

Neither Nationalists nor Universalists: Rex Ingamells and the Jindyworobaks

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Introduction

THE JINDYWOROBAK POETRY MOVEMENT, FOUNDED BY REX INGAMELLS IN 1938, emerged in the context of a literary-cultural milieu split between those concerned with developing a uniquely ‘indigenous’ Australian tradition on the one hand, and those primarily concerned with defending and maintaining continuity with Australia’s European inheritance on the other. While the Jindyworobaks have typically been associated with the former tradition, this essay argues that they in fact sought to chart a new path that rejected both the straightforward traditions of anti-colonial nationalism and the ‘alien’ influence of imported European culture; that they rejected *both* extremes and sought instead to achieve a synthesis of the two. With this aim in mind, they turned towards Aboriginal Australians, as bearers of the spirit of the place, in an attempt to appropriate an imagined environmental essence and to thereby construct the conditions for an unmediated encounter between the settler and the land.

In formulating their program in these terms, the Jindyworobaks conformed to a broader tradition. David Carter has referred to its ‘radical originality’: seeking to identify Australia’s *genius loci*, the spirit of *this* place, as a source of alterity and to solve the problems of settler nationalism by means of an originary emergence. Yet as this essay argues, this tradition is itself characteristic of the ‘multifaceted

ambivalence' of settler-colonial nationalism (Thomas 34). Indeed, conflicts and misconceptions such as those surrounding the Jindyworobaks are typical of settler societies, in which the tensions produced by a system of relations involving settler, metropolitan and indigenous agencies mean that the imperatives towards settler indigenisation and neo-European replication compete for supremacy but are never ultimately resolved (Veracini chapter one). The concluding sections of this paper therefore introduce a settler colonial studies interpretive perspective in order to propose an original interpretation of the Jindyworobaks as neither universalist nor exclusively nationalist, and neither nationalist nor exclusively indigenist, but rather ambivalent settler nationalists expressing the typical settler-colonial desire to overcome the contingencies characteristic of the settler-colonial condition.

There is an important thread in the historiography on Ingamells and the Jindyworobaks that identifies, but cannot specify, the imperatives underlying their approach as deriving from Australia's settler-colonial conditions.¹ Yet this thread does not elaborate the implications of such an interpretation. Importantly, the reinterpretation proposed here is not delimited by either history or geography, yet takes both factors seriously. Indeed, while Les Murray has described himself proudly, if half in jest, as the 'Last of the Jindyworobaks' (Elliott, 'Editor's Note' 283), the cultural dynamics of settler colonialism this essay identifies and applies to Ingamells and the Jindyworobaks extend well beyond this admittedly limited historical example. Paul Keating's recent call for the 'blending of black and white Australia to create [a] new national identity' stands as only the most recent and public example of a persistent concern for settler indigenisation (Taylor), or what Philip Mead has described as 'a continuing desire in the white Australian imaginary ... for a species of cultural-racial syncretism' (560).

Perhaps even more significantly still, the imperatives and exigencies identified here are no more limited by geography than they are by chronology: similar movements driven by similar concerns, albeit exhibiting distinctive characteristics on the basis of differing cultural and political contexts, can be identified in, for example, the literary-cultural strands of Andean *indigenismo* in Latin America (Coronado; Rama), *l'École d'Alger* (Dunwoodie; Haddour), the Canaanites in Israel (Ohana; Piterberg chapter three), and the Maorilanders in New Zealand (Stafford and Williams). Ever-sensitive and insightful, Nettie Palmer was awake to the comparative dimension at the time the Jindyworobaks were writing, requesting a statement of 'Jindy theory' from Ingamells in 1944 on the grounds that she was undertaking

¹ See, for example, Clunies-Ross; Kirkpatrick 'Jindy Modernist'; Mead; Wright 'Perspective'; 'Extract'.

a study of Australian literary-historical movements, at one point finding analogous 'moments' in the literary history of another southern continent in the New World: Latin-America. Only its Jindies try to go to a period of the Incas, the Incas whose records and race were blotted out by the Spanish conquest. (Palmer)

Each of these movements, in one way or another, responded to the problems of settler colonialism and modernity in ways informed by their own cultural and political histories and circumstances. While a comprehensive account of the diversity of these movements falls outside the scope of the current discussion, in each instance they involved a turn towards what Ingamells would call 'environmental values', as well as—in a spirit of appropriation yet with sometimes positive long-range outcomes for the subjects of said appropriation—local indigenous peoples, in a varied set of attempts to overcome the exigencies of the settler-colonial situation.

The broader tradition identified here thus reaches beyond the Jindies' rather more limited historical and geographical confines. One of the virtues of a settler colonial studies interpretive perspective is its ability to identify and account for 'the continuities, discontinuities, adjustments, and departures' within and between settler societies, and against non-settler ones as well (Wolfe, 'Elimination' 402). This is work that, with respect to the Jindies, remains to be undertaken elsewhere.

The problems of settler nationalism

In Patrick Wolfe's seminal definition, settler colonialism is distinguished from 'franchise' or 'dependent' colonialism on the basis that whereas the objective of colonialism is the extraction of surplus value from peripheral territories through the enforced exercise of indigenous or imported labour, the primary object of settler colonialism is the land itself (*Settler Colonialism*). Settler colonialism is distinct from colonialism because it is, at its core, a project aiming towards the assertion of permanent territorial sovereignty. The clue is in the name: unlike the temporary colonial sojourner, the settler *stays* (Veracini chapter one). This leads to a number of features typical of settler societies themselves, the most significant of which for present purposes is the establishment of a permanent, albeit dynamic, triangular system of relationships comprising settler, metropolitan and indigenous agencies (chapter one). While settler relationships operate in multiple and dynamic ways, this framework for conceptualising the settler-colonial situation emphasises the fact that, as Lorenzo Veracini has outlined, 'there are conflicting tendencies operating at the same time on the settler collective: one striving for indigenisation and national autonomy, the other aiming at neo-European replication and the establishment of a "civilised" pattern of life' (21).

In Terry Goldie's convincing account, indigenisation is defined as the process 'through which the "settler" population attempts to become as though indigenous, as though "born" of the land' ('Man of the Land' n.p.) and both expresses and addresses a desire on the part of settlers to erase what he terms their 'separation of belonging' from the land (*Fear and Temptation* 12). Yet in attempting to undertake a process of settler indigenisation and to thereby distinguish their indigeneity from their European cultural inheritance, settler nationalists inevitably confront the limits imposed on this process by the necessity of maintaining the colonial authority and sovereign capacity deriving from this very inheritance. As Veracini has outlined,

Indigenization and Europeanization should ... be seen as asyndetic [sic] progressions—the line separating settler and indigenous must be approached but is never finally crossed. The same goes for neo-European imitation, where sameness should be emphasized but difference is a necessary prerequisite of the absolute need to distinguish between settler self and indigenous and exogenous Others. (23)

The closer to their European origins the settler claims to be, the starker their sense of geographical and historical isolation becomes. As Deborah Bird Rose has suggested, this sense of isolation institutes a 'discontinuity' between the settlers' memory of home and the reality of here, 'alienating them from their own origins and kin, and assigning them a lower-order identity' (43). Conversely, the further towards indigenisation the settler progresses, the closer to the figure of the actual—authentic/authoritative—indigene the settler finds themselves to be. As J. J. Healy has commented, 'an authentic consciousness trying to grasp the distinctive characteristics of European society in Australia would, sooner or later, find itself face to face with the Aborigine and the land' (173). Settlers—and settler nationalists in particular—are therefore subject to a dual sense of alienation, finding themselves suspended between 'the backward-looking impotence of exile and the forward-looking impetus to indigeneity' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 135). As a consequence, they continually confront what Patrick Wolfe has described as 'the problem of the fragment': that is, 'how to be British for the purpose of expropriating Australians and Australian for the purpose of independence from Britain?' ('Nation and Miscegenation' 126).

There are a variety of possible responses to this predicament, and this essay will attempt to map that proposed by the Jindyworobaks against the two relations the settler always (whether 'wittingly or unwittingly') addresses (Johnston and Lawson 370). In the first instance, in relation to the settler-metropole relationship, responses vary from the extremes of anti-colonial nationalism, epitomised by *The Bulletin* of the 1890s, to the conservative Anglocentrism represented in the

interwar period by the likes of G. H. Cowling and J. I. M. Stewart, Professors of English at the Universities of Melbourne and Adelaide respectively. Each of these exemplars would provide important impetuses for the Jindyworobak program, which sought to propose a new way forward that rejected both the 'larrikin' view of Australian life and literature presented by *The Bulletin* on the one hand, as well as the 'alien' influence of imported European culture on the other; that is, that rejected *both* extremes and sought instead to achieve a synthesis of the two.

The settler-indigene divide, on the other hand, both structures the tension between what Gérard Bouchard has characterised as the competing imperatives of 'continuity and rupture', yet also seemingly offers settlers one potential strategy towards its supersession. The variety of possible responses to this second relationship range from disavowal of either the sovereignty or significance of indigenous peoples on the one hand, to a radical mode of indigenist appropriation on the other. These are the dual strategies Goldie has termed '*penetration ... and appropriation*' (*Fear and Temptation* 15), *both* of which aim towards the goal of settler indigenisation and to construct the conditions for imagining the unmediated encounter between the settler and the land towards which settler colonialism ultimately strives (Wolfe 'Islam' 235).

Various positioned between the nationalist-universalist and nationalist-indigenist extremes, individuals and movements also had to find ways of relating to the historical circumstances of the interwar period out of and into which the Jindyworobaks emerged. These exigencies, and their particular Australian manifestations—including the aftermath of World War I, the various impacts of the Great Depression, the rise of fascism and the imminent threat of Australia's involvement in another European war, as well as the tensions these events produced in Australia's relationship with Britain—combined to make settler nationalism simultaneously more urgent and increasingly problematic throughout this period. Perhaps most importantly, the demise of the doomed race ideal in the interwar period also meant that settlers found themselves confronting what Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra have termed 'the intractable conditions of [settler Australia's] foundation event' (26).

These circumstances contributed to the emergence and the urgency of two strands of thought of particular significance in this historical moment, both of which responded to the exigencies of the settler situation in ways conditioned by the pressures of the period. In the first instance, a new form of cultural nationalism emerged, associated with figures such as 'Inky' Stephensen, Miles Franklin and the Palmers, which asserted Australian independence yet nevertheless sought to claim a sense of national 'maturity' and sophistication; the second entailed an explicit indigenism marked by a sense of fascination with the figure of the

Aboriginal and most strongly represented by Margaret Preston and the subjects of this essay, the Jindyworobaks. The Jindyworobaks were associated with both.

Rex Ingamells and the Jindyworobaks

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

The Jindyworobak poetry movement was founded as, and remained, a broad church, more open along gender lines than many comparable movements of the time (Birns 25), and open to sceptics, even critics, within its own ranks so long as key precepts were accepted and adhered to. And yet, despite the sometimes uncomfortable coexistence within the original Jindyworobak Club (the nomenclature is telling) of 'cosmopolitan' Jindyworobaks like Flexmore Hudson on the one hand (Regan), and nationalist-indigenists of an even more radical ilk than Ingamells like Ian Mudie on the other,² it was Rex Ingamells who maintained a clear line on key points of emphasis throughout the movement's existence, until its eventual decline under the altered cultural and political conditions of the post-war period. As the above quotation from Brian Elliott's introduction to his edited collection *The Jindyworobaks* suggests, in many ways Rex Ingamells was the Jindyworobak poetry movement, or at least its most powerful material and intellectual, if not creative, driving force. And Ingamells himself was not afraid to assert what he regarded as his 'proprietary right' over the Jindyworobak imprimatur, writing to his Victorian State Editor Kenneth Gifford in 1944 that his 'authority in all matters of Jindyworobak publishing [was] complete and unquestionable' (*Letter*).

In light of the above, as well as the fact that this essay is largely concerned with criticisms of the Jindyworobaks which almost invariably targeted Ingamells, either directly or implicitly, the following discussion focuses on Ingamells' own articulations of the movement's aims and intentions. This is not, however, to deny or downplay the significance of those others who contributed to the development and dissemination of the Jindyworobak program, in particular Ian Mudie, who first alerted Ingamells to the 'symbolic possibilities' of 'alcheringa' (Dally 'Quest'; Kirkpatrick 'Fearful Affinity'), Victor Kennedy and Kenneth Gifford, each of whom

² Mudie was Ingamells' first and most direct connection with 'Inky' Stephensen and his Australia-First Movement, an association to which Dally attributes at least part of the condemnation the movement subsequently received (*Literary Philosophers*).

published their own statements of the Jindyworobak position, or Roland Robinson, who carried the Jindyworobak mantle well beyond the dissolution of the movement itself and contributed far more than did Ingamells in terms of both evidencing and encouraging an *actual* appreciation of the cultures of Indigenous Australia.

So, to introduce our main protagonist. Reginald Charles Ingamells (1913-1955), Rex to his friends (and everybody else), was born in Orroroo, a railway town in outback South Australia adjacent to Goyder's Line and at the very edge of the so-called 'settled' districts, a location Brian Elliott has described as 'a last-outpost meeting-place of the civilized and the savage' ('Introduction' xxiii). These geographical circumstances and his paternal descent from a Methodist minister, may well have contributed to Ingamells' interest in what he later described as the 'unique qualities in the Australian environment' ('Spoils of Time' xxvii), as well as to what Peter Kirkpatrick has characterised as his 'missionary zeal' ('Jindy Modernist' 102). Ingamells would later aim to make good use of these attributes in pursuit of his mission to create an 'indigenous' Australian idiom.³

These material and personal bases were reinforced by the historical and structural concerns outlined above and, in combination with a series of subsequent educational encounters and experiences for Ingamells, brought the Jindyworobak program into being. These included a reported encounter with T. G. H. Strehlow on a trip to Central Australia in 1930-1931⁴ and the criticism and encouragement he received from Professor L. F. Giblin (Ingamells 'Jindyworobak Review'), who in his foreword to Ingamells' first book of verse, *Gumtops*, in 1935, urged Australian poets to 'forget all they have learned of the poetry of other lands ... and try to give us their first-hand, direct reaction to nature and man as they find them in Australia' (x).

In the literary realm, Ingamells' most influential encounters included the spat between Vance Palmer and Professor Cowling, also in 1935 and, in 1936, his reading of the first section of P. R. Stephensen's *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*, written in response to the Palmer/Cowling controversy (Ingamells 'Jindyworobak Review'). Stephensen's essay directed him backwards, to D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*, from which Ingamells 'gained a strong sense of the primaeval in Australian nature [but] ... rejected Lawrence's view of strangeness in

³ For Ingamells and other Australian literary figures at the time, 'indigenous'—along with 'native' and the unqualified term 'Australian'—had come to refer to Anglo or settler Australians, while Indigenous Australians had come to be known as 'Australian Aborigines', 'Aboriginal natives', or simply 'Aborigines'. This is significant, since it points to one of the main imperatives underlying the Jindyworobak project: settler indigenisation. See Ahluwalia.

⁴ In a 1972 interview with John Dally, Strehlow himself cast doubt on this apparently formative meeting, yet his subsequent support for the Jindyworobak program is not in question (Dally 'The Jindyworobak Movement' 47-8).

the Spirit of the Place', since his 'own first-hand experience of outback life made it familiar' to him (10-1). Ingamells also rejected Stephensen's suggestion that 'imported English culture is the most important element in Australian culture' (Ingamells and Tilbrook 12), protesting that Stephensen 'was not Australian enough' ('Jindyworobak Review' 10)!

It was also in 1936 that Ingamells first read James Devaney's appropriately—albeit inaccurately—entitled *The Vanished Tribes*, from the glossary of which he 'adapted' (Ingamells 'Jindyworobak' 63) the originally hyphenated term 'Jindyworobak', a term Devaney 'assured' him had belonged to an unspecified 'Queensland tribe' and glossed as meaning 'to annex, to join' (Ingamells 'Miles Franklin' 221). Ingamells apparently evidenced little interest in its etymology,⁵ choosing the term because it was 'Aboriginal', 'outlandish according to fashionable literary tastes', and possessed an 'apt symbolism for its meaning ... denoting synthesis of our European cultural heritage with our Australian heritage' (221).

Eventually, after a few false starts, in 1938, with the publication of his manifesto *Conditional Culture*, the formation of an official Jindyworobak Club and the establishment of the annual *Jindyworobak Anthology*, the Jindyworobak Movement was founded. In *Conditional Culture*, Ingamells outlined the aims of the Jindyworobak program as follows:

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

1. A clear recognition of environmental values.
2. The debunking of much nonsense.
3. An understanding of Australia's history and traditions, primaeval, colonial, and modern. (Ingamells and Tilbrook 4-5)

Ingamells defined his expression 'environmental values' as encapsulating 'the distinctive qualities of an environment which cannot be satisfactorily expressed in conventional terms that suit other environments' (11).

Ingamells' program was formulated in response to the various literary and educational encounters just outlined and traced two particular threads of central importance to any attempt to understand him and his movement. First, against the

⁵ *Jindi woroback* was the original form noted by Daniel Bunce in his 1859 vocabulary of the *Melbourne* language/s and copied by Devaney. See Dixon.

Anglocentrism of Cowling and even the assertive (though not assertive enough for Ingamells) nationalism of Stephensen, Ingamells argued that while Australia's European inheritance was important, it was not and could not be the most important element in developing an 'indigenous' Australian culture, since it was 'imported' and therefore 'alien' to the Australian environment and its cultural conditions. Second, against Lawrence and following from the first, that Australia's 'unique' environment and the Aboriginal cultures he described as 'closely bound in every way with their environment' (17) were not strange, as Lawrence had claimed, but familiar to those, like himself, who had never known anything else. They could and would, indeed they must, provide the source and inspiration for the development of a correspondingly unique 'indigenous' Australian culture. This second thread was, in part, an unavoidable reaction to the first; yet it was also a unique response on Ingamells' part to his geographical circumstances and experiences.

In framing his objections in this way, Ingamells was refuting the claims of those authors and critics—those he classified as holding 'fashionable literary tastes' ('Miles Franklin' 221)—who claimed that literature in general, and poetry in particular, were universal in essence and should be adjudged according to existing universal (that is, European) standards. He was also repudiating the perspective of those who, however much they may have emphasised the importance of an 'indigenous' settler national culture, could see no value or promise in the living cultures of the Indigenous peoples of the continent for the purpose of national cultural construction. These were very often the same people and, as the following outline will attest, his approach duly provoked their considerable ire.

Universalist objections to the Jindyworobak program

Contemporary critics were not always dismissive in their responses to the Jindyworobaks, and even when they were they often moderated or modified their position later on. More sympathetic views were in evidence in the *Jindyworobak Review* of 1948, which, to its credit, published these positive perspectives alongside criticisms from the likes of Brian Elliott, amongst others (Ingamells et al.). Yet those critics writing from the universalist (read Europeanist) position typically employed similar critical strategies against the Jindyworobaks. The first was to assert the relative exoticism of Aboriginal cultures and languages to European Australians, as compared with the European traditions Ingamells deemed 'alien' to Australia, and to emphasise Ingamells' apparent preference for the former *at the expense* of the latter.

It was on this basis that in 1941 A. D. Hope launched a scathing attack on the Jindyworobaks in *Southerly*. Hope began his review, described by Bruce Clunies-Ross as exemplifying the 'line of attack which was probably the most damaging'

(59), by suggesting that '[t]he Jindyworobaks might be described as "the Boy Scout School of Poetry"' ('Corroboree' 248). Against Victor Kennedy's suggestion that 'our poets too often write as if they were still living in England and so write badly, for what they write is second-hand and imitative', Hope asserted that

to the majority of Australians, the point of view and culture of the Aboriginal is still more alien and remote, and the poet who tries to write like a second-hand Abo. is no more likely to produce sincere work than the poet who writes like a second-hand Englishman. (249)

In his editorial introducing the same issue of *Southerly*, R. G. Howarth asserted similar misconceptions concerning the Jindyworobak program, objecting to their insistence that Australian writers 'must disown Europe, think and write only of our surroundings and true past' and suggesting, in a familiar move, that the Australia of the Jindyworobaks

is that of the Aborigines, not that of the so-called usurpers, the white men; according to some of them—if this is not unfair—to be true Australians we must trace our culture back even to Alcheringha [sic], the ancient native 'dreamtime' or period of primitive bliss. ('Editorial' 252)

In a similar vein, Max Harris, short-lived founding member of the Jindyworobaks and later earnest and Angry Penguin, in a 1943 article published in *Meanjin*, took umbrage with the Jindyworobaks' 'Aboriginalizing' of English and their use of what he called 'the "exoticism" of foreign verbiage' ('Little Wombat' 261). This was despite Harris having published his own first book of verse, *Gift of Blood*, in 1940 under the Jindyworobak imprint (Kirkpatrick, 'Jindy Modernist' 107). Brian Elliott, also involved with the movement in Adelaide in the lead-up to its formation and later describing himself as a 'potential Jindy' ('Jindydammerung' 76), reiterated a similar objection in 1947, calling 'the *Alchera*' concept an 'exotic fancy' for 'white Australians' ('Breath of Alchera' 10). Elliott founded his claims in an objection to the Jindyworobaks' supposed 'contention that we must forget our European origins and find some way of accepting the black gods', an idea Elliott described as 'absurd', 'confused and errant in the extreme' (5-8).

These critics typically countered Ingamells' assumed anti-Europeanism with assertions, or assumptions, that Australia was and remained European in essence and that its European inheritance was both superior to and more central than any secondary 'environmental' influences, European Australians having only recently 'settled' the land. So Hope, in response to what he termed 'the series of emotional outbursts masquerading as an argument' ('Corroboree' 249) comprising Ian Mudie's contribution to the 1941 collection of Jindyworobak essays, *Cultural*

Cross-Section—in which Mudie claimed that ‘[w]e are merely aliens in our own land, and nothing else’ (29)—stated unequivocally that ‘[w]e have created a new European country in Australia and we belong to the European nations even though we do not live in Europe’ (249).

A corresponding strategy employed by universalists was the assertion—against Ingamells’ emphasis on the importance of ‘environmental values’—that poetry should remain universal in nature and should be judged as such. Harris, for example, insisted that ‘[t]he sole issue of any importance so far as the literature of this country goes is the poetic quality of the poetry’ and that the poet’s ‘fundamental environment is himself’ (*Little Wombat* 260, 262). From a different position, Elliott stated in 1947 that ‘[p]oetry that is real and actual can only have its actuality because everybody knows and sympathizes with the basis of its making’, clearly not the case, as Elliott observed, for the ‘exoticisms’ with which the Jindyworobaks were concerned (*Breath of Alchera* 10). These strategies are related, of course, so that the claim that Australian poetry and literature should remain universal in character most often represented a claim for the precedence of Australia’s European inheritance over and above its settler-colonial surroundings.

Each of these critics later softened their stance towards the Jindyworobaks, with Hope even contributing to the *Jindyworobak Anthology* in 1943 and 1944 and in 1974 prefacing the reprint of his review contained in his collection of criticism—*Native Companions*—with the comment that ‘[s]ome amends are due ... to these Jindyworobaks ... I made the mistake of supposing that if a case is badly argued, there is nothing in it at all’ (*Native Companions* 44). In 1986, he conceded that ‘despite its muddled thinking and its impossible demands on artists, it was a healthy reaction against overseas domination of our ideas’ (*Australian Literature* 10). It should, however, also be noted that Hope maintained his misconception of the Jindyworobak creed, asserting in his 1986 reflections on ‘the advent of an Australian literature’ that ‘the so-called Jindyworobak movement of the Thirties ... urged Australians to cut all their ties with the white man’s culture and to develop a new art and literature based on that of the aborigines [sic]’ (10).⁶

As others have noted, however, it is ironic that one of the more effective responses to Hope’s criticisms, and corrective to his continuing misapprehensions, was contained within the oft-quoted passages from his own poem *Australia*, ‘[w]here second-hand Europeans pullulate / Timidly on the edge of alien shores’. Here,

⁶ For a fascinating and insightful rebuttal of Hope’s continuing misconceptions, see Bruce Clunies-Ross’ reply in the comments section of the article online (available from <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v08/n15/ad-hope/ad-hope-reflects-on-the-advent-of-an-australian-literature>). Clunies-Ross authored one of the more convincing analyses of the Jindyworobak position.

Hope appealed for a ‘savage and scarlet’ spirit to emerge from the central desert and, turning ‘gladly home / From the lush jungle of modern thought’, hoped against Hope that ‘still from the desert prophets come’ to free us from ‘the chatter of cultured apes / Which is called civilisation over there’. This poem, as Brian Elliott has pointed out, would undoubtedly have been welcomed by Ingamells had it been submitted for consideration towards the annual *Jindyworobak Anthology* as what Ingamells would have classified as ‘positive Jindyworobak verse’ (‘Introduction’ lxii). And as David Carter and Bridget Griffen-Foley point out, Hope’s own expression of a ‘radical Australian originality links him unexpectedly to the Jindyworobaks and forward to a poet such as Les Murray’ (251), the aforementioned ‘Last of the Jindyworobaks’ (Elliott, ‘Editor’s Note’ 283). As Peter Kirkpatrick queries, when ‘the Augustan A. D. Hope nicknamed the Jindyworobaks “the Boy Scout School of Poetry”, did he not remember his own 1939 poem, “Australia”?’ (‘Fearful Affinity’ 136).

Max Harris, who contributed to the *Jindyworobak Anthology* in each of its first five years (1938-1942) and again in 1947, attempted his own unique brand of reconciliation in his piece for the *Jindyworobak Review*—appropriately entitled ‘The Importance of Disagreeing’—stating that ‘[a]lthough I have been one of the most caustic critics’ of the Jindyworobak project, ‘I have been always fully aware, both of its creative role historically and the valuable elements its theory contains’ (‘Disagreeing’ 74). And Harris too, like Hope, could not resist turning inwards, though in this case towards a different locus of nationalist emergence, to discover an antipodean modernity emerging out of the bush itself: ‘the Australian bush is in the spirit of this new outlook and will find its best expression there’ (*Letter* n.p.).

Howarth, a significant and regular contributor to the *Jindyworobak Anthology* over the course of its existence (appearing in eleven issues between 1940 and 1953) went perhaps the furthest in his 1948 contribution to the *Jindyworobak Review*, where he commented that ‘the Jindyworobak Movement represents a further stage in the development of the Australian vision’ (‘Perspective’ 91). Unlike Hope, Howarth’s understanding of the Jindyworobaks’ program had also improved. Now, in place of the misconception that the Jindyworobaks wished Australian writers to ‘disown’ their European inheritance, Howarth accepted that Ingamells had ‘advocated from the beginning what amounts to self-reliance in our writing’ and that ‘Jindyworobakism stands for the natural Australian outlook, with some emphasis, to secure effect, on what we may call the pre-history of our continent’ (91). Elliott also, albeit much later on, displayed a surprising degree of sensitivity to the intentions of the Jindyworobaks in introducing his 1979 edited collection *The Jindyworobaks*, a collection which itself helped generate a renewed interest in the movement (‘Introduction’ xvii-lxvi).

Yet the outline above suggests the often-contradictory nature of the universalist criticisms levelled at Ingamells, which were as much as anything else constructed around a misconception of the Jindyworobak program. This was, as others have observed, in part a result of Ingamells' own failures of expression (McQueen chapter six), since his style of prose was both polemical and imprecise. In his early articulations of the Jindyworobak program in particular, he tended towards overstatement in his suggestion that a 'fundamental break ... with the spirit of English culture, is the prerequisite for the development of an Australian culture' (Ingamells and Tilbrook 6) and that 'Australian literature must, to develop, diverge in important respects from the course taken by the parent literature' (12). And he would continue to insist on the primacy of Australian environmental values over the 'alien influences' that he felt would otherwise 'trammel' 'indigenous' settler Australian culture (this was, after all, the very basis of his program) (4-5).

And yet, as Ingamells himself objected, '[i]t is ridiculous to assume—as is assumed in some quarters—that we are against the appreciation of overseas art, or that we regard the only suitable subjects for Australian art to be typically Australian subjects' ('Editorial' 3). There is enough evidence in Ingamells' published statements to refute the contention that he sought to reject Australia's European inheritance in its entirety. Rather, he was often at pains to emphasise its importance, stating, for example, that '[w]e identify ourselves with Australia, which is our Motherland, and English, which is our Mother Tongue' ('Jindyworobak Review' 21), and observing that '[o]ur traditions are twofold. Inextricably woven with the transplanted European culture are our experiences of the Australian environment' (Ingamells and Tilbrook 17). Indeed, in *Conditional Culture* Ingamells even conceded that '[s]ome of the greatest Australian literature yet to be may have no local colour at all' and that '[o]ur best poetry must deal with universal themes' (6). As Humphrey McQueen has observed, Ingamells 'did not close his mind to the rest of the world' (128), and it was this openness that surely lay behind Ingamells' inclusion of even a 'world-minded' intellectual like Flexmore Hudson within the Jindyworobak congregation (Regan).

Jindyworobak indigenism and anti-indigenist objections

It was not only the universalists who objected to the Jindyworobak program, however, for objections were also raised from the nationalist end of the settler-metropole spectrum, typically reflecting the racism Humphrey McQueen has identified as common to 'literary Australians' at the time (125). A. A. Phillips, subsequent designator of the 'cultural cringe', for example, ridiculed the Jindyworobaks in his review of the *Jindyworobak Review*, suggesting that '[t]hey dance their war-corroboree alternately chanting "Alcheringa"—which means nothing to most of us, and "Environmental Values"—a phrase which I find about

as firm and about as exhilarating as a slab of boarding-house blanc-mange' ('Jindyworobak Review' 65). These criticisms are not necessarily surprising from Phillips, who can easily be read as an advocate of the 'penetration' approach to settler indigenisation (Goldie, *Fear and Temptation* chapter one), and his apparent solution is typical of anti-indigenist forms of settler cultural nationalism: that is, that settlers should simply become *indigenous* without becoming *Indigenous*.

Those who were sympathetic to Aboriginal Australians themselves were also critical of the Jindyworobaks' indigenism, including notably Bernard Smith, who in 1945 objected to their 'neo-Rousseauan romanticism' and what he regarded as their 'invocation to go back to a state of nature ... and to return to yams and witchetty grubs' (250, 166). Elliott, in the derisive essay mentioned earlier, also objected to the 'callous' nature of the Jindyworobaks' project of indigenist appropriation, suggesting, with some justification, that

[t]he Jindies are using the blacks as ... symbols; extracting from them a kind of essence-of-Australia ... they really have no practical use ... other than that ... [o]nce we have imbibed enough of their *Alchera*, they may ... go hang. And the sooner the better. ('Breath of Alchera' 9-10)

While this seemingly foreshadowed subsequent objections against Jindyworobak indigenism on the basis of pro-Aboriginal politics from the 1970s on, Elliott himself quickly reverted to scornful dismissal of both Ingamells and the object of his appropriation, Aboriginal culture, suggesting that '[t]he *Alchera* is, for white Australians, an exotic fancy' (10). Unsurprisingly, anti-indigenist criticisms on the basis of politics would become much more frequent in the formally post-assimilationist era, and included, for example, J. J. Healy's suggestion that 'Rex Ingamells walked into the hothouse of nationalistic assumption that Stephensen had improvised, and fell into the same tendency to *use* the Aborigine' (174).

The purpose here is not to argue against these or subsequent objections to Jindyworobak indigenism. The Jindyworobaks, Mudie and Ingamells foremost among them, were, as should be clear from the preceding discussion, indigenists, and therefore manifested a tendency to appropriate a symbolic Aboriginal spirituality for the purposes of settler indigenisation. While Ingamells exhorted settler Australians to become students of the cultures of Aboriginal Australia as a means of becoming closer to their environment, it is a matter of some debate just how much interest in and knowledge of the subject he had himself. His formulation of means and ends is important, and his indigenism clearly instrumentalised: Ingamells advocated the study of Aboriginal cultures in order that the 'spirit' of these 'forgotten people' could be 'assimilat[ed]' by settler Australia/ns, an 'assimilation' he regarded as 'essential to the honest development of [settler] Australian culture' (Ingamells and Tilbrook 16-7). And as his appropriation of the

decontextualised term 'jindy-worobak' indicates, his indigenism was as much about adopting an antagonistic and contrary position towards established European-Australian traditions as it was about the origins of the term itself. To the extent that such a term was attractive to Ingamells because it denoted 'synthesis of our European cultural heritage with our Australian heritage' ('Miles Franklin' 221), this was more a project of settler indigenisation than a product of any interest he might have had in Aboriginal culture in and of itself.

Yet while on the one hand the Jindyworobaks' indigenism necessitated the displacement and disavowal of actually existing Indigenous people in order for their spiritual essence to be rendered available for appropriation (Wolfe *Settler Colonialism* 208), this does not necessarily preclude a co-existing sympathy or even empathy for the plight of Indigenous people themselves. As Tim Rowse has argued, settler indigenism has not *only* been 'an instance of the European modernist concern for the "primitive", and not *only* has it been an expression of New World nationalism; "indigenism" has also sometimes included sensitivity to the grievances and wishes of actual Indigenous people' (28). While, as Rowse continues, 'Ingamells' Aborigines were undoubtedly an abstraction from history, not actual people', there nevertheless remained the 'potential within Australian "indigenism" to be sensitive to the actual, rather than merely the idealised, Aboriginal presence' (42).

This was clearly the case for Ingamells who, though he was not opposed to appropriating a decontextualised 'essence' of authentic Aboriginality for the purposes of indigenisation, expressed his hope that

[o]ur interest in the aborigines [sic] will ... prove to be not only a literary appropriation, but also vital for their welfare. We wish to deepen the existing sympathy with and understanding for them, which must precede legislation on their behalf. ('Editorial' 4)

Indeed, in a move highly atypical within his historical-cultural context, Ingamells went so far as to recognise Aboriginal land ownership and the legitimacy of customary law, even expressing the unpopular view that so-called 'half-castes' were 'a fine Australian type, who deserve attention' (*Good Australians*). Crucially, while his pronouncement of Indigenous Australians as 'a forgotten ... degenerate, puppet people, mere parodies of what their race once was' (Ingamells and Tilbrook 16) remained, as David Carter and Bridget Griffen-Foley have observed, entirely 'consistent with the belief that Indigenous people were doomed to extinction, it also expressed the possibility of a radical originality in Australian culture with Aboriginality at its centre—a possibility with which Australian culture is still engaged' (246).

The 'impossible necessity' of settler indigenisation

As the preceding discussion has outlined, Ingamells' expression of a radical and radically original potentiality in Australian culture 'with Aboriginality at its centre' provoked the vociferous criticism of his contemporaries, universalists and nationalists alike. These criticisms can be usefully mapped against Terry Goldie's model of settler indigenisation (*Fear and Temptation*), with some minor modifications. In the first camp were those who maintained the primacy and superiority of Australia's European inheritance over and above any secondary 'environmental' influences, of which Aboriginal Australians themselves were taken to form a part. This grouping, of those we might term 'colonialists', though they would have refused the classification, rejected the option of settler indigenisation altogether and sought instead to emphasise uninterrupted continuity with their European inheritance. In doing so, they refused to countenance the belatedness and derivativeness inherent in the colonialist option despite sometimes also, at least in the cases of Harris and Hope, finding themselves turning inwards in search of their own forms of radical originality (*sans* the reality of Indigenous occupation).

In the second camp were those Goldie might term 'penetrators', who favoured 'the forcible imposition of the dominator and his discursive system within the dominated space' (15). These equally *indigenising* but definitively not *indigenist* settler nationalists objected to the Jindyworobaks on the grounds that Aboriginal cultures and the peoples representing them were not valid subjects or sources of inspiration for the 'always emerging but never fully emerged' 'indigenous' Australian national literature (Carter, 'Critics' 260). This option similarly entailed a refusal of the realities of the settler situation, in which disavowal presents itself as a desirable option but is consistently undermined by the delegitimising presence of Indigenous populations and their persistent claims against the historical denialism of the penetrationist project.

The Jindies, clearly associated with the approach to settler indigenisation Goldie terms 'appropriation'—entailing 'the consumption enforced by the dominator of what belongs to the dominated' (*Fear and Temptation* 15)—represented a third tradition that sought to address the realities of the settler situation and to *synthesise* its conflicting dynamics into an original strategy for supersession. While, as Goldie's language makes clear, such a project is premised on 'the elimination, or displacement, of the empirical indigene' (Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism* 208), the shift from outright rejection towards the tentative embrace of an albeit decontextualised, symbolic indigeneity nevertheless opens a path towards subsequent attitudinal shifts in relation to the historical indigeneity the project initially rejects (this transformation is never complete, and the dual imperatives towards disavowal and embrace always uneasily coexist). Yet it was arguably the

implications of this option for settlers of both nationalist and universalist persuasion that provoked the critics' indignation. As Clunies-Ross remarks, the Jindyworobaks found themselves 'attacked' on the one hand 'by those who maintained the essential European traditions of culture in Australia and on the other hand by those committed to a different, and incompatible, view of the Australian tradition' (59).

While the concerns of those objecting to the appropriative nature of Jindyworobak indigenism should be taken seriously and are accepted here, such objections also tend to overlook what Goldie has termed the 'impossible necessity' of settler indigenisation (*Fear and Temptation* 13). As Goldie's account suggests, and Healy's makes clear, sooner or later, one way or another, all those invested in the construction of an 'indigenous' *settler* national culture find themselves confronting and responding to the figure of the actual, authentic and authoritative, indigene. Since the dual indigenising strategies of disavowal and appropriation similarly enact the further incursion of settler-colonial authority into Aboriginal discursive space, Ingamells' articulation of the Jindyworobak program represents only one, original and exemplary, response to the exigencies of the settler-colonial condition. The alternatives are no less violent in their implications, symbolically or otherwise.

The Jindyworobaks and the problems of settler-colonial modernity

The indigenist aspect of the Jindyworobak program and the imperative behind it also complicates the various attempts to classify them as either anti-modernist provincial isolationists or, conversely, modernist primitivists. The traditions remain distinct, since the imperatives underlying the settler-colonial compulsion towards indigenism are not commensurate or reducible to those underlying the metropolitan modernist turn towards primitivism. Whereas the latter seeks to recuperate an already superseded and generic state of being as a means of overcoming or escaping a modern malaise conceived in universal (read European) terms, the former seeks to appropriate aspects of a particular and emplaced alterity for the purposes of attaining an always and already desired futurity within a specific locale, the very conditions of which compel their supersession. As Nicholas Thomas remarks:

Primitivism in settler culture is ... something both more and less than primitivism in modernist art ... Settler primitivism is not ... necessarily the project of radical formal innovation stimulated by tribal art that we are familiar with from twentieth-century modernism. It was, rather, often an effort to affirm a local relationship, not with a generic primitive culture, but a particular one. (12-3)

David Carter has characterised the Jindyworobaks' 'attempt to leap backwards over the colonial inheritance, into an Aboriginal connection to the environment, [as] also a step forwards into modernity, into the problem of inventing a language adequate to the present' ('Modernising Anglocentrism' 97). Yet it was also a step inwards towards the Australian environment and away from precisely the problems presented by the specifics of the Jindies' modern settler-colonial condition. For Ingamells, as much as for his own critics like Max Harris, and contemporary critics like Pascale Casanova, modernism was a European phenomenon that could be, indeed had to be, selectively responded to and engaged with from afar. Yet in seeking an alternative to the altogether unsatisfactory options (for a settler nationalist) of either attempting to 'catch up' to European modernism, or rejecting it outright, in a typically settler-colonial move Ingamells and the Jindyworobaks turned *away* from Europe and instead turned *inwards* towards the spirit of *this* place. In so doing, they found themselves confronting the figure of the indigene.

Humphrey McQueen's definition of Australian modernism as entailing 'a *range of responses to a nexus of social-artistic-scientific problems*', and his identification of 'emergent' Australian modernisms *alongside* those examples of modernism that arrived 'in suitcases from Europe', is apposite here (xii-xiii). As is Coronado's definition of Andean (settler-colonial) modernities as 'the particular discursive formations belonging to the intellectuals who took it upon themselves to represent indigenous peoples in their own works' (3). Here, settler-colonial modernity *is* the settler response to the arrival of non-indigenous cultural, political and economic forms (of which they themselves were and are, of course, the harbingers) and this response is necessarily predicated on a turn towards the indigene. These responses were and are 'assertions of local agency before the often-foreign processes that shape both global and local realities' (Coronado 3). The Jindies were therefore not only 'antipòdernists', to appropriate Ian Henderson's 'purposefully ugly label' (89), but *settler-colonial* modernists grappling with a similar set of problems to those confronted by other settler populations, in comparable ways yet under the influence of the specific conditions of their own historical and cultural circumstances.

As the Jindyworobaks' indigenism was distinct from modernist primitivism, so too was their impetus towards anti-modernism different, despite ostensible similarities, from the outright rejection of the modern by European fascists.⁷ In

⁷ The very existence of the unpublished 1940 Jindyworobak survey 'Whither Australian Poetry?'—intended to enquire as to Australian poetry's relation to the metropolitan meridian of literary modernism—suggests an openness to exploration, if not experimentation. Ingamells' associate and AFM leader and internee P. R. 'Inky' Stephensen came much closer to fascist anti-modernism, although his position appears to have been driven as much by the origination of literary modernism in Europe and North America and the resultantly 'derivative' and 'imitative'

spite of apparent affinities with the ‘blood and soil’ ideology of German national-socialism, the Jindyworobaks’ conjuring of an emergent national culture and identity from the spirit of the place involved an *originary* emergence, a national genesis as an escape—through differentiation and distancing—from the crises of European modernity, rather than the palingenesis of a glorious pre-modernity (Griffin). Ingamells was responding to the unavoidable truth that the ‘environmental values’ he sought to cultivate would necessarily arise out of the interaction between someone else’s blood (race) and someone else’s soil (place). Ingamells’ attempt to invent (or to discover) a national culture and identity for the new world outside and untainted by the conflicts and crises of the old, ties him to figures such as Inky Stephensen, but also, less intuitively, to Norman Lindsay and even, as elaborated above, one of his fiercest critics in A. D. Hope (Carter, ‘Screamers in Bedlam’; McQueen).

The prevalence and persistence of the Eurocentric interpretive perspectives against which Ingamells and others railed (that is, those that begin with Europe at the centre and as the original, and extrapolate outwards from there) is affirmed rather than overturned in re-readings of the Jindyworobaks as ‘Jindy’ or ‘provincial’ modernists (Kirkpatrick, ‘Jindy Modernist’; E. Smith), as well as in readings of Ingamells’ and Ian Mudie’s association with Stephensen’s Australia First Movement in terms of an alignment with European fascism.⁸ A perspective that begins with the dynamic *relations* of settler colonialism, on the other hand, affords an alternative interpretation of Ingamells’ and others’ uneasy and often complex, if not always consciously so, negotiations of modernism and modernity as responses to European movements and associated crises arising in the context of a sovereign indigenous territorial space, rather than simply derivative or imitative reflections of the European original.

Conclusion

As this essay has attempted to outline, Ingamells, in ways not often appreciated, sought to chart an original path forward through the complex and contingent conditions of Australian settler colonialism, so that rather than advocating a straightforward anti-colonial nationalism, he in fact rejected the ‘larrikin’ tradition and sought instead to develop an ‘indigenous’ Australian literature both modern and mature and, crucially, in touch with its European inheritance. While his approach was heavily indigenist in orientation and therefore *highly*

nature of Australian modernism, as it was by his association of modernism with ‘ghetto-philosophy’ and the ‘bizarre theories of Marx, Freud, and Einstein’.

⁸ David Bird’s exercise in incrimination-by-association is exemplary. Bird goes so far as to suggest that even the ‘supposedly minimalist [Jindy] position’ of Victor Kennedy, who in his letters to Ingamells was one of the most vociferous opponents of any association between the Jindyworobaks and Australia First, ‘contained some of the flavour of Nazism for those determined to detect it’ (298). That, Bird most certainly is.

problematic, politically and programmatically, it also conforms to a broader tradition David Carter refers to in terms of its 'radical originality' ('Critics' 266; Carter and Griffen-Foley 246), which seeks to identify Australia's *genius loci*, the spirit of *this* place, as a source of alterity and thereby to escape the exigencies of the settler situation by means of an originary emergence. This is what Ingamells was claiming when he stated, borrowing from fellow Jindyworobak Victor Kennedy, that Jindyworobak had 'existed all along, and merely awaited a name and recognition as the spirit of Australia' (*Letter*).

If, as this essay has attempted to illustrate, the Jindyworobaks' attempt to synthesise settler Australians' inherited European traditions with a sensitivity to the influence of Australia's unique environment was their ultimate, if often misunderstood, aim, then an indigenism which emphasised Aboriginal culture as a culture 'in harmony' with that environment was a convenient and useful, even if ultimately unsuccessful, strategy to be deployed towards that aim. In this sense, the Jindyworobaks were proposing an original strategy intended to supersede *both* aspects of their settler situation. In the first instance, they sought to synthesise Australia's European inheritance with its now indigenous environment, rendering themselves indigenous in the process; in the second, they sought to appropriate a decontextualised Aboriginality towards precisely that end.

The Jindyworobak aim, recapitulating Giblin's emphasis and ordering of Australian 'nature and man', was the synthesis of Australia's European cultural and intellectual inheritance with the Australian *place*, and only secondarily the 'original good Australians', who functioned as markers of the spirit of that place and offered settlers the possibility of the unmediated encounter with their environment towards which the imperatives of settler colonialism compelled them. The Jindyworobaks sought, on the one hand, to accept the mantle of civilisation from their European forbears and, on the other, to claim the mantle of belonging from their Indigenous antecedents. Nicholas Birns neatly encapsulates the apparent paradoxes of Jindyworobakism, which he describes as 'Royalist and republican, cosmopolitan and isolationist' (29). Neither universalist nor exclusively nationalist, and neither nationalist nor exclusively indigenist, the Jindyworobaks were, rather, ambivalent settler nationalists expressing the typical settler-colonial desire to overcome precisely the contingencies and exigencies characteristic of the settler situation.

Ultimately, the altered circumstances of the post-war period saw the passing of the Jindyworobak ideal, largely as a result of, and in response to, fascism and the Second World War (Birns 27), and the success of the anti-nationalist backlash that followed, partly also due to improvements in what Geoffrey Serle termed the 'quality of public life' in Australia rendering the kind of cultural striving the Jindies

and associates had engaged in increasingly redundant (148). If the *Jindyworobak Review* of 1948 gave the impression that the movement's most important work already lay behind it, its demise seemed complete with the publication in 1954 of Ingamells' culturally cringe-worthy *Royalty and Australia*. This loyalist panegyric featured a glowing introduction by then Prime Minister Menzies, and in it Ingamells proudly proclaimed 'the profound loyalty of Australians to the Throne' (*Royalty* 80).

However if, in one sense, the degree of loyalism Ingamells displays here appears incongruent with much of his earlier work, in its particular cultural and political context—marked by a 'maturing' Australian culture (Dutton 30), the loosening ties of Empire in a relatively peaceful and increasingly prosperous period, new 'great and powerful friends' (and sources of cultural production), and increasing acceptance of indigenism as a source of modern Australian culture and identity—Ingamells' statement that 'to us, this continent is Home, and ... we now feel ourselves, our character and our living, to be attuned to the land, identified with it', does not contradict, but rather *enables*, his follow-up statement that as 'an acclimatised British stock we happily retain our British heritage' (*Royalty* 94). Comfortable in Australia's cultural, if not yet political, independence, and less fearful of the geopolitical implications of imperial loyalty, an expanded acknowledgement of Australia's British cultural inheritance was rendered acceptable, even to strident settler nationalists like Ingamells. This statement can therefore be read less as a modification of his position than a different formulation under changed historical circumstances.

Ingamells' Eurocentric epic *The Great South Land* (1951), on the other hand, is not so easily explained, except, perhaps, as either the 'sad aftermath' of Ingamells' previous '[p]remature cultural formulations' (Birns 28), or alternatively an expression of what we might interpret as a perverse, unconscious desire on the part of Ingamells to metamorphose into poet laureate for Wentworth's new Britannia in another world!⁹

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the State Library of Victoria for supporting this research through the AGL Shaw Summer Research Fellowships program. I would also like to thank the *AHR's* anonymous reviewer, whose sensitive and constructive comments have contributed to what I hope is a much-improved essay.

⁹ Thank you to my reviewer for a slightly different formulation of the latter possibility.

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