Chapter Five. Responses of South-eastern Aboriginal Musicians to the European Cultural Innovation.

Section One. Introduction.

Although Theodor Adorno considered that 'even quite distant cultures...have the capacity to understand one another musically' (quoted in Kartomi and Blum 1994: 250), historical evidence suggests that in the Australian post-contact experience, a truly practical musical comprehension operated in one direction only. That Aboriginal people entered into musical relationship with the British almost immediately upon invasion is demonstrated by several published observations. Perhaps the earliest of these was that of Surgeon John White, who wrote the following in July 1788:

> While they were thus employed, one of the gentlemen with me sung some songs and when he had done the females in the canoes either sung one of their own songs, or imitated him, in which they succeeded beyond conception. Anything spoken by us they most accurately recited, and this in a manner of which we fell greatly short in our attempts to repeat their language after them (quoted in Egan 1999: 79).[8]

It is logical to assume that the whites' inability to imitate the Aboriginal language here would have extended also to singing, if they had attempted it. The independent

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[8] A similar comment was made by Watkin Tench in his description of the actions of the Sydney Aboriginal Manly (Arabanoo) at the European New Year's celebration in 1789. Although Arabanoo had been with the Europeans less than 24 hours,

> ...his voice was soft and musical...during dinner time a band of music played in an adjoining apartment and, after the cloth was removed, one of the company sang in a soft and very superior style; but the powers of melody were lost on Manly, which disappointed our expectations, as he had before shown pleasure and readiness in imitating our tunes (Tench 1999: 98).

Aboriginal interpretation of European musical material soon supplanted mere imitation, and within five years of first occupation, George Thompson had recorded that:

> when in their canoes they keep constantly singing while they paddle along; they have the French tune Malbrook very perfect: I have heard a dozen or twenty singing it together (24/10/1792, quoted in Gordon 1968b: 9).

This well-known passage was probably originally advanced as evidence of Aboriginal musicality and quickness of ear, but it also illustrates the important points that Aboriginal people could relate conceptually to European musical systems, and that they were probably keen to explore this relationship. The same was true only to a very limited degree the other way, with published accounts suggesting that Europeans rarely responded positively to Aboriginal vocal production or melodies, although there was broad appreciation of Aboriginal rhythmic and formal structures (see chapter two). Watkin Tench's view may be representative here:

> We always found their songs disagreeable from their monotony...(Tench 1999: 262, 3).

Indeed, it seems that a European desire to learn and perform Aboriginal music has been almost entirely lacking throughout the past two centuries. This reluctance might be explained by the belief, widespread amongst Europeans, that Aboriginal culture would soon die out, and thus possessed an antiquarian interest only. The fact that so many Aboriginal songs have been recorded, but never performed by whites lends weight to this proposition. Perhaps Europeans felt that learning indigenous music was too difficult, that the melodic, rhythmic and meaning systems underpinning this

musical expression lay beyond their comprehension or patience. Alternatively, as was argued in chapter two, many Europeans would have disdained indigenous musical productions as inferior. Again, while it is one thing for whites to have maintained peaceful relations with Aboriginal people, it would have been quite another for them to enter into sufficiently close personal relationship to enable deeper musical understandings to flow. For this reason, Aboriginal people may have been reluctant to teach Europeans to perform their music, although some evidence survives which does suggest an early willingness:

> Observing that they were attentively listened to, they each selected one of our people, and placed his mouth close to his ear, as if to produce a greater effect, or, it might be, to teach them the song, which their silent attention might seem to express a desire to learn (David Collins, quoted in Gummow 1992: 79).

This artistic 'relationship' culminated in Aboriginal people actively appropriating new musical ideas, while Europeans (with the notable exception of the Victorian composer Isaac Nathan — Crotty 1995: n.p.) remained apparently impervious to indigenous musical sway.

The course that this relationship took in northern New South Wales, especially New England, is the focus of the present chapter. Examples will be given of the many ways in which Aboriginal musical expression articulated with the European. These will be discussed within a framework provided by the views of two senior scholars, who each proposes a progressive, chronological model for musical connexion. Terminating in the replacement of indigenous by European forms, the models imply that the two musical systems could not coexist with complete integrity. It will be argued that this was not the case, that there was no progressive dilution of indigenous

artistic identity, and that Aboriginal people accommodated European musical elements to varying degrees in contemporaneous artistic expressions.

The chapter is organised into a further six divisions. Section two will argue that the confident isolation of western influence in Aboriginal micro-musical structures is, under the circumstances, impracticable. Section three will present models for the European transformation of Aboriginal music drafted by Catherine Ellis and Tamsin Donaldson. These will provide the framework for section four's survey of ways in which indigenous musical expression utilised European textual elements. Local Aboriginal participation in European musical activities comprises the focus of section five, and section six examines the relationship between Aboriginal and European performance contexts. Section seven concludes the chapter, summarising its arguments and suggesting linkages to other parts of the thesis.

Section Two. Methodological Problems in Determining South-eastern Tonality.

The survey that comprises the bulk of this chapter will concentrate on the textual analysis of several south-eastern indigenous songs, to illustrate the various ways in which they have incorporated English elements. Before this occurs, a brief but concentrated discussion will argue that, except in the most obvious instances, almost nothing can be said with confidence regarding the strictly musical evidence for such borrowing. Much of this uncertainty stems from difficulties encountered in determining the pre-contact character of the south-eastern tonal system.

The opinion of modern research is divided as to whether pre-contact indigenous tonality in the south-east utilised a discrete-pitch or a microtonal system. Catherine Ellis describes the situation succinctly as follows:

> While Jones and Moyle assumed Europeanized interval structure in the areas of their work, Ellis (1965, 1967) suggested that this structure does not apply in central Australia or in the Western Desert, although it may in the south-east of Australia, where extant recordings are of too poor a quality to measure accurately (Ellis 1980: 721, 722).

Linda Barwick has somewhat crystallised this suggestion in her informal opinion that one distinctive feature of south-eastern song lies in:

> The use of discrete pitches rather than microtonal subdivisions and portamenti (quoted in Bell 1998: 168).

The hesitation expressed by Ellis above does not stem from the poor quality of recordings alone. By the time Elkin carried out his sound-recording programme during the 1930s (see chapter two), south-eastern Aboriginal societies had already been relating musically with Europeans for up to 150 years. It would be most unusual for there to have been no tonal influence over that period, and Ellis' scheme for the development of transitional Aboriginal forms certainly assumes the Europeanisation of interval structure (Ellis 1980: 727). Ling Roth was alive to this possibility when he objected to Fanny Cochrane-Smith's recording in 1899 (see chapter one), and it will be seen below that Trevor Jones regarded virtually all Elkin's south-eastern recordings as exhibiting European influence.

Before the phonograph, the only means of recording Aboriginal music was by field-transcription, a process which, by definition, necessarily cast the indigenous product in a Western intervallic framework. Not only was the earliest primary historical evidence burlesqued thereby, but terms typically employed in its contemporary analysis are quite different to, and to some extent incompatible with those used by researchers today. A general example of this was given in chapter two,

in relation to G.W. Torrance's structural interpretation of William Berak's songs. Even in reports unconstrained by the dictates of transcription, it is quite possible that the first observers of Australian indigenous music found difficulty in comprehending a tonality foreign to European ears, and ambiguously portrayed it in western conceptual terms. So, while David Collins described the music of one Sydney song using concepts like 'diatonic', 'thirds' and 'octaves', he also mentioned that the melodic descent of the song was 'waving', which could indicate a microtonal orientation, interpreted somewhat idiosyncratically (quoted in Gummow 1992: 78, 79). Again, while Torrance and Bonwick speak generally about south-eastern melodies in terms of discrete pitches, the former does acknowledge the use of portamenti. On the other hand, Collins' perception of the song as 'soothing' suggests the scalar organisation may not have been so foreign, nor his analysis not quite so Eurocentric after all.[9]

While microtonality might be suspected of indigenous south-eastern music then, this quality was not positively identified by early observers. The oldest surviving musical evidence displays instead a western bearing. Once the use of the phonograph could compile a more faithful record of indigenous performance, not only was the cross-cultural musical relationship already well-advanced, the lack of a reliable frame of reference for comparison prevented the course of a century-long development in native tonality to be discerned. Even where sound-recordings themselves have indicated a microtonal orientation, modern analysts have not always been careful to thoroughly test the assumption of a western-style tonal framework. Alice Moyle

[9] Some other early commentators also regarded Aboriginal vocal expression as pleasing, J.F. Mann finding that

> Their intonation is often very harmonious and agreeable (Mann 1885: 43).

admits to underplaying the significance of certain pitch 'deviations' in her transcription of Fanny Cochrane-Smith's singing as follows:

> Some deviations from the original pitch, during singing, cannot escape notice...in Fanny Smith's performance of the first song there is a gradual fall in pitch amounting to at least a semitone...Such a situation is familiar to all who have listened to amateur performances by unaccompanied choirs. As it is not serious enough to conceal the intended melody, I have not shown the lapse in pitch in the transcription (Moyle 1960: 74).

Margaret Gummow describes a similar difficulty in her transcription of songs recorded from the Darling River region of New South Wales (Gummow 1987: 103). Gummow is generally willing to characterise indigenous scalar structures in western analytical terms, and like Moyle, attributes tonal 'imprecision' to the exigencies of performance. She does however acknowledge the possibility that this variation might be systematic:

> Similar to Australia, tonal variability occurs throughout Aboriginal New South Wales. It is possible that songs contain a tonal area, rather than a specific note, or that the tonal variability throughout a song is deliberate (Gummow 1987: 104).

Trevor Jones seems more decisive in regarding Aboriginal discrete pitch-use as an exotic feature. In his analysis of the Elkin collection of Aboriginal sound-recordings, Jones judged the south-eastern sample as lying predominantly outside the range of typical Aboriginal musical expression, even though that very sample must surely be used in any determination of a general character. That it did not so figure can be seen in the fact that the south-eastern tonal difference does not register as

significant in Jones' statistical surveys, summarised in chapter two. Instead, Jones remarks vaguely that

> All the songs recorded (by Elkin) from this area, except for the two marked 'pre-contact', are sung in a style and vocal quality atypical of Aboriginal music and undoubtedly show European influence, although some of the essentials of the original songs are probably retained...(Jones 1965: 344).

That Jones is ready to attribute all atypical departures, however isolated, to European influence, is shown in his description of one song exhibiting chromatic inflections of the 6th degree of the scale in which it is sung:

> The fact that this is sung by a man who has been in extensive and prolonged contact with European-Australian culture probably accounts for this unprecedented departure (Jones 1965: 346).

While this feature may well be atypical of indigenous practice, there is no more extensive record of its European use in Australia, at least by the folk musicians or rural hymnodists with whom Aboriginal people communicated most frequently. To confuse the issue even further, Ellis criticises Jones himself for the perceived assumption of a Europeanised interval structure in his own research material (Ellis 1980: 721, 722).

Although Gummow did canvass the possibility of New South Wales indigenous melody utilising tonal areas, her summary of persistent European-derived features does not include the use of discrete pitch:

> Several musical features appear to be of European descent...the use of western major scales; arch-shaped phrases which have a relatively wide range of a major sixth; a triadic melody; wide melodic leaps, both

> ascending and descending, within phrases; a longer average duration; and the use of macaronic texts (Gummow 1983: 273).

Gummow tags the use of the western major scale as evidence of European influence in indigenous songs. Her failure to include other diatonic or pentatonic scalar organisations, whose use has been recorded in both Aboriginal and European musical systems, could be seen as a provisional acceptance of discrete-pitch singing as an indigenous musical entity. In assessing even those relatively easily-isolated features as European-derived, Gummow is apparently traversing contested ground. Alice Moyle also notes what she considers to be unusual or atypical musical features in her own analysis — including the triadic emphasis listed by Gummow — but instead of appealing to European influence, she ascribes them to a New Guinea or Pacific Island origin of uncertain antiquity:

> The Tasmanian samples, with their central tone, emphasis on a triad and upward thrust in the initial phrases, lead one to compare them with island styles further north (Moyle 1960: 75).

The contradictory opinions sampled above, leave quite open the question of south-eastern tonality. It is possible that discrete-pitch singing always marked off the south-eastern from central, northern and western Australian Aboriginal practices. The fact that south-eastern Aboriginal people appeared to relate so readily to European tonalities lends some weight to this view. [10] On the other hand, it is difficult to

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[10] The following observation indicates that European tonality may not have been so very foreign to central Australian Aboriginal people either. During his first journey of exploration in 1872, Ernest Giles noted of natives near Charlotte Waters Station that:

> One of their number, a young man, could speak English pretty well, and could actually sing some songs. His most successful effort in that line was the song of "Jim Crow," and he performed the "turn about and wheel about and do just so" part of it until he got giddy, or pretended to be (Giles 1995: 3).

account for such a radical regional difference, in an otherwise largely homogeneous Australian culture-suite, without some appeal to external influence, whether it be European, Chinese or Pacific Islander.

As a discrete-pitch system obviously accords with western tonality, and as the Eurocentric assumption of discrete-pitch has been a persistent problem in the recording and analysis of indigenous music, it is also possible that the observed anomaly between south-eastern tonality and that of other regions may be due entirely to methodological discrepancies. The bulk of research into central and northern Australian Aboriginal singing has coincided with the refinement of analytical techniques, particularly those relating to pitch and intervallic structure, developed and employed by Ellis and others (C.J. Ellis, 1997a). Virtually all observation and analysis of south-eastern music has been carried out at a much coarser level, however. A further confounding factor arises from the circumstance of these remote areas being relatively thinly-populated by Europeans, and it is reasonable to assume here a concomitantly lower level of European musical influence. Taken together, these factors have produced a formula that effectively correlates sophisticated recording techniques with microtonality and low European influence, and unsophisticated recording techniques with discrete-pitch use and high-level influence. Consequently, the evidence of pitch and intervallic structure from the regions is to some extent incompatible, and certainly ineffective in determining whether differences as to pitch-use are the result of European research methods, European musical influence, or indigenous *praxis*.

A precisely similar situation seems to hold for rhythmic analysis. Ellis writes that recorded rhythmic forms can also display varying levels of European influence.

Presumably she regards old-style Aboriginal rhythmic organisation to have been predominantly isorhythmic, so that any documentation of rhythmic forms able to be divided into western metrical units betrays Europeanisation, or at least Eurocentric analysis. Athough this would probably not apply in all cases, there is no doubt that Gummow considers the two to be often compatible, western rhythmic and isorhythmic division being possible simultaneous interpretations (Gummow 1987). This means of course that European rhythmic influence would, in many cases, be indiscernible.

By restricting the following examination of syncretic processes to song texts, it is considered that the extent of the discussion required to draw some basic conclusions is kept within manageable limits. To introduce the contested detail involving musical elements on the other hand, would render argument impossibly convoluted, and any determinations radically qualified. Before entering fully into the discussion of these song texts, two major schemes describing the recent development of indigenous Australian music will be presented.

Section Three. Paradigms of Cultural Loss.

Very little has been published analysing the course of the relationship between nineteenth-century south-eastern Aboriginal and European musics. That which has, invariably posits a continuum of progressive change. Starting with the unadulterated indigenous product, a process of radical transformation eventuates in European and Aboriginal musical expressions presenting as physically indistinguishable. The following survey challenges that assumption, and shows instead that although a multitude of syncretic forms have been recorded, these various expressions had a

coterminous existence. Furthermore, it will be proposed that, no matter how extensive the merging, Aboriginal-identified music was never confused with the European.

In certain pockets, church music held an undoubted sway over Aboriginal performers. However, rural folk music is considered here to have provided the most intense locus of relationship, certainly on New England, as it was the dominant musical type maintaining social and geographic contiguity with Aboriginal society. Catherine Ellis offers some support for this assertion, having found in her own research with Aboriginal people of South Australia and Victoria that:

> Many older aboriginal performers who have no tribal affiliation and speak only English have had close musical contact with white folksingers. Often these aboriginal singers know local folksongs forgotten by most white Australians, including songs referring to the country of emigration as well as to local events (Ellis 1980: 727).

By equating skill in folk music performance with lack of tribal affiliation and language, Ellis implies that where white folk music forms an important part of Aboriginal singers' repertoires, it must have replaced indigenous expression. This is not borne out by the experience of other field researchers however, who have identified a positive corrrelation between performance expertise in European folk and in indigenous genres (Sullivan 1988; McDonald 1996).

Elsewhere, Ellis describes a form-based scheme for the relationship between indigenous Australian and European folk musics, which, as might be expected, assumes the eventual subsumption of the former by the latter. This formulation, which concentrates solely on the indigenous product, can be summarised thus:

i. The first step in transition involves the production of new songs in the traditional idiom. Any songs that are not concerned with mythical ancestors, Ellis seems to

suggest, show outside influence. In 'tribal' society, she continues, composition of new songs was very rare, as all 'proper' songs were believed to be originally the work of the ancestral beings.

ii. Songs become less complex in performance, the overlay of patterns described in chapter two being gradually reduced.

iii. The general shape of melodies and ornamentation are preserved, but melodic movement, interval usage and rhythm are Europeanised.

iv. Songs are fully Europeanised, their only Aboriginal identity residing in subject matter and performance context (Ellis 1980: 729).

Unfortunately, a proper assessment of Ellis' scheme is impossible, as she gives no evidence for her first three categories. However, it is clear that her outline betrays a certain narrowness in implying that the only song-forms current before the European innovation were those relating to mythical ancestors. Ellis here seems to subscribe to a view of 'old style' Aboriginal society as having been extremely static, if not ahistorical, which as seen in chapter one, has been refuted by a number of scholars. Against Ellis' view, Luise Hercus, in describing central Australian *Wangkangurru* musical culture, comments that, in addition to ancestor-songs,

> there were...also other types of songs, usually regarded as transient, and described as "rubbish" songs. These dealt with adventures of individuals (Hercus 1994: 107).

Another problem with Ellis' formula is that it seems to be predicated on the assumption that there was an inevitability, and an implied chronology, whereby change progressed towards the complete Europeanisation of Aboriginal songs. This aspect will be discussed further below, along with the similar judgement of one other Australian song-scholar.

Tamsin Donaldson has advanced what have proved to be influential views (Bell 1998: 168), with a sub-text comparable to Ellis'. Donaldson has aimed her discussion of syncretisation at the level of formal structure however. Her critique consequently avoids the consideration of musical micro-structures such as pitch and rhythm. Donaldson considers that:

> significantly syncretic forms or performance contexts appear never to have developed in the southeast. Dancing to corroboree songs was largely abandoned when claypan dances to fiddle and accordion music started on reserves and riverbanks. Old themes could persist in the new forms, and you might occasionally hear a corroboree song with strummed violin — or improvised tapped tobacco tin — in place of clapstick accompaniment. But the non-narrative patterned repetitions of corroboree song texts could not be successfully combined with the stanzaic construction of introduced songs (Donaldson 1995: 144).

There are a number of points of issue raised in this passage. Donaldson is undoubtedly correct in stating that there is no evidence for the development of musical forms that combined stanzaic and non-narrative, repetitive structures. But it is another thing for her to suggest that this could not have happened, despite the intentions of Aboriginal musicians. Any portrayal of indigenous structures being replaced by European ones implies that the two musical systems were to some extent incompatible. If Donaldson is founding such an opinion on the fact that the narrative ballad and short-section corroboree forms never coalesced, this seems, at the very least, an exceedingly narrow base from which to generalise the history of the relationship between black and white musics. Her analysis also stops short of examining possible reasons for that lack of merging. Not only has cultural exchange

gone considerably deeper than the introduction of a tapped tobacco tin or 'strummed' violin to corroboree events, the causes for its particular development could reveal much about Aboriginal attitudes to music generally, and to the principle of accommodation in particular. That this relationship was extensive, complex and creative will be shown below, the evidence organised to answer the three main components of Donaldson's assertion, *viz*:

a) that significantly syncretic musical forms never developed; b) that significantly syncretic performance contexts never developed, and c) that white dance music replaced black dance music. During this discussion, the major tenets of Ellis' formulation will also be addressed.

In the first instance, it can be seen that communication with European expression has resulted in the creation of several distinct Aboriginal musical forms, falling into one or other of the following categories:

I. music predominantly indigenous in style, but utilising European-derived elements in its performance;

II. music predominantly European in style, but utilising indigenous elements in its performance;

III. music entirely European in structure, but bearing an exclusively Aboriginal 'essence'. Examples for each of these classifications will now be considered in some detail.

Section Four. Relationship between Aboriginal and European musical forms.

<u>I. Aboriginal People Utilising European-derived Elements in Their Performance of Compositions Predominantly Indigenous in Style.</u>

This category contains the following subsets:

a). lingo songs composed with indigenous melodies and European themes;

b). songs comprising lingo texts and European tunes;

c). songs containing indigenous tunes and macaronic texts;

d). songs combining indigenous tunes and wholly English texts.

The perception of the indigenous nature of tunes in three of the four subsections above is based on the musical analysis of scholars such as Margaret Gummow.

a). Indigenous-style Songs Composed as Commentaries on European Phenomena.

Several indigenous songs have been recorded that contain European themes. Most are historically-oriented, in that they document important post-contact events such as sightings of sailing ships, horses or railway locomotives. Many also incorporate modified English textual elements. Notwithstanding Ellis' assertion, there is absolutely no reason to suppose that south-eastern Aboriginal people composed topical or historical songs only after the white invasion (Hercus and Koch 1996: 148).

Wanggala-ji and *Bulagiri,* two of Frank Archibald's songs seen in the previous chapter, comprise good illustrations of Aboriginal songs incorporating European themes. Some songs go further than this, and express emotions or sentiments that may themselves bear a post-contact character. Examples include a *Bandjalang* song about women mourning like 'weeping willow trees' (Gummow 1992: 122), and the following *Gumbaynggirr* song taken from a performance by Harry Buchanan of Nambucca. English textual elements here include the words *maning* 'money', and *birriin* 'bread'. More interesting is the expression of the concept of poverty, as like as not to be a European innovation. The following textual transcription was kindly provided by Steve Morelli:

Gurraam ngaya gurraam

Nyaaga ya(y) bu bulaa

Maning mugumbanggirr jurraang

Nganyundi(ng) gal birriin ngayandi

Ngurraa ngaanya waanyjalay

Yaamadi ngujawiny(ndi) bel gurraydi

Gurraam ngaya gurraam

Brother Steve's translation runs as follows:

I am a poor feller. Look at this poor feller here!

I have no more money. I told my girl 'if only I had some bread'.

Give me something! I am shivering.

Well all you fellers, if you're coming around here,

(Give me something because) I am a poor feller.

Other songs that reveal what may be European conceptual innovations include *Duguhn Balehn*, a song about a man who received a divine injunction against flogging his bullocks (Gummow 1992: 116), and *Duguhn Malehn*, a 'very sacred' corroboree composed by a man who had been given a vision of heaven (Gummow 1992: 117). This may be a convenient departure point for some discussion of the many indigenous songs dealing with God and heaven that commentators have often regarded as Christian replacements, rather than as genuinely syncretic creations.

The crux of their argument is that, as central and northern Australian religious expressions show no evidence of belief in a sky-god, then any south-eastern references to God, heaven or the All-Father must indicate a supplanting of locative indigenous observance (Swain 1993). However, local Aboriginal elders, all initiated men fluently versed in aspects of their culture, have consistently drawn direct parallels between the essences of old-time Aboriginal and Christian religions (Buchanan 1973; de Silva 1994; Briggs 1995; Robinson 1989). They would

undoubtedly agree with *Bandjalang* man Eric Walker, that these songs do express an indigenous spirituality of very long standing. In relation to the composition of *Duguhn Malehn,* Walker here pleads a case for the seamless integration of Christian and Native Australian cosmological observance:

> Yeah, he was a clever man, yeah. He was the man that made this...corroboree...There is life after death, like. Which a lot of people think when you die you're finished...but the Aborigines that was their belief. They knew that there was heaven up there somewhere...They knew that there was God...they knew that there was God in the three, you know the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. They had the names for them all, the Aborigines...this is the corroboree that they sing...(Gummow 1992: 117).

Indeed, there is a wealth of evidence from New England and the north coast of New South Wales to corroborate Watkin Tench's firm belief that

> the Indians of New South Wales acknowledge the existence of a superintending deity (Tench 1793, quoted in McGregor 1998: 3, 4).

All the New England languages had their own names for 'God' for example, alongside those for various lesser deities and mythical beings. A.C. McDougall, who lived with *Gumbaynggirr* people for many years during the nineteenth century, wrote the following concerning their religious beliefs:

> The Coombangaree tribe believes in one god, whom they call Uli-tarra...when all the black people die Uli-tarra will go with them to Kowandah. The soul leaves the body as soon as death takes place and goes away towards where the sun goes down...Each totem...formerly had a (Cam-bora) [*gumburr*] spirit or ghost of its own, either in the

> shape of an animal, bird, fish, or reptile. They believe in one god, Ulitarra, but they also have a superstition about certain trees in which they believe a "Cam-bora" lives (McDougall 1901: 63).

It might be argued that McDougall's description demonstrates clear Christian influence. This may be so, but that writer certainly presents a strong argument that belief in a sky-god may not have been inimical to a commitment to the locative expression of totemism. Common sense would indeed expect some Christian influence, but it is probably impossible to now discover what may have constituted the original religious base over which Christian details may later have been laid. Roland Robinson provides examples of the interrelation of Christian doctrine and northern New South Wales creation myths that suggest a more sophisticated relationship than that one replaced the other, or even sowed the seeds for its supercession (Robinson 1989: 66ff.).

The most recent scholarship concerned with the 'All-Father' argument has been summarised by Les Hiatt, who provisionally concludes that not only might the south-eastern concept be indeed indigenous, something similar may also hold true for Aboriginal people of north, central and western Australia. While the contributing evidence is diverse, Hiatt believes that

> we can still speak of a genre, a suite of fleeting forms connected with the rainbow, through which the philosophers of Aboriginal Australia have sought to express the idea of an underlying reality (Hiatt 1996: 116).

b). Songs Comprising Lingo Texts and European Tunes.

This is another well-represented genre, and *Nganyundi ba:liga Gumbaynggirr* from the north coast of New South Wales is a particularly good example. The song deals with the indigenous identity of a young warrior, and is set to a popular European tune. It seems to have enjoyed a widespread currency, having been recorded from Harry Buchanan of Nambucca, and also from members of the *Yarrawarra* community (Harry Buchanan 1973; Bruce Laurie 1998). Here is the text of the song, as transcribed by Steve Morelli:

Nganyundi ba:liga Gumbaynggirr

Nganyundi mi:miga Janggadi

Ngaia jawgarr ya:m Gumbaynggirr

Gala:ndi nga:nya warrga nyayagi junuygudi? Nga!

Gamay junuy warranwarran du:wa da:rigu

Ngaia jawgarr ya:m gulbul waman.gu

Nganyundi nyami jawgarr Wa:ngganba

Gala:ndi nga:nya warrga nyayagi junuygudi? Nga!

Brother Steve's translation reads

> My father is *Gumbaynggirr*, my mother is *Dhangadi*, therefore I am *Gumbaynggirr*. Why does my sweetheart hardly notice me? I'm clever at dancing, and handy with the small spear, battle-axe and hard boomerang. My woman is a *Waangan*, and therefore the right sort, so why does she hardly look at me? (Morelli n.d.: n.p.).

Immediately obvious is the song's European-type structure. It has a strophic form, its melody is commercial European, and its two verses even display evidence of a

standard rhyme scheme. Pure *Gumbaynggirr* is employed in the expression of its self-consciously indigenous sentiments, however. There seem to be no English words used in the text, nor does the song contain any references to a post-contact experience. The composition is an affirmation not only of Aboriginal, but of deeply local identity, cast entirely in a European musical form. If one can extrapolate from Ellis' and Donaldson's progressive schemes the assumption that transformation of one aspect of a musical production presupposes transformation in another, then this song surely stands in solid contradiction: of all the pieces examined in this section, *Nganyundi* possesses the least modified indigenous text, married to the most typical of western music-hall melodies (Steve Morelli 1996: pers. comm.).

Further examples of this type of syncretisation form a significant part of recorded *Gumbaynggirr* musical culture. Tony Perkins told me that his old people at Corindi sang *Gumbaynggirr* hymns (that is, lingo texts married to European hymn-tunes), that were considered by them to be sacred in nature, and to bear power similar to doctors' songs (Perkins 1998). In addition, at least one of Junie Mercey's old *Gumbaynggirr* songs is sung to a European tune which seems to bear a close relationship to *Nganyundi Ba:liga Gumbaynggirr* (Morelli 1996: pers. comm.). An earlier recorded instance of the phenomenon consists in the following southern Queensland text, itself embedded within a discussion from the journal *Science*. While the song is provisionally considered to be an example of a completely indigenous text allied to a European melody, it is possible that the tune only acquired a European character once reduced to western notation:

> Mr. Thompson writes: – 'I send you herewith the notes of an air used by the blacks of the Mary River, Wide Bay in their corroborees. They

are furnished by a lady who has heard and noted them, and may be relied upon as correct.' The words of the song are as follows:

Mo mo yah lea mo mo no yah lea

Mo mo no yah lea, Mo mo no

Wah! wah! wah!

Ming yah gobundah gobundah

Ming yah, Mo mo no yah lea mo,

Mo no yah lea, Mo no yah lea,

Mo mo no wah!

Ah yah na winga runna, ah yah,

Ah na winga runna! Ah yah ah

Na Winga runna! Ah yah ah

ah na candoweh, candoweh.

Ah yah ah na merri merri wangah,

Ah yah ah na merri merri wangah.

Ah yah ah na winga runna,

Ah yah ah na winga runna.

Mr.Allpress' note, endorsed by the executive of this Society is as follows: – 'After careful perusal of the corroboree music you have placed in my hands, I have arrived at the conclusion that it is not genuine, as it appears to me to have too much resemblance to a civilized tune. I do not wish to infer that the person who noted it down, did so otherwise than in good faith, but would suggest the possibility of the aborigines having picked up an old tune from some settlers and afterwards turned it to account for corroboree purposes.' We wish to

add nothing to the remarks of Mr. Allpress quoted above, except to observe that on hearing the song played and chanted, the writer was reminded of some children's singing game which he could not locate (Harper 1902: 175).

c). Songs Comprising Indigenous Tunes and Macaronic Texts.

It can be seen from the foregoing analysis that European melodic influence in a song in no way presupposes a similar textual process. It seems that the same operates in reverse, with Gummow providing evidence of strict indigenous musical structures being applied to the English components of at least one macaronic song-text. This is *Rum Song*, recorded by Jeremy Beckett from the singing of *Maliangapa* man George Dutton, in Wilcannia, western New South Wales. Gummow points out that the song comprises two syllable-strings of twenty-seven units each, this indigenous organisation applying to both English and Aboriginal textual elements:

wona wodi boy good morning boy com'n 'ave a nobbler 'v dark brandy dark brandy I want ee rum-o.

wainbadai ja nain, nain, nain du ju avamagan duju wodjabadan walu ju kalamadu ju (Gummow 1987: 99).

Another instructive representative of this genre is found in the song referred to by Gummow as *Getting A Bride*. While it is expressed mainly in *Bandjalang* and conforms to an indigenous formal structure, the piece contains one complete verse in English:

Yilah wahlu yanbalehla, yilah wahlu yanbalehla Gamigalgu

To get me a *dubay* to *ganjaliyah*, to get me a *dubay* to *ganjaliyah*

Don't forget me *wah* don't forget me *wah* wedding cake*gu*

I'll bring you leg of a possum or a bear, I'll bring you leg of a possum or a bear

Jarang nganyi yanganah jarang nganyi yanganah janajangah

Jarang nganyi yanganah janajangah, jarang nganyi yanganah janajangah

Yila munah yunalah yila munah yunalah mala waybarah

Yila munah yunalah mala waybarah yila munah yunalah mala waybarah

(Gummow 1992: 426, 427).

Gummow's gloss on the text runs as follows:

> A man was asked where he was going. He replied that he was going to Evans Head to find his bride and get married. His friend replied not to forget to bring him some wedding cake. Traditionally, a possum or a bear was given as wedding cake (Gummow 1992: 427).

Both songs contain whole verses in English that obey the same compositional rules as the indigenous ones. Again there is displayed an equality of treatment that confounds the view that European expression systematically superseded the indigenous.

Interesting in this context is the observation that a text may be wholly indigenous in its theme, and yet contain English phrases for Aboriginal concepts — a reverse of the first genre examined, which contained songs strongly European in theme while utilising indigenous words for European concepts. Also worth noting is

the seamless marriage of Aboriginal and English grammatical elements illustrated by the phrase *wedding cakegu* ('for wedding cake').

Indigenous and European compositional features have been seen above to interrelate almost effortlessly, at all structural levels. This denies that there was any inevitability about how their relationship might have progressed. There is certainly no suggestion from the evidence that the use of English language or European musical elements necessarily threatened the integrity of their indigenous counterparts.

d). Songs Comprising Indigenous Tunes and Wholly English Texts.

This category is much more rarely-documented than the others. In relation to *Getting A Bride*, Gummow indicates that two versions of the song have been recorded entirely in English!:

> 1) One was performed by Alexander Cameron who was from the *Gumbainggir* language area and recorded by John Gordon at Pippy Beach in 1968...Cameron learnt this song in Chapman, a town on the Richmond River and stated that it was about his friend Bunny Cook going to Baryulgil, rather than Evans Head. *Cameron's song is in English.*
>
> 2) A performance by Lyle Roberts from Lismore and recorded by Margaret Sharpe in 1977. *This performance is similar to Cameron's performance.* (Gummow 1992: 427. Emphasis added).

Gummow provides no further details of either of these versions of *Getting A Bride*. Assuming other elements of their structures to have persisted, the textual transformation from lingo to English is persuasive that the local Aboriginal musical community could creatively shift forward and back between indigenous and European

heritages, presumably maintaining the identity distinction between them. It will be seen in the next division that a similarly bold juxtaposition of cultural elements is a feature of the song *Jacky Jacky*.

II. Aboriginal People Utilising Indigenous Elements in Performing Music That is Predominantly European in Style.

This class of song includes unusual forms utilising chiefly pidjin textual elements. It can be safely assumed from the content and recorded performance contexts of these songs that, although predominantly European in style, they are Aboriginal productions. Melodies have never been noted for the majority of these texts. An exception is the song *Jacky Jacky*, recorded from many Aboriginal singers in south-eastern Australia, including New England (Archibald Family 1995), and whose air bears a strong British folk orientation (see Donaldson 1995). Two other texts — *Wheelbarrow Broke*, and *Baal Gibbit Blanket* — were examined in the previous chapter. From the evidence given there, it is argued that not only should they be viewed as essentially Aboriginal compositions with strongly indigenous meanings, but that they could be seen as very early instances of Aboriginal musicians composing consciously in a European form. While the song *Jacky Jacky* may be of much more recent provenance, it nonetheless displays many structural and thematic similarities to *Wheelbarrow Broke*. Both texts, for example, are narrative in style and set in rhyming quatrain form. Each also presents a 'potted' history of the effects of European invasion and occupation, culminating in a vision of European economic breakdown and a concomitant moral victory for the Aboriginal way. The moods of the two songs are also similar, the protagonist in each case cynically holding himself at arm's length from seemingly futile white economic activity.

Jacky Jacky was a smart young fellow,

Full of fun and energy,

He was thinking of getting married,

But his lubra run away you see.

Ch: *Krikitah bubilah wildi maiah*

Ngabili nadja jindjerri wah.

He headed to the hills to chase the emus

With his spears and waddies too

He's the only man that can tell you,

What the emu told the kangaroo.

Krikitah bubilah wildi maiah

Ngabili nadja jindjerri wah.

Hunting food was Jacky's business,

'Til the white man came along,

Put his fences across the country,

Now the hunting days are gone.

Krikitah bubilah wildi maiah

Ngabili nadja jindjerri wah.

Now the country's short of money,

Jacky Jacky sits and laughs all day,

Whitefeller wants to give it back to Jacky,

No fear, Jacky won't have it that way.

Krikitah bubilah wildi maiah

Ngabili nadja jindjerri wah (Chittick & Fox 1997: 58,59).

Margaret Gummow has analysed the song, and comments on its special character that successfully combines European and indigenous musical elements:

> the indigenous Aboriginal melodic features of intonation on the tonic, tonal plateaux and tonal repetition, and the Western major scale and triadic melody are combined (Gummow 1987: 244).

Tamsin Donaldson has also analysed *Jacky Jacky* from a structural perspective, and is correct in saying that the song does not represent a true marriage of indigenous and European forms (Donaldson 1995: 144). The rhyming quatrains are purely English in style, while the corroboree-verse chorus displays strongly indigenous characteristics, suggesting a joining rather than a blending process in its composition.

III. Aboriginal People Performing Entirely European-style Indigenous Compositions With Particularly Aboriginal Meanings.

While no progressive transformational process is suggested hereby, it is only a short step from the singing of *Getting A Bride* in English to the composition of Aboriginal songs, possessing undeniably indigenous meanings, with English texts and European airs. These productions have been recorded of course, but as virtually all the local evidence for this phenomenon comes from the testimony and singing of the Archibald family of Armidale, this special category will be examined in depth in the following chapter. It will be seen there that many of the extra-musical meanings of indigenous singing that were outlined in chapter two, can also inhere in English-language songs with western melodies. Considering everything that has been said so far in relation to musical accommodation, the paradox that Aboriginal identity can

obtain in songs that display no outward connections with indigenous precedent, will be fully explicated.

It is apparent from the very brief summary given above, that virtually all possible permutations of the structural relationship between indigenous and European musics have been recorded from south-eastern Aboriginal singers, with *Jacky Jacky* and *Getting A Bride* even approaching Donaldson's marriage of structural forms. There is no suggestion of a chronological continuum here, as Aboriginal people were composing simultaneously in European and indigenous modes from soon after first contact: despite their considerable stylistic differences, *Bulagiri* and *Wheelbarrow Broke* are likely to have been contemporaneous local compositions. Nor, for reasons set out later concerning the parallel performance of indigenous and European compositions, is there a suggestion of one style eventually superseding the other. This maintenance of cultural difference would seem to argue more strongly for continuity of indigeneity in music, than for the replacement of the Aboriginal by the European, as Donaldson implies. The theme of continuity through the maintenance of difference is elaborated further below, and again in the following chapter. The demonstrated ability of Aboriginal people to participate fully in European-style musical activities, while at other times observing indigenous cultural orthodoxy, comprises the focus of the next two sections.

Section Five. Aboriginal Participation in European Music and Dance.

South-eastern Aboriginal people have been documented as participating fully in white musical culture on New England in three main directions — in playing European instrumental music on European instruments, in dancing, and in singing English songs. This record is lamentably sketchy however, as short-sighted salvage

collecting projects have, until very recently, concentrated solely on the identifiably indigenous repertoires of bi-cultural musicians. Apart from Catherine Ellis' brief foray into the recording of English-language Aboriginal songs from South Australia and Victoria in the early 1960s (Ellis 1993: pers. comm.), much of the work aimed at correcting this bias has been carried out by Chris Sullivan. In an overview of the results of his extensive field research with Aboriginal musicians, Sullivan reports that

> the performance of European influenced /derived dance, music and song by Aboriginal people dates from at least the 1850s (Sullivan 1988: 65).

Data for New England itself have not been found to extend back this far, but oral history testifies that Aboriginal people were participating in European music here from well before the turn of the twentieth century. The present section will briefly consider that evidence in its discussion of local Aboriginal involvement in instrumental performance, in social and step-dancing, and finally in European-style singing.

I. Aboriginal People Playing European Instrumental Music.

It will be remembered from chapter four that Heather Goodall found it was the most knowledgeable Aboriginal people who were often the main agents in the successful farming of reserve lands in New South Wales. Chris Sullivan reveals a similar situation pertaining to European instrumental music in south-eastern Australia:

> In fact, it was often the elders who most strongly retained the vestiges of pre-contact culture who were among the leaders in the European music and dance (Sullivan 1988: 65).

The willingness of fully-cultured Aboriginal people to embrace the foreign music seems to be borne out by the New England evidence, immediate examples being found in the persons of Frank Archibald and senior members of the Dunn family of Oban. The latter have been described as most conscious of maintaining their cultural roots (Doug Irving 1995), while also renowned for their European-style instrumental abilities (McIntyre 1989; Jay 1995). Jack Dunn, king of Oban around World War One, spoke lingo almost exclusively (Jim Lowe 1983: TRC 2720/39/1), made a living at bush work, supervised the maintenance of important aspects of local indigenous culture, and apparently spent a great deal of time playing the accordion (Jay 1995). Around this locus, there was indeed a significant intertwining of cultural expressions.

Following is a list of names, no doubt very incomplete, of local Aboriginal people remembered within their communities as active instrumental musicians during the early twentieth century. The have been collated from the present author's field interviews, and include: members of the Naylor family of Rockvale (fiddle, accordion); members of the Ross family of Rockvale (fiddle); members of the Quinlan family of George's Creek and Yooroonah (fiddle); members of the Dunn family of Oban and Guy Fawkes (fiddle, accordion); members of the Redmond family of Falconer (fiddle); members of the Vale family of Bellbrook and Hillgrove (fiddle); Doug Scott of Bellbrook and Hillgrove (fiddle); Arthur Widders of Guyra and Armidale (fiddle, bones); Frank Archibald of Oban and Armidale (accordion, concertina and mouth-organ); Jimmy Miller senior of Walcha and Woolbrook (fiddle); Jimmy Miller junior of Walcha and Woolbrook (bones); members of the Green family of Walcha and Woolbrook (accordion); members of the Snow family of Walcha and Woolbrook (accordion); members of the Morris family of Walcha (fiddle, accordion); Jack Moses of Glencoe and Niangala; Jim Yarry of Walcha (fiddle);

Charlie Ellis of Walcha and Tingha (accordion); Annie Cross of Walcha and Inverell (accordion); Jim Boney of Ebor, Walcha and Armidale (concertina, fiddle); Charlie O'Leary of Barraba and Kingstown (accordion), Ralph Lowe of Guyra and Kempsey (mandolin, accordion); Andrew Irving of Guyra (whistle, banjo), and members of the Faulkner family of Uralla (fiddle, accordion). Many more Tableland musicians are or were members of families with indigenous forebears who chose not to identify as Aboriginal. These people are not included in the present survey. The extent of the Aboriginal facility for playing European instruments is suggested by the following record of conversation between Margaret Somerville and Annie Kelly (Wright) of the Walcha district:

> *Margaret*: How often did they have these dances and parties?
>
> *Annie*: Oh, they'd have them every weekend if it was properly — you'd even ride to them you know, at the one place, specially to Ingelba. They were from Woolbrook, Callagan's Swamps and all them places. They come into Ingelba.
>
> *Margaret*: What did they do at those parties?
>
> *Annie*: Music and dancing. A lot of the men could play the violin and the cordine, the concertina — couldn't they? All those older people, they'd all take it in turns to play the fiddle...Some of them'd stand up and sing all the funny — Uncle Henry...(Cohen & Somerville 1990: 78).

If Trevor Jones is correct in saying there was no purely instrumental music in old-style Aboriginal society, then the dance music of the Europeans must have been a unique innovation. This fact may have made it all the easier for differences between

the musics to be maintained, as there was no Aboriginal precedent with which the European could have been blended. Although Sullivan claims that

> There are some recorded examples of European instruments being used for tribal music/dance and of tribal tunes and language being used for European dances (Sullivan 1988: 66),

he provides no examples to expand on Gummow's skeletal evidence, and I have not yet come across one reference to European dances accompanied by indigenous music. It is further argued from the illustrations above, that European melodies were unlikely to have been used to accompany corroboree dancing. It appears that in these contexts, musical functions were separated, not so much because they could not be successfully combined as Donaldson asserts, but because Aboriginal musicians apparently deliberately kept them so.

The writer's own fieldwork resulted in the recording of two Aboriginal accordion players only, neither of whom had played for many years. The discrepancy between this, and the considerably larger number of known local Aboriginal instrumentalists listed above, is explained by the fact that most of the latter had died by the time I began my recording work. Furthermore, the generation succeeding theirs did not generally take up the learning of melodic dance-type instruments. This is significant in relation to what will be said below of the coroboree and European bush-music styles dying out simultaneously. From my own very small recorded sample, together with some observations made by these musicians' contemporaries, some provisional statements may be made about local Aboriginal involvement in bush music.

Aboriginal people took passionately to the performance of European music, and excelled in its execution. By the turn of the twentieth century, they were often the

favoured musicians for both black and white dances in the bush. Aboriginal musicians seem to have been identified as consistently expressing greater rhythmic sophistication in their art, and Charlie O'Leary confessed to being known as always ready to 'swing' the music (O'Leary 1989). Other accordion players were renowned for freely resorting to syncopation techniques in their rendering of dance tunes (Charlie Ellis 1985). Musical analysis of Aboriginal performances is yet to reveal what might be particularly indigenous about attitudes to European dance music. Superficially, these reveal little substantial difference to white attitudes. This observation applies also to a number of European-style dance tunes, composed by Aboriginal musicians of western New South Wales, that have been recorded by Chris Sullivan.

Indigenous musicians were apparently more likely than whites to play in ensembles, as the provision of music for white bush dances was largely a solo phenomenon (McDonald 1994b). Early photographs give some idea of the instrumentation used in these groups. One published by Sullivan displays what may have been a conscious adaptation of a typical minstrel-band line-up from Purfleet, New South Wales. In addition to identified vocalists, band members are holding a banjo, button-accordion, fiddle and autoharp. A similar photograph from Red Rock, on the New South Wales north coast, shows musicians holding predominantly home-made instruments (plate 5). These include what appears to be a type of kerosene-tin 'cello or bass, an autoharp, whistle, banjo, gum-leaf and clapsticks. Other musicians from the same area attest to the manufacture and use of kangaroo-skin drums, a practice much more rarely-documented for white performance (de Silva 1994; Maggie Morris 1994; Lardner 1998).

The *modus operandi* of the Red Rock band provides an interesting example of the possible appropriation of an ancient English custom. At Christmas time, the band would apparently go from house to house in the local hamlets, playing music in return for gifts of food. How close this is to aspects of the English customs of wassailing and mumming, yet members of the *Yarrawarra* community aver that it was as much the inheritance of indigenous precedents as of the European (Laurie 1998; Lardner 1998)!

II. Aboriginal People Dancing European Forms.

a). Social Dancing.

Aboriginal people also excelled at performing European dances. Jim Lowe remembered that while black people held their own functions, they also attended white dances in his area. At these events, they were subjected to no discrimination, and were instead encouraged to participate fully (Jim Lowe 1983: TRC 2720/39/1). Aboriginal community dances were nearly always held outdoors, which was quite uncharacteristic of the white occasion, and therefore suggestive of a merging with older practices. Hazel Vale describes something of this type of dance near Guyra in her youth:

> We used to dance out in the open. Dancing there one night when the snow started coming down...We'd make a big fire out there with tyres and that, and start dancing...We had a feller who used to play the violin...my husband's uncle, we used to call him *Baba* (Grandfather) Dave Vale. And...he got a kerosene tin, and he made it like a guitar...and old Granny Vale used to play that and he'd play the violin. And then we had the 'cordeen players there too (Vale 1994).

The ground was always well-prepared for these dances, and Ethel de Silva remembers seeing Granny Widders of Armidale pouring boiling water on the North Hill dancing-floor and sweeping it every day for a week before a dance (Archibald Family 1995). This careful preparation is also recorded by Sullivan (Sullivan 1988: 66), and by Margaret Gummow, in the following reminiscence of Charlotte Page:

> Do you remember there used to be a dancing floor there too...And you know, you used to chip it. Chip the grass, water it, sweep it, then water it again. You know, not water it, not wash it away but just sprinkle it, sweep it. You know, that floor would be lovely and smooth and hard to dance on (Gummow 1992: 176).

The dances performed at Aboriginal events were the same as those popular in the European community, and in the period examined by this thesis, included the waltz, polka, schottische, quadrilles, varsovienna, mazurka, the Highland Fling and other step-dances.

b). Step-dancing.

Unlike instrumental playing, it could be argued that Aboriginal step-dancing implied strong links with indigenous practice. The genre certainly shared with some corroboree dancing, particularly 'shivery-legs' performances, the character of a display of footwork. There may have been more emotional resonances as well, something suggested by records of individuals dancing alone and in a meditative fashion. A local newspaper noticed 'Mary, one of the dusky daughters of the sun', dancing a solo 'corrobory' while drunk in the streets of Armidale in 1878 (*Armidale Express*, 10-5-1878). Harold Harrison described old Rosie Mumbulla doing

something similar on the south coast of New South Wales in the first half of the twentieth century:

> You'd see her dancin' around a tree, singin' in the language. She was just shufflin' around and singin' (quoted Chittick & Fox 1997: 91).

Producing a mirror-image of these practices, it is said that Tom Lowe, a local Aboriginal man from Backwater, indulged frequently in solitary European-style step-dancing. Although he was never witnessed in action, his neighbours tell of seeing the deep depression he thereby wore in the dirt floor of his bark hut (Wilson 1994).

If the parallels between the 'shake-a-leg' and step-dancing were immediately obvious to Aboriginal people, then the following account by First Fleeter David Collins shows they may have been critical judges of the standard of the new European steps:

> the natives were lively, dancing and singing in concert in a very pleasing manner...three of the sailors, who were Scotchmen, were desired to dance a reel; but, for want of music, they made a very bad performance, which was contemplated by the natives without much amusement or curiosity (quoted in Gummow 1992: 79).

Aboriginal people indeed developed the local reputation of showing the greatest skill in step-dancing, Jim Lowe commenting that 'a blackfeller is very clever on his feet'. Jim illustrated this with the example of Arthur Widders, who step-danced on a flattened sheet of bark, 'rattlin' the bones all the while'. His dancing of the 'longshoe' displayed such lightness of step, that Arthur was described by Jim as 'a feather with the stem taken out' (Jim Lowe 1983: TRC 2720/39/16/B).

III. Aboriginal People Singing European Compositions in the European Style.

Catherine Ellis considered that Aboriginal communities have been comparatively rich repositories of older British folk music (Ellis 1980: 727), an opinion reinforced by other field researchers (Sullivan 1998; McDonald 1996). Aboriginal singers were certainly renowned for their skill and unusual repertory in the broader European New England musical community. Certain individuals such as Tom Lowe and Frank Archibald have been consistently singled out as specialist vocalists, but, as with instrumental music, Aboriginal singers were more likely than whites to perform *ensemble*. Ben Cherry commented on local Aboriginal singers' 'lovely soft, low voices' (Cherry 1987), a style exemplified by Leonard de Silva, who sang quietly and in a deep register, with a wide, controlled vibrato (de Silva 1994). This may reflect the preferred Aboriginal sound aesthetic explained by Tony Perkins in chapter two. The types of song favoured by Aboriginal people again seem to have been similar to those sung by rural whites, with perhaps more emphasis placed on older ballads and hymns. A representative list would include sentimental parlour songs, bush ballads, items from Child's corpus of English and Scottish ballads, folk hymns, comic songs and parodies. While it would be very difficult to attempt a reconstruction of meanings that European dancing might have held for Aboriginal people, the case is a little easier for singing. As this forms the focus of chapter six, details will not be elaborated here, except to say that Aboriginal people often varied the texts of European-composed songs to reflect their own community meanings.

All the identifying Aboriginal singers recorded by researchers on New England have been able to perform lingo songs as well as English-language items. This circumstance has been noted from the early days of the Australian colonies, as illustrated specifically by the following Tasmanian example:

> And the Native men was playing and singing about God and Jesus christ and they were a singing bout there own country song...(*Flinders Island Weekly Chronicle*, 6/11/1837, quoted in Rose 1996: 13).

This is another piece of evidence which can demonstrate, when bundled with that already adduced in this section, that south-eastern musicians possessed the ability to maintain a healthy bi-musicality, without the risk of their indigenous expression being replaced by European music. The testimony of the Archibald family in chapter six, will show that Aboriginal musicians deliberately maintained a distinction between the two modes, and this assisted considerably in ensuring indigenous cultural continuity. The following section will reinforce these musical findings in its discussion of bi-cultural performance contexts.

Section Six. Relationship Between Aboriginal and European Performance Contexts.

a). Corroborees and Country Dance.

The second of Tamsin Donaldson's statements concerns performance contexts, and again it is argued that the relationship here has been more extensive than she has allowed. Donaldson comments on the persistence of old themes in new forms during corroboree events, but from the examples given so far in this chapter, it would perhaps be more accurate to speak of the generation of new themes in old forms. Significant mergings of context do seem to have occurred in the south-east, always mediated by the Aboriginal desire that the essential indigeneity of corroborees should be preserved. Besides the European instruments mentioned by Donaldson and Gummow as having occasionally accompanied corroboree singing (Gummow 1992: 121, 172), other mergings include what appears to be a deliberately syncretic attitude

to costuming. This is detailed by Emily Horneville in a description of her community's corroboreeing in western New South Wales in the early twentieth century:

> I've seen the gins too — young girls with their trunks on. I was in on that! Some of them looked good too. But some had bloomers on...They knock off at sunrise, have a wash, have breakfast, put on their clothes (Oates 1985: 118).[11]

Visual support for Horneville's statement can be seen in a photograph taken by Joseph Check at an open New England ceremony in 1895 (plate 6). Check's picture portrays Aboriginal people dressed in an array of clothing styles, some seeming to have been deliberately employed to complement painted body-decoration. A further written analogue is provided by a journalist's description of a corroboree held at nearby Dalmorton in 1910, where:

> the men and boys were clothed with trunks, and the exposed portion of their faces, bodies and limbs painted in grotesque fashion...the women and girls were clothed in white dresses...(Gummow 1992: 87).

Again, an earlier corroboree described by the journalist for the *Armidale Express* intimates that the wearing of red dresses by the women was a consciously ornamental exercise (*Armidale Express*, 25-10-1873: 4).

It could be that some of the designs painted on the men in Check's photograph represent the crossed belts of a British military uniform. This might be considered fanciful until one heeds Carter's record of an English marines' drill being incorporated

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[11] A modern analogue might be seen in the practice of women in central and northern Australia sometimes wearing bras while dancing, in order to make themselves look 'more beautiful' (Elizabeth Mackinlay 1995: pers. comm.).

into a *Ngarrindjeri* ceremony early in the nineteenth century (Carter 1992a: 162). But the designs could well be local after all, as Matthew Flinders noted, in his description of that very same drill, that:

> the red coats and white crossed belts were greatly admired, having some resemblance to their own way of ornamenting themselves (quoted in Carter 1992a: 161, 162).

The argument is clinched by the following record from Captain John Hunter, describing armed men massing to defend their women against the invading Europeans, only three days after the first landing at Port Jackson:

> they were painted with red and white streaks all over the face and body...there were those who, at a small distance, appeared as if they were accoutred with cross-belts (quoted in Egan 1999: 18).

A second demonstrated merging in performance context relates to the sites, both temporal and spatial, where Aboriginal communities hosted their dances. Here the evidence argues persuasively that Donaldson is mistaken in her belief that 'claypan dances' replaced the corroboree. Ample documentation survives of Aboriginal communities participating in both indigenous and European dancing contemporaneously — sometimes, as will be shown in chapter six, on the very same occasions. To all intents and purposes, the bush dance and the corroboree maintained a parallel existence, on New England at least, until both declined seriously in the years before the Second World War (Gray 1999: 81). Charlotte Page of Woodenbong here describes the dances of her youth, where corroborees and quadrilles were held on roughly alternate occasions on the same 'dancing-floor':

> But corroboree nearly used to be only a Saturday night...Mostly a Saturday night. It was just like the ordinary dance for us but they'd do

> it at night and then if it wasn't corroboree it was dancing then. And we'd dance on the ground floor. There was no floor then. And down in the hollow here where they chipped a great big patch, that's where we used to dance. And the men folks, they'd all get the fire wood and have it all ready and when it was time, for dancing time, then all the mothers, old ladies, they'd make the cakes and that, you know, they'd have a cup of tea in between dancing time (quoted in Gummow 1992: 190).

Corroborating evidence for the coevality of indigenous and European dancing has been gathered for the north coast of New South Wales (Leonard de Silva 1994; Auntie Maggie Morris 1995), and for central New England (John Naylor 1995; Maisie Kelly 1995; Ethel de Silva 1995). More will be said of the Archibald family's own merging of musical contexts in the following chapter.

That Aboriginal people themselves drew a close and ready comparison between indigenous and European dance occasions — and indeed forms — is illustrated by Dick Donnelly of Woodenbong, in his explanation of the nature of the corroboree:

> Alright, meet a different tribe in different other places. Have this good ol' dancing, you see. Like you people have...well you go to dances, anyway, we was the same...I'll tell you, alright — different dance, different song. You might go to somebody...might sing out 'take your partner for the waltz'. Well, he must play that waltz dance, eh? ...Just like the same as you people, you dance. All right, you play the waltz, then you start again, another song, another dance, you see (quoted in Gummow 1992: 189).

This comparison also holds good for the typical disposition of dances. It was seen in chapter two that one style of Aboriginal rhythm-production consisted of a musician beating a stick held against his chest in the manner of a violin. The following observation from the Hunter Valley, just south of New England, reinforces that description, and insinuates an identification of the corroboree with European dance organisation:

> the dancers...are arranged in one or more lines at a suitable distance, their bodies ornamented by designs in pipeclay...In front, and facing them stands *a man called the "fiddler,"* who acts as conductor or leader. He keeps the most admirable time by beating his boomerang with a piece of stick...(Mann 1885: 42, 43. Emphasis added).

It need scarcely be pointed out that this indeed corresponds closely to the organisation of a country dance (*sans* pipeclay!), right down to the detail of the bush musician haranguing his instrument with a fiddle-stick. This identification of the indigenous with the introduced extends also to song-types — even to their religious dimensions — where increase-songs, and certain 'spiritual' corroboree songs are likened directly to hymns (Radcliffe-Brown 1929a, notebook 6: 37; Gummow 1992: 181). It should be re-emphasised that there is no sense of the white replacing the black here, but at all times, *identification with* presupposed the independent status of each.

b). The *Square Dance Song.*

The foregoing discussion is wonderfully and definitively encapsulated in the example of one *Bandjalang* corroboree song-and-dance composed by Raymond Duncan. As its resonances for this study are so compelling, and as it has already received a certain amount of analytical attention from scholars, chiefly Margaret Gummow, I would like now to examine its contribution in some detail.

The *Square Dance Song*, according to Gummow (1992: 92), accompanied a corroboree about Aboriginal people dancing the quadrilles. It was recorded from the singing of Cecil Taylor, who himself played the fiddle and accordion for European dancing. On a previous occasion, Gummow declared that the text proved resistant to complete translation (Gummow 1987: 2), so her later summary of the content of the song may not represent her 'final word':

> In the text Section 1 begins by saying that everyone is about to start dancing. Section 2 mentions something about cuddling your partner and Section 3 mentions removing each other's clothes (!). The text of the second part of each section involves the repetition of two syllables – 'ya we' in the first section, 'di min' in the second section and 'gu bul' in the third section. According to Taylor the repetition of syllables at the end of each section is 'the sound of the foots...They call it the hands up in the old time square dance...and the noise is the foot. The sound they make with their foot kicking the floor' (Gummow 1992: 92).

Elsewhere, Gummow transcribes an illuminating conversation between Cecil Taylor and the music researcher, John Gordon:

> Then Gordon states 'Those noises at the end are not words they're just knocks from the foot?' Taylor answers, 'Where they're goin' round and round and round. Each time you make a different sound...Of course in the early days in those square dances, you will understand that they changed partners and so forth and so on like that...and that's the noise it makes...(Gummow 1987: 3).

Cecil Taylor's comment regarding 'the early days' is ironic, according the quadrille a significant time-depth within a discussion of a form as ancient as the corroboree. This serves to underline the point made below that the European dance and the indigenous *Square Dance Song* and its dance were contemporary expressions of Aboriginal musical culture at the turn of the twentieth century.

It appears that different dance steps were used for each section of the corroboree (Gummow 1992: 225), and that at the end of each section, the music could be extended indefinitely — to accommodate the performers taking however long was necessary to complete the dance (Gummow 1985: n.p; 1992: 224). This feature is tied to a technique of 'cueing' which Catherine Ellis describes for central Australian music (Ellis 1997b: 77), Tamsin Donaldson isolated in *Ngyiampaa* songs, Gummow found in older *Bandjalang* expressions, and which she writes has also been documented in Arnhem Land singing (Gummow 1987: 5). Most interestingly in this context, those very same structural features are found in the European dance-form that the song describes. Quadrilles (otherwise known as set-dances or square-dances) also consist of multiple sections or figures, each utilising different dance-steps. Furthermore, it is common for Australian dance-music researchers to collect set-tunes that are performed irregularly as regards structural length. This irregularity is believed to have originated in dancers consistently taking more than the allotted number of bars to

complete certain figures. Australian dance scholar Shirley Andrews, in describing music played for the Lancers Quadrille, comments:

> Many traditional musicians will watch the dancers, and play on to allow sets which have got behind the music to finish the figure (Andrews 1974: 44).

Almost incredibly cleverly, Raymond Duncan, the composer of the 'Square Dance Song', seems to have closely and deliberately 'mimicked' the European analogue, *without at any time needing to stray from deep, customary indigenous strategies to do so.* Not only does the *Square Dance Song* present an iridescent entwining of European and indigenous forms, certain other ironies are apparent in its composition: it is a dance about a dance — itself a favourite vehicle for achieving irony — which bears English analogues such as *Hamlet's* play-within-a-play; more importantly, an indigenous expression which combines *participation in* and *observation of*, as this does, partakes of the quintessence of Aboriginal Dreaming songs, according to Stephen Wild in his analysis of the central Australian *Anmatjarra Honey Ant Men's Love Song*:

> The song words constantly shift between objective and subjective points of view, as if the singer is sometimes taking the part of each character and at other times taking the part of an outside observer. This shifting perspective reflects the fact that the singer is both singing *about* ancestral events and participating *in* the ancestral events as an actor in the process of attracting a woman. A fusion of objective and subjective experience is a salient feature of the concept of the Dreaming: human beings are both products of the Dreaming and participants in it...(Wild 1994: 49, 50).

Under the circumstances, it is felt that this song is an enormously poetic symbol of the relationship between indigenous song and European folk music. The two forms could not be more representative of their respective cultures, yet the *Square Dance Song* sees them merged as far as they possibly can be, while still maintaining the complete formal integrity of each. It is surely a classic example of Aboriginal society's genius for engaging accommodation as a relational strategy.

c). The Parallel Existence of Aboriginal and European Musical Performance.

Further evidence can be invoked in refutation of Donaldson's assertion above, that, in time, 'claypan dances' overtook and replaced corroboree dancing. A most convenient illustration of the parallel existence and eventual demise of the two forms is given by George Gray, in his memoir of a life lived on eastern New England that spanned most of the twentieth century. Gray not only documents his witnessing of a corroboree in the district sometime between 1920 and 1924 (Gray 1999: 81), but he also comments on the passing of the old European bush style of music in his immediate locale in 1925:

> Before the public hall was built, the dance following these race meetings used to be held in the house at 'Wyatt's Creek'. The music was supplied by a concertina played mostly by Bill Wheatley or a violin played by Fred Johnson or even a gum leaf played by an Aborigine...the big opening night arrived in May 1925...gone was the need for the services of the concertina and gum leaf — the new hall had a piano. The wife of the school teacher at Wollomombi, Mrs. Ellem, was a good dance pianist, her brother a drum player and Charles Walker a clarinet player, so we had a three piece orchestra for the

> occasion...When Mrs. Ellem moved away from Wollomombi, musicians were hired for these occasions, notable amongst whom was Mrs. Norris's Orchestra from Armidale...With the advent of better roads and the ease with which the motorcars could diminish the time taken to reach Armidale the use of the hall also diminished...it too was closed and the building removed...(Gray 1999: 98, 99).

These developments changed the social focus of music from the highly personal experience of dancing in each others' houses to one that was much more remote. Gray's general chronology is strongly supported by the testimony of many Aboriginal and European inhabitants of the region (see the audiography appended to this thesis). Bill Mann of Walcha commented wryly that, around the Second War years, 'the world was getting wider — that changed the tune altogether' (Bill Mann 1984). This intimates that the local music was radically twinned with a sense of place, intimate relationships and self-reliance. Inverting Bill's assertion would result in setting up a positive correlation between the relative isolation of inland New South Wales before World War Two and the vigour of local musical activity.

The fact that corroborees and European dances proceeded contemporaneously, and were spoken about by Aboriginal people in such relational terms, points up important issues. One is that Aboriginal people could readily identify with European dance forms, and adapted their performance to suit their own circumstances. A second is that, if Aboriginal people were so ready to identify with European-style dancing, it was obviously important, especially when the forms were danced side by side as it were, that the distinction between them was quite strictly maintained. At the same time, it is argued that any cultural barriers — or more accurately, cultural membranes — were to some extent permeable, a point which will be elaborated in the next

chapter with reference to the Archibald family's experience. So, while it allowed influence to flow in both directions, this permeability is seen to have in no way threatened the integrity of either form, whose identity and roles were always subject to the decisions of Aboriginal people themselves. As explained in the previous chapter, the phenomenon of 'jump up whitefeller' resonated with Tony Swain's theory that nineteenth-century Aboriginal cosmologists sought a subsumption of dual elements under the one Law, eventually finding it in the development of *bora*:

> The aim of these ceremonies was not to naïvely return to a pristine pre-colonial life...but to maintain Aboriginal identity within the cosmos by demarcating its place within post-colonial society...(Swain 1993: 143, 144).

The cultural corollary to this is that there was a strong identification of black with white elements generally, not a simple replacement of one by the other. That European music may have played an important part in this demarcation should be no surprise, as music was so critical to the Aboriginal world-view, a matter discussed fully in previous chapters. The process that militated against the complete immersion of one musical style in the other, and which Donaldson sees as lying behind the eventual 'abandonment' of old music, is precisely that which preserves Aboriginality in musical expression containing European elements. This is the principle of accommodation.

Although European musical forms did not bring about the demise of regular corroboreeing in Aboriginal communities, it is clear that something did. Reasons for this were canvassed briefly in chapter two, where the teaching and learning of indigenous music in the twentieth century was seen to be affected by a number of factors. These included attitudes of Aboriginal people themselves, the increasing

difficulty that Aboriginal people had in achieving privacy for ceremonies (Perkins 1998: pers. comm; Gummow 1992: 60), and the breaking-up of communities for various logistical and political reasons. It is probably no coincidence that the date given for the end of the coorroboree, and the destructive dispersal of Aboriginal communities just before World War Two, exactly coincide. The dying-out of the European styles on the other hand, may be attributed to a general breakdown in the strictly local rural social focus, as communications and other technologies advanced after the First World War. When life in the bush changed, so too did cultural opportunities for both Europeans and Aboriginal people. For the present, it would be fair to propose that black and white 'bush' musics were twin victims of modernity. The passing of both styles was mourned by Aboriginal people, as each signified connection to place, community independence, and small-scale social cohesion (Archibald Family 1995; Gummow 1992: 176).

Section Seven. Conclusion.

This chapter has outlined aspects of social and musical relationships between Europeans and Aboriginal people in both rural New England, and northern New South Wales generally. Its broad survey concentrated on recorded instances of Aboriginal people utilising European elements in their music, and on their manner of merging European and indigenous performance contexts. It is argued from this evidence that Tamsin Donaldson may have underestimated the extent to which white and black musics have interrelated in south-eastern Australia up until World War Two. Further, it has been demonstrated that, contrary to the ideas of Ellis and Donaldson, the relationship between south-eastern Aboriginal and European musics has not generated a history whereby one was gradually replaced by the other. To

presume that it did would risk the portrayal of the two musical systems as inimical, and the supersession of the indigenous system as determined. To the contrary, Aboriginal people were capable of modifying their own musical expression in a radical fashion very soon after whites invaded this country. Pre-contact creations were then performed alongside modified indigenous styles and European compositions right throughout the period until the 1930s. This was made possible by a cosmologically-based *praxis* which allowed for the incorporation of white elements into cultural expression while maintaining the integrity of its Aboriginal identity. Part of the operation of this accommodation involved a deliberate separation of that which was considered indigenous, from that which was regarded as essentially European. Although it is not always clear precisely which criteria informed this judgement, sometimes form but more frequently meaning and function are likely to have played important roles.

The next chapter will continue the examination of the interrelationship of European and Aboriginal musics, but will once again focus specifically on New England. Discusssion will shift from the incorporation of European musical elements to the practice of local Aboriginal musicians and singers performing in a strictly European style. The experience of the Archibald family of Armidale will not only illustrate much of the analysis of all the previous chapters, it will also provide an insight into what might be considered essences of local Aboriginal music, and into the ways Aboriginal performers have given European music a particularly indigenous character.

Chapter Six. The Musical World of Frank Archibald.

Section One. Introduction.

Much of what has been said up to this point may be illustrated by the following examination of the musical experience of the Archibald family of Armidale, New South Wales. In the process, a new category of music will be introduced — that of songs identified as Aboriginal, but cast entirely in European form. This classification will be further divided into those songs composed by Aboriginal people, and those composed by Europeans, but whose meaning has been appropriated by Aboriginal performers. A strong case will hopefully be made to support the Archibald family's assertion that their musical expression has been inherited through a truly indigenous lineage, even though much of it bears a European character. It should be stated here that the testimony presented by the Archibalds is considered reliable, not only because it was more often than not presented in concert and therefore subject to ready refutation, but also because family members are highly respected elders in their community (Cecil Briggs 1996). Where possible, corroborating evidence has been supplied from the writings of other researchers, whether local or based further afield.

Most of the information used in this investigation has been drawn from conversations and interviews conducted with immediate family members in Armidale between 1993 and 1999. Evidence was also provided by those who were either more distantly related to Frank Archibald, or who knew him personally. A total of fourteen people contributed to the compilation of about thirty hours of taped material, while others participated in discussions recorded only in field notes. Because of the predominantly narrative style of this chapter, it is considered that to cite these references throughout the text would be unnecessarily intrusive. Consequently, all

directly relevant citations will appear grouped together at the end of this chapter, reappearing in the general reference list appended to the thesis.

This chapter is further organised into the following divisions. Section two will present biographical details for Frank Archibald, his family, and the musical culture they both inherited and developed. Section three will examine the family's recorded song repertoire, paying particular attention to local Aboriginal songs composed in European style, and to European songs slightly modified to reflect indigenous meanings. Structurally unmodified European songs, together with their performance contexts, will be discussed in section four, their deeper meanings revealed by the exegesis of family members themselves. Section five will analyse the evidence the Archibalds' experience provides for local musical accommodation strategies, a theme extended in section six to embrace the symbolic figure of the New England bushranger Captain Thunderbolt. Section seven will summarise the arguments of the present chapter, and introduce those of chapter seven, concerning the nature of musical tradition.

Section Two. The Life of Frank Archibald.

Frank Archibald (plate 7), was born either in Armidale or at Oban in 1885, and died in Armidale ninety years later. His father was described as 'a blue-eyed, red-haired Scotsman', about whom very little else is known. Frank's mother's name was Emily King or Emily Roberts, both having been used by white people to identify her as the daughter of King Robert, one of whose songs was discussed in chapter four. Emily was also the name of Frank's maternal grandmother. Frank had one brother, Dick Gow, and a sister, who sadly died with her mother during childbirth. The two brothers were then reared at Oban by King Robert and Queen Emily (plate 8). Robert

was a senior *Gumbaynggirr* or *Baanbai* man whose tribal lands centred around Oban, Backwater and Ward's Mistake, east of Glen Innes. He is said to have been born in 1808, long before whites first encroached onto his country, and died a very old man in about 1910. Robert was succeeded as king of Oban by Jack Dunn in 1909. Queen Emily's biography is even sketchier than that of her husband, though it is known that she outlived him, and in her later years became a valued friend of the aptly-named White family, influential graziers of central New England.

It seems that not only did Frank Archibald inherit a very musical culture, he was earmarked for a special spiritual education by the King and other *Baanbai*, and possibly *Anaiwan* elders. He was apparently actively shielded from European educational influences, and he consequently never learned to read or write. During the time of his passing into manhood, twelve elders intensively schooled Frank in various customary 'subjects': bushcraft and hunting lore; religious and social knowledge and rules; and the development of judgement, listening, understanding, and wisdom. In addition, he was taught less well-documented aspects such as an appreciation of the local history of black/white relations, the understanding of white people's ways, and how to effectively nurture and express love — this last considered to have been the most important of the young man's lessons.

As Frank progressed through adulthood, he continued to spend much time with King Robert, often accompanying him on 'walkabout' through the rugged forests of eastern New England, until the latter's death when Frank was around twenty-five years old. Frank himself became 'a clever feller' — to use A.P. Elkin's phrase, an Aboriginal man 'of high degree' — with special spiritual powers, and upon his marriage to Sarah Morris in 1911, was initiated also into the *Anaiwan* or *Djungutti* culture group. Sarah was the niece of *Murruwung* Joe Woods, a powerful *Anaiwan*

clever man, and her people were also very musical. Nearly every member of her immediate family played European instruments such as the violin and accordion. Frank apparently spoke seven Aboriginal languages, and was held in high esteem within many Aboriginal communities as a special 'cultural' identity, just as King Robert was before him. While employed as a tracker in the Nymboida and Walcha police districts, he also earned the respect of the white population of New England.

Frank and Sarah Archibald reared their own children in an intensely musical and spiritual environment. Frank was expert at bush work such as ringbarking, grubbing, suckering and fencing, and during the three decades between King Robert's death and the outbreak of World War Two, would take long-term contracts of work on remote stations in his own culture area. He would then travel into the bush with a gang of labourers, more often than not comprising his wife and twenty-odd children, together with other relatives. Camps were constructed of bark shelters and tents, and much of the company's food was taken from the bush in the old way. Sometime during this period Frank initiated his sons, but the girls' education remained less ritually-focused. They were brought up however, with a great respect for what they could not be told, and for the places 'we didn't have to go'.

Every evening while the family was camped in the bush, a large fire would be built, and singing and dancing proceeded until the late and early hours. Corroborees were danced by the girls and the boys, Frank singing and Sarah playing the clapsticks, and European songs and dances were also performed. Both parents played the accordion and mouth organ, and some of the children would provide musical accompaniment on bush-leaves. Besides corroborees and white folk music, the Archibalds taught their children 'hymn songs' and didactic ditties, called by Maisie Kelly 'little choruses'. There is little doubt that a process of deliberate musical

enculturation was initiated here. The eldest of Frank's children, Hazel Vale, attests to its effectiveness in proudly stating that, at the age of eighty-eight, she can still remember every song that her mother and father sang to her. Curiously, none of the Archibald children learned to play a dance-instrument, although Ethel de Silva became a proficient performer on the gum-leaf.

Many old-time bi-cultural musicians such as Frank Archibald and Cecil Taylor (see chapter five) were never recorded performing their European musical material. It was not until ten years after Frank's death, that Chris Sullivan's research with their children revealed that Frank and Sarah had also been expert dance musicians and sang a great number of English songs. Fortunately, much valuable knowledge has since been recovered from their daughters, but the opportunity to conduct research with a truly bi-cultural indigenous musician and singer was lost.

Frank retained a fiercely independent Aboriginal identity that resisted any European interference in his family's lifestyle. On a number of occasions he successfully prevented 'the Welfare' taking away one or other of his children. While living at Walcha however, he finally had to resign to shifting with his family to Burnt Bridge Aboriginal reserve near Kempsey, or suffer his children to be removed from his care and dispersed. Once government policy changed in the 1950s, he brought them back to Armidale, and established an Archibald stronghold where Narwan Aboriginal Village now stands. Around this time, his daughter Ethel married Leonard de Silva, an initiated *Gumbaynggirr* man (plate 9), who was a competent and knowledgeable lingo singer and corroboree dancer. Another daughter, Maisie (plate 10), married Clive Kelly, a composer and performer in the European style. Clive is acknowledged as having taught guitar to the famous country-and-western singer Slim Dusty. Hazel Archibald (plate 11), married a member of the *Djungutti* Vale family,

renowned for its nurturing of expert fiddle players. In this and in many other ways, the Archibalds have maintained their intense focus on a musical lifestyle.

Section Three. The Archibald Family's Repertoire.

a). General Features.

As mentioned above, the Archibald family's singing was recorded during the 1980s by Chris Sullivan. I conducted further interview sessions with family members over a period of six years, documenting information in field-notes and onto audio-tape.[12] The following list of songs represents only those items that have persisted from the repertoire of Frank and Sarah Archibald, and which can thus be taken to have formed the nucleus of their children's musical education. Other songs were recorded, and these will be discussed briefly below. The reason for the bracketing of the older songs, is that their currency accords with the time period covered by this study, and they reveal, much more clearly than later-learned items, the course of what is presented as a truly indigenous musical tradition.

The great majority of songs in the family's repertoire are of European provenance, and constitute the following genres: Australian and British folk songs; several varieties of popular song, including nineteenth-century parlour-songs; 'hymn-songs', and folk songs composed by Aboriginal people in European genres. These categories occur in roughly equal proportions of the total corpus of forty-five items, and, corroboree songs aside, probably comprise a typical sample of rural Australian

[12] I was assisted on many occasions during this time by friends and colleagues, including Colin Ahoy, Catherine Nano, Cath Ovenden, Mazz Plane, Mark Martin, Steve di Luzio, Alan Heeney and Willa McDonald. Cath Ovenden has also conducted interviews with the family on her own account.

popular vocal music of the early decades of the twentieth century. The only items known to have been sung by Frank Archibald that are missing from this list are the *Hill Song, Nga:mi* and *Shivery Legs* (see chapter four). This is not to be taken as evidence that the family could not, or has not performed them in the past, however. Amongst other things, this repertoire demonstrates the relevance of folk and European sacred musics to local indigenous performers.

b). Songs learned From Their Parents by the Archibald Family of Armidale.

i). Corroboree Songs.

Wanggala-ji

Drowned Girl Song

Bulagiri

ii). British Folk Songs

The Man You Don't Meet Every Day

Camden Town

I Rode Over Hills

Barbara Ellen

As Shickered As He Could Be

The Indian Lass

iii). Australian Folk Songs

Saltbush Bill

The Lad From Woolloomooloo

True-Born Irishman

Botany Bay

Old Bark Hut

They Won't Do It Now

iv). Local Aboriginal Australian Folk Songs

Two Little Kangaroos

Jacky Jacky

Woodbine Hill

Daisy Hill

Wibble-Wobble Song — actions associated

Breeza Boys

When the Sun Goes Down — actions associated

v). Nineteenth-Century Parlour Songs

Please Give Us a Penny Sir — actions associated

Poor Little Joe

Don't Tease the Old Man, Boys

Mother's Prayer

Mama Dear I Want My Papa

There'll Come A Time

When We Grow Too Old to Dream

vi). Hymns

The Blood of Calvary

The Old Rugged Cross

Nearer My God toThee

Our Saviour Has Gone On Before

Will the Circle Be Unbroken?

In the Sweet Bye and Bye

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

vii). Irish and Scottish National Songs

The Wearing of the Green

Danny Boy

Loch (Ben) Lomond

When Irish Eyes Are Smiling

The River Shannon Flowing

viii). First World War Songs

Roll Out the Barrel

Show Me the Way To Go Home

The Northern Lights of (Armidale) Aberdeen

All Good Friends and Jolly Good Company actions associated

Instructive observations may be made about the structural features of certain of the songs sung by the Archibald family, and still others about the purposes to which several items have been put. Where forms are examined, they fall into two categories — that of the Aboriginal song composed in European style, and that of the European song modified to express aspects of Aboriginality. Form is not relevant however, to the discussion of those European-composed songs, serving a variety of indigenous functions, that depend for their meaning on the intentions and

understandings of the singers and their listeners. Discussion of all of these issues will proceed directly below.

c). Local Aboriginal Compositions in European Form.

Two of the Archibalds' best-loved songs were composed by a New England Aboriginal musician named Billy Redmond, who apparently composed and sang only in English, using European musical forms. While his productions should rightly be regarded as cornerstones of the British folk style, they yet display strong connections with indigenous conceptualisations. Billy Redmond's heritage was more than likely local, as his family is recorded as having been resident on New England from at least the 1860s. The songs examined here are believed to have been composed around the turn of the twentieth century.

The first of these, *Woodbine Hill*, is an agonised lament for a love 'that could never be'. As such, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that the object of the composer's affections here was a European woman.

O Woodbine Hill, I can see thee still,
Where the sun-lights on the dew-drops shine,
It was there that I first fell in love
With a pretty little maid of old Woodbine Hill.

No-one knows how much I care,
She promised to be mine.
O I rue the day I learned to love
The maid of old Woodbine Hill.

O Woodbine Hill, I can see thee still,

May the lights of Heaven on you shine,

For it was joy to meet you, but sad to leave,

Farewell false maid, to you and old Woodbine Hill.

No cruel fate can proclaim,

She filled my heart with joy,

For I rue the day I learned to love,

The maid of old Wood bine Hill.

O Woodbine Hill, I can see thee still,

Where the sun-lights on the dew-drops shine,

And the love we shared that could never be,

When you feel the pain, you'll think of mine.

Woodbine Hill itself is prominent in the Walcha district, and the importance of place in the song is marked, the landscape feature occupying a more central position than the singer's own beloved. There is even a suggestion of belief in the sentience of place, as expressed in the last line of the song. This is likely to reflect a particularly Aboriginal attitude to musical composition, which in its indigenous form, is very much a place-oriented phenomenon. Something similar has been noticed for songs composed and performed in the rock idiom by modern Aboriginal Australian groups Yothu Yindi and The Warumpi Band (Dunbar-Hall 1997: 66). Closer to home, Maisie Kelly pointed out that, in bringing his 'exiled' family back to Armidale, her father was expressing a deep-seated Aboriginal connection to place. She told me that it amounts to a truism within Aboriginal communities that 'blackfellers always go back

to where they come from to die'. This was verifed by Doug Irving of Guyra, who once met an old man walking back to Oban station to lose himself in its fastnesses and quietly pass away (Doug Irving 1995).

Woodbine Hill is considered to be the only Australian-composed love song to have been recorded in the traditional folk style (Sullivan 1988: 66). It appears therefore, that Billy Redmond was not looking to local white models for inspiration, and if his direct influence here was not customary indigenous composition, then it is likely to have been Irish or Scottish music. Another singular feature is that the song is framed in an irregular metrical form. As free-rhythm is virtually unknown elsewhere in the Australian folk corpus, it is tempting to speculate that *Woodbine Hill* may comprise an English-language analogue to local indigenous free-rhythmic expressions such as Granny Ballengarry's *Widi* song (see chapter two). That composition, whether coincidentally or not, also involves the agonised expression of deeply-felt emotion. While the comparison between *Widi* and *Woodbine Hill* may have some validity, it should be acknowledged that certain Irish-derived expressions such as Simon McDonald's version of *Moreton Bay,* approach the type of rhythmic treatment displayed in the Redmond composition. An alternative and perhaps more satisfactory interpretation is that Billy Redmond drew upon both indigenous and European styles for his inspiration.

A second song of Billy Redmond's shows a clearer relationship to indigenous compositional concepts. *Daisy Hill* is a topical or 'gossip' song, which narrates the activities of members of the local Aboriginal community living on Daisy Hill station, near Wollomombi to the east of Armidale. In the textual transcription below, dotted lines indicate gaps in the singer's memory.

It was at a place called Daisy Hill, Jack Widders' courting days begun,

He placed his heart-affection on a girl called Katie Dunn.

Now Katie she's not handsome, and Katie she's not fair,

But you'll find her at the looking-glass, a-dolling up her hair.

She'd always take a drop of scent to make her breath smell sweet,

And she'd like to look her very best, so dainty, trim and neat.

Now Jack he loved his Katie, and Katie she loved Jack,

Until Susan Miller came on the scene, then Katie got the sack.

Well Jack he went as a burner-off for a man they called Macrae,

And he'd come home on the weekends with his dole and his pay.

.....

I'll take you into Armidale, and there we'll have a spree.

I'll drive you down through Beardy Street in my father's two-in-hand,

Oh they'll take us for some king and queen and won't we look so grand!

I'll take you to the Royal Hotel, the best hotel in town,

and in some private parlour, we'll have a quiet sit-down.

I'll treat you to the very best champagne and sparkling wine,

.....

.....

Henry Morris'll play the 'cordeen, and Dad will be M.C.

He'll put us through the waltz and sets.....

And you'll bless the day you came that way and cut out Katie Dunn.

Daisy Hill is a song containing many layers of meaning. This in itself may suggest a connection to earlier indigenous compositional concepts. Like the *Square Dance Song*, it describes the participation by Aboriginal people in typical European activities. The text is divided into three main sections: the first depicts a woman prettying herself before the mirror; the second anticipates the scene of sweethearts drinking at a hotel, and the last portrays the community participating in European-style dancing. These vignettes are probably all imaginary however, and steeped in irony. Gordon McRae of Yooroonah, a nephew to the only white man mentioned in the piece, knew many of the song's characters. He described Katie Dunn as extremely dark-skinned, so dark that 'charcoal would've left a white mark on her' (McRrae 1989). The play of words on 'fair' in the second verse suggests that the composer may have been singling her out for sarcastic treatment.

There is more word-play on the name of the Royal Hotel, in the line immediately succeeding the imagined comparison to a king and queen. Allusions to royalty were common in the local Aboriginal society of the time (Robinson 1989: 93; Cohen & Somerville 1990: 75). Bill Cohen said that his father Jack, having achieved the status of *grunda* in the initiation *cursus honorem*, was known as an Aboriginal

prince (Bill Cohen 1988: 3). Frank Archibald explained that his mother shared an equivalent status:

> Frank's mother, Emily King...was actually a Princess. She was the King's eldest daughter. "But there were no silver or gold coaches to ride around in," he says with good humour, "I suppose the title didn't really amount to much" (Anonymous 1962: 5).

In this context, Billy Redmond's image of the 'king and queen' riding into town in a two-in-hand reveals the depth of the song's ironic character. The position occupied by Aboriginal people in the broader local community of the time is not known precisely. For instance, it is unclear whether or not they were even permitted to drink in hotels. However, there is little doubt that white people would not have easily entertained the idea of 'royal treatment' for a young Aboriginal couple from Daisy Hill.

The reference to music and dance in the text, especially the mention of the quadrilles ('sets'), ties *Daisy Hill* to the *Square Dance Song* discussed in the previous chapter. This is an appropriate coupling, as both Billy Redmond and Raymond Duncan were noted composers of 'gossip' songs — one in European, the other in indigenous style. Gummow describes the practice of gossip-song composition by both Raymond Duncan and Jack Barron in the *Bandjalang* language (Gummow 1992: 179), and Sullivan says of Billy Redmond that he was:

> a topical/gossip song-maker whose role in the regional Aboriginal society of that time was most probably a continuation of a pre-contact tradition (Sullivan 1988: 66).

This detail was confirmed by the Archibald family, who described Redmond's compositional technique in terms identical to those used by Gummow.[13]

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[13] A further link is provided by the following description of northern Australian practice:

Billy Redmond employs language with great facility in both these songs, indicating a deep familiarity with the nuances of English. The use of poetic and archaic expression in *Woodbine Hill*, while intense, is particularly skilfully managed, and at no stage does the composition threaten to descend into sentimentality or burlesque. *Daisy Hill* reveals a different use of language, one that is admirably sharp and direct, and which effectively recruits techniques, such as wordplay, in the service of its ironic meaning. In short, the verbal expression employed in each song is admirably fitted to its mood and purpose, an observation that may extend to the use of melodies, both of which are entirely European in structure. Billy Redmond has created British-style songs that bear connections with indigenous compositional concepts imperceptible to the casual listener. While their function and subject matter are Aboriginal, the songs' formal styles are almost more essentially European than the local white community itself was capable of producing.

d). European Songs Modified to Express Aspects of Aboriginality.

The Archibald family sings certain European-composed songs whose texts have been modified to indigenise them in one way or another. For example, the parlour song *Two Little Girls in Blue* has been extensively parodied to become *Two Little Kangaroos*, which concerns the hunting of food animals with traditional weapons. A further modification technique localises certain songs. So in *The Northern Lights,* Aberdeen becomes Armidale, and in another song, Loch Lomond is

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Most of the 'Gossip' songs of western Arnhem Land are about sweethearts, or about affection between men and women, for these subjects have the greater appeal to the composer and his audience (Berndt & Berndt 1988: 191).

changed to Ben Lomond, the name of a mountain of great significance to Tablelands Aboriginal people. This localisation is the musical extension of a practice that has apparently persisted in New England society for some time. Hazel Vale commented that when she was a girl, one of her old-time Aboriginal elders explained that Armidale was not a Scottish place name as most white people imagined, but was actually so-called by two Aboriginal hunters upon their killing a kangaroo on the future site of the town. When the carcass was apportioned in the customary manner, one man took an arm, the other a tail, 'and that's how Armidale got its name'. Although it may have been just a story told to amuse children, this example does declare its origins in the creation-myth type. It also demonstrates the importance, to indigenous people, of reinforcing their relationship to place through the investment of meaningful names.

Connection to place was seen in the previous section to be a strongly indigenous characteristic. Margaret Somerville elaborates upon this phenomenon in her analysis of cultural attachment to the Ingelba reserve near Walcha (Cohen & Somerville 1990: 44-78). Significantly enough, one of the Archibalds' songs, *The Indian Lass,* localises itself just there, and while only slightly-modified, the change is sufficient to render the song a much more immediately relevant vehicle for the expression of indigenous meanings:

Once I walked in to a far-distant town,
I called in to Naylor's to spend an half-hour.

I sat myself down and was taking my glass,
By chance there came in this Indian lass.

She sat down beside me and squeezèd my hand,

Saying 'You are a stranger, and not of this land.

You will have fine lodging if with me you will stay,

You can have all my fortune without more delay'.

Next morning early, when the ship had to sail,

'Don't go way and leave me, my sailor' she cried.

I pulled my handkerchief out to wipe the tears from her eyes,

'Don't go way and leave me, my sailor' she cried.

We up with the anchor and away we did steer,

Right out into Nameborough, right out in far view.

I am safe landed on my own native shore,

And drink a good health and a long life to this young Indian lass.

The story of this song concerns love between a white man and a native woman, the reverse of *Woodbine Hill's* theme. By the insertion of the single word 'Naylor's' in verse one, a significant shift of outlook is achieved in the song. The Aboriginal Naylor family were relations, who lived for a time near to the Archibalds at Walcha. 'Nameborough' in the penultimate verse may originally have represented a similar change, with the name of the seaside town of Nambucca a likely candidate. In any event, even this minor remodelling has localised and personalised the song, thereby sharpening its meanings for the Aboriginal performer.

Although the focus of the song has been narrowed, it also gives voice to universal themes well-treated in English folk lore. *The Indian Lass* belongs to a genre shared by *The Lass of Mohee*, *The Lakes of Pontchartrain* and other songs illuminating the British colonial enterprise. As scholar Stuart M. Frank points out, the word 'Indian' is used in all these versions in the broad sense of 'native' (Frank 1996: 7; also see Tench's adversion to the 'Indians of New South Wales' in the previous chapter), and it is ironic that in this case, the song is sung by indigenous Australian women. As with *Daisy Hill*, *The Indian Lass* reveals nineteenth-century Aboriginal culture's ready ability to accurately describe its own position in the broader society, neither stinting in the portrayal of personal pain, nor shying away from self-parody. As the song depicts the ultimate failure of personal relationship, it echoes strongly *Woodbine Hill's* suggestion of a 'love that could never be'.

At a deeper level, it is conceivable that both songs are symbolic of the European failure to enter into the accommodation 'contract' presumably sought by Aboriginal people in the south-east. While it was argued in chapter three that significant relationships did sometimes develop between individuals, European society consistently marginalised the Aboriginal population of New England. Although there was some sharing of knowledge there, a more complete blending of the indigenous and European, as occurred in stable marriages, appeared to frequently result in the ultimate spurning of an Aboriginal identity. Chapter five's argument was constructed on the premiss that a truly two-way musical accommodation never occurred in south-eastern Australia. Deborah Bird Rose considers this lack of reciprocation to have been a persistent cause of Aboriginal frustration:

> we might expect that when Aborigines found that it was not possible to resist invasion, they would seek reciprocal accommodation with

> Europeans through offers of marriage, knowledge, and access to resources. We might expect them to accommodate European ideas, events, and items within their own cosmology. They might seek to transfigure or transform European objects through ritual. And we might expect them to be baffled and angered at Europeans' failure to respond. What, indeed, have Europeans given back to reciprocate the profound gifts they have been offered? (Rose 1998: 106, 107).

Certainly the text of *The Indian Lass* details the offer of 'profound gifts' by the young woman, if only the sailor would stay with her. And what could be more appropriate for the Aboriginal composer of *Woodbine Hill,* than to identify with, and seek solace in the constancy of a local mountain, in the face of the fickleness of human relationship, whether on a personal or a 'racial' level? Even this opportunity was denied south-eastern Aboriginal people more often than not, as they were progressively separated ever-more completely from their significant places. The foregoing picture of unrequited accommodation, is balanced to a degree by the discussion, in section five, of a symbolic sharing through the legendary figure of the New England bushranger, Captain Thunderbolt.

Section Three. The Aboriginality of European-composed Songs.

a). Unmodified European Songs Expressing a Fundamental Aboriginality.

Although I had recorded the family's singing several times before the event, a specially-organised concert, and subsequent interviews with individuals, suggested entirely unexpected connections between their current musical expression and what is known of their great-grandfather King Robert's culture. The first link was made when family members told me that Frank Archibald was schooled by his elders using

certain English-language songs considered to possess particular pedagogical significance. One example provided was *Don't Tease the Old Man, Boys,* a homiletic nineteenth-century drawing-room ballad that was apparently used by Frank's uncles to supplement their teaching of respect for elders — then, as now, a major issue in Aboriginal society. The family explained that it was unquestionably a 'message' song, and highly suitable for inclusion in a young person's indigenous education.

Another link concerned the reputedly common practice of using vocal music to 'tell a story', as a direct substitute for spoken narrative. Frank Archibald told his children that in his grandfather's day, 'they used to sing their stories', not tell them in the conventional way. Examples of such musical story-telling were given in chapter four, with King Robert's song-description of the new train, and the tale of murder in the *Drowned Girl Song*. That this phenomenon may have been widespread is instanced by the evidence of *Ngumbarr* (New South Wales) man James McGrath, who told the poet Roland Robinson that

> The old people, they couldn't read or write, but they had their stories in their mouths and they had them in their hands. They danced and they sang all their stories (Robinson 1989: 17).

This is corroborated for northern South Australia by Luise Hercus and Grace Koch, who say in relation to *Wangkangurru* topical songs:

> From the few songs of this kind which have survived it seems that their language was very close to the spoken language. When telling of a dramatic turn of events or when expressing strong emotions the oldest traditional people would often sing their words, their intonation would change to a chant. The sentence structure would still be like the spoken

> language, and the meaning perfectly clear, they would in fact be composing a 'rubbish' song (Hercus and Koch 1996: 148).

During the Archibald family concert in June 1995, it was evident that stories were also being told by the singers there. At one stage, Maisie Kelly was called from the hall to attend to some urgent family business at the local courthouse. She returned 'downhearted', and re-entered the hall singing a hymn, *Wash Me in the Blood of Calvary*. Her siblings responded immediately to Maisie's message, gathering around her and joining in, with expressive gestures, her outpouring of grief. Maisie later explained that her sisters would have clearly understood her predicament the moment they heard her singing that hymn.

Esma Ahoy, one sister who has suffered a stroke and can no longer speak, communicates effectively to the rest of her family through song, and another will *sing* to her children and grandchildren when they are in trouble, rather than talk to them. This latter practice has also been recorded for *Bandjalang* society (Gummow 1992: 113). Family members recognise particular songs as signalling personal distress, or alternatively *joie de vivre,* and use them in the confidence that their message will be immediately understood by their kin. In every case, the songs used are of European provenance, taught personally to their children by Frank and Sarah Archibald, who considered that all music 'has a message'. Their children affirmed unanimously that these songs are frequently used as overt communication within the family. This insight resonates with what has been said in previous chapters about corroboree songs relying for effective communication on a closely-shared meaning system — which in old-time Aboriginal society may well have presupposed a family-style social organisation.

A further connection between modern and ancient musical practices involves the 'power-laden' quality of some of the Archibalds' songs. It appears that family members were given not only the physical forms of songs, but also the powers that were associated with them. As mentioned earlier, the expression of love was that aspect of Frank Archibald's Aboriginal education considered the most important by his elders. Frank in turn taught his children that music was the medium by which love could best be transmitted from one person to another, and moreover, that this was its primary function. He accordingly directly transferred to them the ability to 'put love' into the hearts of others through song. Sarah Archibald instances the use of the hymn *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* for precisely this purpose. Again, family members say that by singing certain other of their parents' songs, their persons/spirits can be directly summoned, usually when their spiritual support is most needed. Some gloss on this is provided by John Von Sturmer, who says of music in northern Australia, that:

> Songs have the power to call the spirits into the presence of the song; and the spirits have the power to manipulate the environment...the song invokes the spirit; the dance demonstrates its presence (quoted in Ellis 1997b: 60).

Once again, the power-laden songs of the Archibalds are exclusively European-composed.

All in all, the message I have received here is that singing, for this family, possesses a particular dynamic character not parallelled in white rural communities, but which has been noted by scholars of local and farther-flung traditions such as those of the *Arrernte* and *Pitjatjantjara* in central Australia. Many of the songs so-used are 'hymn-songs', which indicates some identification of Aboriginal spirituality

with the European. But it must be repeated that, as with the power-laden lingo hymns sung by the Corindi Beach *Gumbaynggirr* mentioned in the last chapter, this practice does not indicate a simple replacement of black by white spiritual expression. Frank Archibald explained to his children that he had no need of white religion, that he had 'his own Aboriginal church'. He also told his grandson Cedric that, out of interest, he once attended a Catholic service in Armidale. When he saw that it was very similar to his own ceremonial, using smoke and green boughs (it is quite likely that he witnessed a Palm Sunday liturgy), Frank concluded that Catholicism would add little to what was already provided by customary religious observance. This did not prevent him from singing hymns however, nor from transferring them, loaded with power, to his children.

The connection between the present and an historical indigenous musical culture does not appear to reside solely in song-types and -powers. Musical contexts, styles of performance and other features also show correspondence. The first and most obvious of these is the context in which the family's English songs were learned — in community and around the fire at a bush camp, alongside performances of indigenous lingo music. When these songs are re-performed in a group, such as occurred at the Archibald family concert, that original context is strongly invoked.

There is a likelihood that the tone of singing itself conveys messages in the Archibald family's experience, as when Maisie communicated her story of grief so immediately to her sisters at the hall. As seen in chapter two, the sonic element is all-important in the Aboriginal musical system, with meaning and power residing in the whole gamut of sounds available to singers. King Robert's railway song was primarily a sound picture, and there may well have been power inherent in the *Drowned Girl's* evocation of the sound of a young girl's crying. The magic of the

Square Dance Song is partly transmitted by vocal sounds approximating the non-musical noises of a group of dancers. Consideration of this sonic element might further illuminate the process whereby the young Frank Archibald was taught enduring lessons using songs, and it could help explain why a grandmother will sing to her troubled charges. For when coupled with music, verbal pictures are augmented by emotion, colour and perhaps also rhythm, to actually instil a 'message' into the receiver's psyche.

It is clear that the Archibalds consciously employ a gestural language when singing. At least four of the songs recorded in their concert were accompanied by pantomimic gestures, undoubtedly learned with the singing of the songs. These gestures directly and eloquently elaborated textual material, sometimes being, as Howitt said of Mragula's performance in chapter two, 'much fuller than the words'. The practice of unison-singing employed by the family, together with the provision of frequent rhythmic accompaniment in the form of hand-clapping, are presumed to represent further links to an older indigenous musical culture. Neither practice has been recorded to any extent in performances of local white folk music (McDonald 1999).

Finally, the intention to gather and sing as a group has significance here, as the Archibald family thereby consciously reaffirms its Aboriginality. The transmission of an indigenous cultural identity in bush camps during the 1920s and 1930s was partly by way of resistance to white institutional interference, and has been recorded and directly interpreted as such for this and other *Gumbayngirr* and *Anaiwan* families (Briggs 1995). Indeed, the great importance that the Archibalds place on a shared musical culture might itself be an indicator of deep indigeneity which has ensured the persistence of an intense musical focus from the time of King Robert.

b). The Spiritual Nature of the Archibald Family's Music.

The music handed down from Frank and Sarah Archibald, whether in indigenous or European form, is positively identified by the family as 'genuine Aboriginal culture'. This is distinguished from comparable mainstream white expression, obviously not by its formal content, but by its particular 'spiritual' nature — a designation used to indicate a dynamic essence, and one emphasising the special means of its transmission. Maisie Kelly explained it to me in this way:

> Aboriginal culture is very spiritual. Jesus was a spiritual man. God was a spiritual man. When he said things, they happened. Aboriginal culture is very spiritual. Very spiritual.

The sort of culture communicated by Frank Archibald appears to be mercurial, not at all dependent on indigenous-style form or content for its Aboriginality. Maisie thus said of her father that, although the women of the family 'weren't taught much about the old sites...he gave us our *way*.' In this almost Taoist sense of the concept, Aboriginal people who are perceived to be ignoring or living contrary to their culture are described as 'losing their *way*'.

This inculcation appears not to have relied solely on transmission through living teachers. Before Frank Archibald died, he apparently put certain of his grandchildren through a process which sensitised them to communication with spiritual Ancestors, *via* dreams, visions and similar channels. So, using a variant term for the concept of spirituality, the extended Archibald family group was described by Hazel Vale as 'cultural', because it contains members who are Aboriginal doctors, 'nurses', seers and visionaries, in ready communication with their Ancestors. This has resulted in a continuing replenishment of powers that ensures, in the words of another

sister, that 'our Aboriginal culture will never die'. Ancestors in this case would doubtless include Frank and Sarah Archibald, who it might be said — considering the insights offered by Rose in chapter four — now belong to the Dreaming. While their canon of Aboriginal songs seems for the moment to be self-contained, Maisie Kelly expressed an openness to the idea that further songs could be added to the family's repertoire through their Ancestors' intercession. Maisie's grandson Dawson has recently dream-composed a song in the country-rock idiom, and the introduction to the family, by Maisie's son Terry, of a north Queensland lingo hymn, *Mwanagini ngadja ngo,* may have been similarly-inspired. Millie Boyd of Woodenbong confirmed what appears to be a general south-eastern Aboriginal view that Ancestors can return to teach songs well after their own translation into the spirit world (Gummow 1992: 182).

Section 4. The Archibalds' Music as Evidence for Accommodation.

a). The Investment of Meaning as a Marker of Aboriginality.

The argument concerning the indigenous accommodation process has, in previous chapters, articulated around the assertion that Aboriginal people of New South Wales have incorporated European elements into indigenous compositions without compromising the integrity of Aboriginal musical identity. This was demonstrated formally, and also with reference to performance contexts, where Aboriginal people were shown to have maintained separation between what was considered indigenous, and what was regarded as European musical material. The genres introduced by the present chapter, although also identified by the Archibald family as Aboriginal, are quite different to the material previously discussed, chiefly through their resistance to isolation by formal analysis. It is unlikely that a casual

reader would recognise Aboriginality inhering in the songs of Billy Redmond for example, even less so for the Archibalds' European-composed items. It is argued that the difference here is quantitative rather than qualitative however, suggesting that the accommodation process has been taken a step further in the appropriation of European compositional elements.

Rather than confounding the scheme presented so far, this novel challenge should actually further reveal the nature of Aboriginal cultural accommodation. In the case of European-style songs, it is the investment of Aboriginal meanings that makes the material, more specifically the music-as-performed, indigenous. It could be argued that the greater the proportion of European content in Aboriginal expression, the more extensive has been the employment of indigenous accommodation. So, instead of tracing the relationship between Aboriginal and white musics in terms of a gradual Europeanisation of native expression, as does Catherine Ellis, this reasoning would document instead the Aboriginalisation of the European. Again it must be emphasised that there is no sense of progressive stages of replacement implied here. The Archibald family's repertoire presents material, performed all at once, that displays various degrees of the application of this strategy, from the relatively minor appropriations of the corroboree songs, through the half-English/half-lingo *Jacky Jacky,* to the Redmond material and songs composed by Europeans.[14] This is considered to accurately reflect the historical situation during the period covered by this thesis, when south-eastern Aboriginal people corroboreed, sang in lingo and initiated their youth — at the same time as they were excelling in the performance of

[14] Billy Redmond is interesting in this regard, in that he seems to have transferred the indigenous gossip-song genre holus-bolus into a European framework.

European folk genres, and merging the two musical cultures in almost every conceivable way.

The proposition that Aboriginal people could appropriate entire English songs, and perform them with Aboriginal integrity, might be rendered less challenging when viewed in the context of putative pre-contact accommodation processes. It is presumed, as outlined in chapter two, that Aboriginal groups assimilated whole foreign-language songs and dances into their repertoires, sometimes with little understanding of the meanings they held for the groups wherein they were composed. That they were then invested with fresh localised relevance forges yet another link between the Archibalds' performance-practice and an older indigenous musical culture.

It was said in the previous chapter that the Archibalds' musical experience as children in the bush, saw a separation maintained between indigenous and European modes of expression. There should be no difficulty in accepting this proposition for dance music, as the relevant cultural genres have never really been comparable. Where Donaldson states in chapter five that the corroboree verse and European song stanza were never fully merged, she fails to indicate that she is discussing two entities whose difference extends further than that of cultural origin. The corroboree verse is a movement-based creation — it is dance music — while the English song verse was, by and large, reserved for non movement-based entertainment in Australia. For dancing, Europeans generally utilised an alternative, though admittedly related performance genre, which had no analogue in old-style Aboriginal culture. When Aboriginal people performed European music, they seemed to have maintained the European distinction between songs and dance-music, and furthermore distinguished these from their performance of corroboree songs. As already explained, European

tunes have never been specifically recorded as vehicles for corroboree dancing, nor have indigenous melodies been described as accompanying white dance-forms. More significantly, there is no history of the investment of European instrumental music with indigenous meaning, as there is for vocal material. All this serves to reinforce the proposal that Aboriginal identity-in-accommodation might more truly reside in the realm of meaning than in form or structure.

The Archibald family also performs songs that are not considered to be especially indigenous. These are for the most part country-and-western items, composed by both white and Aboriginal Australians. The presence of these country songs assists in bracketing-out the Archibalds' unmodified, power-laden European compositions, so that their purely white-style repertoire may itself be divided, along the lines of cultural identity. While the separation of musical expression in the bush presumably also applied to singing, it is not known exactly which European-style songs fell into what cultural category, or which songs of that era occupied the position held by the country songs of today. It might reasonably be surmised that separation did occur however, resulting in an overall distinction between corroboree songs, European dance-music, European songs with indigenous meanings, and European songs without indigenous meaning.

b). Frank Archibald's Training in Accommodation Techniques.

The process of managing their musical repertoire is very much in the family's control, just as an earlier manifestation of the accommodation process, revealed by the varied nature of the materials employed in Frank Archibald's education, was controlled by the Oban Aboriginal community. It will be recalled that this suite comprised customary lessons, plus the novel European-related elements of the history

of black and white relations, the understanding of local white society, and the manipulation of love. These latter components suggest that the elders were not merely imparting static knowledge to their pupil, but were providing him with the tools and skills they regarded as necessary for the continued management of Aboriginal culture within mainstream Australian society. Considering that these lessons seem to focus on relationship between Aboriginal people and Europeans, it is tempting to conclude that they might represent, at least in part, the philosophical foundation for a developing indigenous accommodation strategy. There is unfortunately no evidence which might assist in taking this particular aspect of the examination any further. It is possible however, to explore from other angles the proposition that Frank Archibald was deliberately trained in the exercise of cultural accommodation.

The New England Aboriginal author, Patsy Cohen, recognises a change in local indigenous educational philosophy that she feels must have taken place in the final decade of the nineteenth century:

> It was about that time, it would be in the 1890s...I believe that's when the silence started and the secrecy of keepin' things away from the next generation. They had ter really go the white feller's way. It must've been a very sad time for them old people 'cause they couldn't pass on what they knew...(Cohen & Somerville 1990: 109).

Mrs. Cohen does not elaborate upon what might have replaced the old-time education, however. The Archibalds maintain that the old people did in fact pass on their knowledge — and in Frank's case it would have been during the 1890s — but, as described, it was couched in terms revised to suit changing circumstances. Significantly, commentators are now discussing this type of situation as it is occurs and recurs in northern Australia. Frank Brennan writes that young Aboriginal people

there, who have 'unimagined choices available to them', desperately need new direction in a rapidly-changing world. Consequently, he continues, customary law and culture must be invested with fresh and appropriate meanings by knowledgeable elders (Brennan 1998: 171).

Acceptance of the proposition that Frank Archibald was consciously schooled in accommodation techniques might benefit from the citing of supportive evidence from other localities. To begin with, it is known that Frank was 'trained up' to cleverness, and J.F. Mann says that, from soon after first contact, it was primarily the clever fellers, in his experience, who communicated most purposefully with Europeans in the Hunter Valley:

> these men are usually more intelligent than the others — at least they associate more readily with the white people (Mann 1885: 45).

Ernest Worms takes this idea a little further in asserting that certain knowledgeable elders were chosen specifically to mediate with white men. Discussing the etymology of the name *Baiami*, he states that:

> This last word corresponds with *bia-na,* which from 1788 onwards was used for the Aboriginal elders who in the name of their tribal comrades were entrusted with contacting the English administration (Worms & Petri 1998: 136, 137).

Evidence from central Australia demonstrates similar challenges confronting senior Aboriginal people there, and suggests that solutions may have been sought in like fashion. The following passage describes *Arrernte* elders discussing the continued management of their culture around the years of World War Two, and evidences the possibly deliberate selection of a part-Aboriginal man for the purpose. Unfortunately, it is not revealed whether further accommodational steps were taken in this instance.

R.G. Kimber talks here of Walter Smith, whom he described in conversation as 'one-eighth Aboriginal' (Kimber 1999: pers. comm.), but who was nonetheless a most important *Arrernte* personage:

> In any of the men's discussions of ritual law or preparations for ceremonies he was deferred to, for by now he was widely recognised as a senior "law man" of great knowledge — the last man to be put through all of the degrees of Eastern Aranda men's law, a doctor-man, a rain-maker, keeper of the sacred tjurunga stones and boards, song-man, and a man with encyclopaedic knowledge of ritual protocol and song-cycles. He and the other old men at times worried over the changes of which Walter was also a part-reflection. The coming of Europeans had greatly disrupted the traditional Aboriginal ways. There had been the shootings of the bad old days, then diseases against which they had no immunity, the station work with the droving that took so many young people away from their home and challenges to their religion by the missionaries. All of these things had tested and fractured the old law, until many of the young men could no longer "sing the tjurunga". There were always those men and women who remained strong in spirit, but always too there was drift away from the law...(Kimber 1996: 146).

Most significantly, Dick Kimber told me that Walter Smith identified equally as white and Aboriginal, passing effortlessly between one heritage and the other as circumstances demanded (Kimber 1999: pers. comm.). Frank Archibald, who coincidentally was an exact contemporary of Walter Smith's, may also have been such a man, trained to help carry his local Aboriginal culture through a particularly

demanding era. Of course, the natural inheritors of Frank's cultural knowledge have been his children and grandchildren. It might be seen in their case, that accommodation skills have been passed on from Frank in a variety of forms, including sensitivity to the communication of Ancestors. In just the fashion that he himself was educated, Frank has bequeathed to his children not only cultural material, but also the methods by which this might be augmented or modified while maintaining an indigenous identity.

It was observed in previous chapters that often the most knowledgeable south-eastern Aboriginal people participated the most enthusiastically in European activities like farming, mining and instrumental music. This raises the interesting possibility that they were thereby giving cultural direction, were actually steering their culture along the path that offered the best chance for its creative endurance. Oodgeroo Noonuccal implies that this may indeed have been the case, in her poem *Integration – Yes!,* quoted at greater length in chapter one:

> Eagerly we must learn to change,
>
> Learn new deeds we never wanted,
>
> New compulsions never needed,
>
> The price of survival.

To arrange this type of direction with music would have been a natural strategy for Aboriginal elders, given its importance in old-style indigenous society. This provides some key to understanding the paradigm, offered by the Archibald family, that the greatest of Frank Archibald's boyhood/initiation lessons was the proper management of love, which lay at the heart of Aboriginal culture. Frank told his own children that one of the best ways to communicate love, and by association, the Aboriginal essence, was through music, or more specifically, singing. Given the relational orientation of

Aboriginal culture argued below, the identification of its guiding essence with love, and love with music, seems a logical assumption for the inheritors of Frank Archibald's cultural knowledge.

c). The Relational Core of Aboriginal Culture.

In a fundamental way, the Archibalds can be considered to truly represent local traditional musical culture as it had developed by World War Two. The family's insistence that their expression is indeed 'genuine', is to some extent a response to broad societal perceptions that authenticity would normally be conveyed by singing in lingo or through the playing of 'traditional' instruments. Family members have indicated an awareness of this anomaly, Hazel Vale expressing her frustration that the *didjeridu* is considered by some younger people to have been an instrument customarily played on New England. In support of her view to the contrary, Maisie Kelly has asserted that the gum-leaf 'was the music of New South Wales'. Hazel also bemoans the fact that the New England corroboree style, which she describes as 'very pretty', is not better known. She considers it aesthetically superior to the wider-publicised 'hislands' styles, in which, she said, 'they just seem to jump about'. On one recent occasion, Maisie Kelly was angered by the performance, at the Tamworth Country Music Festival, of a 'tipsy' revival didjeridu player who was painted up, dressed in a 'nap-nap', and purported to represent local traditional musical practice. Asserting her authority as an elder, she asked the man to leave the busker's stage, and explained to the onlookers that if they wanted to hear genuine local Aboriginal musical culture, they should listen to the singing of the Archibald family. A reasonable interpretation of this event would recognise the clarity of Maisie's

awareness that Aboriginal identity does not rely on external marks alone, whether or not they approximate a historical reality.

These examples demonstrate that the Archibalds' musical culture is to be distinguished from form-based revival expressions by the fact of its spiritually-nourished indigeneity. Again, something of the same is expressed by Oodgeroo, in her acknowledgement that:

> Much that we loved is gone and had to go,
>
> But not the deep indigenous things.
>
> The past is still so much a part of us,
>
> Still about us, still within us.

This sentiment defers to the comparatively non-material nature of old-time Aboriginal culture, which seems to have long been, above all, relational (Berndt & Berndt 1988: 122). A comment made consistently by New England observers is that Aboriginal people left little lasting mark on the local landscape. Uralla bushman Ray Cooper said that in all his time spent working in the Macleay Scrub, he saw very little trace of Aboriginal material culture, although he knew the area to have been inhabited for thousands of years (Cooper 1997). It was seen in chapter three that, from the 1870s, white New Englanders were largely unaware of the continuing existence of local people themselves. As ever, Finney Eldershaw considerably overstates the case in writing that the Aboriginal people of the Northern Tablelands:

> are, and appear to have ever been, utterly destitute of even the rudest attempts to perpetuate one sign or trace of their career — no monument...no sculptured rock or stone...no record of any kind is found amongst them (Eldershaw 1854: 79, 80).

The existence of the reputedly magnificent Serpentine stone arrangements directly contradicts him of course, but there is surely some truth in the nub of his opinion. Even more germane is Eldershaw's further statement that, because of this non-material cultural orientation,

> it requires a long acquaintance with, and a careful consideration of, their various customs, habits, superstitions, and pursuits, before that sense of the impossibility of obtaining any clear insight into the history of their past — which checks mere curiosity, and seems to baffle even patient investigation — can ever be overcome (Eldershaw 1854: 79).

Whether or not Eldershaw himself ever succeeded in this attempt, no clearer exposition could be made of the primarily relational, knowledge-based and spiritual character of Aboriginal society. Not only was spirituality relational as between people and Ancestors, it was also thus between people and place. Place in Aboriginal cosmology, as far as one can understand, is a sentient being, precisely because of its implication with the actions of living Ancestors, and enters fully into human relationships. In this way, relationship has been invoked in response to situations that in other cultures might require greater physical manipulation of the landscape, or at least resolution by more material means. This is certainly the point Deborah Bird Rose makes in her comparison of accommodation with other cultural strategies, seen in chapter four. Aboriginality therefore resides within the person and within relationship. This is why some European people can become Aboriginal through relationship, and why Aboriginal people might effectively relinquish their indigenous identity for the sake of alternative networks. The crux of the Archibald's experience as outlined above, is that the Aboriginality of much of their musical expression is so subtle as to escape material analysis. This hearkens back to Maisie Kelly's seminar

pronouncement, quoted in chapter one, that Aboriginal culture will never be found in artefacts, musical or otherwise.

It will be remembered from chapter two that the qualities that indigenous music shared across the continent, despite local stylistic differences, included performance contexts, the circumstances regarding song-composition, and the 'power-laden' qualities of songs. It is most significant that these characteristics are precisely those tying the Archibalds' English repertoire to historical indigenous practice. As such, they might well constitute those unchanging essences of indigenous music that were discussed in several earlier chapters, and may at the same time serve as indicators of the successful workings of the indigenous accommodation strategy. This brings the discussion right around to the first chapter's concern with research as relationship. If the Archibalds are seen to represent the 'beating heart' of local indigenous musical culture in the twentieth century, then it must be acknowledged that cultural essence resides in the immediacy of personal relationship — with other people, with place and with Ancestors. Ethnological researchers who were typically interested in an Aboriginal 'long past', sought only pure expressions of Aboriginality, thereby ignoring the documentation of a very significant period of Aboriginal cultural development. As a result, what is most remarkable about the materialistic salvage operations of whites right through from the late nineteenth century to the recent past, is how little information has been gathered about what were and remain very richly-endowed cultural situations.

Section Five. A Shared Symbolic History Through Captain Thunderbolt.

It was pointed out in section two above that, when singing songs like *The Indian Lass*, Aboriginal people may have been expressing subconscious

disillusionment at the failure of whites to respond to accommodation relationships. But the strategy continued to be activated nonetheless, perhaps in the hope that at some stage, Europeans might reciprocate. An example of the possible occurrence of a deep symbolic cultural sharing between black and white concerns the legendary New England bushranger Captain Thunderbolt. This man/myth fitted exactly the archetype of Hobsbawm's 'noble robber' (Hobsbawm 1969): he roamed New England for seven years, evading capture for longer than any other Australian bushranger; he 'robbed the rich to feed the poor' as he himself sang; he never seriously hurt, let alone killed anyone; he was chivalrous to women, and he is reputed never to have been caught for his crimes (McDonald 1993). Thunderbolt displayed very local 'bush' characteristics in addition to those universal themes: he was native born; the ultimate bushman, he spent most of his seven years-at-large living in a series of strategically-selected caves, and he was an expert horseman. The bushranger was further renowned as a fine singer and dancer, and composed songs for circulation amongst his friends. He married Mary or Mary-Anne Bugg, the daughter of a New England Aboriginal family, whose immediate descendants lived for a time near the Archibalds on North Hill in Armidale. Thunderbolt was very widely-supported by New Englanders, and many local people tell stories, handed down in their families, of their relatives either hiding the bushranger, feeding him, conveying strategic information his way, or providing him with a fresh horse.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Thunderbolt myth is the universal belief that he was not killed by Constable Walker in Kentucky Creek, as the conventional histories state. Even grisly reality is sometimes successfully subordinated to the vagaries of myth-creation — rationalised in this case by an appeal to mistaken identity — and it is said that the real Frederick Ward peacefully lived out

his time in one or other of a number of far-off exotic locations such as California or Chile (McDonald 1993).

Significantly, the Archibald family avers that Thunderbolt, that symbol *par excellence* of the New England bush ethos, was himself Aboriginal. This identity may have been bestowed through his marriage into the Bugg family, but whatever the circumstances, there are apparently several local Abroriginal people who claim kinship to the bushranger. It is understandable that Aboriginal people might identify positively with Thunderbolt, as his life represented much that resonated with the post-contact indigenous worldview: resistance to white authority; the sharing of resources, 'natural' justice and morality, horsemanship, bushmanship and, last but certainly not least, musicianship.

The local Aboriginal community has its tales of hiding Thunderbolt just as the whitefellers do. Hazel Vale told me that Granny Widders was supposed to have once hidden Thunderbolt under her skirts to foil troopers' efforts to capture him. Interestingly, Patsy Cohen relates the same story with the persona of the Hunter Valley Aboriginal bushranger Jimmy Governor substituted for Thunderbolt (Cohen & Somerville 1990: 106). Jimmy Governor appears again in another of Mrs. Cohen's stories, and there is some reason for believing that the characters of the two bushrangers have been conflated either here, or somewhere further back along the line of transmission. This second story might then relate just as well to Thunderbolt as to Jimmy Governor. Not that it matters terribly, as the conflation only supports the argument that the myth of Thunderbolt, as Aboriginal or European, held significance for New England Aboriginal people. The tale in question, from the Walcha district, is rich in musical resonances, something that is particularly appropriate, both to this chapter's subject-matter generally, and to the character of Thunderbolt in particular:

> Did you ever hear about these old dances that they used to have here? There's supposed to be — I heard a story about Jimmy Gov'nor, when they were after Jimmy Gov'nor. They 'ad a dance 'ere and the troopers came out lookin' for 'im. And when the troopers came into the dining room, dunno where, somewhere up there...But you'll hear violins here at a certain time, beautiful music, sweet music Ethel, but only the kids hear it. Sweet, oh the most beautiful music — Linda — the sweetest music she said you ever heard, Linda, when she was a little kid and she said it come from that direction over there where the Morrises were livin'. Anyhow they were dancin' and Jimmy Gov'nor was in this dance and when the troopers walked in and everybody, all the old blackfellers knew Jimmy was in there — everything went quiet and they all looked around for Jimmy Gov'nor and 'e was gone — a will-o-the-wisp sort of a fellow. The troopers went and here's Jimmy Gov'nor jumped down out of the fireplace (Cohen & Somerville 1990: 90).

In 1984 I collected a song from Bill Mann, a whitefeller of Walcha, that tells a very similar tale, *mutatis mutandis*. It was apparently composed by Thunderbolt himself, and distributed amongst his many friends (Bill Mann 1984). The song, a reconstructed version of which appears below, is a poetic depiction of triumph over alienating authority, sung to the air of a European dance tune. As in Patsy Cohen's story, the action takes place at a country dance. Again, a trooper appears at the dance, and once more the bushranger evades capture through deft footwork:

> One night in Uralla Scrub as I lay,
>
> Strange fancies came o'er me and I thought it was day.

I thought it was day, but still it was night,

And my dreams they all vanished, and I woke in a fright.

I saw scenes of a picnic in a far-away town,

Of singing and dancing and sports all around.

My mother and father enjoying the fun,

And school-mates with whom I once ventured to run.

Yes my dreams they all vanished and I woke with a jolt,

To find myself still the outlaw Thunderbolt.

But the music kept playing, there was a dance on nearby,

There no-one would know me, so I strolled right inside.

We were having a spell, we'd just finished a dance,

When a trooper rode up and his horse it did prance.

I could tell by his looks, he was more than a colt,

So I said to myself, 'You'll suit Thunderbolt'.

While the trooper engaged in having a dance,

I made for the door, to the horse I seen prance.

I sprang to the stirrups, in the saddle with one bound,

I said 'Oh young feller, a rider you've found'.

Over rivers and mountains and valleys we flew,

And from the green grass swept the bright morning dew.

The trooper gave chase, but he hadn't a chance,

So with his head hanging down, he rode back to the dance.

To that young policeman a lesson I'd taught,

No more will be heard in any police court.

It was a hundred good miles that I made on that colt,

They put a thousand gold sovereigns on bold Thunderbolt

(Bill Mann 1984; McDonald 1993; McDonald 1999).

Like both *Wheelbarrow Broke* and *Jacky Jacky*, this song deals, on one level, with the confounding of the official European economic programme, in which bushranging played a most unwelcome part. It is considered here that, through his social and economic resistance, Thunderbolt could well have represented morality to the Aboriginal people of New England, in the same way as did Ned Kelly for the Aboriginal people of Yarralin (see chapter four). While it was argued there that local Aboriginal people had been identifying with white society since the 1840s, Thunderbolt's career may have served as a later reinforcement of that accommodation, neatly encapsulating it within the person of a single legendary figure. If regarded as a European, Thunderbolt would then surely be seen to have

reciprocated in accommodation, by giving back wealth to Aboriginal communities, and by instituting a moral stance against an acquisitive European economy. He was certainly seen as a moral figurehead by all but the most privileged or authoritarian Europeans on New England. There are close parallels to be drawn between Thunderbolt's mythical status and that of the northern Ned Kelly. The legend that Thunderbolt never died, his own dreamings, his uncertain racial origins all accord with the Yarralin creation figure as described by Deborah Bird Rose:

> In spite of the many ambiguities, Ned Kelly — man, myth-dream, and Aboriginal Dreaming figure — provides a superb bridge between cultures...Yarralin people have resurrected him twice over — both in the story and by locating him in Dreaming. In addition, they have given birth to an indigenous Ned Kelly: he belongs to the continent because he helped make it...They have analysed his actions and defined him as purely moral...Through Ned Kelly an equitable social order is established as an enduring principle of life (Rose 1998: 117).

Though he has never been allowed quite the same status, the figure of Thunderbolt, appropriately clothed in musical raiment, presents one documented example of European New England responding in kind to the accommodation of local Aboriginal people.

Section Six. Conclusion.

The main purpose of the foregoing chapter has been to introduce the musical experience and repertoire of New England's Archibald family. In so doing, the examination analysed genres of English-language songs either composed or modified by local Aboriginal musicians, and noted the Archibalds' practice of singing

European material invested with Aboriginal power. Evidence was presented that linked their modern musical expression with an ancient cultural forerunner, a relationship that is maintained both through spiritual channels, and the deliberations of the local musicians themselves. This evidence was then applied to the discussion of Aboriginal accommodation that has been proceeding since chapter four. It was found that further useful insights could be gained into the nature of accommodation, and that Frank Archibald may have received a special education to equip him in the pursuit of this strategy in a fast-changing world. The primarily relational character of Aboriginal culture was outlined in some detail, in order to help explain how the indigeneity of much of the Archibalds' repertoire resided, not in the formal aspects of their music, but in its radical implication in local Aboriginal relationship networks. It was extrapolated from this discussion that performance contexts, the circumstances regarding song-composition, and the 'power-laden' qualities of songs, might constitute essences of indigenous music that endured from pre-contact times until World War Two. Finally, the myth of the bushranger Captain Thunderbolt was rehearsed as a possible isolated example of nineteenth-century European participation in indigenous accommodation.

Not all local Aboriginal people celebrate a musical, or even a general cultural heritage in the same way as do the Archibalds. Many different paths have been chosen for the expression of a contemporary identity. The Archibald family's experience is foregrounded through its members' unanimous commitment to the faithful expression of their parents' and great-grandparents' musical culture. It is in this singularity that the operation of tradition might be glimpsed. It was postulated above that, when the Baanbai elders educated Frank Archibald, they not only gave him cultural material, but they also imparted the means whereby this material could be further received and

transmitted. The proposal was extended to include Frank's enculturation of his own children, and while the process was there implicated in the operation of the accommodation strategy, it will be seen from the findings of chapter seven that the two are in fact separate entities. Accommodation, a particularly Aboriginal strategy, has been portrayed as the means whereby European musical material could be appropriated in the name of a developing indigenous identity. The more universally-applicable phenomenon of tradition has enabled the inter-generational transmission of cultural material, together with the means for its further propagation.

The Archibald family's musical culture was said to be distinct from other English-language expression by the particular nature of its spiritual core. This might be best-illustrated through comparison with the experience of Jim Lowe, who was a white Australian contemporary of Frank Archibald's. A reasonably full outline of this man's musical life is given in the next chapter, and it will be seen there that, while the two men shared a similar basic musical repertoire, the meanings that their respective musics held for them were fundamentally different. It will be argued that it is once again in this difference that the phenomenon of musical tradition, bearing a particularly Aboriginal character, might be found to operate.

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