of the American frontier from Hollywood films they had seen. They could imagine “the great battles with the savage aborigines in order to occupy the land” and “sitting in on peace talks and smoking the peace pipe”. When looking for a first glimpse of Australia they wondered if it would be “a huge aboriginal camp with blazing fires and chanting savages performing war dances around them?”<sup>33</sup>

Similar lessons, and the use of films, continued in the R&T and Holding Centres in Australia however, the content was often expanded to include the history of ‘white Australia’ and the arrival of the ‘first white men’ who, it was emphasised, had made the houses, towns, roads and farms that migrants would

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<sup>32</sup> National Archives Australia, A437, 1948/6/377, Draft Lectures for Welfare and Information Officers on Displaced Persons Ships.

<sup>33</sup> Vasilas, *In Search of Hope and Home*, 195.

see. Lessons continued with descriptions of the 'blackness' of the Indigenous Australians, their lack of height, their faces 'not like a white man's face', their lack of clothes and reliance on hunting for food.<sup>34</sup> Finally, displaced persons were again reassured that:

[y]ou will not see Aborigines like this in the South ... or North East of Australia now ... [but in] the North and North West of Australia you will see Aborigines. There they live like they did before 1788.<sup>35</sup>

However, if they ever did come into contact with Aboriginal people, DPs were warned that they must not give them alcohol and as an added deterrent were told that if they did, 'the Policemen will take you to the Police Court'.<sup>36</sup> Contemporary newspaper accounts indicate incidents where DPs and Indigenous Australians were charged, especially in remote areas, with the offences of supplying and consuming alcohol and the fines were often considerable.<sup>37</sup>

It is not surprising that these official representations of Indigeneity often left a lasting impression on the displaced persons and influenced subsequent behaviour or, at least, the justifications for such behaviour. In 1950, for example, a Yugoslavian-born DP told the Wodonga Court that "he had purchased a pistol and kept it under his pillow at night because he was scared of the Australian natives. Before coming here he had heard about the ferocious aborigines in

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<sup>34</sup> Material for Elementary Classes, Education Section Bathurst, 21 September 1949 in NAA: A1361, 33/21/29, Migrant Education - Teaching techniques and materials – Australianization.

<sup>35</sup> Material for Elementary Classes, NAA: A1361, 33/21/29.

<sup>36</sup> Material for Elementary Classes, NAA: A1361, 33/21/29.

<sup>37</sup> See for example 'Heavy fines for Supplying Liquor to Aborigines' *Port Lincoln Times*, 23 August 1951, 1. In this particular case fines were issued of between £5-15.

Australia.”<sup>38</sup> Similarly, a group of Ukrainian-born DPs, living and working in a forest in Tasmania, panicked one night at the sight of a bearded face, and believing it to be a ‘dangerous native’ attacked the man with ‘axes, spades and other implements’.<sup>39</sup>

### **Encounters: Migrant Accommodation Centres**

Within the R&T and Holding Centres the encounters between displaced persons and Indigenous Australians moved from the more abstract, lessons and films, to actual contact, generally as a consequence of highly manipulated events aimed at aiding assimilation. Newspaper reports often linked “New Australian” participation with that of Indigenous Australians. For example, reporting on the celebrations for the Jubilee of Federation in Brisbane in 1951, *The Courier Mail* noted that the women and children from the Wacol Holding Centre travelled on a float entitled ‘Bridge of Light’ which represented the ‘dark hopelessness of Europe and a new life in Australia’ while ‘on two other floats 40 natives ... show[ed] their way of wild life, and [the] progress made in the last 50 years’.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, during the 1954 Royal Tour, displays of both migrant and indigenous culture were common. In Lismore, the *Northern Star* reported that “New Australians will be asked to march in their national costumes, and it is hoped aborigines from Woodenbong reserve will take part”.<sup>41</sup> This of course can be seen as a precursor

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<sup>38</sup> ‘Ferocious Aborigines in the North East!’, *Shepparton Advertiser*, 28 Apr 1950, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Investigation showed that this was in fact a neighbour living in a nearby hut. “Bearded man case” solved’, *Advocate* (Burnie, Tasmania), 15 May 1953, 1.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Migrant float will span the darkness’, *The Courier Mail*, Brisbane, 23 February 1951, 5

<sup>41</sup> *Northern Star*, “District Celebration for Coronation on Elaborate Scale,” *Northern Star*, 29 May 1953.

to an Australian multiculturalism that exoticised both non-British migrants and Indigenous Australians.<sup>42</sup>

Within the accommodation centres new arrivals were also exposed to Aboriginal dance and culture at officially organised events including the opening of the Stuart Holding Centre for displaced women and children<sup>43</sup> or during excursions to visit museums and cultural centres to see Indigenous art and artefacts.<sup>44</sup> DP children and youth were also in contact with Indigenous children through the activities of religious based groups working towards assimilation. Groups of DP children from the Woodside Centre in South Australia, for example, attended the annual Toc H summer camp at Victor Harbor with Indigenous children from the Port Pearce Mission and a number of underprivileged local children. On these regular summer camps for girls the Toc H Journal of Australia, *The Link*, commented that this rather progressive 'experiment of mixing Europeans, aborigines and white Australians proved a great success; colour ceased to become remarkable, and was accepted naturally by all the girls'.<sup>45</sup>

For other displaced children, encounters with their Indigenous counterparts occurred in less congenial circumstances as work contract requirements put extraordinary demands on families, especially unmarried and widowed mothers, who were encouraged to place their children in care, either temporarily or

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<sup>42</sup> Brigitta Olubas, 'The Nostalgia of Others: The Construction of the White Migrant', in Peter Drexler & Andrea Kinsky-Ehritt (eds), *Identities and Minorities: Postcolonial Readings* (Berlin: Trafo, 2003), 150, 155.

<sup>43</sup> 'Migrant Centre Opening Tonight', *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 12 August 1950, 3.

<sup>44</sup> 'Migrants to see native art', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners Advocate*, 25 January 1952, 2.

<sup>45</sup> *The Link*, Toc H Journal of Australia 31, no. 6 (1956), 24.

permanently, in order to fulfil their employment obligations.<sup>46</sup> The Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia, for example, ran a children's home where, in 1950, they claimed that "colour and creed are no bar" and "children of displaced persons, and many Australian natives and half-castes mix with our fair-skinned children."<sup>47</sup> Child placement also occurred when relationships broke down.<sup>48</sup> For example when the children of a Hungarian father and German mother separated soon after leaving Bonegilla, the daughter returned to Europe with her mother while the son, left with his father, was placed in a foster home at Victor Harbor with "the Tripp family of Aborigines" so that his father could earn a living.<sup>49</sup>

Although the accommodation centres in which the displaced persons and later European migrants were initially housed were designed as temporary, moving out and establishing a home was often very difficult as they also fell victim to the post-war housing crisis their labour was designed to address. Consequently, in their desire for family reunification and "moving on", DP and other migrants were sometimes forced into housing which brought them into contact with Indigenous Australians. Lydia Ivanchenko, for example, recounts how as a child of Estonian-born DPs, her family had moved into a house that her stepfather built as a "squatter" on a block at La Perouse (Sydney), in a "shantytown" neighbourhood with a number of other post-war migrant "squatters".

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<sup>46</sup> Karen Agutter, "Fated to Be Orphans: The Consequences of Australia's Post-War Resettlement Policy on Refugee Children," *Children Australia* 41, no. 3 (2016), 224-31.

<sup>47</sup> '100 Years of Mercy Work for Children', *The West Australian*, 26 May 1950, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Contemporary social worker reports indicate that "marriages of convenience" were not uncommon in post-War Europe as refugees, especially women, looked for opportunities to create new lives in Australia and other receiving nations. These marriages often broke down within weeks or months of arrival. See for example National Archives Australia: A445, 276/3/1; Senior social workers annual reports - all states.

<sup>49</sup> Reference



The surrounding area was an Aboriginal reserve and Lydia later recalled that living at La Perouse as a child was “great fun”; “many tourists came to see the snake show and the boomerang throwing exhibition”. However, once the migrants could afford to buy a ‘real’ house, they moved on; Lydia’s family lived at La Perouse for six years before obtaining a house in suburban Sydney.<sup>50</sup>

### **Encounters: Labour Scheme**

The most prevalent of encounters between displaced persons and Indigenous Australians occurred in the work place. The required work contracts, and the classification of DPs as general labourers and domestics, resulted in their placement in industries and government utilities classified as essential to Australia’s economic and industrial reconstruction and expansion. Indications are that DPs often worked and lived with, or in proximity to, Indigenous Australians in remote and regional areas on the railways, in forestry, road construction, electricity and water supply, coal mining, in salt, fertilizer and cement manufacture, and other areas which traversed aboriginal land and/or employed Indigenous workers. The greatest challenge however, is establishing where and how these encounters occurred. Given the passing of time, archival sources, memoirs, and existing oral histories, often in broader collections on post-war topics, have, to date, been our major sources. For example, the employment of migrant and Indigenous workers are noted in an oral history project on the Cotter Dam in the Australian Capital Territory but, given the project’s focus on the

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<sup>50</sup> Vasilas, *In Search of Hope and Home*, 274.

engineering achievements of the construction, there is no further comment within the interviews themselves on the interaction that occurred.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the State Electricity Commission of Victoria employed Australians who had been prisoners of war, displaced persons, and 'some aboriginals'<sup>52</sup> and a report from the Electricity and Water Supply Camp at Wanilla in South Australia, where there was a significant cohort of DP workers, comments that a number of aboriginals were employed.<sup>53</sup>

Contact commonly occurred in agriculture where, for example, it was not unusual for migrant gangs to work alongside Indigenous gangs in the cane fields and in forestry for timber harvesting or in support of other industries including mining.<sup>54</sup> When Lithuanian-born DP, Jurgis Endrulis, was sent to cut timber in the Elgin Vale Forest in the Nanango district in south eastern Queensland, his daughter Ruth later recalled the journey from Bonegilla. Ruth's memories give us a rare insight into the apprehension her mother experienced, perhaps based on the content of earlier lessons, as they were stranded at Nanango bush railway station:

A man in a truck came later on - I think it must have been after about four hours - and Mum didn't know if we should go with him. He had this great big hat on, he had shorts and big boots and this big singlet.

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<sup>51</sup> HMSS 0269 Engineering Heritage Canberra Oral History Program - Special Projects Series Cotter Water Supply Project, ACT Heritage Library Manuscript Collection. See for example interview with Fred Byrne.

<sup>52</sup> Josef Sestokas, *Welcome to Little Europe: Displaced Persons and the North Camp*, (Sale, Victoria: Little Chicken Publishing Co., 2010), 203.

<sup>53</sup> NAA: D1917; D6/48, Progress Reports DP Scheme Part 1.

<sup>54</sup> See for example '92 Migrants for Richmond Cane Harvest', *Northern Star*, Lismore, 3 July 1953 4.

Mum said 'I don't know', but he said 'You come! You come!' He was shouting like anything, yelling 'You come!', and we couldn't understand why he was shouting so loud. Eventually we got on the back of the truck and away we went. Mum was upset, she was crying - we just did not know where we were going or who we were going with or anything. And there was an Aboriginal sitting in the truck with us, and of course we had never seen one, so that made us doubly fearsome of what was happening.<sup>55</sup>

In rare instances, displaced persons were directed to work at Aboriginal missions. Irene Szogi's Polish father was sent to a Presbyterian mission at Arakun in Cape York to build facilities for the Indigenous people; she says that "no one else would have volunteered to go up there". Although it was very hot in north Queensland, Irene's father "got on well with the Aboriginal people' and 'even ate their food, including goanna".<sup>56</sup> Polish DPs Jan and Maria Naturalny, along with their children Bill and Krystyna, were sent in February 1950 to the Moore River Native Settlement (renamed the Mogumber Native Mission a year later) in Western Australia to work out their two-year contract. There were four non-Indigenous families working at the Mission, including the Natuarlnys; Jan worked as a general maintenance hand and Maria worked cooking and doing laundry, while the Aboriginal women at the Mission did most of the necessary cleaning. The Naturalny's daughter, Krystyna, later described their time at the Settlement:

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<sup>55</sup> Brian Murphy, *The Other Australia: Experiences of Migration*, Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW (Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1993), 122.

<sup>56</sup> Maximilian Brandle, *Refugee Destination Queensland*, 77.

These European families, including Jan and Maria, had never heard of Aboriginal people let alone seen them. It was quite an experience. But they soon came to know their ways such as the pilfering of sugar and tobacco, their disappearances into the bush for days at a time so that one could not rely on them for work, and the way they discarded their clothes once they became dirty and came back for more handouts rather than wash them. When they did work, they seemed to be generally indolent, though charming.

When their labour contract ended, the Naturalists returned to “civilisation”.<sup>57</sup>

For Hungarian-born DP, Joseph Karlik, the experience of working with Indigenous Australians at a station near Bunbury, Western Australia, led him to reflect on the racial hierarchy. He says, there were three “*of us*” and “about half a dozen Aboriginals also working” and on one occasion there was “no tucker in the box” and the workers had to shoot a kangaroo for food. Joseph noted that “it was very interesting because the segregation was of course very strong. Not because, not that any of them were racist as far as you would consider it now, they were just from separate, different lifestyles, the Aboriginals were camping with us and we didn’t think of camping with them, that’s the way I saw it.”<sup>58</sup>

One point of interest is how the attitude of the displaced persons towards Indigenous Australians was influenced by, or differed from, contemporary

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<sup>57</sup> Nonja Peters, *Milk and Honey – but no Gold: Postwar Migration to Western Australia, 1945-1964* (Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2001), 181; George P. Sekulla and Krystyna Legge, *Our Dream, Our Future: A History of the Midland-Bellevue Polish Community, 1950-2006* (Bayswater, WA: 2007), 299.

<sup>58</sup> Karlik, Joseph. Interview by Whitehorse Historical Society, 10 October 2006.

Australian attitudes. As anthropologists David Trigger and Richard J. Martin note, commonalities of physical work and mixed marriages can produce “some porousness in the social boundary”. Are these commonalities enough, though, to surmount cultural differences and the habitus of settler colonial power relations?<sup>59</sup> Can, as Richard White notes, migrant incursions “disrupt the binary” of black-white relations?<sup>60</sup>

The Australian official, and author of the previously mentioned report on Wanilla in South Australia, makes a number of observations which might be considered as representative of the times. He states that “the mess is staffed with coloured females, who cannot be classed as over-clean on our standards” and goes on to note that “The foreman is married to a half-caste and a brief sum up of the position there is that it is “black versus white”, with the foreman on the side of the coloured workers.”<sup>61</sup> By contrast, an Austrian-born assisted migrant notes, in an oral history conducted for the Hostel Stories Project, his shock on hearing Australians refer to them as “bongs [and] that sort of thing, black beans and things like that”. As he elaborated, the problem as he saw it was that the average Australian had probably never met or spoken to an Aboriginal person and were ignorant of them, whereas he had worked with them.<sup>62</sup> This outlook is also

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<sup>59</sup> David Trigger and Richard J. Martin, ‘Place, Indigeneity, and Identity in Australia’s Gulf Country’, *American Anthropology* 118, no. 4 (2016), 833.

<sup>60</sup> Richard White, ‘Collisions of Cultures and Identities: A Comment’, in Patricia Grimshaw and Russell McGregor, eds., *Collisions of Cultures and Identifies: Settlers and Indigenous Peoples* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, Department of History, 2006), xviii.

<sup>61</sup> NAA: D1917; D6/48.

<sup>62</sup> Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants’ is an Australian Research Council funded Linkage project. The project team is comprised of staff and students at the University of Adelaide, in conjunction with community and government partners. The oral histories conducted during this project are currently held by the research team but will be available

supported by other accounts including that of Luba Ryder who, recounting a family story involving her Ukrainian father working for the SECV at Newborough, in Victoria states:

Dad had many jobs upon arriving in Australia and one of them was digging ditches in the Valley. After work Dad would go to the pub for a few ales and on one occasion he took with him an aboriginal who had been working with him. Upon entering the pub and asking for two beers Dad was told by the publican that he could have a beer but that the aboriginal would be refused. Dad said that if his mate could not have a beer then he did not want to drink at the pub and turned and walked out in disgust at the treatment of his fellow worker. Dad related the story when he got home and told us kids how upset he was that in Australia they could treat the aboriginal with such disrespect. Dad preferred to believe that in this free country all people would be treated justly and fairly.<sup>63</sup>

In another example, in 1949, Lithuanian displaced person Juosaz Mikstas visited the Adelaide Museum and subsequently wrote a poem to capture his feelings on seeing the skull of an Indigenous person on display. The poem, entitled *The Aboriginal's Skull*, included the following stanza, translated from the original Lithuanian: 'You hear their chief asking sternly, "Who showed you the path to us?

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at the State Library of South Australia at the conclusion of the project. The oral histories are currently catalogued according to initials, in this case WH.

<sup>63</sup> Sestokas, *Little Europe*, 205.

When are you going away? Tell us, you cunning white". Mikstas notes "it did not take much time to conquer them ... and you are enjoying the fruits of this land".<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, there seems to have been some consternation among displaced persons that they were being treated, in the words of Polish displaced person Stanislav Gotowicz, "like black fellows, you know".<sup>65</sup> Egon Kunz, an academic from a wealthy Hungarian family, assumed that he would continue to be treated as a "gentleman" in Australia's social hierarchy: he thought that the work scheme would involve "a lot of Ukrainian and Polish peasants building a road and I will count their salaries or something like that".<sup>66</sup> This, of course, wasn't to be. Russian DP Walter Lebedew, whose father had survived a stint in Siberia, similarly referred to the DP Scheme as "black labour".<sup>67</sup> From the Australian perspective this attitude is particularly evident in a 1949 article in the (Grafton) *Daily Examiner* which reported that due to recent trade union successes, there was a shortage of Aboriginal labour for dairy farms on the north coast of New South Wales. Mr C. K. Bennett, a Taree dairy farmer, complained: "At one time we used to go to a blacks' camp, but the niggers are getting full wages now, and are in great demand". Consequently, farmers called for the Department of Immigration to set up labour camps of indentured DPs on the north coast to fill

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<sup>64</sup> Sestokas, *Little Europe*, 206.

<sup>65</sup> Stanley Gotowicz. Interview by Barry York, 8 April 2001, TRC 4716, National Library of Australia; see also Andonis Piperoglou, 'Greeks or Turks, "Wjhite" or "Asiatic": Historicising Castellorizian Racial-Consciousness, 1916-1920', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 40:4 (2016), 400.

<sup>66</sup> Egon F Kunz. Interview by Peter Biskup, March/April 1988. TRC 2262, National Library of Australia.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Lebedew. Interview by Rob Linn for the Sport Oral History Project, 2008. TRC 5900/69, National Library of Australia.

farmer's labour needs.<sup>68</sup> Similar shortages of Indigenous labour were noted in that year in north-west Queensland.<sup>69</sup>

As Suvendrini Perera and Joseph Pugliese have noted, migrants “bring with them their own histories, experiences and ideologies of ethnic and racial differences”.<sup>70</sup> In this case, the displaced persons had been selected in Europe by the Australian government to be (white) manual labourers, even though many displaced persons were intellectuals and professionals. However, other DPs, including forced labourers from Russia and Ukraine, were accustomed to being on a low racial hierarchy in Nazi Europe. Further research is needed to establish what DPs and European migrants thought of the new racial hierarchy they found in Australia. This question is of course further highlighted when we think of the approximately five hundred Jewish DPs subjected to the two-year indentured labour contract. Francesco Ricatti, in his work on post-war Sicilian migrants and Aboriginal people, has shown that entrenched stereotypes and paradigms operated in both the receiving and giving nations, and that migrants brought and extended the notion of the ‘other’ from home.<sup>71</sup> Questions that we have around the indentured labour scheme include these tied issues of class, race and labour, and also a very premature question (in terms of our research) as to whether

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Migrants Needed for Farm Labour’, *Daily Examiner* (Grafton, NSW: 1915-1954), 1 October 1949, 1.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Personal: Vice-Regal Engagements’, *Brisbane Telegraph* (Qld: 1948-1954), 4 May 1949, 3. It is interesting to note that by the early 1960s newspapers were reporting that migrants had taken most of the jobs Indigenous Australians had once done, leaving Aboriginal workers desperate.

<sup>70</sup> Suvendra Perera & Joseph Pugliese, ‘Detoxifying Australia?’, *Migration Action* 20, no. 2 (1998), 13.

<sup>71</sup> Ricatti, ‘The Emotion of Truth and the Racial Uncanny’, 137. This is also evident in the prejudices some post-War migrants have toward current day refugees - see Karen Agutter, & Rachel Ankeny, “Unsettling Narratives: Overcoming Prejudices in the Hostel Stories Project,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no. 4 (2016): 464-77.



displaced persons were involved with nascent trade union involvement in Aboriginal rights issues. Polish DP John Sobol, for example, born in 1922 and a former forced labourer in Austria, later posed the question: “[Am I] European? Australian? Well, the real Australians are the Aborigines.”<sup>72</sup>

Once released from the indentured work contract, displaced persons settled all over Australia. The Director of Post-war Reconstruction, HC Coombs, later noted that the increasingly diverse immigrant intake “paved the way for the abandonment of the racist White Australia policy”.<sup>73</sup> One area in which migrants and Indigenous peoples integrated was in Australian soccer or, as it was derisively known, “wogball”.<sup>74</sup> John Maynard has argued that the multicultural environment of soccer in the post-war decades provided a haven for Aboriginal players, as post-war migrants were also “partners and victims” of White Australia.<sup>75</sup> He cites Indigenous player Gordon Briscoe:

When these ‘New Australians came onto the scene, they didn’t question our background, because they were people who’d had difficulties, they’d suffered from war damage, they’d suffered from [not] having the freedom to move wherever they wanted to, they were probably being employed for the first time, struggling, but yet still wanting to practice their culture, which was soccer ... So, when they saw us, they didn’t question our background and racial heritage ...

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<sup>72</sup> Sobol, John. Interview by Barry York in the Polish Australians Oral History Project, 2005. TRC 5363, National Library of Australia.

<sup>73</sup> McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion*, 64.

<sup>74</sup> Maynard, ‘Football Barriers’, 46.

<sup>75</sup> John Maynard, ‘Football Barriers – Aboriginal Under-Representation and Disconnection from the “World Game”’, *Soccer & Society* 10, no. 1 (2009), 39, 46.

and they respected us, because we could do the things that entertained them.<sup>76</sup>

Indeed, Briscoe and his cousin Charles Perkins played for the Croatia Club in Adelaide before Perkins began his prominent career in Aboriginal activism, which included a vocal anti-communism.<sup>77</sup>

Anna Haebich's work on assimilation has previously brought attention to these two strands: the policy of assimilation meant that the assimilation of Aboriginal people and post-war migrants ran parallel, sharing a common goal toward nation-building into the Australian way of life. The migrant, though, was considered more readily assimilable. In Haebich's words, assimilation was ostensibly "heralded as the mechanism to sweep away racial and cultural differences and divisions and to absorb all Australians – Indigenous, settler and immigrant – as equal citizens sharing a common way of life".<sup>78</sup> Assimilation was of course a rather ambiguous policy as it referred to migrants, and, as Andrew Markus and Margaret Taft recently noted, it was as much if not more about assimilating *white Australians* into the idea of inclusion.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps though, assimilation also meant, as Pugliese has argued, encouraging migrants to reproduce an Australian system of othering, with Indigenous Australians firmly at the bottom of an imagined assimilatory hierarchy which privileged whiteness.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Maynard, 'Football Barriers', p. 45.

<sup>77</sup> Maynard, 'Football Barriers', 47.

<sup>78</sup> Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 11.

<sup>79</sup> Andrew Markus & Margaret Taft, 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation', *Australian Historical Studies* 46, no. 2 (2015), 238.

<sup>80</sup> Pugliese, 'Migrant Heritage in an Indigenous Context', 15.

Due to the post-war mass migration schemes, mid-century Australian settler colonialism was forced to renegotiate the 'complex landscape of power'.<sup>81</sup>

## **Memory and Commemoration**

A further objective of this article is to interrogate cultural markers of memory, belonging and identity, in order to understand how connections with Indigenous Australia influenced both the post-war migrants' sense of their place in the settler colony of mid-century Australia, and wider discourse surrounding the Australian settlement project. Ann Curthoys has argued that:

Ethnic communities [have] contributed to the idea of Australia as home, with their own versions of historical victim narratives, telling a story of persecution or economic difficulty in their country of origin, experience of racism and rejection after arrival, and the gradual building of a new life and making a contribution to Australian society at large.<sup>82</sup>

In other words, tropes of assimilation and multiculturalism have been "used to obfuscate the history of Aboriginal dispossession".<sup>83</sup> In 1951, for example, two women working as cooks at Mildura migrant camp – Ambrus Racz and Gyula Banpatski - baked a cake depicting "hostile" Aborigines' holding up Sturt's voyage down the Murray, to celebrate the anniversary of this event, and in doing so clearly

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<sup>81</sup> Neilesh Bose, 'New Settler Colonial Histories at the Edges of Empire: 'Asiatics', Settlers, and Law in Colonial South Africa', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 15, no. 1 (2014), 1.

<sup>82</sup> Curthoys, 'An Uneasy Conversation', 290.

<sup>83</sup> Rob Garbutt, *The Locals: Identity, Place and Belonging in Australia and Beyond* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011), 148.

placed themselves with the British settlers.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, in 1970, writer Nancy Phelan described an Estonian community in New South Wales: “They cleared and worked and built, as the first settlers had done ... It is hard to believe the wide lawn and trees had been untouched bush when [they] first came.”<sup>85</sup>

In a multicultural society (and in one particularly focused on social cohesion), memorialising ethnic community ‘contributions’ can become a way of legitimating a more inclusive national narrative.<sup>86</sup> One example of this is the homogenisation of ‘post-war migrants’, and the frequent characterisation of these post-war migrants as ‘nation builders’.<sup>87</sup> The achievement of multiculturalism as the end-point of immigration stories thus becomes “a completed stage of history, safely nestled in a sealed-off past”.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, Mark McKenna has argued that the focus on ethnicity and multiculturalism – “the parade of nationalisms” - in the lead-up to the Bicentennial celebrations in 1988 were a means of government side-stepping Aboriginal grievances by focusing on assimilable ethnics rather than a postcolonial counter-narrative of ‘Invasion Day’.<sup>89</sup> Historians Paula Hamilton and Paul Ashton have further argued that, in general, public historians become

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<sup>84</sup> ‘They knew they were coming, so ...’, *Good Neighbour* (ACT: 1950-1969), 1 March 1951, 1. This was at the request of the Red Cliffs (Victoria) Returned Services League; after exhibition this cake was eaten by young patients at Mildura Base Hospital.

<sup>85</sup> Nancy Phelan, *Some Came Early, Some Came Late* (South Melbourne: The Macmillan Company, 1970), 79.

<sup>86</sup> Paula Hamilton and Paul Ashton, ‘On not belonging: memorials and memory in Sydney’, *Public History Review: Changi to Cabramatta: Places and Personality*, 9 (2001), 23.

<sup>87</sup> Pennay, ‘Remembering Bonegilla’, 59.

<sup>88</sup> Kirk Savage, cited in Sue-Ann Ware, ‘Contemporary Anti-Memorials and National Identity in the Victorian Landscape’, *Journal of Australian Studies* 28, no. 81 (2004), 121.

<sup>89</sup> Mark McKenna, ‘Anzac Day: How did it become Australia’s national day?’, in Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, eds., *What’s Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010), 115; Zora Simic, ‘What are ya?’: Negotiating Identities in the Western Suburbs of Sydney during the 1980s’, *Journal of Australian Studies* 32, no. 2 (2008): 223; see also Curthoys, ‘An Uneasy Conversation’, 285, 290.

“enlisted *de facto* in the state’s ‘management’ of cultural difference” because fitting into narratives of the state-sponsored structure of heritage is of paramount importance when applying for funding and recognition.<sup>90</sup>

In the case of the displaced persons, migrant attachments to particular locations can be problematic. Indigenous leader and theorist Marcia Langton has asserted that the Australian ideal of ‘the bush’ is based on *terra nullius*, the assertion that the Australian landscape as vacant at European settlement.<sup>91</sup> With regard to commemorative efforts at Bonegilla, the largest and longest-lasting migrant reception centre, Joseph Pugliese has argued:

In their failure to acknowledge the Aboriginal history of Bonegilla, the migrants who tell their painful and anguished histories of dislocation, loss and racism must be seen as complicit agents in the reproduction of contemporary colonialism. [There is] a migrant complicity with the colonial forces that still dominate the Australian landscape.<sup>92</sup>

Pugliese further argues:

Precisely because the task of identifying and preserving migrant heritage sites is now *in process*, migrants have the opportunity literally to reject the reproduction of colonial history by marking in their own histories the very Indigenous histories that have so effectively been erased from both the local and national histories of Australia.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Hamilton and Ashton, ‘On not belonging: memorials and memory in Sydney’, 25.

<sup>91</sup> Marilyn Omerovic Legg, ‘Re-thinking the ‘National’ in National Parks: Decolonising Australian Environmental Discourse’, [www.polsis.uq.edu.au/docs/Challenging-Politics-Papers/Marilyn-Omerovic-Legg-Rethinking-the-National.pdf](http://www.polsis.uq.edu.au/docs/Challenging-Politics-Papers/Marilyn-Omerovic-Legg-Rethinking-the-National.pdf), accessed 20 February 2013.

<sup>92</sup> Pugliese, ‘Migrant Heritage in an Indigenous Context’, 8, 9.

<sup>93</sup> Pugliese, ‘Migrant Heritage in an Indigenous Context’, 8, 9.

A particularly potent example of the co-option of a landscape in an act complicit with settler colonialism is that of Bielany, a Polish recreational reserve established in NSW in 1969 and planted with European trees to create a 'homely' place. The founders of Bielany stated: "Once Australia was land of the Aboriginal, then England, but now today is a land of many nationalities, and we are trying to endow this land [with] Polish culture." Interestingly, as the second and third generations assimilated into multicultural Australia, National Tree Day in 2002 involved planting Australian species.<sup>94</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This article has considered migration history from a position of decolonizing the archive rather than through a settler colonial lens.<sup>95</sup> The historical fragments presented in this paper have highlighted a series of encounters between post-World War Two European refugees and assisted migrants and Indigenous Australians at a specific point of Australia's immigration history. They mark a beginning to what we hope will be a wider interdisciplinary discussion across time frames and ethnicities.

On arrival, European displaced persons and other non-British migrants were expected to assimilate into the Australian way of life; to rise in social status from Exogenous Other to citizen settler. They entered an existing political order where the "dirty colonial work" of Indigenous displacement had already

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<sup>94</sup> Danielle Drozdewski, 'A Place called "Bielany": Negotiating a Diasporic Polish Place in Sydney', *Social & Cultural Geography* 8, no. 6 (2007), 864-65.

<sup>95</sup> Hannah Forsyth & Sophie Loy-Wilson, 'Seeking a New Materialism in Australian History', *Australian Historical Studies* 48, no. 2 (2017), 187.

occurred,<sup>96</sup> and they benefited from a form of “colonial gleaning”, which is also evidenced by recent commemorative attempts within the discourse of multiculturalism.<sup>97</sup>

The push for migrants to integrate into the mainstream continues today and was the topic of a recent NITV article in which four newly arrived migrants discussed their feelings of identity and belonging. As Indonesian born Alfred Pek noted, although new arrivals are detached from Australia’s colonial past, “as an immigrant to Australia, we’re still a group of people that benefit from the systems that oppress a lot of these Indigenous cultures.”<sup>98</sup>

## Authors

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<sup>96</sup> Perera & Pugliese, ‘Detoxifying Australia’, 5.

<sup>97</sup> Ghassan Hage, *The Diasporic Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 2018), forthcoming.

<sup>98</sup> “Residents in ‘someone else’s land’: How interaction with Indigenous Australians gave new meaning to these migrants’ lives,” NITV, available <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/explainer/residents-someone-elses-land-how-interaction-indigenous-australians-gave-new-meaning-these>, accessed 1 August 2018.

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