



## Discourses of genocide in Germany and Australia: a linked history

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For decades before the Nazis began the legal persecution of Jews, anti-Semites had been active in Germany. They created a climate in which genocide — or so it seems with hindsight — became possible. In 1996 an American scholar, Daniel J Goldhagen, went further. He argued that in Germany 'eliminationist anti-Semitism' had created a culture that produced 'Hitler's willing executioners'. The 'common sense' of German society during the Nazi period was grounded in years of discussion about getting rid of the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

As critics pointed out, the most vocal and persistent campaign does not provide evidence that all, or even a majority, shared its aims or its assumptions. It is impossible to be sure what people might have understood by 'elimination'. Assimilation would have been assumed by many, emigration by some, expulsion by only the most radical minority. No one, even in 1939, had reason to envisage something which had never been canvassed or imagined. Yet a Germany without Jews, indeed a Europe almost without Jews, was very quickly achieved.

A hundred years earlier, an Australia without Aborigines was both imagined and canvassed, and the public discussion persisted, directly in relation to policy, until well after Nazism was defeated. What should interest us here is not whether all Germans, or all Australians, somehow bear blame for genocide — a revived talking point in Germany and a very belated one in Australia. My concern is with the ways a 'discourse of genocide' inhabited ideas and assumptions — the commonsense in which ideology is most effective. Further, I want to explore how two variants of genocidal thinking belonged within a shared discourse, linked by the larger history of European expansion.

Goldhagen distorted the case in attempting to make the 'eliminationist' discourse peculiar to Germany. It belonged, as Hannah Arendt had shown, to the heightened race consciousness of European imperialism.<sup>2</sup> Once we are able to see the anti-Semites'

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1. Goldhagen 1996: 80. For some important continuing issues see AD Moses 1998, 'Structure and agency in the Holocaust: Daniel J Goldhagen and his critics', *History and Theory* 7(2): 194–219. I am indebted to many friends and colleagues, especially Dirk Moses and Richard Broome, for comments and discussion.

2. Arendt 1958: pt 2.

obsession with 'the Jewish problem' as a subset of the imperialist obsession, events everywhere in the imperialist era look different. The colonising impulse to possess the world as the birthright of European superiority could become a genocidal one wherever the assumption of superiority was threatened by resistance or competition. In Europe the most visible competition was from Jews, suddenly prominent in commerce, the professions and the arts. No matter how well integrated into a specific European society and culture — Germany was their shining example — Jews could be portrayed as 'foreign', or even as colonising the continent's new nation states. They both exhibited and disguised their difference. They claimed the same national identity as everyone else, but retained one that transgressed national boundaries. They had no respect for social boundaries, flaunting comfort, status and influence within a generation. Outside Europe, things were simpler. In 'foreign parts', the colonisers' superior identity was protected by both ideological and physical boundaries.

### **Identity, race and the Jews**

The nineteenth century nation states were at once rationalised modern entities and the embodiment of a kind of atavistic tribalism, carried first in the culture and later in the 'blood' of people whose identity was now to be 'French' or 'Russian' or 'German'. The rationalism of modernity which appeared to threaten this identity even as it was being established could conveniently be identified with a group who had most visibly profited from it. The Jews were emancipated by the same sequence of enlightenment and secular revolution which had emancipated the European nations. The trick was to load all the grievances of a floundering conservatism onto this people without a nation. Revolutionary rationalism, corrosive capitalism, every form of liberalism became Jewish inventions, carried in the culture, and then the 'blood' of Jews. Conservatives discovered that the radical ideologies of imperialism and anti-Semitism could be co-opted to manipulate the democratic nationalism they had feared. And the rationalism they had abhorred could be turned to provide new justifications for the dominance that had been their birthright.

Not for nothing did the Jews feature as the demons of boundary subversion. Into a traditional society thought of as orderly, economically secure, biologically homogeneous and culturally stable, came an agent (this is the anti-Semite's view) of disorder, insecurity, cross-breeding and instability — in a word, modernity. The Jews were advantaged by the social, economic and political opportunities of liberalism so — naturally enough — they became its energetic supporters. What was emancipating to Jews was corrosive to traditionalists, threatening in every respect. The demonisation of 'the Jews' as responsible for both capitalism and socialism made perfect sense to anti-Semites: the entrenched order was subverted by both and Jews most prominently profited from both.<sup>3</sup>

Anti-Semitism (not just anti-Judaism) preceded modernity. Even in traditional Christian guise, 'the Jew' was created as a concept, a demon signifying everything antithetical to society, state, and church. It was Christianity, as Bauman says, that 'assigned to the Jews an eschatological mission' and ensured that 'the conceptual Jew' acquired a mythical power both separated from, and attached to, the actual Jews who inhabited

<sup>3</sup> Arendt 1958. On Jewish emancipation and anti-Semitism see Pulzer 1988 and Barta 1993.

Europe's towns and villages. In this imaginary menace (here there is no dispute with Goldhagen) lay the seeds of actual genocide.

Construed in such a way, the conceptual Jew performed a function of prime importance; he visualized [made visual] the horrifying consequences of boundary-transgression, of not remaining fully in the fold, of any conduct short of unconditional loyalty and unambiguous choice; he was the prototype and arch-pattern of all nonconformity, heterodoxy, anomaly and aberration. As an evidence of the mind-boggling, uncanny unreason of deviation, the conceptual Jew discredited in advance the alternative to that order of things which had been defined, narrated and practised by the Church. For this reason, he was a most reliable frontier-guard of that order. *The conceptual Jew carried a message; alternative to this order here and now is not another order, but chaos and devastation.*<sup>4</sup>

The Nazis were anti-Christian but not above exploiting this reliable Christian heritage, with extreme consequences for Christian peoples as well. While the genocide of the Jews was being completed to the best of the Nazis' ability, they employed the propaganda litany of 'Jewish Bolshevism' to transfer the theme seamlessly to the inhuman treatment of conquered Russians, Ukrainians and other Slavic nations. Polish elites capable of leading resistance had been sought out for killing from the first day of the war; genocide through starvation was envisaged unflinchingly in the German colonisation of the new eastern 'living space'.<sup>5</sup> When the war in Russia was lost, Goebbels' prime propaganda image became the 'Asiatic' menace bearing down on Germany from the East. Murderous Bolshevism, 'subhuman' Slav hordes, death, destruction and chaos: the Jews would yet have their victory if Germans did not hold out. With a solidarity fuelled by a reasonable fear of Russian rather than Jewish vengeance, Germans did hold out, and fought to the bitter end. Their reward was to be told in Hitler's testament that they had failed their leader in his great struggle, but in the most important respect it must go on.

Above all I impose on the leadership and following of the nation the obligation to hold fast to the racial laws and to carry on unmerciful resistance to the world poisoner of all nations — international Jewry.<sup>6</sup>

What 'unmerciful resistance' meant, the world would soon find out, though neither the images (bulldozing of bodies at Belsen, warehouses of human hair at Auschwitz) nor the evidence of the Nuremberg trials would create the meta-image of 'the Holocaust' until two decades had passed.<sup>7</sup>

Several other genocides later, the Nazi genocide of the Jews remains unparalleled, and retains a unique power to shock. One reason, without doubt, is the sustained thoroughness and technical efficiency of the operation. Another is the recognition that the victims in the pictures were 'people like you and me', hard to tell from the person next

4. Bauman 1989: 39.

5. Himmler, quoted in Fest 1972. On the relation of the 'Final Solution' to genocidal warfare against Poland and Russia, see Browning 1992. He dates developments to show that genocidal treatment of Poles and Russians preceded the all-out onslaught on the Jews.

6. Pinson 1954: 529. That vengeful Jews would arrive with the American forces was by comparison an insignificant fear, despite some propaganda about the Morgenthau Plan for de-industrialising postwar Germany.

7. Barta 1996.

door. This worried even some Nazi perpetrators, who sometimes had to be convinced that the people waiting to be killed were after all 'terrorists' or at least representatives of the enemy who was bombing their loved ones at home. But their difficulty making the transfer from 'international Jewry' to the little girl in front of them was only momentary. The propaganda of race was lethally effective. Genocidal killing, Himmler and Hitler insisted, had to be carried out as a historical necessity: 'To have gone through this and yet — apart from a few exceptions, examples of human weakness — to have remained decent, this has made us hard.'<sup>8</sup>

Modern racial anti-Semitism was the counter to modern assimilation, in which many Jews left their religion behind. 'Race' meant they were still — genetically — 'Jewish'. Arendt, not too dramatically, characterised the shift that took place late in the nineteenth century.

As far as the Jews were concerned, the transformation of the 'crime' of Judaism into the fashionable 'vice' of Jewishness was dangerous in the extreme. Jews had been able to escape from Judaism into conversion; from Jewishness there was no escape. A crime moreover is met with punishment; a vice can only be exterminated.<sup>9</sup>

Goldhagen virtually ignores Arendt, and Bauman, who built on her insights. For Bauman the distancing that left ordinary moral or human responses out of play is partly explained by the language of hygiene perfected by the Nazis. Their 'method of making invisible the very humanity of the victims' culminated in Hans Frank's 'favourite conjunction of "Jews and lice"... the typhus-warning posters on the walls of the ghettos, and finally the commissioning of the chemicals for the last act from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Schädlingbekämpfung — the German Fumigation Company'.<sup>10</sup>

### Aborigines and race on the frontier

The exterminating of pests is also familiar in the language of the Australian frontier.<sup>11</sup> When Aborigines were being cleared from the land their humanity was already blurred in the minds of many settlers; when the remnants were forced into 'blacks camps' near towns or pastoral stations, the effects of drink and disease produced further dehuman-

8. Himmler's tape-recorded Posen speech on 4 October 1943, referring directly to 'the extermination of the Jewish people' as 'an unwritten and never to be written page of glory in our history', is the most widely known declaration but there are many instances, referring to the killing of Poles and Russians as well as Jews. See Fest 1972: 176–84, Breitman 1991: 242–3 and (for Hitler) 220–1.

9. Arendt 1958: 87. See also Bauman 1989: ch 2. Doubts about Bauman's theses are expressed by Yehuda Bauer, in 'Overall explanations, German society and the Jews, or: some thoughts about context' in Bankier 2000. I share Bauer's admiration for the explanatory account given by Saul Friedländer, who sees in the unparalleled ambition and ferocity of the Nazis a 'redemptive antisemitism' that made complete elimination of the Jews essential to a new and better world. See Friedländer 1997: ch 3.

10. Bauman 1989: 24–7. On 'solving' health problems in the ghettos, see Browning 1992: ch 7.

11. 'The habit of regarding natives as vermin, to be cleared off the face of the earth, has given the average Queenslander a tone of brutality and cruelty in dealing with "blacks" which is very difficult for anyone who does not know it, as I do, to realize' — British High Commissioner Gordon to Prime Minister Gladstone, 1883 (Evans et al. 1975: 78). The evidence of attitudes, atrocities and policies Evans published in this book remains the most powerful compilation of genocidal discourse and action in the settlement of any part of Australia. See also Evans 1999.

ising responses. In 1887 the Normanton Native Police 'put out of their misery' a number of 'diseased and most disgusting' blacks congregating round the telegraph station. The editor of the *Normanton Herald* had previously said such action would be 'more a mercy than a crime', and gave his reasons. 'Considering the terrible nuisance these semi-civilized savages are generally in the Northern Communities, considering their faithlessness and treachery ... considering their propensity for brandy, considering that the niggers are propagating with terrible rapidity the most dreaded form of the syphilitic virus and ruining hundreds of men's constitutions.'<sup>12</sup>

The role played by the men is — no surprise — absent. No surprise, either, that the same hundreds of men would be absent as fathers. The girl, already 'ruined' according to official morality, and ruined in health by the white men, would find every attempt to better her circumstances ruined before she began. Her children, most probably by different fathers, had their chances, and their children's chances, tilted towards ruin as well. That was not the concern of those editorial writers who were fond of giving lessons in reality to 'pseudo-philanthropists', the missionaries and 'protectors' who tried to provide more humane paths to survival. If a minority of editorialisers supported their campaign, the 'realists' of the settler press were the propagandists of a new nation, and its purity was their rising concern. If that was threatened, as it plainly was, the most pitiless remedies were justified.

Anyone still ignorant of the discourse of genocide which accompanied the European acquisition of Aboriginal land can be referred to the historical record. The blood-curdling proclamations of frontier journals have been republished progressively over the past thirty years. The smoothing of the dying pillow was no less a public perform-

<sup>12</sup> Evans et al. 1975: 2. Recently Evans has asked whether 'the principle and destructive scourge' of syphilis, 'knowingly and wantonly broadcast by European carriers' at Moreton Bay, belonged to a pattern in which Aboriginal deaths from disease were expected. 'A degree of human agency is always involved in the spread, control and treatment of diseases, and explicit acts of commission and omission, as well as accident and fate' need to be considered 'before violence and disease are pigeonholed neatly as mutually exclusive causes of annihilation — the one intentional, the other accidental.' Evans 1999: 28. The question of the 1789 smallpox epidemic is also examined anew in Reynolds 2001: ch 1.

Looking back in 1931 from his position as Chief Protector in the Northern Territory, Dr Cecil Cook painted a picture of Queensland 50 years earlier that was clear about intentions and effects. 'The policy of the state in those days was laissez-faire. Armed sorties of enraged whites were permitted, and occasionally even authorised, to shoot down whole tribes of defenceless natives, men, women and children. Many aboriginals were poisoned by the admixture of arsenic with their flour issues. Opium was a routine issue by well-meaning employers to their aboriginal employees. No action whatever was taken by the State until the wearing effect of the opium, the decease of their youth and the influx of more efficient white labour eventually drove the natives off the stations to herd in squalid camps outside the townships, there to exist as best they could on the proceeds of theft, beggary and prostitution. Then, and only then, did the state make a humanitarian virtue of social necessity by uprooting the bedraggled remnant from the country that had been the corner stone of their social organisation to herd all together in settlements where the shame and degradation to which white cruelty and official apathy had reduced them would no longer be publicly apparent' (Markus 1990: 89–90). For a plain-speaking 1880 editorial from *The Queenslander*, and later policy in that State, see Kidd 1997; for a broader survey of frontier violence, and the ideology that drove it, Reynolds 1987.

ance, an honorable elegy at the end of the imperialist century. But then comes a newly paradoxical discourse recognising that the race was not going to die. In the twentieth century, the problem was what to do with Aboriginal survival. From 1886 there had been legislation to deal with those that were neither one race nor another. Race, with all its problems of definition, segregation, maintenance and mixing was promoted to centre stage. The Aboriginal race might not disappear in the north of Australia. On the other hand, people who maintained they were Aborigines but did not altogether look like them should be helped to disappear throughout the continent.

For most of Australia's history, Aborigines have been an absent presence. They were invisible to the majority of the population, present mainly in their absence. That has had deep consequences in the understanding of our past. What Geoffrey Blainey, and then Prime Minister Howard, called 'black armband history' was resented because it questioned the 'white blindfold' version most Australians were comfortable with. But the making invisible of Aborigines was a much more purposeful social policy, related to the removal of children for assimilation to white society, and the safe quarantining of blacks in the remoter regions of the north. Not in itself genocidal, comparison with what was happening in Germany brings out the genocidal undertone.

Reflecting on the social suppression of moral responsibility, Bauman cites Ian Kershaw's conclusions about the success of the Nazis in 'depersonalizing' the Jews:

The more the Jew was forced out of social life, the more he seemed to fit the stereotypes of a propaganda which intensified, paradoxically, its campaign against 'Jewry' the fewer actual Jews were in Germany itself. Depersonalization increased the already existent widespread indifference of German popular opinion and formed a vital stage between the archaic violence and the rationalized 'assembly line' annihilation of the death camps.<sup>13</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that the passive and active opposition to the race policies of the regime was based on prior moral or religious principles and established political affiliation rather than on discussion. Private discussion was very inhibited and public discourse impossible. Networks of like-minded people continued to exist, and people knew who among their neighbours was outraged by the grey buses taking the mentally disabled to the 'euthanasia' facilities. Catholics, in particular, knew they had determined church support. Showing sympathy to Jewish fellow citizens required more courage. The propaganda and police presence was more overt, and the Churches, notoriously, failed to speak out. It became a matter of individual moral impulse or of personal connection. For such situations Germans have a saying: 'My shirt is closer to me than my jacket'. Relationships of family and love were the ones that mattered.

What was different in Australia? In fundamental ways, almost everything. The first wave of genocide occurred 50 years before the discourse of imperialist racism flowered in Europe, not 50 years after. Genocide was never the policy of the state. It could be argued it was the *effectual* policy of the state, because so little was done to restrain the settlers. Certainly, protectors were appointed, and severe warnings were issued. But only in a few cases were perpetrators of a massacre brought to justice. The dispersal campaigns of the mounted police came close to being official policy to kill the blacks.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Kershaw 1983: 371-2, quoted in Bauman 1989: 189.

The greatest difference was the openness of public discussion. In Germany, under Hitler, genocide was the *secret* policy of a police state; in Australia, throughout the time of massacres and frontier violence, opponents of what was going on spoke and wrote their denunciations. Terrible descriptions were published for all to read. If the weight of discourse was always for the 'common sense' view that the Aborigines were in any case destined to disappear, the supposedly unrealistic 'philanthropists' were not intimidated, let alone forbidden to publish.<sup>15</sup>

The open opposition to genocide during the nineteenth century has been a major reason for the resistance among Australian historians to the idea of genocide in Australia. Another, also widely shared, was given by Henry Reynolds after his early attempts to establish the scale of killing on the frontier. In answer to the blunt question 'Was it genocide?' he wrote:

In a literal sense, clearly no. The Aborigines survived the invasion. The population has been increasing for a generation, though it has still not [in 1987] reached that of 1788. Many of those who died did so from disease; others were killed in an upsurge of conflict within Aboriginal communities. A rapidly falling birth rate may have been of greater demographic significance than a spiraling death rate. Yet even when those qualifications have been made the central question remains. Did significant numbers of settlers seek the total destruction of Aboriginal Australia? It is an important and complex question and must be carefully answered.<sup>16</sup>

Whether some people survived the onslaught is of course not the point: the *intention* to do away with the Aborigines is what a court working from the Genocide Convention of 1948 would want to determine. That is the framework for his more recent consideration of whether Australia bears the shame of a crime that was not named when it may have been carried out. Was there, he asks, an official intention behind all the talk? Evidence remains hard to find but Reynolds leaves the question-mark in place. This applies even to the role of disease in the death tally: can we be sure the devastating outbreak of smallpox brought by the First Fleet was accidental? He recognises that the rapidly falling birthrate of these peoples in the midst of uprooting, death, despair and destruction of families, contributed to the fact that their very existence as a people was threatened.

Reynolds acknowledges that the definition of 'a people' may be the matter needing most care. How many unique cultural-linguistic groups were wiped out? Even if we adopt the Europeans' categories, 'Aboriginal Australia' may not be a more relevant concept than 'the Aborigines of Victoria' who so suddenly disappeared from view. In 1835, according to Richard Broome, 'there were an estimated 10 000 Aboriginal people in

14. See Evans et al. 1975, Evans 1999, Reynolds 1987 and Palmer 2000. Reynolds 2001, esp. in chs 7 and 8, tackles the question of official sanction for genocidal actions directly. Criticism of my 'Relations of genocide' (Barta 1987) has centred on the question of state responsibility and intentionality. See esp. A. Dirk Moses 2000, 'An antipodean genocide? The origins of the genocidal moment in the colonization of Australia', *Journal of Genocide Research* 2(1): 89–106, and Frank Chalk 1994, 'Redefining genocide', in George J. Andreopoulos *Genocide: conceptual and historical dimensions*, Philadelphia.

15. See esp. Reynolds 1987 and 1999.

16. Reynolds 1987: 53–7. Reynolds expands on his careful answer, with some changed perspectives, in 2001 *An indelible stain? The question of genocide in Australia's history*.

what became Victoria, while in 1853 only 1907 remained — a decline of 80% in less than a generation.' Broome is careful to note that direct killing was not the sole reason. 'Violence caused about 10 percent of the losses, disease, malnutrition and infertility accounted for most of the decline.' And while the efforts of missionaries and protectors saved the remnant for possible regeneration, the later determination of governments to shed responsibility for all but the small number of 'full-bloods' meant that assimilation was expected to bring about the disappearance of the 'problem'. By the 1920s estimates ranged from 402 to 586 survivors, 'a point dangerously close to the extinction of a people'.<sup>17</sup>

In Australia the final solution to the Aboriginal 'problem' advocated by frontier propagandists was never put into effect as policy. By the time of World War I (in which Hitler learned how modern governments could engineer mass death) the unofficial, dispersed kind of Australian genocidal killing had in most places been halted. The settler society, now firmly established in the great cities as well as the rich farmlands of the south, was so securely separated from the remaining Indigenous population, concentrated in the north, that their race consciousness was largely directed towards the new 'Yellow Peril' from Asia. Aborigines were almost entirely overlooked when Australia became a federation, except to confirm they would not be counted in the census.

The first half of the twentieth century saw no change in the basic orientation of Aboriginal policy: if Aborigines were to survive they should do so out of sight and out of mind. The individual States continued to make policy based on a model of 'protection' which in practice meant reserves ruled by missionaries under government authority. Aborigines, whether on a mission or a pastoral station, had no rights they could make effective. Since 1869, in Victoria, their children could legally be taken away. But the human (and inhuman) realities of frontier life had always made separation of races an ideological fantasy. 'Half-castes' and their children who habitually associated with Aborigines were first defined as Aboriginal and later, under the 1886 Act, put under pressure to break their association. The visible problem was in the people who had been denied support on the reserves, and were not assisted to integrate into the superior (white) community. How would the human frontier be maintained?

### Science and race

Since the eighteenth century the dialectics of social development and science as a world view had been fatefully entwined. At the core, permeating the deadly discourse in all its variants, was the 'problem' of difference. Without differentiating population groups there could be no 'Jewish question' and no 'Aboriginal problem'. The scientific curiosity that helped propel European expansionism was further stimulated by the discoveries of so much that was new and different. The new and different demanded classification — Cook and Banks in the *Endeavour* — and then explanation — Darwin after the voyage of the *Beagle*.

That Australia should figure so largely in the imagination of 'discovery', and then of classification, was a terrible visitation on all its 'curious' inhabitants. The plants (suddenly with new names such as 'Banksia') and animals (impossible to depict) were to

<sup>17</sup>. Broome 1995: 130, 141–3. See also footnote 12 above on intentionality and disease.

suffer their own traumas of exoticism, displacement and extinction. The humans, like the strange plants and animals, were immediately seen as amongst those most different from Europeans. Even before scientific classification set in, they served the imagination of discovery as a most 'other' Other.

In an early but persistent theory, owing something to both Voltaire and Hume, their distinctiveness was attributed to a separate act of creation. 'Polygenesis' meant that the great white race doing the discovering and the colonising could reasonably be kept superior to lesser breeds even if both political reason (the Rights of Man) and religion (all God's children) suggested the unity of 'mankind'. Linnaeus, in 1745, began the study of race by proposing four subgroups. Blumenbach in 1781 used physiognomy and anatomy to identify five. The most popular division based mainly on skin colour was adopted by Gobineau: white, black and yellow. This was to be especially convenient for racial classification in Australia, and was still being elaborated scientifically in 1937, with Hooten's Caucasoid, Negroid and Mongoloid types. Evolution along these lines did not require polygenesis; differences had very probably developed from one stock. But polygenesis persisted as a popular strand and helps explain why 'race thinking before racism' was so deadly in the early settlement of Australia. As late as 1903 Samuel Laing's *Human Origins* argued that the problem was 'still an open one' because among the 'great variety of human races' there were 'fundamental types so dissimilar as to constitute what in animal zoology would often be called a separate species.' This was genetic nonsense that helped make sense in the discourse of genocide.<sup>18</sup>

Darwin, whose name would constantly be invoked in the scientism of differentiation and 'survival of the fittest', knew that there was only one human species. There were distinct races, recognisable by external characteristics, but whether they could be ranked in any way was a problem he wrestled with in the context of his time. The bright assumption of natural superiority at the dark heart of the civilising mission transmuted into an ever more scientific superiority at the height of the imperialist age. There was a serious push (still often called 'Social Darwinism') to move away from Darwin and his ambivalence about whether in the human species there were 'higher' or 'lower' races.<sup>19</sup> The German professor Ernst Haeckel said his new science of 'comparative animal psy-

<sup>18</sup> Evans et al. 1975: 74. The other two parts of the book, by Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin, are important for contemporary attitudes towards Melanesians and Chinese in Queensland. For the wider context of racial thinking see McConnochie 1973: ch 1. See also McGregor 1997: ch 1.

<sup>19</sup> Lindqvist (1998: 107–20), recalling Darwin's 1836 encounter with the fate of the Aborigines in Tasmania, finds in *The descent of man* (1871) the perhaps more historical than biological observation: 'At some future period not very distant as measured in centuries, the civilised races will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races'. See also Hannaford 1996 and Langton 1999. *The Age* 13 Feb 2001 supplies a twenty-first century coda on the newly described human genome: Each human, it was found, shares 99.99 per cent of their genetic code with others. 'No serious scholar in this field thinks that race is a scientific concept,' said Dr Graig Ventner. 'It's just not.' And the good news, happily from Germany, was that the science could not be used to foster the ignorance on which racism was founded. Professor Svante Paabo, of the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, noted that the gene pool in Africa contains more variation than elsewhere and that the genetic variation found outside Africa contains only a subset of that found in Africa. 'From that perspective, all humans are therefore Africans, either residing in Africa or in recent exile,' he said.

chology' would explain the origins of all state and social formations. In evolution 'the differences between the highest and lowest humans were greater than those between the lowest humans and the highest animals.' This is a direct inversion of Darwin.<sup>20</sup> All colonised peoples were inferior to all colonisers, but some were more inferior than others. Those with undeniable evidence of civilisation — Chinese, some Indians, a very few North Africans — were somewhat 'higher' on the cultural (and racial) ladder. Lighter-skinned warriors — Maori, some Native Americans — could be respected enough to negotiate treaties. The darker the colour, the closer to savages. And right at the bottom, only just above the animals, were Hottentots and Australian Aborigines.<sup>21</sup>

The scientific efforts to link biology, anthropology, sociology, psychology and history endowed German intellectual life with a fatal mix of instrumental rationalism, eugenics, race-thinking, and neo-Darwinian ruthlessness. It was both genuinely scientific and, as Germany's most eminent scientist said, utterly unscientific. As Rector of the university in Berlin, Rudolf Virchow drew attention to the rise and respectability of irrationalism:

Our time, so sure of itself and of victory by reason of its scientific consciousness, is as apt as former ages to underestimate the strength of the mystic impulses with which the soul of the nation is infected by single adventurers. Even now it is standing baffled before the enigma of anti-Semitism, whose appearance at this time of the equality of right is inexplicable to everybody, yet which, in spite of its mysteriousness, or perhaps because of it, fascinates even our cultured youth. Up to the present moment the demand for a professorship of anti-Semitism has not made itself heard; but rumour has it that there are anti-Semitic professors.<sup>22</sup>

Members of the academic elite of Imperial Germany, though staunchly nationalist, refused to support racial research even when they were lobbied by the Kaiser: 'they abhorred biological racism as unscientific and a violation of personal liberty'.<sup>23</sup> Later, when a 'single adventurer' spectacularly succeeded in infecting the soul of the German nation, there were professors of Race Science in a state that made race a fundamental principle. If not directly implicated in selecting Jews and Gypsies for killing, they were part of a system that accepted killing as 'understandable'.

In Australia there was no killing of this kind, but what becomes understandable, simply by looking at the career of one of the professors, is the influence of colonialism on genocide in Germany, and the flow of racist science from and to Australia. Robert Manne has suggested that in the 'breeding out' policy of some Australian officials 'genocidal thought and administrative practice touched'; his careful formulation has a context that throws up uncomfortable connections.

20. Darwin *The descent of man*, ch III, Haeckel 1886, quoted in Weindling 1989: 55.

21. Haeckel in Weindling 1989: 56.

22. 1896, in Weindling 1989: 59.

23. Weindling 1989: 240. Virchow had himself, as a leading member of the newly founded German Anthropological Society, in 1871 sponsored a questionnaire on skull shapes, hair and eye colouring, given separately to Christian and Jewish schoolchildren. Only the city of Hamburg refused to cooperate, on grounds of infringement of personal liberty. Virchow used the survey to demonstrate the falsity of racial categories but made little headway against the myths and prejudices (Mosse 1978: 90–3).

### Discourses and genocide

The route, suitably enough, is via Africa. In 1908, three years after the genocidal campaign against the Herero,<sup>24</sup> the German colonial authorities annulled all mixed-race marriages in German South West Africa. Such unions, mainly between Boers and Hottentot women, were forbidden in the future and those who persisted in them were deprived of their civil rights. In 1913, a Dr Eugen Fischer of the University of Freiburg published his findings about the mixed race offspring ('Bastards' in technical German) he had studied in the Rehoboth district of the colony. His findings on the *Bastardisierungsproblem beim Menschen*, the 'problem of miscegenation in humans' had a large historical sweep.

We still do not know a great deal about the mingling of the races. But we certainly do know this: Without exception, every European nation that has accepted the blood of inferior races — and only romantics can deny Negroes, Hottentots, and many others are inferior — has paid for its acceptance of inferior elements with spiritual and cultural degeneration.

There were also immediate policy implications: 'We should provide them with the minimum amount of protection which they require, for survival as a race inferior to ourselves, and we should do this only as long as they are useful to us. After this, free competition should prevail and, in my opinion, this will lead to their decline and destruction.' Ten years later, a more general textbook on 'human heredity and racial hygiene', written with two others, was read by Adolf Hitler while he was writing *Mein Kampf*. Ten years later again Hitler was in power. Ten years after that, Polish children in their thousands were being stolen to replenish the 'racial stock' of the future Germany. Jewish children in their millions were murdered. Professor Fischer meanwhile progressed from giving lectures on 'racial crosses and intellectual achievement' in 1933 (when he also became Rector of Berlin University) to advising on the illegal sterilisation of all German coloured children in 1937, and, finally, to serving in the 'scientific front line for the defence of European culture against the influence of Jewry' at a 1944 congress in Cracow, close to where his academic associate Dr Mengele was doing front line duty at Auschwitz.<sup>25</sup>

All very far from Australia. However, in 1929 the American President of the International Federation of Eugenic Organisations, Dr CB Davenport, asked Professor Fischer to chair its committee on racial crosses, and in 1932 to succeed him as President. Professor Fischer declined, because of other commitments. A colleague from Munich accepted. Whether any Australians were included in the exchange of ideas between the German stars and their English-speaking admirers has not been researched. Common concerns, going back to Darwin's enthusiastic observations about the 'immense mongrel population' of Brazil, certainly persisted.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> For a full account of this terrible episode see Bley 1971. For further sources, and comparison of the genocide of the Herero in 1905 with events in Queensland in the previous sixty years, see Palmer 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Quotations and career outlines from Müller-Hill 1988: 7–21. He supplies a chronology of policy developments and an unsurprising post-war interview with Fischer's daughter: 'My father was a kindly man. So sensitive.' Henry Friedländer 1995 also deals with Fischer's influence and career.

In Australia, to repeat, the trajectory was *from* annihilation. The catastrophe of the stolen children was grounded in a stern brand of humanitarian idealism as well as eugenic ideology, but without the depersonalising stereotypes and the indifference they fed the policy could not have been put into effect. The fewer Aborigines people in the cities saw, the more the stereotypes of drunken, broken blacks could back up what little was shown about the campaign to save the light-skinned 'half-caste' children from a similar fate. The residual genocidal core of the enterprise became visible in this attempt to re-establish a segregated difference. Blacks could very quickly contaminate the children classed as almost white who had to be kept separate from their families regardless of the human cost. The UN definition making removal of children from a group a form of genocide only covers part of the story. Australians should be reminded that 'breeding out' any part of a group to fit racial (and therefore racist) criteria is closely related to genocide. It is a policy calculated to disallow a certain category of offspring their belonging to the group, and therefore curbs the ability of the group to regenerate and adapt.<sup>27</sup>

The tragic effects of this policy are documented in the accounts of the stolen children themselves. The *Bringing Them Home* report is a powerful summary, if far from a comprehensive record.<sup>28</sup> But the mentality which instituted the policy and carried it through is best revealed in the book published by its leading exponent. On his retirement in 1940 after 25 years as Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, AO Neville wrote *Australia's Coloured Minority* as a passionate argument for sorting out Australia's deplorable racial mixing. For all Neville's human sympathies, he cannot disguise a deeply inhuman antipathy to the group created by procreation across colour lines — 'nearly 30 000 people [the anthropologist AP Elkin supportively wrote in his Introduction] of mixed White and Aboriginal descent, usually referred to as 'half-castes'. Better terms would be mixed-bloods, part-Aborigines (part-Whites!) or Coloured Folk.'

Neville did not stop there. He was obsessed with 'degrees' of genetic inheritance, and provided photographs of 'half-castes', 'quarter-castes' and 'octoroons' all looking progressively (and cheerfully) less Aboriginal. Breeding out the black strain had become his mission, and he counted the adoption of his policy by an official conference at Canberra as his greatest success. Under the heading DESTINY OF THE RACE, the Canberra Conference of 1937 had resolved 'that the destiny of natives of aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth, and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end'.<sup>29</sup>

26. Brazil, Fiji and other examples showing the fertility of human 'crosses' proved humans of all races to be a single species (Darwin *The descent of man* ch VII 'On the races of Man'). For Brazil as a model for breeding out colour, see Haebich 2000: 272.

27. See Tatz 1999, Barta 1987 and Gaita 1999, esp. 107–30. Concern about the term 'genocide' in an official report is usually expressed in relation to *Bringing Them Home*. It was noticed less, despite newspaper headlines, when it appeared in the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody reports a decade earlier. (See, for instance, Commissioner Wootten's report on the death of Malcolm Smith, and *The Age* on 21 April 1989: 'Past policy genocide: inquiry QC'.)

28. For the latest turn in the discourse, aimed at discrediting the report and any history recognising the realities of Australia's past, see Manne 2001. For the history and effects of the assault on Indigenous families in all States, see Haebich 2001.

This genocidal end unsurprisingly led Neville into terrible means. His partisanship in favour of Aborigines comes through on every page but the acts his officers committed in pursuit of an ideal makes him as calculating and clear-eyed as the recently defeated Nazis in both facing and creating 'facts'.

The fact that the full-blood people are apparently dying out, while the coloured people are increasing and all the while approaching us in culture and colour, lessens our problem of assimilation ... The rate of decrease and increase respectively is likely to be accelerated as time goes on.<sup>30</sup>

The increase would have disastrous effects if not checked by a policy of segregation and breeding out. Neville held up the prospect of 'an untouchable population' of these 'already prolific people' spilling out from the 'embryo Harlems in our capital cities'.<sup>31</sup> Here he played the winning race card — the awful alternative to his eugenic policy. There were of course practical difficulties:

One of our chief stumbling blocks is the viewpoint that children ought not to be taken from their parents ... You will have a struggle to get the children away, even though the parents will be on hand to see them daily if they wish [compare the next sentence] but believe me they will thank you in the end, as I have been thanked by parents who resisted me almost to fighting point when I removed some lovely youngster from their doubtful care to place it in the Kindergarten to commence its upward journey through life. Once a child is removed it must never return to live with its parents within a settlement; if it does, all the good work already accomplished will be undone ... You must for a generation or more pursue this course if you are to do any good.<sup>32</sup>

It is an explicit final solution that Neville is propounding, one in which the killing has already done its work but which nevertheless requires those charged with the historic mission to be 'hard'. The task has been thrust upon this generation and it must be carried through, regardless of human cost, for the greater good of all succeeding generations. There is no sense anywhere in Neville's book of an awareness about the solutions being attempted by the Nazis as he was writing, and good Christians like

<sup>29</sup> Neville 1947: 168, 176–77. For the context of the conference, with insightful observations about Aboriginal life, ideology and policy development, especially in Western Australia, see Hasluck 1988: chs 3 and 4. Under the reverberating title *Shades of darkness*, Hasluck makes a strong case for assimilation as the opening of opportunity and the privileges of belonging within the majority. He is clear about scientific and cultural influences on views of Aborigines as a 'dying race' (pp 8–9) but his descriptions of policy towards 'half-castes', including child removal, (esp. pp 16–20, 28–33, 42–52) underplay its clear racism. Reynolds 2001: ch 9 has a clear-eyed view of Hasluck's historical role. On the history of defining Aborigines by degrees, and the context of scientific discourse, see Markus 1982 and 1988. For the wider context of anthropology in which such views were formed see McGregor 1997 and Wolfe 1999.

<sup>30</sup> Neville 1947: 58. Manne quotes Neville asking the 1937 conference: 'Are we going to have a population of one million blacks in the Commonwealth or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia?' It is here that Manne comments, 'At this moment in Australian history genocidal thought and administrative practice touched.' Manne 2001: 40. In an earlier essay Manne quotes similar rhetoric from the protector in the Northern Territory, Dr Cecil Cook. Manne 1998: 29. On Cook's attitudes and policies see Markus 1990.

<sup>31</sup> Neville 1947: 261.

<sup>32</sup> Neville 1947: 168, 176–77. For Neville's policy in Western Australia see Haebich 2000, especially chapter 4.

Elkin who supported him did so as part of their larger concern for Aboriginal welfare.<sup>33</sup> At the very moment when the term 'genocide' was being coined in response to events in Europe, the Australian discourse of genocide, heir to its own history, evoked no echoes.

### A linked history

Eugenics and colonialism were the links between Germany and Australia and the links went a long way back. Broadly, within the modern history in which both countries achieved national unity, Germany proceeded from eugenic preoccupations to radical genocide, while Australia progressed from genocide to eugenics. Germany acted radically against racial mixing, Australia moved with it. The discourses met at the apogee of European imperialism: the 1886 Aborigines Acts came into the world three years before Adolf Hitler — 15 years after German unification and 15 years before the Commonwealth of Australia. It is time now, a century after federation, to recognise that a nation founded on genocide needed all of the twentieth century to get to grips with the consequences. In the first 50 years even the most well-meant policies — encouraging assimilation to a higher living standard, absorbing Aborigines within the European genetic majority — were frankly racist. A source of pollution was being cleansed by life, not by death, but being cleansed nonetheless.

So was the discourse of assimilation a discourse of genocide? In Germany, the Nazis were able to proceed from 50 years of eliminationist talk to genocide. In Australia assimilationist talk was developed over more than 50 years to cope with the results of colonisation and genocide. But in a key respect the discourse became both parallel and simultaneous. It was in the 50 years 1890–1940 that the awareness of racial difference in both countries looked for boundaries that should not be crossed and saw social and cultural peril in letting the guard down. For German racists the danger came in admitting an alien (who might not look alien) into the national fold, for Australian racists the danger was all too visible in the biological result of boundary transgression — the 'half-caste'. So in each country the challenge was to restore and hold the boundary. In Germany assimilation was the racist's enemy: it had to be stopped. In Australia, more paradoxically, assimilation offered the best chance of drawing a clean line between the Aboriginal survivors and the white conquerors: it was the racist's friend. The evidence of sexual mayhem on the frontier could be absorbed into the white genetic majority, and the black minority could be kept segregated from any access (including biological access) to the majority's privileges and power.<sup>34</sup>

Here is the plainest link between German and Australian incitements to genocide. The threat of the Other was not in any particular action, or even in any particular vice. Their vice was in being as they were; their being was their vice. Therefore their being had to be eradicated, as one eradicates a pest. In Australia, in the frontier encounters of

<sup>33</sup> Elkin (like Tindale and other key scholars in the anthropology of Aborigines) had his own struggles with racist biological science purporting to show inferiority mental capacity in Aborigines. See Markus 1982, and, for policy development before and after World War II, Hasluck 1988.

<sup>34</sup> On sexual relations, race privileges and power as unresolved legacies of slavery in the United States, see most recently *Jefferson's Blood*, produced and directed by Thomas Lennon, WGBH, 2000.

the nineteenth century and (rather less openly) in the first decades of the twentieth, eradication meant starving, shooting, poisoning, and simply observing the spread of disease. In Germany, it could not mean starving, shooting and poisoning (often with the pretext of preventing the spread of disease) before the arrival of total war in the mid-twentieth century. In both countries the discourse of genocide enabled the majority of the population in whose name the genocide was being carried out to ignore the implications or to acquiesce. And in both countries the limits to genocide were the moral vigilance of a minority, a frail barrier which nevertheless saved significant numbers; the capacity of the killers to see the job through; and — here again there was divergence — the biological entanglements of the groups across the genocidal boundary.

For the Nazis, the problem was one of defining who was a 'Jew' by genetic inheritance, and preventing that person from 'polluting' the 'Aryan' genetic pool. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were the main weapon of legal discrimination, preventing intermarriage or sexual contact. (The most virulent propaganda also came from Nuremberg: Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer*. Its cartoons of predatory Jews and innocent blonde maidens backed up the new law prohibiting the employment in Jewish households of 'Aryan' women under 45.) Problems with existing mixed marriages, and 'mixed race' offspring (*Mischlinge*), were still not resolved when the 'Final Solution' to the 'Jewish Problem' had been implemented.<sup>35</sup>

The catastrophe of racism in Germany sealed the turn from racism in Australia. Hasluck, who became responsible for Commonwealth policy towards Aborigines in 1951, recalled that even before the genocide of the Jews, 'the extreme policies of Hitler made "race" a dirty word'. Already in the 1930s, biological difference was being questioned and replaced with the idea (bound to produce difficulties in practice) that only social circumstances held Aborigines back: 'given the chance, they could do anything the white man could do'.<sup>36</sup> Hasluck left the impression that nothing, in his view, could ever be that simple, and historically the turn was not that simple, but until recently he remained alone in linking the historic change in Australia to a larger history. Policy changed because of consciousness about categorisation, eugenic ambition and genocide.

Hasluck's book remained to one side of the debates brought on by the bicentenary of 1988. In that year, when German history was still distracted by the 'historians' controversy' about the uniqueness of Nazi atrocities, Detlev Peukert called for a new historiography of Germany's path to genocide. It would need, he wrote, to integrate the specific ends and means of Auschwitz into the science-inspired ambitions of modernity. Technology and state power could carry through policies of unexampled rationality.

<sup>35</sup> Once the 'final solution' was under way, both Hitler and Himmler were generally confident that the remaining taint of Jewish 'blood' would be bred out within a few generations. In the night of 1-2 December 1941, Hitler made one of his almost explicit references: 'Probably many Jews are not aware of the destructive power they represent. Now, he who destroys life is himself risking death ...' He added, 'It is remarkable that the half-caste Jew, to the second or third generation, has a tendency to start flirting again with pure Jews. But from the seventh generation onwards [more teutonically thorough than the Australian eugenicists], it seems the purity of the Aryan blood is restored. In the long run nature eliminates the noxious elements.' *Table Talk*: 140-1.

<sup>36</sup> Hasluck 1988: ch 1.

Moreover, in steadily widening areas of social policy, health policy, educational policy, and demographic policy a ruling paradigm and guide to action became established, whereby people were divided into those possessing 'value' and those lacking 'value'. 'Value' was to be selected and promoted, and 'nonvalue' was to be segregated and eradicated. Large-scale social planning of a highly modern kind was harnessed toward the establishment of a racist utopia in which the social question would be 'finally solved'.<sup>37</sup>

To focus yet again on the specific history of anti-Semitism (Peukert would die before Goldhagen did exactly that) was to lead historical enquiry back into a too narrow path. The same could be said of an Australian historiography that tries to focus questions of genocide on the stolen generations, without the context of destruction in the processes of settlement. The eugenic program of 'breeding out' those of no value in the utopian vision of Australia cannot be understood without the history that created the 'half-castes' on the fringes of the nation-building project.

Many scholars like to think that settlers, whether in the Americas or Australia, cleared brown and black people off the land in relatively non-racist ways and the language of hierarchy only became firmly attached to skin colour when most of the damage was done. If civilisation (as the word proclaims) always depended on seeing the city as more advanced than the tributary population in the surrounding countryside, the 'primitive' other was in any case a threat. When new notions of equality also became a threat, they called into being the counter-ideologies of class, gender and race to justify the separation of the privileged from the various, and previously natural, lower orders. 'The good of the race' meant cleansing polluting inferiors from the national stock even before other races were a problem and in both countries preoccupations with a home-grown social peril were precursors of the racial campaigns.<sup>38</sup>

In the hierarchies of class and social status some merit was required to improve one's position. Men made sure that gender inferiority was regarded as biological, but members of the weaker sex could still move up the scale by intelligence, good fortune and exploiting 'natural attributes'. The only hierarchy in which all the lowest-status members of a dominant group could associate themselves with dominance was the absolutely relative hierarchy of race. Notoriously, the most degraded and despised — convicts in Australia, poor whites in America or South Africa (or, later, in post-colonial Britain) — could literally 'lord it over' the racially inferior population with whom they otherwise had most in common. Only race gave them a status above the bottom, and

37. Peukert 1993: 237.

38. Australia (where relatively few black slaves were imported) was unusual in its degree of eugenic reference to its indigenous population. Angus McLaren 1990, *Our own master race: eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945*, Toronto, has no references to Native Americans. McLaren notes prejudices (and some admiration) towards a variety of immigrants, but it appears the original population didn't even flicker on the consciousness of those concerned with breeding better Canadians. A 1994 book on eugenics in the US (Stefan Kühl 1994, *The Nazi connection: eugenics, American racism, and German national socialism*, New York) managed three index references to Native Americans, showing that they were included by some eugenicists in the 1930s with the 'genetically inferior' populations — black, Indian, and Mexican — which were growing at a rate faster than the preferred Northern European stock. Henry Friedländer 1995, Ch.1, also surveys American eugenics. See also Haebich 2001: 268-79.

economic competition at the proletarian level gave them a pressing incentive to insist on the superiority and inferiority guaranteed by race.

Before Hitler looked for a 'final solution' to 'the Jewish problem', he offered his beleaguered constituency a final solution to the 'Marxist' problem as well. Hitler understood very well that the primary menace in the minds of those he appealed to was the working class, intent on Social Democracy at the very least and Bolshevik revolution at the worst. In the concentration camps set up for the 'cleansing' of Germany from the Marxist menace the prisoners would be joined by the 'asocials' and 'work-shy' and Gypsies who represented their own threat to a eugenically conceived nation. Then convicted criminals were mixed in as well, with predictable and successful effect. All concentration camp prisoners were referred to in popular parlance as 'criminals' and if Himmler had not discovered how useful the green-triangle German convicts were for ruling the other categories and nationalities during the war (he boasted about this success in speeches) perhaps they would not have been secure from the killing which eugenic policy decreed for the mentally disabled. The gas chambers were developed first for Germans of inferior quality; after protests halted 'euthanasia' in Germany, the expert team at T4 was given the larger task of eradicating the most dangerous racial enemy.<sup>39</sup>

The 'labouring and dangerous class' that had terrified right-thinking people in 1848, 1871 and 1918 was the same criminal and degenerate class that was exported to Australia as convicts. The dramatisation of eugenic purpose was always acknowledged here as 'the convict stain'. And the convicts in Australia, hardened to violence before they became the frontier guards of the new pastoral economy, served a similar role in dealing death to lesser breeds as the German criminals did in the concentration camps. So Australia's first crossing of eugenics and genocide occurred long before either term was coined.

Because Australia was a settler society from its foundation, there was a reason for killing as the land was taken. Because Germany — as Hitler's generation knew from its schooling — was late in coming to colonialism, it could well have some killing ahead of it. However, the words 'Germany' and 'genocide' have been so profoundly joined in the murder of the Jews that the colonial content and context have been lost. Germany's larger genocidal project accompanied the Holocaust and took its cues from colonialism. The 1905 genocide of the Herero in German West Africa turned out not to be the way forward, but the lesson drawn from Reheboth was. Interbreeding with inferior races would sap Germany's imperial mission.<sup>40</sup> The vast killing fields of the Great War left Germany defeated, and further humiliated by internal revolution and the theft of its

<sup>39</sup>. Henry Friedländer 1995: chs 10–14.

<sup>40</sup>. How Jews could be seen as both inferior — with a 'Negroid' admixture — and superior in power never troubled most anti-Semites. Gobineau believed the Semitic peoples were 'least infected by contact with the black race' and added in a note, also neglected by his followers: 'It may be remarked that the happiest blend, from the point of view of beauty, is made by the marriage of black and white. We need only put the striking charm of many mulatto, Creole, and quadroon women by the side of such mixtures of yellow and white as the Russians and Hungarians.' Gobineau nevertheless believed the inferiority of blacks was proven many times over and judged (here he would have found plenty of assent down under) that neither indigenous Australians nor New Zealanders ('who are usually of weak constitution') were the equal of Europeans in 'the amount of labour they can go through without flinching.' Gobineau 1967: 151–2.

colonies. In Hitler's mind the three events were inextricably connected. Out of them he shaped his national project. It had to accept a sacrifice of lives no less ruthless than the struggle for world supremacy of 1914–18. Its field of endeavour would not be overseas but in the historic lands of German expansion, in the immediate east. And the project could never succeed, or even begin, unless every internal element of disunity was eliminated. If Germany's genocidal mission had to be carried through a century after Britain's (and three centuries after Spain's) there was no way out of that. Besides, their triumphant histories were the best evidence that victors never have to answer for their atrocities.

Hitler always sought to distinguish himself from the colonialist world view he was born into. He would have nothing to do with the scramble for Africa, or the later campaign to reclaim Germany's lost colonies. But he was quite clear about establishing Germany as the 'civilising' colonial power in Eastern Europe, with a standard White Man's Mission. This meant regarding the Slavs as honorary blacks, and their vast lands as a *terra nullius*. Both land and people were to be subjugated — no treaty and no political rights for just barely human 'brutes'.<sup>41</sup>

In nineteenth century Asia, Africa, Australia, and earlier in the Americas, the resistance of indigenous peoples provoked the invaders to ruthlessness. In a competition for resources, genocide was the most obvious option. Enslavement of the remnant would depend on their utility in the new economy. When Hitler's imperialist sense of the world repatriated the ideology and practice of the colonies to Europe, that became his interim solution for the 'Asiatic' Slavs. There really were too many to kill off all at once. He would see how their subordination to the German colonists, the bearers of European civilisation, developed, and as in the case of the Jews, there would be a rational solution.

Variations of the Darwinian struggle for existence supplied a rationale for the disappearance of Aborigines on one side of the world and inspired Hitler's ruthlessness towards Jews and Slavs on the other. When Israelis are ruthless towards Palestinians, or South Slavs towards their Muslim neighbours, the larger historical context should assert itself. The discourse of genocide from far-flung colonies returned catastrophically to Europe, and has now colonised even those who were recently its victims.

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41. A constant theme in Hitler's *Table Talk* in 1941 following the invasion of the Soviet Union. In February 1942 he made the connection with earlier colonisations plain: 'No sooner do we land in a colony than we install children's creches, hospitals for the natives. All that fills me with rage. White women degrading themselves in the service of blacks.' Then: 'The Russians don't grow old. They scarcely get beyond fifty or sixty. What a ridiculous idea to vaccinate them. In this matter we must resolutely push aside our lawyers and hygienic experts. No vaccination for the Russians, and no soap to get the dirt off them. But let them have all the spirits and tobacco they want.' *Table Talk*: 319.

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