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Acknowledging Presence

Alexander Schramm's Representation of Aboriginal People in Colonial South Australia 1850-1864

Abstract: The Berlin-born artist Alexander Schramm (1813-1864) emigrated to the British colony of South Australia in 1849, where over the next fifteen years he produced paintings, drawings and lithographs that focused on representations of the local indigenous people in encampments, travelling and interactions with settlers. While this body of work was not large, it constituted the major part of his Australian oeuvre and was made at a time when the Aboriginal population had been drastically diminished and largely dislodged from the centres of settlement. Schramm appears to have had no intention of ethnographic documentation and his works are distinct from those of most contemporaries who employed the modes of portraiture of "representatives of the race" or figures included in the landscape for compositional or symbolic purposes. Rather they showed Aboriginal people per se, full-figured and individual, as they were currently seen around Adelaide. Schramm's reasons for this focus and his own attitude to these people remain obscure but the works he made provide a unique record of an indigenous group over a decade of dislocation and suggest both the vitiation and the accommodations made by them in response to the expansion of colonial settlement.

When Alexander Schramm left Berlin on the 'Prinzessin Luise' in August 1849 for the recently established settlement of South Australia he already had fifteen years practice as a portrait and genre painter and had exhibited paintings regularly at the Berlin Royal Academy of Arts. But in a crowded profession he appears to have had limited success[1] and while his departure at this particular time might suggest that he was disillusioned with the failure of the 1848 uprisings to achieve significant political and social change,[2] he was also likely seeking the greater economic opportunities promoted by emigration agents that prompted many of his fellow passengers. He declared himself a portrait painter on his subsequent application for naturalisation in 1850 and a number of portrait commissions signed by him survive. Yet his principal works over the next fifteen years would not be conventional images of local landowners, merchants and other settlers but representations of indigenous people living in and around and visiting the

1 One hundred and forty portrait painters were recorded in the Berlin directories for 1845, when Schramm returned to Berlin from Warsaw and set up again as a portrait and genre painter. Despite regular exhibition entries, his works received no reviews and Schramm is not mentioned in Atanazy Raczynski's Geschichte der neueren deutschen Kunst (1836-41), the major survey of contemporary German artists that drew heavily on the Berlin exhibition and personal visits to ateliers, nor are there works by him in the inventories of contemporary private collectors and dealers or the various Kunstvereine.

2 Otto Schomburgk, the President of the Berlin-based emigration association that commissioned the Prinzessin Luise, and committee member Carl Muecke had been active participants in the uprisings and earlier political agitation. The initial aim of the association was to set up a formal Gemeinschaftlichkeit on a liberal political basis with ideas of economic self-sufficiency. (Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung, March 1849, no. 20, p. 75). A possible political/social motivation for Schramm's decision to emigrate has been discussed in most writings about him, from Ron Appleyard's pioneering articles to the 2011 study by Lally and Monteath (R.G. Appleyard: Alexander Schramm, painter, p. 28; Janice Lally and Peter Monteath: 'Essentially South Australian', p. 149)

settlement of Adelaide. It is this focus on a group already diminished significantly and increasingly being forced out of the principal areas of settlement, and the manner in which he represented them, that distinguish Schramm and give particular significance to his relatively small body of work.

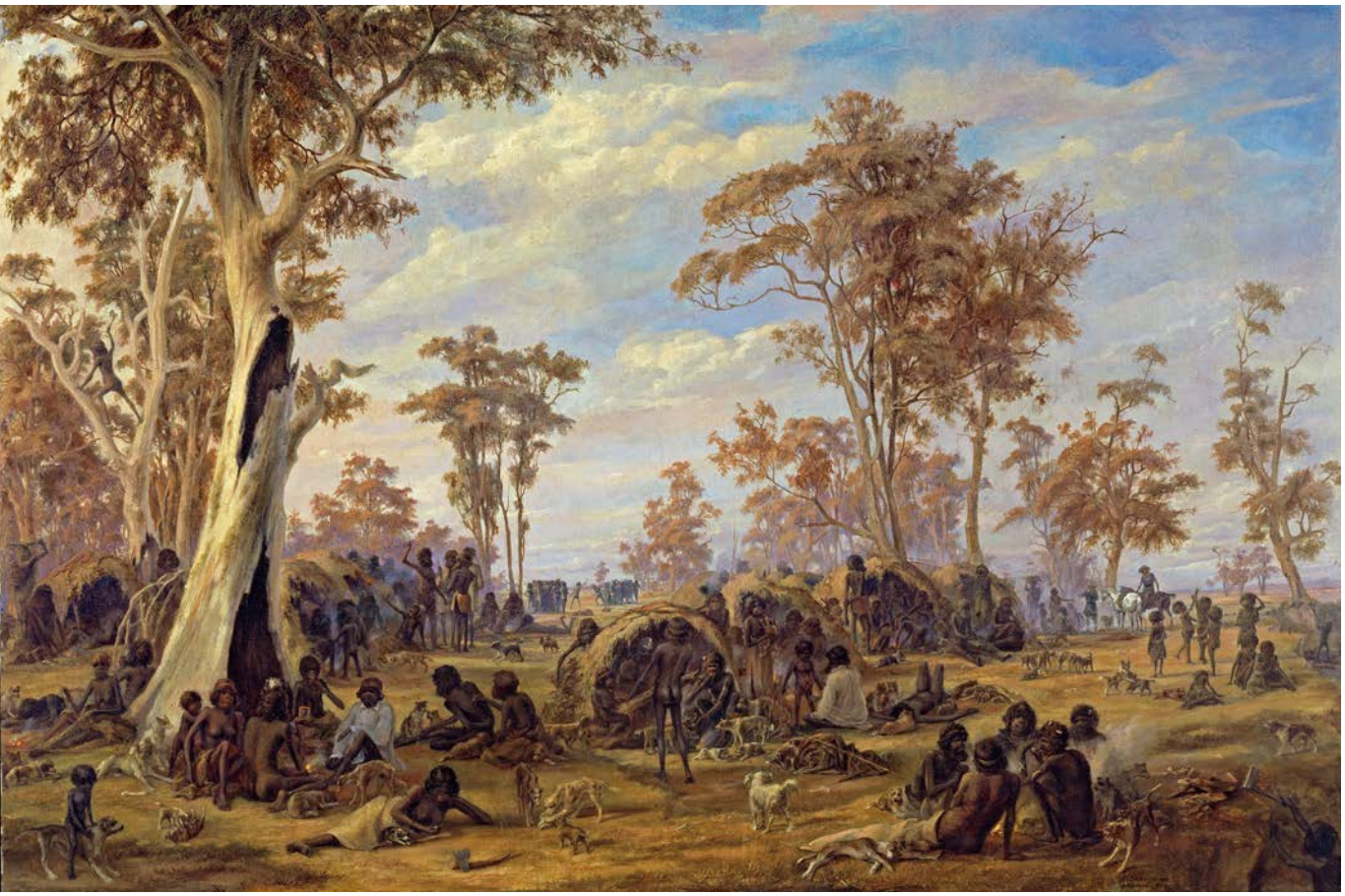

Fig. 1: Adelaide, a tribe of natives on the banks of the River Torrens, 1850

Schramm's first publicly noticed major painting was of a large group of Aboriginal people in a temporary encampment of brush or bark shelters in a clearing along a river bank (Fig. 1). While a traditionally balanced landscape composition, with a beautifully rendered hollow gum tree dominating and framing the left boundary, the focus was its figural content. More than eighty people are individually distinguishable, men and women disposed in discrete groupings across the work, variously centred around a shelter, game, or other activity or conversing and smoking around a fire. Children play, youths and men compete at spear-throwing. A single naked male figure with a raised axe creates a striking silhouette in the fork of a distant tree, pictorially balanced by another who emerges, axe in hand, from a dry creek bed at the extreme right margin, where a third man is piling up gathered branches. In the background two men on horseback appear to have just approached the camp, one has dismounted and is in conversation with a woman who holds out her hand. Numerous dogs who sit or lie with the groups or play or fight among themselves add to the animation of the scene, and the limited palette of the rich brown of the bodies, the blue of the sky and the yellow brown of the terrain gives it cohesion and warmth. Figures

are meticulously painted, and there is a realist exploration of light and texture in skin and hair and clothing, in the smoke from the campfires and in the distinct form and materials of the shelters and the close observation of the shape and foliage of the trees.

The location of the scene, with its cleared ground and mature gum trees, accords with contemporary descriptions of camps and corroboree grounds at Kensington, an area where two creeks flowed into the Torrens river. With water, shelter, birds, game and travelling access from other areas, it was noted by settlers as a favourite meeting ground as early as 1840, and even a decade later Bishop Short recollected seeing "as many as three hundred … in their wild state".[3] Visually and in mood it accords closely with a description by early settler Mary Thomas of:

> an encampment containing nearly a hundred natives, men, women and children on my way to North Adelaide about a mile distant, where some of their 'wurlies' as they are called, were situated among the trees. These wurlies are constructed of the boughs and bark of trees in such a manner as to shelter the occupants and to allow the rain (or, as it is called in their native tongue, "Cowie') to run off. They were placed a short distance apart on both sides of an open space between some lofty trees. Here some of the men were throwing spears for practice or pastime and others were stretched at full length on the grass. Most of the women were seated round the fires outside the wurlies and, as I could plainly observe, made their remarks on me as I passed, though I did not understand a word they said. Some of the children were amusing themselves by running and leaping, at which they are great adepts, while others were apparently asleep with their wild dogs, of which there several.[4]

The painting, which Schramm must have commenced when he had been but a few months in Adelaide, was surprisingly confident in its depiction of a very different landscape and people. As a demonstration of his formal technical skills, it brought him to public attention as an artist for the first time,[5] reports in the local newspapers noting that:

> "A large and well executed painting by Mr Schramm of an encampment of aborigines is now to be seen at the Exchange. The foreground shows the different employments in which the natives are engaged. Some are throwing the spear, others net-making, while others are reclining in their wurleys; and one blackfellow is chopping branches from a giant gum-tree. The background is a grove of large gum-trees, which is well-executed ... Relief is afforded to the dusky figures of the blacks by two horsemen conversing with the lubras".[6]
>
> "A masterly painting of an encampment of Aboriginal natives at Kensington, by Mr Schramm, is now exhibited at the Exchange. It is on a very large scale, and beautifully framed by Mr Cully. The expression of the blacks is well varied and faithfully delineated, and any person will readily recognise several sable countenances well known among the dingy promenaders of the metropolis. The scenery

3 South Australian Register, 7 April 1855 Observer, 2 June 1855; G. B. Wilkinson: South Australia, its advantages and resources, p. 326; J. Warburton (ed.): Five Metropolitan Creeks of the River Torrens, pp. 39 and 47; Sharyn Clarke: The creation of the Torrens, p. 5.

4 E. K. Thomas: The diary and letters of Mary Thomas p. 76 and as extracted in the South Australian Register, 21 August 1915, Observer, 28 August 1915, and quoted in Sharyn Clarke: The creation of the Torrens, p. 50.

5 He had been described earlier as an "artisan" when a witness to an assault on a fellow German (South Australian Register, 29 December 1849 p. 4)

6 South Australian Register, 25 December 1850, p. 3.

> is also justly portrayed, especially the hazy thin smoke from the smouldering fires of the 'Gunyas', and the huge trunk of a neighbouring gum tree, burnt hollow by a bush fire".[7]

According to these notices, the painting had already been purchased: "The picture … is, we believe, the property of Mr C.S. Penny[8], who intends to take it to England with him, where it will doubtless attract much attention". Despite some reservations about Schramm's colouring as "perhaps too warm", "the sky more of a European than an Australian one", its endorsement as "well-executed" and "masterly" may have been influential in gaining Schramm subsequent portrait commissions and in his decision to apply for naturalization (months later than most of his fellow 'Princess Louise' passengers). The subject of this painting was not in itself surprising for a newly arrived artist, for depictions of Aboriginal people along the Torrens river bank, small groups fishing, collecting wood and around campfires on the Adelaide plains had been made by professional and amateur artists since the foundation of the settlement. Nonetheless, a major oil painting, with a substantial investment in the work and in the frame, dedicated to the people in the camp, shown in recognisable physiognomic detail and brought into an unusual intimacy with the viewer, was a departure. Beyond the praise for its formal qualities was an implicit suggestion of the oddity of Schramm's focus on these "dingy promenaders", unease at his considered attention to them, and perhaps mockery that the painting might be presented to the Queen "as a faithful representation of Her Majesty's South Australian sable subjects".

More than three years would then pass before public notice of a further offering of a similar major work by Schramm. Little is known of his output during the intervening period beyond a large oil painting now known as 'Madonna and child' that has so far eluded definitive explanation[9], a pair of portraits of an unknown man and woman, and some mediocre commercial lithographs.[10] As with the 1850 'Encampment', this second work was a large, highly finished oil painting of an Aboriginal camp, compositionally similar, with multiple small groupings scattered across the foreground and middle distance (Fig. 2). Again, there is clear delineation of individual people, and graphic depiction of diverse poses and actions. It is, however, less densely populated, with the number of people and dogs almost halved, and fewer shelters. There are no games taking place and no visitors. While many people occupy the foreground, and a number appear to be engaging directly with the artist — one child waving a stick in

7 Adelaide Times, 28 December 1850, p. 2.

8 Christopher Septimus Penny, who had arrived in South Australia in 1841, had earlier visited with the German missionary H. A. E. Meyer stations along the lower Murray frequented by members of the "Milmenrura tribe" (as then commonly known by settlers; a clan within the Ngarrindjeri nation) and subsequently given a public lecture on them in Adelaide that was unusually positive about their qualities and potential. Advertisements for the sale of his property and household goods in December 1850 suggests he was then in process of permanently leaving Adelaide (South Australian, 29 June 1841; Adelaide Times, 16 December 1850, p. 3)

9 Discussed by Ron Radford in Ron Radford and Jane Hylton: Australian colonial art 1800-1900, pp. 127 ff.

10 It has been speculated that Schramm might have tried his fortunes on the Victorian goldfields but there is no evidence for this in shipping records or, most significantly, his art production.

acknowledgment — they occupy a bare quarter of the work, and those in the middle and background are loosely sketched. More attention is given to representation of the physical landscape, with trees providing mid-ground focus as well as structural balance, and hills visible in the background. Set in cool late afternoon light rather than the bright heat of the day and introducing the soft purple tones of the hills, with a more elevated and remote viewing point, the mood conveyed is more subdued than in Schramm's earlier encampment.

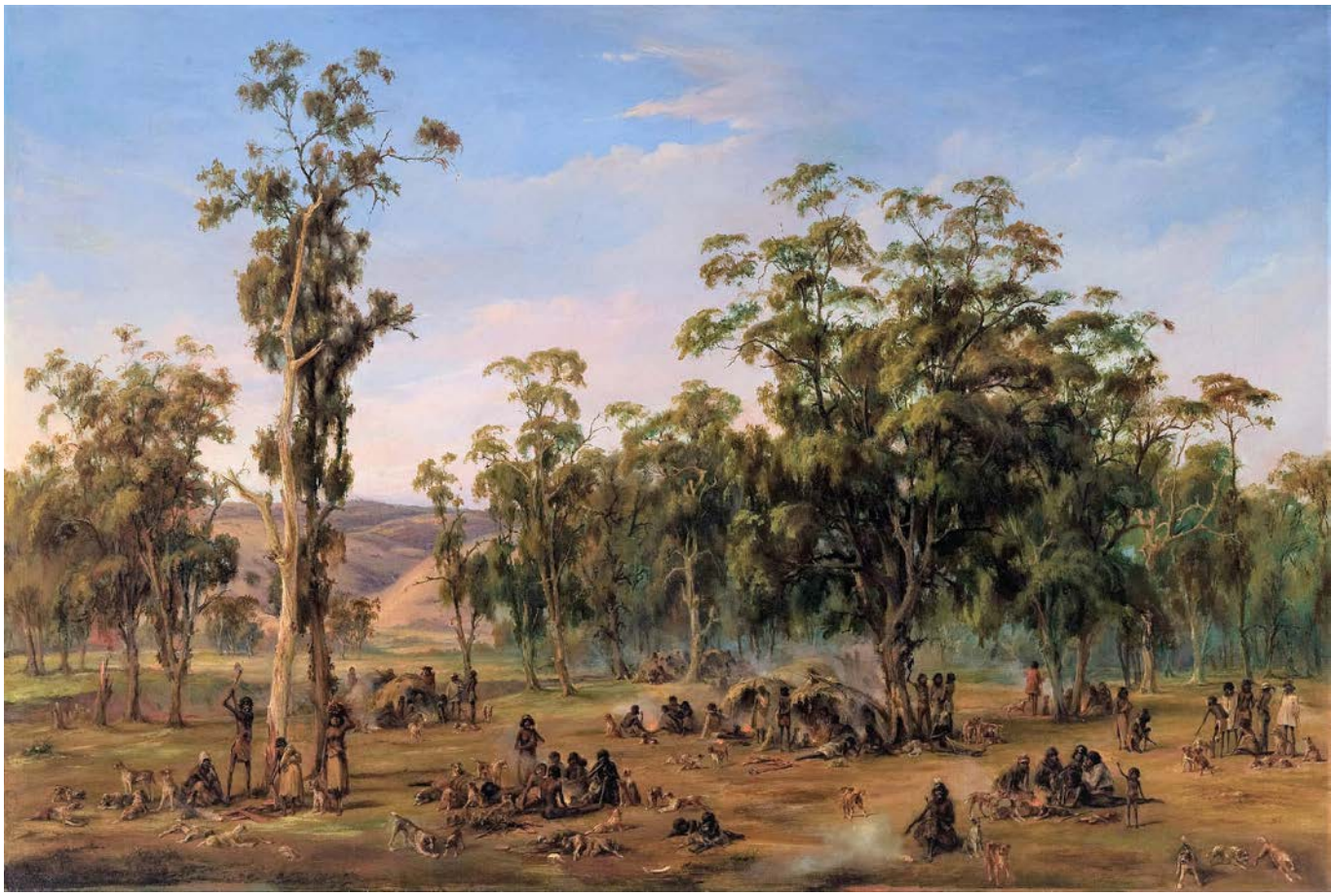

Fig. 2: An Aboriginal encampment near the Adelaide foothills, 1854

On this occasion the local newspapers did not provide a detailed description of the work, noticing it more generally as "representing Australian scenery, with native figures" that was to be offered for sale through a raffle ("Fifty members at £2.2s each"), although it was commended as "very truthful, and will in the course of time possess peculiar value as a correct delineation of the form and habits of a race which must, ere long, either improve in both, or wholly pass away".[11] Disposal by raffle was not uncommon — it was a system with which Schramm would have been familiar through the Kunstvereine in his home city, and was employed by many local artists in the Australian colonies.[12] Schramm might have anticipated that this new work, conforming more closely to the landscape tradition, responding to the

11 South Australian Register, 8 and 14 July 1854, p. 2; Adelaide Times, 8 July 1854.
12 As by John Gilfillan in January 1844, S. T. Gill in January 1847, James Shaw in May 1852 and Eugene von Guérard in Melbourne in 1854 and 1855.

criticism of the colouring of his first painting, and with the encampment and people integral with the general scene, might have had appeal in the open market. Nonetheless, a two-guinea raffle ticket was ambitious when a lithographed 'view' could be purchased for less than one, and a hundred guineas was a substantial amount for a painting, especially as South Australia had not fully recovered from the mass exodus to the gold fields in the neighbouring colony of Victoria. Indirect evidence suggests that the venture was not a success, for the painting would be taken by the frame maker David Culley to sell speculatively and Schramm would only receive full payment after recourse to legal action.[13]

More disconcertingly, reports of this court case described Schramm simply as "an artist", with little suggestion that he had yet established a reputation (indeed, the 'Adelaide Times' allowed only that "from the plaintiff's statement it appeared he was an artist") and the experience seems to have dented his optimism and ambition. This 'Encampment' appears to have been his last large "set piece" painting offered publicly. Subsequently his work would only be known through much more modest paintings, drawings and lithographs, most exhibited at the annual exhibitions of the South Australian Society of Arts, established in December 1856, that created a new forum for the exposure and sale of the work of local artists.[14] Some were portraits shown by their owners, indicating that Schramm was still receiving commissions, but the majority of his works shown by their current owners and submitted for sale by Schramm himself were of Aboriginal people in landscapes, "native scenes" or genre works, although the limited descriptions and the generic titles create some difficulties in confidently identifying them against surviving works, which are rarely titled or dated.

'Bush Visitors', first noted at the Society of Arts third exhibition in October 1859 where it was described as "Blacks at a cottage door" and awarded the Society's highest prize, was Schramm's most substantial extant oil painting during this period. A work that attracted the most attention at the time (and the most reproduced in its various forms) it is essentially a genre scene, utilising Schramm's skills in this style (Fig. 3).[15] It shows an Aboriginal group of nine, five women (one with a baby on her back), two men and a boy, in conversation with a young settler couple, their child, and another woman who appears to be a maidservant, outside their cottage. The main Aboriginal party stands at a remove as two of the

13 Schramm initiated legal action against Culley for the recovery of £21.1.0, the dispute being whether four 'pictures' left with Culley had been sold direct to him or taken on commission, with a large painting entitled 'Native scene' valued by Schramm at £100 at the centre of the action. Schramm won his action and was awarded the disputed amount (South Australian Register, Adelaide Times, and Adelaide Observer 8 February 1855).

14 South Australian Register, 25 September, 5 November, 10 and 11 December 1856, 8 January 1857. The Society began largely as an initiative by Charles Hill, an experienced printmaker and engraver who had arrived in South Australia in 1854, with the objectives "to promote the cultivation of the arts, by means of lectures and conversaziones, a school of arts and design, a permanent gallery and annual exhibition of works of art generally, and such other means as may be devised". There is no evidence that Schramm took part in the formation of the Society or ever served on its committee.

15 At least two other genre scenes with colonists as subjects were noted: Morning, described as 'a girl at a cottage door, looking up with shaded eyes at a pair of pigeons' and Burnt out, depicting a settler family and dog by the ruins of their hut, destroyed by a bush fire (South Australian Advertiser, 26 October 1859; Adelaide Observer, 2 June 1860).

women engage with the settler woman at her washing, while another is shown in the foreground taking a light from the fire under a steaming pot of water. A letter of October 1858 found with a copy of a lithographic version of the scene provides a rare contemporary commentary on the painting's setting:

> The scene is a cottage in the North Park Lands, near the Native Camp, it is Washing Day – the Iron Pot, heating the Water out-side – The Group of Natives, just returning to Camp, from a day's begging in Adelaide, accompanied by a troop of Dogs – the principal character is "Old King William." The Woman on his right his Lubra (i.e. Wife) the others his family – the whole Dogs included is true to life.[16]

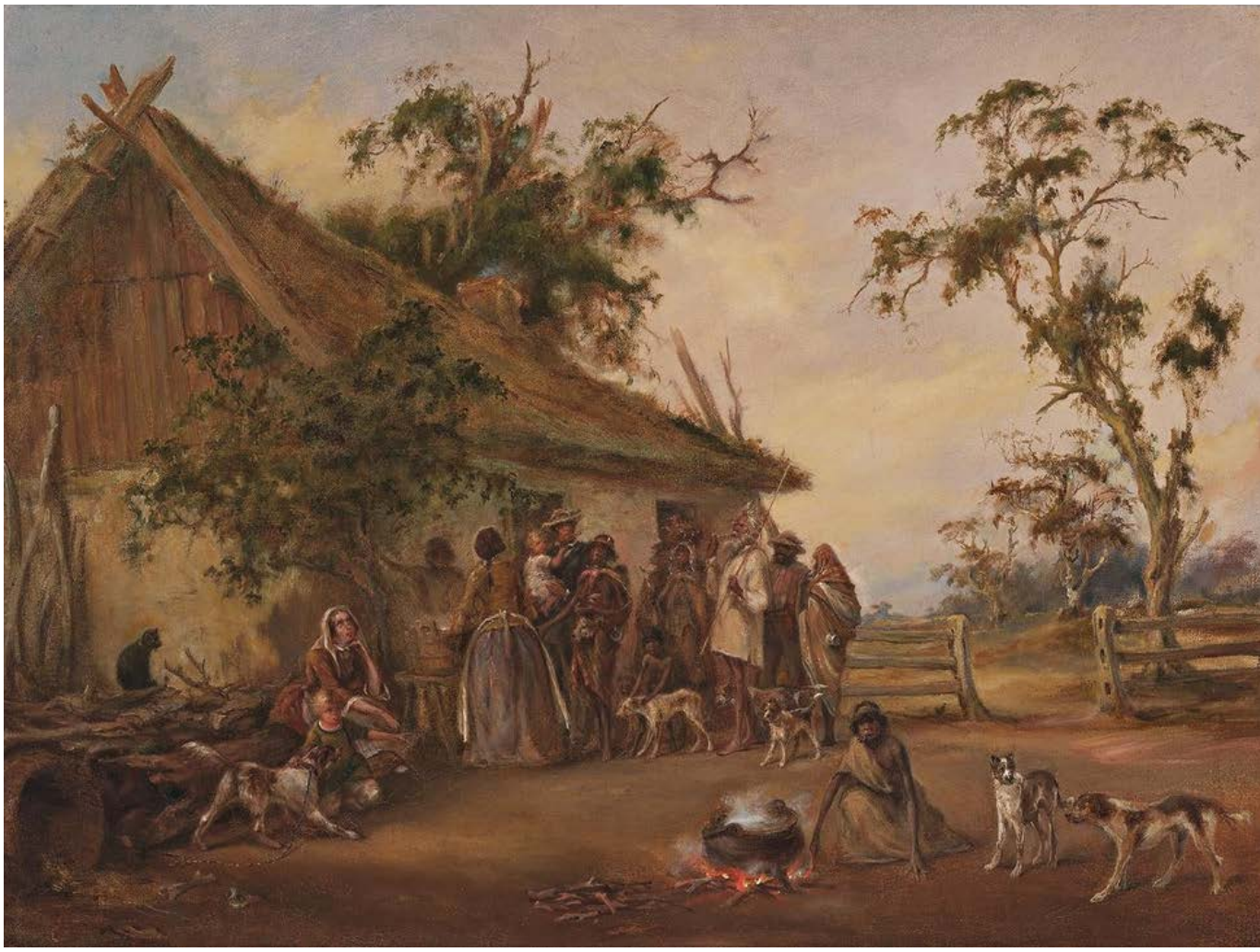

Fig. 3: Bush visitors [Coming in for tucker], c1859

It was a scene that had already appeared as a lithograph in or by 1856, though with some changes: the cottage roof and the timber fence are rougher, the bird cage on the house wall is omitted, and the hair of the woman at the tub is dressed in a plait rather than a loose knot. It is less 'finished' than Schramm's earlier 'Encampments', with crudities in the use of paint, white highlights introduced to

16 Letter of David Liston to Robt. Hart, Adelaide 10 October 1858, attached to a copy of the lithograph donated to the National Gallery of Victoria in 1998 (the underlining is Liston's). The writer was likely David John Liston, who had arrived in Adelaide in 1850, while Hart appears to have been in another colony or back in England, as Liston wrote that he was taking care in folding the print so it would not be damaged in transmission.

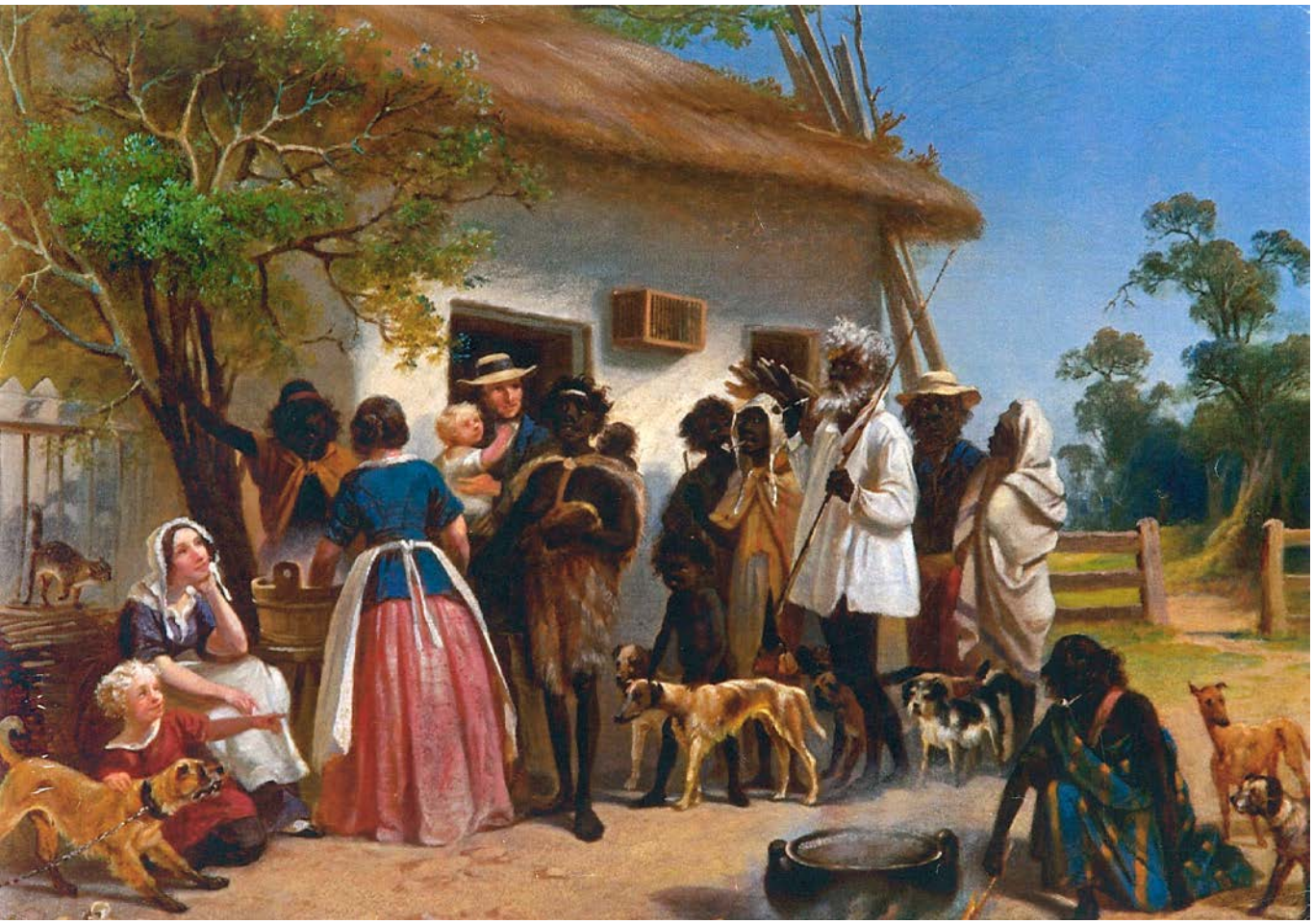

Fig. 4: A scene in South Australia c1850 [sic]

outline shapes and lift the brown tones, and splashes of red and blue not only to dramatize the fire and steam but more randomly in animals and clothing. Compared with the preceding lithograph the view has been opened up to the distant horizon, rendering it more a 'landscape with figures', and the faces of some of the Aboriginal visitors are less distinct. The recession of the encounter itself within the composition and the lack of clarity in the faces add to the ambiguity of the scene, where the proud and hostile stance of the Aboriginal elder, the conciliatory but defensive attitude of the settler at the door of his home, the importuning arm of the Aboriginal woman, the turned back of the woman at the tub, and the contradictory responses of the maidservant and the young boy, create a tableau that is much more complex than the friendly encounter interpreted by some later commentators[17].

Another considerably smaller version of this work in oils, acquired by the Art Gallery of South Australia in 1982, is closer in content to the original lithograph but in its bright colouration and the exotic dress of the woman at the fire is unlike any other "native scene" painted by Schramm (Fig. 4). On the basis of the palette and other stylistic characteristics it has been considered among Schramm's earliest South Australian works, when he was still under the influence of the aesthetic

17 Philip Jones: Bush Visitors, p. 2.

traditions that he is understood to have brought with him:[18] indeed, Schramm was described by the vendor as "a typical Biedermeier artist of his time", and there are perhaps early nineteenth century German painterly models for the settler family, with a strong resemblance in the distinctive back view of the woman at the tub to Caspar David Friedrich's 'Frau am Fenster' (1822). Rather than necessarily being the earliest representation of this scene, however, it was possibly a variant specifically made for the German market or returning immigrant, or even possibly for Schramm's own family[19] 'finished' with a palette appropriate to contemporary taste there: it was never mentioned in Adelaide at the time, even in relation to the controversy over 'Bush Visitors', and would re-emerge in Berlin only in the 1970s. This version (the most commonly reproduced of Schramm's works), known as 'Scene in South Australia' on the basis of the titled print, retains the close viewing point of the lithograph, although the specifically local characteristics of the scenery have been muted, the fence and roof materials changed to give a neater and more cottage-like appearance, the trees more verdant. Here the figure grouping occupies most of the scene, with the elder, the central woman clad in animal skins and the woman taking a light from the fire more physically dominant. In contrast with its passivity in 'Bush Visitors', the cat has its back comically arched while the chained dog is a different breed and more aggressive. The effect of these modifications is to create a work that conforms more closely with the idea that such visits were common but unwelcome to settlers.

Schramm's only other surviving depiction of interaction between an Aboriginal group and colonists is the work now known from its lithographic version as 'Civilization versus Nature', though it appears to equate with a work shown under the title 'Industry and Indolence' at the October 1859 Society of Arts exhibition (Fig. 5).

Less complex in composition than 'Scene in South Australia', and more light-hearted in tone, it depicts an Aboriginal couple with their dog, dressed for travelling, as they halt to observe a pipe-smoking settler who is examining rocks in or at the edge of a dry creek bed.

The title of the lithograph has influenced its interpretation as within the moralising convention of genre ("a piece of virtuous Biedermeier philosophising"[20]), with Schramm seen as contrasting indolent Aboriginals with industrious settlers, but the possibility of a more humorous intent should not be excluded. The couple's bemusement at such labour in the heat of the day is evident and the scene can be seen to convey the mutual incomprehension of the two parties rather than moral judgement by the artist, recognising the understanding articulated by a witness before the New South Wales Select Committee on the Condition of

18 Dating based on the palette is compromised as there was conservation work on the painting, including the addition of white highlights, after acquisition by the Gallery.

19 Peter Beck, a specialist tool supplier from New South Wales, who offered the work to the gallery for a significant $30,000 on the basis of Schramm being "ein typischer Biedermeier-Maler seiner Zeit", stated that "I bought this painting 10 years ago from a young man in Berlin, his name was Lothar Schramm, but I think he didn't now [sic] nothing about this painting".

20 Ron Radford introduction to Christopher Menz: Colonial Biedermeier and German art in South Australia during the nineteenth century, p. 2.

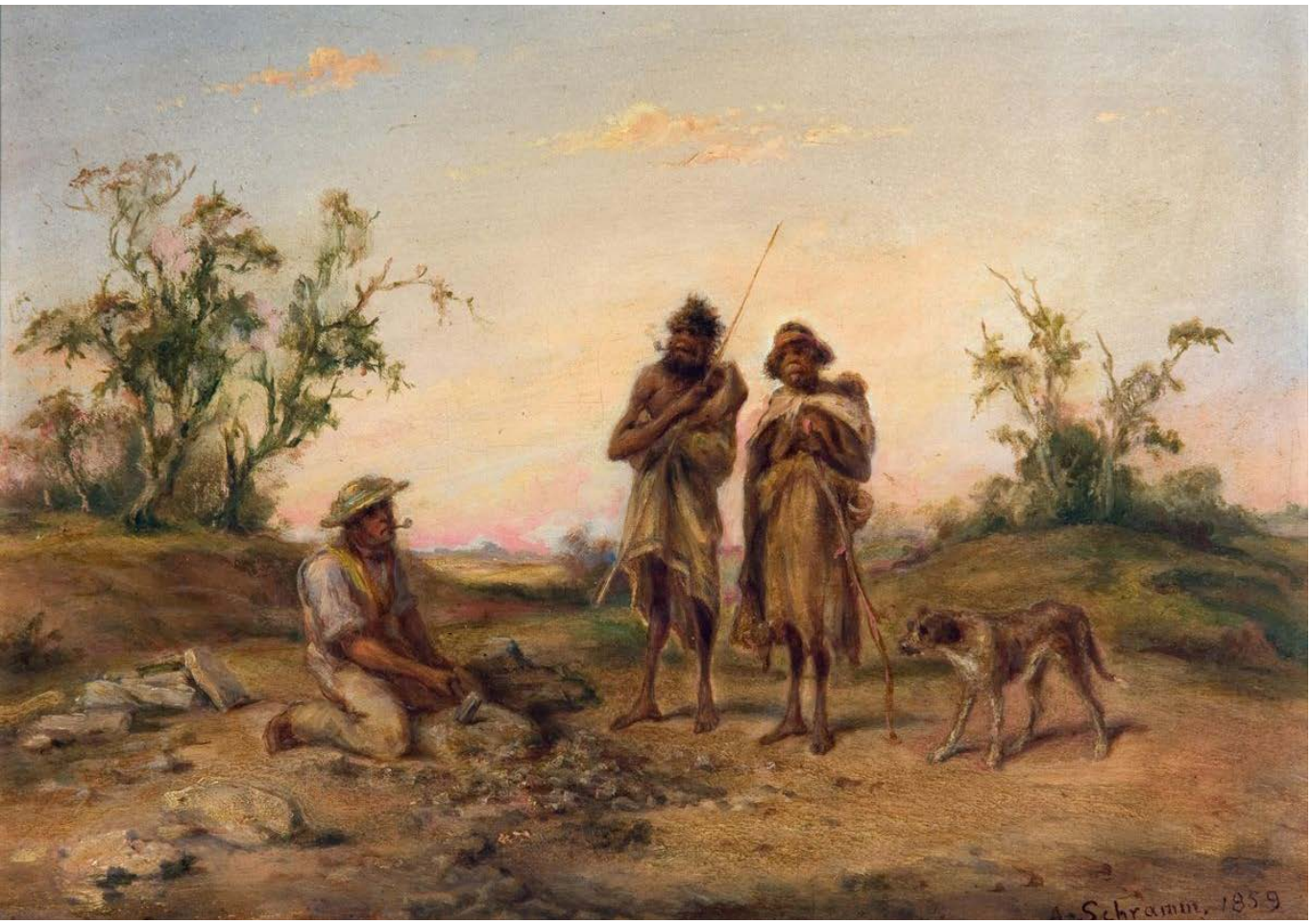

Fig. 5: Civilization versus Nature, c1859

the Aborigines in 1845, that "To the whole; they preferred their mode of living to ours … they pitied us that we troubled ourselves with so many things".[21] It may also be a quietly subversive commentary by Schramm on the contemporary mania for geology and the seeking for gold and other mineral deposits. Indeed, the figure wielding the rock hammer brings to mind the eccentric German geologist Johann Menge, whose be-hatted and pipe-smoking portrait 'cleaning his minerals' had appeared as a wood engraving in William Cawthorne's memoir published that year in Adelaide.[22]

There were other works showing contact between settlers and Aboriginal people, described in contemporary reviews, including 'Whist party', noted as "a group of blacks and whites playing at cards", and 'Blacks and Whites/Black and White Natives/Landscape and group – a Native selling a Cockatoo' depicting "an English lady with two children – a girl on foot and a boy on horseback – negotiating with some natives for the purchase of a cockatoo" and as "a group of blacks ... gazing intently on a party of whites … who are bargaining with one of their number for a lame cockatoo".[23] These paintings, which might have

21 Evidence of Reverend William Schmidt quoted Bill Gammage: The Biggest estate on earth, p. 310.
22 W. A. Cawthorne: Menge the mineralologist, title page illustration.
23 South Australian Weekly Chronicle, 15 February 1862 and 31 January 1863, South Australian Register, 23 April 1861 and 30 January 1863.

given further insight into Schramm's perception of relations between "Blacks and Whites", have unfortunately not yet been located.

In most of his remaining works, Schramm returned to Aboriginal groups as a subject in themselves, rather than in relation to settlers. In one untitled watercolour depicting a group of four adults with children and dogs resting at the edge of a dry river or creek bed, seemingly waiting for a woman walking along the bank, there is some evidence of dwellings in the distance, yet although the resting group are proportionally a small element in the scene it is they, rather than the settlement beyond, who are the pictorial core. In the small oil paintings 'Australian landscape' (where a single woman, dressed for travelling and carrying a

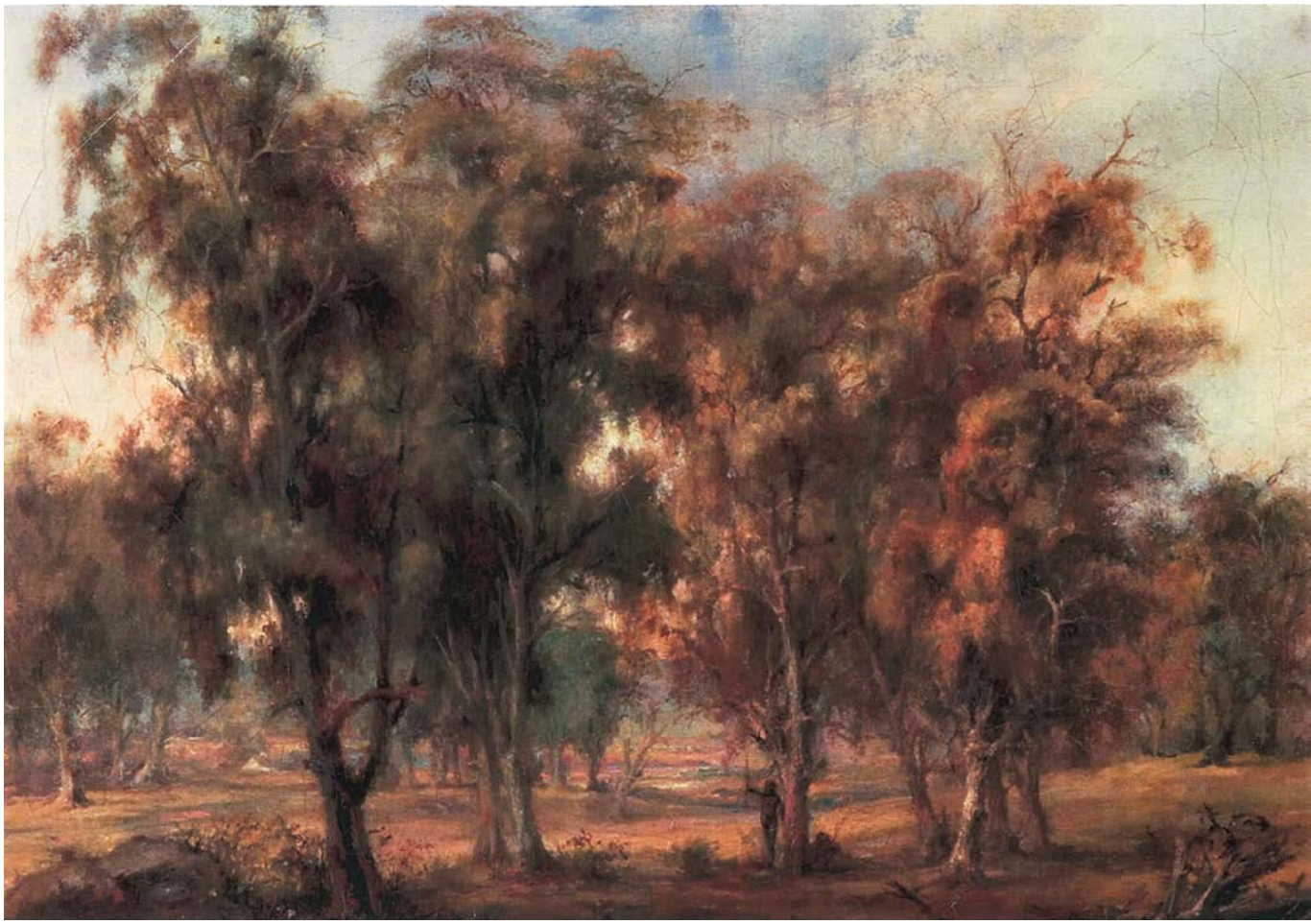

Fig. 6: Landscape with Aboriginal hunters

child, walks with three dogs along the edge of a shallow creek bordered by gum trees) and 'Landscape with Aboriginal hunters' (exhibited as 'Natives spearing kangaroos' in 1863), with two poised naked hunters and their unsuspecting prey, the figures are closer to romantic staffage in forest landscapes comparable with European and British artists of the period (Fig. 6).[24] In these works the real focus is the trees, the most remarked and praised component of Schramm's landscapes in contemporary reviews and the subject of separate studies by him.

24 Landscape with Aboriginal hunters also bears a strong resemblance to the lithograph of an opossum hunt that appeared as a title page illustration (v.2) to Charles Sturt's account of his expeditions into the interior of southern Australia, published in 1833.

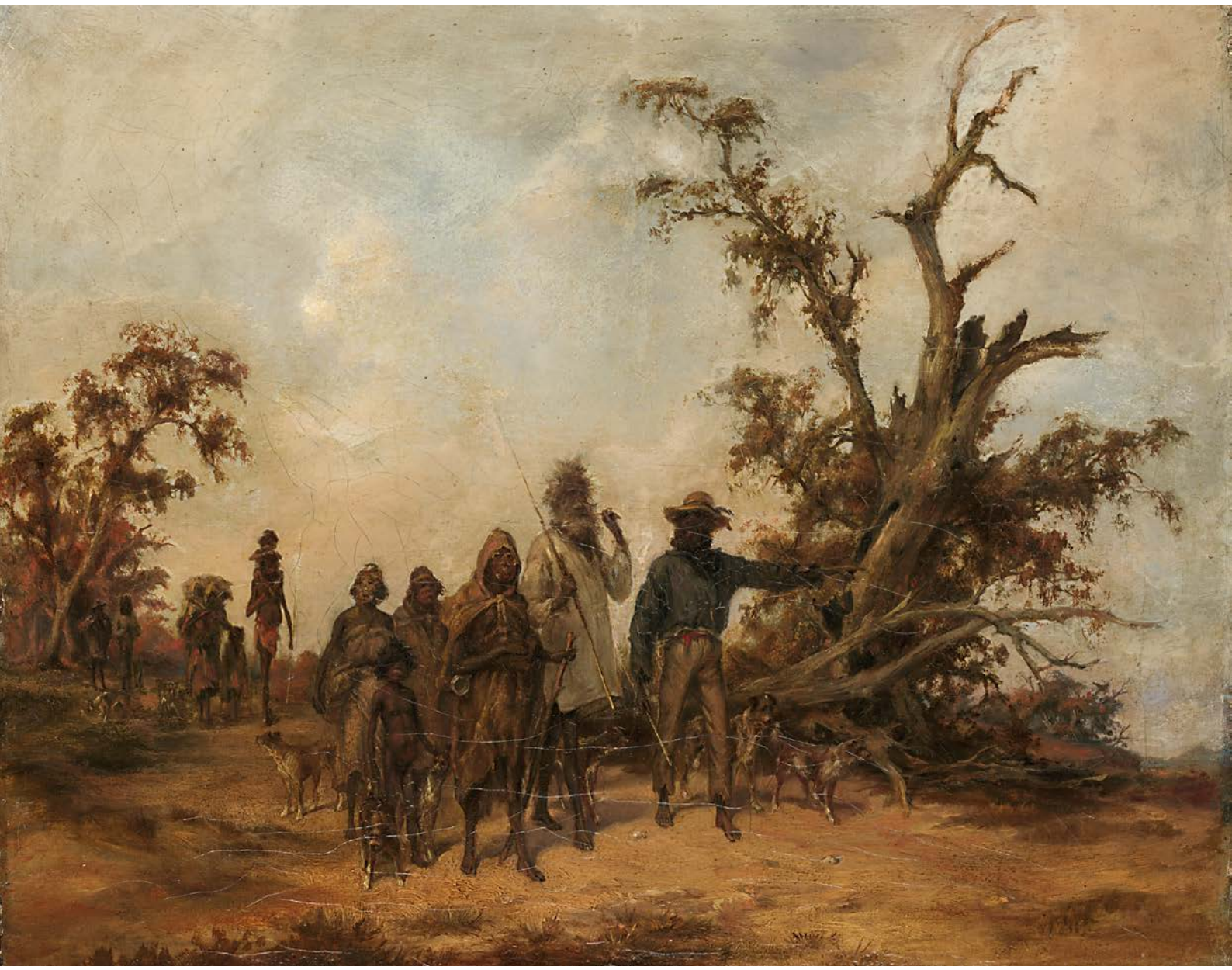

Fig. 7: Aborigines on a walkabout, undated [by 1859]

The majority of surviving works, however, depict small groups shown variously around a single shelter, travelling or resting temporarily in the open landscape. In the oil now known as 'Aborigines on a walkabout' (the 'Travelling party' first exhibited in January 1859, then owned by the colony Governor, Richard MacDonnell) a core group almost identical to that in 'Bush Visitors/Scene in South Australia' is seen crossing an open plain on a hot day, with additional figures trailing in the distance (Fig. 7). The party is spread out across the canvas, but forms a cohesive unit centred on their shared act of travelling, rather than the diffuse 'employments' of the camps. As with 'Bush Visitors', this work captures a transient occasion, but is more freely painted, without laboured details, and suggests a more distant artistic engagement. There is a narrative implicit in the pointing arm of the younger leading man, and perhaps significance in his adoption of European dress (apart from shoes), but whether there is symbolic intention as well as observation in such details is unclear.

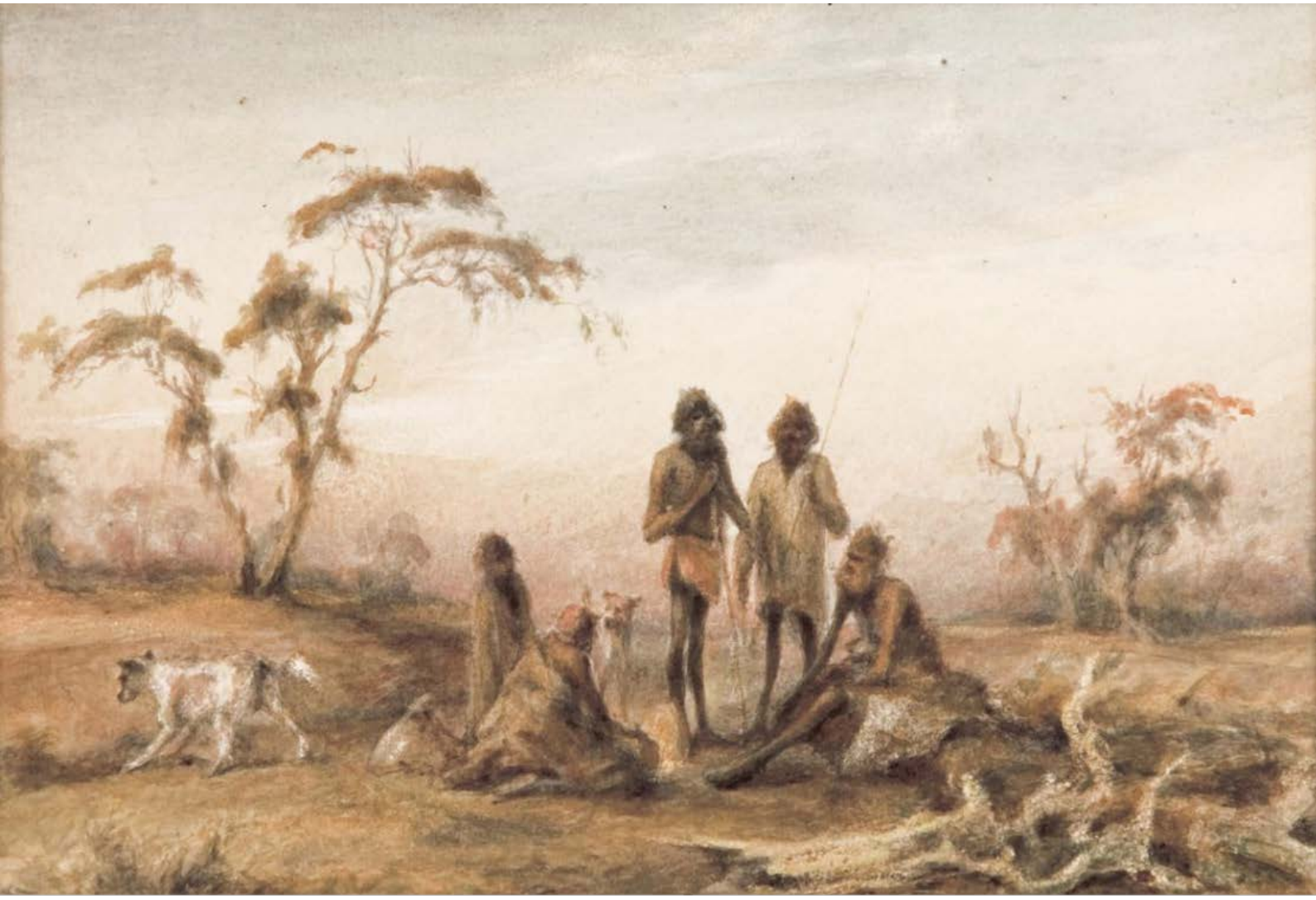

Fig. 8: The encampment, Adelaide Plains, [by 1859]

Another substantial oil painting of a family in front of a shelter, given the title 'Aboriginal encampment' on its initial re-emergence at auction in 1978, is comparable with vignette groupings and figures seen in Schramm's large 'Encampments' (the woman carrying a load of sticks on her head, the older man net-mending, the multiple dogs), but the sense of their situation is very different. This family are shown engaged in the necessities of setting up camp and survival, rather than at leisure and playing games. Their possessions, including a tin pannikin, are seen scattered in the foreground, and the setting is again a flat dry plain with dead and dying trees, rather than a picturesque enclosure with water and surrounding hills.[25] Similarly in the small watercolour (later misleadingly titled) 'The encampment, Adelaide Plains', where a comparable small group is seen resting in a depression, perhaps a dry creek bed, in an open plain against a hazy or dusty sky, there is not the relaxed interaction of the big Encampment paintings but the exhaustion of a hot day's trek, showing a "halt by the way" (Fig. 8). In both works there is wariness, even hostility in the return gaze of the family group, unlike the cheerful gesturing of people depicted in

25 This work was further sold, for a record price of $490,000, at the Sotheby's Sydney auction of 8 May 2012, under the title Native Encampment in South Australia but its current ownership is unclear, so no image has been copied.

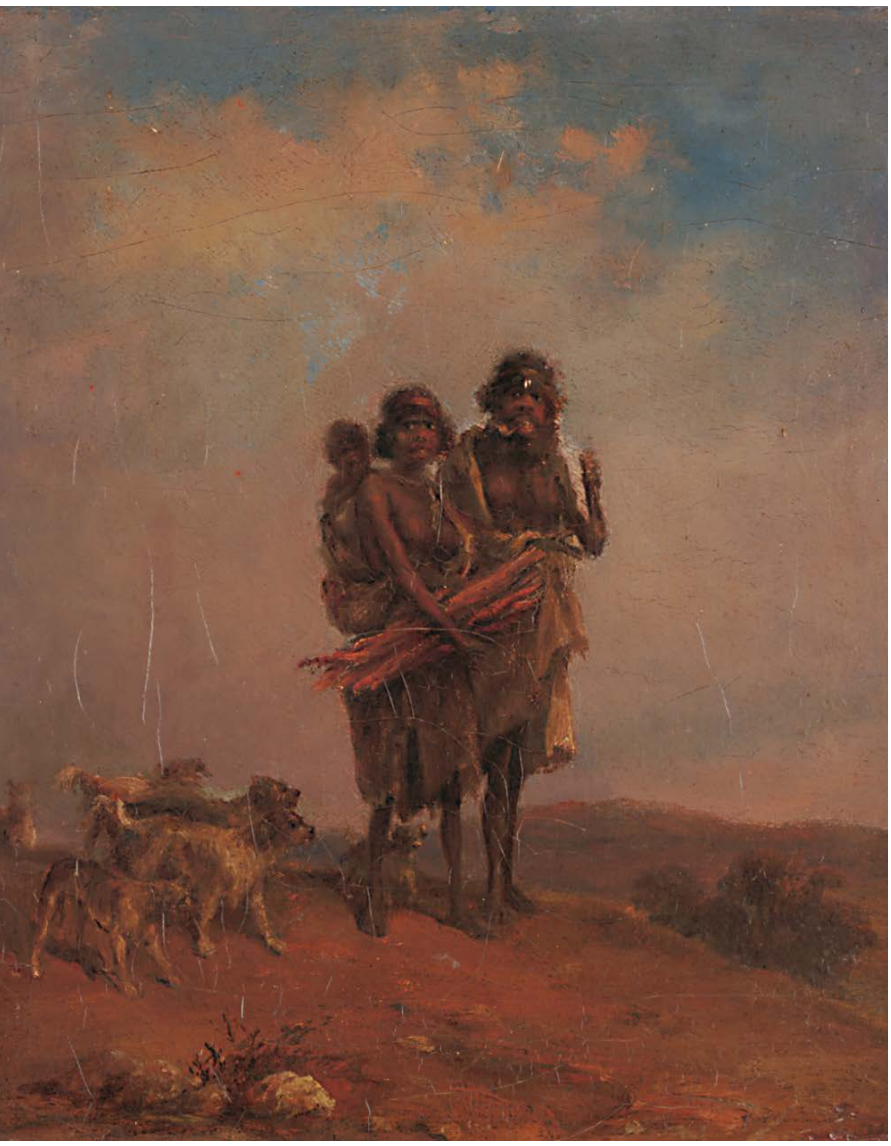

Fig. 9: Aborigines with dogs on the tramp in South Australia, c1859

Schramm's first 'Encampment'. In 'Aborigines with dogs on the tramp', the most intimate of Schramm's works in this vein, with unusually detailed facial features, where a single travelling couple with their child and dogs halt suspiciously as they come over a rise in the midst of an open sweeping landscape in the heat of the day, this sense of an unexpected encounter, where the artist's presence seems an unwelcome intrusion, is even more pronounced, even the dogs turning away (Fig. 9).

The same people and scenes formed the basis of Schramm's lithographic offerings. Like many artists who visited and worked in the colonies, Schramm found that the local market for original art works was limited and competitive[26] while lithography was, as claimed by the inventor of the process Aloys Senefelder, "the cheap and easy way … every artist is enabled to multiply his original drawings"[27], and one that he was already familiar with from lithographic commissions in Berlin and in South Australia.[28] The series that he issued between c1855 and 1859 (most are undated) all relate to known paintings. The first to be noticed publicly, Scene

26 There were a surprising number of painters in Adelaide in the 1850s, and for a portrait painter there was the added competition of photographic 'likenesses', advertised for as little as 12/6.

27 Quoted in Roger Butler: Printed, v.1 p. 99. Penman and Galbraith set up as lithographic printers soon after arriving in Adelaide in December 1848 and between 1849 and 1851 had issued a range of works by S.T. Gill and other local artists, and there were a number of advertisements offering lithographic services, including by other immigrants from Germany.

28 A view of steamers at Swan Hill from a sketch by James Allen illustrating his account of the Lady Augusta's pioneering trip on the River Murray, a sketch of the Free Presbyterian Chalmers Church and [attributed] a portrait of the minister of that church, the Reverend John Gardner: his monogram also appears on the more substantial lithograph, The [South Australian] Company's Bridge. At least one (undated) portrait printed in Berlin signed 'Nat. gez. Alex. Schramm' is known but three others signed as drawn by 'Schramm' are, I believe, more likely to be by J.H. Schramm (1810-65), known at the time for his series of Portraits von Zeitgenossen.

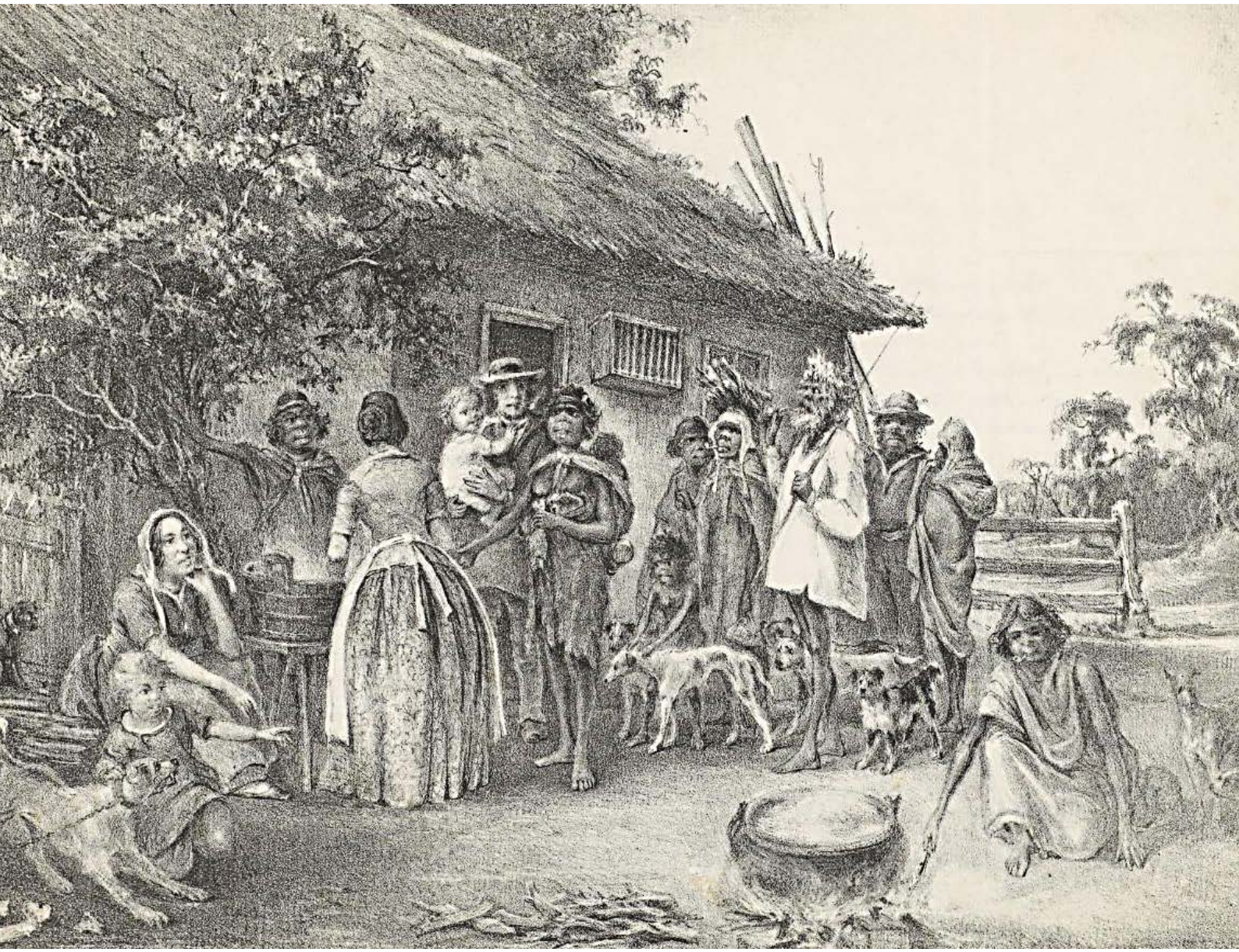

Fig. 10: A scene in South Australia, c1856

in South Australia (Fig. 10) appears in fact to have predated the closely related major oil Bush Visitors, for a challenge at the 1859 Society of Arts exhibition to the award of the prize for best original oil painting to Bush Visitors stated that it was a copy of a print "sold by all the print sellers in the town for this last four years" and exhibited by the frame-maker Culley in the Society's Exhibitions of 1857 and 1858.[29]

A second large lithograph, 'Native Encampment in South Australia', contains elements of Schramm's 1850 and 1854 'Encampments' in oils. It includes details like the woman idly playing marbles and the abandoned axe in the foreground and the glimpse of a river depression at the far right, while the grouping that forms the focus of the left of the lithograph is very close to that seen in the Native

29 South Australian Advertiser, 24 October 1859, South Australian Register, 24 October 1859, South Australian Weekly Chronicle, 29 October 1859. The copy acquired by the Art Gallery of South Australia in 1955 was on a newspaper backing with a partly visible date of 'Ju..1858'.

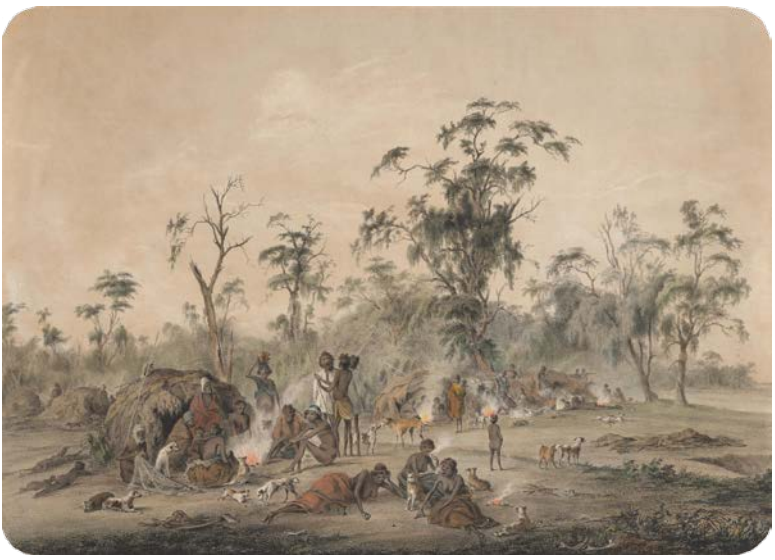

Fig. 11: Native encampment in South Australia

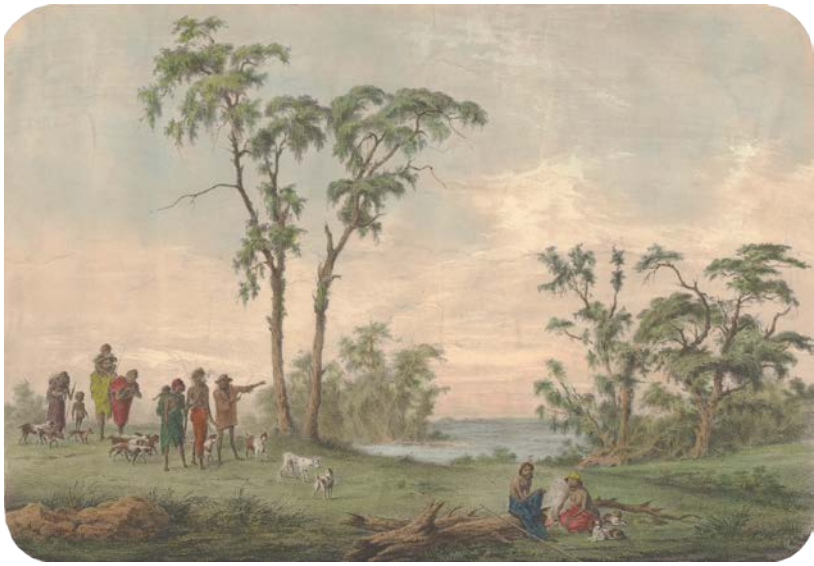

Fig. 12: South Australian natives on the tramp, c.1859

encampment oil sold in 2012 noted above (Fig. 11).[30] The companion piece 'South Australian natives on the tramp', depicts a 'travelling party' with their children, dogs, and possessions, who enter the scene from the left in an extended line, approaching a couple seated on a log on the foreground seemingly waiting for them to catch up (Fig. 12). The walking group is closely related to that seen in the painting 'Aborigines on a walkabout' (Fig. 7) although it is a departure in terms of composition, with the main group of figures concentrated on the left, and the centre opened up to create a broad landscape view. Elements from this or a similar scene appear in two further smaller lithographs, 'Natives on the tramp' and 'Halt by the Way', issued in an oval format and probably as part of a series of four

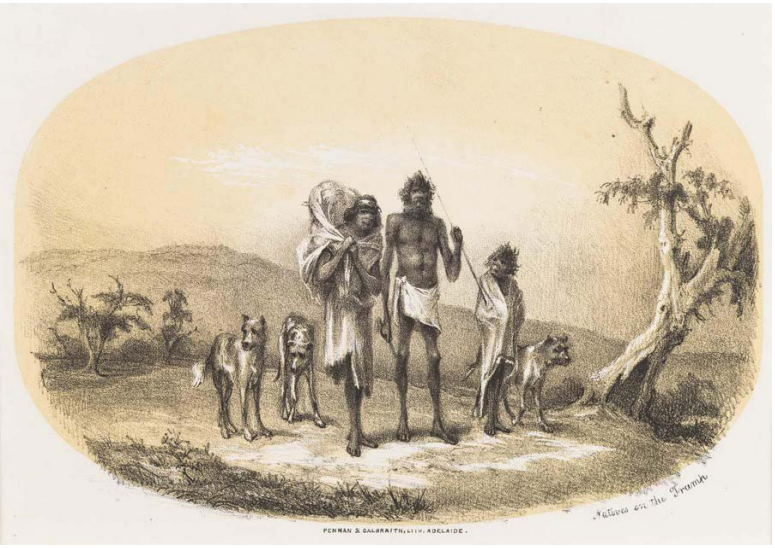

Fig. 13: Natives on the tramp, c.1859

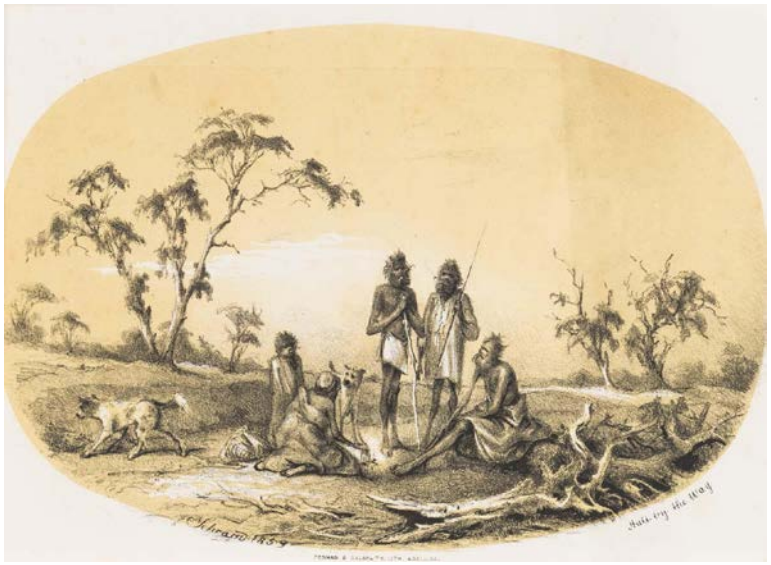

Fig. 14: Halt by the way, 1859

30 Undated and unsigned, this and Schramm's other lithographs have generally been dated as c.1859, the date of the signed and dated Halt by the way, though the emergence of a copy (National Gallery of Victoria Accession number 2016.60, collection work 118267) with the manuscript inscription 'S. A. Native Encampment 1854' suggested as in Schramm's own hand, has caused this to be questioned.

along with scenes entitled 'Civilisation versus nature' and 'Bushing it-Morning'. 'Natives on the tramp', showing a single couple and young boy with their three dogs (Fig. 13), is almost a vignette from the strung-out travelling party in 'South Australian natives on the tramp'. 'Halt by the way' (Fig. 14) is another aspect of this travelling group, here seen resting, in a scene again based on (or the basis for) the small watercolour subsequently entitled 'The encampment, Adelaide Plains', while 'Civilisation versus nature' is faithful to the 1859 painting of that name, in an almost identical setting to 'Halt by the Way'.

It is clear from these survivals and numerous contemporary references that Aboriginal people remained the focus of Schramm's oeuvre for at least the first decade of his life in Adelaide. It is less clear who they were, for Schramm never names any individuals or specific clan or language group in his titles. The only contemporary indication of the identity of the group who appear in 'Bush Visitors/Scene in South Australia' comes from David Liston's letter of 1858 (cited above), which specifically notes that:

> "The principal character is "Old King William." The Woman on his right his Lubra (i.e. Wife) the others his family – the whole Dogs included is true to life. "Old King William" is well known in Adelaide & is so named from his resemblance to that Monarch, he came to town every morning in a clean White Shirt and carried his spear, his hair White and gait stately, his Wife has a load on her head, some of the others at their backs, where one of the Women carries her Piccanini... In their rambles they are always accompanied by a large troop of hungry looking Dogs. The countenance of the "old King" is a little too severe – in begging he never takes less than a silver Sixpence, if less be offered, it is given to his Lubra or children".[31]

Members of this extended family group are seen in many of Schramm's surviving works but attempts to retrospectively identify them have been at best inconclusive, despite Liston's statement that "the characters are all Portraits, I know them all and can avouch for its correctness" and some other limited contemporary corroboration.[32] A King William as a brother or counterpart to Mullawillaburka (Encounter Bay John), who was commonly referred to as 'king' of the Encounter Bay tribe, is suggested in contemporary accounts of the Aboriginal tribes in the vicinity of the early colonial settlements and the native name Marroocha is given for William of Tandarnyungga (a district of the Adelaide tribe). However, only King John, Captain Jack and Tommy were recognised as leaders

31 Letter of David Liston to Robt. Hart, Adelaide 10 October 1858, as above. The name William bestowed upon those seen as 'chiefs' during the early years of the colony has been understood to be in parallel with (or in parody of) the name of the lately reigning English monarch William IV; although it seems equally to have been applied by Aboriginal people to settlers. (Peter Mühlhäusler: "Hermann Koeler's observations on South Australia in 1837 and 1838 in Peter Monteath: Germans; Nathaniel Hailes: Recollections, p. 31). Teichelmann and Schürmann's early work on the local Aboriginal languages records that Wilyaru/Willyaroo was the word for a fully initiated adult man; perhaps this, given in response to enquiry, was mistakenly taken as a specific name?

32 S.T. Gill's drawing of the rebuilt Trinity Church on North Terrace and Samuel Calvert's lithograph of the British Hotel at Port Adelaide, both dated c 1850, include a very similar shirted figure (in the latter carrying spears, smoking and wild haired), while a reference to Schramm's painting of 'a travelling party' when first exhibited noted the "fine hoary-headed chief of the aborigines who used a few years ago to visit Adelaide and its vicinity, and perhaps feasted on opossums on the site of the Institute long before the first white man stepped on Australian shores" (South Australian Register, 11 January 1859).

(elders) at the Governor's dinner to the 'Aborigines' in 1840 (where their traditional names were given as Mulla Wirra Burka, Kadlitpinna and Bukartiwillo), and King John was quoted subsequently as speaking on behalf of the Adelaide *and* Encounter Bay people.[33] Other Aboriginal men called 'Old Williamy' and 'Williamy' were noted in the local papers in the 1840s, occasionally favourably, but more commonly in court proceedings: a man named Williamy gaoled for a week in 1843 after threatening a servant with a spear after he refused a demand for a shilling; Mungorink(t) or Mungoringa, 'otherwise Williamy', charged for theft in May 1844, imprisoned for two months on the complaint that he had obstructed the door while four other men and a boy rifled a hut for food and stole a shilling, a pint pot and a spoon; King William, alias Targko Malaitya, 'a Gawler Town native' aged 29, charged in May 1844 with attempting to murder a shepherd at the station of J.B. Hughes.[34] The suggestions of aggression and group soliciting in these reports accord perhaps with Liston's description of the 'Scene in South Australia' lithograph and the visual narrative in the painting itself, but neither were described as always wearing a white shirt or reported as regularly begging.[35] Possible other contenders are the 'Old William' reported as one of the signatories along with (a later) King John to an address of welcome by 'the natives in and around Port Elliot' given to the Governor Sir Dominick Daly on his tour through the southern districts in December 1863, or the white-haired and bearded 'King [Billy] Poole' noted in 1867 as once 'king' and still a significant figure in relation to his people in the Encounter Bay area[36], though neither of these seems to have been residing principally in Adelaide in the 1850s.

33 C.G. Teichelmann and C.W. Schürmann: Outlines of a grammar, vocabulary and phraseology, of the Aboriginal language of South Australia spoken by the natives in and for some distance around Adelaide, pp. 4, 36; William Wyatt: Vocabulary of the Adelaide and Encounter Bay tribes and Some account of the manners and superstitions of the Adelaide and Encounter Bay Aboriginal tribes. In J.D. Woods, The native tribes of South Australia, pp. 179 f.; Rob Amery: Warrabana Kaurna! Reclaiming an Australian language; The Southern Australian, 26 May 1840 and South Australian Register, 30 May 1840, Adelaide Observer, 27 April 1844; Christine Lockwood in Peggy Brock and Tom Gara: Colonialism and its aftermath, pp. 69-85. An 'Old Williamy', together with Bob and Captain Jack, was reported in 1839 to have assisted settlers in fighting a fire and in pursuing a suspected (native) murderer, and "old blind Williamy" was noted among the mourners who "returned to their green encampments and commenced loud lamentations" after the execution in June 1839 of two Aboriginal men convicted of murder (South Australian Gazette, 11 May 1839, Southern Australian, 12 June 1839)

34 South Australian Register, 4 February 1843, 25 May, 1 June, and 3 July 1844; Southern Australian, 24 May, 2 and 9 July 1844; Adelaide Observer, 13 July 1844. Court reports are not a comprehensive record, for while begging was an infraction of regulations, it was not usually taken to court. (A.R. Pope: One law for all? Aboriginal people and criminal law in early South Australia, pp. 107, 182).

35 Philip Jones is inclined to associate King William with Targko Milaitye who, after release in 1847, served for a while as a court interpreter (Philip Jones: Bush Visitors, pp. 17 f.), but Liston's account does not make any reference to such notoriety. A recent article on Scene in South Australia/Bush Visitors, in the context of a discussion of illustrations of charity, suggests the central character might be the Tairmunda, alias Williamy, who was called as a witness to the murder of a young woman Watte Watte in 1853, although there is little in the court reports to identify him other than the brief descriptions "a venerable copper coloured native" and "of most wretched appearance" (South Australian Register, 11 May 1853; Stephen Graham: 'Open Doors' pp. 78 f.)

36 South Australian Register, 22 December 1863; photograph of the Poole family taken at Victor Harbor in 1867 (State Library of South Australia B26343)

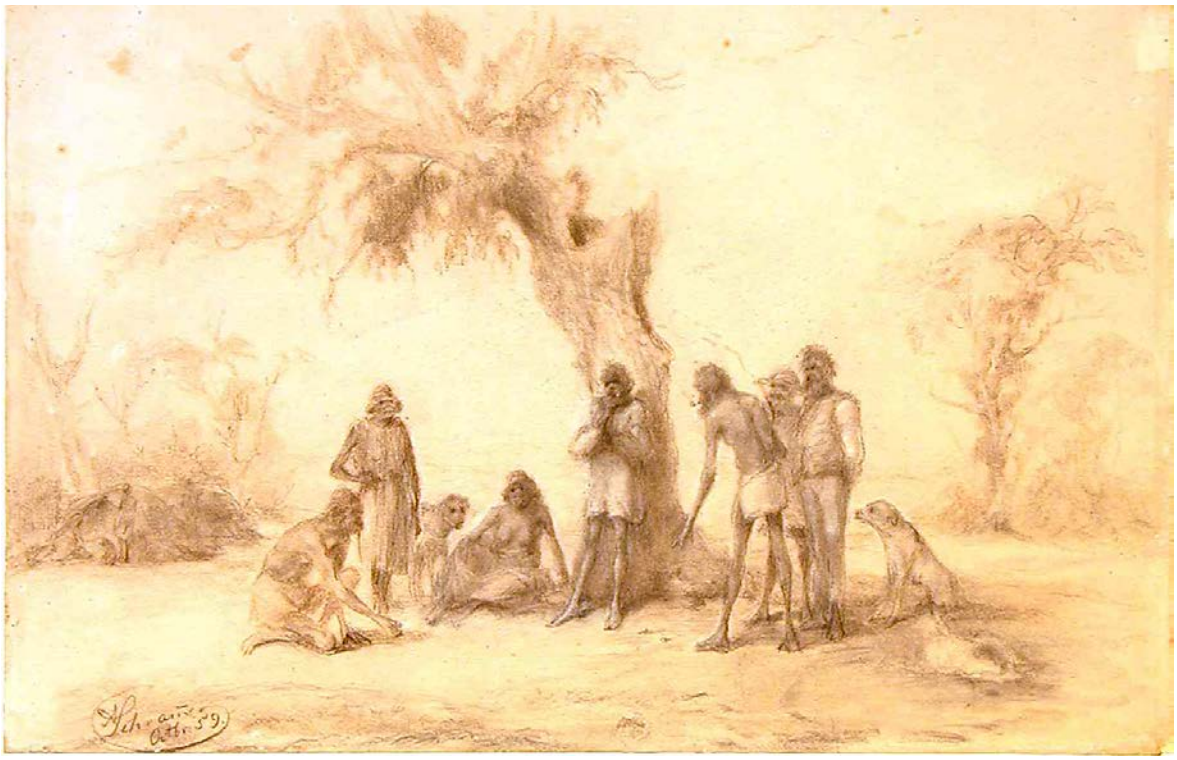

Fig. 15: [Sketch of Australian natives – A group of natives], 1859

It is moreover unclear whether this group were some of the few remaining members of the local Adelaide/Cowandilla people[37] or visitors from areas to the north, south-east or the Murray River. The numbers and camp configuration of Schramm's 1850 'Encampment' indicate a gathering of many language groups, part of the regular movements and fluidity of Aboriginal society that long preceded the attractions provided by blankets and rations though by this time undoubtedly influenced by these, especially in the winter. Schramm's attention to characteristic body forms, poses, and groupings is evident in the few drawings by him that have survived, as in 'A native standing with folded arms' and 'A group of natives' (Fig. 15). His representation of form, expression, behaviours,

37 Most contemporary references were to the Adelaide or Cowandilla(h) tribe, Kaurna (or Kaura) only being generally used much later (see review of Howitt's Native tribes in Adelaide Observer 31 December 1904 and report of talk by T. D. Campbell on "Aboriginal occupation of the Adelaide Plains" in Advertiser 26, August 1926). The existence of different "tribes" was well recognised: "Constant fights" in the Park Lands between the Moorunda or Big Murray tribe against the Ramung or Lower Murray and Encounter Bay tribes and with the Adelaide tribe, in consequence of the former (Murray) taking away the women of the Adelaide tribe, were reported from the earliest years of settlement, and there was evidence by the late 1840s that the Cowandilla or Adelaide natives had been already driven away, their wives and daughters seized on, and men killed by "'hordes of wild Murray and even Darling natives who at this moment infest out streets and who were never seen this side of the mountains before the whites came". As early as 1843, the Adelaide tribe were seen as "degraded"; six years later their numbers were diminished to the extent that it was accepted that "they will become extinct". In 1859 a report on the Aborigines of the Murray and Lake districts noted the (re)location of the 'remnant' of the Adelaide tribe from Port Adelaide to Willunga, and William Oldham noted with regret the extinction of the Adelaide tribe at a meeting of the Aborigines Friends Association in 1863; subsequent histories commonly noted the "now lost or defunct Adelaide or Cowandilla tribe". The meaning of the name Cowandilla was stated by pioneer colonist Mary Thomas as 'plenty of water' and as the indigenous name for Holdfast Bay or its adjacent plains (Mary Thomas: Experiences of a lady pioneer, as extracted in South Australian Register, 27 December 1886)

stances, and groupings was considered "truthful", the figures "faithfully delineated" and highly characteristic of the 'race' in reviews of his exhibition works. But while they are comparable with the representation in near-contemporary photographs and some earlier paintings, there is equally no record of the particular clans or language groups of the people in these other images to provide a benchmark.

Schramm left no record to indicate whether he had specific intentions in creating this body of work. Unlike George French Angas and William Cawthorne who had extensively sketched and painted the indigenous people of the colony in the previous decade, or fellow German immigrants William Blandowski, Gerard Krefft and Ludwig Becker who made studies of the indigenous people of Victoria in the 1850s, he seems to have had no intention of formally recording a dying race.[38] He would be noted in his obituary as having "devoted considerable attention to the study of Australian scenery, and the manners and customs of the aborigines".[39] But in his representations, Aboriginal people are the subject unto themselves, with no obvious documentary or didactic purpose. He left no

38 Angas's South Australia Illustrated was predicated on the understanding that the Aboriginal race would inevitably decline and undertaken "with the hope of preserving true and life-like records of men and scenes, so quickly passing away" (preface). William Cawthorne, who had been unusually closely associated with members of the local Adelaide people in the 1840s and had made numerous sketches to illustrate his own planned work about them, proposed in 1858 that a collection be made of images and artefacts "before the race disappears from off the face of the land" and in a public lecture in 1864 on the manners and customs of the Aborigines stated unequivocally that the people of whom he spoke were largely gone (South Australian Advertiser, 19 July 1858, Advertiser and Observer, 8 and 9 April 1864). The stated rationale for the images created William Blandowski – in his private travels and studies and on the government sponsored expedition to the Murray and Darling, he led in 1856 "for the purpose of making investigations on the natural history of that district" – was to document "the natives by whom we are at present surrounded and who are now fast dying out", accepting the "strange and unvarying law" that "causes the dark and savage races of mankind to dwindle and wither before the whiteman's civilization", "the outcome of processes beyond human control". Although 'Die Ureinwohner Australiens' were only part of a wider ambitious project conceived on the lines of Humboldt's Kosmos, in which indigenous people were intrinsically connected with the natural world and its flora and fauna, the sketches made by Gerard Krefft as Blandowski's assistant and artist to the 1856 expedition reflected the human interactions that were possible during the extended contact with the Nyeri Nyeri (Jarijari) people who provided many of the specimens. But he too believed that "Their days are numbered I think that in a very short time, like the inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land they will only live in the tradition of the colonists" (South Australian Register, 1 October 1856 and Goulburn Herald, 26 September 1857; Krefft journal, entry undated but likely February 1857; Harry Allen: Australia; articles by Harry Allen, T. A. Darragh, Hannelore and Marie Landsberg, John Kean and Jenny Nancarrow; Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll: Art in the time of colony and Imaging nation; Kerry Heckenberg: Shifting terrain, pp. 383). The Darmstadt-born Becker (who like Schramm had worked professionally as an artist for at least fifteen years prior to his arrival in Tasmania in 1851, mainly as a miniaturist portrait painter, and would continue this as a basic living in Australia) painted some sensitive portraits of individual Aboriginal people in Tasmania and Victoria but either on commission or with an ethnographic intent, while those made as artist on the Victorian Exploration (Burke and Wills) Expedition in 1860-61 were intended to illustrate dress and customs or individual physical characteristics. (Marjorie Tipping (ed.): Ludwig Becker, artist and naturalist with the Burke and Wills expedition; Marjorie Tipping: Ludwig Becker and Eugene von Guérard; Martin Edmond: The supply party; I. D. Clark and Fred Cahir (eds.): The Aboriginal story of Burke and Wills) Each of these is discussed in detail in Susan Woodburn: Alexander Schramm, pp. 131-142, 172-190.

39 South Australian Register, 25 January 1865.

written record of his attitudes to the people he depicted that might be compared with the images themselves. We do not know what preconceptions he might have brought with him, whether he was familiar with the writings on race of Johann Blumenbach[40] that placed the indigenous people of Australia at the lowest level of "human varieties".[41] But similar views permeated the promotional literature for prospective German emigrants to South Australia in the 1840s. Friedrich Gerstäcker's 1849 guide for emigrants to Australia concluded its account of the country's original inhabitants with the statement that "the end of this unfortunate race is, by the way, to be expected".[42] Quotes from emigrants' letters from the time of Pastor Kavel's arrival with the first significant group from Germany in 1838 generally described a people physically unprepossessing, without culture, good natured but lazy and importunate, petty thieves and harmless beggars already marginal in the developing colonial society, and destined to further decline and likely extinction as a race. The influence of Blumenbach's framework of conceptualisation and classification is evident in the vivid word picture by Carl Kaulvers, an emigrant in 1848 who published his own account on his return to Germany:

> "The natives of New Holland belong to the Papuan or Australian negroid (Australneger) race …are ugly in form, colour and features: because apart from the small, frail bony form, they have a flea-brown skin, wide round face with a flat nose, large mouth and thick long hair. This race of mankind will also scarcely last much longer, because cultivation is increasingly taking hold of the land in Australia and since they, as stated, are quite unreceptive to it, they will be displaced more and more".[43]

Had he been unaware of these perceptions before departure, Schramm would quickly have been confronted by similar widespread local views representing them as a 'doomed race' who might at best be given charity to ease their sufferings during their inevitable decline, a demoralised people who should be removed out of sight, whose presence engendered physical distaste, as reflected in Liston's comments on 'Scene in South Australia' ("the Men and Women but scantily clothed, you will notice their Arms and Legs are very thin and deficient of muscle, their hands and feet seem a grade between the Ourang Outang and a

40 J.F. Blumenbach, On the natural variety of mankind 1775 and De generis humanae varietate nativa, Göttingen, 1795. These views were much influenced by the widely published ethnological observations made by the naturalists Johann Reinhold Forster and his son Georg following their participation in James Cook's second voyage to the Pacific, with specific commentary on Aboriginal people of the Australian colonies also in Georg Forster's 'Neuholland und die brittische Kolonie in Botany-Bay' published in Allgemeines historisches Taschenbuch, oder Abriss der merkwürdigsten neuen Welt-Begebenheiten [1788?] quoted Leslie Bodi: Georg Forster, p. 358.

41 While not regarding them as separate species, in the comparison of societies in terms of the stage of advancement or culturation, with material development as the indicator of social progress, the peoples of New Holland and Van Diemen's Land were judged to "graduate away so insensibly towards the [lowest] Ethiopian variety that they may not unfairly be classed with them". J.F. Blumenbach: "Degeneration of the species" quoted E.C. Eze: Race and the Enlightenment, pp. 89 f..

42 Friedrich Gerstäcker: Nord and Süd-Australien. Ein Handbuch für Auswanderer, p. 170.

43 Letters of Pastor Kavel in South Australian News, May 1845; C.A. Sobels February 6, 1848, quoted in 'The emigrant to South Australia', p. 45; Michael Deutscher and Carl Ernst Kaulvers as translated in T.A. Darragh: Emigrants on the Alfred, pp. 39 and 57.

perfect human development") and in the description of a visit by amateur artist Edward Snell to sketch a family in their "hut' on the banks of the Torrens in 1849:

> "There was a double row of huts, perhaps 30 or 40 in all, built of bits of old matting. Tarpaulin, rags, bone, sticks, old shoes, grass, and in short everything they could pick up. The miserable wretches were squatted down inside many of them asleep, some of them ill and dying of disease, absolutely rotting away piece meal. Most of the women had their hair cut close off and their faces plastered round the eyes with white paint, their breasts hung down to their waists, they had great bellies all hanging in wrinkles, and miserable thin spindle legs, no calves whatever, their shoulders and breasts notched all over by way of ornament, and in short take them all together they were the most disgusting wretches I ever set eyes on, most of them quite naked. The men have large heads and shoulders, big bellies, and thin arms and legs. Great beards and monstrous heads of hair, some of their faces were smudged over with reddle and grease and many of them had their heads painted red".[44]

Schramm's representations do contain some suggestion of a similarly Eurocentric aesthetic: limbs elongated to the point of caricature[45], unshod feet resembling paws, wild hair. He painted no formal portraits of Aboriginal people — at least, no such portraits were entered in exhibitions, and no preliminary sketches for any such portraits have survived. Even in individuals shown in close-up there is not the intimacy of association seen in the well-known sketch 'Portrait of Dick the brave and gallant guide' by Ludwig Becker ("described as 'one of the most sympathetic portraits ever made of black by white")[46] and of other expedition guides. Often there is a vagueness or blurring to the faces that may owe something to the ephemeral nature of the encounter or hasty completion of a work (and perhaps later inept cleaning) yet stands in contrast to the clarity of the faces of the settlers in 'Bush Visitors' and the Gilbert family portrait of 1864. The "smudgy" and "ghostly" features of Schramm's subjects, criticised at the time[47] but little noted in subsequent art historical considerations other than Philip Jones's observations in his essay on 'Bush Visitors', were remarked by an anonymous visitor to the Art Gallery of South Australia who saw crudity and prejudice in Schramm's depiction of the facial features of what he/she called "the local Adelaide mob" in 'An Aboriginal encampment near the foothills' (Fig. 2) in stark contrast with his "cleverly adept" portraits of non-Aboriginals.[48] A number of works might also be seen to reinforce local perceptions and attitudes to the Aboriginal people depicted. 'Scene in South Australia' clearly shows a habit of soliciting. The focus

44 Snell diary entry for 30 November 1849 (Griffiths, Tom (ed.).: The life and adventures of Edward Snell, p. 50)

45 There was contemporary criticism that he made his figures too "leggy" and "lean", although this particular aspect of physiology is also evident in G.F. Angas's earlier illustrations of the [Ngarrindjeri] people sketched on visits to the Coorong and Lake Alexandrina region.

46 Geoffrey Dutton: White on black, p. 48. This portrait derives particular poignancy from the retrospective knowledge of the privations endured by the expedition and Becker's own death at the base camp at Bullo on 29 April 1861. For Ludwig Becker, see also the contribution by Wulf D. Hund and Stefanie Affeldt in this volume.

47 South Australian Register, 27 January, 6 February, and 7 December 1863; Advertiser 26 December 1863, South Australian Weekly Chronicle, 12 December 1863.

48 Philip Jones: Bush Visitors, pp. 16, 19; unsigned and undated note headed 'Schramm's sham: Aboriginal Encampment Adelaide' in Art Gallery of South Australia acquisition file AC2/15.

on the women seen carrying the family's possessions in South 'Australian Natives on the tramp' and 'Natives on the tramp' illustrates the (critical) observation that "when on a journey, they bear the baggage, and the men stalk before them, only carrying their spears and other weapons", made in published accounts of South Australia by George Wilkinson and others.[49] 'Civilisation versus nature' might have resonated as an apparent commentary on the natural "indolence" of the Aboriginal race, particularly during the ongoing debate on the policy of issuing rations as against encouraging industry by requiring labour in return for provisions. The general feeling of 'Native encampment', with its parched ground, trees with dead branches, crudely drawn groups showing little of the self-contained animation of Schramm's original camp painting, and bare-breasted pipe-smoking young women in a prominent group in the foreground, is dismal. It prompted a rare public comment, with an anonymous letter in the local newspaper taking issue with its depiction of "the peculiar animal development of this remarkable race, no doubt much better able to withstand the baleful influence of civilization upon their vital energies … seen, almost alive, roasting themselves at a tremendous fire…".[50]

It is perhaps such ambiguities, together with the absence of specific identification of the people depicted, that have made Schramm's representations of marginal interest and value to Aboriginal people today as a resource for biography and genealogy, as well as for more general historical and anthropological studies, and there has been only limited and muted recognition in publications and websites devoted to Indigenous representation in Australia.[51] Given the general climate in which he worked however, what is remarkable about Schramm's representations is not the occasional suggestions of exaggeration in the physical characteristics of individuals or distance from them but how little evidence they show that he had taken on board a negative view of the race in general. His artistic exploitation of his subjects is tempered by respect and an awareness of imposing unwanted attention that is quite distinct from the confident imposition of the artist's purpose seen in Robert Dowling's paintings of posed compliant groups, or the intrusive intimacy reflected in the frontally posed group of giggling young girls at Mondellimin by Gerard Krefft, and is in stark contrast with the arrogance of Edward Snell. His "bush visitors" may wear a motley assortment of dress and solicit from settlers but the impression is different from that of Eugene von Guérard (who noted in his diary seeing "poor creatures demoralised

49 George Blakiston Wilkinson: South Australia, p. 323 (1983 edition with extensive marginalia sketches of Aboriginal Australians by J.M. Skipper)

50 "Homo' in Advertiser, 26 September 1859 and South Australian Weekly, 1 October 1859.

51 Schramm's Adelaide, a tribe of natives was used to illustrate Rob Amery's case study of the Kaurna language with the somewhat open caption "the Kaurna people were allocated an area on the north bank of the Torrens River that was known as the Native Location. This painting shows an unusually large camp of people, probably in this area" (Rob Amery: Encoding new concepts in old languages, p. 39). Scene in South Australia (in the form of the smaller oil painting version) was used as the cover illustration for one of the pioneering studies of South Australian Aboriginal biography (Jane Simpson and Luise Hercus: History in portraits) but not discussed anywhere in the text. The 2005 sale of the 1850 Encampment was noted, with an image, in the Koori Mail 1 June 2005 but without comment on the painting itself or the people in it. None of Schramm's works were included in Perkins, Rachel and Marcia Langton: First Australians, an illustrated history.

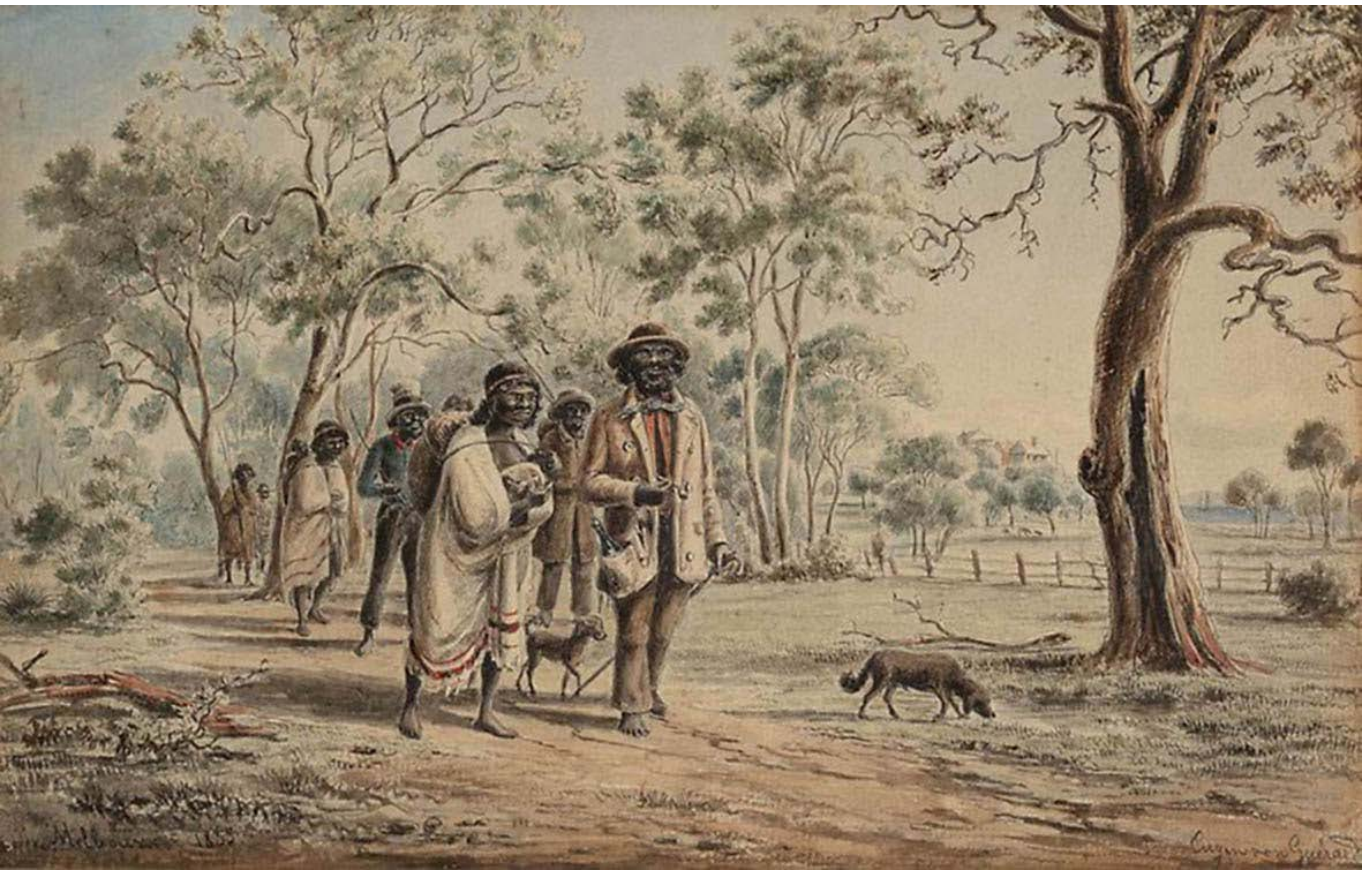

Fig. 16: Aborigines outside Melbourne, 1855

by the white man's influence … clad in the most ludicrous odds-and-ends of European wearing apparel, and nearly all in a drunken condition")[52] in his only representation of a group in a fringe setting. Here, in addition to the European dress of the men and the government-issue blankets worn by the women, von Guérard shows prominently a bottle in the jacket pocket of the leading man, while grazing animals and other indications of white settlement lie beyond the fence line which circumscribes the group's route (Fig. 16).

The distinctiveness of Schramm's focus on Aboriginal groups and the apparent absence of any overtly negative reference in his imagery have intrigued commentators since the initial research of Appleyard. Inevitably his nationality has been considered a contributing if not determining factor. Given that Schramm was thirty-five by the time he left Berlin and had spent his formative years in the cultural and political milieu of central Europe, he clearly arrived with artistic skills and predispositions and likely political and social views honed within that milieu, as well as formed personal attributes. It is difficult, however, to discern specifically European intellectual or aesthetic influences in his paintings. In contrast to von Guérard, there is limited pre-emigration work to compare stylistically, but there is little evidence of Humboldt's "grand theatre of nature" with its focus on dramatic geological and other natural features that has been demonstrated to have formed the landscape work of von Guérard both before and after

52 Eugene von Guérard, journal 1852-54, entry 16 March 1854.

he came to Australia[53] (and seen in Blandowski's Australia Terra Cognita plates of 1855 and later Australien compilation). It is also hard to detect in his "native scenes" any reflection of the specifically German Romantic "landscape of the soul" of Caspar David Friedrich and Karl Schinkel. In what is known of his life in South Australia, Schramm appears to have had no special relationship with other local immigrant European artists and artisans[54] or contact with the vigorous community of German artists and scientists in Melbourne, who recorded indigenous people in various ways, even though Blandowski and the engraver Frederick Grosse began their Australian sojourn in Adelaide and von Guérard visited twice. Similarly, while it is tempting to infer that Schramm's own minority status as a German in a British colony and apparent lack of integration into colonial society might have coloured his seemingly non-judgmental representations of the disenfranchised indigenous groups, there is little to suggest that Schramm saw himself as German in any defining way or was perceived as such. The single notice of him in the local Adelaide papers as a "German artist" during his lifetime was not in reference to his style or subjects and is countered by the more common contemporary reference to him as a colonial artist or "old colonist". He is not recorded as taking an active part in any of the national associations established in South Australia by fellow Princess Louise passengers or later arrivals, or to have been the subject of their continuing interest. Before his death, he was noted only once in the German language Süd-Australische Zeitung, for his painting Lake Hope — a notice that gave more attention to the prestige of having a work commissioned by a wealthy colonist than to the painting itself – while his obituary was no more intimate or informative than that in the English language newspapers, even though the Zeitung editor was then Carl Muecke, a fellow emigrant.[55]

For art curators and historians, discussion of Schramm's particular sensibility since the re-emergence of his works into the mainstream of critical consideration after a century of neglect[56] has been influenced by the environment in which this occurred, a very different one from that in which the works were originally made and received. This was a time of reassessment of Australian colonial history and art generally, in which both representations of Aboriginal people by

53 Ruth Pullin: Eugene von Guérard and the science of landscape painting, pp. 4 and 62 ff.; see also her article in this volume.

54 As Hermann Schrader, T.H.G. [Heinrich] Weisendanger (art master at the Deutsche Schule), Max Weidenbach (artist on the 1842/45 Lepsius expedition to Egypt supported by Humboldt, reported to have made collections of images of Aboriginals and artefacts while in South Australia, and a fellow competitor for the Society of Arts medal design), or the silversmiths Julius Schomburgk and Henry Steiner, who incorporated Aboriginal figures in their epergnes, candelabra and other decorative ware.

55 The only modification to a notice taken verbatim from the earlier Advertiser report was to record him as "the German painter, Herr Schramm" (Süd-Australische Zeitung, 18 November 1864, p. 5)

56 Such posthumous neglect was common to mid-nineteenth century colonial artists (Eugene von Guérard suffered a similar fate) due to changing expectations and tastes and a preference for the work of the late nineteenth century artists who were regarded as bringing to fruition a long sought distinctively 'Australian' school of painting, which recognised the particular quality of the landscape and reflected nationalist ambitions: this is discussed in more detail in Susan Woodburn: Alexander Schramm, pp. 194-220.

expedition and colonial artists and the acknowledgement or denial of an Aboriginal presence in landscape painting as a political issue, intrinsically linked with colonial settlement and the historical treatment of Aboriginal people, would be a significant part.[57] This revisionism was reinforced by the broader stream of post-colonial critical theory in which the idea of visual imagery as a struggle in representation, "a battle for the power to appear", would resonate. In this context, most attention was given to those works that illustrated "encounters" between Aboriginals and settlers, the more general "bush scenes" in which the subjects are solely Aboriginal people engendering less interest. Comment on 'Scene in South Australia' was divided. It was seen on the one hand as "easy social interchange", a work in which a group of natives are mingling with a family of settlers in "a very jolly fashion", showing two groups who are "clearly … comfortable with each other",[58] but more commonly, in the spirit of post-colonial understandings, has been regarded as reflecting the "occupation of the colonised landscape" and as reinforcing perceptions of Aboriginals as "dependent, dispossessed and figuratively marginal"[59]. 'Civilisation versus Nature' also evoked its share of responses more influenced by modern arguments than by investigation of its specific time and context or recognition of possible humorous intent. Interpretation embedded in post-colonial terminology and ideas had some difficulty fitting Schramm into their discourse[60] but in eschewing the stereotypes of (ig)noble savage or cultural disintegration and an absence of any clear "rhetorical stance"[61] Schramm

57 Ian Donaldson and Tamsin Donaldson, Seeing the first Australians, p. 15; Christopher Allen: Art in Australia, pp. 19 and 148; Nicholas Thomas: Possessions, pp. 91 f.; Terry Smith, 'Writing the history of Australian art: its past, present and possible future', Australian Journal of Art, 1983, 3, p. 3; Terry Smith, Transformations in Australian art: the nineteenth century, p. 54; Andrew Sayers, Australian art, p. 28. In the initial frenzy of critique there was some more nuanced commentary, as by Anne-Marie Willis ("… how they were imaged depended upon the circumstances of depiction; the artist's perception of the intended audience; and the genre and conventions within which the artist was working. Regularity is not even assured across the work of a single artist […] the conventions of each genre determine the appearances, rather than the artist's attitude towards the subject. In the more artistically self-conscious medium of oil painting (as opposed to sketches, lithography, engraving, press illustrations) the chosen aesthetic was even more over-determining") and later Ian McLean and David Hansen (Ann-Marie Willis, Illusions of identity: the art of nation, p. 104; Ian McLean 'Post colonial: return to sender' Australian Humanities Review, 12, December 1998; David Hansen: 'Seeing Truganini', Australian Book Review, May 2010).

58 Daniel Thomas: Aboriginal art, p. 2; John McDonald: Art of Australia, p. 169; Jane Hylton: South Australia Illustrated, p. 134. As reproduced in a heavily illustrated French history of Australia it had the caption "After an initial period of conflict, Whites and Aboriginals cohabited 'parfois sans heurts' as here in Australie Méridionale [sic] on a farm of German colonists" (Georges-Goulven Le Cam: L'Australie, p. 62).

59 It was in this spirit that Blandowski had much earlier included a copy of Schramm's lithograph in his Australien in 142 photographischen Abbildingungen, (unacknowledged and re-engraved) with the caption "Aborigines visit the colonists, help them cook, wash and carry wood in exchange for the paltry amount of one pound of flour daily" (Harry Allen (ed.): Australia, p. 43)

60 As Rod MacNeil, in the only work since Dutton to attempt a broad survey of the representation of Aboriginal people in colonial painting, who saw Schramm as "sympathetic" but his paintings as implicitly foregrounding "the occupation of the colonised landscape" (R.P. MacNeil: Blackedout, pp. 38, 133, 117); a later article by him placed Schramm rather ambiguously as among those artists "depicting the translocation of aboriginal people into the landscape" (Rod McNeil: Time after time,, p. 58)

61 "A point of view, or attitudes, which the picture conveys towards the images inscribed there" as discussed by Eric Michaels: 'A primer of restrictions on picture-taking in traditional

would be largely exempted from the damning revisionism visited upon many fellow colonial artists. The interpretation when two of his works were included in the first survey exhibition of 'The Australian Aborigine portrayed in art', held at the Art Gallery of South Australia in 1974, was that he had a "desire to document … the devastating impact of Europe settlement on the Aboriginal people of the Adelaide plains"[62]. Subsequent to that exhibition there has been a gradual and progressive lionisation (to some extent coloured by parochial or commercial motives), asserting that he "depicted the Aborigines with great sympathy at a time when their tribal life was being disrupted by the colonists" [with] "an empathy unique in Australian colonial art", with claims for his work as "important visual documentation of the processes of cultural destruction and assimilation in early South Australia", a comment or critique of the shattering impact of colonial attitudes and policies, with the wandering groups in parched landscapes and untidy camps deliberate evidence of dispossession, the dying trees intended as symbolic.[63]

A broad survey of Schramm's oeuvre between 1850 and 1859 does appear to reflect a significant diminution of the life of Aboriginal people around the settlement, the dwindling groups in apparent perpetual itinerancy, and the absence of the children suggesting Schramm's recognition of what was happening to them. His last major work, a composite portrait of the family of Thomas Gilbert on their estate at Pewsey Vale for which he spent some months making studies on site, included an Aboriginal man as groom as a significant element in the composition and a small camp with a number of shadowy figures around a fire on a distant hillside. While the groom might readily be explained within his commission, as a reference to Gilbert's renowned stable of racehorses, of which Schramm also made separate paintings (most other members of the family are also shown on horseback)[64] — there are parallels in Robert Dowling's 'Mrs Adolphus Sceales

areas of Aboriginal Australia', p. 197.

62 This exhibition had a specific intention to demonstrate "changing social attitudes" to Aboriginal Australians as reflected in visual representations and to redress what anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner in his Boyer lectures of 1968 had called "The Great Australian Silence about the Aborigines", with works selected within the framework of a new historical consciousness and acknowledgement of "the wrongs in the white settlement of Australia" and "the poor conditions in which the people represented were known to exist" (Geoffrey Dutton: The Australian Aborigine portrayed in art, pp. 35-41; Geoffrey Dutton: White on black, p. 74).

63 Tim Bonyhady: The colonial image, p. 54 and Images in opposition, p. 34; Ron Radford: Australia's forgotten painters, p. 95; Ron Radford and Jane Hylton: Australian colonial art 1800-1900, p. 116; Tracey Lock-Weir: Visions of Adelaide 1836-1886, p. 70; Philip Jones 'Alexander Schramm, A Scene in South Australia and Eugene von Guérard, Winter encampments in Wurlies...' p. 98; Janice Lally and Peter Monteath: 'Essentially South Australian', pp. 145-165; Jane Hylton: South Australia Illustrated, pp. 133 and 138; David Hansen (acknowledging Phillip Jones) in Sotheby's auction catalogue, Sydney, 8 May 2012; Philip Jones: Bush visitors; David Hansen: Another man's understanding, p. 116.

64 Recollections of Schramm's visit noted his "particularly good" animal studies and "some beautiful pictures of the racehorses" (The History of the Gilbert family of Abbaston Manor […] and Pewsey Vale, Lynedoch, South Australia, p. 134) as well as a rare personal anecdote relating Schramm's care of a young dog there. A contemporary review (Adelaide Observer, 4 June 1864, p. 4) noted the groom's presence only glancingly as among "some dependents grouped or disposed" across the work (these included the governess, also later painted out). He is not named in letters, but an undated photo of a group at Pewsey Vale includes an Aboriginal man identified as Charley Gaduggan.

with Black Jimmy on Merang Station' (1856) – it is possible to see the camp detail as a conscious intervention, referencing the marginalisation of the original inhabitants of the land. But was this, or any of his previous work, intended as a critique of the situation imposed on the indigenous people by expanding colonial settlement? Commentary some years after his death would state:

> "His love for his profession and the opportunity Australia gave him for studying nature in its new and varying forms induced him, to his serious loss, to abandon a more lucrative field in the Fatherland for a lengthened stay and untimely death at the antipodes, where his attainments as a painter of aboriginal life stamped his work as probably the most successful of all who have attempted that line up to the present time."

and that,

> "… small in stature, dark and somewhat retiring in disposition, he made but few intimates … lived … on the proceeds of his brush, often disposed of far beneath their real value, and died as he had lived – extremely poor."[65]

While these articles were generic in style and contained few details about Schramm (and some inaccuracies), they suggest that he had painterly rather than social intentions on arrival but that in the relatively young and unsophisticated settlement found a limited and competitive market for his work. After the first big paintings, there was a marked modification in his artistic ambition, much repetition in subject matter and work of uneven quality as his health declined. Rather than "empathy", his single-minded artistic focus on a limited group of people in a limited range of situations and locations may well reflect circumscribed opportunity to seek out new subjects during the years of "long and painful illness" referred to in his obituary[66] and his own artistic limitations.[67] Indeed, the impression of respectful distance and personal reticence conveyed by much of his work has been challenged by a recently emerged painting of a rather dashing figure on horseback conversing with an Aboriginal woman and child in a posture of ease and dominance, close to similar representations by his contemporaries S. T. Gill and J. M. Skipper, that has been claimed as a self-portrait (Fig. 17).[68]

65 South Australian Register, 5 February 1891 and 7 November 1898.

66 South Australian Register, 25 January 1865.

67 Lake Hope, a commission in 1862 from the wealthy pastoralist Thomas Elder for a painting of the John McKinlay expedition, based not on Schramm's own observation but a sketch by the expedition surveyor and draughtsman William Hodgkinson, was criticised for its perspective, proportion, lack of integrated composition, representation of water and oversize birds, the only praised feature being "the figures of the exploring party and the natives" (Advertiser, 27 March 1862, 27 January and 3 February 1863, South Australian Register, 30 January 1863, South Australian Weekly Chronicle, 7 February 1863)

68 Bushman, native woman and child (likely the work 'A Bushman and Native Woman and Child' shown by Schramm at the Society of Arts exhibition in October 1859 and the 'Horseman and aborigines' sent by a dealer to the Art Gallery of South Australia for valuation and information in 1995) was offered at the Elder Fine Art auction held in Adelaide on 18 November 2018 without this claim; the inscription 'Self portrait with Natives' was only revealed on the verso of the canvas under examination carried out at the request of the purchaser in 2019. There is clearly a casual familiarity in the encounter that, if the "bushman" indeed be Schramm himself, somewhat confounds the picture of distance and reserve formed from study of Schramm's other extant works, and further studies may extend and perhaps disturb received ideas about Schramm and his representations as more paintings emerge.

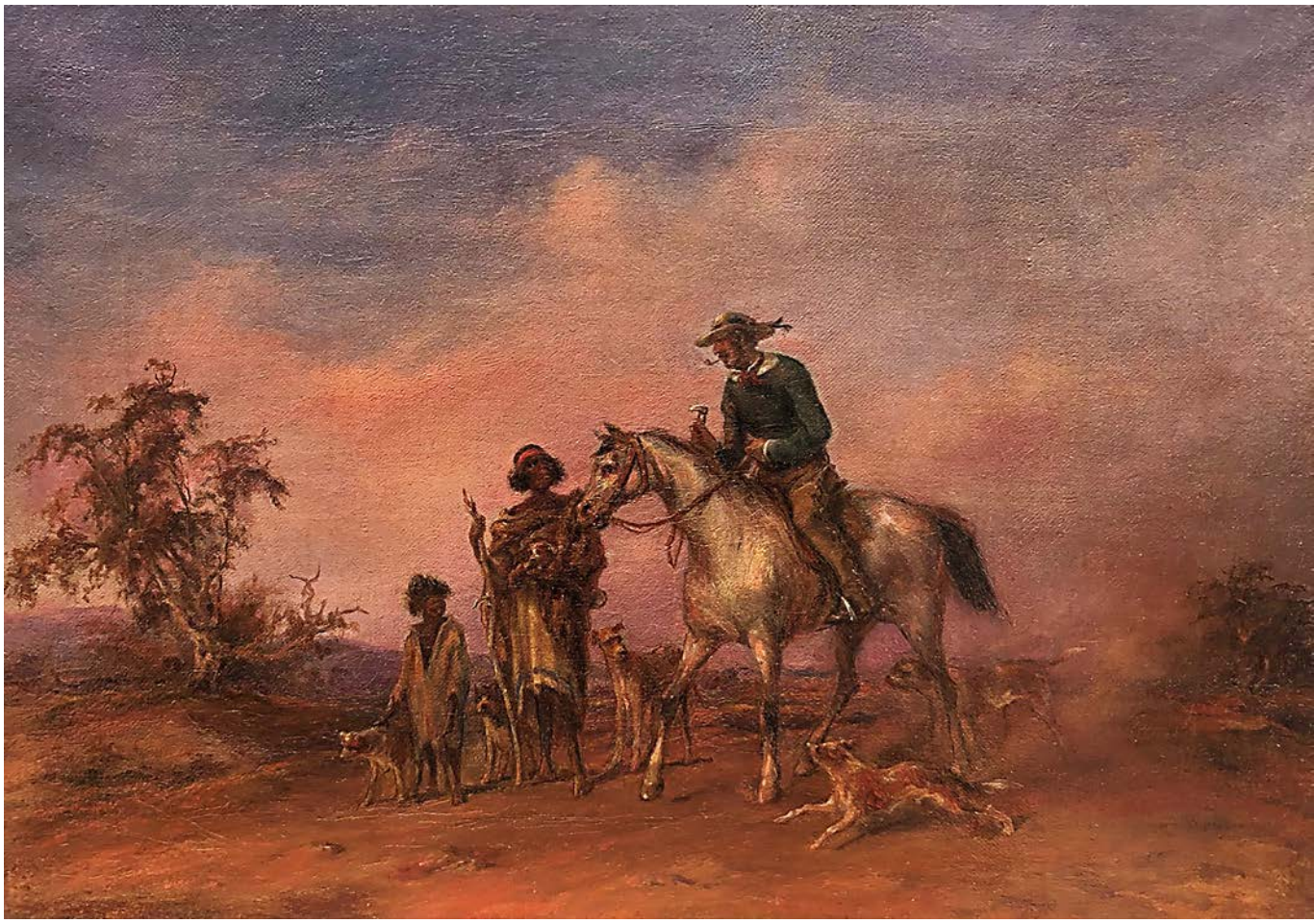

Fig. 17: Bushman, native woman and child, 1859

As others have noted, "While any image or object can be fitted into many historical discourses, it cannot be at the expense of the historical discourse within the image itself". Art historians "need to distinguish our motives from those of the artist" and consider works apart from "that consideration of art as symptoms of something else'", with its attendant danger of misrepresentation by selectivity and ahistorical political and social assumptions.[69] Yet mindful of this, and regardless of the continuing mystery of Schramm's intentions and the elements of ambiguity in his representations, in continuing to make Aboriginal people central to his work despite the declining enthusiasm for his "native scenes", Schramm contradicts assertions made subsequently of a universal and conscious artistic obliteration of Aboriginal people from the landscape of colonial art from the mid-nineteenth century and of the inevitable complicity of colonial artists in that invisibility.

More importantly, in making representations with an artistic integrity to what he saw, Schramm created images that both reflect the impact of the colonial settlement of South Australia on the local Indigenous people and recognise a resilience in their response and a continued existence under changed circumstances. The scenes of extended family groups maintaining travel and camp practices

69 Anthony Pagden: European encounters with the New World, pp. 183 f.: Ian Mclean: Figuring nature. painting the indigenous landscape, p. 122; Ian Burn: 'Is art history any use to artists', pp. 1, 6 and 13.

can be seen as evidence of the persistence of an Aboriginal presence at a time when concerns about soliciting, drunkenness, stealing and attitudes to regular employment were increasingly prompting official and unofficial attempts to remove them from living near or even visiting areas of colonial settlement and against the general expectations that the 'race' must inevitably die out. Rather than reflecting dispossession or cultural degradation, a false nostalgia or romanticisation, the Aboriginal people in Schramm's representations can be seen to be making adaptations and interactions that challenged static notions of Aboriginal identity and culture: fringe camps as "hybridised" spaces constituted in relation to white settlement[70], the expectation of 'hand-outs' a means of survival in return for the disruption of subsistence practices, the rejection of fixed abodes and work or the acceptance of service on a station like the groom at Pewsey Vale as evidence of choice and 'agency'. Despite the absence of individual identification of the Aboriginal people he depicted, Schramm's works leave a lasting legacy to them in his rare attestation of lives that continued though pushed to the periphery of colonial consciousness.

References

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70 Penelope Edmonds: The intimate, urbanising frontier, p. 144). Bob Reece, challenging the "powerful academic orthodoxy" of a general 'Aboriginal' identity and resistance to colonial settlement, made similar observations on the interactions of the Swan River people with early settlers, seen as characterised rather by "a series of accommodations and adjustments by people not basically hostile to European presence and aware of their ability to enforce their will by arms". Bob Reece: Inventing Aborigines, p. 22.

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This article draws largely on work undertaken for my thesis 'Alexander Schramm (1813-64) and the visual representation of Aboriginal people in mid-nineteenth century colonial Australia' (2017) and an unpublished paper "Acknowledging presence: Alexander Schramm's lithographs" presented at the November 2018 conference "Graphic Encounters: colonial prints and the inscription of indigeneity". The acknowledgement of the work of others in my thesis, especially that of Ron Appleyard and Philip Jones, applies equally here.

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