I think of land as the history of my nation. It tells of how we came into being and what system we must live. My great ancestors who lived in the times of history planned everything that we practise now. The law of history says that we must not take land, fight over land, steal land, give land and so on. My land is mine only because I came in spirit from that land, and so did my ancestors of the same land.

My land is my foundation. I stand, live and perform as long as I have something firm and hard to stand on. Without land ... we will be the lowest people in the world, because you have broken down our backbone, took away my arts, history and foundation. You have left me with nothing. Only a black feller who doesn't care about anything in the world. My people don't want to be like you!

—Galarrwuy Yunupingu

The basic fact of Australian history is the conquest of the country by one people and the dispossession, with ruthless destructiveness, of another. The recorded effects of this encounter are as clear as they are terrible. Of the black people who inhabited the continent as "Aborigines," "from the beginning," and who had developed complex languages, cultures, and social organizations in more than 50,000 years of tribal life, only small minorities survived the first generations of contact with the white invaders. Driven from their lands, deprived of traditional food supplies, decimated by introduced diseases, many thousands died of causes the Europeans would list as "natural." Thousands more—perhaps 20,000—were killed in the raids and reprisals of frontier war, in massacres, in countless individual acts of violence.
peans were determined to settle, Aborigines were fated to die. Not only in Tasmania but in all the rapidly occupied south and east of Australia the processes of colonization and economic expansion involved the virtual wiping out of the Aboriginal population. Australia—not alone among the nations of the colonized world—is a nation founded on genocide.

This is not a view which many white Australians share. The majority have in any case little consciousness of the violence in their past and resent the increasingly outspoken Aboriginal references to it. They would prefer to celebrate their bicentennial in 1988 free of black counter-demonstrations and untroubled by the mounting Aboriginal claims for restoration of land. Among the historians who have shaped the Australian consciousness of the past only very few, very recently, have emphasized the destruction of the Aborigines as a central fact. If they have not spoken of genocide—the word appears very rarely—it is for reasons of definition which have made the concept inadequate in a case crying out for its use. What we need, I shall argue, is a conception of genocide which embraces relations of destruction and removes from the word the emphasis on policy and intention which brought it into being.

That genocide must be seen as a policy, for which individuals could be held responsible and called to account, was the main argument behind Raphael Lemkin's conception. The new word was meant "to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves." This emphasis on intention and scope, on purposeful annihilation, has given the word its terrible leading edge. It has succeeded in devaluing all other concepts of less planned destruction, even if the effects are the same. To be really terrible, an ordeal inflicted on a people now has to be "genocidal." These essays, too, are written under that shadow.

"The deliberate destruction of a race or nation"; "acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such": all subsequent definitions of genocide have pressed home the emphasis on planning and purpose. Yet we know that the destruction of many peoples, genocidal outcomes, have been the result of complex and only obscurely discerned causes, and in that respect genocide should properly lose its uniqueness—the uniqueness of having intentionality as its defining characteristic. It should not be possible after more than a century of Marxism and other varieties of historiography intent on teasing out dialectics of change behind apparently singular events to accept the construing of policy as a substitute for explorations of its contexts. This is the issue Karl Marx addressed early on, when he attempted to establish the sets of relationships structuring historical reality as the proper object of historical enquiry, rather than only the intentions and actions of individuals.
In the investigation of political conditions one is too easily tempted to overlook the objective nature of the relationships and to explain everything from the will of the persons acting. There are relationships, however, which determine the actions of private persons as well as those of individual authorities, and which are as independent as the movements in breathing. Taking this objective standpoint from the outset, one will not presuppose an exclusively good or bad will on either side. Rather, one will observe relationships in which only persons appear to act at first.  

Marx did not have genocide—or Australia—in mind; nor was he yet thinking primarily in terms of economic relationships. Discussion of capitalism, of imperialism, of colonialism has of course embraced the kinds of violence associated with the clash of cultures and the imposition of an alien economic, social, and political order. It is in this way that Leo Kuper (somewhat reluctantly, it seems to me) acknowledges a contribution of Marxism to our understanding of genocide. He quotes Eric Wolf on the extermination of hunting and gathering peoples in the name of civilization, whose representatives then inherit the land: "The progress of civilization across the face of the earth is also a process of primary accumulation, of robbery in the name of reason." And while Jean-Paul Sartre is seen as too readily equating colonization with genocide, Kuper recognizes in Sartre's reference to Americans "living out... a relationship of genocide" with the Vietnamese as a way around some of the more legalistic approaches to the problem of intent.  

It is this kind of "living out a relationship of genocide," one structured into the very nature of the encounter, which I wish to explore in the case of Australia. I will not, I hope, beg the question of how relationships might be expressive of intentions; I expect to construe intentions from action (and inaction) and from words as well. But I will assume of actions that they imply relationships, and entail consequences, which people do not always envisage clearly. Genocide, strictly, cannot be a crime of unintended consequences; we expect it to be acknowledged in consciousness. In real historical relationships, however, unintended consequences are legion, and it is from the consequences, as well as the often muddled consciousness, that we have to deduce the real nature of the relationship.  

In Australia very few people are conscious of having any relationship at all with Aborigines. My thesis is that all white people in Australia do have such a relationship; that in the key relation, the appropriation of the land, it is fundamental to the history of the society in which they live; and that implicitly rather than explicitly, in ways which were inevitable rather than intentional, it is a relationship of genocide.  

Such a relationship is systemic, fundamental to the type of society rather than to the type of state, and has historical ramifications extending far beyond any political regime. Irving Horowitz (misleadingly, in my
Tony Barta

view) calls Germany "a genocidal society" because during one terrible period of political aberration the "state bureaucratic apparatus" was used for "a structural and systematic destruction of innocent people." My conception of a genocidal society—as distinct from a genocidal state—is one in which the whole bureaucratic apparatus might officially be directed to protect innocent people but in which a whole race is nevertheless subject to remorseless pressures of destruction inherent in the very nature of the society. It is in this sense that I would call Australia, during the whole 200 years of its existence, a genocidal society.

Nothing could have been further from the minds of its founders. Captain James Cook had taken possession of eastern Australia as "terra nullius," land not effectively belonging to anyone, so that there was never any negotiation with the Aboriginal inhabitants. In this certainly were the seeds of the subsequent genocide: because the Aborigines had never mixed their labor with the soil to make it productive they had no right to it and would be cleared from it by those who did. However, when Captain Arthur Phillip arrived with the first fleet at Botany Bay in 1788 his instructions were unequivocal: he was "by every possible means to open an intercourse with the natives," to "conciliate their affections," and to enjoin everyone to "live in amity and kindness with them." He must punish all who should "wantonly destroy them, or give them any unnecessary interruption in the exercise of their several occupations." The problem, of course, right from the beginning, would be in defining "wanton destruction" and "unnecessary interruption." Colonizing activity in itself—founding a settlement, planting crops, pasturing animals—could not be considered under either heading. To "wantonly destroy" the Aborigines was something very different from taking land they appeared to make no use of, and the distinction became more important in the maintenance—and modification—of colonial attitudes as the area of settlement expanded and Aboriginal resistance increased.

The impulse to expansion was economic. In 1812 it was demonstrated that Australian wool could sell profitably to the Yorkshire mills. Having displaced the peasant farmers from the British countryside by enclosures and larger-scale farming (a process of social dislocation not unrelated to the rise in urban crime and the pressure to transport convicts to Australia), the agrarian revolution in Britain now helped finance an expanding textile industry which it could not supply with raw materials from home production. In 1822 the British government dropped the duty on wool from its own colony on the other side of the world to one-sixth of that on German wool. A new wave of free settlers, often only with sufficient capital for a small starting flock, knew that enterprise and determination—with much of the frontier hardship borne by convict or ex-convict stock-keepers—might bring rich rewards. Sheep may seem unlikely instruments of genocide, but together with the cattle that
trampled edible plants and fouled the water holes, they were the innocent embodiment of historical pressures which wrought massive and irremediable destruction. The tide of strange animals loosed on the Aborigines' carefully tended grazing lands displaced the Aborigines' game and the Aborigines themselves. If the kangaroo, so curious to the eyes of white men, represented the ecologically delicate economy of the hunter-gatherers, the sheep, equally odd in the eyes of the blacks, were suitable representatives of the incomprehensible concepts of individual ownership and private property. The imported animals and the appropriated land were soon shown—like Byron's stocking-frame—to have a higher value than human life. The most drastic demonstration was in Tasmania.

In 1817 the European population of Van Diemen's Land stood at 2,000, the Aboriginal population at about the same. By 1830 the Europeans' numbers had increased to 23,500, some 6,000 of whom were free settlers with capital to invest in the pastoral industry. They had been granted almost half a million hectares, which they stocked with 1 million sheep—more than in the whole of New South Wales. Nobody seriously considered the effect of this on the few Aborigines encountered; the settlers were more worried about escaped convict bushrangers. But the Aborigines were shortly to make their attitude plain, and in the necessity of fighting a virtual war to protect the settlers Australia was to at least brush with that more classical mode of genocide, the direct sanctioning of violence by the state.

The imperial administrator called on to test the viability of humane principles on the frontier was Colonel George Arthur. He arrived in Hobart as Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land in 1824 with a reputation for having stood up to the slave owners of British Honduras in defense of an indigenous people, the Mosquito Indians. One of his first duties, indicative of the way things were to develop, was to approve the trial and execution of the first two black resistance leaders—one of them called Mosquito. He also issued a proclamation, in accordance with Colonial Office instructions, placing the Aborigines under the protection of British law and warning the stock-keepers that if they continued to "wantonly destroy" the Aborigines they would be prosecuted. Neither during his tenure of office, which saw the rapid escalation of frontier violence, nor in the subsequent history of the colony was any European charged, let alone committed for trial, for assaulting or killing an Aboriginal.

Arthur was no doubt sincere in his desire to protect the Aborigines. But attacks on settlers continued, and in November 1826, only two and a half years after his arrival, he gave the settlers the right to drive off any Aborigines they suspected of meaning them harm, and if their own force was insufficient they could call on assistance from the nearest detachment of troops. There followed three years of warfare during which Arthur could find no alternative to the policy being urged on him by the
settlers; the Aborigines would have to go. As the clamor increased for their forcible removal to some kind of reserve—or else for a free hand to the settlers—he confessed, "I cannot divest myself of the consideration that all aggression originated with the white inhabitants," but it is not clear that he ever saw this aggression as being synonymous with the very act of settlement. Settlement, after all, was Arthur's business; whatever Colonial Office principles of fair treatment might be, they did not include the re-embarkation of the colonists and the restoration of the land to savages who had never known how to make it productive. If the blacks would not allow white expansion to proceed uncontested (and thirty white deaths in 1827 showed that they would not) their exclusion from the settled areas was the only option. Under pressure from the local press—the Hobart Town Courier recalled the removal of the Indians to the other side of the Mississippi forty years earlier—the final solution came to be envisaged as removal of all Aborigines from the main island of Tasmania.

Arthur was only reluctantly pushed into declaring martial law, into sponsoring the Black Line, a drive across the entire island which despite ridicule hastened success in clearing the settled areas of Aborigines, and into the removal of the remainder to special camps on outlying islands. He was persuaded that the Aborigines were ready to go for their own good, that removal was necessary for their protection, that once removed from their traditional lands they would more readily accept the blessings of white civilization—Christianity and the work ethic—as the only means to survival. He knew that they might "pine away"; he also knew that their end would be more violent if they were left among the settlers. The despair and disease which finished off the last full-blood Aborigines was not ameliorated by Arthur's hope that their passing be attended by "every act of kindness." Nor was this decline confined to the southernmost colony, with the smallest black population. In fundamental respects the pattern was repeated in the rest of Australia: pastoral invasion, resistance, violent victory of the white men, mysterious disappearance of the blacks.

When a House of Commons Select Committee in 1837 attempted to understand what was happening to the Aborigines it quoted the Bishop of Sydney:

They do not so much retire as decay; wherever Europeans meet with them they appear to wear out, and gradually to decay: they diminish in numbers; they appear actually to vanish from the face of the earth. I am led to apprehend that within a very limited period, a few years, those who are most in contact with Europeans will be utterly extinct—I will not say exterminated—but they will be extinct.12

The bishop had observed well. By 1850 whole tribes from the region of Sydney had disappeared. The story was the same at Newcastle,
further north. In the Port Phillip area, after the settlement of Melbourne in 1835, the numbers dropped from more than 10,000 to less than 2,000 in eighteen years—a decline of over 80 percent. Around Geelong, a center of pastoral expansion, the decline was from 279 to 36. In the new colony of South Australia, the number of Aborigines in the region of Adelaide fell from 650 to 180 in the fifteen years after 1841. Relatively few of these deaths—perhaps a fifth of them—were the result of direct violence. The countless undocumented atrocities and the known killings on the advancing frontier of settlement do not account for the vast proportions of the disaster. By far the greatest number—possibly two-thirds—were killed by the previously unknown illnesses against which Aborigines had no resistance (chiefly smallpox) but also by alcohol and malnutrition. Aborigines had a low resistance to alcohol and tobacco and the respiratory complaints which were exacerbated by the European conventions of clothing (often worn when wet) and housing (now fixed, but without adequate sanitation). Malnutrition, in the almost instantaneous adaptation to a high carbohydrate European diet—flour and sugar were irresistible innovations—played a part in the dramatically lowered birthrate, as did venereal disease.13 A greater part, too easily underestimated, was played by demoralization and despair. If the Europeans only half understood the inability of the Aborigines to withstand civilization and too readily saw them as a race doomed to extinction, Aborigines themselves had reason to be fatalistic. With many of their women bearing mixed-race children to white men, the black birthrate dramatically in decline, their social structure destroyed, and their traditional culture impossible to maintain, many Aborigines could hardly envisage a future in such a cataclysmic world. They knew the white men's ways, and they knew that the kind of statements now treated as empty rhetoric by many historians expressed the white man's view of the real relationship between the races, the genuinely historic terms of the encounter.

We cannot shut our eyes to the inevitable destiny of the Aborigines—the incontrovertible fact that the propagation of the race has ceased—and the consequence, that the present generation of Aborigines is the last that will have existence.... we have already expressed an opinion, which under the expectation of receiving obloquy of pseudo-philanthropists, we unhesitatingly repeat, that the perpetuation of the race of Aborigines is *not to be desired*. That they are an inferior race of human beings it is in vain to deny; (the probable extinction of the race from natural causes is a proof of this); and it is no more desirable that any inferior race should be perpetuated, than that the transmission of an hereditary disease, such as scrofula or insanity, should be encouraged. In the case of the Aborigines, the process of their extinction is the result, in a great degree, of natural causes; and even if not beyond cure, is scarcely to be regretted.... This may be considered a harsh, cruel view of
the question, but it is founded upon clear conviction, and is not unkindly meant.14

The immediate context of this statement, an expression of editorial opinion by The Geelong Advertiser in 1846, was a discussion—intended to be realistically supportive—of missionary efforts to help the Aborigines. The larger context was Geelong's new status, within a decade of its foundation, as one of the busiest wool ports in the world, the center of pastoral expansion into that area of potential wealth called by its white discoverer "Australia Felix." In these vast grasslands individuals with sufficient capital and pioneering spirit could take up "runs" as "squatters" on Crown Land.15 If not every squatter had to kill for the land which would now be his, he knew that the necessity to protect his flocks and stockmen from Aborigines might arise and that if the Aborigines did not threaten him it was because some of them had already been killed—"taught a lesson"—by other settlers. The Geelong Advertiser, which since the previous year had added "and Squatters' Advocate" to its masthead, was vocal in retailing the "depredations" and "outrages" of the blacks and in demanding military protection from a too philanthropic government. So the reality of land seizure by whites, and clearing or at least "pacification" of blacks, was the context of all government policy in Victoria, too, as it had been in Tasmania.

The strategies adopted by a harassed, undermanned administration were to be the same elsewhere, until every yard of the continent had been appropriated. "Protectors" would be appointed to round up the Aborigines and "civilize" them, while saving them from the settlers. Those who resisted this path to social and cultural destruction risked more immediate annihilation at the hands of a new and deadly force of black troopers formed in response to settler demands. Expert at tracking down and "dispersing" Aborigines accused of crimes against people or property, the Native Mounted Police were an effective instrument for securing the displacement of one people by another in most of Australia. Nowhere was the displacement achieved without official and unofficial killing. Everywhere the killing—whether officially sanctioned or not—was understood as necessary to the establishment of the new economic and social order.

The connection between appropriation and violence was lost on no one. From the first expansion of the zone of settlement around Sydney there had been official encouragement for the settlers to form vigilante groups, and in 1824, to protect the flocks and herds spilling out onto the plains beyond the mountains, martial law was declared for five months. No casualty figures were ever reported, but in that time the Aboriginal problem was generally considered solved: there was no more trouble in the Bathurst area. Later the missionary L. E. Threlkeld gave an account of what had been told to him. It is thick with the language of genocide.
One of the largest holders of Sheep in the Colony, maintained at a public meeting at Bathurst, that the best thing that could be done, would be to shoot all the Blacks and manure the ground with their carcases, which was all the good they were fit for! It was recommended likewise that the Women and Children should especially be shot as the most certain method of getting rid of the race. Shortly after this declaration, martial law was proclaimed, and sad was the havoc made upon the tribes at Bathurst. A large number were driven into a swamp, and mounted police rode round and round and shot them off indiscriminately until they were all destroyed! When one of the police enquired of the Officer if a return should be made of the killed, wounded there were none, all were destroyed, Men, Women and Children! the reply was;—that there was no necessity for a return. But forty-five heads were collected and boiled down for the sake of the skulls! My informant, a Magistrate, saw the skulls packed for exportation in a case at Bathurst ready for shipment to accompany the commanding Officer on his voyage shortly afterwards taken to England.\(^{16}\)

Such massacres took place on every colonial frontier: in Australia the terrible story of shootings, decapitations, and poisonings continued into the twentieth century.\(^{17}\) There was open discussion of atrocities in the press, many of them involving troopers supposedly upholding the law, and many more incidents than were ever reported lived on in Aboriginal memory. One of the best documented, because the Attorney General of New South Wales was determined to show that the law (unlike the land) could not be taken into private hands, was the Myall Creek Massacre of 1838. Some thirty peaceful and friendly Aborigines on Myall Creek station were kidnapped by twelve white stockmen and the entire group, men, women, and children, slaughtered. Although the bodies were burned beyond recognition, seven of the killers were tried and—at the second attempt—convicted. Amidst enormous public outrage at this victimization of men who had acted no differently (it was asserted) from government agents in the same area some weeks before, and despite a defense lobby organized by the squatters, they were hanged. Their jailer reported that right to the end all of the men maintained "that as it was done solely in defence of their masters' property . . . they were not aware that in destroying the aboriginals they were violating the law, or that it could take cognizance of their having done so, as it had (according to their belief) been so frequently done in the colony before."\(^{18}\)

It is true that the colonial government, prodded by the disquiet expressed in the House of Commons, now attempted to assert its authority over the settlers and to make its protection of the Queen's black subjects more effective. But the government knew it was dealing with a larger historical encounter whose effects it could at best mitigate. It knew that its own position represented a fundamental denial of Aboriginal claims "whether as sovereigns or proprietors of the soil," and the settlers knew it, too. When they demanded that "energetic and effectual steps" be
taken against the Aborigines because they were "convinced that such a course will eventually prove to be the most humane and merciful," they knew there was after all no dispute about the necessity to protect "the laudable and enterprising pursuit of a pastoral life in the interior" or their status as "pioneers of civilisation." 19 The government was able to proceed with the appointment of protectors because it was understood that their mission would be a civilizing one—rounding up Aborigines and showing them the benefits of Christianity. They would not interfere—and would in fact stop the Aborigines from interfering—with the "laudable and enterprising" incorporation of the continent into the capitalist economy.

The settlers won on the ground, and it is their history, pioneers of civilization in a harsh continent, inevitably displacing the stone age tribes, which remains the conventional view. Very few Australians are aware of the ruthlessness of the process; sympathy for Aboriginal fringe-dwellers, out of sight and out of mind, is low. Claims for land rights are often met with derision. References to the subsequent history of attitudes to the Aborigines—"smoothing the pillow of a dying race," removing children from parents, forcing assimilation of half-castes, insisting that the majority culture of white Australians must be embraced by Aborigines if they are to survive (this has remained the basis of policy in most areas up to the present)—are assumed to be either excusable ("that's the way they thought in those days") or, in common-sense way, inevitable. Certainly nobody now, despite occasional remarks later passed off as jokes, thinks in terms of extermination. So the idea that the consistent, indeed mounting pressure toward incorporation in the now even more internationalized Australian economy is in some way related to genocide is incomprehensible. In fact, all the subsequent pressure on the Aborigines as a people is a direct result of their losing the unequal war for possession of the land. It is possible that a people less weakened by disease might have resisted more successfully; it is not possible to imagine a settler class less determined to break that resistance. The killing on the frontier, then, had to be of a kind that would destroy the ability of Aborigines to survive as independent peoples, with their own social organization, ethnic separateness, and cultural value system in conflict with the world view and economic interest of the invaders. This was clearly understood at the time, by both sides. The Europeans knew that if they could not establish their right to secure property—possession of the land—they had no future; the Aborigines knew that when they lost the fight for the land, all was lost. The fatalism of the black people's "fading away" from those areas where the white man's civilization so quickly triumphed was not very mysterious. In the ten years to 1849 only twenty births were recorded amongst all the seven tribes around Melbourne. But without the land to which their whole being belonged, without the sacred sites and ceremonies which ex-
pressed the meaning and purpose of Aboriginal life, how could a future life be envisioned? Derrimut, of the Yarra people, said to a European in the 1840s:

You see... all this mine, all along here Derrimut's once; no matter now, me soon tumble down... Why me have lubra? Why me have piccaninny? You have all this place, no good have children, no good have lubra, me tumble down and die very soon now.

And Billibellary, an elder of the same group, apparently explaining the increase in the traditional practice of infanticide:

The Black lubras say now no good children, Blackfellow say no country now for them, very good we kill and no more come up Pickaninny.20

To veil the realities of this conflict behind the cloudy rhetoric of "the fatal impact" is to deny historical responsibility by refusing historical analysis. "We Australians," a Melbourne sociologist recently assured newspaper readers, "have inherited the wreckage of one of the many cultural tragedies that litter human history. When a strong and a weak culture meet, the latter invariably dies." It was not a matter of anyone being at fault in the past, so we should not overreact in the present—notably by "rushing in dripping with guilt to give away huge sections of the country" which might (through mining) be of benefit to all Australians.21 I am aware that the large-scale "relations of genocide" I propose can imply a similar "no one is to blame" approach. The difference, I hope, is in an insistence that relations imply connections within systems, and that the whole system needs to be critically explored.

What Marx said in 1843 referred to the economic and societal pressures on the Moselle wine growers, but it is equally apt to the situation of Australian wool growers at the same time. It was not "an exclusively good or bad will on either side" which caused the destruction of the Aborigines but "the objective nature of the relationships" between (white) capitalist wool producers and (black) hunter-gatherers. Local encounters were always between individuals, and individual attitudes could make an immediate difference between life and death. The quality of personal relationships varied according to the whole range of individual character and circumstance, but the larger encounter and the inescapable relationship was between totally incompatible forms of economy and society.

At the center of this relationship—both in consciousness and in actuality—was the land. Both peoples, the Aboriginal inhabitants and the invaders, needed the land. Because of the uses for which each people needed the land, and because of the cultural gulf in understandings about the land, coexistence was impossible. The black people
belonged to the land, their being was part of it and it was part of them. Collectively and individually, it was their life. To the white people it was land to be brought into production; that production was at the center of their culture and the basis of their social order. Collectively, taking over the land was the driving force of the colonists; individually, they saw the land as potential and then actual property. Once appropriated by one man it belonged to him alone—even if normally owned by the state power which had claimed it all. Very few of the invaders had a sense of alienating the land from the Aborigines; how extreme a form of alienation it was they understood even less. The men who put their capital into land knew they had a relationship, through wage labor, with the men who helped them make the land productive, even if they would not have recognized any alienation of labor into capital through that relationship. With the Aborigines there were generally no relations of production, only relations—again by means of capital—through the land. So the key relation between white and black was one of total alienation: that was the condition of the triumph of a taken for granted economic, social, and political order in an "alien" land.

It will still be objected that taking over a continent and destroying its inhabitants are two very different things. And—as I have been at pains to agree—the determination to do one did not imply the intention to do the other. Only a minority "had to" kill, as they saw it, in defense of their property, or in defense of their own lives—lives on the line because of commitment to property. But the violence accompanying the appropriation of the land was of a scale and ruthlessness—largely uncurbed by official intervention—which could leave no doubt in black or white minds as to the fate of those who resisted the "inevitable" course of events, and it can be no coincidence that it was accompanied, among those with no thought of murder in their minds, by much talk of the "inevitable" dying out of the black race. I do not think it is too simplistic to see in this dominant opinion the most comfortable ideological reflection of a relationship which could not be recognized in good conscience for what it was—a relationship of genocide.

In some larger human reckoning, it has been pointed out, the economic development of Australia benefited more people than it harmed. By the end of the nineteenth century, "three million Australians and millions of people in other lands were being fed by a continent which in its tribal heyday had supported only a fraction of that number." The new sheep industry in Australia provided work in English mills and warmth to millions in Europe and North America. 22 And it was the blanket, a typical and beneficent product of the new capitalist world economy, which provided the symbol both of the production relations and the relations of dispossession which came together in the appropriation of the land. Made productive according to the original justification for its
seizure, the land was never acknowledged in principle or practice as hav-
ing been taken from previous owners. Therefore no payment or com-
pensation was ever offered. But for many years the acknowledgment
that a black fringe-dweller was a full-blood Aborigine, deserving at least
of government charity, was the issue of a new blanket, completing its
journey from the wool of the seized grasslands, through the mill of the
industrial economy, to the survivors of the dispossessed.

We were hunted from our ground, shot, poisoned, and had our daughters,
sisters and wives taken from us. . . . What a number were poisoned at
Kilcoy. . . . They stole our ground where we used to get food, and when
we got hungry and took a bit of flour or killed a bullock to eat, they shot us or
poisoned us. All they give us now for our land is a blanket once a year.23

Times change, commodities at the center of the economy change,
ways of negotiation change. Aborigines in the far north of Australia,
where the climate and landscape were less congenial to European settle-
ment, met the white onslaught later and with greater numbers. Some
who still remember the massacres—the last shooting by a police party
took place in 1928—finally, in the 1970s, acquired rights to significant
areas of reserve land. But the pressure at the frontier of the yet more
transnational economy has not let up. Bauxite, industrial diamonds,
uranium—a substance whose genocidal potential for the first time
threatens the white peoples of the world as well—have joined pastoral
products as necessary commodities which black peoples, in the name of
the greater good, should not stand in the way of. Some would have the
Aborigines stand firm against uranium mining. The Aborigines know
the uranium will be mined when there is a market for it and that their
choices in the future are not separable from what has happened in the
past. They know that the relations of power between black and white
may still be modified, but that their fundamental weighting will not be
changed.24 In that sense the relations of genocide are alive, and every
negotiation will continue to be witnessed by the Aboriginal dead.

NOTES

1. Galarrwuy Yunupingu, Northern Land Council, in a letter to white
people, Black News Service, 1976. Quoted by Janine Roberts, From

2. The estimate of numbers of Aborigines killed in direct conflict is
from Henry Reynolds, The Other Side of the Frontier (Townsville: James
Cook University of North Queensland, 1981), p. 99. This is an indispens-
able account of the colonial encounter between whites and blacks.

3. Exceptions include Bernard Smith, The Spectre of Truganini, ABC
Boyer Lectures (Sydney: The Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1980),


19. The correspondence between Governor Gipps and "The Memorialists" is reprinted by S. G. Foster, "Aboriginal Rights and Official Morality," *Push from the Bush*, No. 11 (November 1981), pp. 68-98. He shows how the House of Commons' recognition that the land had been taken from the Aborigines "without any other title than that of superior force" was suppressed in official pronouncements.


23. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, p. 158. At Kilcoy, in 1842, perhaps more than one hundred Aborigines were poisoned; in the 1928 massacre thirty-one Aborigines were officially admitted to have been shot—justifiably, in self-defense.

24. As I write, an advertising campaign by the mining industry, estimated to have cost a million dollars, has paid off. Faced with elections, the West Australian and Federal Labor governments have announced that they will not allow Aborigines to block mining on Aboriginal land. Jan Mayman, "How White Money Feeds White Fear," *The Age* (19 September, 1984), and further reports 27-29 September. Galarrwuy Yunupingu (see note 1) has become a leading advocate of the necessity for Aboriginal communities to negotiate royalty agreements with the uranium mining companies.