Conclusion
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On 28 August 1860 the Victorian Land Convention was politically discredited after a riot occurred at Parliament House. As noted in the last chapter, the Convention had already turned its organisational energies towards creating a voice within Parliament, where Don, Crews, Gray and Hunter now formed part of the fractious ‘Corner’ faction led by Charles Gavan Duffy. The 1860 riot arose during another deadlock between Assembly and Council over the Nicholson ministry’s Land Bill. This Act, at least in its early form, almost replicated the land selection policies drawn up by the Convention in 1857. However, the legislation which eventually passed Council in September 1860 bore little resemblance to the original. During the riot the crowd attempted to breach the doors of Parliament house and threatened members with violence as they escaped towards the city. At about ten in the evening the Riot Act was read by the Mayor of Melbourne, after which the menacing assembly was dispersed by a series of mounted police charges. Protesters retaliated by pelting stones at police, several being seriously injured. Hundreds involved in the violence wore red-ribbons ‘to denote those who were capable of ulterior movements’. Emergency legislation immediately was passed preventing political demonstrations near Parliament House, and during the next few days over a thousand special constables were sworn in for Melbourne’s protection. In some ways, it was 1848 all over again.

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1 See Serle, The golden age, pp. 296-99. For accounts of the Parliament house riot see Argus, 29 August 1860, p. 5; Age, 29 August 1860, pp. 4-5; Herald, 29 August 1860, pp. 4-5.
2 Argus, 29 August 1860, p. 5; Herald, 30 August 1860, p. 5.
3 Argus, 30 August 1860, p. 5; Age, 3 September 1860, p. 5. The colonial armed forces had recently been sent to New Zealand.
As had become the custom, early on the evening of the riot the crowd assembled at the Eastern Market. One of the speakers who addressed this emotional gathering was an unfamiliar orator identified only as ‘Mr. Tope’. He counselled caution, and his exhortations to desist from ‘ulterior measures’ were not well-received. Was this Tope the Torquay Chartist who had left for Australia in 1853, vowing to combat oppression wherever he found it?

Once again, the lack of factual verification of this kind again highlights the difficulty in adopting a biographical approach to Chartist diaspora. In any case, it is debatable whether an inherently individualist methodology such as biography does justice to a collective subject like Chartism. Class, the traditional alternative, is also problematic when faced with novel social contexts such as New South Wales and Victoria. In the mid-nineteenth century both societies typified the classic paradox of colonialism. In an alien natural environment, generations of Britons sought to impose a familiar order upon all things. But Australia never was, and never could be, a simple reproduction of Britain.

What, then, does the cultural alternative pursued in this argument entail? At a basic level, political forms are the logical starting points of my approach to Chartism. The original understanding of culture applied to Chartist activities may still be useful in British contexts, but it offers few solutions to the problem at the heart of this argument. In order to trace the persistence of Chartism beyond Britain and beyond 1848, it is necessary to adopt a more searching notion of culture that takes some (but certainly not all) of its cues from the ‘linguistic turn’ of recent nineteenth-century political historiography. As we saw in chapter one, ‘culture’ has almost become

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4 Age, 29 August 1860, pp. 4-5.
synonymous with 'language' in this 'new political history', and my account also begins by establishing a rhetorical framework of reference.5 Whilst Chartist arguments may have been highly derivative, they did combine to provide colonial radicals with a rich and almost instinctive demotic language. The oral, printed, 'synthetic' and symbolic media in which Chartist claims found expression also need to be accommodated in a cultural interpretation, for traditional forms of historiography invariably pass over these facets of the making of political meanings. I have thus stressed the uses of print by the leadership and the rank and file, the visual and aural media that typically constituted Chartist pageantry, the theatrics and spatial meanings associated with the radical platform, and the way in which quest narratives could be used to impart a tangible sense of collective destiny. I have also made a general distinction between the counter-cultural and invasive tendencies of various forms of collective action, as this interpretative dichotomy helps trace the fate of neo-Chartist contention in Australia.

Four arguments run through this thesis. Firstly, emigration was a significant element of the Chartist experience. I have also argued that Chartist political culture had significant international ramifications, and was perhaps the most important 'influence' upon Australian colonial radicalism between 1848 and 1860. In other words, I am arguing that metropolitan and colonial radicalism can only be adequately understood by close reference to both contexts. In fact, if this thesis has one distinguishing feature, it is a refusal to treat Chartism as a interpretative prelude to various aspects of colonial political culture. Rather, I have attempted to show how Chartist culture was an active constituent of colonial politics in the decade or so after

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1848. However, my third line of argument is that most attempts to initiate independent forms of neo-Chartist association came to nothing. It was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century that a rich (but again, intensely derivative⁶) radical counterculture bloomed in Australia. Hitherto, the political landscape had simply been too sparse to sustain such association. Finally, I have suggested that the Australian contexts patently reveal the racial limits of Chartism’s inclusive domestic ethos.

What elements of Chartist culture, then, persisted and flourished in Australia? In the case of Hawksley’s *People’s Advocate* in New South Wales, it was primarily a flowering of ideas in print — a radical-democratic contestation of the British constitutional legacy within a burgeoning colonial public sphere. The dialogic cultural links between Britain and the colonies also should not be underestimated; this traffic in printed political knowledge was certainly crucial to Hawksley’s journalistic endeavours. As we saw in chapter seven, Hawksley conceived of ‘the People’ in Australia as Britons. This is why he repeatedly turned to the British constitutional heritage to justify his arguments for democratic political representation in New South Wales. In doing so, Hawksley drew upon rhetorical legitimation strategies that had as much validity in Sydney as they did in Britain. However, his attempts to implement counter-cultural institutions such as the demotic open letter, a Land Plan and an indoor meeting place were doomed in a colony only just emerging from a penal past.

Hawksley also had to contend with an established local political culture, with methods of popular agitation dating back to the convict and ex-convict community of the 1820s. Such a culture was much less powerful in Victoria, which in any case was transformed by British emigration in the 1850s. The received understanding of

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goldrush Victoria dating from the 1960s fuses a rather commonsensical form of materialist explanation to a Whiggish narrative style and outlook. Whilst the classic text, Serle’s *The golden age*, faithfully charts the evolution of democratic government, it is not particularly attuned to democratic radicalism or its cultural origins. In fact, orthodox accounts of goldfields protest tend to deny the very existence of political contention in these transitory environments. My case study of Bendigo in 1853, on the other hand, suggests that coherent and consistently espoused radical political claims inspired the anti-license protests. The red-ribbon movement also intrigues in its reliance upon improvised and oral modes of propagation. There were newspapers on the goldfields in 1853, but as shown in chapter eight, they were often rare and expensive items. The alternative lay in writing, lecturing, and a colonial variant of the mass platform whose internationalist character echoed the evolution of late-Chartist political culture. In August 1853 a carefully planned physical confrontation between the unrepresented producers of colonial wealth and the state was mobilised around this improvised but evidently effective political medium. The victory won by miners in August 1853, however, was soon to be overshadowed by further conflict culminating in the armed conflict at Ballarat the following year.

The striking differences between the visual spectacle of the license fee movement and the anti-transportation protests also show how Hawksley in New South Wales had been constrained by an established colonial culture borne of bureaucracy and surveillance. There has been no opportunity to examine radical-democratic feeling on the (much less productive) goldfields of the older colony. But the evidence adduced in chapter eight suggests that despite the constant popular derision of ‘commissioner government’ in Victoria (and despite the best efforts of historians), the
goldfields of that colony were sites of political freedom the likes of which had not been seen before in eastern Australia.

The final chapter reverts to the urban environment of Melbourne, its streets and the Eastern Market. Both counter-cultural and contestatory elements of the Chartist inheritance informed colonial radicalism in Victoria in the first years of responsible government. In fact, the Victorian Land Convention – a phenomenon much more important for contemporaries than it has been for historians – perhaps represented the most obvious counter-cultural manifestation of the Chartist inheritance in Australia. Originally conceived as an anti-Parliament, its agrarian and democratic reform programme amounted to an alternative legislative programme for the future of Victoria. The street politics loosely associated with the left flank of the Convention were also particularly rich manifestations of the contestatory protocols of Chartist collective action. However, by 1859-60 a comparatively democratic Parliament had re-asserted its political authority, and effectively subsumed the counter-cultural challenge of the Convention.

The clash of cultures on the colonial frontier, the fears of exile implicit in the colonial experience, the confusion over what might constitute an ‘Australian’ identity or destiny seem particularly pronounced in the latter part of the 1850s. Here we see how much Chartism was a cultural phenomenon, nourished by certain cultural circumstances, rendered poisonous by cultural difference. As David Goodman points out, the notion that the land belonged to ‘the People’ was an intensely powerful populist ideology in Victoria.7 The inherited radical-democratic concept of ‘the People’ may have actively embraced British and, later, European forms of ethnic

difference, but it went no further. Thus the Convention explicitly construed the Chinese as the most alien form of humanity imaginable, and was complicit in the hegemonic logic of exclusion that took up so much public debate in Victoria on the ‘Chinese Question’ in 1857-8. The Convention’s silence upon the rights of indigenous cultures also spoke volumes. Only by examining these far-flung colonial contexts and issues, however, can we gauge the limits of the Chartist challenge.
11. Hashemy demonstration site near the Domain in the early 1850s.

12. Anti-license demonstration, Forest Creek, Victoria, December 1851.

13. Captain John Harrison.

THE CUNNING SPOUTER.

A NEW VERSION OF AN OLD SONG.

HERE was a cunning spouter,
And a spouting he was boun,
And he set out to emigrate,
And came to Melbourne town.
Singing, we'll gang again a spout-
ing,
And blathering away,
And we'll gang again a spouting,
For that's the trade to pay.

He found out a' folk's grievances
As soon as on the shore,
And had na landed quite a week
Ere he began to roar.
Singing, we'll gang again, &c.

He wadna sleep in the depot,
Because there was na fire,
And preached of rich men's wicked
ways
To rouse the poor man's ire.
Singing, we'll gang again, &c.

This cunning loon he got a job,
'Twas flair agan his will,
And verra soon he tired of work,
But stuck to spouting still.
Singing, we'll gang again, &c.

The scales then fell frae aff men's e'en,
And then it was they saw
He was the greatest loafer loon
That stood amang them a'.
Singing, we'll gang again a spouting,
And blathering away,
And we'll gang again a spouting,
For that's the trade to pay.

15. Melbourne Punch,
15 October 1857.

16. Melbourne Punch,
14 May 1857.
17. Meeting at the Eastern Market.

**THIS EVENING.**

**TO THE PEOPLE!**

"To your tents, oh, Israel."

"Now's the day and now's the hour."

Fourteen Obstructionists have thrown down the gauntlet, and placed themselves in opposition to the will of the people. They have the audacity to say the People do not wish for Reform. In order to show them to the contrary, a Committee of One Hundred has been formed, and will meet IN THE EASTERN MARKET, THIS EVENING, at Six o'clock, to organise an immense TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION. The Procession will be headed by Flags, Banners, Music, and One Hundred Torchbearers. After proceeding to North Melbourne, Collingwood, and other places, a GREAT MEETING IN FRONT OF THE PARLIAMENT HOUSES will be held, when the votes for and against Reform will be taken.

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN, we are now undergoing a great crisis. The Squatters and their confederates know that the hour is almost come when they will be made to disgorge their ill-gotten gains. We must not talk of liberty while we cannot touch an inch of this fair land, and we pay taxes for the protection of the rich. We allow dust to be thrown in our eyes, while chicanery and fraud does its work. Arouse from your slumbers: let no cowardly spirit deter you from gaining your country's emancipation. The People—not the Squatters—are the foundation of a great nation. We must direct our efforts to the obtaining of a better system than we left behind, where class legislation and misrule have brought the people to the starvation point. It has ever been the practice of the wealthy to oppress the poor, and the custom of kings to deprive by fraud and plunder the people of the land, and parcel it out to an aristocracy, who degrade the people to the level of serfs; making them toil and slave for a paltry pittance, just enabling them to keep body and soul together.

FELLOW MEMP, we must battle against such a system in this Colony. No three or four dukes or squatters must be allowed to portion off this Colony as they have done in Scotland. Once more calling on the people to be prepared, the Committee would say, in the words of the great O'Connell, "He who is not with us is against us."

The Committee are prepared to do their duty—let their friends do theirs.

W. WILLIAMS,

MAY 28th, 1858.

Secretary to the Demonstration Committee.

18. Reform demonstration poster, 1858.
19. Diggers, Castlemaine, 1857
   (Antoine Fauchery).

20. Charles Don.

22. The Eastern Market and Bourke Street, Melbourne, in 1874. The government office precinct, including Parliament House, is at the top right.

23. Bourke Street (east), from Parliament House, 1857. This was the site of the 1858 reform demonstration and the 1860 riot.
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