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PART THREE: MAINTAINING THE CONNECTION

Imperial rhetoric and the literature of travel 1850-1914

Part three examines the imperial rhetoric contained in travel literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which worked to convey an image of Australia's connection to Britain and the empire. Through a literary approach that employed metaphors of family, travel writers established the perception of Australia's emotional and psychological ties to Britain and loyalty to the Empire. Contemporary theories about race, the environment and progress provided an intellectual context that founded travel writers' discussions about Australia and its physical links to Britain. For example, a fear of how degeneration of the Anglo-Saxon race would affect the future of the British Empire provided a background for travellers' observations of how the Anglo-Saxon race had adapted to the Australian environment. Environmental and biological determinism explained the appearance of Anglo-Australians, native-born Australians and the Australian type. While these descriptions of Australians were not always positive they emphasised the connection of Australians to Britain and the Empire. Fit and healthy Australians equated to a fit and healthy nation and a robust and prestigious empire. Travellers emphasised the importance of Australian women to this objective, as they were the moral guardians of the nation and the progenitors of the ensuing generation. Travellers also justified the dispossession of Aborigines based on racial theories. While the interaction of people and their environment preoccupied travellers' discussions, they also considered the adaptation of the Australian environment to British progress. A utilitarian view of the Australian environment moulded aesthetic appreciation with progress into a British form so that Australia was viewed as making an important contribution to the British Empire. Even discussions of environmental problems that resulted from British settlement could be considered in a positive light. Travellers perceived Australia's economic potential as limitless and adding prestige to the Empire. These ideas with a strong focus on environment are covered separately in the next five chapters.

Chapter Seven
Family Ties:
Imperial patriotism and metaphors of “home” and “family”

England’s greatness is too near to us at home to create sentiment; - but in the far Antipodes loyalty is the condition of the colonist’s mind. He is proud of England, though very generally angry with England because England will not do exactly what he wants. ... He does not like to be told that he is to be divided from her. He is in truth loyal. He always speaks of England as home.¹

Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, 1873.

The metaphors of “home” and “family” in travel literature evoked a powerful metaphysical bond that reminded readers of the cohesiveness of the British Empire. “Home” denoted a stable, structured environment that could be relied upon. Socialised as British and identifying with an Anglo-Saxon (sometimes Anglo-Celtic) heritage, Australians desired to belong to the imperial family. Metaphors of “home” and “family” are interwoven into travel literature of Australia and emphasised the Australian sense of belonging to Britain. Britain was “Home”, the secure place to and from which excursions were made. While home is a familial place, connected with family memories and places, it is also a cultural or political domain to which the individual is connected by ethnicity or political institutions. Although the use of these metaphors is not exclusive to travel literature of Australia, the choice of them by travel writers strengthened the imperial rhetoric in their narratives. They used home and familial metaphors to stimulate imperial patriotism and show the Empire as unified whilst also acknowledging Australia’s eventual self-determination.

Metaphors of “home” and “family” are used interchangeably in the travel literature covered here. Britain was “home” in the psyche of Australians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed Australian identity, both individual and collective, was connected to their psychological acceptance of this understanding. Bonds of birth, ancestry and tradition tied Australians to Britain and stimulated a pan-Britannic nationalism. The exposition of the concept of home by symbolic anthropologist Mary Douglas contributes to an understanding of Australia’s attachment to Britain. She suggests that the idea of home can transcend place, extending beyond physical boundaries, and can exist in an intangible sense, within the individual and the group and

¹ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p 54.

that it may only be visible in the maintenance of certain cultural, social and political practices.² This is the case with diasporas where communities have settled outside their native territory, real or imagined, but retain a strong loyalty to their place of origin based on cultural, political and religious ties. Robin Cohen, a sociologist, has identified differing forms of diaspora including the imperial diaspora which is particularly pertinent in the case of British migration to Australia. He defines an imperial diaspora as one that is

marked by continuing connection with the homeland, a deference to and imitation of its social and political institutions and a sense of forming part of a grand imperial design – whereby the group concerned assumes the self-image of a “chosen race” with a global mission.³

Such was the situation in Australia where the established British social and political institutions created a bond of loyalty and deference to Britain.

Home is a flexible term that can incorporate multiple locations. Steven Grosby asserts that the establishment of familiarity through “patterns of activity whose meaning is familiar to one” was important in the connection between the familial home and identification with a homeland.⁴ Both home and homeland are “where one’s life and one’s family is propagated, sustained and transmitted.”⁵ Grosby contends that as infants are familiarised with their immediate surrounds they also establish cognition of the wider concept of ‘homeland’ by being socialised into wider groups and allegiances.⁶ Home becomes then the locus of the accepted cultural, political and social norms of an individual or group; “home is here and there”, in Britain and Australia.⁷

Writing at a time when the British had withdrawn their soldiers from the colonies, Anthony Trollope observed Tasmanians to be particularly attached to Britain and appreciative of the security that emblems of British rule conveyed. He remarked:

There is with them all a love of home, – which word always means England, – that touches the heart of him who comes to them from the old country. “We

² Mary Douglas, “The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space”, *Social Research*, Vol.58, No.1, 1991, pp.288-290. Nigel Rapport, “The Topic of the Book” in N Rapport & A Dawson, *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement*, Oxford, 1998, pp 6-7. Steven Grosby, “Homeland”, in Athena S Leoussi (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*, New Brunswick, 2001, pp129-131.

³ Robin Cohen, *Global diasporas: An introduction*, London, 1999, p.67.

⁴ Steven Grosby, “Homeland”, p.130.

⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.130-131.

⁷ Rapport, “The Topic of the Book”, p.7.

do not want to be divided from you. Though we did in sort set up for ourselves, and though we do keep our own house, we still wish to be thought of by Great Britain as a child that is loved...”⁸

In this passage Trollope reinforced the image of the Tasmanians’ sense of belonging to Britain as “home”. He made the distinction between “house” and “home”, the former suggesting a mere place to reside, rather than the sense of belonging that “home” conveyed. The Tasmanian “house” had not yet become “home”. Trollope used the analogy of a child who looks to a parent for comfort to describe Tasmanians who maintained a dependence on Britain for their security.

This chapter examines the concept of imperial patriotism and how metaphors of “home” and “family” were used in its constructions. It analyses the imperial rhetoric contained in these metaphors and how travellers constructed the sense of belonging and loyalty as the collective response of Australians to Britain and the empire. It explores the use of these metaphors in travellers’ discussions of Australia’s evolving national sentiment and how Anglo-Saxonness and Anglo-Celtic ethnic nationalisms provided genealogical and psychological ties to Britain at the same time as cultural identity was undergoing transformation.

Imperial patriotism

In explaining how imperial rhetoric operated to stimulate imperial patriotism some elaboration of the ideological concept of patriotism is pertinent. Daniel Bar-Tal’s social psychological perspective on patriotism is relevant in providing the connection between metaphors of “home” and “family” and the loyalty of Australians to empire. For Bar-Tal, patriotism is

an attachment of group members towards their group and the country in which they reside. This attachment is reflected in beliefs and emotions that individuals hold.⁹

Attachment to groups is part of the normal socialisation process of individuals from childhood. The desire to belong to a group that is positively evaluated is important in providing the individual with a sense of security and in stimulating cooperative

⁸ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.520.

⁹ Daniel Bar-Tal, “Patriotism as Fundamental Beliefs of Group Members”, *Politics and the Individual*, Vol.3 No.2 1993, p.45.

behaviour.¹⁰ At a fundamental level, patriotism is distinguished by the interrelated nature of attachment to ethnographic group and affinity to place, even when a person is not resident in that place. Political changes or ideological shifts do not affect it. To the group, patriotism serves the functions of stimulating “unity, cohesiveness and mobilization”.¹¹

Imperial patriotism might be considered a form of pan-Britannic nationalism which united people of British origin throughout the world. It was the collective and learned response of the imperial diaspora to feelings of displacement and isolation when disconnected from Britain. Its foundation was a sense of belonging to an imagined community of Anglo-Saxon racial heritage which adhered to British traditions and institutions. In Australia, patriotism stimulated feelings of loyalty and belonging to Empire that joined differing ethnicities and impelled them to support, trust and defend the Empire. An identification with Britishness provided the glue for imperial patriotism. Genealogical ties were an understandable source of identification with Britishness as in the nineteenth century, many Australians still had ties to an extended family resident in Britain. While membership of the pan-Britannic group was characterised by genetic links to Britain, it was also imagined and based on feelings of psychological belonging to Britain. Furthermore these psychological bonds continued long after the “blood ties” weakened.¹² Britishness and Anglo-Saxonness came to define the imperial patriotism of Australians and infused Australian nationalism as it developed.¹³

In Australia in the late nineteenth century imperial patriotism was considered to be stronger than it was in Britain. As Anthony Trollope indicated in the epigraph at the beginning of the chapter imperial patriotism was greater at the peripheries than at the

¹⁰ Bar-Tal, “Patriotism as Fundamental Beliefs of Group Members”, p.48. Daniel Druckman, “Nationalism, Patriotism, and Group Loyalty: A Social Psychological Perspective”, *Mershon International Studies Review*, Vol.38, 1994, pp.44-45.

¹¹ Bar-Tal, “Patriotism as Fundamental Beliefs of Group Members”, p.45.

¹² Russell McGregor, “The Necessity of Britishness: ethno-cultural Roots of Australian Nationalism”, *Nations and Nationalism* Vol.12, No.3, 2006, pp.493-511. Neville Meaney, “Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography”, *Australian Historical Studies*, No.116, April 2001, pp.76-90. Walker Connor, “Beyond reason: the nature of the ethnonational bond”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.16, No.3, July 1993, pp.373-389. Peter Cochrane, “Britishness in Australia”, *Voices*, Vol.6, No.3, 1996-97, pp.63-74. Peter Cochrane, “Anglo-Saxonness: Ancestors and Identity”, *Communal/Plural: Journal of Transnational and Cross-cultural Studies*, Vol.4, 1994, pp.1-16.

¹³ British and Anglo-Saxon are often used interchangeably in the travel literature covered here. However Anglo-Saxon is at times used in discussions related to race.

centre. Implicit in his “England’s greatness is too near to us at home to create sentiment” was British complacency about the empire. It was not until subjects were physically alienated from Britain through relocation that their sense of belonging to the pan-Britannic group activated imperial patriotism.¹⁴ John Foster Fraser also commented that patriotic loyalty in Australia was greater than in Britain although he distinguished between loyalty to the empire and loyalty to Great Britain, noting that the majority of Australians were conscious of being an integral part of the British Empire.¹⁵ In the colonies the sense of belonging to the empire created loyalty and cohesion that fostered imperial prestige. In his recent work, *The Absent-minded Imperialists*, Bernard Porter has explored how imperialism was received in Britain and concludes that it was more important within the colonies than with the majority of British people. He argues that it did not involve large sections of the population in Britain but remained important mainly to the middle and ruling classes.¹⁶

In some instances travellers perceived contradictions in Australian loyalty, as if imperial patriotism and Australian nationalism were necessarily in tension. Fraser, who visited Australia in the early twentieth century, considered Australia was a “paradox”, patriotic to the empire but displaying the beginnings of national sentiment. He explained the strength of imperial patriotism as the result of the common British ancestry of Australians. It was the “warm and generous love for the Motherland” that explained the weakness of national spirit.¹⁷ He asserted that nationalist aspirations for independence were weak but would develop “out of Imperialism” when state rivalries were set aside and national ideals awakened.¹⁸ He predicted that “when the national tree blossoms, the crop of good will be enormous. For one of the things that has hampered Australia’s progress has been the absence of the national ideal.”¹⁹

Travel writers continually reminded readers of the “blood ties” between Australia and Britain, which evoked a sense of continued belonging to the imperial family. This form of imagery was significant as it established a psychological bond that lasted long after

¹⁴ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p 54.

¹⁵ John Foster Fraser, *Australia: the Making of a Nation*, London, 1910, pp.11-12, 18.

¹⁶ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain*, Oxford, 2004.

¹⁷ Fraser, *Australia: the Making of a Nation*, p.11-12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

settlers' attachment to Australia evolved, and the actual genetic ties to Britain had weakened. Writing ten years after Federation, Ernest Scott suggested the enduring nature of the emotional bond of Australians to Britain and the empire. Scott contended that the "average citizen of the Commonwealth troubles himself very little about Imperial affairs" but in times of crisis and spurred on by imperial rhetoric, the average citizen was enthusiastic and responsive to the Empire's need. Scott perceived Australia's response to the Empire as loyal "in a very real if vague fashion".²⁰ Advocates of Australian nationalism stressed the coexistence of Australian nationalism with imperial patriotism and maintained displays of pride in Australia's continued attachment to Britain and the empire, which varied from open public demonstrations of loyalty to personal expressions of connection to Britain. For example, the nationalist William Sowden, who advanced Australian national aspirations while remaining loyal to the British crown, praised the loyalty of Australians to Britain:

when the National Anthem is sung in any part of the Commonwealth, every mother's son among the audience, indoor and outdoor, wet or shine, hot or cold, doffs his hat, and remains thus uncovered until the last strains of the patriotic song have died away.²¹

The existence of imperial patriotism was understandable given familial ties to Britain through the number of British-born Australians. James Jupp estimates that in 1861 52% of the population were overseas-born settlers. Of these, 38.7% were born in Great Britain and 13.7% were born in Ireland. By 1901 only 13.1% of the population were born in Great Britain and 4.9% in Ireland.²² Despite the decline in the numbers of British-born settlers by the turn of the century, the majority of Australians still claimed British ancestry. In 1870, Anthony Trollope visited his son who had settled in Australia. He spoke from personal experience when he acknowledged the strength of familial ties in Australia, asserting, "We know that the Australians are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, as fully as though they still stood on English soil."²³ R.H. Horne insisted that genealogical ties should transcend disputes between Britain and Australia. He declared:

²⁰ Ernest Scott, "Australia and the Empire", *Round Table: A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Empire*, Vol.1, August 1911, pp.497-500, in J. Arnold, P. Spearitt and D. Walker (eds), *Out of Empire: The British Dominion of Australia*, Port Melbourne, 1993, p.21.

²¹ W. Sowden, "The Anglo-Australian Position from an Australian Point of View" in *An Australian Native's Standpoint: Addresses by Will. J. Sowden*, London, 1912, pp.62, 65-66.

²² James Jupp, *Immigration*, Sydney, 1991, pp.125, 127. Jupp's percentages for the population for 1861 are Aboriginal 13.4%, Native-born 34.6% and Overseas-born settlers 52%.

²³ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p 350.

Now, there is no need for any “true-born Briton” to be angry with any other native Briton, or with any natural descendant, for making the above remark on the simple question of the size and condition of a piece of earth. Is it not rather a cause for the self-gratulation and sympathy of England, that men who are not merely descended from her race, but the majority of whom are actually of present flesh-and-blood relationship, have furnished an additional example of the energies of her nature, and established, within a few years, a progressive and loyal colony – the richest of all her foreign possessions – at the very antipodes of her maternal fields?”²⁴

In Horne’s imperial rhetoric, it was the English-born settlers who were advancing the Australian colonies as an integral part of the British Empire. These settlers were part of the imperial family and displayed the vigour and progressive spirit of their British forebears.

Through imagery that evoked a sense of belonging to not just an immediate family in Britain but a wider imperial family travel writers reinforced an image of Australian loyalty to Britain and the empire. In developing this imagery metaphors were a powerful textual device that strengthened the travellers’ imperial rhetoric of Australia’s relationship with Britain.

The use of metaphor

When the metaphor of “mother” was used in travel literature, Britain became mother and the colonies of settlement were the offspring. The words “home” and “mother” are both symbolic of origin and belonging. The “mother” metaphor signified the reproductive role of the centre and created a means of group belonging and unification in the colonies. Queen Victoria provided the personification of the “mother” image. The image constructed of her was comparable to the image of mother in a Victorian middle class family where the female role “was biological and spiritual, dedicated to the production and rearing of healthy children, the support of men and the guardianship of ... spiritual and moral values”.²⁵ Queen Victoria’s fecundity and maternal capabilities were unquestionable as she had given birth to nine children. She was perceived as the reproductive centre of an imagined imperial family. In later life, she took pleasure in the image of herself as the imperial mother of 398 million subjects.²⁶ The outpourings of grief in Australia upon her death in 1901 were likened to the loss of one’s own

²⁴ R.H. Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospects*, London, 1859, p.100.

²⁵ Mackay & Thane, “The Englishwoman”, p.192.

²⁶ Gavin Souter, *Lion and Kangaroo: The Initiation of Australia*, Melbourne, 2000, p 50.

mother, a mother who had nurtured and guided a daughter, Australia, throughout her growth from the infancy of colonial self-government through to adulthood and Federation.²⁷ However, the construction of a mother image at the head of empire contrasts with the paternalism of Britain's administration. John Hirst has suggested that the image of the monarchy in Australia was less associated with political power and more concerned with generating a feeling of support, belonging and security in the colonies.²⁸ Indeed, Queen Victoria may be perceived as the feminine counterpart to Westminster's patriarchal management of the imperial family.

Even the American traveller, Mark Twain was familiar with the use of the "mother" and "daughter" metaphors to portray the relationship between an imperial power and its colonies. In *Following the Equator*, published in 1897, Twain adopted the metaphors to reveal Australia's relationship with Britain. By this time England was characterised as the aging and frail mother, not unlike Queen Victoria herself, and Australia was the daughter fast approaching adulthood and independence. Twain was touched by the habit of Australians talking about England as "mother":

It was always pretty to hear it, and often it was said in an unconsciously caressing way that made it touching; in a way which transmuted a sentiment into an embodiment, and made one seem to see Australasia as a young girl stroking mother England's old gray head.²⁹

Twain supported the recurring maternal theme in travel literature, which accentuated the Australians' bond of common origin and their sense of familial belonging to Britain.

Just as family relationships are intricate and there are times of disagreement and discontent, so too travellers perceived tensions in Australia's relationship with Britain. Occasionally, commentators perceived the relationship between Britain and Australia as one-sided. Britain, as the parent, provided guidance and the material resources that nurtured the colonies. However, some saw little reciprocation from its Australian children. Charles Dilke portrayed the Australian colonies as selfish children, stating: "When a Briton takes a survey of the colonies, he finds much matter for surprise in the one-sided nature of the partnership which exists between the mother and daughter

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 52-3.

²⁸ J. B. Hirst, *The Strange Birth of Colonial Democracy: New South Wales 1848-1884*, North Sydney, 1988, pp 78-79.

²⁹ Mark Twain, *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World.*, Vol 1, New York, 1897, p.130.

lands.”³⁰ He was referring specifically to the one-sided nature of Britain’s defence of Australia. The defensive arrangements were funded by British taxes levied on British citizens at a time of increasing population and mounting individual poverty, while the colonies contributed little.

The Australian commentator Frank Fox perceived Australia as a loyal but spoilt child. Australia was the problem child of the imperial family, “an indulged, an unruly, and yet a warm-hearted and generous child.” He continued:

The unruliness and waywardness of Australia at various epochs of her relations with the Mother-country would, if they were considered separately, probably suggest a rebellious and ungrateful nature. When they are considered side by side with the magnificent expressions of loyal affection evoked at times of crisis, they give the truer picture of a community sound at heart, Anglo-Celtic in temperament, with some of the faults of a race always impatient of any outside control a little accentuated by the free-and-easy conditions of Australian life; but with all the virtues of the stock in robust growth.³¹

Fox considered Australia’s rebellious behaviour as a sign of the “genesis of Australian nationalism, which was always intensely British in its intolerance of outside interference and which had always a note of enterprise and courage”.³² He used the family metaphor to suggest that the character of Australian nationalism exhibited traits inherited from its British parents. Furthermore, he believed that the development of Australian nationalism did not preclude imperial patriotism, but that the two were mutually supportive.

However, not all images of mother were positive and nurturing. W.J. Sowden of the Australian Natives Association reproached Britain for the stigma acquired from Australia’s convict origins. He asserted that Australia was “born in obloquy and bred in contemptuous neglect”, the dumping ground for Britain’s convicts. His statement demonstrated the moral attitudes of the late nineteenth century, implying that Australia was born of a promiscuous mother, an illegitimate child of Britain but one who had overcome the shame and “the stigma of the birthstain”.³³ Nevertheless, even while

³⁰ Charles Dilke, *Greater Britain*, Geoffrey Blainey (ed.), North Ryde, 1985, (1869), p.142.

³¹ Percy F Spence and Frank Fox, *Australia*, London, 1910, p 205.

³² *Ibid.*, p 207.

³³ Sowden, “The Anglo-Australian Position from an Australian Point of View”, in *An Australian Native’s Standpoint*, p 96.

condemning Britain's moral lapses, Sowden conceded there was still a feeling of belonging to the imperial family; Australians were the "loyal sons of the Empire".³⁴

The mid-nineteenth century was the beginning of a period of prosperity and security for Britain. Relinquishing the empire became a focus for political debate but such debates did not envisage the loss of loyalty to Britain in the settler colonies. From the 1840s and 1850s Gladstone and his fellow liberals followed a policy of "freedom and voluntaryism", by which the settler colonies were largely self-governing but remained voluntarily bound to Britain and the empire by ties of loyalty and kinship. By the 1860s Conservative Party members were advocating a more centralised empire: a unified entity which strengthened the monarchy and reinforced a feeling of imperial patriotism. This did not mean that the Conservatives opposed self-government, but that they advocated colonial self-government within an imperial federation. Britain's paternalistic approach to the governance of its colonies established cohesion and thereby sustained their global position. Its policies emphasised familial concern, which guided development but also used force when necessary. Central to British imperial administration was its educative role, to lead its possessions towards a more advanced stage, at which point the colony would qualify for some form of self-government. Metaphors of family were apt in discussions of colonial self-determination, as colonial development, like child rearing, was a lengthy process by which the colony developed through stages at the guidance of its imperial parent.³⁵

Travellers also used other metaphors that described the Australian colonies as "young", "youthful", "new", or as "offshoots", "leaves" or "branches" of a long-established tree to create a vivid image of British nurturance. Contributing to this impression of British concern and guidance was the use of possessive pronouns by travel writers which implied British authority. Travel writers used the metaphors of development to accentuate the familial bond between the Australian colonies and Britain. In so doing a strong genetic connection was established and any praise of Australian achievements could be interpreted as British self-glorification through the empire's accomplishments.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 96-7.

³⁵ Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study of Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*, Chicago, 1999, pp 11,198-200.

Anthony Trollope likened the establishment of the British colonies of settlement to swarming bees:

Our people are going out from us, as bees do, - not that the old hive is deserted, but that new hives are wanted for new swarms. For a while it is our duty to take some care of these new homes. The most populous [United States] has long been freed from our control and our protection, and is successful. To say that the others also will be freed is only to say they also will be successful.³⁶

Frank Fowler used the metaphor of the English rose, a cutting of which was transplanted in a tropical location, to create an image of British nurturance of its colonial possessions:

...it must be interesting to watch the progress of free English institutions in a distant country – to see how the Red Rose blooms in tropic soil – to learn how this fine young colony of ours has built up and strengthened her constitutional edifices, so as to confer the greatest amount of freedom on her people, without recourse ever being had to the extreme measures resorted to by America before a similar system of political emancipation was obtained, and like conditions of prosperity secured.³⁷

In both examples parental responsibility was accepted. Britain nurtured its possessions until such time as they could be self-governing. Their ancestry assured the success of the colonies.

During the process of development the child/colonies would mature through life experiences which were “as certain as the disorders of childhood”.³⁸ Such trials, James Froude stated, were fundamental to gaining wisdom and understanding as:

Nations cannot mature, any more than each individual of us, without having their school lessons drilled into them by painful processes, *ἐν πάθει μαθεῖν* is the law of human progress, from the growth of the schoolboy to the growth of the largest community.”³⁹

He predicted that Australians would serve a successful apprenticeship as they were of “English blood”, while the familial ties that bound Australia and Britain would continue to strengthen.⁴⁰ Using metaphors of biological maturation, and looking towards the Federation of the Australian colonies, Anthony Trollope maintained:

³⁶ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.58

³⁷ Frank Fowler, *Southern Lights and Shadows: being brief notes of three years' experience of social, literary and political life in Australia*, London, 1859, p.60.

³⁸ J. A. Froude, *Oceana or England and her Colonies*, London, 1892, p.185.

³⁹ *Ibid*, Greek – Approximate English translation “From experience comes knowledge”

⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

As Australia becomes older, and as the number of her leading children who are Australian-born becomes greater, as the tendency to lean upon the mother country becomes slighter, the feeling for the newer patriotism will grow up; and with the feeling of Australian pride will grow the conviction that Australia, to be great and strong, should be one.⁴¹

At times the roles were reversed and the Australian colonies appear to have been nurturing Britain. Froude asserted, “The life of a nation, like the life of a tree, is in its extremities. The leaves are the lungs through which the tree breathes, and the feeders which gather its nutriment out of the atmosphere.”⁴² Recognising a more symbiotic relationship Trollope considered that British success was inseparable from the progress of its colonies stating that “The one may be consequent on the other. The greatness of the nation may be perpetuated by the strength of her off-shoots.”⁴³

These metaphors, which evoked a sense of origin, were used by travellers to establish Australia’s connection to Britain. The maintenance of this connection, as well as those with its other colonies, was imperative to preserving the strength of the British Empire. In their imperial rhetoric travellers noted fervent imperial patriotism in Australia but they also considered the presence of an evolving national spirit. Mostly travel writers saw the two as coexistent.

Ethnicity

The familial bond demonstrated by metaphors of mother/daughter or tree/leaves was extended to encompass the connection to an Anglo-Saxon heritage. Anglo-Saxon ancestry explained Britain’s global pre-eminence and inherent superiority, and justified further imperial expansion. Britain believed strongly that the creation of a homogeneous empire characterised by common origin, customs and institutions stimulated cohesion and loyalty over a vast geographic area.⁴⁴ By identifying the ancestry of Australians as ancient Briton or Anglo-Saxon, a heritage that accounted for the character of the people and the potential for the colonies to progress, travel writers not only made Australians an integral part of the imperial process, but also affirmed their allegiance. It was because of an historic link to an ancient British past that

⁴¹ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p 352.

⁴² Froude, *Oceana*, p 334.

⁴³ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.60.

⁴⁴ Cochrane “Anglo-Saxonness: Ancestors and Identity”, p 4. Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, St. Leonards, 1981, p.47.

Australia thrived. It developed a bond that joined individuals in a perception of common origin. Cochrane writes that Anglo-Saxonness carried

its own, distinctive connotations which marked out identity through difference and anchored all sorts of claims to virtue, achievement and destiny deep in history.⁴⁵

Nonetheless, this Anglo-Saxonness was in the people's perception of themselves rather than in the reality of their ancestry. Walker Connor, in his discussion of the nature of the ethnonational bond, states that

it is not *what is* but *what people perceive as is* which influences attitudes and behaviour. A subconscious belief in the group's separate origin and evolution is an important ingredient of national psychology.⁴⁶

At the foundation of Britain's global prominence was a belief in its racial superiority, substantiated by the elaboration of evolutionary ideas which suggested that some races were more fitted to survive and advance than others. Expressing a view that reflected evolutionary ideas, Charles Dilke described the character types in the British colonies of settlement:

The type of the Anglo-Saxon of the future, growing up in Canada, and in South Africa, and in Australia, may not be everywhere the same: the South African English are browner than the Canadians; the Australians taller and more given to outdoor sport; but essentially the race continues everywhere to be ours, differentiated from the people of the old country and from the Americans of the United States by a healthier cheerfulness of life.⁴⁷

Anglo-Saxon heritage explained the success of Britain and was the foundation for a faith in a progressive civilisation in Australia. The Canadian traveller Gilbert Parker declared:

Against all dangers that beset Australian life there may, therefore, be seen the element of a great activity – the latent strength and the conquering faculty of the Anglo-Saxon race.⁴⁸

It was the Anglo-Saxon traits of strength and love of freedom, confirmed in history, that gave Australians the ability to overcome difficulties and control their environment. Such statements encouraged further emigration to Australia at a time when the British population was growing and poverty was increasing. In the mid-nineteenth century, Frank Fowler predicted that Australia would attract immigrants

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁴⁶ Connor, "Beyond reason: the nature of the ethnonational bond", p.376.

⁴⁷ Charles Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain*, London, 1890, p 696.

⁴⁸ Parker, *Round the Compass in Australia*, p 142.

and would become “the noblest monument of Saxon rule and enterprise, and one of the greatest marvels of modern progressive civilization”.⁴⁹ By the late nineteenth century Australia was considered invaluable to Britain as the “recipients of [Britain’s] redundant population” and, indeed, it was conceived by Anthony Trollope to be the British mission to “populate such lands”.⁵⁰ Other travellers believed that the British race was provided by God to undertake His work on earth. The American Reverend Francis Clark asserted that the Englishman was “a mighty and potent factor in the world’s civilisation wherever he settled”.⁵¹ He avowed, “If ever there was a providential race raised up of God to do a particular work in the world and exert a mighty civilizing agency, that race is the Anglo Saxon.”⁵² At the heart of the travellers’ rhetoric of empire was their belief that the strength of the British Empire lay in its Anglo-Saxon racial origin. This racial origin could account for the success of British progress.

Part of the Enlightenment theory of social and economic progress was the pattern of the rise and fall of empires. It was believed to follow a westward progression from ancient Greece to Augustan Rome to England.⁵³ Anglo-Saxonness was linked to the rise of the British Empire and, due to their ancestry, the Australian colonies would develop into a form of England’s greatness in the southern hemisphere. Some travel writers believed that the transplantation of Anglo-Saxonness in Australia would alleviate the seeming decay of Britain. J.A. Froude declared:

Amidst the uncertainties which are gathering round us at home – a future so obscure that the wisest men will least venture a conjecture what that future will be, it is something to have seen with our own eyes that there are other Englands besides the old one, where the race is thriving with all its ancient characteristics.⁵⁴

The character traits of Anglo-Saxonness were often synthesised with the legacies of ancient Greece and Rome. Gilbert Parker included a proem to his account, which predicted a return to an ancient past, and foresaw the establishment of a civilisation in Australia that would rival the glories of ancient Greece and Rome. He concluded the proem with a prediction that

⁴⁹ Fowler, *Southern Lights and Shadows*, p. .65.

⁵⁰ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p 744.

⁵¹ Clark, *Our Journey around the World*, p76.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.76.

⁵³ Dixon, *The Course of Empire*.

⁵⁴ Froude, *Oceana*, p 15.

...The New South rising with her forehead bare –
Her forehead bare to meet the smiling sun –
Australia, in her radiant panoply;
And far-off kingdoms see her work begun,
And her large hope has compassed every sea.⁵⁵

Parker saw Australia as a “young, valorous, buoyant country, a robust and progressive civilisation, which [was] reviving in these latter days the glory and the puissance of a decayed South [classical civilisation].”⁵⁶

Others took this idea further, developing a grander vision of progress with Australia as the actual centre of the British Empire. In 1859, travel writer R.H. Horne’s vision extended beyond mere dependent colony status, anticipating:

Here, amidst the Australasian and Austral-Indian group, compact in feeling and action, being cemented by a Federal Union, would be a fair scene to which you might shift the seat of empire; ...and renew the youth and the domain, of old England.⁵⁷

The child, Australia, would become the parent, the reproductive centre of empire. Horne linked human development with progress, and predicted a new cycle of progress in the Australian region. While Anglo-Saxonness was perceived as the foundation stone upon which the success of Australia and the British Empire had been built, the reality of their ancestry was more diverse. In their imperial rhetoric travel writers found ways to explain the attachment of some Australians to regional ethnicities.

From the travel literature covered here, travel writers perceived the ethnic nationalisms that existed in Britain as diluted in the colonial setting. They considered that the blending of Anglo-Celtic groups through closer association established a strong British patriotism, displayed in an emotional attachment to, and participation in, the British Empire that transcended the attachment to ethnonational group. Even the Irish became more British whilst retaining some of the spirit of Irish national sentiment. The Irish politician Michael Davitt wrote:

I found my countrymen, as a rule, sharers in this general sentiment of Australian attachment to the empire. I noticed in many houses I entered in my tour, particularly those of Catholic clergymen, the picture of the Queen; but almost always flanked by that of Mr Gladstone, and, not unfrequently, by either Mr

⁵⁵ Parker, *Round the Compass in Australia*, p 1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p 143.

⁵⁷ Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospect*, p 219.

Parnell, Mr Dillon, or Mr William O'Brien – a somewhat incongruous association. On almost all public or semi-public occasions they likewise drink Her Majesty's health.⁵⁸

Here the two forces of imperial patriotism and ethnic nationalism coexisted. The Catholic clergymen demonstrated loyalty to the British Empire in the display of the icons of Empire; the British Queen and Home Rule advocate William Gladstone alongside those of Irish nationalists Charles Parnell, John Dillon and William O'Brien.

Welsh migrants also have been recognised as maintaining the distinctive elements of their ethnicity that set them apart from English migrants. Aled Jones and Bill Jones in their exploration of the Welsh diaspora note that large Welsh communities developed in Victoria during the gold rushes of the mid-nineteenth century. Their ethnic nationalism took the form of maintaining “Welsh-language religious and cultural life in Australia into the 1870s and beyond”.⁵⁹ While they retained strong cultural and religious ties to Wales, their distinctive cultural identity gradually transformed once they settled in Australia. By the 1860s some commentators frowned upon the growing reliance on the English language at eisteddfods.⁶⁰ This was the case in 1890 when Josiah Hughes considered that “The programme of the meeting was gone through in a very primitive, sociable, free-and-easy manner, more like a caricature than a real, actual, sober Eisteddfod”.⁶¹

Nevertheless, Hughes perceived the annual eisteddfod competition at Ballarat as a celebration of Welshness in Australia. He recounted the opening speech of Mr D.M. Davies MLA, Minister of Public Works, who praised Welsh ethnicity in Australia as combining the social and intellectual refinement of the Welsh literary and cultural tradition with the vigour of outdoor pursuits popular in Australia to create a nation of physical and mental endowment. Despite his positive impression of Welshness in Australia, Davies anticipated the inevitable demise of the Welsh nation.

That the Welsh, as a nation, shall die is inevitable: there is nothing exceptional or terrible in this to a nation any more than to an individual; every man who comes into the world is but a unit in the infinitude of numbers, and a nation is

⁵⁸ Davitt, *Life and Progress in Australia*, pp.130-131

⁵⁹ Aled Jones & Bill Jones, “The Welsh World and the British Empire c.1851-1939: An Exploration”, in Carl Bridge & Kent Fedorowich, *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*, London, 2003, p.62.

⁶⁰ Bill Jones, “Welsh Identities in Colonial Ballarat”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, No.68, June 2001, pp.34-38.

⁶¹ Hughes, *Australia Revisited*, p.155.

only a drop as compared with the sea of human beings that have and will exist on this earth. The life of the longest-lived period is too small a space of time to be compared with the continuation of intelligent existence on this globe. It is our selfishness that has over magnified our importance. Human conceit and ignorance made man and the world he lives in the centre of the universe, and on this assumption the wildest systems of theology and philosophy were built.⁶²

Davies' speech resonated with the history of the political amalgamation of Wales that had begun centuries earlier and which, by the mid-nineteenth century, had established Wales as an integral part of Britain.⁶³ He believed the Celtic races of Wales, Scotland and Ireland had contributed significantly to Britain's intellectual and military greatness.⁶⁴ In their article, Aled Jones and Bill Jones examine this contribution of the Welsh to the British Empire and suggest that there was a perception amongst the Welsh that Welshness in the form of intellectual, cultural and religious traditions would save the British Empire from its Anglo-Saxon materialism.⁶⁵ Their research refers to increasing numbers of Welsh involved in imperial service as "soldiers, administrators, educators, industrialists, businessmen, engineers, surveyors and religious missionaries" by the late nineteenth century.⁶⁶ While they recognise the Welsh migrant experience was diverse, their study suggests that Welsh ethnic nationalism was maintained in diasporic communities in the late nineteenth century and coexisted with loyalty to the British Empire.⁶⁷

Gilbert Parker noted how the blending of British regional ethnicities in Queensland would present itself. He contended that:

The Queenslander will survive, and he will be robust in mind, as he will be warm in his physical vigour. The Irishman, the Scotsman, the Englishman, and the native[born], are distinct enough up here now, but one can see the fusion going on; the levelling down and the levelling up; the Irishman gaining directness and industrial confidence; the Scotsman gathering adaptability and warmth; the Englishman leaving off his insularity; and the native[born] borrowing the good points of the others, and possessing also the feeling of certainty that, being of the soil, he can match them all, beat them at a bargain, and still be friends with them.⁶⁸

⁶² D.M. Davies in Hughes, *Australia Revisited*, pp.153-154.

⁶³ Kenneth O. Morgan, "Welsh Nationalism: The Historical Background", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.6, No.1, Nationalism and Separatism, 1971, pp.153-172.

⁶⁴ Davies in Hughes, *Australia Revisited*, p.154.

⁶⁵ Rev John Thomas in Jones and Jones, "The Welsh World and the British Empire", p.60.

⁶⁶ Jones and Jones, "The Welsh World and the British Empire", p.59.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.59-62.

⁶⁸ Parker, *Round the Compass*, p.231

As a Canadian observer of the interaction between ethnic groups he predicted that each group would transform and be transformed through close contact. It was not a merger where Englishness was being imposed upon other ethnic groups but a subtle association of cultures where several identities could coexist.

Percy F. Rowland commented on the Australian national character in 1902 and distinguished the coexistence of multiple identities, although he asserted that provincial identities weakened rapidly when transplanted to Australia. He reiterated Parker's contention that closer association between groups accelerated this process. Although the Irishman lost "the crudity of his provincialism" through contact, "in temperament he remained Irish; no doubt his religion and his instincts kept him in line with other Irish colonists" but his "Irishism is not the Irishism of the Irish in Ireland."⁶⁹ The Irish in Australia were different as they were isolated from the political, economic and social conditions of English hegemony that influenced Irish nationalism in Ireland. Travel writers suggested that political and cultural tensions which existed in Britain were moderated in Australia.

Ties to distinct cultural groups remained in other forms that were non-political. Davitt emphasised the perpetuation of Irish ethnicity through the Catholic education system, which instilled in students a concept of their genealogical community:

[The Irish nuns] instil into their minds a love of the fatherland of their parents which will ensure a kindly and lasting link of sympathy between the "old land" and its sons and daughters at the farthest end of the end.⁷⁰

According to Patrick O'Farrell, Catholic education, with a focus on Irish heritage, history, language and literature, sustained the common identity and ancestry of Irish Catholics whilst at the same time assimilating them into the Australian community.⁷¹

Belonging to the group could be strengthened by belief in the psychological bond of common ancestry that extended beyond ethnic background. The transplantation of British institutions and culture socialised native-born children to be part of the British family and reinforced the loyalty of Australians. Travel writers commented on the

⁶⁹ P.F. Rowland, "The Beginnings of an Australian National Character", *The Nineteenth Century and After: a Monthly Review*, Vol.52, No.307, September 1902, p.401.

⁷⁰ Davitt, *Life and Progress in Australasia*, p.126.

⁷¹ Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia: 1788 to present*, third edition, Sydney, 2000, pp.162-164.

presence of these institutional similarities which emphasised the solid basis of the Australia/Britain relationship. Richard Twopeny noted the similarity in political institutions:

The chief interest of Australian politics lies in their relation to those of the Mother Country. Having imported their whole constitution and law books holus-bolus from England, each colony has been engaged ever since its foundation in fitting them to its circumstances. The legislative equipment of the young Australias corresponded pretty nearly to the tall hats and patent-leather boots which fond mothers provided for the aspiring colonists.⁷²

The dominance of English as the language spoken in settler society emphasised the extent of Britishness in Australia. James Jupp states that “half the Welsh, one-fifth of the Irish and one-tenth of the Scots could speak or understand a Celtic language in mid nineteenth century Australia”.⁷³ Yet he maintains that these groups assimilated towards the English culturally and linguistically once in Australia and that little evidence exists to suggest that the “languages survived beyond the second generation”.⁷⁴ Travel writers commented on the form of the language and accent they found in Australia. James Froude, indicating a hint of surprise, recorded that on arrival in Australia:

The first thing that struck me – and the impression remained during all my stay in Australia – was the pure English that was spoken there. They do not raise the voice at the end of a sentence, as the Americans do, as if with a challenge to differ from them. They drop it courteously like ourselves. No provincialism has yet developed itself. The tone is soft, the language good, the aspirates in the right places.⁷⁵

The accent and tonal properties of the language he encountered were those of “pure English” without the regional dialectical variations that existed in Britain. Froude considered that this was due to the education system and demonstrated how “English they yet were” while admitting that the people were still in an “imitative stage” and that the language would develop regional qualities with the development of individuality in the colonies.⁷⁶ While some contended that a regional version of English existed in the colonies, Mark Twain accounted for the origin of the accent as lower-class English or “costermonger”. He wrote:

All over Australasia this pronunciation is nearly as common among servants as it is in London among the uneducated and the partially educated of all sorts and

⁷² Richard Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia*, London, 1883, p.148.

⁷³ Jupp, *Immigration*, p.36.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Froude, *Oceana*, 1892, p.73.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.163.

conditions of people. That mislaid y is rather striking when a person gets enough of it into a short sentence to enable it to show up.⁷⁷

Language was an aural and verbal tie to Englishness but visual symbols also evoked a sense of belonging and kinship that operated beyond genetic links and rational thought.⁷⁸ Symbols of Britishness appealed to the subjectivity of Australians, not to their reason. Trollope related the Tasmanians' feelings of the sight of redcoats in the colony:

We [the Tasmanians] like to have among us some signs of your power, some emblem of your greatness. A red coat or two in our streets would remind us that we were Englishmen in a way that would please us well.⁷⁹

The symbol of British military might gave the Tasmanians reassurance psychologically that they were English. Similarly, Australians felt pride and connectedness to Britain in the display of the Union Jack. In 1865 Britain passed the *Colonial Naval Defence Act* which authorised the establishment of naval defence forces by the colonies and stipulated the flag that colonial vessels of war should display. The flag was a blue ensign with the emblem of the colony in a scutcheon, near the edge of the flag, farthest from the staff. While the flags were originally specified for naval vessels they eventually had a more general use and exist as the flags of the Australian states today.⁸⁰ Froude noted that a member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales and advocate of Imperial confederation, William Bede Dalley called for the "English flag again" that is, the Union Jack, because Australians bitterly resented having a different flag imposed on them by Britain:

Australians do not like a bar sinister over their scutcheon, as if they were bastards and not legitimate; and surely of all ill-considered measures in our dealings with the colonies, the dignity of forcing upon them a difference in the flag was the very worst.⁸¹

Psychologically, Australians felt disassociated from Britain like an illegitimate child rejected by its parent.

⁷⁷ Twain, *Following the Equator*, 1897, p.130.

⁷⁸ Connor, "Beyond reason: the nature of the ethnonational bond", pp.384-385.

⁷⁹ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.520.

⁸⁰ "Flags", in John Shaw (ed.), *Collins Australian Encyclopedia*, Sydney, 1984, pp.244-245, p.493.

⁸¹ Froude, *Oceana*, pp.183-184. "William Bede Dalley", in Graeme Davison, John Hirst, Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Melbourne, 1998, p.171.

Sometimes the metaphors of family revealed the complexities of the relationship between Australia and Britain. With reference to tariff protection in the colonies, the Irish politician, Michael Davitt, suggested that while family ties remained strong, an evolving spirit of independence went beyond the kinship bond into the area of developing national individuality:

The daughter colonies of Great Britain are devoted and true to “Home”, as the old countries are called at the antipodes, but they make “Home” pay all the same for the privilege of trading with their distant relations.⁸²

With increasing numbers of native-born Australians by the 1890s, Francis Adams discerned a change in Australian attachment to Britain which exposed an emerging national identity distinguishable by its egalitarian nature:

Ten years ago England was spoken affectionately as the Old Country or Home. Now it is “home” or more sarcastically “ome”. The inverted commas make all the difference, and the dropped “h” contains a class contempt.⁸³

The lower case “h” suggested that while Britain was still home in the minds of colonists, they were appraising the relationship with some dissatisfaction. Intriguingly, in both these cases, continuing loyalty to Britain and empire coexisted with blossoming ties to Australia and increasing national consciousness. Twopeny predicted that

When the purely Australian element gets the upper hand, the keeping of the British connection will become merely a question of advantage and opportunity. In time of peace the advantage is decidedly on the side of the present state of things. The events of war might reverse the position.⁸⁴

Through an increase in native-born Australians and under the challenge of war, it was predicted that an Australian national sentiment would strengthen. While Australian troops had been involved in imperial conflicts such as in the Sudan and the Boer War, it was not until World War I that the national myth of Anzac was born and nurtured by Australian society. Previous involvement had been founded in patriotic loyalty for the British Empire but sometimes the beginning of national spirit was apparent. Australian travel writer, May Vivienne, wrote of watching the departure of a troop ship from Fremantle for the Boer War. The provincialism of the colonies was set aside as one soldier demonstrated the cohesiveness of the soon-to-be Federated Australia by passing a bottle of whisky around all the colonial troops with “real federal spirit”. Nevertheless

⁸² Davitt, *Life and Progress in Australasia*, p 27.

⁸³ Francis Adams, “Social Life in Australia”, *Fortnightly Review*, Vol.56, July-December 1891, p 400.

⁸⁴ Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia*, p 173.

she continued by describing the ship's departure with reference to Australian loyalty to the empire. She observed:

When the time came for the troopship to leave, some affecting scenes took place between mothers, sisters, wives and soldiers, but all bore up as bravely as possible. Were they not going for the glory of Old England and the honour of the beloved Queen?⁸⁵

Australian involvement in World War I continued to emphasise the coexistence of Australian nationalism with imperial patriotism. Stephen Alomes states that imperial patriots and Australian nationalists gained from Australia's involvement in the First World War and in the establishment of the Anzac legend. He contends that "it appealed both to imperial patriots and to some nationalists on the Left who related the diggers' human qualities to the tradition of the earlier digger and bushman."⁸⁶ Alomes considers that Australia's involvement in World War I unified Australia as a nation and achieved recognition of it as an integral part of the empire. Australia remained a loyal offspring of the British Empire.

Conclusion

Metaphors of "home" and "family" added force to imperial rhetoric that expressed Australia's attachment to Britain. Such metaphors evoked a sense of imperial unity and bolstered Britain's preeminent position. Furthermore they contributed to the perception of Australia's growing individuality and the inevitability of separation from Britain in some form. They also emphasised that the ties of kinship, both real and imagined, would continue to bind Australia to its parent in patriotic loyalty. Evidence of imperial patriotism as observed and recounted by travel writers reinforced the British imperialist vision of a unified and cohesive empire. Imperial patriotism coexisted with an evolving Australian nationalism.

⁸⁵ Vivienne, *Travels in Western Australia*, p.46.

⁸⁶ Stephen Alomes, *A Nation at Last: the Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*, North Ryde, 1988, p 62.

Chapter Eight

Science, Physical Environment and the Australian type

There is no sign, as far as I can see that the race is deteriorating. The “Australian natives” are taller, especially in New South Wales, than their parents; their spirits are higher; they have abounding physical vigour.¹

R.W. Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, 1889.

At the centre of Reverend Dale’s observations in 1889 was a fear of racial degeneration. However his thoughts reveal a wider contemporary discussion. As already mentioned in an earlier chapter, it was believed that the success of the British Empire was built upon its Anglo-Saxonness. The degeneration of the Anglo-Saxon type would have adverse effects on the British Empire. Australia provided an ideal setting for observing the effects of relocation on the Anglo-Saxon type. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries travellers were preoccupied with race and how the environment had led to adaptations in the character and physical appearance of the Anglo-Saxon type.² The Australian type Dale described was considered healthier and more robust than its British cousin. However not all travellers were as confident and tensions exist in the published accounts about whether Australians were a degenerative form of the Anglo-Saxon type. Travel writers used discourses of race and environment as the scientific basis for imperial rhetoric that linked the Australian environment to the evolution of a distinct Australian type. They maintained that the physical environment of Australia was having both positive and negative effects on the developing Australian type. A fit and healthy Australian was perceived as an essential factor in maintaining the strength of the British Empire, particularly a strong white British Empire. However when the Australian type was compared to its British cousins and found to be lacking, the descriptions tended to reinforce the superior nature of the British Anglo-Saxon type and highlighted the fear held about degeneration.

This chapter examines contemporary scientific ideas about the impact of environment on racial type. It analyses travellers’ descriptions of native-born Australians and how they differed from those Australians, born overseas. In particular it focuses on what they considered to be the Australian type. Whether they viewed the Australian people as a

¹ Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, p.23.

² White, *Inventing Australia*, pp.66-67.

positive or negative racial form, their discussions highlighted imperial rhetoric that was based on a fear of racial degeneration and of the imperative of maintaining the strength of the British Empire.

Contemporary ideas about the effect of the environment on race and society

At the basis of their imperial rhetoric about Australians was a body of scientific views on climate, geology and disease. In the mid-nineteenth century scientists held that “cold climate races” were industrious and creative as survival demanded planning for times of scarcity. In contrast “tropical climate races” were indifferent and lazy as the necessities of life were abundant and easily obtained. Lamarck’s theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics supported theorists’ assumptions that the energies and habits developed in cold climates were passed on to descendants and allowed the continued progress of Europeans. Conversely tropical races were destined to remain child-like and undeveloped due to their inherent laxity.³ Espousing a polygenist view of race, Josiah Nott contended in 1857:

Each realm possesses a group of human races, which, though not identical in physical and intellectual characters, are closely allied with one another, and are disconnected from all other races ... the climates of the earth may be divided in PHYSICAL and MEDICAL; and that each species of man, having its own physiological and pathological laws, is peculiarly affected by both climates.⁴

His views were not confined to polygenists. Other commentators held a similar assumption that when races were transplanted outside their designated location they would degenerate.⁵ It was predicted that the change in climate would disrupt the normal behaviour that people displayed in their natural environment; many would drink more and sexual excesses were probable due to increased temperatures which would cause “surexcitation of the sexual organs”.⁶ The removal of Anglo-Saxons from a cold temperate climate to the warmer temperate climate of Australia would have detrimental physical and moral effects on the

³ David Walker, “Climate, Civilization and Character in Australia, 1880-1940”, *Australian Cultural History*, No.16, 1997/98, pp.80-81.

⁴ Josiah Nott cited in David N Livingstone, “Climate’s Moral Economy: Science, Race and Place in Post Darwinian British and American Geography”, in Anne Godlewska & Neil Smith, *Geography and Empire*, Oxford, 1994, p.138.

⁵ Nancy Stepan, “Biological Degeneration: Races and Proper Places”, in J.E. Chamberlin, and S.L. Gilman (eds), *Degeneration The Dark Side of Progress*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1985, p.99.

⁶ William Ripley (1899) in Stepan, “Biological Degeneration”, p.103.

settlers. The Australian-born children of emigrants who settled in Australia inherited traits their parents had acquired through acclimatising to their new environment. Changes in diet and way of life were considered to change the racial type in both positive and negative ways.⁷ Dr James Kilgour, a physician from Victoria, connected the changes in the physical appearance of Australians he encountered in 1850s to the process of acclimatising undertaken by their emigrant parents.⁸ He considered the leanness and lack of muscular tone he observed in the people was similar to that visible in the Australian Aborigines and local horses and cattle. Referring to Mullar's theory that species of animals and plants undergo modifications when adapting their original traits to the climate and environment of a new location, Kilgour contended that the Anglo-Australian race he observed demonstrated evidence of the peculiarities of climate at work. In children, the colour of hair and eyes were "very generally light in hue, while adults had "a frame more slender than that which characterizes their European prototypes."⁹ Although he observed no notable alteration in complexion he predicted that, based upon evidence of European settlement in the Americas, the "Australian sun will deepen the hue of the present races, subjected to its influences."¹⁰ Kilgour speculated that changes in climate produced physiological changes in the individual, and that these would be manifest in an Anglo-Australian race. Such a race had the potential to be distinctive and Kilgour imagined that they might be like "the inhabitants of southern France" – fond of drinking, impulsive but courageous – however due to influences other than climate and environment he predicted the descendents of immigrants were more likely to retain some British characteristics.¹¹

Charles Dilke who visited Australia in 1867 was concerned about whether the Anglo-Saxon type would thrive or disappear completely when placed in a new environment. Noting that the decline of the Anglo-Saxon type was a fear not confined to the settlement of British migrants in Australia, he posed the question "Can he [the Anglo-Saxon type] thrive except where mist and damp preserve the juices of his frame? He comes from the fogs of the

⁷ Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia*, Melbourne, 2002, pp.62-65.

⁸ James Kilgour M D, *Effect of the Climate of Australia upon the European Constitution, in Health and Disease*, William Vale, Geelong, 1855, pp.6-7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.16.

Baltic shores, and from the Flemish lowlands”.¹² He noted how the climate in Australia, which was hot and dry, had changed the type already. In South Australia he distinguished changes in the type which could be traced to the hot, dry climate. South Australian men, he wrote,

are thin, and fine featured, somewhat like the Pitcairn Islanders, while the women are all alike – small, pretty, and bright, but with a burnt-up look. The inhabitants of all hot dry countries speak from the head, and not the chest, and the English in Australia are acquiring this habit; you seldom find a ‘corn-stalk’ who speaks from the chest.¹³

Dilke seemed uncertain whether the changes were permanent, “or a temporary divergence produced by abnormal causes, and capable of being modified by care.”¹⁴ However his fear of racial degeneration did not stop his imperial rhetoric that promoted continued emigration from Britain. He considered Australia as a “refuge and future home” for impoverished British rural labourers: a place where colonial land legislation was beginning to encourage small rural holdings to combat the larger pastoral holdings of squatters.¹⁵

In 1871, Dr Andrew Ross, a New South Wales physician and politician, feared the signs of degeneration were already present in native-born stock. He put forward his views on the effect of the Australian climate on the European immigrant, observing that “white native born subjects fall far short in too many instances of the standard of health, strength, durability, and even longevity of their parents.”¹⁶ This was not the direct effect of climate on the constitutions of racially feeble immigrants but physiological changes which had been stimulated by associated changes in diet and behaviour brought about by climate and relocation. Ross contended that frequent use of horses, smoking, alcohol consumption and a diet high in meat protein had resulted in an attenuated and slender frame in the native-born, which was inferior to the European immigrant. He found the unsuitability of the

¹² Dilke, *Greater Britain*, p.166.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.151.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.166.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Andrew Ross, MD, “The Climate of Australia, viewed in relation to health, especially its influence on the constitution of the European immigrant”, *New South Wales Medical Gazette*, Vol.1, No.5, February, 1871, p.132.

European diet in the Australian environment also was a cause of the accelerated decay in the Aboriginal population who had come into contact with Europeans.¹⁷

The centrality of climate in substantiating views about place and race was reinforced by corresponding theories about the earth's geological development and the evolution of organisms. Some exponents of natural history held that with each stage of the earth's geological development came a corresponding development of organic life forms from simple organisms to progressively more complex forms.¹⁸ They contended that human development in its highest form was found in regions such as Greece, where there was a rich variety of natural resources and where the soil had undergone its latest development. Subsequent migrations from ancient Greece had led to the development of civilisation in other areas throughout the world where soil and climate were favourable. Scientific opinion was supported by evidence of the success of such civilisations in the historic record. But as in theories on climate and racial development, it was considered that the transplantation of Anglo-Saxons from regions of quaternary formation to the mesozoic and tertiary stratas of Australia would result in "an inevitable degeneration" of the race, not the development of a great civilisation.¹⁹ In 1880 Henry Ling Roth discounted this theory by citing numerous exceptions. He stated that Australians possessed the means to improve both climate and soil through the planting of trees, which would increase rainfall in the interior. He envisaged that the continuing advances of science would promote progress in Australia, as had been the case to date. Roth stated that progress in Australia in wheat, wine, wool, beef and sugar production provided a good demonstration that soil and climate would not necessarily lead to degeneration. He contended that the same was true of the Anglo-Australians, soil and climate would lead to their progress not degeneration.²⁰

Theories about the interconnections between climate and race continued to be advanced in the early twentieth century. Racial changes brought about by climate were considered to

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.134, 232.

¹⁸ Anon, "Will the Anglo-Australian Race Degenerate?", *The Victorian Review*, Vol.1, November 1879, pp.114-115. Arnold, *The Problem of Nature*, pp.25-29.

¹⁹ Anon, "Will the Anglo-Australian Race Degenerate?", pp.114-115.

²⁰ Henry Ling Roth, "The Influence of Climate and Soil on the Development of the Anglo-Australian Race", *The Victorian Review*, Vol.1, October 1880, pp.848-849.

occur over time and travel writers were often uncertain of the extent of those changes. In their rhetoric they did not necessarily see the changes as degenerative to the race as a whole. Published in 1907, *The Real Australia* contained Alfred Buchanan's observations of Australia and its people. He appeared to tentatively support the theory that humans evolved into a new race when placed outside their climatic zone. He observed that people in Australia tended to be different "physically and morally, from that in the Northern Hemisphere".²¹ However he questioned whether the theory was supported by physical evidence, as at the time of his observations it had only "produced a crop of half results, of insufficiently proven theories, and of partially established types".²² Another commentator, Percy F. Rowland contended that the English race transplanted in Australia held its own against the influence of climate and other environmental factors. However he did concede that climatic influences were gradual and subtle changes in the race may not be easily detected.²³ These two views demonstrated the tensions in the travel writers' views of the effect of climate and environment on racial types that existed at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the basis of their indecision were scientific theories that pondered degeneration.

However by the beginning of the twentieth century it was generally accepted that the climatic influence on humans in the southern areas of Australia was far from detrimental. Nevertheless the climate of northern parts of Australia continued to be seen as physically debilitating to the white race. John Foster Fraser, a self-proclaimed authority on climate and heredity, claimed to be able to distinguish between those Australians who lived in the southern temperate climate and those who lived in the tropics according to their dynamism in business.²⁴ In *Australia, the Making of a Nation*, published in 1910, he proclaimed:

Humidity, undoubtedly, has an effect on the energy of the people. Now, mark how pleasant, soft-voiced and delightful the Queenslanders are. Come south and you find more commercialism in the air of Sydney than in Brisbane. Drop further south still, to Melbourne, and there, there is really something like energy. Continue south till you get to New Zealand, and there you can pass from the charming easy

²¹ Buchanan, *The Real Australia*, pp.2-3.

²² *Ibid.*, p.3.

²³ Rowland, "The Beginnings of an Australian National Character", pp.400-401.

²⁴ Fraser, *Australia: the Making of a Nation*, pp.52-54.

manners of the top of the north island until you get amongst the rugged, determined business men who live at the bottom of the south island.²⁵

At the time of his visit he found that Australians were much like British people, but predicted that, with the passage of time their new physical and social environment, with a diversity of climates would produce distinctive types.²⁶ He followed the work of Dr Alexander Buttner who contended that where both parents were Australian born “the weakening effect of climate shows itself more and more strikingly with each succeeding generation.”²⁷ While he noted the link between climate and changes and degeneration of racial type, he was not critical of Australia as a place for further settlement. His imperial rhetoric emphasised continued emigration not just from Britain but also from other parts of Europe particularly from Germany. He considered German agricultural workers were virile and made good colonists. He believed that they had been instrumental in the development of the United States and that the consideration of emigration to Australia from mainland Europe was a means of strengthening the Anglo-Australian type.²⁸

The success of white settlement in the tropics was a topic of concern for travel writers in the late nineteenth century. Using scientific theories of place and race, they employed imperial rhetoric which advanced the idea that white people could not work in the tropics. From the 1860s such theories justified the use of Indigenous labour by colonials on plantations in the Pacific.²⁹ The use of cheap Pacific Islander labour became an integral part of the colonial experience in the South Pacific.³⁰ As a consequence it was not surprising that some travel writers supported the use of Pacific Islander labour in Australia. Its use was not only necessary as it was considered that white labour could not work on those sugar farms north of the Tropic of Capricorn but was also politically and economically expedient to sugar growers. Anthony Trollope noted that the use of Pacific

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.52-53.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.58.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.54.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.57-58.

²⁹ Trish Mercer, *White Australia Defied: Pacific Islander Settlement in North Queensland*, Townsville, 1995, p.1.

³⁰ Clive Moore, Jacqueline Leckie and Doug Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, Townsville 1990, p.xxxi.

Islander labour fostered debate within the Colony of Queensland.³¹ He believed that the white man disliked the manual labour of cultivating sugar cane in Queensland's tropical climate.³² In the 1880s R.W. Dale speculated that Australia's future development in tropical areas would never be undertaken by the white European race although

Englishmen, Scotchmen, Irishmen may find the capital, and may direct the labour; ... the labourers themselves, who must form the great majority of the population, will be coloured people.³³

However at the same time as there was support for the use of Pacific Islander labour other travel writers emphasised philanthropy as it was feared that the use of this form of labour anticipated a return to a type of slavery. Although Charles Dilke highlighted his concern over the suitability of the white race to settle in the tropics, he was critical of the action Queensland had taken in the sugar and cotton regions where "coloured labour is now almost exclusively employed, with the usual effect of degrading fieldwork in the eyes of European settlers, and of forcing upon the country a form of society of the aristocratic type".³⁴ His stance was not surprising given he was a liberal politician, experienced in colonial issues and a staunch defender of the cause of oppressed Indigenous subjects. Later concerns for maintaining a white Anglo-Saxon race in Australia forced sugar growers to relinquish their Pacific Islander labourers as part of a "White Australia" policy.

Concern about the degeneration of the race continued into the early twentieth century. Frederic C. Spurr contended that "white Australia" and the notion that white man could not survive in the tropics was hindering development in northern Australia particularly in areas like the Northern Territory where "the natural wealth and resources of the north are almost incredible".³⁵ In the tropical climate of Queensland he predicted changes in the outward appearance of white settlers:

But let it be understood that the pure white man who enters this tropical territory will not long remain white. He may retain all the instincts belonging to the white races, but his skin will be tanned, darkened, and in course of time perhaps blackened, under the powerful rays of the Northern sun.³⁶

³¹ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, Chapter VIII *passim*.

³² *Ibid.*, p.178.

³³ Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, pp.49-50.

³⁴ Dilke, *Greater Britain*, pp.90-92

³⁵ Frederic C. Spurr, *Five Years under the Southern Cross: Experiences and Impressions*, London, 1915, p.79

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.88.

Fraser believed that although the British had demonstrated an ability to live and work in the tropics, in the long term the tropical climate would have a debilitating effect, particularly on the physiology of offspring.³⁷ “The tropics”, he wrote, “are bad places for the breeding of white children; the conditions of nature are altogether against them; they grow up lanky, weedy, and without stamina.”³⁸ Such views were topical due to the use of cheap Pacific Islander labour on sugar plantations in the tropics and Australia’s evolving immigration policy, which excluded all but European migrants. The adventurous Australian, Francis E. Birtles, supported the idea of white Australia; however he also believed that “nature [had] located the various races in places best suited to their physiques”.³⁹ The theory that some races were more suited to tropical climates than others, in Birtles’ opinion, justified the use of black labour in tropical regions. In such areas he contended the white man could not perform manual labour. He wrote “Let the Australian be master and the Negro be man, as he expects and is willing to be, and we need have no fear for the future.”⁴⁰ However Birtles differentiated between the ability of Europeans to maintain health in the tropics and their capacity to work and succeed economically in the same environment. In his narrative he considered that “the Australian or the Britisher could thrive and rear a race of hardy descendants” even in tropical regions like the Northern Territory.⁴¹ Failure to thrive in the tropics was connected to poor personal, domestic and public hygiene:

discoveries of modern times indicated that tropical countries had their special diseases that required special means for their prevention. The adoption of such means had enabled France and America to accomplish in their tropical possessions that which a few years ago would have been regarded as impossible.⁴²

Birtles believed that white settlers could live successfully in the tropics if they were able to control the pathogens, which caused disease and debilitation but they could only profit if they had cheap black labour available for the manual work.

³⁷ Fraser, *Australia: the Making of a Nation*, p.54.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.180.

³⁹ Birtles, *Lonely Lands*, p.76.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.174.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.176.

Not all commentators viewed the settlement of Anglo-Saxons in tropical climates as degenerative. Some suggested a more pragmatic approach to white settlement in the tropics. In his mid-nineteenth century book, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, Anthony Trollope advocated the union of people of Anglo-Saxon descent with local black populations. Far from perceiving the union as unnatural and leading to the physical and moral decline of Anglo-Saxons as some scientists contended, he considered that with time these unions would lead to a new race better suited to tropical climates.⁴³ Such a race “would be fitted by intellect for civilization; and fitted by physical organisation for tropical sun.”⁴⁴ He asserted that Anglo-Saxon intelligence would be combined with the local black people’s resistance to climate and result in a race “capable of living and working in the climate without inconvenience” and with the passing of time, he envisaged a new race capable of self-determination.⁴⁵ Possibly Trollope saw sponsorship of such a view as a way of securing British withdrawal from Jamaica at a time of economic downturn and political tension when tariff preferences for British sugar had ended. Later in the century in his account of Australasia Trollope expressed a different view on interracial unions. This time he took the view that miscegenation would lead to a degenerative form who despite attempts to train towards western ways would “always return to the bush and become some black man’s gin”.⁴⁶ He considered that the offspring of white fathers and black mothers would “not become a race as they have done in the western world”.⁴⁷ In Australia, large scale white settlement had achieved success for the British Empire, but the Indigenous population had demonstrated no sign of progress beyond a savage state. Trollope contended that the genetically inferior Aboriginal minority was doomed to extinction in the face of increasing white settlement.⁴⁸ When placed beside his descriptions of Pacific Islanders who had “civilisation within their reach” and who “will work, and are anxious to

⁴³ Stepan, “Biological Degeneration: Races and Proper Places”, p.106. The British anatomist Sir William Lawrence contended that “un-natural unions” of different races would result in the physical and moral deterioration of the European. While the union would have beneficial effects for the dark races, the stain of “blackness” would remain, long after the colour had been absorbed in whiteness, in the presence of a particular smell exuded by descendants of the union.

⁴⁴ Anthony Trollope cited in Young, *Colonial Desire*, pp.142-143.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.142.

⁴⁶ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, pp.110-111.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.113.

gather to themselves and to keep the fruits of their labour”, Trollope’s belief in a racial hierarchy was revealed.⁴⁹

Contemporary scientific ideas fuelled the debate on degeneration of the Anglo-Saxon racial type in Australia. Travel writers expressed these views in their observations of native-born Australians.

Native-born

By 1861 34.6 per cent of the population of the Australian colonies was native-born.⁵⁰ Travel writers’ imperial rhetoric regularly described these Australians by the differences they embodied to the Anglo-Saxon type. Labelled variously as “cornstalks”, “gumsuckers”, “native-born” and “young colonials”, they were thought to embody a new race whose physical appearance and nature had evolved in response to a new environment. This new race was both positively and negatively drawn. The nineteenth century emigrant mechanic, Alexander Harris, noted how connection with their surroundings was establishing cohesiveness amongst the native-born. They were “growing up a race by themselves; fellowship of country has already begun to distinguish them and bind them together in a very remarkable manner”.⁵¹ They were perceived as distinctive from the British race. It was the connection of the environment to divergence from the Anglo-Saxon type that particularly interested travel writers and resulted in an often-contradictory discussion that nevertheless was infused with a sense of the travel writers’ racial superiority. The native-born Australian was reduced to a biological specimen to be analysed and located within a hierarchy of racial types.

British traveller and journalist, Frank Fowler’s discussion of the character of native-born Australians contained some of these contradictions. He seems unsure whether the colonial young-stock was a beneficial offshoot of the Anglo-Saxon race or whether they were degenerative. Fowler described the Australian boy as

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.175.

⁵⁰ Jupp, *Immigration*, p.125. The term native-born was given to the Australian-born descendants of European settlers and did not include Aborigines. Jupp estimates the percentage of the population who were Aborigines in 1861 as 13.4%.

⁵¹ A. Harris cited in John Molony, *The Native Born: the First White Australians*, Carlton South, 2000, p.54

a slim, dark-eyed, olive-complexioned young rascal, fond of Cavendish, cricket, and chuckpenny, and systematically insolent to all servant girls, policemen, and new-chums. His hair is shiny with grease, as are the knees of his breeches and the elbows of his jacket. He wears a cabbage-tree hat, with a dissipated wisp of black ribbon dangling behind, and loves to walk meditatively with his hands in his pockets, and, if cigarless, to chew a bit of straw in the extreme corner of his mouth. His face is soft, bloomless, and pasty, and you fancy if you touched his cheek you would leave the stamp of your finger behind.⁵²

Fowler deemed the young colonials lazy, indolent and profane but he derived some delight in their disrespectful behaviour towards new-chums. On the positive side he considered they were more able and shrewder than cockney youth as they were independent and working from a very early age.⁵³ Such self-reliance, ill-manners and swearing, Fowler expected of working-class adult males but not juveniles. Their appearance and demeanour deviated from what he accepted as the model of youths of similar age and social class in Britain. R.H. Horne agreed with Fowler's description but suggested it was the social environment that was influencing the degenerative type. He enlarged the cohort to include young men working in clerical occupations, whom he claimed had no relish for wider education.⁵⁴ Horne noted that it was a rare phenomenon to meet the son of a gentleman who had followed in his father's footsteps and gained university education. Up to a point, Horne blamed the social environment of the colonies for the poor character of colonial youth. He was, however, optimistic that the strengthening of the population by the continued influx of young men of a better model would

“work up” very well as the social wheels progress. Give us two or three millions of inhabitants, and all the institutions, promises, and performances of a vigorous young nation of the nineteenth century will rapidly be evolved and do honour to their ancestors and their race.⁵⁵

Biologists held the view that continued migrations of healthy and moral individuals would maintain the strength of the racial type in colonial settings, thus warding off degeneration.⁵⁶ In a similar manner travellers implied that continued immigration was a means of maintaining the strength of the Anglo-Saxon race in Australia. In the 1870s, Anthony

⁵² Fowler, *Southern Lights and Shadows*, pp.22-23.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospects*, p.93.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.95.

⁵⁶ Stepan, “Biological Degeneration: Races and Proper Places”, p.103.

Trollope expressed concern about the possibility of degeneration when the numbers of suitable young emigrants declined and the numbers of colonial born increased.⁵⁷ R.W. Dale raised the same question but he questioned whether the strength of the Australian or local colonial types would withstand the test of time once the effects of the frosts and snows of the northern hemisphere had diminished. He posed the question as to whether the lack of such climatic influences would have a negative physiological impact and result in weakened muscle tone and reduced stamina in the individual.⁵⁸

However, during his visit in the late 1880s, Dale did not perceive any signs that native Australians were deteriorating.⁵⁹ As far as he was concerned bush children were not healthier or more vigorous than city children, a feature often noted by other commentators. It was the climate and prosperity of Australia that was instrumental in forming the characteristic qualities of its people but Dale contended that much of the reason for the vitality of the race was that those who had settled Australia from Britain were above-average in strength and enthusiasm.⁶⁰ Australia, he wrote,

has been settled by men and women with more than the average physical energy, and with a fearless and adventurous spirit. They were an excellent stock, both physically and morally; and their children inherit their admirable qualities.⁶¹

Addressing a British readership, Dale asserted that “They are ourselves- but ourselves with a difference;” and while he described a typical Australian type he also perceived subtle variations in the temperament and character of the people of each colony.⁶²

Other commentators placed less emphasis on immigration as a means of maintaining racial strength. According to Dr John Shaw, a new race, of Anglo-Saxon ancestry, would evolve under the “stimulating influence of the Australian sun” and purge itself of its “heavier and roast-beef qualities” gained under English skies.⁶³ The resultant race were like those he

⁵⁷ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.453.

⁵⁸ Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, pp.40-41.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.25.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.23.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.24.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.40.

⁶³ Shaw, *A Gallop to the Antipodes*, p.58.

observed in Melbourne, industrious, vital and energetic.⁶⁴ Dilke also described young Australians as active and healthy although he was conscious of the number of variations that existed. He was particularly taken by the native-born Australians, and commented:

The fitness of the term “cornstalks” applied to the Australian-born boys was made evident by a glance at their height and slender build; they have plenty of activity and health, but are wanting in power and weight. The girls, too, are slight and thin; delicate, without being sickly⁶⁵

Reverend Clark directly connected the climate of Australia to its positive effect on the physiology of Australian men and women. Using America and England as comparisons he contended that the favourable Australian climate had increased participation in outdoor pursuits and would produce “a fine race of men physically.”⁶⁶ However, he cautioned that moral qualities might be lost in the process.⁶⁷

Michael Davitt commented that the “Australian born of British or Irish parents, is the best physically developed man of either of these races.”⁶⁸ The reason for the superior physical appearance of the native born was the “dry and healthful climate”, the “atmosphere of the limitless eucalypti forests”, “the outdoor life and labour” of rural workers, good food and the “ordinary luxuries” of life.⁶⁹ All contributed to “the vigorous frame, manliness of bearing, and stamp of independence characteristic of the average Australian”.⁷⁰ He considered the lifestyle of Australians compared favourably to that of the inhabitants of the United States but he also compared the physiology of Australian women to that of women in Spain and Italy and noted the reproductive potential of Australian women. He stated: “Complexions may not be as fair nor cheeks as rosy as those you see at Punchestown or the Oaks, but the face is equally as handsome, while the build is finer and firmer, and gives hope of a more vigorous offspring.”⁷¹ The health of Australian-born women had wider implications than just their role in producing healthy children. It was believed that the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.58-59.

⁶⁵ Dilke, *Greater Britain*, p.87.

⁶⁶ Clark, *Our Journey Around the World*, p.93.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Davitt, *Life and Progress in Australasia*, p.118.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p120.

strength of the nation and empire was measured by the physical attributes of its individual members.⁷²

The real Australian

By the 1890s preoccupation with the Anglo-Australian type as an evolutionary development of the Anglo-Saxon type had diminished and there emerged perceptions of a distinctive Australian type exemplified by bushmen and women. Travellers believed that it was possible to identify national types and that their characteristics were at least partly a result of climate and geology. In their imperial rhetoric some travel writers connected the Australian type to Australia's growing sense of nationhood, a sentiment, which was both distinct from, and attached to, feelings of loyalty to Britain and the Empire. Indeed travel writers attempted to distinguish between Anglo-Australians and the real Australian. This new race was invariably found in the interior, west of the Great Dividing Range. Here arose a myth that linked climate, hardship and isolation with the appearance of an authentic national type who was stoic, egalitarian, intelligent and taciturn. It was a commonly held belief that these traits had evolved through interaction with the inland environment of Australia and were not necessarily inherited.

Francis Adams emphasised the positive influence of the environment on the development of a unique Australian type that he considered more genuine and superior to the hypocritical and pretentious Anglo-Australian and British types. He distinguished between the people of the interior and those who lived on the coastal plains, predicting that:

In another hundred years the man of the Interior – the veritable “bushman” – will be as far removed from the man of the sea-slope as the Northern Frenchman from the Southern, as the Castilian from the Andalusian.⁷³

He praised the uniqueness of the bushmen and women of the interior as epitomising the real Australian. Although the people of the coast demonstrated some signs of adaptation to their environment, Adams noted that they retained much that was English in character and manner. He asserted that “The one powerful and unique national type yet produced in

⁷² See *Chapter nine: Moral guardians of the nation: Travellers perceptions of Australian women 1850-1914* for more detail on the role of women in furthering a strong nation and empire.

⁷³ Francis Adams, *The Australians: A Social Sketch*, London, 1893, p.13.

Australia is ...the Bushman".⁷⁴ Refined elements of the type were present in the squatter and station manager and although the selector was closer to the bushman, the true bushman was to be found in the "shearers, boundary riders and general station hands", Adams wrote.⁷⁵ For Adams the Anglo-Australian had been "absorbed in the Interiors much more rapidly than on the sea-slope and in the towns".⁷⁶ He stressed that the "true British type" could not survive in the climate of the interior, as the Englishman had a historic association with the sea and could not subsist so far from it.⁷⁷ In the bush, women lost their "antique insipid prettiness and fashion-plate nullity still so dear to the heart of the average Englishwoman!".⁷⁸ The new type of Australian woman was strong, honest and assertive.⁷⁹ Adams' maintained a position of authority in his discussions of the evolution of the Australia type and its comparisons with the British type although his rhetoric was anti-imperialist and socialist in tenor.

Gilbert Parker also identified the development of a national type in the rural areas of Australia. In the interior, "where the climate, soil, and natural movement are at work", the Englishman or native-born became after ten years an Australian, "distinct from every other nationality".⁸⁰ Parker perceived that because of their ability to cope with the unexpected and often trying situations that occurred in the bush, the true Australians were "an upstanding race of men, irascible yet hospitable; strenuous and stalwart yet not robustious; explosive yet not troublesome; uncompromising yet generous; hardy, honest, and true".⁸¹ He compared the Australian bushman to the Canadian frontiersman, and concluded that the differences were due to different climatic conditions, which impacted upon demeanour and character. The cold climate imposed restriction on behaviour that made the Canadian frontiersman "hardy, firm and decisive in action. He [was] more alert, more temperate, and more subdued than the man of the back-blocks, as the up-country of Australia is called."⁸²

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.165.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.166

⁷⁷ Francis Adams, "The Labour Movement in Australia", *Fortnightly Review*, Vol.56, July-December 1891, p.187

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.183.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Parker, *Round the Compass in Australia*, pp.80-81.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.81.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.439.

The climate of Canada fostered optimism and hope in the frontiersman. Pessimism and hopelessness were the character traits that distinguished the Australian bushman. The bushman was “careless, drawling, opulent in manner, and has a fervid tendency to tea and swizzles”.⁸³ In a similar way to Adams, Parker associated the Australian bushman with the shepherd and drover of the interior who were wildly romantic figures, spiritually connected to the unique bush landscape. According to Parker the bushman’s character contrasted starkly with that of the Canadian frontiersman because the bushman had a more symbiotic relationship with his environment:

The shepherd or drover is most picturesque when he is out on the plains, on, as it were, his native heath, among the myall, the mulga, the quondong, the stay-a-while, and the wattle trees; where he sits by his little fire on the banks of some creek, and with his billy of tea and his dog muses and drones and philosophises with a deal of pessimism. The shepherd and boundary-rider of Australia is reserved almost to taciturnity.⁸⁴

Parker considered that unlike the impact of the Canadian frontier on the frontiersman, the isolated frontier of Australia produced negativity and introversion in the real Australian, which displayed itself in “a sense of irresponsibility, a cavalier-like hopelessness, a riding the track of life for all that it is worth.”⁸⁵ He predicted that the Australian bushman would lose his romantic image and distinctive character when the wildness of the frontier was overtaken by settlement and infrastructure development.⁸⁶

The influence of the environment was an integral part of Jessie Ackermann’s observations and comments on the evolution of the real Australian woman. She suggested that the real Australian would develop in the interior. Ackermann used the example of feminist and South African patriot Olive Schreiner’s deeply ingrained association with her homeland, an association which was visible in the vivid and emotive descriptions contained in her novel, *The Story of an African Farm*, to demonstrate how the physical environment becomes a part of the person. She considered that “peoples are in a true sense a very part of their surroundings” but in Australia this had not as yet occurred.⁸⁷ Ackermann wrote, “Correctly

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp.438-439.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.441.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.442,

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.444.

⁸⁷ Ackermann, *Australia from a Woman’s Point of View*, p.36.

speaking, it cannot be said that there is yet a generation of Australians who bear the imprint of Australian atmosphere. The country is too young.”⁸⁸ With time, she believed, the vastness and openness of the landscape would be inscribed in the character of the people. Ackermann held that the “Never Never” was the soul of Australia. It was where

weak women are made strong, and courage finds birth in a single day of struggle; where Hope chases the shadows of Despair that lower and often settle upon the heavy grind of daily toil.⁸⁹

Certain aspects of their environment were impacting upon the identity of women in Australia, in particular “the blowing sands of the “Never-Never” have made women brave to endure. The sweeping fires which threaten property and life have armed them with almost superhuman strength.”⁹⁰ She suggested that in the remote areas of Australia the beginning of a distinctively Australian form of womanhood was emerging. These girls were “free, independent, and unconventional”.⁹¹ They possessed attributes similar to American girls the “chief differences are those which would naturally arise from surroundings, climate, and methods of training”.⁹²

Suggestive of his support for the women’s movement, Francis Adams similarly described Australian women as having independent spirit but lacking the decorum of the English lady. Melbourne women, he wrote, were “Restless, frank, energetic, they have little prudery, and are well able to look after themselves.”⁹³ Likewise “the Australian girl” of the interior “will not sink her individuality in that of her husband, and tolerate neglect and even outrage under the rococo plea of fulfilling a divinely-ordained ‘duty’.”⁹⁴ He considered that in the bush environment Australian girls and boys were socialised in an environment of equality and openness which carried through into married life and resulted in a more equitable society and more unrestricted interaction.⁹⁵ Australian women demonstrated a lack of subservience to their fathers and husbands, which contrasted sharply

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.36-37.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.59.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.207.

⁹³ Adams, *The Australians*, p.28.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.152.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

to that of English women and impressed upon Adams Australia's future as a democratic and equal society.

These three travellers, one British, one American and one Canadian, all imagined the Australian type would evolve in the unique environment of the interior of Australia. Adams and Parker, who were travelling in Australia in the 1880s, connected the emergence of the Australian type with the development of a distinctive national identity and form of nationalism. However their political visions of Australia were divergent. Adams' views reflected those of a minority of radical republicans of the 1880s. He was anti-imperialist and against social inequality. He believed the success of democracy in Australia would be impelled by the activism of rural workers. In contrast, Parker's rhetoric presented a Canadian's view which envisaged Australian nationhood as part of the Imperial Federation movement. Parker supported Joseph Chamberlain's idea of an Imperial Federation of the colonies of settlement, all autonomous but loyal to the Empire. Australian Federation was a necessary step in the process towards establishing an Imperial Federation. At the time of their travels in Australia these two debates were current, one emphasising republicanism while the other debated Australia's participation in an Imperial Federation.

Adams perceived the bush as the birthplace of Australian national identity and bushmen and women as the instigators of an independent Australian nation. He was committed to a vision of Australia as a republic, politically independent from Britain, where social inequality had been erased. In *The Australians*, he formulated a number of oppositions, the most obvious, the urban-rural dichotomy. This binary opposition supported his political vision. The association of the city with vice and social decay fostered the perception of the Australian interior as the birthplace of the real Australian. Adams painted the city as evil; Melbourne was "pagan" and typically Australian, although its society was outwardly English in style.⁹⁶ He perceived Melbourne as a distorted form of English civilisation, whose people were attempting to create English society and institutions but without an historic understanding of their foundations.⁹⁷ Adams associated Anglo-Australians in the

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p26.

cities of the sea-coast with the capitalist class who were exploiting the working class in an increasingly urbanised and alienating world.⁹⁸ The city with its vice and alienation stood in opposition to the purity and integrity of the interior where he identified the evolution of a new Australian race. Even as the Anglo-Australians were absorbed, and native Australians took their place, a veneer of Englishness was retained in the city; stylish but common, self-confident but ignorant, outwardly devout but materialistic.⁹⁹ He described them as products of their city environment:

Lean and high-strung, with the alternations of languor and activity which the terrible changefulness of their climate gives them, they wear themselves out in all they do, mistaking the exercise of nervous energy for pleasure.

They have in their underside the taint of cruelty.

The vigorous Anglo-Saxon, with his profuse exclamations of wrath, is giving way to the new exemplar of a suppressed viciousness twice as dangerous.

The more angry the Victorian – and one may as well say the Australian – becomes, the slower he speaks, drawling out his oaths, and staring like a wild beast about to spring.

The street-riots of the Melbourne “larrikin” are as different as can be from the “rows” of the London or Birmingham “rough”.

It is the difference of tigers and bears at angry play.¹⁰⁰

Adams linked the appearance of the Australian type with the development of republican nationalism in Australia. He considered the frontier colony of Queensland demonstrated the greatest potential in this regard and he openly supported Sir Thomas McIllwraith’s anti-imperial federation stance in the late 1880s.¹⁰¹ It was “in Queensland, the colony of youth and enterprise, the home of all the daring and restless spirits of Victoria and the South generally, that we find political activity and advance”.¹⁰² This notion of the frontier giving birth to democratic ideas and stimulating racial adaptations coincided with the views of other commentators at the time.¹⁰³ Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis contended that American democracy was born in the independence and self-sufficiency of the farmers

⁹⁸ Meg Tasker, “*Struggle and Storm*”: *The Life and Death of Francis Adams*, Carlton South, 2001, p.156.

⁹⁹ Adams, *The Australians*, pp.26-27.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Tasker, “*Struggle and Storm*”, pp.133-137.

¹⁰² Adams, *The Australians*, p.34.

¹⁰³ Graeme Davison, “Frontier” in G. Davison, J. Hirst, S. Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Melbourne, 1998, p.pp.269-270.

of the American west.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Adams asserted that the Australian bush frontier would be instrumental in the development of a true national type. It was this type that would lead the cause of Australian democracy and nationalism. Adams perceived the genesis of Australian nationalist sentiment in Queensland, in the political action over the use of Kanaka labour in the northern part of the colony. Here, he predicted disunity over labour might split the colony into two opposing factions as had happened in America between “North and South, democrat and aristocrat”.¹⁰⁵

Using the American experience of the Civil War, which had threatened the survival of democratic unity, Adams evoked the strong association of the Australian national type with Australian nationhood. He credited the preservation of the union during the Civil War to the support of the rank and file from the western states of America. So in Australia it would be “the Interior ... the heart of the genuine Australia, [that] ... if needs be, will do as much for the nation and the race.”¹⁰⁶ His comparison augured similar passion for national unity amongst the bush people of Australia whom he imbued with democratic socialist aspirations. In an 1891 article in the *Fortnightly Review*, Adams praised the bushman type as a unionist and a socialist. He observed that the real Australian of the interior had united with unionists of the eastern coast in a political grouping of labour unions, to gain political voice and oppose urban and rural capitalism.¹⁰⁷ The aim of the movement was to eradicate privilege and inequality within society, which was fostered by the capitalist class.¹⁰⁸ Adams linked this capitalism with Anglo-Australians of English background and/or sentiment.¹⁰⁹ He believed it was the real Australians, the native-born Australians of the interior, who were demonstrating individuality, initiative and nationalist sentiment.

The Canadian, Gilbert Parker presented similar but opposing views about the Australian type and Australia’s connection to Britain. Like Adams he considered that it was in the rural areas of Australia that an Australian type would evolve. However in his imperial

¹⁰⁴ Frederick J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1962, (1920).

¹⁰⁵ Adams, *The Australians*, p.38.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.171

¹⁰⁷ Adams, “The Labour Movement”, p.190.

¹⁰⁸ Stuart MacIntyre, “Australian Labor Party” in Davison, Hirst, MacIntyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, p.48.

¹⁰⁹ Adams, “The Labour Movement”, p.193.

rhetoric, the real Australian had a dual identity that was not only distinctively Australian but was also loyal to the Empire. The two were compatible. Parker also made distinctions between urban and rural Australia. However his work was less concerned with creating a good/bad, rural/urban opposition but more with considering the multiplicity of identities. He asserted that the real Australian was hard to define in the cities because the English influence was so strong. Also environmental influences had affected the character of city people. Because the climate was milder more time was spent out-of-doors and there was less attachment to home, both of which had stimulated strong independence in the people.¹¹⁰ Parker observed these hybrid Australians “were not a race of weak-knees; they have breathed pure air; they have a sense of social and political freedom, and work stares them in the face.”¹¹¹

Parker also used the American example of north and south to distinguish Australians. However in Parker’s parallel the political character of people living in northern and southern Australia was less pronounced:

In Australia there are not great extremes of climate. Differences are incidental, not absolute. The northern man has a trifle more of freedom of speech and action than his comrade of the southern provinces. He has more fire and dash. The south being colder, tends to more sturdiness and reserve; yet it is but a variation in the type, not an unlikeness. The methods of living in the north and the south differ slightly.¹¹²

However unlike Adams, Parker perceived the unrest caused by the trade unions as characteristically English, not as directed by the people of the interior. The movement, he asserted, had its origin in English struggles for freedom and power, ideas which were implanted in the minds of dwellers in the Australian cities.¹¹³ Such political action would lead to nationhood and to his vision of Australia as one of a number of nations within the Imperial Federation – all independent but loyal to the Empire. An Imperial Federation that would strengthen the British Empire.

¹¹⁰ Parker, *Round the Compass in Australia*, p.107.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.112.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp.82-83.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.81.

Parker's imperial rhetoric predicted federation for Australia but within an environment of ongoing loyalty to the Empire. Adams presented a minority and opposing political view as an anti-imperial federationist who supported republicanism in Australia and the dismemberment of the empire. Although their political views were opposing, they both considered the distinctive inland environment would provide the catalyst for the development of a distinctive national type and national identity.

Conclusion

In their discussions of the Australian people they encountered, travel writers maintained the authority of their superior position as observer. Their authority was supported by their imperial rhetoric that placed Australians in an inferior position to that of the British Anglo-Saxon type. Scientific ideas about the impact of climate and environment on the Anglo-Saxon type influenced their rhetoric. In the early nineteenth century it was presumed that when the Anglo-Saxon race was removed from its proper place of habitation, it would degenerate. As a consequence of these ideas the native-born were often considered a degenerative form of the Anglo-Saxon type and some travellers called for continued migrations of Anglo-Saxons to Australia to halt degeneration. However to other travellers degeneration was not present in the Australian-born but comparisons were made between Australians living in the city and those living in the bush. In some instances it was in the bush that travellers considered that the Australian type was most distinctive. There, the physical environment had impacted upon those of Anglo-Saxon heritage and a national type was appearing in the form of the Australian type. Fear of degeneration infused much of the imperial rhetoric of travellers, as it was perceived a healthy race corresponded to a strong nation contributing to a robust British Empire. Travel writers predicted the emergence of an Australian national identity and nationhood with the evolution of the Australian type. Nevertheless in the late 1880s, when discussions regarding Federation and Australia's place in the Empire were beginning, most travellers perceived Australia's future as autonomous but maintaining a continuing loyalty to the British Empire. A radical minority anticipated otherwise.

Chapter Nine
Moral guardians of the nation:
Travellers' perceptions of the role of Australian women

The children were fully prepared for bed, and were eagerly anticipating their hour: their very own hour. First, came the mother's talk on the conduct of the day, and how they had treated each other. Then followed apologies for rudeness, kisses of forgiveness, a general clearing up of all the day's accounts, ready to begin a new and clean page on the morrow. After these confessions, not wrung from them, the puckered lips, moist eyes, and the sweet resolve to "be better to-morrow" – happiness reigns in each little heart; then comes a chapter of the favourite story, followed by a romp with "Dad". The day closes with clasped hands and upturned faces they kneel about the mother's knee, then-oh, the joy of it! – good-night kisses, each resolved to have the "last".¹

Jessie Ackermann, *Australia from a Woman's Point of View*, 1913.

In the above epigraph, a woman's role was characterised as maternal. The family was the centre of Victorian society with women having a domestic and nurturing role. Young female members of the family were guided by their parents, who instilled in them the need for constant self-appraisal, in order to fulfil their future responsibility as wives and mothers. However by the end of the nineteenth century the role extended beyond the immediate family into the community at large as motherhood became increasingly important to the future of the nation. Maternity became a moral responsibility and the public duty of fit women who were identified as white, married and middle-class. Middle-class women were constructed as chaste and decent, and in their role as mothers and homemakers they provided moral guidance and sanctuary from the immoral excesses of the outside world. Moral fortitude and fitness to reproduce were considered essential qualities in women who would produce strong and healthy children as part of a strong and healthy race, ensuring a strong future nation. National strength was important to maintaining a prestigious British Empire at a time of intensifying imperial rivalries and perceived threats to Australia from developing Asian empires. The imperial rhetoric contained in travel writers' observations of Australian women was part of a wider imperial mission to mobilise motherhood not only in the national interest but also for the empire. Indeed this imperial rhetoric was not confined to how Australian women were viewed by travellers but also was visible in descriptions of women of Anglo-Saxon ancestry throughout the British Empire.²

¹ Ackermann, *Australia from a Woman's Point of View*, pp.89-90.

² For example see Moyles and Ogram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914*, Chapter 8.

By the early nineteenth century, the continued movement of rural workers to the new industrial cities and a rapidly increasing population was creating social upheaval in Britain. The nation was finding it difficult to provide enough food for its growing population and many workers were living in miserable, cramped and unhealthy conditions close to the factories and industries where they worked. The middle-classes also felt the brunt of change and found cause to question the effects of change upon society. They were surrounded by social dislocation, and middle-class men were under increasing pressure to succeed in the growing capitalist world; thus they turned increasingly to the home and woman as its centre as a sanctuary from the decaying social order of the outside world.³ Women's responsibility for the maintenance of a moral society was highly valued. Virtuous women were positive role models who created and raised a moral society while the immorality of some women was manifested in the incidence of prostitution and illegitimacy. The perceptions of women as either moral or immoral had implications for the future of the nation and the empire due to women's role in producing fit future citizens.

During the late nineteenth century Australia came to be considered the "Social Laboratory of the World". Australia provided a *tabula rasa* from which the blight of its convict origins had been erased and where the social concerns inherent in Britain would be overcome.⁴ The fresh and unsullied environment of Australia would have a positive effect on British settlers, who would forge a positive future for the nation and the empire. In the mid-nineteenth century travellers focused on Lamarckian ideas which suggested that an individual's adaptation to their environment could be passed to offspring. A woman's function was to bear and raise children as responsible members of society, to support her husband, and to run the household.⁵ As eugenics gained acceptance in the late nineteenth century motherhood and racial purity and fitness became the central focus of marriage.⁶ With the growing influence of hereditarian evolutionary ideas, it was thought that an individual's characteristics were fixed, as a child would be born with traits inherited from

³ Carol Christ, "Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House", in Martha Vicinus (ed), *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, Bloomington, 1977, p.146.

⁴ C.L. Bacchi, The Nature-Nurture Debate in Australia, 1900-1914, *Historical Studies*, Vol.19, 1980, p.200.

⁵ Neil Smelser, "The Victorian family", in British Family Research Committee (eds.), *Families in Britain*, London, 1982, p.64.

⁶ Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", in Frederick Cooper & Ann Laura Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkeley, 1997, p.91.

their parents. Thus the eugenics movements advocated government policies centred on the control of reproduction so that a fit and healthy race developed. Morality was a central concern of both ideas.⁷ This chapter examines the travellers' perceptions of Australian women as either moral or immoral and their place in furthering the imperatives of nation and Empire.

The effects of the environment on the morality of women

Armed with these understandings of human development and morality, travel writers described Australian women. In Australia they assumed that the environment was impacting upon the temperament and physiology of Australian women. Their texts demonstrated an appreciation of the positive effects of the environment on women as well as its adverse and objectionable results.⁸ Some travellers considered that the crude and unsophisticated environment of mid-nineteenth Australia was affecting the moral fibre of Australian women. For example, Melbourne and the gold fields were deemed immoral and presented a situation where unprotected women could be corrupted. It was understood that in order to maintain their virtue, women in nineteenth century society needed to be protected. As a rule the protector was a husband or male relative. In some situations working-class women came to Australia under the protection of a philanthropic organisation. Ellen Clacy suggested that women who emigrated into this environment should be healthy and capable and "not fastidious or 'fine-ladylike'" and that they should not go to Australia unless they "go under suitable protection".⁹ She predicted a positive outcome for healthy, working-class emigrant women who, given the imbalance in the ratio of males to females in the colonies, would find that "The worst risk you run is that of getting married and finding yourself treated with twenty times the respect and consideration you may meet with in England."¹⁰ Thus Clacy implied that moral working-class women, provided they were suitably protected, could escape the decay and corruption of Britain's urban slums to the promising environment of Australia where, through marriage, they would contribute to the development of a moral colonial society.

⁷ Grant Rodwell, "'Persons of Lax Morality': Temperance, Eugenics and Education in Australia, 1900-30." *Journal of Australian Studies*, No.64, March 2000, pp.62-63.

⁸ This has been covered in greater detail in the previous chapter.

⁹ Clacy, *A Lady's visit to the gold diggings*, p.151.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

While there was a tendency to view working-class women as more susceptible to the influences of social decay, moral corruption could transcend class bounds. The women Horne observed on his travels did not fit the ideal of nineteenth century womanhood and he considered their immoral behaviour was a threat to stable colonial society. But Horne was careful to separate these women from the decent and more refined women, who through no fault of their own, had fallen upon hard times and been forced into prostitution to survive.¹¹

Demonstrating understanding and sympathy he pondered the reasons for their decline,

It may be they have not been “brought up to work,” and have no skill in any way; and, maybe, if they have, they cannot find employment. Many female accomplishments might be mentioned of which no use could be made for some time, even by the aid of the best introduction of friends there is no hope, even if the time could be endured. They are truly unfortunate. No mother, no sister, no brother, no friend, - they vainly endeavour to obtain some employment short of the menial one for which they have not strength, if otherwise fitted for it. They linger on in respectable lodgings till their last shilling is gone – and they become what they are.¹²

Horne maintained a mid-nineteenth century view of women as modest, gracious and well-groomed. His British middle-class values concerning women were apparent in his comments on sections of female society in the Australian gold rush era. At times he was critical of the immorality he observed in Australian women, considering them far more depraved than English women of the same type while at other times he demonstrated a humanitarian understanding of their plight. However he also revealed the authority of his British background in his concern for the future of colonial society.

Prostitution

As a group, travel writers tended to make generalisations about the character and appearance of prostitutes in Australia, linking the incidence of prostitution to the innate weakness of women who were not only prone to temptation but also easily induced into immoral activities by malevolent individuals. Working-class women were identified as forming the largest group involved in prostitution although some acknowledged the involvement of middle-class women. However, the participation of middle-class women in

¹¹ Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospects*, p.90.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.91.

prostitution was more often described with a degree of sympathy and understanding. Travel writers made a clear distinction, based purely on appearance and behaviour, between those working-class women they considered prostitutes and those they thought respectable, which suggests that while they were confident in their identification of prostitutes, there is scope for some doubt as to the actual incidence of prostitution in Australia. Mostly, travel writers considered prostitutes as a distinct “class” of immoral women, not as individuals drawn into the business as a means of existence. Although prostitution was scarcely ever mentioned directly, it was alluded to through reference to the women as “servants of all work”, a “social plague”, “unfortunate girls” and “nymphs of the street”. They were stereotyped: gaudy in appearance, loud and lurid in behaviour, and non-contributors to society.¹³

Theatres were often considered to be centres of immorality frequented by prostitutes, and where the respectable could clearly be distinguished from the corrupt by behaviour and dress.¹⁴ Such was the case when Frank Fowler noted that the “upper boxes are usually given up to that class of the community who are partial to pink bonnets and cheeks to match”.¹⁵ Their behaviour was particularly abhorrent and distressing to him; they were prone to “lively flirtations, with an occasional dash of fighting,” which was “carried on in these delectable regions in the most flagrant and unblushing manner.”¹⁶

Fowler considered the open display of vice in the young colonial cities to be of serious concern. Prostitution in the older European cities, he considered, was a result of overpopulation, a factor not evident in the colonies. Fowler appeared to support the idea that overcrowding in cities, which was a result of industrialisation, had broken down traditional social values and led to immorality. It was believed working-class women, in particular, were most vulnerable to the corrupt influences of the manufacturing centres. Jeffrey Weeks suggests that this was because working-class girls in England were “less

¹³ Fowler, *Southern Lights and Shadows*, p.40. Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospects*, p.90. Buchanan, *The Real Australia*, p.18

¹⁴ Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, p.98.

¹⁵ Fowler, *Southern Lights and Shadows*, p.39.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

socially protected than they had been in pre-industrial communities”.¹⁷ For Fowler Australia presented cause for grave concern, as Sydney and Melbourne were fledgling cities, and were just emerging from the “simplicity of nature and primal purity”.¹⁸ Australia was a “social anomaly”.¹⁹ While it was industrialisation that was linked to a rise in immorality in Britain, Fowler suggested that it was the disruption to society caused by the gold rush that resulted in innocent young girls quickly falling into prostitution on arrival in the colonies, particularly when confronted with the temptation of the “gauds and glitter” of a “land of gold”.²⁰ He declared:

The large bachelor population, climatic peculiarities, the idle voyage out, plenty of money for little work on arriving, are some of the causes, perhaps, which send so many women adrift in Australia.²¹

He observed “Girls, with baby English faces” became “women scarred with years of stolid sensuality; decrepid harlots, blind with age and gin”.²² Fowler did qualify his observations by stating that it was only the weak women who fell into prostitution and these would have done so in any city where they lived. To Fowler the incidence of prostitution was far higher in Australia than in older European cities however he qualified what might have been considered a very negative view of Australian women by stating that the moral tone of the general population was decent and that the great number of churches in the eastern colonies provided moral guidance. As a liberal, Fowler supported social and political reform and praised attempts to reform fallen women through benevolent institutions similar to those in Britain.²³

By the 1870s concerns about race were linked to the incidence of prostitution in Australia. Although Anthony Trollope accepted that prostitution existed in the colonies, he asserted that it was less prominent than in the larger towns of Britain.²⁴ Nevertheless Trollope

¹⁷ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics & Society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800*, second edition, Harlow, 1989, pp.64-65.

¹⁸ Fowler, *Southern Lights and Shadows*, p.39.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.* p.41

²¹ *Ibid.* p.41f

²² *Ibid.* pp.39-40

²³ R. G. Gerring, Introduction to Fowler, *Southern Lights and Shadows*, p.26. Bede Nairn, Geoffrey Serle, Russel Ward (eds), *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 4, 1851-1890*, D-J, Carlton, 1979, pp.208-209. Fowler, *Southern Lights and Shadows*, pp.40-42.

²⁴ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.109.

considered that the incidence of prostitution in Australia was related to issues of race, in particular Chinese emigrants. Fuelled by fear of miscegenation of the white Anglo-Saxon race and the antagonism to Chinese generally, writers conjured up notions of evil Chinese preying upon innocent Anglo-Saxon women and enticing them into prostitution.²⁵ Trollope laid the blame for the vice and prostitution that he saw in Victoria on the Chinese, whom he described as almost innately corrupt:

They have no women of their own, and the lowest creatures of the streets congregate with them in their hovels. But this is far from being the worst of it. Boys and girls are enticed among them, and dwell with them, and become foul, abominable, and in-human.²⁶

When he visited Australia after the turn of the century, Alfred Buchanan suggested that the economic environment was a cause of prostitution in Australia, which was “much in evidence in Australia”.²⁷ Prostitution was so obvious, he wrote that “There is scarcely a main street in which after dark, the evidences are not visible of that which the hypocrite censures, and which the wise man merely deploras.”²⁸ Buchanan considered that the poor wages paid to women meant they were forced into prostitution to supplement their incomes rather than face destitution and possible death: “Her unending sacrifice for there is no doubt that it is a sacrifice, chosen as the less of two sacrifices.”²⁹ He contended that those who considered that women engaged in prostitution for pleasure were wrong:

The pleasure, facetiously so called, is the outcome of an industrial system under which the working womanhood of the country is expected to feed and clothe and house itself on ten shillings a week, or less.³⁰

Despite the introduction of the basic wage for male workers in 1907, the inequity in male and female wages was such that women received much lower wages than men. Buchanan declared that through the payment of low wages to women, they were forced into prostitution to survive. He stated, “It is an obvious truth that Australia is always in danger of being injured, politically, by its statesmen, while it is always being rescued, socially, by

²⁵ Kathryn Cronin, “ ‘Orientals, Leprous-Fitted/Blood-Diseased and Small Pox Pitted’ , The urban anti-Chinese movement”, in Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders & Kathryn Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*, St Lucia, 1975, pp.298-299.

²⁶ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.400.

²⁷ Buchanan, *The Real Australia*, pp.16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

its nymphs of the street”.³¹ He suggested that because women accepted poor wages and continued to supplement their incomes with earnings from prostitution, their employers prospered. He considered the ongoing payment of low wages to women allowed further investment in industries and thus contributed to Australia’s continued prosperity.

Illegitimacy

While Dale did not make a direct connection between prostitution and illegitimate births in late nineteenth century Australia, he did suggest an association by concluding his statistics on illegitimacy with a note that there was a considerable amount of prostitution in the major cities of Australia.³² Travel writers compared the incidence of illegitimacy in Australia to that in Britain and made assumptions about Australia and Australians.³³ However they tended to disagree about the rate of illegitimate births in Australia, the cause and how to solve the problem. Some travel writers stressed that the rate of illegitimate births in Australia was no higher than in Britain. Dale asserted, “Illegitimacy is less common than in England and Wales and much less common than in Scotland, but more common than in Ireland”.³⁴ Other travellers found not only that the rate of illegitimate births was greater in Australia, but that the age of the mothers was younger. Fraser declared:

When I was in Melbourne Chief Justice Madden spoke out against this evil. Statistics were produced to demonstrate the startling amount of illegitimacy; cases were even quoted of girls of thirteen years of age having children.³⁵

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the incidence of illegitimacy was believed to be increasing with women of lax morals bearing the burden of criticism.³⁶ Certainly travel writers like Fraser assumed a lack of morality in the developing society as the reason for the prevalence of illegitimate births.³⁷ While this may not have been vastly

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

³² Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, p.250.

³³ Gordon A Carmichael’s analysis of birth statistics provides a useful indicator of the Australian condition during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He reveals that while nonmarital births were always a minority of total births, the rate of illegitimate births in Australia increased until around 1900 when it began to slow. Gordon A Carmichael, “From floating brothels to suburban semirespectability: two centuries of nonmarital pregnancy in Australia”, *Journal of Family History*, Vol.21, No.3, July 1996, pp.287-288.

³⁴ Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, p.250.

³⁵ Fraser, *Australia: the Making of a Nation*, p.123.

³⁶ Shurlee Swain & Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and their Children: Disposal. Punishment and Survival in Australia*, Cambridge, 1995, p.10.

³⁷ Fraser, *Australia: the Making of a Nation*, pp.123-124.

different from the situation in cities such as London or Edinburgh, it is interesting to note that the traveller John Foster Fraser asserted that the warm climate of Australia was a factor in the early sexual maturity of young Australian men and women. In addition by the early twentieth century he noted that there was a noticeable “weakening of religion” in Australia.³⁸ He observed that schools focused less on Christian teachings and their Sunday Church services were poorly attended due to the outdoor lifestyle of Australians with its emphasis on picnics and beaches. Finally, he blamed parents for their failure to provide appropriate guidance to their children who walked the streets at all hours in large numbers from a very young age.³⁹ Fraser called for Australia to provide “the proper guardianship of the purity of its young womanhood.”⁴⁰ It was the chastity of Australian woman that was being eroded by a lack of control and the corrupting influences of a rapidly changing society. Fraser presented a middle-class British male opinion that reflected British middle-class values placing high importance on religion and self-control.

In the late nineteenth century Jessie Ackermann maintained an evangelist’s view and considered that unmarried mothers were the innocent victims of malevolent men.⁴¹ She pointed out the discriminatory nature of a solution which implied that the woman was to blame for the illegitimate birth of a child and which failed to recognise the male’s responsibility for his actions. She wrote:

“Something must be done to guard the purity of your young womanhood”; but what about guarding the virtue of the young manhood? – or the old manhood, for that matter? Some of us who have long been familiar with Rescue Homes and similar institutions, realise a fact which must be taken into consideration in solving the problem: *each of these children had a father!*⁴²

Ackermann presented a pragmatic and enlightened opinion when she considered illegitimacy a worldwide problem that resulted from a decline in the moral standards of people and that Australia’s rate of illegitimate births was lower than in many other countries. She declared that illegitimacy was not related to climate, citing evidence that

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.124.

³⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Dee Garrison, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945”, *Journal of Social History*, Vol.28, No.4, Summer 1995, pp.901-904.

⁴² Ackermann, *Australia from a Woman’s point of view*, p.174.

“Iceland with a climate like that of central United States, [had] the small percentage of illegitimacy; while Austria and Norway reach the highest level: that of 20 per cent as against the 6.2 per cent of the Commonwealth.”⁴³ For Ackermann illegitimacy was class related, was more prevalent in the industrial working class and was not necessarily a new issue.⁴⁴ She contended that, “the morals of the industrial population are a matter of vital moment. There is certainly a measure of immorality among girls, and there are also numbers of girl mothers unmarried”.⁴⁵ Again, the traveller suggested a connection between the working-classes and the incidence of illegitimacy. However she did not necessarily see its incidence in Australia as any greater than in other parts of the world.⁴⁶ Ackermann’s comments on illegitimacy and its prevalence amongst the working class suggested that a decline in moral standards would have wider ramifications for society. As much of her text focuses on the development of the Australia as a nation and the appearance of a distinctive national type forged by the environment, it is possible to infer that she perceived illegitimacy as a threat to national strength.

Decline in birth rate

The decline in the birth rate became a problem of most industrial nations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and Australia was not excluded from discussions of the trend. Travel writers noted a decline in the Australian birth rate, which they implied was the result of women’s selfish actions. Women’s lives in the nineteenth century were an endless cycle of pregnancy and childbirth followed by further pregnancy. However, by the late nineteenth century women were becoming more assertive and able to control their own fertility. While the population of women of child-bearing age increased, the number who were married declined. The severe economic depression of the 1890s may have led young men and women to delay marriage and childrearing.⁴⁷ In addition, married couples were limiting the number of children they had. The decline in the birth rate became all the more

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.175.

⁴⁴ Ackermann refers to the “industrial population” and members of the “industrial occupations” thus implying those members of the working class who were engaged in industries from mining to factory work.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.232.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* In recent times Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath and Quartly have reiterated this nineteenth century assumption stating that chastity before marriage was of lesser concern for the working-classes. P. Grimshaw, M. Lake, A McGrath, M. Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, Ringwood, 1996, p.92.

⁴⁷ Graeme Davison, “Population” in Davison, Hirst, Macintyre (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, p.516

noticeable as the number of immigrants settling in Australia declined in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁸ By the early twentieth century the continuing decline in the birth rate was seen as a serious sign of national decay.⁴⁹ In New South Wales in 1903, a Royal Commission was ordered to investigate “the causes which have contributed to the decline of the birth rate in New South Wales and the effects of the restriction on child-bearing upon the well-being of the community”.⁵⁰ The health of mothers and the care of children became a national focus as social education programs were introduced in an attempt to redress the problem and improve the health of the Australian nation. Travel writers after the turn of the century were aware of the concerns prominent Australians expressed about the declining birth rate. Some, such as E.C. Buley, merely related the fears of individual Australians, while others, like the American journalist Jessie Ackermann, offered comprehensive comments on the problem.

Buley related T.A. Coghlan’s concern about the declining birth rate. He wrote:

Mr Coghlan, the statistician whose paper upon the subject first called public attention to this development of Australian life, decided as a result of his early investigations that Australian-born women do not bear so many children as the European women who emigrate to Australia. Fuller inquiry, however, convinced him that in this conclusion he had been mistaken. The decline of the birth-rate is more intimately connected with the rapid growth of the capital cities, where the conditions of life approximate more closely to those of the Old World. Mr Coghlan’s carefully reasoned paper upon the subject has resulted in the appointment of a commission, empowered to inquire fully into all the circumstances affecting this phase of Australian life.⁵¹

There is a suggestion in Buley’s imperial rhetoric that the decline in the birth rate and the “corresponding decline in the physical or moral fibre of the Australian woman” were linked to the changing role of women, away from Victorian society’s domestic and maternal figure to a more involved role in the public sphere.⁵² He observed:

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Sherrington, “Settlement 1881-1914”, in James Jupp (ed), *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, its People, and their Origin*, Cambridge, 2001, p.51.

⁴⁹ Davison in the *Oxford Companion to Australian History* cites a fall of 22 per cent in the number of births per 1000 married women aged 15 to 45 years in the period 1891-1901. Davison, Hirst, MacIntyre (eds), *Oxford Companion to Australian History*, p.516.

⁵⁰ Neville Hicks, *This Sin and Scandal: Australia’s Population Debate 1891-1911*, Canberra, 1978, p.xv

⁵¹ Buley, *Australian life in Town and Country*, pp.128-129.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.128.

The Australian woman who earns her own living has had to encounter less prejudice and opposition than has been the case elsewhere. In the professional class women have come rapidly to the front, and women doctors, dentists, and lecturers are matters of everyday existence, being accepted as readily as their male counterparts.⁵³

Such a change had wider implications, as motherhood was important to the future of the nation. The change in the role of women developed as a result of growing industrialisation, which led to changes in lifestyle and greater equality for women. Although Buley accepted that women in the working-class were still victimised he considered that educated women had gained greater equality in formerly male-dominated areas and had greater independence. They were able to vote, could earn a living and obtain success in business.⁵⁴

Jessie Ackermann devoted a complete chapter to fertility rates at the turn of the century in Australia in her account. She considered state led programs would counter the continued decline in birth rate. In “Mothers, Children and the Birth-Rate”, she stated that the decrease in the birth rate prevailed mainly in middle-class families where enlightened women had developed a greater understanding of the many facets of child-rearing. In addition, she wrote,

Girls, as well as young men, are less and less inclined to marry, but are generally disposed towards business pursuits, for which they must be trained. ... This involves greater expense in rearing a family, and providing all that is expected for them until they are grown and properly launched in life. As the children come along it usually means increasing sacrifice on the part of the mother, which often reaches the point of giving up all extras for herself, and ends in doing without help, even when obtainable.⁵⁵

The decline was related to economics, she contended: the more children a mother produced the greater the cost to the family and the greater the burden on the mother’s health as she attempted to meet the needs of the family. Ackermann applauded the positive initiatives of the state in the social development of Australia. In particular she supported training programs that would teach mothers how to rear fit and healthy children. She noted that state support of scientific motherhood, which included “mothers’ schools” and advances in the treatment of childhood illnesses had decreased child mortality and led to an “increase in

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.129.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.130.

⁵⁵ Ackermann, *Australia from a Woman’s Point of View*, pp.94-95.

the population among the white race”.⁵⁶ This was despite a decline in the number of marriages and the number of the children per family within the middle-class.⁵⁷ Ackermann praised the recent laws that controlled the occupations of mothers during and after pregnancy as contributing to the development of fitter children.⁵⁸ She claimed that:

Women, in Australia especially, have advanced in a knowledge of scientific motherhood. They are seriously considering themselves as life-givers. In contemplating the far-reaching consequences as such they have a new and enlarged vision of their life-giving rights, as well as of their responsibilities. Science has come to their aid and declared that no living woman, no matter how strong she may be, can do justice to children either by way of care or otherwise, unless there is at least a period of three and a half or four years between births. Women have come to feel that, in the best interests of the future race, it is better to rear three or four physically sound and mentally fit citizens than help to swell the increasing flood of poorly equipped specimens of humanity, that make up so large a number of the rank and file of the race.⁵⁹

Signifying her feminist perspective on motherhood, Ackermann supported methods of contraception, most probably abstinence, that gave women the ability to limit the number of children born. Such control exerted by mothers, she emphasised, would result in a fit and healthier race and ultimately a strong nation. Ackermann considered that it was for women to decide “when they were mentally, spiritually and physically able to take on the conditions of motherhood, and carry them out to the highest betterment of the human family.”⁶⁰ Her encouragement of the procreation of the “fit” and criticism of government’s failure to legislate to “prevent the procreation of the unfit” went even further in her support of state intervention in reproduction and denoted her support for eugenics.⁶¹

While Ackermann espoused views based upon feminist and eugenicist beliefs, other travel writers held the view that women were avoiding their motherhood role for selfish reasons that would have wider imperial ramifications. For example, British travel writer John Foster Fraser expressed his concern over the declining birth rate in Australia, declaring: “The antagonism to large families is a serious menace to the Commonwealth. All

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.95.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.94-96.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.96.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.98.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.98.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.98-99. Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885-1914*, , London, 1995, pp.231-232.

publicists agree that there is a growing shirking of the responsibilities of parenthood.”⁶² He continued by quoting a passage from the report of the Royal Commission in which the author highlighted the importance of procreation to the “British race” and to the Australian nation. The author of the report stated that the declining birth rate was “a grave disorder, sapping the vitals of a new people, dispelling its hopes, blighting its prospects, and threatening its continuance.”⁶³ Fraser concluded by noting that Australians generally did not appreciate their civic duty to ensure the future of the nation through procreation. However it was not only the declining birth rate that would lead to national decay but also the high rate of infanticide and abortion. In quoting the Sydney City Coroner, Fraser noted that they were viewed as felonious crimes that contributed to the decline in the birth rate. Fraser also added the view of the Presbyterian General Assembly that the “selfish refusal of parentage”, whether through contraception or abstinence, was a “crime both against humanity and against God”.⁶⁴ Such actions would lead to non-Christian races overrunning Christian races and thus to “race suicide”.⁶⁵ Fraser voiced a common outlook held at the end of the nineteenth century, which emphasised that a healthy and expanding population was a source of national strength, and that fears about the continuing decline in the birth rate, the procreation of the unfit and the high incidence of infanticide and abortion would erode the nation’s vigour and ultimately the empire’s prestige. With such ideas floating around in contemporary society, it was not surprising that anxiety developed about the domination of European nations by non-European races, a factor which influenced immigration policies in Australia over the next few decades.

Alfred Buchanan maintained a more promising view about the decline in the birth rate that did not predict national decline. His background as a lawyer and journalist gave him a pragmatic approach to the evidence before him. He was not convinced that the declining birth rate would lead to race suicide. Ministers and politicians, he related, noted that the working classes continued to reproduce, while the middle and upper classes, through self-interest, limited the number of children they produced. Buchanan considered fears about

⁶² Fraser, *Australia: the Making of a Nation*, p.124.

⁶³ Report of Royal Commission cited in Fraser, *Australia: the Making of a Nation*, p.125.

⁶⁴ Fraser, *Australia: the Making of a Nation*, pp.125-126.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.126.

the decline in the birth rate were alarmist, as historic evidence suggested that the birth rate was always stronger than the death rate. He contended that recent improvements in disease prevention and the reduced incidence of war would lead to a continual increase in the population, such that “in fifty years, even at the present rate of increase, there will be 8,000,000 people in the Commonwealth”.⁶⁶

Women’s responsibility for child rearing

Women as mothers had a central role in producing and rearing a moral and fit society as part of a grander vision of national strength and imperial prestige. While the physical and social environment was blamed for the immorality of some Australian women, it was also linked to changes in child rearing practices. Some travel writers considered that the environment was having positive effects on children’s socialisation while others were fearful of the ramifications of a freer, outdoor upbringing. In British society, women’s role was to produce and rear children and their child-rearing practices were highly structured and organised. In middle-class and upper class families children were separated from the adult members of the family and supervised by nursemaids, nannies and governesses as “this was regarded as the best way to begin to train character and prepare children for their eventual adult duties and responsibilities.”⁶⁷ Such upbringing was thought to instil the obedience and respect necessary for a moral society. In Australia, as British travel writer Marianne North found, a different socialising process was taking place that connected the outdoor environment to the development of independence in children from a very early age.⁶⁸

Jan Kociumbas suggests that concerns about child health may have been a reason for greater outdoor socialisation in middle-class families in Australia. She considers that continued high infant mortality and the belief that miasmas spread infectious disease may have prompted changes in child-rearing practices which placed a greater emphasis on fresh air.⁶⁹ While this idea about the transmission of disease and the benefits of pure air was not

⁶⁶ Buchanan, *The Real Australia*, pp.36-37.

⁶⁷ F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900*, London, 1988, p.126.

⁶⁸ North, *Recollections of a Happy Life*, Vol.2, p.119.

⁶⁹ Jan Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood: A History*, St. Leonards, 1997, p.95.

confined to Australia, Australia had a milder climate than Britain, which may have made outdoor child-rearing more noticeable to travel writers. Kociumbas suggests that the need for pure air may have influenced changes in the style of housing and led some middle class families to move to outer suburban areas and country estates where it was thought the air was pure and uncontaminated.⁷⁰

In the late nineteenth century the British flower painter, Marianne North, in describing Mrs Moffat's daughters, maintained that because they had been brought up in the bush they had developed traits of independence, resourcefulness and unselfishness but had not lost the cultural refinement necessary to be respected members of society. Displaying the strength of character developed through a life in the bush, and despite the danger to her, the eight year old Jo Moffat offered to climb to the top of a eucalypt and bring down a koala for North to paint. Her experiences with Mrs Moffat and her daughters led her to recommend "all young men who want good useful wives [to]... seek them in Australia".⁷¹

The adaptation of women's nurturing role to differing environmental surroundings was also illustrated by North's description of the ability of women to tame native animals. Sir Henry Parkes' daughter, Lily, was described by North as an industrious and unselfish girl who lived in the solitude of the Blue Mountains with her mother. Lily was so assimilated to her environment that, as well as knowing the local flora and fauna, she also cared for and tamed injured animals and birds, later releasing them back to their bush environment. North related that some of the birds returned to the house occasionally and looked in the window, "former pets which wished to see her [Lily] again."⁷² The assimilation to the environment began at an early age: North was amazed at the close relationship a baby, at a lonely house outside Albany, had with a cockatoo and a magpie. The baby played with the tamed birds, from time to time feeding the magpie bread and butter.⁷³ In describing Australian children as independent and resourceful, travel writers suggested that these traits were imprinted on the individual's character from childhood through the mother's close

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ North, *Recollections of a Happy Life*, Vol.2, p.119.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp.138-139.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.151.

involvement in the child's upbringing, brought about by the lack of nursemaids and nannies and the encouragement of an outdoor life.

Jessie Ackermann who also travelled throughout Australia in the late nineteenth century implicitly linked changes in child rearing practices to the development of a promising nation. She contended that due to a favourable climate in Australia and the lack of domestic help, children were not confined to the nursery but supervised out of doors on

the lawn or sand, where even the baby is free to crawl about at will investigating the mud-pies and play-houses of the older ones. If one of them trips and falls, unless injured, the busy mother calls from some point where she has them in sight: "Get up, that's a little man," or "Don't cry; don't be a baby!" The tears are dried without coddling, and the imaginary hurt is cured without any interruption in the work of the always busy mother. This does not mean neglect, but it spells in very large letters the beginning of independence of the children of Australia.⁷⁴

However Ackermann also criticised the excess of outdoor play, asserting that it translated into a lack of manners indoors, and suggested that outdoor play should be moderated because "an over-developed love for pleasure and excitement is bad, very bad". She was not generally critical of family life and upbringing and stated that Australian women were "royal mothers" and predicted that:

In time the romp wears off. The "good will to others," which is really the spirit of the child, finds expression later in a grace of manner that will, in the future, stand to the credit of the young people of Australia.⁷⁵

It would appear that by the late nineteenth century alternative child rearing practices had developed in Australia which moved away from the strict, distant and regimented British method towards a more lenient, inclusive and casual upbringing that developed as an adaptation to changes in the physical and social environment.⁷⁶ It is interesting that it was women travel writers who considered these changes as having an encouraging effect on the development of Australian children.

⁷⁴ Ackermann, *Australia from a Woman's Point of View*, p.87.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.86-89.

⁷⁶ A. Burns and J. Goodnow, R. Chisholm and J. Murray, *Children and Families in Australia: Contemporary Issues*, second edition, Sydney, 1985, pp.46-49. The authors support the view that Australian children were socialised outdoors to a greater extent than children in Britain and Europe. As a result Australian children became independent and resourceful from an early age.

Not all travel writers perceived the different child rearing practices of Australians as having a positive effect. The employment and retention of suitable domestic staff to care for children was a problem in Colonial Australia. The unequal ratio of men and women in the colonies meant that many women, who, had they stayed in Britain, would have been employed to assist in the care of children, married shortly after arrival in Australia.⁷⁷ This situation resulted in mothers becoming more involved in child rearing. Richard Twopeny frowned at the child rearing practices of Australian mothers, who included babies in everyday family life unlike in English middle-class families. This practice, he declared, had resulted in the badly behaved Australian baby:

Nurseries are few and far between. He is lashed into a chair by his mother's side at meals; he accompanies her when she is attending to her household duties, and often even when she is receiving her visitors...Wherever his mother goes, baby is also taken. He fills railway carriages and omnibuses, obstructs the pavement in perambulators, and is suckled *coram populo* in the Exhibition. There is no getting away from him unless you shut yourself up altogether. He squalls at concerts ; you have to hold him while his mother gets out of the omnibus, and to kiss him if you are visiting her house.⁷⁸

Twopeny continued the comparison into childhood and emphasised the differences between the native-born boy and his English equivalent. He discerned differences in the native-born, which he linked to nurture. The boy's environment sustained his physical needs but it lacked the discipline of an English upbringing. The Australian boy's lifestyle, which emphasised the outdoors, cultivated a boy who was

Able to ride almost as soon as he can walk, he is fond of all athletic sports; but it is not till leaving school that his athleticism becomes fully pronounced; thus reversing the order observed in England, where the great majority of the boys, who are cricket and football mad at school, more or less drop those pursuits as young men.⁷⁹

Indoors, he considered, the native-born was less restrained and more offensive than the English boy. Twopeny concluded that the boy's unrepressed childhood was reflected in his later behaviour in professional and business life.⁸⁰ According to him parental discipline was lacking in Australia and resulted in the "naughty boy and wilful girl" whose independence and self-assurance were viewed locally as holding promise for Australia's

⁷⁷ Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath, Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, p.91.

⁷⁸ Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia*, pp.82-83.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.89.

future.⁸¹ Twopeny was not convinced and revealed the superiority founded in his own British childhood in his assertion that Australian children demonstrated inferior characteristics to those of English children.

Larrikinism

Travellers identified larrikin behaviour as a possible consequence of the lack of parental guidance and of living in poor conditions in Australian cities and towns, particularly in the 1890s. They commented on its presence on Australian streets in their published accounts. In so doing they compared them to similar groups in other parts of the world and considered larrikinism in Australia of greater prevalence and a serious threat to society. Unemployment, the lack of parental supervision, rapid urbanisation and poor social planning all contributed to the appearance of larrikins on the streets of colonial Australia's cities. In Australia, it was perceived as having its origins in rapid population growth that occurred with the gold rushes of the 1850s. As fathers disappeared in search of gold, women and children were left to fend for themselves and many vagrant children roamed the streets with little supervision. The rapidity of urbanisation added to the developing social problems as poor town planning created substandard housing and high rents for the working-classes. Many working-class youth worked as unskilled labour in factories; however, as efficiency in the industrial process increased, leisure time became greater and youths were left idle. Some of these youths dressed in a particularly outrageous fashion and congregated together in gangs on street corners. They harassed passers-by and were often involved in petty larceny and prostitution.⁸²

Travel writers bring to light the ambiguity of larrikin behaviour and had varying opinions as to its prevalence and deleterious effect on society. However they all distinguished one defining feature of larrikin behaviour which was that their antics and appearance flouted the accepted social norm for youth behaviour. In comparing Australian larrikins with similar groups which existed in Europe and Britain, travel writers generally noted that the situation

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.101-102.

⁸² James Murray, *Larrikins: A Nineteenth Century Outrage*, Melbourne, 1973. Manning Clark in Clem Gorman (ed), *The Larrikin Streak: Australian Writers look at the Legend*, Sydney, 1990, p.37. John Rickard, "Lovable larrikins and awful ockers", *Journal of Australian Studies*, No. 56, March 1998, pp.78-86.

was worse in Australia. Buley wrote “The larrikin has his equivalent in most big cities, and may not differ much in type from the English Hooligan, the American Tough, or the French Apache” but he maintained that the incidence of youth gangs was greater in Australia than in the Old World.⁸³ Similarly, the Hill sisters observed that larrikin behaviour on Australian streets was “even more audacious than is their class usually at home”.⁸⁴ However Twopeny, while he acknowledged that larrikinism was troublesome in Australian cities, contended that the crime associated with it was less severe in Australia than in European cities.⁸⁵

While larrikins were not usually guilty of the more serious crimes, their “licentious and obscene behaviour” was offensive and affronting to passers-by. The Hills observed

“Larrikin” seems to be almost synonymous with our “rough”, except that it applies to young persons only at present, and that these appear to be even more audacious than is their class usually at home. ...The “larrikin” indulges in the coarsest and most insulting language addressed to inoffensive passers-by, and this is sometimes attended with personal violence, which we were told may be encountered in even the best streets of Melbourne.⁸⁶

Their actions were often perceived as stemming from the effect of detrimental social surroundings. The Hills thought it the result of a lack of parental control and guidance during childhood. However, they noted that the Government was trying to prevent the problem and had spared neither money nor attention in the search for a solution.⁸⁷

Besides the relationship between the incidence of larrikinism and poverty and urbanisation, some travel writers considered the deviant and immoral behaviour of larrikins as a sign of societal degeneration that could lead to national decay and which had implications for the empire at large. Degeneracy had not only physiological manifestations but also produced offensive conduct. It was regarded as a sign of atavism or the failure of the natural selection process and did not augur well for the future of the nation.⁸⁸ At the turn of the century Buley contended that “the larrikin pushes, or gangs, are recruited from youths of

⁸³ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, p.84.

⁸⁴ F. & R. Hill, *What we saw in Australia*, London, 1875, pp.345-346.

⁸⁵ Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia*, p.126.

⁸⁶ F. & R. Hill, *What we saw in Australia*, pp.345-346.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.346.

⁸⁸ Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, p.224.

working-class whose tastes incline in the direction of brutality and conspiracy.”⁸⁹ To Buley, it was degenerative types who were attracted to the “pushes” by the sense of belonging to an adventurous and secret society.⁹⁰ The larrikin, he contended

when his worst passions are roused he is a positive source of danger, and the perpetrator of many cowardly crimes, the consequences of which he too often contrives to escape. His existence may well be a source of uneasiness to those concerned in the future of the new nation.⁹¹

Twopeny distinguished between larrikinism in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney and felt able to define its social origins in each case. He asserted that larrikinism was a localised phenomenon in urban centres, and was particularly prevalent around seaports:

Adelaide has an advantage in being seven miles distant from its seaport, which naturally retains a large portion of the noxious element. Melbourne has two disadvantages, which tend to make it the sink of Australia – firstly in its metropolitan character and central position, and secondly in the admission of a large number of bad characters at the time of the gold-diggings. Sydney, of course, retains traces of the old convict element – an element, however, which must be acknowledged to have contributed to the good as well as to the bad qualities which are peculiar to New South Wales.⁹²

While Melbourne presented the perfect formula for the development of larrikinism, Twopeny suggested that its presence in Australia was a phase in the development of urban centres. However he considered that while larrikins were a problem of society, they were not usually involved in burglaries and serious crimes. Dale had a similar view of larrikins. They were “a little wild, reckless, and insubordinate” but not violent.⁹³ He linked their bad behaviour to climate and a daily diet high in meat products.⁹⁴ He considered that discipline was the solution to their unruliness and suggested the establishment of a Cadet Corps where military discipline would instil them with better manners and behaviour. Other travel writers echoed such solutions to the problem. When Alfred Buchanan visited Australia at the turn of the century, he was full of apprehension about Australian youth, declaring:

⁸⁹ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, pp.84-85.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.86.

⁹² Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia*, p.126.

⁹³ Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, p.251.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

It was impossible to say anything new about the Australian larrikin, just as it is impossible to exaggerate the heights of his lawlessness, or to plumb the depths of his depravity.⁹⁵

The larrikin was “a living monument of hopeless vulgarity and inexpressible vice”, a person who had “reached the summit of irresponsibility”.⁹⁶ Buchanan called for laws to prevent youth from declining into depravity.⁹⁷ Richard Twopeny warned of an increase in the anti-social actions of larrikins in Melbourne. However while he espoused the benefits of implementing corporal punishment for serious offences among this working-class group, he acknowledged they formed an influential body at election time whose votes could

turn the scale at elections. Their kith and kin form the majority of the population and therefore of the electorate. However much a member of Parliament or a Minister may recognise the necessity of meeting a social danger, he can hardly afford to do it at the expense of his seat.⁹⁸

Travel writers were concerned about the rise in the presence of larrikins on Australian streets. They expressed fear about their impact on the future of Australian society and the nation. However their fear had a wider context as it was not only Australia that was threatened by this form of social deviance but also other parts of the world.

Conclusion

Travel writers’ impressions of Australian women were guided by contemporary understanding that women were the guardians of a moral and stable society and a strong nation. Their influence was considered to extend from the home into society and the nation. Because of this defining role in society they were open to criticism when they deviated from the image. Travellers considered some Australian women self-centred as economic and personal growth took priority over family and home and thus they were perceived to be contributing to the decline in the birth rate, the maintenance of which was a source of national strength. Other travel writers explained the incidence of immorality in Australian women as the result of a developing industrial society. Like the declining birth rate, the prevalence of female immorality also raised fears of social and national decay in

⁹⁵ Buchanan, *The Real Australia*, p.14

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p.15

⁹⁸ Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia*, p.99.

Australia. In the process of describing Australian women, travel writers exposed their authority as observers by maintaining a position of superiority. Travel writers' comments on Australian women also indirectly related to Australia's contribution to the empire. Australia was viewed as the dutiful daughter of an imperial mother, thus signs of immorality and social decay in Australia ultimately stimulated fears about continuing imperial prestige and power.

Chapter Ten
**“...a quaint relic from the prehistoric times”:
Travellers’ perspectives on Australian Aborigines**

...he was a highly interesting savage, a quaint relic from the prehistoric times when the ichthyosaurus was a living reality.¹

Percy F.S. Spence and Frank Fox, *Australia*, 1910.

According to Frank Fox, the Aborigine had never advanced beyond the developmental stage of savagery and would never progress to “a national, nor even to a well-organised tribal stage of development”.² He speculated that “It was as though the race, segregated by some strange accident from the rest of humanity, and left to stagnate in an eddy of the human stream had, though incapable of real progress, been able to refine in details upon its settled primitivism.”³ Ideas stemming from racial and evolutionary science provided the background for discussions of Aborigines by travel writers in this period. Through their constructions of Aborigines as either exotic or dying or both, travel writers defined them as inferior to Europeans and thus subordinated them in their imperial rhetoric.

Many travellers believed that Aborigines were primitives with savage tendencies, low on the scale of humanity. At the same time, they appreciated the integrity of Aborigines living in their natural state and were fascinated by their outstanding bush skills and the distinctiveness of their culture. Moreover, by the late nineteenth century Aboriginal society was considered unique to evolutionary science, as it seemed to provide a link to a previous human developmental stage and a connection to the ancient origins of humankind.⁴ What was distinctive about late nineteenth and early twentieth century descriptions of Aborigines by travel writers was the sense of closure in their discussions about Aborigines. Firstly, there was a sense of finality in the ongoing process of dispossessing Aborigines of their culture and land, and secondly, in the inevitability of Aboriginal demise which was premised upon evolutionary laws of nature. Implicit in these themes was the subordination of Aborigines to a superior race.

¹ Spence and Fox, *Australia*, p.133.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp.136-137.

For travellers journeying throughout Australia during the period 1850-1914, the plight of Aborigines presented a sad and tragic counterpoint to the progress of the British Empire. Like explorers in the early nineteenth century, travellers at the end of the century expressed regret for the loss of innocence occasioned by Aboriginal contact with white civilisation. Confronted with such destruction of cultural innocence and because Aboriginal extinction was considered a *fait accompli*, many travel writers only briefly discussed Aborigines, thereby marginalizing them in their accounts. Very little space was devoted to in-depth discussions of their condition and very few travellers expressed more than a passing interest in their culture. Those who did devote a chapter or at least a few pages, were interested in their primitiveness, noble and ignoble, which could be of scientific interest and which provided a contrast to the industrial society the writers came from. These travellers carried more in their suitcases than their personal effects; they arrived with preconceived ideas about Indigenous peoples that were influenced by contemporary ideas of race and progress. Their discussions of Aborigines were founded on ideas which ranked people according to their stage of development and which placed Aborigines low on the scale, primitives destined to become extinct in the face of the power of progressive Anglo-Saxon civilisation.

This chapter examines descriptions and discussions about Aborigines contained in late nineteenth and early twentieth century travel literature and how these expositions positioned Aborigines as inferiors in the racial hierarchy which allowed their dispossession and explained British policy towards them.

A primitive people

Aborigines who lived in tribal groups in the more isolated parts of the bush were granted the dignity of primitive people uncorrupted by civilisation. In making the distinction between Aborigines who lived a traditional life and those who lived on the fringe of settlement, travellers incorporated romantic notions into their work that impelled the reader to look to the Aborigine as a link to their own ancient past. They emphasised the positive

⁴ Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939*, Carlton South, p.39.

and romantic aspects of Aboriginal culture, their dignity, independence, endurance and skill. The image of the dignified primitive was occasionally put in terms of their physical appearance. “The Gulf native is a fine, well-built specimen,” wrote Francis Birtles in 1909.⁵ (Illustration 33) Carl Lumholtz described Herbert River Aborigines (Illustration 34) as small but with

remarkable control over their bodies. They bear themselves as if conscious that they are the lords of creation, and one might envy them the dignity and ease of their movements. The women carry themselves in a dignified manner, and do not look so savage as the men.⁶

The stature, muscular tone and facial expressions of some Aborigines gave them the dignity of “noble savages”. Other travellers perceived less of the classical savage and more of the primal savage in their physical appearance. Trollope revealed that he considered Aborigines to retain more of the characteristics of simian ancestry than other races. He observed, “To my eyes the deportment of the dignified aboriginal is that of a sapient monkey imitating the gait and manners of a do-nothing white dandy.”⁷ Such a description reinforced the subordinate position of Aborigines and justified British policies that were aimed at controlling and ameliorating their condition. The French travel writer L.P. Blouet also noted the ape-like characteristics of the Aboriginal race. He declared:

The type is a horrible one. The body is badly formed, the legs thin, and the arms like those of an orang-outang; the forehead is high, narrow, and receding; the eyes dull; the chin scarcely exists, and is almost merged in the lower jaw, which is receding and very large. The hair is long and fuzzy, and looks like a crow’s nest.⁸

Blouet’s description was more graphic and derogatory than Trollope’s. In this case it was not only their stature that was indicative of their closer connection to earlier ancestors than the white race but also their physical features: the forehead shape, the receding chin and thin arms and legs, all reminiscent of humankind’s ape-like ancestors. While both of these descriptions were disparaging, implicit in Blouet’s use of satire was underlying criticism of

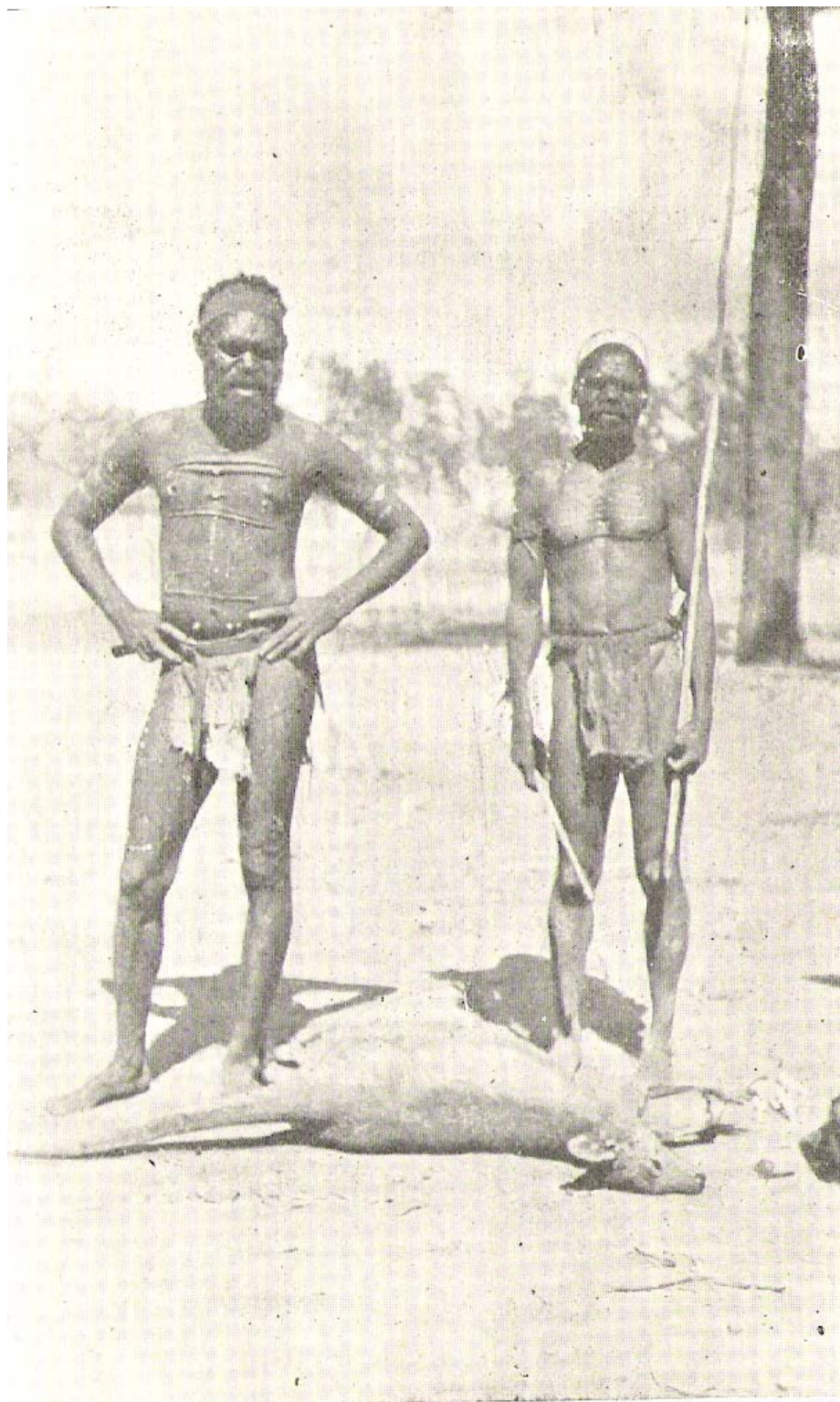
⁵ Birtles, *Lonely Lands*, p.80.

⁶ Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, p.145.

⁷ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.100.

⁸ Max O’Rell, [L. Paul Blouet] *John Bull & Co.: The Great Colonial Branches of the Firm: Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa*, London, 1894, p.143.

Illustration 33

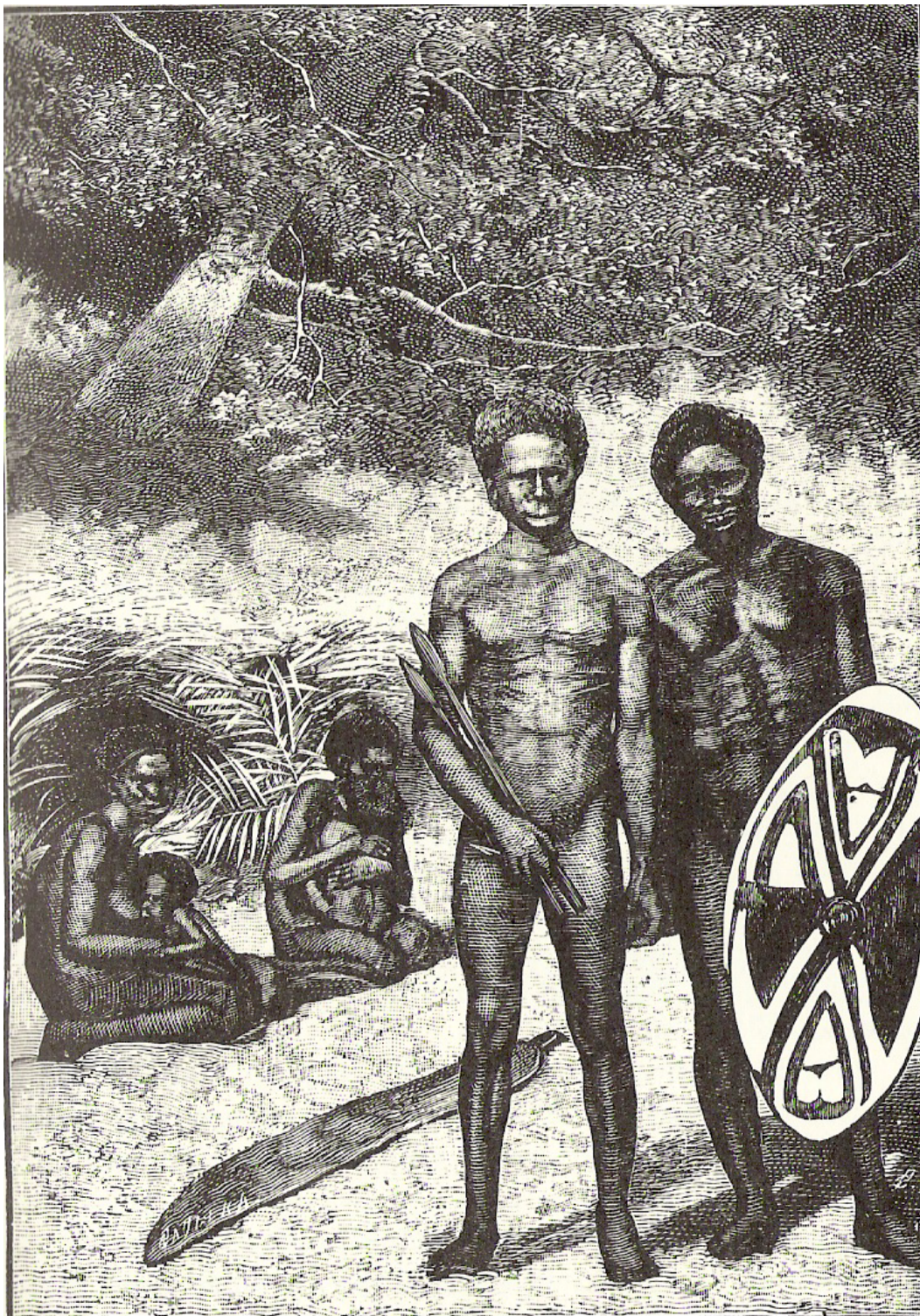


“WILD FELLAHS,” GREGORY, N.T.

Lonely Lands.

Source: Francis Birtles, *Lonely Lands*, N.S.W. Bookstall Co., Sydney, 1909, facing p.86.

Illustration 34



Source: Carl Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, John Murray, London, 1889, page 147

British imperialism. After a particularly graphic description of a drunken Aboriginal woman, he remarked: “There is another convert for the English to be proud of”.⁹

While life for Aborigines living in the remote areas was sometimes harsh, they managed to maintain their independence from white civilisation. They had a well-developed set of beliefs which explained the world around them; an efficient kinship system that defined their place within society and their obligations to other members of the group, and their own laws to maintain order. Travellers’ interpretation of the customs and practices of Aborigines, such as corroborees, cannibalism and initiation rituals recognised very little of this. Rather they harkened to exoticism and primitivity. Descriptions of corroborees in accounts of travel emphasised the primitive nature of Aboriginal culture and the savagery and wildness of the scene. The painted bodies dancing in the moonlight to ancient beats and chants fascinated travel writers. In the mid-nineteenth century Fowler was attracted by the primeval sounds of a corroboree he witnessed:

About twenty naked blacks, painted hideously, with blue stripes along each rib and down each leg, – white around each eye, and splashes of red upon the forehead, – were dancing beneath the moon and grunting all the while with a husky *hoo!* – *hoo!* – *hoo!* So as to keep a very *common* time. Five or six “gins” one with a little boy upon her back, were sprawled upon the ground, tomtoming on opossum rags, piling the fires with fresh logs, and occasionally breaking in with a wild chorus of

“Corinda briar,
Corinda briarre!”

Prolonging the last syllable for nearly half a minute. Catlin would have given a little for the picture.¹⁰

For Fowler it was a romantic scene worthy of the brush of George Catlin, an American artist of the mid-nineteenth century who specialised in painting North American Indians and their way of life.¹¹ Such scenes not only indicated the connection of Indigenous people to nature but also reminded the traveller of humankind’s ancient origins.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.144-145.

¹⁰ Fowler, *Southern Lights and Shadows*, p.90.

¹¹ Elizabeth Johns, Andrew Sayers, Elizabeth M. Kornhauser & A. Ellis, *New Worlds from Old: 19th Century Australian and American Landscapes*, Canberra, 1998, p.236. George Catlin, a lawyer, rejected the legal profession in favour of travel in west and south-west of North America. There he documented the lives of North American Indians. His Indian Gallery collection of 600 paintings was exhibited in New York in 1837. Later he travelled to London and Paris with the collection.

While staying at Somerset on Cape York in the 1880s, Ellis Rowan witnessed corroborees and was drawn by the exoticism created by a night time performance of the dance. Describing the scene she noted:

they wear masks representing birds of different species, or alligators. Last night they were pelicans, and they imitated all the movements of these birds in their dances, which were almost graceful, but it was on the whole a most grotesque sight to see the fire-light flickering on their huge beaks ornamented with feathers, while round their waists they wore the young white leaves of the cocoa-nut palm torn into shreds. Those who did not dance, sang or chanted and kept time, beating on a sort of drum.¹²

Here the firelight gave the scene a wild and romantic feel, distorting the forms of the Aboriginal dancers. At another corroboree she stressed the primitive and savage nature of the sounds and movements of the participants. At Hambleton she observed:

Then with infuriated yells they advanced and retreated in and out of the fires, dancing faster and faster, and shouting “Ough! Ough!” as each footstep went with a thud on the ground, until, fairly exhausted and streaming with the heat, they suddenly all retired into the darkness of the surrounding bush.¹³

Aborigines emerged from the surrounding bush, danced around the fire, filling the observer with awe and on completion of their dance merged back into the blackness of the bush. The travellers’ reactions to the dance reiterated earlier explorers’ views that Aborigines were an integral part of the natural landscape.

Carl Lumholtz considered the corroboree he witnessed an “utterly childish dance” which he likened to a pantomime. Nevertheless he presented an ethnographer’s observations, describing the music, the actions of the dancers and their ornaments. (Illustration 35) He revealed distaste for one female dancer who offended his moral values, remarking:

She was middle-aged, with a pair of beautiful eyes, but her limbs were slender, and she had a large protruding stomach. The very uniform hopping movements of her lean body were not graceful. She kept her arms extended and spread the long slender fingers of her hands as far apart as possible. The sight of this woman jumping up and down in the same place, in the attitude above described, and with

¹² Rowan, *The Flower Hunter*, p.114.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.37.

Illustration 35



DANCE OF THE NATIVES.

Source: Carl Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, John Murray, London, 1889, p.260.

her large breasts dangling, was truly disgusting. But the woman seemed to enjoy herself wonderfully, and she was not relieved by any of the other women.¹⁴

In their descriptions of corroborees travellers positioned the Aboriginal participants as mere scientific specimens scrutinised by a “superior” European race.

By the early 1900s, as Elsie Masson and her party watched the proceedings of a Northern Territory corroboree, the dance signified not only the traveller’s fascination with Aboriginal culture but their belief in the Aboriginal demise. She described the scene:

A ring of dark crouching forms sat round the concrete, each beside a small fire of flowing embers. In the centre of the concrete, which shone a blank white in the moonlight, five or six wild figures stamped and gesticulated, while one man squatted on the ground before them, clapping two boomerangs together and singing his harsh song. The chant began high up and wandered restlessly about like a strayed ghost seeking its grave, until at last it fell contented to a low growl, so deep that it was hardly a note at all. ...With what strange sadness that chant was burdened! The desolate melancholy of desert places, the mystery of dark, swirling rivers, the cries of birds and beasts in the primeval bush, all the struggle for life of this lonely people in a vast land seemed to find voice in the wild minor cadence.¹⁵

The imagery used by Masson was that associated with death and sorrow. Masson considered the fading sounds of the corroboree as they returned home played out the evolutionary pronouncement of survival of the fittest.¹⁶ The sound of the piano and the gramophone overwhelming the sounds of the corroboree was “prophetic...of the fate of this primitive people relic of a bygone era.”¹⁷ Masson combined images of Aborigines as exotic with the inevitability of their demise to explain the position of Aborigines in the Northern Territory – it was contact with civilisation that was destroying them culturally and physically. (Illustration 36)

Discussions of tribal customs also provided a means of emphasising the savagery of Aborigines. While their customs were often abhorrent to travel writers, discussions emphasised the closeness of Aborigines to their natural world. Buley believed the hunter

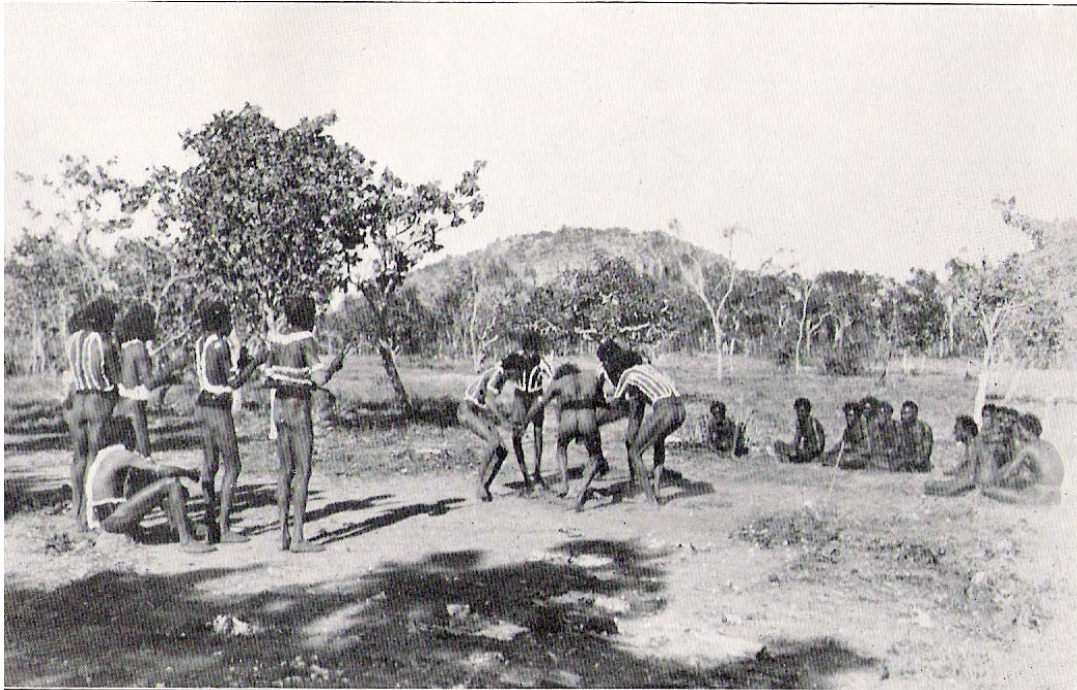
¹⁴ Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, p.259.

¹⁵ Elsie Masson, *An Untamed Territory: The Northern Territory of Australia*, London, 1915, pp.63-64.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.67.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Illustration 36



Photo, Professor Baldwin Spencer.

BLACKS AT CORROBOREE.

Source: Elsie Masson, *An Untamed Territory*, MacMillan & Co Ltd., London, 1915, facing p.64.

gatherer lifestyle of Aborigines in the remote areas of Australia revealed a lower stage of development of the people. He observed:

Of agriculture he had not even the most primitive idea, and relied for food upon the wild fruits and vegetables of the land, and upon the game secured during his fishing and hunting expeditions.¹⁸

However another traveller, Philip H. Gibbs, romanticised the lifestyle by contrasting it with the pressures of industrialised society. He considered that Aboriginal

wants are few compared with those of civilised man. He does not have to worry over tailors' bills or the latest style of fashion. In summer he goes without any clothing at all and in the winter wraps himself in kangaroo skins.¹⁹

It was their integrity in pursuing a traditional life unaffected by civilisation that was appreciated by some travellers. Anthony Trollope contended: "Their laws, especially with regard to marriage are complex and wonderful. Their corroborees, or festival dances, are very wonderful".²⁰

Some customs were repugnant to travel writers and considered indicative of a heathen state but they had an essential purpose, which was explained by the traveller. Trollope asserted that the strict observance of tribal law played an important part in the practice of cannibalism in Aboriginal society. Using the work of Samuel Bennett, Trollope related that cannibalism, at the time of the bunya festival, was not a question of "the disgusting cruelty, the frightful inhumanity, or the curious physiological question involved", but was dictated by tribal laws, "laws arising out of the necessities of their existence, and the indirect proof afforded of the severe pressure on the supply of food".²¹ In this case, Trollope believed, invited tribes practised cannibalism to compensate for not being able to touch the animals in another tribe's domain. Gibbs also suggested similar pressure on resources as a motive for Aboriginal customs. He described the Aborigine as

a very hard hearted person, and he has nasty way of abandoning his old father and mother to die of starvation in the Australian bush when he or she becomes a burden

¹⁸ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, p.153.

¹⁹ Philip H. Gibbs, *Australasia: the Britains of the South*, London, 1903, p.135.

²⁰ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.107.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.106.

to him. On the other hand, he is a devoted father himself, and often when a boy-child dies a parent will mourn for it bitterly and passionately for years.²²

The practices of infanticide and the abandonment of elderly people, which they assured readers were necessary to Aboriginal survival, emphasised the primitivism of Aboriginal customs.

While the Aboriginal practice of ritual scarification of their bodies, was its sign of courage and manhood, it was also considered a badge of savagery. (Illustration 37) Lumholtz noted:

The natives are as fond of decorating their bodies as a sailor is, but they do it clumsily with a sharp stone or a clam-shell, with which primitive instruments they cut parallel lines across the breast and stomach. To keep the wounds from healing they put charcoal or ashes in them for a month or two until they well up in rough ridges. ... In the course of time these peculiar lines, which in young men are conspicuous and as thick as one's little finger, become indistinct, so that on old men they are scarcely visible.²³

While such customs held meaning for Aboriginal society as a sign of maturity and acceptance of responsibility, travel writers through their exposition were confirming the primitive and thus inferior nature of the people which was demonstrated by their ability to endure pain and discomfort.

Life in the bush gave Aborigines skills unparalleled in European culture. However they were appreciated by travel writers as signs of their less evolved state. Lumholtz noted the agility and ingenuity of Aborigines in climbing tall trees in the Herbert Valley rainforest. They were "more skilful in climbing than any of the other natives I had seen up to this time" he observed.²⁴ Aborigines also were praised for their keen senses which made them proficient trackers, and their natural abilities which made them good stockmen in the pastoral industry.²⁵ Buley stated:

Aborigines make splendid stockmen, for they are good natural horsemen, and their keen sight and hearing, as well as their instinct for observation, are of the greatest advantage in this work. It more closely resembles their natural life, providing them

²² Gibbs, *Australasia: the Britains of the South*, pp.134-135.

²³ Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, pp.149-150.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.97-98.

²⁵ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, p.158.

Illustration 37



A YOUNG BOY FROM HERBERT RIVER,
SHOWING ORNAMENTAL SCARS.

Source: Carl Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, John Murray, London, 1889, p.149

with plenty of change and excitement, and with the nomad existence to which they have always been accustomed.²⁶

Aboriginal women made good domestic servants in the bush; their faithfulness and cheerfulness correlated to a perception of the childlike nature of less evolved people.²⁷ Fox noted Aboriginal proficiency in constructing the boomerang which he considered a paradox in such primitive people. He contended:

In the manufacture and use of the boomerang, for instance, the Australian aboriginal is unique. It is a throwing stick that if it misses the object at which it is aimed, it comes back to the feet of the thrower. The boomerang shows a knowledge of the effect of curves on plane surfaces which would make the fortune of an aeroplanist if he could apply its secret.²⁸

While Mae Vivienne was thrilled by an Aboriginal demonstration of boomerang throwing she did not think that the development of the boomerang was unique, and stated “a weapon almost the same was used by the Abyssinians hundreds of years ago, and still earlier by the people of ancient Egypt.”²⁹

Tales of escape from Aboriginal attacks added adventure to accounts of travel. By the late nineteenth century travel throughout Australia was relatively safe; Aborigines had been subdued and travellers were unlikely to be attacked. However some travellers were still able to incorporate the adventure of Aboriginal attack into their narratives, particularly those who travelled through the more remote parts of Australia where Aborigines still lived a traditional life. Francis Birtles related an incident where he was nearly speared by Aborigines while he was travelling by bicycle in 1907 through the isolated interior of the Northern Territory.

Attracted by the howling of the pups and the screaming of their women folk they stood like statues, with spears poised and eyes ablaze, awaiting my oncoming. It did not take me long to grasp the situation, and, concluding that a flash past would be my best move, I put my head down and pedalled for all I was worth. The rush rather upset their calculations, for, although fully a dozen spears were sent whizzing after me and the sound of their peculiar “singing” sent a few shivers down my spine I escaped unscathed. One spear better judged than the rest found an opening between the spokes of my front wheel, but the angle at which it struck and the speed

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Spence and Fox, *Australia*, p.137.

²⁹ Vivienne, *Travels in Western Australia*, p.176.

at which I was going caused it to snap and the broken half caught me a severe rap on the right arm. ... I rode fully fifty miles before I camped that night, and as a precautionary measure I lit no fire, but was content to have a cold tea.³⁰

Birtles was perpetuating the image of the Aborigine as hostile and treacherous, at a time when such incidents were few. He added adventure or tall stories to his narrative for the readers' enjoyment.

Even when such incidents did not affect the traveller directly, they delighted in relating accounts of Aboriginal hostility towards white settlers that exposed frontier violence and the Aboriginal savagery in the past. Mae Vivienne included in her narrative of her travels in Western Australia, an account of the Aboriginal massacre of white settlers in the 1840s. She reported:

York is one of the oldest Western Australian towns, and enjoys the distinction of being the place where the first official execution took place in 1840. The wife of a settler, Mrs Cook, and her infant, were murdered by aborigines during the absence of her husband. The murderers escaped into the bush, and were only brought to justice through a tribal quarrel which resulted in some natives betraying them. They were conveyed to the scene of their crime and hanged in chains, in the presence of a large gathering of natives.³¹

Vivienne was concerned not only with the violence of the Aboriginal attack on a defenceless woman but also with relating the punishment meted out to the perpetrators. In relating this event and others like it in her account she kept alive the concept of the savagery of Aborigines on the frontier, who were often dealt with soundly or subdued by the firm hand of European justice.

Some travel writers were ethnographers and made closer observations of traditional Aborigines than most. While exploring the rainforest of the upper Herbert River, the Norwegian ethnographer Carl Lumholtz reflected:

Here I was to find the natives in their original condition, uninfluenced by intercourse with the white man. I had long desired to study these savages – the Australian aborigines, the lowest of the human race – in their actual conditions of

³⁰ Birtles, *Lonely Lands*, pp.141-142.

³¹ Vivienne, *Travels in Western Australia*, p.16.

existence; for the ethnological student no phase of human life is so interesting as the most primitive one.³²

Majority scientific opinion in the late nineteenth century held that as different races demonstrated differing rates of evolution, it was possible to rank them according to their stage of social and biological development. The white race exhibited the highest degree of evolutionary development brought about by successful interaction with their environment while Aborigines were ranked lowest, constrained by environmental factors which did not stimulate biological or societal adaptations. Australia was of particular interest to scientists, as not only were the flora and fauna unique, but the Indigenous people displayed a distinctiveness that could be explained in terms of their lower stage of evolution. It was considered that Aborigines provided an indirect link to humankind's apelike ancestors.³³ Anthropologist Baldwin Spencer stated that Aborigines were "the most backward race extant", an example of an earlier stage of human development. Aborigines had not advanced beyond a stone age existence as they had not had the impetus to advance which came from competition with more advanced races.³⁴

Travel writers demonstrated an awareness and understanding of contemporary ideas about human evolution. Nearly all travel writers ranked Aborigines low on the evolutionary scale. Travellers' discussions of Aboriginal development were related to their physical appearance, behaviour and material culture which demonstrated their low developmental stage. Anthony Trollope wrote:

These people were in total ignorance of the use of metals, they went naked, they ill-used their women, they had no houses, they produced nothing from the soil. They had not even flint arrow-heads. They practiced infanticide. In some circumstances of life they practised cannibalism. They were savages of the lowest kind.³⁵

He placed Aborigines lower than Africans and although he considered African civilisation low, he contended that the African had redeeming qualities; he could be "taught to work for his bread".³⁶ The Aborigine could not, as he was innately idle:

³² Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, p.113.

³³ McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, p.39.

³⁴ Walter Baldwin Spencer, cited in McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, pp.41-42.

³⁵ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.105.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.108-109.

the dignity of black deportment of which one hears not unfrequently is simply the dignity of idleness...His sinews are never tired and torn and stunted by burdens, and he can go erect...This so called dignity has to me been the most odious part of his altogether low physiognomy.³⁷

Trollope contended that the dignified bearing of Aborigines was in fact an indication of their low developmental stage and indolence. It indicated their savagery, the fact that they only worked to service their immediate needs and were not worn down and crippled by heavy work.

Gibbs asserted that Aboriginal life was either one of plenty or of starvation. They did not prepare for contingencies. Gibbs noted:

The blackfellow has one great failing, which is the cause of needless suffering to him – that is, a lack of thriftiness. He has not learnt the lesson of the squirrel, which hoards up a store of nuts at their time of ripening to provide him with food through the winter.³⁸

It was believed that without the impetus to advance the Aboriginal race had failed to progress beyond the primitive stage.

Evolutionary theory and the idea of progress were entwined to explain biological and social development. Evidence of the successful advancement of the white race was contained in their social and economic progress. Indicative of the Victorian belief in progress were attempts to educate and advance Aborigines on the developmental scale. However because of their inferiority they were incapable of the progressive Victorian attitude of hard work and individual and societal advancement. Gibbs noted their only concern was their immediate needs and that most Aborigines had a “rooted dislike to settled work of any kind, or to staying in one part of the country. They wander about in tribes, having no interest in life except to get food for themselves and their families, and to shelter themselves from bad weather.”³⁹ Trollope asserted that “for years, probably for many centuries, they have made no progress” and even European attempts to civilise them and thereby advance their culture had been unsuccessful.⁴⁰ Another travel writer R.H. Horne

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.109.

³⁸ Gibbs, *Australasia: the Britons of the South*, p.135.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.133.

⁴⁰ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.107.

observed in the 1850s that while Aborigines were “quick to acquire the vices of civilization, the aborigines have shown little capacity and no desire to assimilate themselves to its virtues and refinements”.⁴¹ Rosamond and Florence Hill noted that in Adelaide a school for Aborigines had been established, but they observed that although the students were apt to learn basic lessons they were unable to find permanent employment when they finished school. Many, they stated, “returned to their wild life, while the few who hung about the town were shiftless and destitute, and exhibited in an intensified form the vices of civilisation”.⁴² According to travellers, when Aborigines found employment they were inconsistent workers who often reverted to their traditional lifestyle. Buley noted Aborigines made good stockmen because the life was closely associated with their natural ways but, he observed, “should the tribe to which they belong make its appearance in the neighbourhood, they at once grow unsettled and sullen and nothing will restrain them from ‘going wild’ for a time at least.”⁴³ He considered that this pattern increased as they got older and they became “less diligent and attentive to their duties.”⁴⁴

Infrequently travellers were more optimistic about the Aborigines’ ability to progress under the supervision of the Christian churches or government authorities. The Hill sisters related the success of the establishment of a Christian mission at Poonindie in South Australia. Aborigines had been converted from their savage ways and been taught that hard work was of benefit to them and their community.⁴⁵ They noted some cottages had gardens. They were “humble little thatched dwellings, generally containing only one room,” which was “occasionally divided into two or more parts by a curtain or other simple means of separation.” They observed that they “found [the houses] extremely clean and tidy; and the good fires the natives love to keep – for they are very sensitive to cold – made them bright and cheerful.”⁴⁶

Their description of the houses at Poonindie, reminiscent of a rustic scene, demonstrated that Aborigines were assimilating to Christianity and the European way of life. They

⁴¹ Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospects*, pp.168-169.

⁴² R. & F. Hill, *What we saw in Australia*, p.179.

⁴³ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, p.158.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.158.

⁴⁵ R. & F. Hill, *What we saw in Australia*, p.188.

noted that even those Aborigines who had retained the nomadic lifestyle occasionally attended the school and church.⁴⁷ Implying some criticism of the past treatment of Aborigines by Europeans, the Hills contended that such institutions would increase:

our knowledge of the nature of the blacks, developing their higher powers, and promoting good-will between their race and our own, effect more to protect them from injustice and cruelty than any police regulations can achieve.⁴⁸

However such views were in a minority in the body of travel literature covered here, as most travel writers believed that Aborigines had an inability to progress and would disappear when engaged in competition with the more successful Anglo-Saxon race. For Buley “even the most intelligent and best-intentioned efforts to civilise this people have proved abortive and injurious to them.”⁴⁹

Travellers’ accounts often contrasted the progressive nature of the Anglo-Saxon race with the perceived inactivity of Aboriginal society. The American traveller Reverend Clark used a comparison of technologies to demonstrate the contrast between the “vanishing bushmen” and the “majestic white race”.⁵⁰ The “vanishing bushmen” in their dug-out canoes paddled out to meet the “all-conquering whites” in their “full powered ocean steamer” to beg for tobacco. After the meeting, the ship steamed away and the canoes disappeared. Clark used this as an analogy for the fate of native peoples in the face of progressive civilisation. With a sense of closure he remarked, “so the black races are disappearing, while the Anglo-Saxons keep steadily on their way, conquering and to conquer.”⁵¹ Gilbert Parker also contrasted European with Aborigines. On one side of the Darling River was evidence of the progressive Anglo-Saxon settlement of Australia while on the other side “Aboriginal Australia [held] ... its sorry court” as a dying race.⁵²

Travel writers believed that natural laws existed which dictated that Aborigines could not survive contact with civilisation. McGregor states “Aboriginal extinction was a corollary

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.184.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.189.

⁴⁹ Buley, *Australian life in Town and Country*, p.153.

⁵⁰ Clark, *Our Journey around the World*, p.129

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Parker, *Round the Compass in Australia*, pp.25-26.

of their primitivity. A race so undeveloped and immature could not possibly survive in competition with the superior and progressive Europeans”.⁵³ As British traveller, R.H. Horne contended, the lowly position of Aborigines was dictated by “laws of nature” which decreed “that some nations and tribes of the earth shall be stationary, and that others shall be progressive”.⁵⁴ He suggested that it was the fate of such societies to succumb to the more advanced races. Buley asserted that nothing could be done to avert the fate of Aborigines “for it dates back to an era before the stone age, and cannot be in any way reconciled with the conditions of today”.⁵⁵ Fox declared the Aboriginal demise to be so certain that it was possible to estimate “a date on which ‘the last post’ will be sounded over the Australian, as it has been over the Tasmanian aboriginal race.”⁵⁶ When Trollope visited his son in Australia in the 1870s he noted that Aborigines were diminishing in numbers. This he put down to the more progressive race subjugating the less progressive; it was their “fate to be abolished”.⁵⁷ Trollope, demonstrating a modicum of compassion, stated that:

Of the Australian black man we may certainly say that he has to go. That he should perish without unnecessary suffering should be the aim of all who are concerned in the matter.⁵⁸

Other travellers also advocated kindness towards a dying race.⁵⁹ Harris supported the establishment of Government reserves so that the “remaining days of the race” could be “spent in peace”.⁶⁰ This was something he felt not even those who supported a white Australia policy would condemn.⁶¹ Spurr likened one such government settlement, Cornanderrk, to a mausoleum. He considered the idyllic natural setting and the silence which enveloped the site portended a dying race. “What more fitting as an accompaniment of death than the solemn stillness which already heralds the eternal stillness of the tomb?” he wrote.⁶²

⁵³ McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, p.48.

⁵⁴ Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospects*, p.168.

⁵⁵ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, p.156.

⁵⁶ Spence and Fox, *Australia*, p.141.

⁵⁷ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.112.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.113.

⁵⁹ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, p.160.

⁶⁰ Harris, *Outback in Australia*, p.161.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Spurr, *Five Years under the Southern Cross*, p.154.

Complacency in their acceptance of the inevitability of the Aboriginal demise and condemnation of British policy which had initiated their end created tensions in some travel writers' narratives. There was an inability to see Aboriginal survival as a possibility. This was understandable given that British anthropologists maintained that primitive people would not survive engagement with white civilisation as they were "unaccustomed to making rational choices of any sort. Primitive social systems were extremely fragile – the products of instinctive reactions and unconscious adaptations."⁶³ In theory, it was the survival of the fittest and the primitive and instinctive nature of Aboriginal people that meant they could not survive contact with the progressive Anglo-Saxon race. It was a proven scientific certainty that despite attempts to protect Aborigines and help them to progress along the scale of development, "they [were] destined to disappear soon".⁶⁴ Demonstrating the inevitability of Aboriginal demise held by many travellers, Michael Davitt remarked: "The white man's presence means death to the black man of Australia, and nothing will avert his doom."⁶⁵ Although Davitt and other travellers may have condemned the "civilising" mission of colonialism, with its policy of "Bibles first, bombshells after", as unjust and hypocritical, nothing could avert the evolutionary laws of nature that decreed Aboriginal demise when placed in contact with a more progressive and sophisticated race.⁶⁶

It was not just violence, addiction and disease which was leading to their extinction but even kindness stemming from the more well-intentioned actions of Europeans. Fox stated:

Of almost as great deadliness to these poor aborigines was the kindness which they met with in some quarters from the whites. With kindness came clothes and the habit of house-dwelling; and clothes and confinement meant, in time phthisis. With kindness of a sort came, too, rum and tobacco.⁶⁷

When Aborigines took up European ways they were placed in a more precarious position, he asserted, as they became addicted to European vices and these meant death.⁶⁸ Such

⁶³ Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within: the Social History of British Anthropology 1885-1945*, Cambridge, 1991, p.93.

⁶⁴ Davitt, *Life and Progress in Australia*, p.36.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.39. O'Rell, *John Bull & Co.*, p.143

⁶⁷ Spence and Fox, *Australia*, p.139.

⁶⁸ Spurr, *Five Years under the Southern Cross*, p.153.

Aborigines were nearly always depicted as degraded and corrupt; as contaminated by contact with civilisation as depicted in the illustration from Lumholtz's account. (Illustration 38) Buley observed the differences between the two groups of Aborigines; one the dignified savage and the other the weak savage, "Interesting as the black-fellow undoubtedly is while he remains in his wild condition, when he comes into close contact with the white man he presents a spectacle that is pitiable and pathetic."⁶⁹ Michael Davitt also observed the collapse of the Aboriginal traditional way of life upon contact with Europeans. He noted some Aborigines "are found near towns or mining camps as tramps and beggars, and bear all the evidences of their doubly degraded condition under the influences of drink and disease."⁷⁰ Under such conditions Aboriginal women were mistreated within their society and substance abuses developed.⁷¹

Aborigines, like other native people, were considered to have an innate weakness which made them unable to resist temptation when alcohol, opium or tobacco were available. Alcohol was to the Aborigines, according to Horne, "the fatal emissary that will sweep his tribe from the face of the earth, and in the course of a few brief years reduce his race to a dark fragment of colonial history".⁷² Rosamond and Florence Hill observed, "Drink is as terrible a snare to the Australian native as to the Red Indian. Having once tasted it, he craves for more, and a very small quantity makes him utterly mad."⁷³ Travellers considered alcohol became the "ruling vice" of Aborigines and they would sell their land over and over in order to obtain it.⁷⁴ While travellers suggested that the dependence on alcohol was destroying Aboriginal health, a factor most travellers found tragic and regrettable, they did not necessarily accept any responsibility on the part of Europeans. They considered the demise of the Aboriginal race to be inevitable; alcohol, opium, violence and disease were just hastening the event. As primitive people, Aborigines were considered incapable of making rational choices, particularly when it came to the vices of

⁶⁹ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, 156.

⁷⁰ Davitt, *Life and Progress in Australasia*, p.37.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

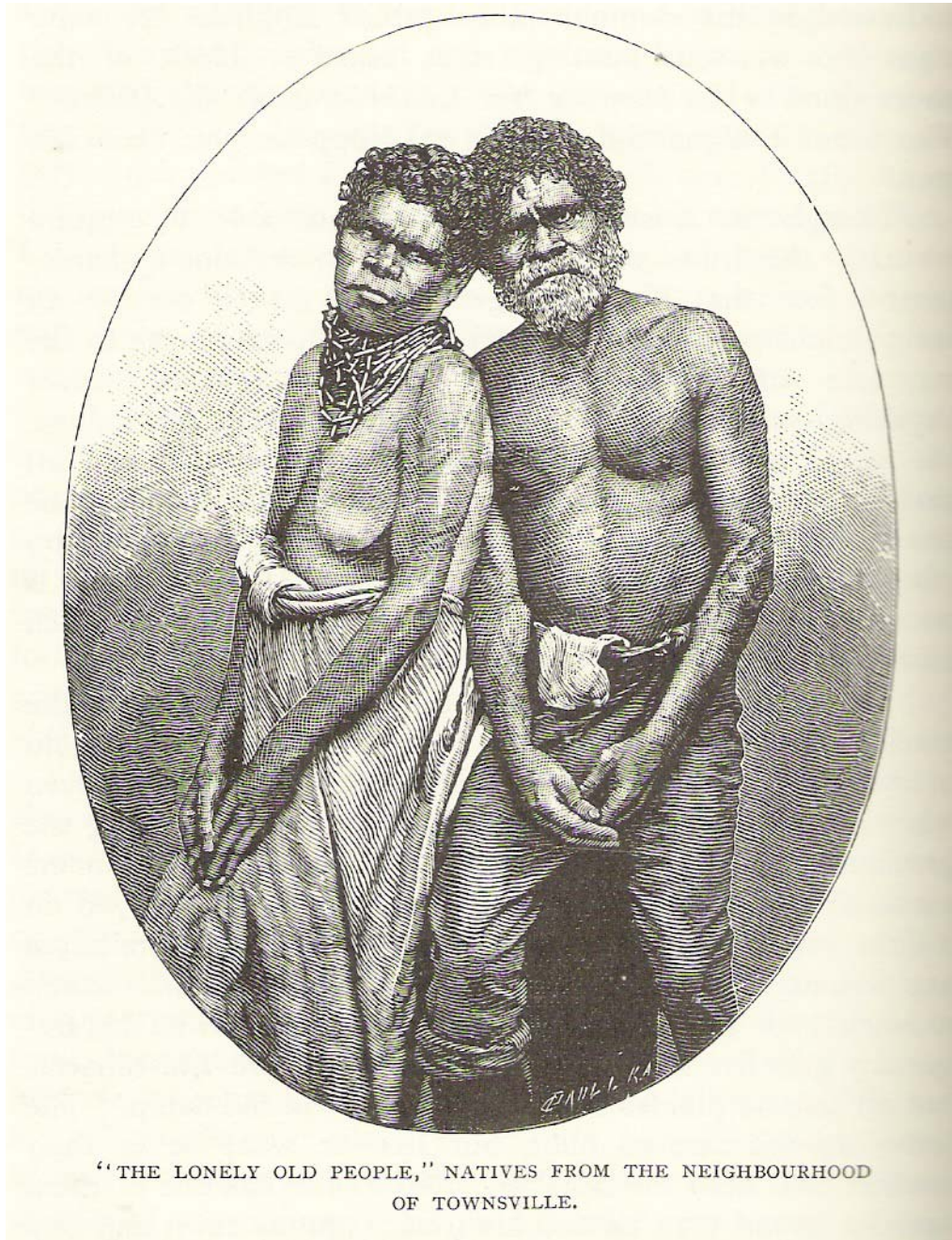
⁷² Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospects*, pp.168-169.

⁷³ R. & F. Hill, *What we saw in Australia*, p.190.

⁷⁴ Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospects*, pp.168-169.

European society. They bore the moral responsibility for their predicament as their stage of development was low

Illustration 38



Source: Carl Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, John Murray, London, 1889,
at p.370.

han making

rational decisions about the implications of their choice. Buley observed:

The opportunities for obtaining drink and opium are too many and too frequent, and these tribes are also diminishing in number. This rapid decay of an interesting race, unfortunate as it is, would appear to be inevitable. The unvarying testimony of all the authorities upon the subject goes to prove that contact with civilisation is fatal to the Australian black.⁷⁵

Some travel writers held the Chinese responsible for Aboriginal demise. Buley noted that despite laws to prohibit it, the Chinese bribed the Aborigines with offers of opium in order to get them to work. He noted: “indulgence in this poisonous drug is even more fatal to the blacks than spirits, but they readily acquire the craving for it, and will do anything for a small quantity.”⁷⁶ Some travellers used statistical evidence to support their views of the impending demise of Aborigines. Gibbs noted that only 70,000 Aborigines remained in Australia in 1903 whereas there had been twice that number when the colonies were established in 1788.⁷⁷

When travellers discussed the inevitability of Aboriginal demise, they were referring to “full-blooded” Aborigines and not those of mixed ancestry. Some travellers noted that Aboriginal blood would continue to flow in those of mixed descent. Davitt asserted:

Half breeds, ..., are very vigorous specimens of the mixed colours and are likely to perpetuate some of the blood of the latest racial victim to European civilization.⁷⁸

Travellers viewed those of mixed origin in either an optimistic or pessimistic light. Often their positive description related to the identification of dominant white traits in the individual. The Hills observed many of the inhabitants of Poonindie were the result of Aboriginal and white unions. They described them as “very intelligent, and some of them are extremely handsome, though usually their aspect is mournful.”⁷⁹ As evidence of their

⁷⁵ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, pp.152-153.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.159.

⁷⁷ Gibbs, *Australasia: the Britains of the South*, p.130. Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, p.152.

⁷⁸ Davitt, *Life and Progress in Australasia*, p.36.

⁷⁹ R. & F. Hill, *What we saw in Australia*, p.185.

optimism they considered the success of one youth of mixed descent, who taught at the school in the school teacher's absence. He was a Christian and had a gentle, calm manner.⁸⁰

Other travellers considered the negative results of mixed relationships. In this case it was suggested that the destructive elements of the Aboriginal's character dominated. Buley contended that while the presence of children of mixed origin was a reproach to the behaviour of whites, it held larger implications for blacks, for it signified "the absence of any vestige of morality in either black man or woman."⁸¹ It was the innate immorality of primitives that was evident in the resultant children. Spurr noted that while mixed marriages between Aborigines and whites occurred, the children of the marriages were not accepted in school any more than those whose parents were both Aborigines. Such behaviour by white children, he declared, indicated that discrimination was as prevalent in Australia as it was in the United States.⁸² Like other commentators many travel writers predicted a bleak future not only for individuals of mixed descent but for Aborigines generally. It was a future that disregarded any rights they had over the land.

Possessing the land

Not only did evolutionary science explain the Aboriginal demise but it also justified their dispossession. International law stipulated that ownership of "discovered" land was guided by whether the inhabitants practiced agriculture and had developed the land by constructing buildings and towns.⁸³ Aborigines were considered not to have settled habits or cultivate the soil but roamed about the coastal fringe, living off the land and sea, with no attachment to the land or structured form of society. Australia was considered a land belonging to no one, although Cook and Banks admitted that they did not survey the inland and accounts published following the voyage stated that the interior was "either wholly desolate, or at least still more thinly inhabited than the places which have been visited."⁸⁴ However as

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, p.156.

⁸² Spurr, *Five years under the Southern Cross*, p.155.

⁸³ Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians: Black Response to White Dominance 1788-1980*, North Sydney, 1982, p.26. Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, Ringwood, 1987, p12.

⁸⁴ Cited in Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, p.32.

settlement developed opinions diverged and many Europeans came to question the legality of British tenure as they realised that the Aborigines did have connection to their land. Settlers observed that Aborigines had a developed and spiritual sense of ownership of land and an understanding of tribal boundaries. The land was utilised and tended but in a somewhat different manner to European understanding. Nevertheless this was alien to many British travellers, who came from a progressive society where land served a utilitarian purpose, to be developed in order to advance the individual and society. Australian land lacked the visible evidence of Aboriginal progress; buildings, agriculture and a recognisable system of government. The view of Aboriginal primitivism became entrenched and as time passed British sovereignty was assured despite questions related to the legality of British acquisition.⁸⁵

By the late nineteenth century travel writers displayed degrees of acceptance of the fact that Aborigines had been in possession of the land when Europeans had settled Australia. However it is unclear what they meant by possession, that is, whether it was legal ownership or mere custody of the land until the arrival of a more advanced civilisation. Buley wrote that prior to European settlement “the black-fellow roamed in undisputed possession of the continent”, but did not question present British ownership.”⁸⁶ General acceptance of the theory of the demise of the Aboriginal race meant travel writers could acknowledge Aboriginal prior possession of the land. For example Gibbs declared: “The black people to whom Australia belonged before white men had discovered the great island-continent are rapidly dwindling away”.⁸⁷

Some travellers implied Aboriginal possession was only temporary as they were not sophisticated and advanced enough to appreciate the potential of the land. Spurr acknowledged that Aborigines were the custodians of the land until the arrival of a higher civilisation:

When the first settlers came to Australia they found in possession of the country a black population, representing a humanity low down in the scale. The native population was never in reality so large as many persons have imagined. It is

⁸⁵ Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, pp.35,39.

⁸⁶ Buley, *Australian Life in Town and Country*, p.153

⁸⁷ Gibbs, *Australasia: the Britains of the South*, p.130

difficult to arrive at exact figures, because in the north there are still large numbers of natives living in a state of practical savagery. These roam about at their will. Where the white man has penetrated, however, the black has gradually receded. When the black adopts “civilised” ways, his already precarious existence becomes yet more precarious. Affecting the white man’s vices – the first thing he naturally copies – he speedily runs down the hill and passes off the scene. The native population is being gradually but surely wiped out.⁸⁸

Trollope stated that the Aborigines had resisted Europeans’ attempts to civilise them because in their opinion:

the land was theirs and the fulness thereof, or emptiness as it might be. The white man was catching all their fish, driving away their kangaroos, taking up their land, domineering over them, and hanging them in chains when they did that which to them was only natural and right.⁸⁹

However while Trollope understood the reasons for Aboriginal resistance he did not advocate returning the land to the Aborigines. He was certain that if a policy of not dispossessing native people had prevailed in the world it would have made little difference to the situation which developed when an advanced civilisation and a backward society met.⁹⁰ The weaker society was destined to die out. Parker also linked Aboriginal extinction to dispossession and violence but tended to accept responsibility on the part of Europeans for the plight of Aborigines. He observed:

They are victims of a policy of Reprisal; of an unwritten word which went forth from high places: “Disperse the aboriginal’ ...Destruction came upon the men, and destruction and worse upon the women, and here they are...”Well, mate, how are you?” said the traveller to a grey-beard. ... But this new scene before us suggests nothing of the gloomy thought that comes with a view of a fading people, upon whose lands another race have made distraint.⁹¹

Davitt, who displayed some personal resentment towards Britain, was much stronger in his condemnation of British dispossession of Aborigines, asserting that British law was one-sided and had justified the dispossession and violence meted out to Aborigines.⁹² While such criticism was damning to Australia and to the prestige of the empire, it came from a position of authority and was narrated in a tone that indicated his superiority.

⁸⁸ Spurr, *Five Years under the Southern Cross*, p.153

⁸⁹ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.105.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Parker, *Round the Compass in Australia*, pp.26-28

Conclusion

Like the exploration literature of the early nineteenth century, the imperial rhetoric of travellers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century positioned Aborigines as inferiors. By the late nineteenth century there was less discussion of Aborigines in travel literature and it was only those travellers journeying through the more remote parts of Australia who discussed Aboriginal culture in detail. In the early years of settlement information about Aboriginal culture was important in furthering settlement of newly explored land but by the late nineteenth century much of Australia had been explored, Aborigines dispossessed of their land and moved onto to reserves and missions. While there continued to be the occasional reference to Aborigines as noble savages, travellers concentrated more on the primitive nature of Aboriginal culture. In their narratives they created a stereotypical image of Aborigines as primitives who were at a lower stage of development. The travellers' expositions of Aboriginal customs and practices confirmed the perceptions of their savagery and immorality. While Aborigines of mixed ancestry would survive contact they were usually not considered in a positive light. Successive travel writers authenticated these images and contributed to the establishment of the inferior position of Aborigines. As inferiors Aborigines were excluded or marginalised from European society and dispossessed of their land. Racial and evolutionary science provided the intellectual framework that influenced travellers' observations of Aborigines and suggested Aborigines would not survive contact with a more advanced civilisation. By the early twentieth century travellers were resigned to the inevitability of Aboriginal extinction.

⁹² Davitt, *Life and Progress in Australia*, p.34.

Chapter Eleven
Picturesque and progressive:
The Australian landscape from a traveller's point of view

I walked up in the twilight to the esplanade at the gate of the public garden, and I think I have never in my life gazed on a scene so entirely beautiful. It was not for the trees and flowers. They were lovely, and anywhere in Europe would be celebrated as a wonder. But there was not the science, there was not the elaborate variety, which I had admired at Ballarat. Sydney is many degrees hotter. Tropical plants which there require glass to shelter them, at Sydney breathe luxuriantly the free air of heaven; but the roses and lilies of the temperate zone, which are the fairest flowers that blow, grow feebly there, or will not grow at all. It is the situation which gives to the Sydney garden so exquisite a charm. The ground slopes from the town to the sea with inclining lawns, flowerbeds, and the endless variety of tropical flora. Tall Norfolk Island pines tower up dark into the air, and grand walks wind for miles among continually varying landscapes, which are framed by the openings in the foliage of the perfumed shrubs. Within the compass of the garden the sea forms two deep bays, one of which is reserved for the ships of the squadron. ... Behind the anchorage were rocky islands, with the deserted ruins of ancient batteries, now useless and superseded by ampler fortifications inside the bluffs. Merchant ships lay scattered over the outer harbour, and a yacht or two lay drifting with idle sails. Crowded steam ferry-boats were carrying the workmen home from the city to distant villages. On wooded upland or promontory shone the white palaces of the Sydney merchants, and beyond again were the green hills, softened by distance and the growing dusk into purple, which encircle the great inlet of Port Jackson.

As a mere picture it was the loveliest that I had ever looked upon.¹

J.F. Froude, *Oceana*, 1892.

In the above epigraph, James Froude used “word painting” to depict the uniqueness and picturesque nature of the Sydney botanical gardens and harbour.² He not only described the scene but gave it economic value through his imperial rhetoric, a value that consolidated imperial progress. Froude visited South Africa, Australia and New Zealand in 1885 to gain material for his book *Oceana* in which he enunciated a political vision of a Commonwealth of British colonies. His account of Australia was enriched by his developed aesthetic sensibility. Froude followed the picturesque convention of landscape description in the epigraph, painting the harbour vista in words beginning with the gardens in the foreground, moving to the ships in the middle distance and finally limiting the scene with the green hills in the background. His description included imperial rhetoric that promoted an appreciation of those elements in the scene that were evidence of the colonies’ progress – the busy harbour with merchant ships and

¹ Froude, *Oceana*, pp.144-145.

² Nineteenth century art and architecture critic, John Ruskin, used the term “word painting” to define the process of textually painting a scene, such as Froude’s harbour side view. Recently, the literary scholar Rhoda Flaxman has defined Victorian word painting as “extended passages of visually oriented descriptions whose techniques emulate pictorial methods.” The travel writer, from the observer’s perspective, framed the view, defining its boundaries, and then progressively moved through the landscape, describing its composition. The reader was engaged by its worthiness for illustration, and by the precise choice of words and imagery, often contrasting the colour, texture and size of elements within the view. The scene was thereby translated into a textual illustration following picturesque composition in art. Flaxman, *Victorian Word-Painting and Narrative*, pp.9-10.

ferry boats and the grand houses of the merchants. Froude supported his picturesque description with an illustration of the scene. (Illustration 39)

While travellers might focus on the aesthetic value of the scene before them, landscape description in the late nineteenth century, like that in the earlier part of the century was often characterised by the merging of aesthetic value with ideas of progress. In their narratives travellers used the conventions of the picturesque and romanticism to envision the landscape's future and to convey their appreciation of its potential. At the same time a utilitarian approach to land, often devoid of aesthetic appreciation but infused with scientific understanding, was visible in their assumptions that any environmental problems were temporary or a sign of the land's fecundity.

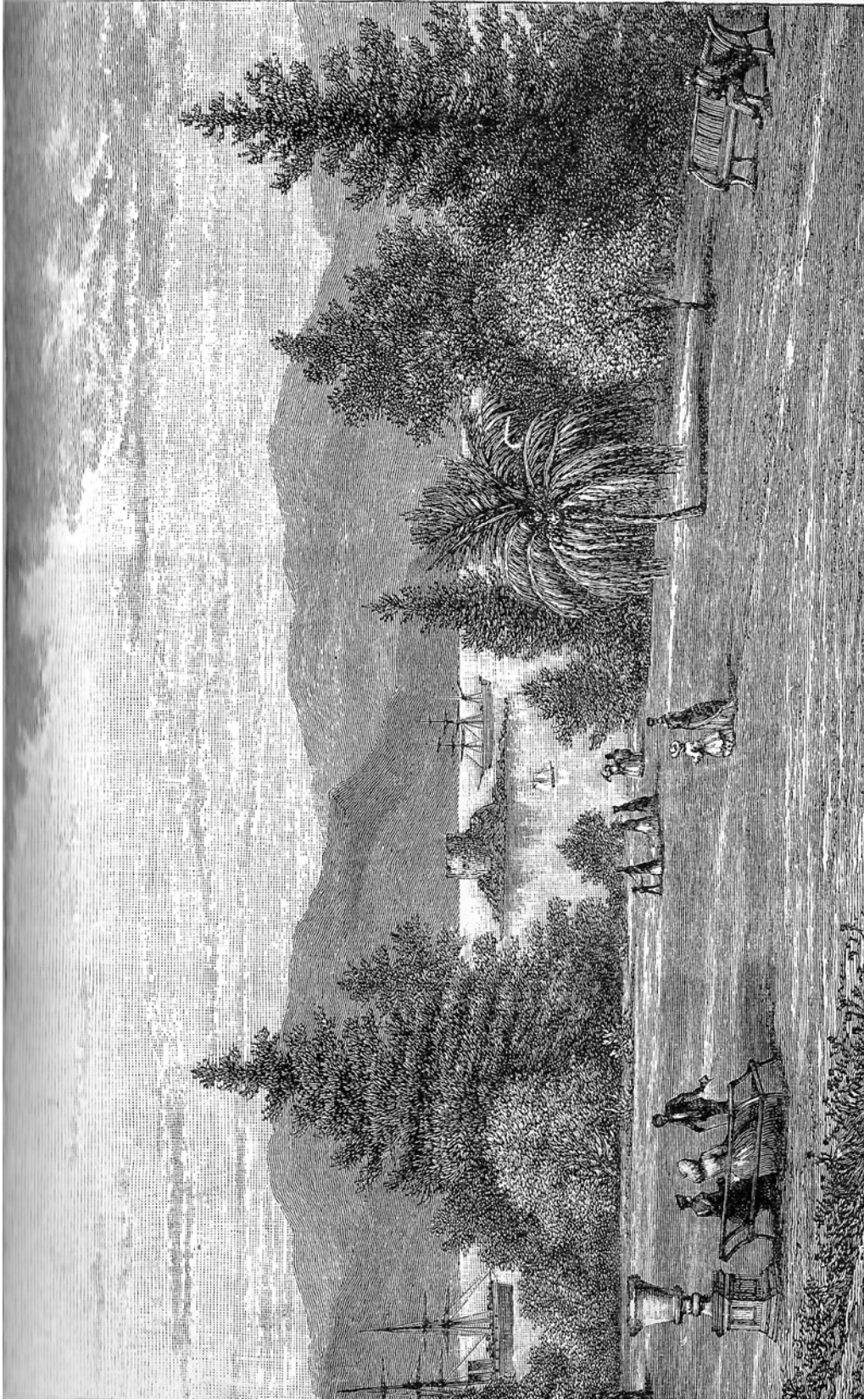
This chapter explores the traveller's position as a purveyor of Australian landscape description and reveals the philosophical understandings at the basis of their appreciation. It considers the prominence of the idea of progress in aesthetic appreciation and the role of science in explaining environmental problems. The chapter suggests that the imperial rhetoric of landscape description in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries consolidated Australia's economic potential to further the prestige of the empire.

Landscape from the traveller's perspective

Like an artist illustrating a scene worthy of artistic representation, the traveller employed word-painting to evoke the values of the scene surveyed. This was a position of some power as erudite travellers could compose scenes that suggested outstanding beauty and economic potential to the reader. Besides their power to paint the scene in words, the traveller could discriminate between what scenes or parts of scenes to include and what to omit. It is evident from their published accounts that some travel writers were aware of this position as they contemplated the tension between the reality of the scene they chose to describe and its reconstruction in their narratives.

Mary Louise Pratt identifies three means by which the description of landscape gave the travel writer a sense of power. First, as in Froude's description, the scene was

Illustration 39



Source: J.A. Froude, *Oceana*, Longmans Green, and Co., London, 1892, facing p.144.

“aestheticised” in a language that draws upon artistic composition by defining its boundaries and tonal proportions. The description of the scene conveyed the heightened sensibility of the travel writer and appealed to the aesthetic sensibility of the reader. Next, the “density of meaning” of the scene was presented through the use of descriptive modifiers which indicated the significance and substance of the scene. For example, “breathe luxuriantly the free air of heaven” gave depth to Froude’s description of the vigour of tropical plants in the gardens and “deserted ruins of ancient batteries” added power to the old fortifications in the harbour by allusion to past civilisations. Finally by defining the limits of the scene for the reader the travel writer indicated his/her “mastery” over the landscape. The scene was reduced to a static view, interpreted from the travel writer’s vantage point at a particular point in time.³ The abundant and progressive scene Froude chose to describe before him promoted his imperial rhetoric of colonial progress.

Anthony Trollope acknowledged this ability of the traveller to control the textual representation of scenery. He also was conscious of the underlying difficulties the travel writer faced in attempting to evoke its values. He suggested, “the charm conveyed has been in the words of the writer, not in the beauty of the place”.⁴ He noted that there were often differences between textual description and the reality of a setting. Trollope wrote: “I doubt whether I ever read any description of scenery which gave me an idea of the place described, and I am not sure that such effect can be obtained by words.”⁵ He contended that Scott and Byron both eloquently conveyed the picturesque and romantic nature of a scene, a textual form which stimulated people to visit the site. Nevertheless, he also emphasised the limitations of word-painting; that describing a scene eloquently did not necessarily confirm the reality of its beauty for the individual observer. Trollope was conscious of the tension between the individual’s response to particular scenery and its textual representation by other travellers. He contended that the appreciation of the scene was contained within the individual’s emotive response, which no textual representation could evoke. In making such assertions he was conscious of his own inadequacy to paint the beauty of Sydney Harbour in words:

³ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp.204-205. David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, fourth printing, Durham, 1999, p.19.

⁴ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.229.

⁵ *Ibid.*

I know that the task would be hopeless were I to attempt to make others understand the nature of the beauty of Sydney Harbour. I can say that it is lovely, but I cannot paint its loveliness.⁶

Other travellers also felt lacking in the ability to describe the vista before them. Some resorted to quoting the picturesque descriptions of the same scene by other writers.

From an altitude of 4,200 feet above Hobart, Josiah Hughes admitted to his failings both as an artist and as a writer and thus resorted to another traveller's description of the scene.⁷ While he was noble in his admission of inadequacy, his statement also emphasised the parallels between landscape art and textual description in the nineteenth century. Because of the height of Mt Wellington, the observer's view was vast, almost an aerial view of the surrounding landscape. The picturesque description that followed emphasised the vastness and clarity of this prospect, in particular, the variety and contrast accorded to elements of the landscape by the atmosphere. A biblical allusion was used to describe the scene. The author likened the panorama, with a shaft of light illuminating part of the vista, to Goshen in Egypt where the Israelites settled after being given the land by the Pharaoh.⁸ The overall scene presented was compared to the beauty and grandeur of Cleopatra, ruler of Egypt.⁹

“Of the magnificence of the prospect from the top of Mount Wellington, one may say, as Mark Antony said of Cleopatra's beauty,

‘Age cannot wither it,

Nor custom stale its infinite variety.’

The vastness of the field of vision, the lucid transparency of the atmosphere, and the interchange of mountain, valley, sea, and river, combine to fascinate your gaze at the time, and to haunt your memory ever afterwards, and the very clouds which occasionally blur the scene confer additional beauty upon it; for, sometimes, as they break away to seaward, they disclose one of the islands of the estuary so completely detached from the line of the horizon as to appear as if suspended in the heavens; and, sometimes, a strong sunbeam striking on the valley of the Huon, while all around is mist and purple shadow, kindles the tract of country it illuminates into such a lustre that it appears to be actually transfigured, and recalls to your recollection the light which abode on the land of Goshen, when impenetrable darkness had settled upon the rest of Egypt, as it flashes in the sunlight or fades in the shadow. The Derwent gleams like a sheet of burnished silver, or assumes the colour of turquoise, while the undulating

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Hughes does not refer to the author by name. Hughes, *Australia Revisited*, pp.259-260.

⁸ Goshen was the fertile land in which there was light at a time when darkness reigned over the rest of Egypt.

⁹ Hughes, *Australia Revisited*, pp.259-260.

country inland seems to advance towards or recede from you according as it vividly reveals itself in the light, or grows indistinct in transitory gloom. The city of Hobart sloping to the water's edge looks like a collection of the tiniest of toy houses dropped by a child in play, and the altitude at which you stand, coupled with the amazing extent of country comprehended in the view, enables you to realize the prospect visible from a balloon."¹⁰

The scene described

Although some travellers may have doubted their ability to adequately describe the qualities of the scene before them, most drew upon aesthetic principles derived from a European context in their attempt to communicate its values to their readers. Often in their descriptions of Australian landscape travel writers defined the distinctive Australian landscape with reference to these conventions. In this way they asserted their authority to describe and claim the Australian environment. Sometimes these conventions were incompatible with a landscape consisting of eucalypt forests and native undergrowth but the travel writer with a heightened aesthetic sensibility still found qualities of the picturesque in Australian scenery. In some instances it remained the park-like scenery reminiscent of English estates which had been appreciated by explorers in the early nineteenth century. James Froude likened the pastoral property of *Ercildoun* in Victoria to the symbol of English progress, the large country estate. He described his approach to the property thus:

The scene had gradually become less dreary. Trees became more frequent and there were stubbles where crops had been reaped. We came at last to a gate, which needed only a lodge to be like the entrance to a great English domain.

The park-like character was more marked when we drove through – short grass, eucalyptus trees, and blackwood trees scattered over it like the oaks at Richmond; the eucalypti, ancient and venerable, with huge twisted trunks and spreading branches, being exactly like oaks at a distance, while the dark green blackwoods glowing picturesque between them might have passed for yews. Sheep were browsing in hundreds, perhaps in thousands, and on a wooded ridge which was behind I was told there were deer.¹¹

While he acknowledged Australian tree species, he likened them to oak and yew trees rather than describing their unique and distinctive appearance.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Froude, *Oceana*, pp.104-105.

Often the textual composition of picturesque scenes was not so explicit but was supported by the inclusion of illustrations. In *Among Cannibals*, Lumholtz described a picturesque stream setting near Rockhampton. On the facing page was an illustration of it. Alluding to the universal nature of aesthetic appreciation and with his sensibility unhindered despite the monotony of Australian forest vegetation, Lumholtz savoured the picturesque nature of scenery featuring:

beautiful woody scenes along the streams, often indeed so charming that we fancy ourselves transported to an ideal landscape. It is not necessary to be a special lover of nature in order to be captivated by the picturesque arches of the trees over the winding stream, where the silence is broken only by the shrill cry of the cockatoo or the tittering ha! ha! ha! ha! of the laughing jackass. Suddenly, as we walk through the vine-scrub, a lizard will throw itself down into the water with a great splash to disturb a poor water-hen that has become absorbed in its own meditations on the strand.¹²

Except for the mention of Australian native birds the scene Lumholtz described could have been in Europe. The tranquillity of the setting he depicted was interrupted only by the calls of the native birds and the density of the vegetation contrasted with the movement of the water. The illustration facing the text, while composed of native Australian vegetation, demonstrated the traveller's mastery over the landscape in his use of the conventions of picturesque composition: an open grassed area in the foreground, the stream in the middle-distance, overhanging gum trees and vines framing the whole scene. Here the power of the travel writer to claim the Australian landscape by placing it within the parameters of late nineteenth century aesthetics was revealed not only in words but also in the accompanying illustration. (Illustration 40)

As discussed in an earlier chapter, in the late eighteenth century the picturesque was imbued with romanticism. The use of romanticism established a sensual connection to the scene surveyed through the use of imagery and metaphor that evoked an emotional and often spiritual response. However the picturesque traveller had to be a patient and devoted observer to fully appreciate the scene. When sailing south down the coast of West Africa in 1850, Shaw contended that the variety and contrast apparent in the tropical ocean sky observed over the course of a day, and which was particularly visible in the formation of clouds in tropical latitudes, was so extraordinary that they could not be reproduced in works of art but had to be experienced sensuously. He wrote that, "It

¹² Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, pp.28-31.

Illustration 40



Source: Carl Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, John Murray, London, 1889, facing p.28

is in these latitudes that nature is dressed not only in her best, but at the same time in her most varied costume.”¹³ Shaw believed that the “careless traveller” was impatient and unfeeling and not “alive to her [Nature’s] beauties”. The hurried traveller did not have the time to absorb and appreciate the beauty of Nature’s changing scenes. Such a traveller could be likened to the tourist on a package holiday, whose brief visits to sights did not allow time for the full development in the individual of aesthetic appreciation. According to Shaw the “good observer” was devoted to constant observation,

otherwise he will see only a part instead of the whole. It is not under the meridian splendour of a tropical sun at noon that these beauties are most striking, although at that time they are often incomparably grand. The traveller must be up at sunrise, and forget not to glance at the evening sunset.¹⁴

Shaw departed from the appreciation of the static picturesque scene and recognised the aesthetic value of the variety and contrast of the scene over the course of the day.

Shaw’s patience heightened his aesthetic sensibility and awakened reflection on the resemblance of the travellers’ journey to the journey through life. His ship travelling through tropical waters exemplified the unity of art and nature, of “man in his voyage through the wide waters in her immediate connection with heaven and earth”.¹⁵ The picturesque nature of the scene was contained in the unity and harmony of the ship gliding smoothly through the sea,

She is comparable to nothing else in the world besides, because there is nothing in the world of art more beautiful than herself when moving in her native element. When sailing, she seems to be the connecting link between the firmament and the waters, the point of union between earth and heaven, for her masts seem to pierce the very sky, while her hull is gracefully ploughing the main. In the dock she is crippled, in the river she is asleep, on the ocean she is rocked and perfectly awake, but in the trades she is in her element, a proud monument of art alone in the wide world, surrounded by the glorious works of nature. “All nature is but art unknown to thee.” Is she not emblematic of man in his voyage through the wide waters in her immediate connection with heaven and earth? – and what a perfect specimen of art she is to be in perfect keeping and harmony with those glorious scenes of tropical latitudes.¹⁶

¹³ Shaw, *A Gallop to the Antipodes*, p.33

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid* , pp.32-33.

¹⁶ *Ibid* , p.32.

In this setting art and nature were in perfect harmony. Here art, in the form of the ship sailing in Nature's sea, was tested and withstood the discerning eye of the traveller in search of the picturesque. Shaw believed:

Art is never so fine as when it will bear the inspection of the critical eye in these wonderful regions, where every imperfection and wrinkle, and want of symmetry, have to stand in the centre of a world of perfection, lit up by the glorious rays of the sun, bounded by the brilliant heavens above, and below by the sparkling and dancing waves of the ocean.¹⁷

However at times travellers accentuated the awesome power of nature over humanity. The sublime nature of some scenes was awe-inspiring and provided strength and fortitude to the picturesque traveller. Shaw recounted the emotive response to the development of a storm at sea:

A dark black cloud rapidly advanced towards us, underneath which the sky was as clear and serene as the sunset of the tropics, while the lightning was playing fearfully on the margin of the black cloud at the time when all was serene and cloudless, presenting a scene of uncommon splendour and sublimity. It was a fearful sight, not so much from the appearance of the thing as from what was likely to follow, having at the time an unusual press of canvass[sic] exposed.¹⁸

He captured the eerie calm before the storm, the heightened excitement of the observer and the alarm aroused by the helplessness of a ship at sea.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, descriptions such as the prospect from elevated ground conjured up an emotive response as the traveller could reflect upon the past and predict the future.¹⁹ Mountain scenery aroused romantic sentiment such as that visible in Fox's description and illustration of the Blue Mountains:

These mountains, so named because of their intense blue colour when seen at a distance, though not lofty, are grandly picturesque. From the top ridge at various points little waterfalls leap down from one to two thousand feet. Sometimes a great, sheer, cliff face, fifteen hundred feet high, stretches for miles flanking rugged valleys of great beauty. World travellers remark that the Blue Mountains have a greater air of wildness and primeval savagery than any other mountain range.²⁰

¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp.32-33.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.42.

¹⁹ Julia Horne, "Travelling Through the Romantic Landscapes of the Blue Mountains", p.86. See *Chapter 5 "Scenes of surpassing beauty": Aesthetic appreciation of landscape in travel literature 1813-1850*.

²⁰ Spence and Fox, *Australia*, pp.115-116.

Fox's description reflected the romantic sentiment of Governor Macquarie's account of the Blue Mountains nearly one hundred years earlier when he recorded "a view is obtained particularly beautiful and grand. Mountains rising beyond mountains, with stupendous masses of rock in the foreground, here strike the eye with admiration and astonishment".²¹ It was the untamed and disorderly aspects of nature that revealed an ancient and savage past which Fox and other visitors found appealing – the feeling of discovering a land in the state of nature. (Illustration 41)

In his account of his journey to the Victorian goldfields published in 1862, Henry Brown recreated the emotion of the moment when a scene was first viewed from high ground. It had been an arduous journey to reach the summit of the hill, near Bendigo, often through difficult country, but the view from the peak made the difficulties of the journey fade into the background. Brown's description of the scene captured his emotional response to the scene before him,

So when we turned round, after having ascended to the pinnacle of the hill, nothing had really prepared me for the magnificent bold expanse of country that was spread out before me. Could this be the land over which I had toiled so wearily! The bad roads, more, and difficult crossings, had all vanished out of sight, and in their place, as far as the eye could reach, there were wooded heights and peaceful valleys. The sun shone brilliantly, and the purity of the atmosphere gave a clearness and a beauty to the view, over a great range of country, but beyond the tranquilizing power that nature, in its vastness, always has over the human mind, there was nothing to touch either the heart or the imagination; the sombre dull foliage gave the scene a heaviness, which the want of life and animation greatly increased, and the longer the gaze was continued, still sadder became the feelings.²²

Brown's description conveyed the changes in the response of the observer, from the initial elation on reaching the summit and viewing the landscape through which they had just passed, through to the growing apprehension of the silent, monotonous landscape with its dense and dark vegetation which foreboded further difficulties. Demonstrating the romantic's love of metaphor and metamorphosis, Brown's harrowing journey to the goldfields was likened by one of his travelling companions to the journey through life:

it is ever so in life, we fight and struggle onward to some little eminence, and during the contest, old age surprises us, and when we turn round and gaze over

²¹ "Government and General Order", in J.A. Richards (ed.), *Blaxland - Lawson - Wentworth, 1813* cited in Horne, "Travelling Through the Romantic Landscapes of the Blue Mountains", p.94.

²² Brown, *Victoria as I found it*, p.131.

Illustration 41

Blue Mountains



Source: Percy F.S. Spence & Frank Fox, *Australia*, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1910, between p.36 and 37.

the past, we forget the roughness of the road, and only see the picturesque and beautiful country in which the weary fight was fought.²³

While the landscape was frequently claimed using emotive terms, travel writers also noted another romantic preference for the grotesque, mysterious and supernatural. The use of the word “weird” suggested that the scenery had a strange and supernatural cast. Mark Twain was fascinated by the Australian landscape, which was unusual and surprising to him. He considered:

To my mind the exterior aspects and character of Australia are fascinating things to look at and think about, they are so strange, so weird, so new, so uncommon-place, such a startling and interesting contrast to the other sections of the planet, the sections that are known to us all, familiar to us all.²⁴

It was the aspects of the landscape that were exotic that captured Twain’s attention, particularly the differences in climate and landscape between the seacoast and the inland regions. Rev. Dale listed the “‘weird’ scenery” as one of the distinctive aspects of Australian travel.²⁵

The use of “weird” could also evoke the uncanny, mysterious character of the environment, arousing an emotive response reminiscent of romanticism. Fox contended that: “To the casual observer the Australian bush is melancholy, even repelling. It is permeated, according to a local poet, with an air of “weird expectancy”.”²⁶ However, he continued, a greater understanding of the Australian environment allowed the alluring nature of the “savage beauty of the forests” to be revealed to the observer. This attraction to the bush was sensual and Fox demonstrated its appeal by the inclusion of Howard Carr’s ode to the Australian forest. In Carr’s poetic description Nature was personified and the aesthete’s relationship with the Australian bush likened to a sexual encounter:

See the swelling breasts of the gums,
Hearts panting for the Invisible above, tugging at their chains;
Immortal longing in those wistful shapes,
...
Shy, virginal, mysterious, the Bush’s lov’liness is but for her true lover:

²³ *Ibid*, p.132.

²⁴ Twain, *Following the Equator*, p.118.

²⁵ Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, p.3.

²⁶ Spence and Fox, *Australia*, p.108.

For him the veil is drawn aside, and the couch made ready.²⁷

It was not conquest of Nature but a mutually satisfying relationship. It was only the aesthete, spiritually at one with nature, who could appreciate the bush and to whom the Bush would respond and receive “her true lover flowing with tenderness”.²⁸

In true romantic style, Australian scenery stirred feelings of solitude and melancholy. For example, Florence and Rosamond Hill found solitude in travelling home at sunset. The landscape was bathed in a “rich flood of mellow light” which had a calming effect on the travellers.²⁹ For Marianne North, riding through a forest of bunya pines aroused feelings of seclusion that allowed contemplation of the majesty of the trees and their utilisation by Aborigines.³⁰ Often the monotony of landscape created a melancholy mood in the account. Ellen Clacy’s comments conveyed the effect of the landscape upon the mood of travellers. She described the scenery passed on their difficult journey to Melbourne during the Victorian gold rush era:

“And is *this* the beautiful scenery of Australia?” was my first melancholy reflection. Mud and swamp – swamp and mud – relieved here and there by some few trees which looked as starved and miserable as ourselves. The cattle we passed appeared in a wretched condition, and the human beings on the road seemed all to belong to one family, so truly Vandemonian was the cast of their countenances.³¹

In this instance Clacy found all elements of the landscape depressing. The traveller Gilbert Parker considered that the “sadness of Australian scenery” in the hot, dry outback stimulated feelings of despondency, but he was not completely damning of the environment. In a very positive manner, he declared that “over this gloomy area hundreds of thousands of sheep were depasturing and doing well”.³²

Some travellers featured the supernatural and the divine in their description of the landscape. They saw the religious significance of the environment; an environment that

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp.109-110.

²⁸ *Ibid*.

²⁹ R. & F. Hill, *What we saw in Australia*, p.105.

³⁰ North, *Recollections of a Happy Life*, Vol.2, p.114.

³¹ Clacy, *A Lady’s Visit to the Gold Diggings*, p.17.

³² Parker, *Round the Compass*, pp.17-18

was created by God for human use. Shaw quoted passages from poets including Milton to emphasise God's power as creator. From Milton he quoted:

“These are thy glorious works, Parent of Good;
Thine this universal frame; that sitt'st above
These heavens - to us invisible, or dimly seen ; yet these
Declare – declare thy goodness beyond thought -
Thy power divine.”³³

Appreciation of the landscape was bound up in its connection to God; it resonated with the glory of God and his “excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love”.³⁴ In some travellers there was awareness of the tension between Nature as God's creation and improved Nature. James Froude wrote:

We had been passed through Purgatory in the morning that we might enjoy Paradise afterwards – literally Paradise – for Paradise means Park, and here was a park worth the name. I have already expressed my admiration of the Australian gardens, but this at Ballarat excelled them all.³⁵

The hot environment of the Victorian goldfields was likened by Froude to Purgatory. It was the improved parts of Ballarat, the botanical garden, which was considered Paradise, a place where complete contentment and happiness could be obtained.

Progress and the appreciation of landscape

Some environmental commentators, such as Williams Lines, have viewed the pursuit of progress in Australia as single-minded and unappreciative of the environment.³⁶ However, analysis of travel writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveals a more complex aesthetic appreciation of the environment, its beauty and potential. Environmental appreciation was often pragmatic but drew upon conventions of the picturesque. Travel writers appreciated land in its natural and developed states, as they considered it provided the ideal ground for the development of a society that would contribute to the ongoing success of the British Empire.

³³ Imperfect quote from John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book V, cited in Shaw, *A Gallop to the Antipodes*, p.36.

³⁴ Jonathon Edwards, cited in Shaw, *A Gallop to the Antipodes*, p.37.

³⁵ Froude, *Oceana*, pp.112-113.

³⁶ William Lines, *Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia*, North Sydney, 1991, pp.110-112.

Often travel writers explained progress in Australia by making comparisons with familiar landscape settings in their homeland. Such descriptions demonstrated the connection between the picturesque aesthetic and the idea of progress. Florence and Rosamond Hill described an afternoon's ride through a rural setting near Poltalloch:

In the afternoon we had a delightful drive through the paddocks, over the luxuriant grass, every now and then sighting mobs of fine cattle, looking perfectly at their ease as they grazed or reclined on the rich sward. With the lake on one side, and low green hills dotted with shea-oak on the other, we could have fancied ourselves driving through an English park.³⁷

Nature in Australia had been improved through pastoralism. The rural scenes that unfolded on Davitt's railway journey from Adelaide to Broken Hill prompted him to think of his native Ireland. In his description of the Australian landscape, agriculture and domesticity denoted progress. The picturesque vistas he described were reminiscent of a rural Irish setting, complete with brush fencing:

Many flourishing orchards are seen alongside of rough-built but comfortable looking cottages. Orange and olive trees abound, but almost all kinds of fruit are found to thrive under the congenial conditions of soil and climate which prevail. Flowers are seen round almost every dwelling, adding their brightness and charm to a picture of "peace and plenty" such as passes before the traveller's eyes in the railway journey over these plains.³⁸

The abundance that Nature provided in Australia was affirmation of British progress. By linking signs of Nature's abundance to the picturesque in their descriptions travel writers affirmed British progress as beneficial and non-destructive.

Occasionally, progress was seen as sanctioned by God. James Froude described a roadside hotel near Ballarat where the emigrants were "'singing the Lord's song in a strange land'". His picturesque composition of the scene before him contained the elements of English rustic scenes:

We stopped for a few minutes at a roadside hotel, near the end of the embankment, to rest our horses. It was tidily kept and picturesquely situated. The little wicket gate was open. I strayed in and found myself in the garden of an English cottage, among cabbage-roses, pinks, sweet-williams, white phlox, columbines, white lilies and orange, syringas, laburnums, lilacs. Beneath the railings were beds of violet and periwinkle, and on a wall a monthly rose was

³⁷ R. & F. Hill, *What we saw in Australia*, p.105.

³⁸ Davitt, *Life and Progress*, p.62.

intertwining with jessamine and honeysuckle. The emigrants who had made their home there had brought with them seeds and cuttings from the old home.³⁹

Froude concentrated on those aspects of the scene that were distinctively English; the English flowers and the cottage with its “wicket gate”. By focusing on these aspects of the scene he implicitly celebrated the successful transplantation of progress in a British form in Australia, a position that anticipated a promising future for Australia generally.

R.H. Horne in *Australian Facts and Prospects*, published in 1859, devoted a chapter to the “Rise and Progress of Victoria”. Horne asserted that Victoria had progressed rapidly from “seven years ago a sheep-walk, and now exporting to the mother-country seventeen or eighteen millions of gold and other produce per annum.”⁴⁰ For him progress was a natural law that determined the advancement of Europeans but not of Aborigines and other non-Europeans. There was an appreciation of land in its natural state in his words. Nature, he considered, provided the “progressive man” with an environment to be utilised in the development of civil society.⁴¹ He anticipated the course of societal development in Australia, reflecting that:

Before his footsteps, the savage desert of sand, of stones, or marsh and bog, of grim forest, of rank luxuriance, or of choking weeds, becomes a station, and a farm, a homestead, a smiling pasture, where order reigns, and where the unbroken silence, which once menaced the imagination of the lost man with famine and fever and delirious death, now only suggests the tranquillity of peace and of plenty.... The absolute facts are before us in yonder homestead, cleared, built up, fenced about, fashioned out of timber, and from trees felled by the owner’s unfailing arms, at the cost of many pounds of sweat, and many a broken axe – his house, his trenches, his yard, his garden, his paddock, and his crops all smiling – the solid product of the understanding, of sound common sense, and man’s irresistible hand.⁴²

Regardless of the type of environment, progress was achieved through hard work and perseverance: “Still he advances, and, finding at length some directing watercourse, or shepherd’s hut, he lives to dig for gold, and build a thriving house. But these, though the first, are the smallest of the conquests of the progressive man of Victoria.”⁴³ Horne

³⁹ Froude, *Oceana*, pp.111-112

⁴⁰ Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospects*, p.168.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.170-171.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.170-172.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.170-171.

appreciated how the land was developed and looked forward to greater advancements still to come.

Some travellers accentuated the theme of progress as the development of civilisation out of the wilderness. Canadian traveller Gilbert Parker compared the natural landscape with that arising from the construction of the railway network in Queensland. The fertile, tropical vegetation near Cairns was indicative of land in its natural state, but it was the railway that would bring civilisation.

It is, after all, a relief to turn from the full ripeness of the tropic hills and valleys to the might of civilisation beside it – to the iron girders and the huge hickory piles, to the pick and the shovel, and the belt of steel, which is the path of civilisation.⁴⁴

In their descriptions of the landscape travel writers intertwined progress and descriptions of the natural and cultivated landscape to convey not exploitation, but the naturalness of the process of development.

However, travellers were aware of the tension created by combining what might be considered incompatible elements. Gilbert Parker noted that, “while man’s ingenuity held you on one hand, Nature, in sumptuous attire, brooded over you on the other.”⁴⁵ His aesthetic sensitivity to picturesque landscape was evident in his appreciation of the beauty, abundance and vigour of the north Queensland rainforest landscape described on his journey from Cairns to Herberton:

The wild banana lifted up its wide fronds twenty-five feet in the air; the fig-tree shot down innumerable roots from a hundred feet into the earth, making for itself palisades of strength, and buttresses like wings to a majestic stage in a forest of Arden. The wild pumpkin trailed its yellow blossoms in the wealth of grass; the pools along the way were panoplied with glorious water-lilies; and ferns rivalled the pawpaw and the slender palm in height. The fruit hung thick upon some pawpaw trees, but, while mouths watered, tongues could not taste; there was not time. And what fruits they are! One has not tasted the best that Nature gives till a breakfast has been made off the grenadilla,[sic] a bulky elder brother of the passion-fruit; or the pawpaw, a direct relative of the musk-melon. The prettiest thing that one can see is the palm – as straight, yet as willowy as a lily – reaching up to touch the pale green leaves of the acacia-cedar; or to pay its compliments to the sound and royal kauri pine.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Parker, *Round the Compass*, p.246.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.243.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.241-242.

He used analogies of defensive and supportive structures to convey the strength of vegetation growth and descriptive words that heightened the vitality and fecundity of the natural landscape. His appreciation of the natural beauty of the landscape coexisted with pleasure in landscapes that, while they portended the destruction of natural beauty, explicitly demonstrated the genius of progress:

And while you are filled with the pleasure of it, there will startle your senses a view of the ocean miles away; and, between you and it, the camps of navvies, the noiseless villages, and the thick swamp where the death-adder and black snake hide, and where the fire-fly flashes in the gloom; then, from such sensations you will be roused by the agonised engines and the grinding of the wheels upon the rails. You are making a great curve now called the Horseshoe Bend.⁴⁷

The reality of progress was the railway that carried development to the interior of Australia.

While nature was yielding to the advance of the railway in north Queensland, Vivienne concentrated on those aspects of the natural world that contributed to abundant yields in Western Australia. At Newcastle on the Avon River she observed:

It is a splendid farming district; the soil will grow almost everything. I saw some magnificent oranges and vegetables. The cattle are as fat and sleek as can be. Rain had been falling when I was there, and now the sun was shining and a beautiful rainbow arose over the hills. The pink everlasting flowers – acres of them – surrounded by the green grass, the pretty winding river, the white bridges and long good roads made up a very pleasant picture. There is plenty of good land around here waiting to be taken up and utilised.⁴⁸

There was appreciation in her words; the fertile soil and rainfall had resulted in productive agriculture and pastoralism. However the natural productions of the landscape were not forgotten. Vivienne sets the progress of the landscape within a natural setting of lush grass, acres of native flowers and a scenic river. Her picturesque description not only confirmed European ability to change the landscape through the introduction of exotic plants and animals but also demonstrated the harmonious relationship between Nature and progress and confirmed the success of the colonising process in Western Australia.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.241-242.

⁴⁸ Vivienne, *Travels in Western Australia*, p.86.

Parks and gardens replicating the formal European styles were not only products of aesthetic taste but were also signs of British imperialism as they confirmed British ability to control and change the natural landscape. Froude noted that the beauty of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens was the work of renowned Prussian horticulturalist, Dr Richard Schomburgk whose gardening philosophy stemmed from Goethe in “taking care of the beautiful and leaving the useful to take care of itself”⁴⁹ Schomburgk had an international reputation as a scientist. He had trained as a gardener in Germany but had been a member of a joint British/Prussian scientific expedition to British Guyana before emigrating to Australia in 1849. On his arrival he engaged in farming prior to becoming director of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens in 1865.⁵⁰ When Froude visited the Gardens in the early 1880s he observed that they contained ornamental plants rather than fruit trees. The gardens contained plants from all over the world:

The flowers with which we are familiar as exotics in our forcing-houses luxuriate as in their natural home. The oleander towers and spreads in pale pink glory. The crimson hibiscus glows among the bananas; passion-flowers – blue, purple, and scarlet – hang in careless festoons among the branches. The air is loaded with perfume from datura, orange-flowers, stephanotis, and endless varieties of jessamine. Araucarias, acacia-trees, Norfolk pines, tulip-trees, &c., are dispersed over the lawns, grouped, not as science would order them, but as they would be arranged by a landscape painter.⁵¹

Whilst he considered the picturesque nature of the scene, he also contemplated the link between aesthetics and progress:

Whether it be the genius of the country, or some development of the sense of beauty from the general easiness of life, or the readiness of soil and climate to respond to exertion, certain it is that the public gardens in the Australian towns are the loveliest in the world, and that no cost is spared in securing the services of the most eminent horticulturists.⁵²

Froude appreciated the Australian environment, its physical character and responsiveness to hard work and he was assured of the success of horticulture in the Australian colonies.

⁴⁹ Froude, *Oceana*, p.75.

⁵⁰ Richard Aitken, David Jones & Colleen Morris, *Adelaide Botanic Garden Conservation Study*, p.25, <http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/botanicgardens>

⁵¹ Froude, *Oceana*, p.76.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.75

For Marianne North, the best example of imperial progress in Australia was the urban environment of Melbourne:

Melbourne is a noble city, and its gardens are even more beautiful than those of Sydney, with greater variety of ground, and lovely views over the river. The distant city towers make an imposing group from all sides, standing as they do on the top of an isolated ridge of high ground. Fine atmospheric effects are produced, as in London, by the abundance of smoke which hovers over the busy town. It is by far the most real city in Australia, and the streets are as full of quickly-moving people as those of London. The dracaenas in the many gardens about it were loaded with great flower-branches, and the ti-tree was everywhere gay with bloom, reminding one of the May bushes at home.⁵³

Signs of the industrial progress of the city; the smoke and the hustle and bustle of the streets, are set amidst the more natural setting of gardens and the river and suggest the spontaneity of combining indications of progress with aesthetic appreciation.

As a result of the gold rushes of the 1850s Victoria's progress was rapid in comparison to the other colonies. Travellers were preoccupied with the exceptional character of this advancement. Their comments are particularly noticeable in the travel accounts of the late nineteenth century. Statistics related to the colony's progress could even have an aesthetic value as Charles Dilke noted. He considered these comparable with creative endeavour and the attainment of perfection in the world of art:

The exact economical position that Victoria occupies is easily ascertained, for her statistics are the most perfect in the world; the arrangement is a piece of exquisite mosaic. The brilliant statistician who fills the post of Registrar-General to the colony had the immense advantage of starting clear of all tradition, unhampered and unclogged; and, as the Governments of the other colonies have for the last few years taken Victoria for model, a gradual approach is being made to uniformity of system. It was not too soon, for British colonial statistics are apt to be confusing. ... Statistics are generally considered dull enough, but the statistics of these young countries are figure-poems. Tables that in England contrast jute with hemp, or this man with that man, here compare the profits of manufactures with those of agriculture, or pit against each other the powers of race and race.⁵⁴

Implicit in Dilke's image of Victoria was a link between aesthetics and progress. Aesthetic appreciation extended beyond the appreciation of landscape into the realm of physical signs of economic progress that he compared to a figure-poem. Such an association was apt as a figure-poem was constructed in a printed form that suggested

⁵³ North, *Recollections of a Happy Life*, Vol.2, p.141.

⁵⁴ Dilke, *Greater Britain*, 1866, p.98.

its theme and reinforced its sentiment.⁵⁵ In this case, Dilke considered that the arrangement of the statistics was poetic and appealed to the reader's aesthetic sensibility.

Melbourne was seen as the manifestation of Victoria's rapid advancement. In rejecting criticism of the sprawling development of Melbourne, the Canadian traveller Gilbert Parker described its attraction as that of a "metropolis" which though "expansive and broad-shouldered" was uniform in layout.⁵⁶ Melbourne was

new, powerful, eager, and conscious of a fine commercial strength. Its architecture suggests all that by its very contrasts – by the Parliament buildings, suited to a city of two millions, dwarfing to meanness neighbouring buildings of form consistent with an earlier and more pioneer-like growth. To put wealth and progress and success in ample visible expression, – that is youthful, it is natural, it is Australian.⁵⁷

Parker recognised Melbourne's foremost position, its striking architecture reflecting its current status and advancement. He made a comparison of Australian cities and defined their essence:

Sydney gives the impression of beauty, of soundness, and of home; Melbourne of progress, of courage, of success, and of expansion; Adelaide of comfort, of well-to-do-ness, and something akin to godliness, – for it is gloriously clean, – and of home also. Brisbane is new, brawny, uneven, and half finished.⁵⁸

By the turn of the century other colonies were being lauded as progressive. Mae Vivienne in her account of Western Australia published in 1901, catalogued the economic progress of that state. Her account was celebratory of the progress made in Western Australia and predicted a promising future. She related:

Our young country has a chance of great and lasting prosperity for population increases and new people settle on the rich lands to cultivate them. Mr Throssell says: "We look forward to seeing our harbour filled with ships laden with not only gold, timber, pearl shell and wool products of the colony, but also with golden grain, wine and fruit." Our Agent-General in London, Sir E. Wittenoom, recently said at a dinner in Paris: "There is something fascinating in the phenomena of the rise of this new colony of Western Australia, which ten years ago, with an area equal to nearly half that of Europe, had only the population of the Isle of Man. Gold reefs were discovered, and the population advanced with great strides in less than four years from 50,000 to 186,000."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ "Pattern poetry." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2005. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online.

<<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9058751>>

⁵⁶ Parker, *Round the Compass in Australia*, pp.101-102.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁵⁹ Vivienne, *Travels in Western Australia*, p.91.

She celebrated Western Australia's rapid progress and the extent and potential of its resources. Her prediction of Western Australia's future, based upon further immigration and the expansion of primary and secondary industries, implicitly reinforced the imperial mission to encourage emigration and thereby relieve British social and economic problems.

A utilitarian approach

In their celebration of Australia's economic progress in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, travel writers often adopted a utilitarian approach to the environment. While they appreciated the beauty of land in its natural state they also considered that the land and its resources were there to use. However by the 1880s travel writers observed environmental problems occurring as a result of settlers' desire to make their new home more like their old. Nevertheless they did not necessarily see these as having long term detrimental effects. Indeed in their rhetoric of environment and progress they considered the opportunistic success of exotic species as confirmation of the fertility of the land and a natural process – a sign of God's handiwork or Darwin's natural selection at work.

In their cultural baggage settlers brought long-established methods of agriculture and pastoralism which they used in their approach to their new land. Land was cleared and European crops planted, weeds subsequently introduced and cloven-hoofed animals pastured. These were established at the expense of the distinctive and different natural species of Australia. As Thomas Dunlap writes, settlers "have understood their land through their European culture, but in each country and era they have had to apply its concepts to their own situation".⁶⁰ In time, farming and pastoral practices adapted to the new environment but the Australian environment had changed and it was not surprising that in some parts of Australia settlement was unsuccessful. Introduced plants and animals did not always thrive as droughts, floods, and the natural environment often took their toll. Anthony Trollope noted that squatters in Queensland

⁶⁰ Thomas Dunlap, "Ecology and environmentalism in Anglo settler colonies", in T. Griffith and L. Robin (eds), *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, Carlton South, 1997, p.76.

not only faced economic difficulties, but also were confronted with problems stemming from the natural environment, including

drought, floods, footrot among their flocks, wild dogs, - or dingoes, - which prey upon their lambs and flurry their sheep, grass-seed which injures the wool, and works its way through the skins of the lambs, utterly destroying the poor little bleaters, grass that is overgrown and rank, grass that won't grow, poisonous grass, too much grass, no grass, - and then that worst of all miseries, panic in the wool trade.⁶¹

At no stage did Trollope consider the unsuitability of placing European sheep in a different climate and physical environment. Rather, through this omission he regarded the introduction of pastoralism as a natural process of European settlement. In his narrative there was no recognition that pastoralism had destroyed the natural vegetation and allowed aggressive native spear grass to proliferate which caused problems for the sheep.⁶²

In the mid-1880s overstocking during periods of drought was of particular interest to the New South Wales Royal Commission on Water Conservation as it caused “the unutterable anguish of the many thousands of animals, which in a period of drought perish by slow degrees from hunger and thirst”.⁶³ The commission was concerned with stock losses and the economic implications for pastoralists. The cyclic nature of drought and flood in Australia absorbed Gilbert Parker who spent some time travelling with the commission. After the prologue to his account, Parker devoted the next two chapters to *Glimpses of Australian Life*, one to Australia in time of flood and the other to drought. His account emphasised not only the dichotomous nature of the Australian environment but also Parker's aesthetic sensitivity due to his often-poetic description of the landscape. Parker considered inland Australia was characterised by an endless cycle of drought and flood, “a land of tested and perilous uncertainty”⁶⁴ Inland Australia was “a basin, not a plateau, a vast and arid sponge which drinks up moisture at a marvellous rate, and still is thirsty”.⁶⁵ The hardship of drought was imprinted on the faces of rural women, the “burning land soon tak[ing] the bloom from the cheek and the light from

⁶¹ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.140.

⁶² Eric Rolls, “The Nature of Australia” in Griffith and Robin (eds), *Ecology and Empire*, pp.39-40.

⁶³ Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, Carlton South, 2000, p.284.

⁶⁴ Parker, *Round the Compass*, p.5

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

the eye”.⁶⁶ Its influence on the rural inhabitants was combined with the visual impact of stock dying a lingering death:

See, as the coach passes into a paddock, these eyeless lambs. Fallen through starvation and weakness, the ravenous crows have picked out their eyes. They strew our path, and far to where the plain becomes one leaden grey are white spots innumerable – dead and dying sheep. It is numb despondency, over which the carrion-crow cries a hateful requiem.⁶⁷

Parker considered the cycle of drought and flood a natural process and did not question the land’s ability to sustain pastoralism. He evoked melancholy through his descriptions of the flood and drought stricken landscape but he also emphasised the inhabitants’ enduring and optimistic nature acquired from an acceptance of the cycle of drought and flood as a natural process in subduing the land. On a positive note he concluded Chapter II:

Here and there loss would be occasioned by the flood, but the country would be a paradise for cattle for two seasons, the wool could be got to the coast, and the hearts of the people, as the land itself, would be refreshed.⁶⁸

Early settlement involved the widespread clearing of native vegetation and trees from the land.⁶⁹ Colonists and colonial authorities considered that this was necessary for the landscape to progress from a state of savagery to pastoralism, agriculture and ultimately to commerce.⁷⁰ From the 1850s enlightened individuals began to question such actions. While the British traveller R.H. Horne asserted the aesthetic and economic benefits of transplanting English trees to Australian conditions, he warned against wholesale land clearing. He declared that settlers “never think of planting trees for the shade and influence”.⁷¹ Horne considered that “The indiscriminate and wholesale clearing of timber may be attended with very bad consequences.”⁷² These consequences related to evidence from the *New York Tribune* which suggested that felling trees had an adverse affect on humidity and the amount of rainfall received. The relationship between deforestation and climate was the topic of scientific speculation during the nineteenth century. In Australia the debate peaked in the 1860s with comments by the Government

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.45-46.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.41.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.34

⁶⁹ Thomas R Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*, Cambridge, 1999, p.49.

⁷⁰ Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, pp.79-90.

⁷¹ Horne, *Australian Facts and Prospects*, 1859, p.186-188.

⁷² *Ibid.*

Astronomer, Robert Ellery and the Government Botanist, Baron Von Mueller, that supported the retention and planting of trees.⁷³ In 1864, George Perkins Marsh published in New York and London *Man and Nature*, which supported the theory and contributed to the establishment in Australia of State Forests.⁷⁴

While Horne was against the indiscriminate destruction of the natural environment, he was not averse to the introduction of exotic species. His imperial rhetoric was utilitarian; the native environment was there to be utilised but on a needs basis only. By the mid-nineteenth century this view had gained a following in Australia in elite government and scientific circles. In the 1830s when Thomas Shepherd had lectured in Australia on the application of British landscape gardening to the Australian environment, an appreciation of how the natural vegetation could be moulded to create park-like scenery was already apparent.⁷⁵ Shepherd explained that

in place of cutting down our splendid forests right forward without distinction, we have only to thin out, and tastefully arrange and dispose them, to produce the most pleasing effects. The country could by this means, at a very small cost, and with less labour than is required by the indiscriminate destruction of our native trees, present an exterior to the eye of the stranger, and the resident in the Colony, such as no other country in the World I believe could furnish.⁷⁶

Introduced species flourished in Australia, brought in by settlers and Acclimatisation Societies to overcome feeling of alienation and to satisfy the interests of amateur and discriminating naturalists. Thomas Dunlap states that acclimatisers did not consider the ecological consequences of their actions but

focused on species, which they saw as things living on the neutral backdrop of the land. Within a wide range of climate, plants and animals would adapt – in the word of the day, acclimate – and take their place as part of the country.⁷⁷

By the 1880s this vision had come into question and some travel writers demonstrated concern at the consequences of introducing exotic species into unfamiliar surroundings. Many species thrived in the Australian climate and overwhelmed native species. However the emotional comfort obtained from introducing familiar plants and animals

⁷³ Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, pp.164.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.165.

⁷⁵ Thomas Shepherd cited in V. Crittenden, *A Shrub in the Landscape of Fame: Thomas Shepherd Australian Landscape Gardener and Nurseryman*, Canberra, 1992, pp.154-155.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.152.

⁷⁷ Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora*, p.55.

did not outweigh the economic costs of their introduction. Reverend Clark wrote in his account published in 1894:

Many of these brilliant flowering plants are indigenous and others have been imported, such as the gorgeous golden gorze, and the equally golden cape-weed, which, however beautiful it looks when the sun shines upon it of a bright spring morning, is a pest as utterly detested by the farmers as the white weed of our northern meadows. By the way, when will people learn to experiment less recklessly with the products of other zones? When will we learn the lesson, that for the most part, the trees and plants and birds and insects which God has settled in the land, are best adapted to that country, and that we are running great risks when we try to naturalize other citizens that are foreign to these climes?⁷⁸

Clark compared the introduction of these species with the experience of their introduction in America. As a Christian he believed that God had created all things and had placed them in a specific environment for a particular reason and they should not be interfered with by acclimatisation to other places. He contended that the sparrow was a pest, a “chattering, mischievous, pugnacious little bird...spreading his ravages through two great continents.”⁷⁹ European domesticated animals taken to the colonies of settlement as “food, leather, fiber, power and wealth” adjusted rapidly to their new surroundings with the development of large populations in a short period of time.⁸⁰ According to contemporary theories of natural selection, their survival and success meant the demise of Australian native species. Anthony Trollope lamented:

It is strange but undoubtedly the fact that animals brought from Europe and acclimatized in Australia, are already thrusting out the aboriginal creatures of the country.⁸¹

He noted that the numbers of emus and kangaroos were being reduced by the spread of sheep throughout New South Wales. While noting the spread of European bees and sparrows, Trollope perceived the rabbit was the greatest pest affecting pastoralism. Rabbits had been introduced into southeast Australia in 1859, had reproduced at an alarming rate and had spread across much of southern Australia by the 1880s.⁸² Trollope observed that:

⁷⁸ Clark, *Our Journey around the World*, pp.104-106.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.105.

⁸⁰ Alfred W. Crosby, “Ecological Imperialism: The Overseas Migration of Western Europeans as a Biological Phenomenon”, in Donald Worster (ed.), *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives of Modern Environmental History*, Cambridge, 1988, p.109.

⁸¹ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.211.

⁸² Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, pp.290-291. Crosby, “Ecological Imperialism”, p.110.

The rabbit has become so great a plague in Victoria and parts of Tasmania that squatters in some localities are spending thousands with the hope of exterminating them.⁸³

It was the costliest and most difficult pest to eradicate.⁸⁴ Trollope continued: “One gentleman informed me that he himself had expended over £15,000 in subduing the rabbit on his own run.”⁸⁵ Even with such evidence before him Trollope maintained his imperial rhetoric that the ability of some of these introduced species to thrive in the Australian environment was a sign of “Australian fecundity”.⁸⁶

James Froude had some doubts about the extent and numbers of the rabbits in Victoria. Although he admitted that rabbits had multiplied greatly since their introduction and had become a nuisance to farmers, he suggested that the problem was somewhat exaggerated:

Had their numbers been so vast as has been alleged, had they really been eating the sheep off the pastures, I must and should have seen more of them than I did see. In an open glade of the forest a few miles from Ballarat, there were, perhaps, a hundred of them playing about, a third of these, by the by, being black. One might see as many, however, on a summer evening outside any wood in England where game is preserved. I suppose the Australian farmers want the traditionary reverence for the *feræ naturæ* which are bred for sport.⁸⁷

For Froude the numbers of rabbits he observed while travelling in Australia were not greater than in the English countryside. This fact alone convinced Froude that rabbit numbers in Australia were not out of control. Needless to say in his rhetoric, Froude, like Trollope, considered the Australian environment similar to that of Britain and that the adaptation of rabbits to Australia would follow a similar course to the rabbit in its English environment and that no harm would result.

In his account of a conversation between a traveller and a squatter, Parker recounted the difficulty faced by pastoralists in trying to stop the damage done by rabbits. Government intervention and requirements hindered the squatters’ attempts, increasing costs without alleviating the problem. The squatter complained:

⁸³ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.211.

⁸⁴ Libby Robin, “Ecology: A Science of Empire”, in Griffith and Robin (eds.), *Ecology and Empire*, pp.70-71.

⁸⁵ Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p.211.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Froude, *Oceana*, pp.102-103.

“As if bad land laws and drought were not sufficient,” said Cawdor, “we were sent the rabbits. We wanted to grapple with the difficulty ourselves, each man working away on his own lines, and getting some consideration by reduction of rents or longer tenure. But no. The government, being the landlord, appointed rabbit-inspectors and the elaborate machinery of a trapping system, all of which cost them at the rate of one thousand pounds a day; of which we must pay half and the government half. I spent as much as four thousand pounds a month on my run. Some rabbiters earned fifty pounds a month, trapping. They could drink champagne, while I had to stick to my billy of tea. Plenty of squatters spent a thousand pounds a month for nothing. Trapping could not possibly destroy the rabbits; and eventually the government found that out, that is, after it had spent well up to a million. Now we have come to our original proposition to do what we can to stay this plague by rabbit-fencing, poisoning, and all that. Thank God, the whole of the colonies are not overrun, or there would be a poor outlook. Queensland, by dint of rabbit-fencing, has kept the invaders from New South Wales, and Victoria has not yet been slaughtered badly by them.”⁸⁸

Despite the effects of the rabbit plague, Parker, displaying the superiority of a member of the British Empire, concluded to the squatter, “And yet the country prospers”.⁸⁹

Conclusion

Travel writers espoused imperial rhetoric about the landscape through their use of contemporary ideologies of aesthetics, progress and science. These theories, placed within the conventions of travel writing, located the landscape within an imperial context. The picturesque aesthetic provided a language for claiming the landscape that demonstrated not only the travel writers’ heightened aesthetic sensitivity but also their superiority as observers. In the travel literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries progress was a predominant theme. Travel writers incorporated signs of progress into the picturesque aesthetic as they catalogued the land’s resources and the developing state of the colonies. Such exaltation of the progressive nature of the colonies served an imperial purpose by furthering the prestige of empire.

While travel writers praised aspects of the Australian landscape they also noted the results of European settlement. They considered agricultural and pastoral settlement successful, but they also were conscious of the problems that had arisen in the process. Nevertheless, most travel writers were not overly concerned about the destruction of native flora and fauna by introduced species as the successful adaptation of the

⁸⁸ Parker, *Round the Compass*, pp.70-71.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.71.

newcomers demonstrated the productive nature of the Australian environment. With a mindset of economic progress and nostalgia for an old world environment they encouraged the ongoing use of the land's resources and celebrated the land's fertility and resilience as new species adapted and spread in the new environment of Australia.

Conclusion

After all is said, it is on ourselves that the future depends. We are passing through a crisis in our national existence, and the wisest cannot say what lies before us. If the English character comes out of the trial true to its old traditions- bold in heart and clear in eye, seeking nothing which is not its own, but resolved to maintain its own with its hand upon its sword – the far-off English dependencies will cling to their old home, and will look up to her and be still proud to belong to her and will seek their own greatness in promoting hers. If, on the contrary (for among the possibilities there is a contrary), the erratic policy is to be continued which for the last few years has been the world's wonder; ...then, in ceasing to deserve respect, we shall cease to be respected. The colonies will not purposely desert us, but they will look each to itself, knowing that from us, and from their connection with us, there is nothing more to be hoped for. The cord will wear into a thread, and any accident will break it.

And so end my observations and reflections on the dream of Sir James Harrington. So will not end, I hope and believe, Oceana.¹

J.A. Froude, *Oceana*, 1892.

This was how James Froude ended his account of his travels through South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Froude was a well-educated middle-class traveller. By the time of his visit to Australia in 1885 he had received acclaim as a historian and author. His account was indicative of how the travellers' views of Australia and Australians were influenced by their background and contemporary concerns. Whilst in Australia Froude was entertained by the governor and feted by the elite of the colonies of Victoria and New South Wales. A prominent concern at the time of his visit was imperial defence and Froude was earnest in his praise of New South Wales Acting Colonial Secretary, William Bede Dalley, in sending a colonial contingent to assist British forces in the Sudan. Froude was an imperialist and perceived this action as a sign of Australia's loyalty to Empire and its integral place in the formation of an imperial federation. In his conclusion to *Oceana* Froude considered the relationship between Britain and her colonies and the future of the British Empire. He was an unabashed propagandist of Empire who endorsed the idea of an imperial federation and Oceana. Froude was explicit in his imperial rhetoric, unlike other travel writers covered in this thesis whose support for the British Empire was more subtle and implied.

This thesis provides an examination of some of the travel literature about Australia published during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Over one hundred works have been analysed covering a period from 1813 to 1914. During this period changes in the form of travel literature can be discerned that corresponded with technological

¹ Froude, *Oceana*, pp.340-341.

developments in the means of travel and in the individual travel writer's background and motivation for travelling. As would be expected there is a noticeable shift from a dominance of exploration literature in the period 1813 to 1850 as Australia was explored and opened up for settlement to one, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where there was a profusion of travel literature by ordinary travellers who considered Australia's progress since settlement and its future potential.

The literature examined also demonstrates the changes in the literary conventions followed by travel writers. Explorers, like Thomas Mitchell in the early nineteenth century, followed a format set down two hundred year earlier. His published account reflected his field notebook, as his narrative was constructed as a diary of his exploration as it occurred although it was prepared and edited after the journey took place. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts subordinated the traveller's journey to a thematic approach that emphasised elements of Australian life, such as its economic progress and society, rather than accentuating the progress of the traveller's journey. In the 1870s Anthony Trollope, for example, arranged his account under headings related to the six colonies he visited, with chapters in each section on contemporary topics of interest. For example, under the part on Queensland there are chapters on the "Occupation of land", "Gladstone and Rockhampton", "Aboriginals", "Gold", "Squatters and their Troubles", "Darling Downs", "Sugar. Labour from the South Sea Islands", "Government" and "Labour". While the journey was implied, the narrative of events that occurred during the course of the journey from place to place was given less attention. It was the theme that was of importance to travel writers and which they anticipated would be of greater interest to potential readers.

Together with these changes in the form and structure of travel literature there appeared changes in the written style and tone of the texts. In the 1820s and 1830s, Oxley, Stokes and Mitchell voiced a romantic and emotional interpretation of the landscape which was evoked through the use of imagery and metaphor. By the late 1850s the romantic tone of travel literature had begun to wane. It was partially replaced by a pragmatic and utilitarian response to Australia. While metaphor and imagery are still evident, the overall tone of the published accounts was less romantic. The traveller became less prominent as the romantic hero of the narrative unlike the explorer in the earlier part of the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the texts consistently demonstrated how the travel writers' cultural baggage as well as contemporary ideas and concerns influenced their observations. For example, explorers in the early part of the nineteenth century drew upon aesthetic theories to describe the Australian landscape. Such a framework for description placed the unique environment of Australia within British understandings, making it familiar. In the late nineteenth century ideas about race provided travellers with the means to assess the adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon race to their new environment and consider their continuing role in contributing to a strong British Empire.

Theories of race and evolution justified ongoing British dispossession of Aborigines throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From such an intellectual basis travel writers positioned Aborigines as the lesser other: a primitive people at a lower stage of development. By the latter period of this thesis, Aborigines were marginalised in the travel literature: a dying race who would not survive European settlement. In many cases travellers did not mention Aborigines at all or only in passing. This silence in the travellers' narratives was a subtle form of imperial rhetoric as lack of discussion of Aborigines indirectly legitimated British actions.

The explorers' and travellers' cultural baggage was a medium for dispersing imperial rhetoric to readers. Sometimes explicit but often subtle, the travel writers' imperial rhetoric emphasised Australia's inherent Britishness and manifest loyalty to Britain and conveyed the image of Australia as an important part of a cohesive and progressive British Empire. This image remained in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but the texts revealed an evolving and separate cultural identity although it was one that was built upon British cultural and political traditions. Travellers generally considered imperial loyalty and evolving Australian identity would coexist even after Australia obtained federation and self-determination.

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 images of the land's economic benefits and potential for settlement, which they promoted to their readership subtly through their discourse. Later travel writers emphasised the connection and portrayed the British Empire as unified with Australia as a loyal, successful and prosperous member of that Empire. Even the texts of non-British travel writers, such as the Prussian, Ludwig Leichhardt, the American evangelist Reverend Francis E. Clark and the Canadian Gilbert Parker, contained imperial rhetoric. Indeed most travel writers arrived with prior understanding of Australia's position in the British Empire which they reinforced in their narratives.

In both the published accounts of explorers and those by later travellers, ideology and contemporary issues provided the framework upon which the travel writers built their perceptions of Australia. The travel writers' authority to comment permeated their narratives, validating the observations presented and suggesting and encouraging a supportive response from their readers. Travel writers were not necessarily deliberate propagandists of empire but they almost always carried the imperial agenda in their baggage.

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