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*Unpacking the travel writers' baggage:  
imperial rhetoric in travel literature of Australia  
1813-1914*

Thesis submitted by  
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in December 2006

**For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the School of Humanities  
James Cook University**



***Wentworth Falls c.1830***

Augustus Earle 1793-1838

Oil on canvas 71.0 x 83.2 cm Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia and National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

**Source:** Elizabeth Johns, Andrew Sayers. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser with Amy Ellis, *New Worlds from Old: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Australian & American Landscapes*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1998, p.98.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research and writing of this thesis has been a journey. As a traveller nervously anticipates a journey so I embarked upon this thesis with some reservations, not the least of which was the amount of work involved to complete it to a satisfactory level. As I approach the end of this journey, I would like to acknowledge the following for their assistance along the way. Firstly, Dr Russell McGregor provided guidance in research, constructive criticism on earlier drafts and inserted the commas where they were missing in the final draft. Similarly, Dr Rosemary Dunn and Dr Janice Wegner offered critical comment on earlier drafts of some chapters. I would also like to thank Ron Store and Susan Coker, Managers of Thuringowa Library Services for their patience and understanding in allowing me to take leave to finalise this thesis. I would also like to acknowledge Ron's assistance in editing some chapters. Last but not least I acknowledge my family and friends, in particular, Geoff, Anna, Peder, Chris, Sandra, Heather, Chantal, Bronwyn and Nancy for their moral support and encouragement through the difficult days.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines imperial rhetoric in published accounts of travel in Australia during the period 1813 to 1914. Imperial rhetoric was a subtle persuasive device that utilised metaphor as well as ideologies and issues to encourage readers towards a particular view of the relationship between Britain and Australia. Published accounts by explorers and travellers provided a medium for imperial rhetoric, one which emphasised Australia's inherent Britishness and manifest loyalty to Britain. It conveyed the image of Australia as an integral part of a cohesive and progressive British Empire. However the texts also revealed an evolving and separate cultural identity but one that was built upon British cultural and political traditions. Fundamental to these images of Australia was imperial rhetoric that initially placed the unknown landscape within an established framework of progress, science and aesthetics and later celebrated the survival of British cultural traditions while acknowledging deviations. Explorers' published accounts were a way of claiming the land for the empire. Their narratives were infused with the land's economic benefits and potential for settlement, which they promoted to their readership through their discourse. Later travellers underlined the idea that the British Empire was unified and that Australia was a loyal, successful and prosperous member of that Empire. In both forms of travel literature ideology and contemporary issues operated as the framework upon which the travel writers built their understanding of Australia which once presented in their published accounts suggested and encouraged a supportive response from their audience.

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