

SETTLERS' PROSE: PENAL AND PASTORAL

Its banks are clothed with brushes, which shroud the river, as it were, with a dark pall; and this sort of land, though it is the richest, costs a great deal before it can be got under cultivation.¹

Those who actually settle upon the land have a vast amount of close detail and a multiplicity of subjects upon which to draw for their reflective writings which must far exceed that available to the land travellers. Yet their very commitment to the personal location, implicated as it is in issues of their own developing identity and of the necessities of appropriation, must actually deny them the savouring or reporting of some part of the range of topics and knowledge recorded by those who moved across the land. The writings of settlers often display very perspicaciously how these pioneer figures of the nineteenth century, thought about, represented, and made use of their new particular space. Their texts can reveal how ideas about their own place/space and its mappings reflect and contribute to notions of the self, of travel, and of their relationship to others. For example, one might see how class and gender relations were particularly expressed through space for one settler writer, while with another his/her relations to physical space contribute much to their ideas and reflective thoughts about race and nation.

The texts to be noted in this section mark a degree of acquisition or appropriation that is permanent in its intent, and one that inevitably comes into conflict with the previous lifestyle of the original inhabitants. These surviving documents show effectively the varied processes that can be involved in this assertive land-taking. At times it is violent conflict, a blind erasure, or a dangerously naïve and simplistic set of

¹ John Henderson, *Excursions and Adventures in New South Wales: With Pictures of Squatting and of Life in the Bush, an Account of the Climate, Productions, and Natural History of the Colony, and the Manners and Customs of the Natives with Advice to Emigrants*, 2 vols (London: W. Shoberl, 1851), I, p. 114.

acquisitive attitudes. At other times there is a sad and failed attempt to live in a degree of harmony—an aim thwarted by the incomprehension of cultural difference and by the inequality of power involved. Within their plans for permanence, the settlers often express their own sense of loneliness, and less often their joy in occasional contact with other Europeans. Yet, mostly it is their sense of coping somehow, unaided by a meaningful surrounding and supporting society, or cultural tradition, or essential support structures. In this, there is another sadness arising from their continual failure to put into practice the high-minded ideals which were publicly used to justify their presence.

The earliest forms of white settlement were those of the semi-permanent cedar-getters, and while in broad terms these men's work had an itinerant dimension, their general occupation of a location over several years marks it as an early form of serious white settlement. Unfortunately written texts from this exploitive group have not survived. What has been located is a sequence of, at times, extensive texts ranging from the convict settlement to the pastoral entrepreneurs, to a later well-established pastoralist and his chronicles. Also found are texts which had their first appearance in a non-English form, or, in one case, dealing specifically with a non-English speaking community. These are considered now with the aim of providing new voices/perspectives on what some may see as old or largely covered topics.

Acknowledging the difficulties of analysis of what is a body of largely non-English language texts in translation, the study proceeds by confining attention to the textual features down to sentence level only. Indeed, at times groups of sentences are the smallest reliable unit. Addressing the uncertainty of translated texts in such a way restores long ignored perspectives that move beyond the mainstream of the culturally expected, and, ultimately, the process brings the benefit of these different historical voices to groups hitherto marginalised in local and regional histories. Here three such texts are treated, drawing upon German, Swiss and Italian North Coast publications.

Several of those to be treated are familiar to broader readership, and in combining these with forgotten or lesser texts of the region, one can see that there is

much of significance that lies in the seemingly ubiquitous or 'common-place' elements of recorded experience from the period—at times whole texts, or elements thereof, that have usually been overlooked can be seen afresh. (In order to cover the large number of available texts, what follows is necessarily a briefer analysis of a larger number of individual works than is seen in earlier chapters.)

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CONVICT PERIOD

The first written records for the region produced by any type of white settlers are those from the secondary convict settlement at Port Macquarie, and these remain as the only substantial 'original' texts that define the ethos of the convict period for the region. The two accounts to be treated here range from an (albeit educated) convict to a mansion dweller.

James Tucker

*Ralph Rashleigh*² is now a well-known novel in the canon of Australian literature, and its writer is generally accepted as a convict who worked in the Commissariat at Port Macquarie. The work was composed throughout 1845, in the stable but declining surroundings of the late period of Port Macquarie's convict establishment. This novel, with its eighteenth century flavour—especially of *Roderick Random*, as Colin Roderick its first editor commented correctly³—uses characters and settings drawn from Tucker's familiarity with various parts of New South Wales and predominantly with the area around Sydney. Reflecting the writer's life to that time, the action only comes to the North Coast in the third and last section. There was

² James Tucker, *Ralph Rashleigh* (Pymble: Angus and Robertson, 1992 (first pub. 1952)). The North Coast section is on pp. 238-278. For many years, prime interest in the work was directed towards the uncertainties in determining the historical identity of its author. Recent serious criticism ignores those earlier debates, and proceeds to examine the text very closely.

³ 'Introduction' to Tucker, p. vii.

sufficient reliable and convincing detail throughout to justify its first publishers this century deciding that the manuscript was a collection of memoirs, and to edit it heavily towards that end. While the text was later revealed as fictional, much of the work set on the North Coast can still be read as the product of the writer's actual observations, his discussions and particularly of his reading, while he was based in Port Macquarie. In the local histories there one finds some mention of James Tucker and of his novel, but there is as yet no consideration of its regional content or of its specific historical/literary context.⁴ From a national perspective, there is a strong coverage of this North Coast section in J.J. Healy's thematic study,⁵ and furthermore, his analysis of the whole novel is in part informed by a local perspective as to:

that asylum of aged and broken convicthood at Port Macquarie. This was the contingent reality to which all fantasy and vision had to return.⁶

Such a generalised use of an aspect of the writer's regional experience should be encouragement towards a fuller interrogation of what of its contents is specifically regional.

Ralph Rashleigh is set in the period up to the early 1820's, i.e., just prior to the settlement at Port Macquarie, and a quarter of a century before the work's composition. Imaginatively it can be readily seen as an intelligent attempt to capture the likely oral earlier record of white movement on the North Coast. First is the escape by sea, northwards from Newcastle of a journey exceeding one hundred miles and then bringing the group to landfall.⁷ The echoes here are a mixture of the Bryants and the *Trial* mutineers⁸—both being groups of convicts who had earlier escaped by sea, and along the coast past the location from which Tucker later wrote—surely stories that would have continued to stir later convict imaginations. Yet within the text the specific

⁴ *Port Macquarie: A History to 1850*, ed. by Frank Rogers (Port Macquarie: Hastings District Historical Society, 1982), p. 130.

⁵ J.J. Healy, *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia*, 2nd edn. (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1989). For more detail supporting Healy, and for a philosophical overview of the section's place in the whole novel, also see Robert Dixon, 'Ralph Rashleigh: A History of Civil Society in New South Wales', *Southerly*, 41.3 (1981), 300-316 (pp. 311-316).

⁶ Healy, p. 45.

⁷ Tucker, p. 238. By sea, the 100 mile mark from Newcastle would be the Camden Haven—just south of Port Macquarie.

⁸ Treated in Chapter 2.

comparison made is one more acceptable to the authorities—Bligh's (more arduous) journey across the Pacific.⁹ Another source is suggested by the subsequent land-travel along the beaches, and the conflict with the Aborigines—both of these aspects echoing closely the land journey by Oxley along the coast. The debt to and knowledge of the explorer's text are made very clear when one convict remarks:

I've heard there's plenty of wrecked ships along this shore. Who knows but we may make or find a better boat than the one we've lost!¹⁰

Similarly, Tucker adds an Oxley-like attempt to make a canoe, but he otherwise ignores the difficulty of repeatedly crossing inlets and the mouths of creeks or rivers. Paragraph-length details of equipment and loads are also reminders of this functional information in the explorer's log.¹¹ Yet in the spirit of many other convict dreams, Tucker's progressive movement and vision are those of an outward-looking escape, imaginatively culminating in what must be the extreme dream of east coast beach walking—arrival at Cape York.

Aborigines are described in two separate sections. The first part covers the progress of the convict group along the land, where the Indigenous inhabitants are presented solely in terms of colour or opposition. This following list is drawn from two pages only:

sable son of nature
dark bodies
some kind of wild animals
black warriors
savage treachery and cunning
sooty companions
sable warriors
sable antagonists
dead bodies of the fallen blacks
black enemies
sable foes¹²

The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*¹³ notes that 'sable' as applied to negroes is a 'slightly jocular' usage. Despite the dangerous attacks here described, this writer can maintain a

⁹ Tucker, p. 237.

¹⁰ Tucker, p. 241.

¹¹ Tucker, p. 241.

¹² Tucker, p. 242-243.

¹³ First noted 1485. *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, 3rd edn, corrected 1987, p. 1869.

derogatory superior disregard that would make a joke of rather than admit the natives' right to defend their land. Beyond the grim humour in the writer's choice of words, the events actually described are particularly gruesome. As the battle concludes one of the convicts begins to:

mangle the wounded wretches with his clasp-knife, as it seemed to our adventurer, needlessly prolonging their torture, until the latter and Roberts commiserated them, and put an end to their sufferings.¹⁴

The description is in the terms of humanely 'putting down' wounded animals, in contrast to the efforts of the sadistic torturer.

This can, surely, be read as an expression of the otherwise unexpressed feelings (and at times the actions) of the white community then towards the Aborigines. The events of the 1838 Myall Creek massacre still resonated in the community, and subsequent actions of extermination had become covert. More immediately for Tucker and his North Coast community, the adjacent killings at Cogo in the Hastings River valley had caused much fear in 1843—only two years before he was writing. While few written records remain of the widespread regional violence (centred on the Falls country to the west)¹⁵ there was a strong oral transmission—still there in the race memory of the Thungutti people.¹⁶ Thus it is that this fictional account is able to record the earlier white generation's dehumanising attitude to the other race, and to suggest with some particularity the violence which was used there against those regarded as merely dangerous fauna. This is also the imaginative completion of the rising anger expressed in Oxley's journal—one which had almost rent the necessarily calm facade of administrative-style prose.

A second section has Rashleigh taken into an Aboriginal tribe. Specific detail of the Aborigines of the Mid-North Coast forms a substantial part of this section. Written while he was 'haunt[ing] the Aboriginal encampment' of Port Macquarie, as

¹⁴ Tucker, p. 246.

¹⁵ Geoffrey Blomfield, *Baal Belbora: The End of the Dancing*, rev. edn (Chippendale, NSW: Alternate Publishing Co-operative, 1986 [1st pub. 1981]), pp. 4-6. This astonishing work is a very late sifting of contemporary and subsequent Koori oral tradition..

¹⁶ Blomfield, p. 6.

Colin Roderick puts it,¹⁷ Tucker uses the intriguing data so gained as a pause for spiritual renewal for his literary character. The more recent scholar, Elizabeth Perkins, sees it thus:

In transforming Rashleigh into an Aborigine, Tucker allows him a rebirth into innocence.¹⁸

Still the description of that Aboriginal society is predominantly one of violence—with only two exceptions. Overall, their poor treatment of women is made prominent, as is their drunkenness—parallel to or echoing Hodgkinson's description of cedar-getters (a work published during the year in which Tucker was writing). In his analysis, Healy details the links between Tucker and Alexander Burnett, the latter a companion on three of Sir Thomas Mitchell's journeys to the inland. Through this link one can see the source for the only Aborigine to befriend Ralph Rashleigh—the terrifying wise man with one eye:

The black who now approached was one of the most revolting specimens of humanity that can possibly be conceived.¹⁹

The portrait is to be linked with the one-eyed Aborigine who so terrified the members of Mitchell's group. Mitchell's publication had reached its second edition by 1839, so that the well-read Tucker would have had textual authority to support his earlier talks with Burnett. Adding a local element, as a background to the portrait, is Oxley's encounter with the deformed old man, just prior to reaching Mount Seaview.

Drawing together the fear and incomprehension of these two portraits, Tucker uses this character as Ralph's saviour and way of entry into Aboriginal life, with hints of its mystery and richness. Yet, perhaps (white) renewal of spirit is a just description of this episode, for Ralph Rashleigh is a mute uncomprehending observer through most of this section, and the near instant initiation seems almost comic to a modern reader. He is never convincing as a member of the tribe, and is most purposeful—and

17 Introduction to Tucker, p. xvi.

18 Elizabeth Perkins, 'Colonial Transformations' in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. by Laurie Hergenhan and others (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books Australia, 1988), pp. 139-153 (144).

19 Tucker, p. 257.

convincing—in his rejection of the group and in the account given of his departure. Only in the additional care shown to his wives, and in his final deadly (white man's) violence, is he shown as active at all. The novel would have the reader believe that the wives show more loyalty to Ralph than to their culture, and as put by Hergenhan, 'their reward is to be translated into ladies' maids'.²⁰ Here there is denial of the inner value of Aboriginal culture—suggesting that the only way forward was for Aborigines to become like loyal white servants. At the novel's very end, the dismissive view of Aborigines re-emerges, casting its denigration over the whole section, and on the Tablelands to the north-west, perhaps predictably, Aboriginal 'marauders' cause the early death of the novel's hero. Still, within the town settler's view of immediate (even seen as necessary) violence, this novel awkwardly senses, or leaves some space for, the depth of distinctive indigenous cultural detail then still observable in North Coast Aboriginal communities.

Annabella Boswell

The writer was a young woman living in Lake Innes House (near Port Macquarie), the home of her uncle, Major Innes, a former Commandant of the convict settlement. For over ten years, the enormous elaborate home in which they lived was a focus for the southern half of the region's colonial 'society', as well as for more distant travellers to the region. Here there were an opulent table, servants (occasionally in livery), a library and a measure of cultured conversation. The highlight recorded from this elegant way of life was the visit by the Governor himself in 1847.

Drawn from 'old letters and journals' and enriched by additions from a richly detailed memory, her 'Journal'²¹ was assembled and published near the end of the

²⁰ Laurie Hergenhan, *Unnatural Lives: Studies in Australian Fiction about the Convicts, from James Tucker to Patrick White* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983), p. 28. Later again in the novel, the cleansing of Ralph's skin causes his wives to distance themselves from him. The writer thus presents race as being superior to individual character or to culture.

²¹ The most accessible edition is Annabella Boswell, *Annabella Boswell's Journal: An Account of Early Port Macquarie*, ed by Morton Herman (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965). For

nineteenth century for the writer's children, and only in the mid twentieth century was the work brought to a wider audience and some critical attention as *Annabella Boswell's Journal*. Its construction pre-figures the recent (1990s) expansion of family history and memoir publishing, similarly produced in small runs and predominantly for one's own family. Annabella Boswell's journal is largely set in the Hastings Valley and the text is a continuing source for local histories requiring detail, evidence and illustration for life there in the late convict period. Yet what is almost universally ignored in the use of this text, are the complexities of voice, and content, arising from the two different times of event and of composition—a necessary subtlety to interpret if one wishes to pursue the socially significant role of the text.²²

While some sections are clearly presented as later interpolations between individually dated entries, 'About this time...' and 'I see by my journal that...', and 'Now after a period of more than sixty years...' . The presentation of the dated entries as authentic is flawed by anachronism, as with the use of 'Queensland' fourteen years earlier than its first use.²³ This leads one to question the degree to which original 1840's notes may have been rewritten from the perspective of the late Victorian period, for example, the presentation of (long) widowhood as a state of dignity and beauty. Such a differing perspective also has likely consequence for the portrayal of the region itself.

Certainly the changed life situation of the writer and her later purpose would to some measure explain the glowing account that one finds throughout. The whole is structured on the coming of age of the writer, and central to the text are the expressions of youthful joy in activity and the savouring of her experiences then. There is an Austen-like repeated use of 'merry', 'excitement', 'grand' and 'anxious least...'. Much attention is given to the changes in fashions and pastimes; and thus the work notes the arrival of the bustle and the polka. The characters, gallantries, good

criticism see: Dale Spender, *Writing a New World: Two Centuries of Australian Women Writers* (London: Pandora, 1988), pp. 34-46.

²² Morton Herman notes these difficulties in his 'Introduction', Boswell, p. vi. The North Coast section (i.e., Port Macquarie), including several short visits to Sydney, covers pp. 30-167 (end of the work).

²³ Boswell, p. 108. Morton Herman adds a note on this point.

humour and stories about the male visitors are key points. Indeed, many entries are, at base, enthused lists of house visitors, with an identifier or note on each one. Her own specific responsibility in the many arrangements for entertaining seems to have been the epergne—that symbolic mix of what is elegant, central and attractive, but ultimately unimportant and best soon removed. In short, the work is dominated by the enthusiasms of an accomplished young woman, a little uneasy in her situation—not only a young woman but also not of the immediate family, and therefore doubly dependent upon the good will of her uncle—and clearly eager to please her host. She circulates with good humour amongst them all, and the climax of this over-riding sense of social obligation is her keeping company with the Governor who had been detained by his strained ankle from joining the boating group. She is concerned to present herself as belonging to and at the forefront of the group of women/children with repeated use of 'we'. In sum, the text seems designed to capture some of the formal elegance of Jane Austen's fictional world—the writer has the enthusiasm of Elizabeth Bennett, with some of the uncertainty of Fanny Price. Any seemingly slight negative detail is muted by her glowingly positive expressions. Even the near drowning of the writer and one other—seemingly a central event by reason of the naming of a whole section 'Peril in the Surf (1844)'—takes up only a small part of the section. Within that description there are merely two statements of distress:

I agreed that we had no doubt been in great danger, and for a moment we were very serious

and

Oh! that fearful moment; it makes me shudder now when I think of it. I felt perfectly sick.²⁴

At times this glowing portrait of later childhood years is quite unconvincing.

This focus on personal development—a sort of *Bildungsroman* approach—modifies the description of wider events. Economic troubles causing great concern and hardship are compressed/passed over for the 1845-46 period, while the writer finds ample excitement in social matters. Towards the end of the work, the close of her

²⁴ Boswell, p. 83, 84.

childhood is marked by descriptions of a decline in the circumstances of the household, and a like Goldsmith-echoing decline in the township of Port Macquarie. Her romantic lament,

Alas! Poor Port Macquarie! It is indeed a deserted village,²⁵

also marks the loss of her childhood freedom for the writer. The departure of two key individuals adds to this sense of inevitable finality—the disappearance of the romantic figure, the skilled but troubled 'Mr Smith'; and the death of Lady FitzRoy, the Governor's wife who had brought such warmth, high fashion and social focus to the Lake during the Governor's visit.

There are more general trends that can be seen in the work. There is concern for her 'countrymen' and other things Scottish. Presbyterianism is given a special place, and set against the exclusive narrowness of 'high church' attitudes. The text indicates the steady stream of migrants, the gradual coming together of various Scottish people, and their valuing of each other—such attitudes often transcending class. Otherwise, the British background intrudes surprisingly little. The clear charm of Mundy, that figure most recently from Britain, reveals the social power of the seldom mentioned but nonetheless true and only meaningful English centre—London.²⁶ Yet, in the experiences described at Lake Innes House, there is a clear affirmation of the value of regional 'nodes', as it were, of the imperial culture. The local map consists of the house and surrounds, the beach, several sights (Blackman's Point amongst others), and some sites inland. Port Macquarie is singled out for its future use as a link to the Tablelands—failing in this only because of the cessation of transportation and the consequent loss of cheap (or forced) labour. Grandiose local dreams extend to plans to make Lake Innes a port—but these ideas are dismissed by Annabella Boswell as destructive of the treasured tranquillity of the area, an attitude that is consonant with her expressions of delight in local flora and fauna. Otherwise, the town is only of interest for the Church, the horse-race track, and predominantly for

²⁵ Boswell, p. 162.

²⁶ It is possible that Annabella Boswell had long access to Mundy's account (1852) before (re)writing her own.

its steamer to and from Sydney. Its non-professional people are rarely mentioned and the work presents and maintains a stereotypical class-based view. The bringing of a large group of Indian coolies to the settlement is cause for a patronising inspection of them and their homes:

Mr Sheriff, who is in charge of them, pointed out some who are tradesmen—blacksmiths, carpenters, etc. He also made them show us their pipes, which are curious ... They seemed pleased to see us, and not at all disconcerted at being brought out to be stared at.²⁷

The morality of such scrutiny raises some personal doubt, and the final sentence may reflect the humanity and awareness of the writer's later years—a revisionary understating of the 1840's easy acceptance of the more forceful use of social power.

Within the context of this text, the Aborigines are ever-present but usually beneath notice. On occasion difficulties arise from the natives burning grass, and particularly so with their like treatment of the reeds at Lake Innes. There is no white proprietorial indignation at this action, and it is reasonable to assume that the natives were usually there and deemed as having a continuing right to act in this way. Thus the anecdote provides an intriguing mix of accommodation and erasure. The latter is more complicated when one considers the younger writer in the context of the contemporary community anger over Aborigines. In discussion of the murder of English settlers in New Zealand, in the earlier Maori hostilities, the Lake Innes houseparty group is agreed that the settlers were the aggressors, but the writer presumes the nicety of blaming 'the natives for killing them after they had surrendered'.²⁸ Such insulation from the real issues of cross-cultural engagement, particularly when so important locally, suggest that shallow (Western) moralising was a strategy to cover the silence on any/all such massacres. More conventionally, Aborigines are thoughtlessly described for purposes of amusement—as figures of fun for their actions or for any physical deformity, much as is also the case with Commissioner McDonald:

Mr M'Donald, the C.C.L., New England, is a very clever man. Unfortunately he is very short with a small hump on his back just at the waist. It was owing to this peculiarity that he at one time possessed so much influence over the natives about here. They had some time previously a very favourite and powerful chief who had the same deformity, and

²⁷ Boswell, p. 108.

²⁸ Boswell, p. 70.

they, according to their established superstition, imagined that at his death he had "jumped up" or arisen again a white man. Mr M'Donald encouraged them in this belief and added to his popularity with them by studying their language and customs.²⁹

Another account, one also presented for amusement, is particularly revealing:

Lately we met Mr Murrigat again (a black fellow) but he did not show much anxiety to renew our acquaintance, though he explained to me how his wife, Ellen, "when she was a little boy" had had the first joint of her little finger cut off to enable her to roll up her fishing tackle with more ease.³⁰

Reading against the grain, the humour can be seen to be directed against the white reteller of this story. When physical avoidance does not succeed, perhaps teasing the local whites by telling outlandish stories was a useful Aboriginal strategy. There are several incidents where Aborigines had been employed for some small service, and one story of a more disturbing arrangement:

Midger Brown, a black boy my uncle used to take about with him and whom he dressed very smartly and spoiled very much.³¹

Yet the text contains evidence of black defiance against the expected meekness, for, taken to Sydney and to the gentleman's club, Midger is able to successfully beg for half-crowns, and to make fun' of the one man who did not then contribute to him. In one sense this writer's distance from Aboriginal people—as compared to the closeness of James Tucker in the same community and writing at the same time—is able to preserve evidence of younger settler attitudes and of a resistance otherwise unrecorded then.

Another short text by Boswell explains the scarcity of Aborigines in the longer work.³² Although she clearly had been familiar with Indigenous people in the Bathurst and later in the Hunter regions, at Lake Innes 'they were not encouraged to come about the house'. The account gives more detail on 'Midgee Brown', who, returning from one Sydney visit, disappeared, and it was reported that he wanted nothing more to do with

²⁹ Boswell, pp. 142-143. For more detail on George James MacDonald see Frank Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-90.

³⁰ Boswell, p. 81.

³¹ Boswell, p. 100.

³² Annabella Boswell, *Recollections of Some Australian Blacks* ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], 1890), pp. 9-10. 'Midgee Brown' is clearly 'Midger'.

White people—"too much no good". In part, the general rejection of Aborigines from the house is thus met by Midger's own rejection.

In sum then, the longer text, seemingly of the convict period, must be seen as a (late-Victorian) validation of an early and uneven engagement with the land that in part includes its original inhabitants, but it remains a limited dialogue since it depends on class-difference and on imperial entrepreneurship.

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PASTORAL SOCIETY

In the first half of the nineteenth-century the eastern texts of pastoral settlement overlap somewhat with those of travel. Europeans whose intention it is to settle describe their movement into the region in language reminiscent of the Book of Genesis.³³ With a strong sense of purpose and even of their own family destiny, these works are decisive in tone, even when signalling the possibility of personal or family failure due to climate, soil type, distance, and the like. This combination of initial determination and of realised vulnerability leads to expressions of independence in all matters—as though the now far distant rules and laws of the parent culture no longer hold. As in many matters of self-reliance, and particularly at times of survival, there is a sense of falling back to the essentials, and the negotiation of an elemental morality. In the wider sphere it was broadly but covertly agreed that the ten commandments did not apply to Aborigines.³⁴ Falling back upon a self-defined Old Testament view, a settler could accommodate a very brutal racism or genocide where it was necessary. This is the moral background for the development of what seems and was a reasonably self-sufficient community, and one that did not tolerate easily the ideas of outsiders.

³³ In her family history, Judith Wright cites the Book of Genesis for the atmosphere of uncleared land in the Hunter Valley. See: *The Generations of Men* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 5.

³⁴ Wright, p. 32.

The following pages reflect the establishment and consolidation of such a social identity.

The early settlers on the North Coast region, then, take with them some of the self-control and sense of the rightness of their use of power that one sees in men newly resigned from the services. They were different in temperament from the unofficial early European close contacts in that they chose to make their place on the land in the context of land use and trade, and they were concerned to mark the limits of land under their control. This is a pattern which causes some dislocation for the indigenous inhabitants, but while there were few such settlers then there was scope for native resistance and adjustment. The writings of these settlers have perceptions of the land and aborigines overlaid with so much of the details of making a (European) living in a difficult land that the central themes of landscape/topography regional definition become difficult to trace.

H.G. Hamilton

Commander Hamilton was one of the many former British armed services officers who took up the opportunity to select land in this region—the group which was gently mocked by Colonel Mundy when at Port Macquarie in 1847. This official ex-naval settler produced one of the earliest extended prose accounts of squatter settlement on the North Coast—and its overlap with the prose of journeys of traverse is especially revealing of early squatter attitudes. Based on two letters to his brother in England, the narrative was published as an article in London in 1844, and has not since been republished.³⁵ The brother was William Richard Hamilton, whose Presidential Address (retiring) was published in the same volume.

It is only an in-text claim that the work originated as private letters—and indeed two sections are dated as letters—yet rather than the informal and personal

³⁵ H.G.H., 'The Country between Liverpool Plains and Moreton Bay, in New South Wales. Extracts from two letters from Commander H.G. Hamilton, R.N., to W.R. Hamilton, Esq.', *Royal Geographical Society of London*, XIII (Old Series) (1844), pp. 245-253.

characteristics of that genre, all the evidence is there for its drafting having been a well-planned and carefully executed journal article. The separate letters are dated long after the journey and the return to the Upper Hunter, but the first proceeds only so far as the Apsley and Macleay gorges, and the whole seems designed to give the effect of despatches sent during the progress of the journey. A summary has been added (perhaps by the editor) as the introductory paragraph. Grand statements of explorer-like movement and location of major features inform the whole. The disinterestedness of the style of exploration prose is to be taken as a mode of communication to mask the pursuit of one's own interest in the appropriation of the land. This impression, of objective observation with the sole aim of furthering useful knowledge, was suitable for a journal which included reviews of the explorers' publications—in this case the (*Journal of the*) *Royal Geographical Society of London*. His text has Australian company in this volume including a review of Edward Eyre's publication and a note on Leichhardt's proposed expedition. Hamilton goes so far in this genre imitation as to include an explanatory map.

The particular style is Oxley's journal, with its matter-of-fact statements of the distances that have been covered—yet so vast for a British audience—and of the process of moving northwards and then east down the escarpment to suitable land. At the gorges, there is included a slight echo of Oxley's expression of the sublime:

The scenery, you may imagine, is very beautiful, and the falls during the rainy season must be grand.³⁶

Even the emphasis that this sentence gains through being the final one of the first 'letter' cannot disguise the almost grudging expression of natural beauty. Unlike Oxley's journey, here the barrier does not reveal a way through to the desired lower North Coast. Rather, there is a repeated probing of the western border, with movement further north after each failed attempt. Eventually this sequence of failures leads the would-be settler to the 'more usual route to the Richmond River', i.e., through Tenterfield. And so the explorer-style prose becomes limited to detailing the network

³⁶ Hamilton, p. 246.

of prior settlements across the vast spaces and tree-marked trails. Ultimately the return by Craig's line (the more southern access to the Clarence River, missed on the downwards journey) marks the loss of all pretension to primacy of endeavour and the writer's text being the earliest as to terrain encountered and traversed—and so the text ends with the group starting on Craig's Line. Those who approached the North Coast from the west have turned their backs on the early dream of an inland of potentially fabulous riches. Squatter practicality is satisfied with more circumscribed but certain wealth.

The long distances enumerated disguise what is essentially a journey from one settler's station to the next. The repeated attempts on the escarpment are on the advice of a series of named Tablelands settlers, their stations serving as informal bases for supplies, rest and for the obtaining of local information. Hamilton reveals his ideal for a new settler group to be their complete independence of outside help. He praises one such group of six settlers for the specific roles undertaken—blacksmith, cattle stockman, shepherd, carpenter, gardener, and finances by the bookkeeper. Furthermore:

They built their own house, sawing all the wood themselves, and put up all the fences, &c.; and they seem to be in full enjoyment of all the comforts and necessaries of a settler's life.³⁷

Here is a vision of a model co-operative or small village-like diversity of task and also of a social completeness—and all co-ordinated with a harmony of purpose and industriously-performed action.³⁸

Those who were clearly outside this desired Edenic and even paradisaical pattern were the Aborigines. When recording his frustration at not finding a path down the gorges to the good lands that can be seen beckoning, with some muted resentment Hamilton notes that:

they are likely to be left for many years to come in the hands of the blacks, who do, I believe, now and then cross.³⁹

³⁷ Hamilton, p. 250.

³⁸ It is not an exaggeration to see in this description the elements of later (rural) political organisation, in which the North Coast and New England regions lead the nation.

³⁹ Hamilton, p. 248.

There is no thought expressed that friendly communication with the Aborigines might help him to his settlement purpose. Rather, the natives are completely 'other', and more akin to migrating fauna than to this writer. Later Aborigines are noted as having 'frightened' the cattle of one settler, which misfortune had necessitated the confining of the herd to settle them. Although not a fully convincing statement, this shows a necessitous positioning of the Aborigines as often/potentially troublesome. The final mention is an actual encounter, rather than a report. It comes on the Richmond, close to the desired settlement, at a time when one might have expected a degree of self-interest in successful long-term engagement with these original inhabitants. The prospective settlers come across:

a camp of Wild Blacks, with only a few women and children in it, all of whom made off as fast as they could; but we had not gone a quarter of a mile further up the creek before we fell in with another camp, containing some 20 or more men, who, immediately jumping up, with their spears, ran to the other side of the creek, where they stopped and began brandishing their arms, and putting themselves in all kinds of strange attitudes — all speaking together, and looking fierce. Not wanting to come to closer quarters with them, we quietly rode on, taking care to have our pistols ready in case they should follow: this they did for some time, but on the opposite side of the creek. At first we did not know whether they wished to be friends or foes, but after a time they held up green boughs, which satisfied us that they had no evil intentions; we nevertheless would not allow them to approach, and wishing to get some distance from them before we halted for the night, we continued on our way, and they soon ceased to follow us. It was so late in the evening, that we were obliged to camp not above a quarter of a mile from them; and although the natives do not generally move about at night-time, we thought it prudent to keep watch all night; but we neither saw nor heard anything more of them.⁴⁰

This account reveals much in the way of cross-cultural misunderstanding, but it is clear that the settler is intent on maintaining an armed security, which includes an avoidance of all closer communication with the natives. Again, this style echoes late exploration prose with its need to cover territory quickly and safely, but with no real interest in ethnographic information. The final clause tells us more than its relief after the night of probably unnecessary wariness. As the last comment on the Aborigines in the whole text, it leaves an impression of suppression—as though the whole project of settlement can now proceed unhindered by henceforth ignoring the natives. The only amelioration of the writer's attitude that comes from this encounter is shown in the

⁴⁰ Hamilton, p. 251-252.

change from the alarmed expression 'Wild Blacks' at the beginning, to the quiescent 'natives' at the end. The two previous references had consistently used the derogatory (and lower case) 'blacks'.

Prime attention is then given to the urgency of completing any outstanding frontier-closing (white) administrative and legal matters. We are presented with details of sudden claims being made and the rush to register these, but then of those persons not occupying the land; the writer is operating in a world where (potential) settler desire and greed outstrips one's ability to follow through the steps to which one has committed himself.⁴¹ Ultimately the centre of the text is the new domain now being claimed. An indirect and distant centre is still in Britain, as a site for reporting, and its approval through publication would indicate a broad cultural validation of the general enterprise. Britain is also important for a backward glance to an almost feudal standard of ordered self-sufficiency and hospitality, against which the local new establishment is (ultimately) to be measured. Yet despite the text's confidence of expression, arising largely from its appropriation of the style of forceful exploration prose, there is still an underlying unease. A tension arises, between the grand claims and exploratory style in areas that, while not known in close detail, were familiar in the broad field of existing east coast-focussed cartography. Similarly, the long sequence of named settlements eventually merges into an image of a more satisfactory close patterned white occupation. In short, the style is too elevated for the rushed entrepreneurial task that is being undertaken and described.

John Henderson

Another time-expired officer/settler, but this time on the lower North Coast, was John Henderson, as his title page declares—a (former) Lieutenant in Her

⁴¹ The run was promptly taken over by the writer's younger brother, Edward Hamilton—soon to be M.L.C. and first Provost of the University of Sydney. See Norman Charles Keats, *'Wollumbin' The Creation and Early Habitation of the Tweed, Brunswick and Richmond Rivers of N.S.W.* (Point Clare, NSW: N.C. Keats, 1988), pp. 313-314. Edward Hamilton's *ADB* entry suggests that a partnership owned the properties, and while lucrative, after many troubles it was dissolved in 1855.

Majesty's Ceylon Rifle Regiment. In his two volume work, Henderson has left the most comprehensive account of settler life in the general region.⁴² Published as one of the many works of early impressions of the colony that found a ready readership in Britain, the 'Preface' declares that its audience, as well as being the intending emigrant, is for 'those at home with relatives unfortunate enough to live in the lone and far bush'. By implication, the merely curious could assist the work by their interest, and so the publication went to a second edition after three years. Since then, only reprinted in extracts,⁴³ the study has been a rich source for local histories of the Macleay Valley, as well as a thematic source, for the late Dr G. Blomfield's *Baal Belbora*.⁴⁴

The text is structured upon an early visit to the area to select land (perhaps in late 1838), and then the subsequent arrival with stock, after following the long route via the Tablelands to take up the holding. From the latter part of the first volume, the account is based on the seemingly permanent settlement, until a later change to consciously general comments on the colony. Reminiscent of Hodgkinson's text, the general non-regional matter takes over for the latter sections, seemingly giving authoritative advice for a broad range of regions. In this case, the work becomes somewhat split in its approach—at times wishing to convey information that could be seen to be applicable to the nation in general, yet also wishing to give an intensity of familiar local detail that would be distinctive and convincing. It was a textual approach, reflecting publishing imperatives, that encapsulated the tension between the 'national'/continental and the local. Additionally, there is an artificiality to the narrative structure arising from the much later composition of the text and incorporation of subsequent observations. Indeed, the chronological narrative is interrupted at many points for long discussions on general issues, revealing the writer's life experiences.

⁴² John Henderson, *Excursions and Adventures in New South Wales: With Pictures of Squatting and of Life in the Bush, an Account of the Climate, Productions, and Natural History of the Colony, and the Manners and Customs of the Natives with Advice to Emigrants*, 2 vols (London: W. Shoberl, 1851).

⁴³ Herbert Strang, ed., *Pioneers in Australia: Stories of Exploration and Adventure* (London: Humphrey Milford, [1934?]), pp. 214-262.

⁴⁴ John Weingarh, 'The Discovery and Settlement of the Macleay River', *JRAHS*, 10.3 (1924), 142-152 (pp. 148-152). Blomfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-41.

The first visit to reconnoitre the area, driven by its commercial imperative, contains a general mapping of the southern half of the region in a degree of detail well beyond that given by Tucker or Boswell. Similarly, the close detail of life encountered during the period of actual settlement exceeds that given by the settler/surveyor Hodgkinson, and in both cases certainly surpasses that recorded by Hamilton. Henderson's arrival is accompanied by an overview of the coast which locates the Manning Valley as a minor field of operation—its river small and there being only three or four settlers. Port Macquarie is described as:

decidedly the best built and most prettily-situated township I have seen in the colony⁴⁵

Tinged with the prospective settler's own idealised hope, this glowing view is similar to the last statements (or nostalgia) of Boswell, both being very different from the urbane Col. Mundy's view. The limit of Henderson's appreciation of this picturesque and well-built town comes with the realisation that the road to the interior was inadequate, and the consequent claim that Government's construction efforts have been misplaced. The settler's practical needs quickly supplant the attractive images.

The North Coast is presented as an open field for settlement. Much attention is given to a general mapping of rivers, distances, directions, and of existing roads. Yet there is still some scope for a delight in the views. As a visitor to Lake Innes he locates the scene:

The only place in the neighbourhood of Port Macquarie worth mentioning is Lake Innes, the elegant residence of Major Innes. The view here is very fine; in fact, I think the most beautiful I have seen in the colony. In front, lies a very large fresh-water lake (a sight peculiarly pleasing in this arid country), beyond are seen, at a distance of from twenty to forty miles, Coolapatamba, Brokenbago, and the other mountains of the Wilson and the Hastings, to which the former is tributary, while Mount-Sea view, on the verge of New England, towers aloft in the background. This fine scenery is enhanced by discovering from the same spot, on looking to the left, a noble sea view, terminated by a bluff called Camden Haven Head, supported, as it were, a little further back by one of the three remarkable mountains called the "Brothers."⁴⁶

The emphasis is on the aesthetic, the 'elegant', 'very fine', 'most beautiful', 'pleasing' and 'noble'. There is a particular pleasure in being able to name the major natural features that help to orient one. Particularly noteworthy is the location within the

⁴⁵ Henderson, I, p. 107.

⁴⁶ Henderson, I, pp. 110-111.

obviously known terms of the earlier explorers. There is the dominance of Oxley's Mount Seaview to the west, while to the south is one of Cook's Three Brothers. The location is presented in the terms of the earlier exploration texts with the use of 'three remarkable mountains called the "Brothers"', echoing Flinders' correction of the expression 'remarkably high' (wrongly assumed to be Cook's description). Interestingly, the well-read Henderson restores the less marked usage of 'remarkable' that was used in Cook's original journal (at this time not yet published). This is a passage which reveals a settler's claiming of the land gaining strength and confidence from citing the naming and the sites of the region's important explorers. More broadly, in its thrust this description asserts itself against a view of Australia as arid, unnamed and uncivilised—all characteristics seemingly inappropriate for the North Coast as seen by Henderson. In this initial attempt to understand the land, to some degree, Henderson's specific observations are subordinated to large generalisations. Even in describing the river of his settling he grandiloquently declares:

this description will also serve for most, if not all, of the other rivers which run towards the east.⁴⁷

On this smaller scale of observation, he finds none of the park land of which he had heard much mention. This description, given by many early writers,⁴⁸ was more applicable to the open forest country elsewhere in the colonies than to the rich luxuriant vegetation of this region. However, there is some delight in descriptions of nature as observed. Fertile soil, trees and the river are linked in the following:

Its banks are clothed with brushes, which shroud the river, as it were, with a dark pall; and this sort of land, though it is the richest, costs a great deal before it can be got under cultivation.⁴⁹

Yet the imagery presents the luxuriance of growth in an increasingly disturbing sequence of 'clothing' and 'shrouding'—and then these verbs followed by a 'dark pall'. The shadows thus described are associated with the tantalising hope, but possible

⁴⁷ Henderson, I, p. 135.

⁴⁸ Henderson, I, p. 139. For a discussion of the original parklands, see Eric Rolls, *From Forest to Sea: Australia's Changing Environment* (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1993), pp. 161-165.

⁴⁹ Henderson, I, p. 114.



GUNYAS INHABITED BY THE AUTHOR AT ELSINEUR.

chimera, of commercial promise. The short-term focus found is in the selection of the occasional river flats or river bends, with their features of rich soil, free of heavy growth due to occasional rising waters or small floods. The unpleasant side of landscape was felt in its likely disease, the 'fever and ague--the demons of these brushes'⁵⁰ and expanded later as:

This part of the river abounds in swamps and brushes, and is very unhealthy, being extremely prolific in cases of fever and ague.⁵¹

Only slightly less pleasant were the European occupants of the valley. The small establishment at Kempsey was described as:

a second edition of the "Deserted Village," a monument to misdirected speculation.⁵²

Using the familiar Goldsmith-image, as did Annabella Boswell of Port Macquarie, here there is a class-based link made between literary learning and business interests. At the other social extreme, at the time Henderson was writing, there were still sawyers working in the upper reaches of the Macleay river. While describing their lives, occasionally with attendant families, and their rough practices, Henderson found them a disturbing presence:

certainly the most improvident set of men in the world.⁵³

Another class-based difference was with his own workers. Even the non-convict overseer 'proved no better than the others'.⁵⁴ This reveals an attempt by the writer to introduce a yeoman class between himself and the even lower orders. In effect, a great gulf is put between himself and (excepting some at Port Macquarie) all others. He was certainly indignant at the variability of his own workers. In the case of one whom he had earlier saved from drowning, Henderson details the short period between expressions of gratitude, or even devotion, and the seemingly inevitable theft from the master and then subsequent absconding.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Henderson, I, p. 126.

⁵¹ Henderson, I, p. 130.

⁵² Henderson, I, p. 130.

⁵³ Henderson, I, p. 125.

⁵⁴ Henderson, I, p. 304.

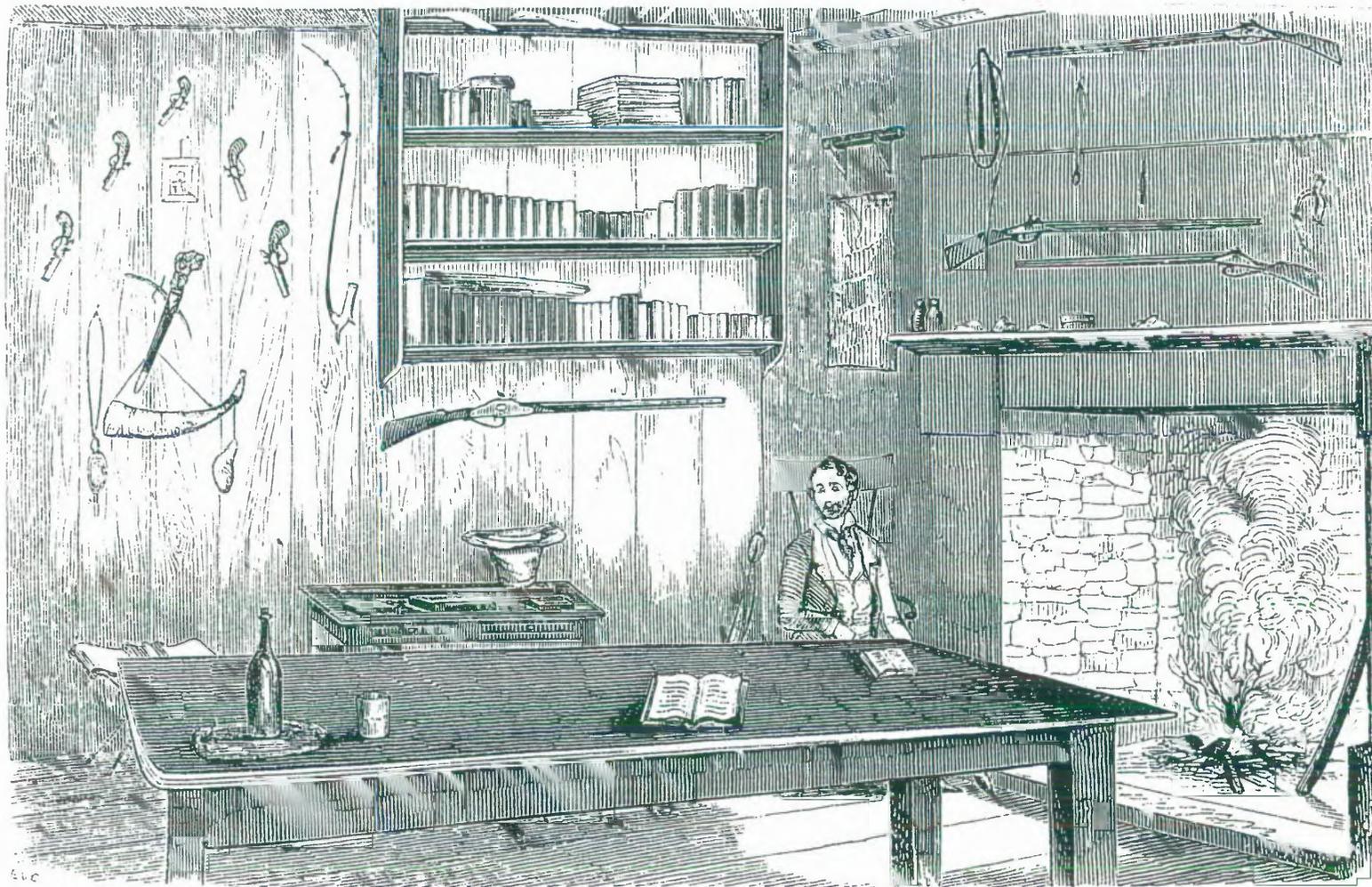
⁵⁵ Henderson, II, p. 19.

Alternatively, detail which is culturally comfortable is given on the establishment of buildings, the mapping of the closer locale and neighbours, and there is much information added as to suitable crops and methods of cultivation. It is part of a strand showing the regularisation of activities and the control of the setting. Emblematic of this strand is the illustration which introduces the second volume. The 'View from the House of Elsineur' shows the factual details of the river-bend location and the herd of cattle, yet the whole is presented in the conventions of the English picturesque. Three distances are presented—the mountainous background; the intermediate field of river and flats; and nearest to the observer are the framing trees. In cultural terms, the image signifies a sylvan closeness to happy natives (all well-clothed and almost Tahitian in appearance), and in mid-frame the grazing/cropping area is background to the amusement of a sailing boat on the river—a reach much like a private lake.

Descriptions of the dwellings are supported by two illustrations. It is rare in such settler works for the reader to be given much detail on the initial make-shift dwellings. Seldom does the description permit any certain visualisation of any temporary expedient—as though the claim and hold on the land was already too tenuous. The usual image presented is that of comfort and completeness. Here, Henderson presents the *gunyas* in illustration, their frail structure and tenuousness suppressed visually by the subsequent illustration of the comfortable interior of the settler's home—which the text suggests is Henderson's third dwelling on that land. This image of the home, 'Interior of the Author's House at Elsineur', which has often been reproduced, ⁵⁶ indicates an ease of life, with a high mansion-like ceiling beyond the frame, books, bottle, pipe, an array of firearms, and a comfortable fire and dozing settler. Perhaps modified by the engraver for the British reading public, it appears to be the perfect hideaway for a colonial gentleman requiring solitude and relaxation.

This does not, however, disguise the danger that is presented in the text. The troubling story from the Tablelands of a man and his dog missing occupies his

⁵⁶ See Neil, *op. cit.*, between pp. 40-41.



INTERIOR OF THE AUTHOR'S HOUSE AT ELSINEUR.

imagination for some time, when other sounds are heard in the distance.⁵⁷ Similarly three young men heading inland towards the mountains take a wrong turn and become terribly lost, barely surviving their ordeal, while a similar misfortune occurs to a local settler.⁵⁸ Some of Henderson's own cattle wander off, only to later appear on the Tablelands. There is danger in the traditional burning of the land, here destroying one of Henderson's gunyas, but also some cause for expressions of grand spectacle:

At night, the appearance of the forest was very grand, the dead timber everywhere being in a blaze. One tree, in particular, stood gleaming through the dark night, like a tall pillar of fire, not blazing, but at a red heat, till all at once, while we were looking at it, it dissolved in myriads of sparks.⁵⁹

Unlike Oxley's expressions of amazement at the vast view over the waterfalls which he encountered, this passage sees the sublime in the more immediate land. The expression used echoes the Book of Exodus (13.21) with its awe-inspiring manifestation:

And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light.

Yet here the event described is not a settlers-shared sign of rightness and direction to the Promised Land. For an individual to take such signs as justification is to risk what may seem to us to be the equivalent of a madness like that of Conrad's Kurtz. The fires observed by Henderson are often the result of the Aboriginal practice of land clearing, occasionally inadvertently, but certainly not for his benefit.

There is a use of literary quotations and allusions throughout that reveals the writer as consciously searching to put the experiences into the approved English cultural context. While Milton, for example, can be used for confirmation,⁶⁰ the quotation provides little continuing consolation in the ongoing text. There is an accumulation of negative expressions—'*ennui*', '*lassitude*', '*monotonous*', '*bewilderment*', '*loneliness*', and '*boredom*'. Against these expressions of what must have been the disappointments and sombre moments of settler life, relief was shown to come from things as slight as tobacco:

⁵⁷ Henderson, I, pp. 310-313.

⁵⁸ Henderson, II, pp. 20-24.

⁵⁹ Henderson, II, p. 15.

⁶⁰ Henderson, I, p. 292.

'a great solace in the deep and painful solitude I was now to undergo.⁶¹

Difficulties with finding one's way, with making one's living in this land, and or making cultural sense of the whole are strongly affected by what is presented in the text as a seemingly disruptive intrusion by the aborigines. Yet, surprisingly, the relationship with the indigenous people is recording as beginning with co-operation and trust:

The blacks, to whom we had lent a gun and ammunition, had shot some wallabies and wild duck for us⁶².

This is a 'loyal servant' form of description, where the immediate power given to the menial ('black') is held in place by the wider but nonetheless obvious power of the master. Similarly positive, but also implicated in assertion of power, are the early attempts made to communicate:

By means of a little tobacco, however, and signs—the usual language of strangers, we soon made them understand that we wanted sheets of bark for enlarging our gunyas... They were anything but agreeable neighbours, though they displayed no hostility, and we were therefore glad when they moved their camp.⁶³

The engagement is presented as one of a fee-for-service, yet the text unwittingly preserves a space for disappointment at the Aboriginal—within the suggestion of potential violence. With such danger foregrounded, there is ever a fear of the 'large brush in our neighbourhood [which] was dangerous, as affording good cover for hostile blacks'.⁶⁴ Still, there appears another chance for more open communication when further work is performed by the Aborigines, and an honorific brass plate promised to the leader who spoke some English words. Yet, in a sequence of recorded lost opportunities, on the second day, the writer's dogs make an attack on the group—

They immediately, for protection, climbed trees with the agility of monkeys, and, on descending, they indignantly went off into the brush, fancying apparently that we had set the dogs upon them.⁶⁵

61 Henderson, I, p. 295.

62 Henderson, I, p. 116.

63 Henderson, I, pp. 296-297.

64 Henderson, I, p. 300.

65 Henderson, I, pp. 301-302.

There is but little concern at the Aborigines' plight, and even humour directed against them here, indicating that they are seen as completely 'other'. There is a sadly misplaced feeling of relief in the period after their departure, as though, animal-like, they would soon forget the incident or accept such harassment in their own land. Another missed opportunity comes when Henderson is appealed to by a native demanding punishment be given to a hut-keeper for the wounding of another Aborigine. Henderson declines:

I told him I could not interfere, and he went away much dissatisfied.⁶⁶

Whatever Henderson had carried or maintained of his whiteman's responsibility was thereby lost. The Aborigines were abandoned to evolve a survival dialogue with the individual stockmen/hut-keepers.

Conflict and battle are given full description of the sort that is largely missing from other accounts of the period.⁶⁷ Although native attacks are not specifically directed against Henderson, in time, he reluctantly becomes involved through the appeals for help from other Europeans. His gradual acceptance and implication in the standard shared White attitudes is marked by increasing descent into descriptions of the natives calling them 'troublesome', as having a 'threatening aspect', and as practising 'treachery and revenge', and 'attacks and murders'.⁶⁸ Accompanying this are rehearsals of complaint against the Commissioner for Crown Lands and the police, while valorising the stockmen as 'the true defensive police of the bush', and the need for 'constant vigilance on the part of the settler, and for reliance upon himself alone for defence, or redress'.⁶⁹

His own action against the Aborigines was in retaliation for the loss/theft of his crop of maize. After burning some opossum cloaks, nets and other objects at a hastily abandoned camp, he proceeded to the main camp where the native group was both surprised and alarmed, whereupon Henderson's group then beat a hasty retreat without

⁶⁶ Henderson, II, p. 54.

⁶⁷ Blomfield *op. cit.*, pp. 38-40, has a section on Henderson's text.

⁶⁸ Henderson, II, pp. 50-56.

⁶⁹ Henderson, II, 55-56.

firing. Yet he became most disturbed by one of his men, in this retreat, who encountered several Aborigines, 'spoke to the leader in his own language, and advanced to within twelve paces of him, ... now , to my astonishment, took deliberate aim at him and pulled the trigger.⁷⁰ The native was saved by the gun failing to fire. The action was a clear denial of humanity, an attempted cold-blooded murder, made somehow worse by the deceptive use of the local language. While attempting to maintain a (class-based) distance from the squabbles and then attacks, Henderson reveals the duplicity of authorities on such massacres, but is increasingly himself implicated in the whole.

In the latter part of the text, there are long sections on generalised descriptions of Aboriginal life. The inclusion of a small list of Aboriginal vocabulary items suggests white attempts at more thoughtful contact. It is noteworthy that the word *muttai* (corn), otherwise unrecorded, is still used in the wider community from the Macleay to the Manning Valleys.⁷¹ This section of his writing suffers from a sense of overview that presumes to include those from beyond the region. Some specific examples, beyond the language, are clearly drawn from his North Coast experience, and there is an awkward alternation between the authentic local observation and the vague generalisations upon the race.

In the overall text, the recurring expressions of disappointment, loneliness and the increasing evidence of white racism, are somewhat belied by the wealth of detail and activity recorded. Such disappointment can only be the realisation that one's initial aims and efforts were mis-directed in this land and towards its people. This is a text which in part presents the grandeur and mystery of this darkly forested land. Yet such expressions are clearly made from outside the 'pall' and shadows of the forests, and there is no imaginative engagement with those depths. Still, as the most sustained work on the early squatter experience of the North Coast, this surviving text is a rich if disappointingly tentative source of material on initial cultural contact.

⁷⁰ Henderson, I, p. 10.

⁷¹ Henderson, p. 165. The word can be seen on signs put up by farmers to sell their produce, a personal observation of my own in recent years.

Annie Baxter

Annie Baxter⁷² came to the Hastings and settled on the Macleay Valley at 'Yesabba', with her husband, in 1839. They were fresh from the high-spirited life of the circle of young Army officers in the more closely settled Van Diemen's Land—a life of parties, picnics, flirtations and minor intrigues, which Annie had particularly enjoyed. Rather than bemoan the social frustrations of (frontier) settler life on the Macleay, Annie was able to make a record of many different social networks, some with features familiar from her earlier experience of Army life. Her extensive diary-writing became a means by which she could give a familiar structure to the new and unfamiliar circumstances of settler life.

The diaries, with thirty-two volumes remaining, have had a varied publishing history. As with most diaries, these were essentially private recordings of feelings, fears and hopes. Much later, selections were made by Annie herself, the events retold in eight chapters, and published as *Memories of the Past by a Lady in Australia* in 1873.⁷³ Of this work, only eight pages deal with her time on the North Coast, with the associated New England chapter added as a seeming afterthought well out of the otherwise strict chronological order. Over a century later, in the spirit of restoring texts with important historical information, this work was subsequently republished with the title slightly varied.

Several years later, the Macleay Valley sections of the diaries, and several letters of the same period, were singled out for attention and appeared in the anthology *No Place for a Nervous Lady*. This last publication brought colonial women's diaries and letters a wider recognition and respectability—subsequently this was widely recognised as a genre which could reward serious investigation, and other editors

⁷² (1816-1905) Born Annie Hadden, married to Andrew Baxter, later married to Robert Dawbin, and appears in *ADB* as Annie Dawbin.

⁷³ Subsequently republished as: Annie Baxter, *Memories of Tasmania and of the Macleay River and New England Districts of New South Wales and of Port Fairy in the Western District of Port Phillip 1834-1848* (Adelaide: Sullivan's Cove, 1980).

followed with their further anthologies of nineteenth-century womens' prose.⁷⁴ The success and influence of *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, and particularly due to its most intriguing extracts from Annie Baxter's private writings, led to a full-length publication devoted solely to Annie's diaries—*A Face in the Glass*.⁷⁵ This work was structured upon a vast range of short sequential extracts from the original journals, interspersed with much in the way of explanatory commentary and observations. The most comprehensive approach to Annie's work has been publication in the 'Academy Editions'.⁷⁶ Sadly for the present regional study, this recent most detailed edition draws upon those diaries written only after she had left the North Coast, and with no extended reflections made upon her earlier time in this region.

From the above, it would appear that a substantial body of text dealing with the four years on the Macleay Valley would be readily available, but this impression is tantalisingly deceptive. Not the least of the omissions was caused by the loss of two whole volumes from the middle of her North Coast period—seemingly texts retained by her friend Robert Massie to whom she gave them to read, and never to be seen again. Of the works published, the mix of a long extract with the many shorter selections, still leaves doubts about completeness, and renders any overview of her time on the North Coast somewhat fragmented. While the remaining diaries are available in manuscript, this is not a readily accessible format, and regional scholars must await a fuller transcript of this work. The most accessible material from Annie Baxter's diary for the Macleay Valley remains that included in *No Place for a Nervous Lady*—the material that had such a strong influence upon the revaluation of nineteenth-century women's writing, and which continues to influence study of this genre. Thus this is the edition to which I will primarily refer.

This particular set of woman's private journals intersects with the texts of Annabella Boswell, and with John Henderson's work—also set on an Upper Macleay

⁷⁴ For an early commentary on Annie Baxter see: Dale Spender, *Writing a New World: Two Centuries of Australian Women Writers* (London: Pandora, 1988), pp. 82-90.

⁷⁵ Lucy Frost, *A Face in the Glass: The Journal and Life of Annie Baxter Dawbin* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1992).

⁷⁶ *Journal of Annie Baxter Dawbin: July 1858 - May 1868*, ed. by Lucy Frost, Academy Editions of Australian Literature (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1998).

squatting run. Yet it differs greatly in intent from the public audience which shaped Henderson's text, and while the audience for Boswell's published version would have been similar to that for Annie Baxter's own nineteenth century published version, in the latter case we have access to the original diaries as composed on the North Coast. Annie's initial text was written primarily for the writer's eyes and to further her obvious clear pleasure in writing. Additionally, the diaries had an initial small readership of those men whose intimacy was highly valued by Annie. The recorded use of these volumes as something with which to tease, later to promise access to them, and finally to offer the diaries, gave these works a social role that, as was claimed by Lucy Frost,⁷⁷ was erotically charged. In sum, this makes for a particular societal mapping of the North Coast that is quite different from the previous works by those who settled.

By the standards applied to other works treated so far, it might appear that in this work the North Coast was almost incidental and that any location would have served their writer as well. Her enthusiasm dominates any reading, so that character and subjective attitudes are always to the fore. Yet one finds expressions of delight brought about by the isolated setting:

[without Baxter] I returned by myself to my own hut! I'm always so glad to see his place - I love it - I've twice refused to go to the settlement now - and yet I cannot give myself any *credit* for it - as there is a halo round this spot, which endears it to me.⁷⁸

Partly this is a joy of solitude, but it is supported by much detail on her enjoyment of the minutiae of station life, even in its problems—the improvised housing; the shortage of food; shortage of funds; the difficulties with producing one's own food; and difficulties with (convict) servants. There is much humorous posturing—seen through the repeated use of exclamation marks—as though a rehearsal of phrasing for conversations in what emerges as a lively set of social interactions. While in John Henderson's text the isolation of the station was tedious and oppressive, for Annie it becomes a centre of lively activity and for networks of savoured relationships.

⁷⁷ Frost, *A Face in the Glass*, p. 18.

⁷⁸ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 130. The diaries use en dashes for period stops.

In the early sections, the writing establishes first the network of other settlers, distributed across the landscape by surnames and by local place names, rather than by distance or any sequence along the tracks. Despite a disclaimer, the interactions with the various settler women are particularly valued, prompting much animated and clearly satisfying comment. Another network contains family members, for two neighbours are relations—Andrew Baxter's sister at one site, and Annie's cousin Maria Kemp at another. Also, despite class differences, there are occasional recurring contacts with certain servants which could be called cordial. The group that is often foregrounded is that of the male visitors to Yesabba—Annie's special friends, who often come out from Port Macquarie.

Of course the major relationship traced in the diaries is the increasing marital breakdown of the Baxters. This too is presented over space, from the fierce passions in the closeness of the hut, to the shocking revelation of adultery in one of the out-buildings, various occasions of Andrew or Annie Baxter's absence from Yesabba, visits to adjoining stations, the journey to New England (the Baxters together but apart), time in Port Macquarie, and finally the journey out of the region and overland to Port Fairy. These movements and positions become charged with significance as oppression, relief, opportunity, threat, denial, grudging co-operation, amongst others. In the writer's social mapping of the locality, these various networks of connections, are all seen in operation in their movement across space. There are clearly presented limits to the borders of this social map:

She told me a funny story about Miss Brodie & Captain Beadon - They have both left the district, so it matters little what is said.⁷⁹

This 'district' marks in practice the meaningful limits, so that even the infrequent visits to Sydney and elsewhere, by any who might carry hurtful stories, are seen to be of no real account to the intensely mapped Austen-like social terrain overlaid on the Macleay and Hastings Valleys.

⁷⁹ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 120.

Particularly important to Annie is her class role and its loyalties and, despite the expressions of love for her own rural location, Port Macquarie forms a strong social centre. Visits for closer social contact, dancing, walking and talking, to the church, and occasionally to Lake Innes House, are all much valued. All these visits provide an opportunity for her to demonstrate her class acceptability, while presumably using the opportunity to again position herself in people's minds as a Romantic heroine isolated in the bush. Life at the Innes' house must have been particularly appealing:

I hear there is to be a large dinner party at the Lake on Christmas day - I wish I could afford to entertain, as I might then perhaps be a little remembered by some acquaintances⁸⁰

Beneath the bitterness over Massie's avoidance of her,⁸¹ there is here an expression of entertaining as a means to make her mark amongst her own class, and to preclude any possible social oblivion.

A long recorded reverie on her earlier experiences in 'V.D. Land'⁸² is included, ostensibly to illustrate her tolerance in matters of extra-marital romance, but also to affirm her refusal to participate in duplicity. What emerges most clearly from this section is the sense of personal (and class) integrity that underpins her pursuit of enjoyment. Reading this section would have been reassuring for any of those special readers to whom she offered the diaries, but would have been a great irritant to her husband in his surreptitious reading. For some, it might be tempting to take Annie Baxter's claims at face value, as did a reviewer of the 1980 re-publication, and conclude that the work is:

the book of this vivacious, self-opinionated coquette⁸³.

⁸⁰ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 133.

⁸¹ In her own publication, for the New England chapter, the name of Robert Massie is replaced by that of his successor as lands commissioner, Edward Merewether. *Memories of Tasmania and of the Macleay River and New England Districts of New South Wales and of Port Fairy in the Western District of Port Phillip 1834-1848* (Adelaide: Sullivan's Cove, 1980), pp. 63-74. Merewether did not arrive until 1848, five years after the journey to the Tablelands, and four years after the Baxters had left the region forever. There is no evidence that Annie ever met Merewether. The replacement suggests an attempt to excise bitter memories of hopes unfulfilled, or perhaps as the ultimate return in kind for being herself so 'little remembered'.

⁸² Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, pp. 122-125.

⁸³ Harold Royle, 'Review: Annie Maria Dawbin, formerly Baxter, 'A Lady in Australia: Memories of the Past'', *ADHSJ&P*, 24 (1980), p. 137.

Yet that would be to confuse the life of the artist with the chosen presentation—all of which necessarily have their own codes, possibilities and limitations. Lucy Frost notes the contrast between the diaries and the drawings done by Annie Baxter at the same time. The former are 'gentle, charming, and genteel,'⁸⁴ and it would be equally misleading to imagine the artist only in this way.

Similarly the persona in the diaries presents us with another shaped experience—one that in its many interests and enthusiasms wrestles with lived experience in a manner that differs from that material collected in her original publication. That work served a purpose for its situation and times—while the diaries, even simply as a product to be shared or withheld, gave the writer a certain social power in the 1840's. The North Coast section reveals a young woman who is passionate for excitement, within a broad view of the bounds of social propriety, but not for physical passion except in a distant future, or if circumstances had been otherwise. The approach taken in the diaries suggests that for her whole time in this region she shared her bed neither with her husband nor with any other men interested in her. Through the guise of a diary-writer who was lively of spirit and without the burdens of the traditional role of caring for children, the text still affords an interplay with the sexual expectations of the region at the time.

The writer is clearly well-read and the diaries record her reading, and reflections upon the issues treated. Specific works discussed are the Bible, Byron's poetry, Captain Sturt's first exploration journal, the *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, and briefer notice of:

The Bishop's Daughter - Emma de Lissan and Klopstock's Memoirs - The latter work I admired excessively! I never heard of him previously, altho' he is the 'Milton' of Germany, but this from being unacquainted with their language - His letters to his wife, and hers to him are very beautiful - How they loved each other, 'twas earthly, and Heavenly! Would to God mine could have been the same for my husband! What ecstasy such feeling must be! On dit that 'stolen sweets are sweetest!' I doubt it - I should prefer uninterrupted intercourse.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 12.

⁸⁵ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 108.

Here one can see the impact of writing upon her romantic imagination, and also see why the diaries may have been so tantalising for a special friend to read, and also the annoyance that they could prompt in a jealous husband. There are many quotations, but without the artificial intrusion that they may be said to make in John Henderson's volumes. A long poem is copied *verbatim*, serving the role as an *aide de memoire*, the source perhaps a borrowed work. It is not the content of her reading that caused immediate problems—rather, it was their social function. Books as gifts to Annie prompted the following:

The other morning Mr Baxter was going to *burn* the *History of Scotland* - I told him, I would thank him to leave *my* books alone - He said I had no business to receive presents.⁸⁶

The names written within some books that were given to Annie cause Andrew Baxter's annoyance and his furious excision of the names⁸⁷ suggests that he saw this reading community as one potentially threatening to his own particularly fragile marriage. Furthermore, Baxter's mocking of Annie's new-found joy in reading the Bible contrasts strongly with the role of a supportive reading community.

* * *

A particular loss in the selection of the North Coast extract for publication in *No Place For a Nervous Lady* is that the early section of the diary, dealing with Annie's arrival in the Macleay, shows her first impressions of Aborigines. Yet there is sufficient material in *A Face in the Glass* to enable a charting of interesting developments in this theme, and certainly to trace a different response from that of John Henderson.

Her first recorded sighting of Aborigines includes delight in their activity as seemingly a part of nature:

⁸⁶ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 106.

⁸⁷ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 143. In this reported case, the donor was Richard Dry, one of her particular favourites in Van Diemen's Land.

In the evening we took a walk & saw the blacks bathing - oh! this is a beautiful country - the foliage is so very various & pretty - thro' every scrub I can fancy to myself something enticing!⁸⁸

The sight of the bathers prompts the exclamations on 'beauty', 'pretty' and 'enticing', all linked to the leaves and vegetation of the scene. It is an idyllic Tahiti-like description, harking back to the island days of Cook and Banks. Compared to other settler accounts which quickly demonise or avoid the presence of the Aborigines, this description maintains a valid and positive position for the natives in this landscape. It is essentially a pre-lapsarian view. On two subsequent nights Annie and another woman join the group of swimmers, thereby participating with the natives in their own way. This is soon followed by viewing a corroboree, where the possible nakedness of the male dancers matters little to Annie. Similar sympathy for native innocence is stressed in the following:

The Black is to be executed today in the settlement - I wonder whether the unhappy man really knows right from wrong?⁸⁹

Differing from Annie's usual usage, here the capitalised 'Black' may well indicate a person familiar in local discussion. Unlike Annabella Boswell's easy but misplaced moralising on a similar topic, there is the recognition of inappropriate White rules and mores being applied—perhaps inevitably so, but also unhappily. Baxter's covert sex with an Aboriginal woman is painful as it indicates a betrayal by her husband, but if one also reads Annie's attitudes on the innocence of Aborigines into the incident, it becomes a more culpable and deliberate abuse of another who knows not of good and evil. By seeing the native as an exploited sexual object, Annie is able to find justification for her own close interest—racially-pure and also between social peers—in her soul mate Robert Massie.

There is also what by now must seem the obligatory motif of an extremely deformed Aborigine:

⁸⁸ Frost, *A Face in the Glass*, p. 18.

⁸⁹ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 115.

There is a black here - a woman - if the poor creature can be so called - that is a living skeleton! I never saw any grown up person to equal it in my life - she is neglected by all the others too, now she is ill - and a more miserable object cannot be imagined⁹⁰.

Annie adds a social perspective to the portrait, taking it beyond simply the objective-scientific approach used by Oxley, and the (similarly distanced) fictional version to be constructed by Tucker six years later. Yet, as with the other writers' usage, ultimately the motif operates to show the Aborigines as more distanced from White people and as racially or culturally more 'other'.

At various times Annie goes further than this, and helps to make links between the two races if not quite the two cultures. She makes special friends of two of the employed native station-hands, Tommy and Governor. This is part of the pattern of squatters taking up natives as regular labourers. When greater numbers were required to help strip the corn, Baxter went to find the Aborigines, much as to obtain a seasonal labour supply. Such a practice reveals an easy communication and use of the natives, but also suggests how close to the activity and products of their land, the Aborigines may have felt. This adds a broader perspective to the taking of what John Henderson saw as 'his' corn.

More potentially threatening for Annie Baxter is the arrival of non-local Aborigines. She accepted their invitation to go and hear them sing, taking the terrified Tommy and Governor with her.⁹¹ The incident shows a confidence in her expressed control of herself in new situations, even to reassuring the station-hands by letting them stay inside the hut for the evening. Several months later, five strange Aborigines came into her hut. It was described as an unwelcome intrusive experience, reaching as far as the bedroom, and thus as having (European) sexual overtones. They apparently had only stopped because of the barking dog.⁹² Here a dog is presented as the means of relief—unlike Henderson's dog whose barking was presented as comic. For Annie Baxter, the whole experience was presented as one that the writer did not understand,

⁹⁰ Frost, *A Face in the Glass*, p. 40.

⁹¹ Frost, *A Face in the Glass*, p. 27.

⁹² Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, pp. 94, 96.

exposing the precariousness of communication between settlers and the indigenous culture.

Shared military interests inform her description of a war-party of seventy Aborigines which came to the Baxters' property.⁹³ Just as with the large group at Surveyor Hodgkinson's house, this presence could be a disturbing presence to the Whites, but the natives offer no threat, and instead go about their own business preparatory to battle, seemingly co-existing well with the pastoralist (in this case herself then appreciative as 'an old *Soldier!*'), before proceeding back to the formalised fray.

Evidence of breakdown in black-white relations is recorded, with an example of another settler losing many sheep and being well out-numbered by the natives, until his return with deadly force.⁹⁴ Then the problem comes closer to home:

The Blacks are all here - Barney too - my favourite Black - They are stealing corn in real earnest from Mr McLeod's, and our Pig-station.⁹⁵

She capitalises 'Blacks' to emphasise the problem, but the comment is still linked with some affection. Later there is no disguising of her own part in attempting to repulse the natives:

The Blacks have been very troublesome for some days - they rob the corn most terribly - I gave the men some caps for their guns, and advised them to shoot quietly! - I shall be taken up for manslaughter - or aiding it - 'Same thing!' as Miss Fattorini says.⁹⁶

Entrepreneurial settlers rely on their hardly-grown produce and while some losses can be tolerated, eventually they must either stop it or fail. Annie Baxter is unabashed about her action and coy stratagem, and characteristically put the event in the context of matters of discussion amongst (women) settlers.

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⁹³ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 147.

⁹⁴ Frost, *A Face in the Glass*, p. 34.

⁹⁵ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 144.

⁹⁶ Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, p. 145.

These diaries reveal a complex but vigorous social veneer over, what were at the time, the two sparsely settled river valleys, and are a model of many (Euro-centric) social distractions during the establishment of permanent settlement, but also of much dialogue that was respectful and to a degree accommodating. This text is a reminder that the settler experience was not solely the isolated (male) struggle against intransigent land and its indigenous people. Here can be seen a wider perspective to the situation, and that early contact between the races had many spaces for confrontation, interaction or other possible outcomes. When the 1990s Academic Edition's meticulous approach is applied to the earlier diaries, then the North Coast will have useful access to a complex and significant resource for further study of the region's inner and outer settler lifestyle and (reflexive) behaviour.

* * *

Edward Ogilvie

Only recently exceeded by the interest in Annie Baxter's life, traditionally the squatter Edward Ogilvie has had the highest profile in accounts of North Coast settlers. Unlike many other early settlers he was not of the military or the navy, being rather the second generation to a naval father who had earlier settled in the Hunter Valley. His bold arrival (precariously coming east over the Tablelands, making his own road), his agreement with the Aborigines, the gradual establishment of an extensive grazing property and the building of an elaborate home—'the Castle'—have given him a lasting pre-eminence, particularly in the northern half of the region.

The only text written by Ogilvie to be singled out by local historians has been his letter of 1842 to the *Sydney Morning Herald*,⁹⁷ but the treatment has usually been

⁹⁷ E.D.S. Ogilvie] 'E.O.', 'Clarence River - the Aborigines', *Sydney Morning Herald* (8 July 1842), p. 3. Quotations are from this version. The letter was soon reprinted in a London-based journal: Anonymous, 'The Aborigines of Australasia: Mercy—Not Sacrifice', *Fisher's Colonial Magazine*, 2 (1843), 137-152 (pp. 140-144). A subsequent reprinting occurred in *A Century of Journalism: The Sydney Morning Herald and its Record of Australian Life* (Sydney: John Fairfax and Sons, 1931), pp. 84-86. The justification is that the letter 'displays so uncommon a

brief. Louise Daley quotes small sections from the letter, and then notes the contrast between those, like Ogilvie, who only wanted the grass (for their stock), and those who 'regarded the blacks as "noxious vermin" and shot them when they could'.⁹⁸ This is a late echo of Ogilvie's own words. Farwell appears to leave most of Ogilvie's words to speak for themselves, and after transcribing almost the whole letter, he comments upon it thus:

Though it was never recognised officially, this remarkable exchange in the hills changed the whole course of tribal relations. The two races had come to understand each other, learning something of each other's strength and motivation. This did not in the least obscure the fact that, ultimately, there could be only one victor.⁹⁹

This is high praise, and the bold generalisations here echo the confident assertions and writer's stance taken by Ogilvie himself in the letter. There is no clarification of the achievement of the letter, and the whole is shrouded in Social Darwinism. Somewhat sadly, it is in Farwell's version that Ogilvie's letter is most often read today.¹⁰⁰

The actual letter is remarkable in that it takes a vastly different approach from that which was usual for squatters—and certainly from the recorded efforts of those already treated in this chapter. Rather than avoidance or seemingly scientific interest, Ogilvie may be drawing upon his childhood contact with Aborigines in the Hunter when his letter reveals a determination to be on friendly terms and to communicate with the Aborigines, even to the learning of much of their language. There was a willingness to put oneself at some personal risk in order to gain the trust of these wary natives, but also to maintain their respect by an understated readiness to defend himself. More curious, with our recent interest in land title, is that the letter presents a White occupancy of the land that is exceedingly slight in its claim—'we wanted nothing in their country but the grass'. It is a model of shared occupation by friendly groups who could benefit from each other, made possible in White terms by the vast area within each squatterage. Ogilvie was himself implicated in earlier revenge

humanity in the writer, that no apology is needed for its insertion here almost in full.' This transcription reduces the number of paragraph breaks, and the author is mis-copied as 'C.O.' instead of the writer's initials.

⁹⁸ Louise T. Daley, *Men and a River: A History of the Richmond River District 1828-1895*, corrected edn ([Carlton]: Melbourne University Press, 1968 [1st pub. 1966]), p. 44.

⁹⁹ Farwell, *Squatter's Castle*, p. 150.

¹⁰⁰ Farwell, pp. 145-150.

attacks, but after only a short time was able to declare to the Aborigines, as reported in the published account:

We said, that we had made war upon them, because they had killed white people, but that now our anger was gone, and that we wished to live in peace with them ...

Great anger leading to organised violent retribution, but then passing quickly, is a pattern very similar to the stylised structures of punishment and renewal in Aboriginal culture itself—a model that was soon to be recorded by Hodgkinson in his text.

Notable as this presentation is in its appropriateness to the native culture, the text contains qualifications to this sympathetic, even altruistic, model. Some of these lapses may be in partial deference to his squatter audience and their familiar shared attitudes—the necessary common ground needed to ensure the publication of his letter. So we have the Aborigines presented as childlike and lacking confidence, hiding their faces in the grass, hiding behind a tree, maintaining a fear of horses biting as if they were monstrous giant versions of the feared Whiteman's dogs. Similarly childlike is their confidence, with enthusiastic leaping about, and finally the rudimentary service suggested by their clearing of the grass for the Whitemen's progress. Instead of the description of a deformed Aborigine, there is a lighter use of the convention, as the 'unpleasant':

The old fellow, upon Toolbillibam calling out to him that he had news of his son, came running down, with outstretched arms, and coming first up to my brother, gave him the full benefit of a most literally sweet embrace, as the old gentleman had evidently dined upon honey, and for want of a spoon had used his fingers, besides having smeared his face and beard a good deal more than was pleasant.

There is humour in the enthusiastic display of emotions in an old man, and in the primitive 'lack' of something so basic, in European culture, as a spoon, as well as the slightly uncomfortable close encounter. Recent knowledge can reveal missed understandings in older documents, such as the importance of honey, to these people, as a sacred substance to be touched by certain older men only. It would take over a century before a White writer could sensitively engage with this aspect of local Aboriginal culture.¹⁰¹ Similarly, Ogilvie's list of native foods available without

¹⁰¹ Patricia Wrightson, *The Rocks of Honey* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1960).

competition to the local inhabitants is added to with humorous tones—oblivious to the imperative driving Toolbillibam's question:

[We] would leave them their kangaroos, their oppussums, and their fish. Toolbillibam here interposed, to know if we would not leave them the honey also. We assured him that it was quite at his service, and that he might make himself perfectly easy about rats, bandicoots, grubs, and all other small game. All this appeared extremely satisfactory to our audience.

For the White speaker the land's natural produce and the natives' use of it was comical, and presented as if the group were pleased with the reassurance on rats and grubs. For the native whose urgency emboldened him to interrupt these powerful Whitemen, there was one significant detail that provided a sacred link with the land on which the group needed knowledge of the newcomers' intentions.

More usual lapses in cultural understanding are seen in the account of the taking of the Aboriginal boy, Pundoon, and the stressing the pre-eminence of the father's emotion, revealing the lack of understanding of the kinship. While native artefacts are detailed, they are not taken. Yet an excessive interest is shown in the natives' possessions, one that is sufficient to cause the Aborigines some concern. This can be read as a rebuke to the usual explorer/squatter practice of appropriating what were seen as the curious items belonging to the natives.

Ogilvie is clearest in his attitude to the readers in the framing sections—those unfortunately omitted by Farwell. The introductory paragraph sets the voice of understanding and truth against the all too common ready demonisation of the Aborigines:

GENTLEMEN,—I am induced to send you an account of a rather interesting interview which I had some days ago with a party of the aborigines upon the upper part of this river, being of opinion that the insertion of the particulars in the columns of your widely circulated paper may be productive of some good results, as far as may tend to remove the belief that these people are an utterly irreclaimable and ferocious set of beings, and throw light upon this their real character and disposition—a subject very little known or understood.

The following restatement of this introduction comes from the conclusion (similarly omitted in the recent printing):

The only apology I can [cite] for occupying so large a portion of your valuable space, is, that without entering into [the] details I could not have attained the object I had in view, namely, to show the very [peaceable] disposition and unrevengful spirit of

these people, and to convince those who are in the habit of looking upon them as little better than wild beasts, that they are mistaken.

With initial deference, but being written to the newspaper with the then widest circulation in the Colony,¹⁰² these are bold assertions of the destructive inhumanity of many of his peers, and what must have been a very challenging encouragement to build respectful communication with the natives.

Farwell's other modifications of the original text need to be noted. These include the omission of several 'and' conjunctions—commencing new sentences instead. Also omitted are many small clarifying phrases. While individually each change is small, the total of over sixty changes in one letter has an overall impact. The effect of both these types of change can be seen by closer attention to the original, where the longer rhythmic sentences produce a slowing down of the account of the meeting, thus revealing more of its caution as well as its space for attempted understanding (and potential misunderstandings)—in short, revealing a respectful hesitancy in the White invader. By contrast, Farwell's 'transcription' compresses the account to give the unduly forceful impression of the Whiteman as more accurate in his perceptions, more confident, decisive, and appropriately incisive in his action. This leads eventually to Farwell's concluding comment on the letter (expressed in the language of combat perhaps more appropriate to the military and naval settlers) that 'ultimately, there could be only one victor'.¹⁰³ Ogilvie's letter shows perception, courage, courtesy and a determination to not only live together on the same land, but also to carry the message of mutual respect to other Whitemen.

While the letter contains no withdrawing from a determination to occupy the land of these people, this is a powerful text detailing early contact and attempted racial accommodation, particularly in its original *Sydney Morning Herald* form. The record of such co-existence deserves a wider readership within the region as well as beyond.

¹⁰² *Australians 1838*, ed. by Alan Atkinson and Marian Aveling (Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987), p. 202.

¹⁰³ Farwell, p. 150.

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By way of some contrast, one can turn to a travelogue based on a journey to Europe, commencing in 1854, by the same Edward Ogilvie. This second text reveals the perspective and voice of an established and even comfortable settler, still living on the same land of the Upper Clarence River that was the setting for the 1842 letter. Under the pseudonym of 'An Australian Settler', the two volume work was published in 1856,¹⁰⁴ and reflects the emerging practice whereby established older Australians would make their first journey to Europe, comparing the old world with the new, and if observations were then published it was often done so anonymously. This particular work was not re-published and is little known in the region.

As with many travel books, there is an initial description of the departure from home (here the Upper Clarence River) and ambivalent feelings where the long-planned pleasure in the journey, is in tension against the regret at leaving a comfortable home. Every departure is to some degree an acknowledgement that the 'local' is in some respects incomplete and inadequate for the traveller's fullest needs. Here the long lingering departure is structured on the detail of emotions, experiences, relationships and even identity, which was located in the familiar surroundings. On the other hand there is the ill-defined sense of individual purpose, that almost comes into a clear focus as the various supports and local links drop away. Specifically this is the pull of Europe, presumably the imagined centre of culture and mores that had sustained the writer through those many years in this outpost. More generally, one can see the forty year old bachelor realising that the experiences and opportunities of Yulgilbar would not enable him to build the family that he wished. His subsequent return from Europe with a wife of ancient lineage, Florentine art works, and plans for the magnificent 'Castle', suggest a high ambition that overleapt colonial standards. Thus the writer of

¹⁰⁴ [E.D.S. Ogilvie] 'An Australian Settler', *Diary of Travels: In Three Quarters of the Globe* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1856). The North Coast section is on pp. 1-15, relevant sections of which are included herein as Appendix H.

the *Sydney Morning Herald* letter, for all his decrying the inhuman attitudes of his fellow Australian squatters, was eventually impelled towards Europe.

For this departure, the scene is presented in the familiar terms of the picturesque—'a scene of equal beauty and interest'.¹⁰⁵ What follows is a threefold description, covering first the house and its immediate surrounds, then moving to the broad sweep of pastures, woodland and mountain range, culminating in the 'clear, blue, transparent sky of this delightful season of the Australian year.' There is obvious pleasure and pride in the whole setting. The description of those watching adds them to a vision of feudal or earlier ownership:

Among the buildings of the farm-yard, still lingering upon the spot where I had parted from them, stood the servants who had assembled to bid me farewell; whilst, upon the intervening slope, in scattered groups, were numbers of the dark children of the forest, who had drawn together for the same purpose, and now reclined beneath the shade of the great trees, some looking on in grave silence, whilst others gave vent to their regrets in wailings and lamentations.¹⁰⁶

There is a positioning of self as a patriarch, as master of the whole scene, including the Aborigines—here described in the unusual expression 'dark children of the forest'—and linking both conventional views of the natives as childlike and as wildlife. The expression also evokes the long primeval sequence of occupation—a view that became less readily summoned up after the large-scale land-clearing of later in the century.

The first person pronouns of the initial pages are soon replaced by 'we', as a collective expression that continues to reflect the views and experiences being mostly those of the leader. This is linked with a class distinction in naming, where the friends (local squatter peers) encountered have their names disguised, at least for non-local readers as E____t, McL____n, T____l and T. S____h. His major assistants (employees) are referred to solely by surnames, and lesser employees are neither named nor individualised. For those who are furthest from the writer's social position (and his level of power)—the Aborigines—one name is given in a manner which emphasises the marginality—'Jimbolo, the black boy, from Ramornie'.¹⁰⁷ A second

¹⁰⁵ Oglivie, *Diary of Travels*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Oglivie, *Diary of Travels*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁷ Oglivie, *Diary of Travels*, p. 10.

Aborigine is first described in the group as 'one European and a native black boy'.¹⁰⁸ Subsequently, both are detailed as 'my Anglo-Australian servant, Smith, and Denny, my merry, good-tempered, aboriginal black boy'.¹⁰⁹ Yet once the group is reduced in numbers for the longer journey, then the native member is elevated in naming to parity with the trusted worker—'our own party, Smith, Denny, and myself'.¹¹⁰ This elevation indicates the respect and even fellowship between the races that was suggested by Ogilvie's letter from earlier years. Even if only in the reduced circumstances of three men travelling together in the bush with a shared effort, it shows an accommodation and acceptance. The previous naming practice shows just how slight was any such acceptance in the local community.

The ending to the work returns the reader's mind to the Clarence River Valley, diminished by distance to simply 'that far distant Australian cottage'.¹¹¹ For Ogilvie, it never completely disappeared, for he eventually returned, unlike the majority of those who wrote in and about the region. His travelogue reveals a continuation of his essential compassion, a closeness to the land and its people, but subsequently with a feudal structure overlaid upon the primeval land. While clearly a dispossession of the original inhabitants, and despite the best of intentions, perhaps it can only be said that the appropriation was enacted with consideration for those who suffered.

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Henry Croad

Smaller settlers generally had less opportunity to write, due to limits on education or participation in wider discourse. When they did produce prose, the text was usually less expansive and often for a personal audience. Henry Croad was a

¹⁰⁸ Ogilvie, *Diary of Travels*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ogilvie, *Diary of Travels*, p. 7.

¹¹⁰ Ogilvie, *Diary of Travels*, p. 10.

¹¹¹ Ogilvie, *Diary of Travels*, II, p. 388.

settler on the Macleay River in the 1860s, and a letter which he wrote to his mother and sisters in England has survived.¹¹²

The work is important in that it is a survival of a communication that was so rare as to have a sense of reporting and overview of the whole of one's life at that time. It is noted within that the letter was written 'one year to a day' after arriving, and the feeling of an annual report, with details well weighed, is strong. A sense of distance underlies the letter, primarily from England but also within the colony. The distance appears and seems overcome by the many links detailed. There is the economic link to Sydney and awareness of the fate of crops beyond there in the south. There is knowledge of gold finds and of a brother-in-law at the Snowy River. Also there is detailed knowledge of the Bellinger Valley well to the north. While the letter-writer is too busy establishing his own settlement to be very mobile, there is much reliance in the letter upon movement of people over the landscape—Aborigines to Bellingen; vessels to Sydney; and Tom's return to England, with the letter requesting to know if he will return (to Australia). Such an impression of relatively common human mobility gives a sense of some degree of control over the vast distances.

Contact through the mail is based on an informal sequence of messengers, the words written passing through several hands. There is a clear contrast between the unreliability of the usual method of post via ship's captains, with the seemingly reliable passage of information by Aborigines to the valleys beyond. There is a suggested ease in the writer's relationship with those he terms simply as 'the blacks' in the one reference to them within the letter. Smaller scale European land use has less competition with the indigenous people, and less need to feel responsible for them or to take a feudal overview of them. Here there is evidence of a complementary occupation of the land.

Otherwise, there is delight expressed in the bounty of the local landscape with figs and vines, and the paragraph detailing his efforts with maize has these specifics of

¹¹² The letter is held by the Macleay River Historical Society, and has been published: Croad, Henry, [Letter to his Mother and Sisters, 1 April 1860], in *Macleay River Historical Society Journal*, 72 (June 1991), 1-2. Included herein as Appendix 1.

local nature interpolated into its centre. It is a laborious but fulfilling life that is presented, where glowing detail as to the children is in the same paragraph as the writer's problems after having lived so long in only a tent.

The letter is intended to be reassuring, and in it the major feature is the strong personal bond between the writer and the family in England, and the attempt to maintain this over such vast distance. There is consolation over kin's affairs previously communicated to him, and a promise to write to another. There are pen portraits of the two children, and even locks of their hair, to give the relatives some sense of closeness.

When private letters dealing with the personal domain are today being given recognition of their societal significance, particularly as being the usual responsibility of women writers, it is interesting to have this example of a male undertaking such a role.¹¹³ The epistle is not bound by domestic detail, but rather the local family is the focus for a view that broadens to encompass the great distances within the colony, then beyond to the vast distance separating the writer from England, and all to serve the needs of a family now widely separated.

* * *

NON-BRITISH VOICES

It is rare for any Australian regional attention to be given to those texts written in a language other than English. Rather than indicating a local Anglo-centric bias, this gap reflects the lack of accessible translations of nineteenth century texts and of ease in transliteration of many missives. The increasing activity of non-English scholars in bush studies may provide more insights for the North Coast region than do the two

¹¹³ See *Life Lines: Australian Women's Letters and Diaries 1788 to 1840*, ed. by Patricia Clarke and Dale Spender (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1992), p. xi *et passim*, and Patricia Clarke, 'Life Lines: 19th Century Women's Letters and Diaries', *Australian Folklore*, 11 (1996), 152-158 (p. 156).

texts now to be considered. With such material there are always difficulties with the accuracy of translations and the search for an exact text. Still, these writings do contain a general perspective of this land otherwise now unavailable.

The two different cultural/language groups to be surveyed here reveal the limited supports for non-British settlers, but paradoxically their methods of coping with problems of personal survival do illuminate general attitudes as well as shedding some light on the alienation of outsiders.

Theodor Müller

The German-speaking Müller came to the Manning River in the 1850s as an itinerant labourer seeking employment with the small scale settlers. While it has many of the elements of a text of travel, this work lingers sufficiently in specific locations so that it also produces useful insights as a text of settlement. While the squatters of the early period have been considered, it is rare for their shepherds—so often illiterate, but at the front-line of real experience of the new ways and their challenge—to leave a written record.

Published in German, well after the events described, the work does not appear in the substantial local histories,¹¹⁴ nor in those works concerned with the Germans in Australia.¹¹⁵ It only came to notice in a recent collection of 1815-1914 German travel texts in translation.¹¹⁶ For ease of access a translation has been arranged for this study and included as Appendix J.¹¹⁷

114 W.K. Birrell, *The Manning Valley: Landscape and Settlement 1824-1900* (Milton, Qld: Jacaranda Press, 1987).

115 Ian and Michael Cigler Harmstorf, *The Germans in Australia* (Blackburn, Vic: Australasian Educa, 1985). Josef Vondra, *German Speaking Settlers in Australia* (Melbourne: Cavalier, 1981).

116 *Wunderbar Country: Germans Look at Australia, 1850-1914*, ed. by Jürgen Tampke (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1982). Some North Coast material is found under Tampke's chapter heading 'Travels in New England'.

117 Theodore Müller, *Neunzehn Jahre in Australien* (Aarau: E.G. Martin, 1877). Appendix J is a translation of Müller's Chapter 18, 'Journey to the Manning', prepared by Iris Bergman and Lyndall Smith for this current work. There is some overlap with the sections included in *Wunderbar Country*.

Clearly the intended later nineteenth century audience was the German-language continental readership, eager to hear news of strange foreign places—and particularly about those to which large numbers of Germans had gone as settlers.¹¹⁸ To some extent the work was a late example of the handbooks for migrants so popular in the 1840s and 1850s, but its predominant tone is of the travel book about exotic locations.¹¹⁹ Little is known of Theodor Müller, and of his intentions, whatever they were, but what remains is a voice from the underclass that is seldom preserved (without some overt political or social intent).

From the perspective of travel as a wanderer, the text provides detail of a landscape characterised in two ways—first as lonely and difficult, yet interwoven with a second strand describing the land as a romantically inspiring pristine wilderness. Streams were serious impediments, with the writer nearly washed away while crossing a smaller one. The roads occasionally 'disappeared into sand', a wanderer would be misled by the 'false tracks' made by wandering stock on their way to water. The latter was cited as:

mainly, the reason that so many people have gone lost in the bush and, dying of starvation, have never come back to light.¹²⁰

Only thirty years earlier, runaway convicts were making their way along vast distances of this coast, and the persistence of such stories of loss and starvation indicates the success in official downplaying of any possibility of escape. Still, in what was perceived as such a dangerous and daunting land, the sparse distribution of houses lent a friendship to all encounters, with ready offers of accommodation for travellers—a practice which the text terms 'the beautiful hospitality'.¹²¹ Similarly the egalitarian circumstances of overnight campfires which would readily transcend class barriers, must have been perhaps the most surprising element for European readers.¹²²

118 Vondra tells us that 'Up to the end of the 19th century, German-speaking immigrants made up the largest European and non-British group of settlers in Australia.' p. 11.

119 Tampke, pp. x-xii.

120 Müller, p. 18.

121 Müller, p. 19.

122 Müller, pp. 18, 19.

There are expressions of delight in the detailed recording of birds, trees and bees, The manner in which stock animals amazedly observe the rare wanderer in the forest seems to justify the presence of both. The forest itself is treated at length, with several romantic descriptions highly evocative of the writer's Germanic background now transferred to the all-emcompassing North Coast forests.

immense forests were stretching out on both sides of the road. From time to time individual farms appeared with their low buildings covered in bark and separated by miles, then the forests were closing in behind us. High beech trees, wild apple-trees, oaks and fir-trees stretched their old weather-beaten heads high up into the air. With the low-grown shrubbery and still-growing trees, there are immensely thick and high gum or ash-trees which would stretch out their huge branches over the younger wood in a protective way. Often there are long stretches of the same kind of wood, and individual species which are very useful for humans and which can be found only in certain areas as will be seen further on. So we continued to wander on in silence and, despite some appeal and vitality in the forest, its dark appearance created a similarly dark mood on this first day.
123

The detail in this description is similar to that found in Hodgkinson's text, yet it differs in its emphasis, its cumulative pleasure, and its close link to human moods.

Warmth is expressed by more than half of the people encountered, such as the kind inn-keeper. The writer's young helper, Andreas, is praised repeatedly for his bush skills and knowledge. Described with similar affection is Old Maid Kelly (who becomes titled 'Miss Kelly' once he is employed by her), presented as transcending gender roles:

in the early days she has tamed the horses living wild in the forest herself and trained them to become good settled horses. She still sat firm and safe in the saddle and rode on fast trot on narrow winding mountain tracks. Looking for horses or cattle she often stayed overnight all alone under a tree, equipped with some provisions, enjoying a bottle of spirits while wearing a loaded pistol under her dress in the event of any male attackers.¹²⁴

There is an ease, too, in using a term from the Americas for an individual of mixed race—'[there] sat a mulatto calmly smoking a pipe'¹²⁵ With the contemporary social denial of any possible sexual relations between the races, this description contains

¹²³ Müller, pp. 20-21.

¹²⁴ Müller, p. 26. This was the Miss I.M. Kelly described as 'one of the Manning River's most colourful, and, if local legend can be believed, perhaps notorious early settlers.' Her estate was sold up in January 1860, i.e., soon after Müller's departure. Birrell, *The Manning Valley*, p. 104.

¹²⁵ Müller, p. 24. The word 'mulatto' was rare in Australia, as was the the range of names for those of mixed race, even though such a schema was used elsewhere by sometimes the same British officials or settlers. See: Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 152.

unusual elements of recognition or even of acceptance. With both these descriptions, the North Coast emerges as a land where much transgression is possible and accommodated. There is only one mention of German people—as more likely than the English to have gardening implements and seeds.¹²⁶ This text shows no specific engagement with other German workers, of whom there had been others in the area.¹²⁷

The work of a shepherd is presented for its difference from the European perception of the task, yet even the ruggedness of the life lived, such as the impossibility of sleep in the tiny guardbox while listening for dingoes, is presented with some nostalgia.¹²⁸ Freedom and closeness to the land are the redeeming features. The text positions a forested land of peace, solitude and unrushed work against a negative generalised description of European city life:

Here one does not hear anything of the restless hustle and bustle of the people in the cities and villages. The loud lamenting of the poor, of the unhappy and of those discontented with their destiny, does not penetrate the calm of the primeval forests hardly entered by Europeans. No ghost, still so common in the old world, disturbs here the sleep of the tired wanderer.¹²⁹

Camping alone in the forest, while daunting for many, is here presented as an experience of untroubled freedom, without even the ghosts of the old world—but still delineated without a thought to the spirit of the new land.

Also the loneliness of the forest has its beauties and its heart-winning sides and many hours which previously I have wasted in the company of others have never left such beautiful impressions within me as the time of my being in the Australian bush.¹³⁰

There is a sense of joy in the writer's increasing observant awareness of the bush, combined with his release from that older too-familiar landscape which was predominantly human—finding his freedom in a sense of opportunity for personal endeavour in the new land. This freedom extends to the satisfying naming of settlements and properties, where the original native names have fallen away, to be

126 Müller, p. 28.

127 Birrell, *The Manning Valley*, p. 79.

128 Müller, p. 32.

129 Müller, p. 19. Harmstorf and Cigler describe the post-1848 'fear of political reprisals and the crushing of all hope of setting up a democratic state [and that] as the Prussian state moved westward, many men came to dread being drafted into the ruthlessly efficient Prussian military system.' p. 9.

130 Müller, p. 30.

replaced by English names. Yet he has forgotten the name of Miss Kelly's property where he worked (Mount George/George Town) and gives his impression of the English names as being arbitrary.¹³¹

That the text is a retrospective view is made evident several times. Most informatively, for its construction of the region, there is an initial contrast made between the conditions of the colony at the time of writing (1875) and with the earlier time of his work and travel in the region (1859). First there is a mistaking of the train route under construction and its impact on the coast:

Northwards along the coast the railway line is being built and soon Brisbane will be connected with Sydney which will in the future greatly diminish the steam shipping which until now has connected the many towns by the sea.¹³²

In the 1870s, railway construction was rapidly proceeding north, but its route was along the Tablelands.¹³³ The coastal link would not come until this century. The view as expressed reveals a sense of triumphant European/commercial progress, and it works to avoid as problematic those features of the North Coast that were most difficult and characteristic of it—the arduous nature of the longitudinal land travel, and the sea-bound nature of North Coast life and so its limited contact with other places. Thus preserved in a little-known text we may have an early feeling of the denial of the land in favour of approval of and some description of a very dynamic commerce and movement.

The benefits of economic development are seen as the right of the earlier European settlers, so that not all change is presented as good. For the small initial population has since been overwhelmed by those:

masses of people greedy for gold from Europe and China and the other colonies in Australia [who] came pouring in.¹³⁴

131 Müller, p. 28.

132 Müller, p. 18.

133 In 1875 the Great Northern Line had been stalled at Murrurundi for four years. See John Gunn, *Along Parallel Lines: A History of the Railways of New South Wales* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1989), p. 142. The problems of the North Coast line are outlined by Gunn, pp. 248, 304.

134 Müller, p. 19.

The social degradation in the new European or White Australia, as a result of these large numbers of gold-seekers, is linked with greed and race, in what is a not uncommon view critical of the goldrushes.¹³⁵

As to the situation of the indigenous inhabitants attempting to continue their traditional lifestyle, there is a complete silence in the North Coast section. The only mention of them in this text is one of the outskirts of the Hunter where they are denigrated, the virtuous White settlers being:

surrounded by hundreds of indigenous people who molested the travellers with begging for pittances and who like anywhere else could only be chased away with firm action.¹³⁶

As the writer moves into the sparser settlement and forests of the North Coast proper, there is now, however, an especial sadness at the absence of Aborigines in the text, reflecting the writer's experiences in the post-massacre period, the triumph of European 'firm action'.

* * *

Étienne Bordier-Roman

A group of three (French-speaking) Swiss settlers came to the Clarence River in 1850, taking up the station of Ramornie. As one of this group, Bordier wrote a series of intermittent diary entries, most of which were published in booklet form in French after Bordier's (early) death.¹³⁷ This work has recently been reprinted in translation,¹³⁸ reflecting wider interest in such early non-English voices, yet the editors' focus is not specifically regional. Using the two nations as foci, Bordier's time

¹³⁵ J.S. Ryan, 'Charles Dickens and the Making of Images for Australia's Folklore', *Australian Folklore*, 7 (1992), 27-45 (pp. 36-39).

¹³⁶ Müller, p. 21.

¹³⁷ Étienne Bordier-Roman, *Journal D'un Colon D'Australie* (Genève: Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1863).

¹³⁸ Etienne Bordier, *A Swiss Settler in Australia: The Diary of Etienne Bordier, 1849-1851*, ed. by Kenneth Dutton and Denis Rowe, trans. by Kenneth Dutton, Auchmuty Library Publication no. 6 ([Newcastle]: University of Newcastle, 1987). The 'Introduction' contains a discussion of the diary's composition and publication. The current analysis and page numbers for quotations will refer to this translation. After the initial section of arrival and arrangements, the North Coast section continues to the end of the diary, spanning pp. 9-22.

in Australia is considered by Wegmann,¹³⁹ but very briefly, and with complete omission of the North Coast section which comprises most of the diary.

As the then owners of one of the early large stations on the Clarence, there is some mention of Bordier and his group in more comprehensive northern local histories. Yet actual treatment has been slight due to the group's short time in the region, combined with the hitherto scholarly difficulty in gaining access to the text. This is an especial loss for a regional study, for the diary reveals a different voice and a distinctive approach.

Reflecting the choice of the particular area for the preferred station, the diary shows a glowing initial positioning of the Clarence River as:

what is without doubt the most beautiful district in New South Wales, beside one of the finest and most important rivers in the country.¹⁴⁰

The venture begins with this combination of beauty and (potential) economic importance. Essentially a business opportunity, Bordier details the productive features of the station in a vision of plenty, covering fish, cattle, horses, Gruyère, and butter.¹⁴¹ The plan in operation is later given a like description, but one that approaches a delight in finding a cornucopia, detailing such products as salted meat, cattle, horses, flower-beds, garden, orange and lemon trees, fig-trees, bamboo, lilac-bushes, herrings, eels, perch, quail, kangaroos, ducks and black swans.¹⁴² While the cattle form the economic base for the station, this European view shows a joy in the diversity of the land's produce.

It would seem that the Aborigines have no involvement in this bounty, or such seems to be the thought expressed in the text. On the group's arrival by ship the indigenous people are described in a method calculated to distance them from both any reader as well as from the writer:

Two or three times, numerous dinghies drew alongside covered in blacks, who came on deck to offer us fish and to beg tobacco. They are less ugly in type than the blacks from

139 Susanne Wegmann, *The Swiss in Australia* (Grüsch: Verlag Rüegger, 1989), pp. 20-22.

140 Bordier, p. 9.

141 Bordier, p. 9.

142 Bordier, p. 11.

the south, indeed some of them, especially the women, have quite regular features; but the great majority are still very ugly.¹⁴³

The tone here is an echo of the early Pacific voyages, with their need for expediency and to keep the over-eager natives at a safe distance, both as some sort of hawkers who may overwhelm the vessel, and as a sexual attraction/distraction. This is here supported by an attempt at a most crude ethnographic objectivity—but one which almost fails with sight of the women. For another month, the text maintains a silence on 'the blacks', indicating some possible success in the intended attitude of avoidance.

At the one monthly assessment point there is a long entry presenting the situation with the Aborigines. Their presence is, of course, unavoidable and continual. If 'peaceable' they are 'lazy', if close they become 'unbearable with their begging and their familiarity'.¹⁴⁴ It is claimed that their very presence can frighten the cattle, and this risk is presented as native 'mischief'. Such is the writer's justification for unabashed statements as to possible/likely murderous White retaliation:

Killing is quite common; but when it takes place, one is careful not to brag about the fact so as not to have any trouble with the police. They have been fairly quiet of late, so we have not yet had occasion to go hunting them.¹⁴⁵

After only one month the new settler has not had such opportunity, but has been imbued with the frontier lore and he has absorbed its racist spirit sufficiently to present it as if his own opinion and experience. These comments conclude the paragraph and the topic at this point.

For the remainder of the diary, one might expect what follows to be a downward sequence of racial violence (as seen in Henderson's text). Yet the text charts a complete turnaround with, now, a burgeoning interest in the native inhabitants. Subsequent diary entries characteristically begin with a description of some detail of farming or of the landscape, but then soon develops into a consideration of the Aborigines and their part in what is being described. While still on this topic of the natives, the entry ends. It is a pattern suggesting a fascination with the culture, the

¹⁴³ Bordier, p. 10.

¹⁴⁴ Bordier, p. 12.

¹⁴⁵ Bordier, p. 12.

characteristics and knowledge of the indigenous people, and an understated dubiousness about the propriety of the Whiteman's treatment of them. The pattern reflects a crisis of conscience—and perhaps a small victory for a lingering decency from European civilization.

Yet, the text shows no easy appreciation of the Aborigines. The fine detail contains too many variations on the familiar derogatory positioning. There is the link made between dogs and Aborigines:

all the dead animals smelt so vile that the only thing we could save was their hides and feet, the rest being eaten by the blacks, who came rushing up in droves at the news, and by the local dogs which regaled themselves for several days on what was left.¹⁴⁶

We train our dogs to chase theirs: in that way they do not come around the house very often. We keep them away as much as possible, because they are great thieves.¹⁴⁷

One of my best blacks, Sam, received a terrible bite this morning, from a dog belonging to one of our men. . . Good dogs will never let a black come up close to them, but this one took things a little too far. In any event, this accident will lead to the blacks keeping their distance. They really are tiresome, forever begging tobacco from you; the more you give them, the more demanding they become.¹⁴⁸

Recently, the dog belonging to our blacks had its stomach almost ripped open by an "old man", one of those old kangaroos, as big as a man, against which a dog is powerless on its own.¹⁴⁹

At one level the link with dogs is a reference to the means of keeping the Aborigines away, while at another it becomes an attempt to relegate the indigenous people to the realm of animals. That each of these quotations ends a diary entry, reveals its reflective fascination as a topic for the writer, and the gradual amelioration of the list of totally negative detail shows an increasing warmth toward the Indigenes.

After much on local nature and its use by the natives—a developing positive relationship, surely—a change comes with the threat to the the settler's stock by an emerging battle with a visiting group.

just as they were about to begin their attack we rushed headlong at them, beating them with stockwhips, whose every blow cut the skin. Having been driven off, they ran away in all directions... We promised them that next time it would not be lashes of the whip but bullets that we would aim at them, and I intend to keep my word.¹⁵⁰

146 Bordier, p. 13.

147 Bordier, p. 14.

148 Bordier, p. 14.

149 Bordier, p. 15.

150 Bordier, p. 17.

Most unlike the tolerance and interest of Annie Baxter or a little later of Hodgkinson,¹⁵¹ the violence here is an aspect of the group's united first-person plural statements, while the final personal affirmation sounds forced—as if an attempt to persuade himself of the capacity for such a murderous warning-off.

An opportunity comes soon when a freshly killed carcass is found. Rather than a hot-blooded pursuit, Bordier distances himself by first blaming two named individuals—Dicky and Wellington—and then by enlisting a former Peel River Aborigine called Sandy. In this he was relying on the landowners' common view:

He is very civilised and a keen hunter of the blacks from hereabouts... and was always the first to fire... [and] being often in the company of the blacks, he knows them all and can immediately tells us which of them has done wrong.¹⁵²

Belying such confidence, the account of the pursuit makes no attempt to disguise its failure. The first camp has been already abandoned; and then after following the trail across precipitous terrain, the pursuers are surrounded by some fifty natives, all armed and in war-dress. As the named villains are not in sight, the group withdraws, until another inter-tribe battle is underway, when the pursuers:

came galloping up while the battle was at its most intense; but it was already dark, and in the melee we were unable to make out our two thieves.¹⁵³

Unable to repeat, let alone escalate, their earlier racial assaults, the group fall into discussion with the Aborigines, and soon Sandy, their chief hunter, throws off his clothes and weapons, and joins the seemingly ritual battle with borrowed native weapons. There is no more thought given to the earlier lethal plans.

The excursion concludes with the return home. Sandy has received a woman for his efforts, and treats her with the culturally required indignity, she having to follow her mounted master on foot. Yet the text reveals that this was a woman whom Sandy had long desired, and that he would linger behind, out of sight of the others, in order to let her join him on the horse and so rest. Within a settler text—one that

¹⁵¹ Without any sense of irony, the recent editors of Bordier have included Hodgkinson's illustration of an Aboriginal battle. Bordier, facing p. 20.

¹⁵² Bordier, p. 19.

¹⁵³ Bordier, p. 20.

generally endorses and attempts to repeat murderous retaliation against a group characterised in animal terms, this is a remarkable inclusion. It marks the preservation of space for some pondering on the expression of human affection and care—mysteriously negotiated within the seemingly strict codes of Aboriginal behaviour.

There is only one more recorded observation on the natives, it noting as 'fascinating' their eagerness to have the first flying fox which had been brought down. The final diary entries note the discovery of gold, and record the settler fears of a consequential local economic decline. In the very last entry, the richness of the gold fields is linked with a story brought by a visitor from outside the region:

One Mr. Kerr bought from a blackfellow, for a mere trifle, a nugget of pure gold weighing 106 pounds, which that dull and primitive inhabitant of Australia had dug from the rock with his tomahawk. ¹⁵⁴

Bordier recounts this view of a non-local gullible Aborigine, using for the first time the expression 'blackfellow',¹⁵⁵ as if a final attempt to accommodate himself to the conventional attitudes, language and behaviour. Elsewhere the diary has captured too much interest and humanity for this stereotype to be a lasting one, and the final emphatic words could well apply to his own situation:

large numbers of people will hasten to set sail for a land where gold is to be gathered by the shovelful. But what sad disappointments lie in store for most of them!!! ¹⁵⁶

That this property was near to that of the most compassionate and understanding Edward Ogilvie, and that some of these Aborigines may have been the same individuals mentioned in his writings, exposes the possibility of great disparity of attitudes and behaviour in settlers to the same Aborigines, and lack of predictable behaviour, even in those Europeans who practised good-will.

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¹⁵⁴ Bordier, p. 22.

¹⁵⁵ The Swiss publication of this French language diary uses the English 'Un M. Kerr a acheté d'un blackfellow...' *Journal D'un Colon D'Australie* (Genève: Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1863), p. 51. This predates the earliest recorded date of the compound of 1879. The earliest combination form, 'blackfellow country', was also 1863. *The Australian National Dictionary*, ed. by W.S. Ramson (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 61.

¹⁵⁶ Bordier, p. 22.

Usually written in their first language, and to inform a European audience which was generally not familiar with the developing discourse of our history, such non-British texts have perspectives not generally available to regional local studies. While one must rely upon the field of languages scholars for the insights that their closer examination may yield, these two texts, brought together through a regional study, are reminders of the range of recorded responses to this land, and they are an important part of our now accumulative textual heritage. As with those from small scale settlers or itinerant workers, attention to the on-going publications in family history may eventually bring more of such highly personal (folk) texts to light. Despite the difficulties, from a regional perspective, it is important to source them and then to make these texts accessible, not least in the hope that more like documents may yet be located, deposited and so made available in original manuscripts and, later in some published/edited format.

LATER PASTORALISM

With time, the reality of successful occupation had become apparent. There was a comfort in claims—without the urgency (or the fragile undertone) of the earlier writers. Here the only doubt that occurs is in the extent of occupation and the nature of the new society—as though its basis were sound foundation for a confident unified progress. In their concern for development and 'progress', where settlers have remained in an area, then a body of texts may emerge, drawing upon each other for detail and ultimately for justification. The scarcity of extensive writing from this period may reflect the unease in addressing or avoiding such justification.

E.W. Rudder

Celebrated as the first settler in the Macleay, in 1835 Rudder observed the land before the arrival of other white people, and in that early period he had regular contact with the native population. As well as a participant in the settlement, he was an

articulate and thoughtful observer. Late in his life he wrote a history of the Macleay as an essay for a newspaper competition (*Macleay Argus*) in 1886, and although being the only entry it was not published in that newspaper.¹⁵⁷ Rather it was self-published anonymously as a pamphlet in 1888.¹⁵⁸ There must have been little contemporary doubt of the work's merit for it was much praised in the same newspaper's obituary for him later in 1888 as a 'splendid history of the Macleay [which] reflected much on the man himself—a person of cultured mind, of patience and perseverance'.¹⁵⁹

The only republishing of the essay has been recently in two extracts with the addition of a facsimile of the cover and of one of its eight pages of text.¹⁶⁰ While such attention signals the potential importance of the work, the actual text is presented awkwardly.¹⁶¹ The sections are a small part of the whole, and, distributed as they are, compete for attention with extracts from the later (and seemingly derivative) works of his sons. Almost all the new paragraph breaks have been made by the editor, missing the cumulative rhetorical power of the original, particularly in the use of lists. Given E.W. Rudder's stature, his pioneer perspective of the Macleay Valley, and the comparative brevity and accessibility of this text, it is surprising how little close individual attention his work has received.¹⁶²

It falls into two sections, the first with its thoughtful overview of the valley and its character as seen up until that time, the second section claiming to look at the present and the future of the Macleay. Predominantly, the text is a retrospective history, once the reality of appropriation had been achieved, and it attempts a justification of the European presence. Much of the content draws upon personal experience, quoting the personal observations of other recorders (such as Clement

¹⁵⁷ Lionel J. V. Rudder, *Magnificent Failure: The Life and Times of Enoch William Rudder, 1801-88, Founder of Kempsey, NSW, Australia, Including his Work in Connection with the Discovery and Mining of Gold in the Colony of New South Wales*, ed. by Patricia Riggs (West Kempsey, NSW: Kempsey Shire Council, 1986) p. 91.

¹⁵⁸ *Labori* (Rudder, E.W.), *History of the Macleay* ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], [1887]). Subsequent references will be to this edition.

¹⁵⁹ Lionel J. V. Rudder, *Magnificent Failure*, p. 91.

¹⁶⁰ Lionel J. V. Rudder, *Magnificent Failure*, pp. 92-93, 98-99, 99-100, 104-106.

¹⁶¹ The two separate extracts on p. 99 are run together, without even a missed line to indicate the break between the selections.

¹⁶² The text receives no mention in the standard local history: Marie H. Neil, *Valley of the Macleay* (Sydney: Wentworth Books, 1972).

Hodgkinson), claiming that the writer could add many of his own personal memories. There is some unease in the method taken and in its reliability, for this was to be an objective work (presented by a scholarly authorial 'we'), and in the centennial spirit of the times—a celebration of progress.¹⁶³ For example, in his first paragraph he describes Kempsey as 'destined to become a large and important town and capital of the Macleay District'.¹⁶⁴ Another tension arises from the religious convictions of the writer, these giving the sense of purpose that had sustained him through many of the years' vicissitudes. Not only is it necessary to demonstrate and chart individual—and societal—progress, but there must be a moral purpose to the whole, and this leads to a text that becomes an extended justification for White occupation.

There is a beginning with elevated language in near epic style, citing the difficulty of capturing 'change! change!! change!!!', and almost invoking as muse 'He who created all, and who changeth not'.¹⁶⁵ The work proceeds to detail a long geological history of the Macleay, using calculations to arrive at certain conclusions—the whole taking over a whole page (or three columns of closely lined text). The import of this section is to stress that there has always been change in the Macleay.

The work then turns suddenly to the history of the inhabitants, first judging that it must be 'obscured in mystery', but then going to much length to cite mythological stories in which an alligator-like creature was in the north, as evidence that the Aborigines were of Malay origin.¹⁶⁶ Having thus postulated that the earliest Indigenous people had to endure a world of change, the writer has the confidence to briefly describe their state at the time of contact:

The tribe on this river was then numerous and supplied with abundance of game, ducks, swans, and other wild fowl were met in numbers far beyond anything now seen or will be again.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ *Australians 1888*, ed. by Graeme Davison, J.W. McCarty, Ailsa McLeary (Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987). p. xv. E.W. Rudder uses the word 'progress' in his first sentence. p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ Rudder, p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ Rudder, p. 1.

¹⁶⁶ Rudder, p. 2. The section describing Aborigines is in extract in Lionel J. V. Rudder, *Magnificent Failure*, pp. 98-99.

¹⁶⁷ Rudder, p. 2.

He then moves to conclude this section with a series of details which would suggest that the Aborigines were complicit in their loss of this Arcadia.

[The Aborigines] were quite inoffensive and obliging, supplying abundance of fish and game for a small return in tobacco, sugar and flour. They were willing to receive white men amongst them and, although they claimed a right to the land, were not backward in affording every information in their power as to spots fit for agriculture or any other purpose, the nature of which was explained to and understood by them. ¹⁶⁸

In the absence of any account of armed conflict, and any view of the land as *terra nullius* patently inadequate, here is an attempted legal justification for occupying the land. It was an invitation to occupy.

Epidemical diseases were occasionally severe, one of these visitations proved fatal to them years since, they then died in great numbers and were left unburied, we have seen several corpses partially interred or altogether left for wild animals to prey upon... and [we] have had to bury and burn the corpses of those who died at our camp. ¹⁶⁹

Here is added a sort of moral justification for occupation, whereby white people can play their more humane part in this land. It is rapidly followed by a class justification, and then finally an appeal to the unarguable, Divine authority:

The greatest calamity of all which befell these poor creatures was the introduction amongst them of intemperance, and other vices, by the whites, many of whom were desperate character and given to excesses. ... Such is the will of Providence that they should pass away and we still more rapidly increase. ¹⁷⁰

Without a paragraph break, and as if to overwhelm the previous topic, the text rapidly moves on to discuss the current large numbers of Europeans and their births, the boldness of their arrival in the Macleay, early timber-getters, ship construction, and stock numbers in 1859 (then roughly the mid-point of White occupation). The topics seem arbitrary, beyond the need to stress some form of the new White progress, after noting the seemingly inevitable decline of the original inhabitants.

A new section extols the plenitude of European produce in fuller detail, from stock numbers, to animal produce and shipping figures. Most impressive is the listing of the (now) available fruit and other products:

¹⁶⁸ Rudder, p. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Rudder, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Rudder, p. 2.

The vine flourished and wine of good quality was produced. Honey abounded and the domestic bee was met with in our forests. It was literally a land flowing with milk and honey. The orange, banana, apple, pear, quince, walnut, pomegranate, fig, almond, melon, guava, lemon, citron, peach, apricot, nectarine, and many other fruits abounded, besides an almost infinite variety of vegetables. Flowers of great variety and the produce of almost all parts of the earth adorn our gardens and perfume the air.¹⁷¹

The list, in addition to those others within the section, far exceeds the needs of a record of commercial cropping. Rather it comprises a cornucopia, of the sort dreamed of by early settlers. In the fullness of this list, and as produce of the land in response to the activities of the Europeans, so the new inhabitants seem welcomed by the land, thus seeming more justified in their occupation. As if to reinforce the point that this is a Paradise, its benefits are claimed as for all—'pauperism is unknown. Who ever saw a beggar on the Macleay?'¹⁷² Clearly the writer is omitting the displaced and dying Aborigines and their obvious need.

As if satisfied with such affirmation of European presence, the writer appears emboldened to address the negative characteristics of their community. First noted is the issue of drunkenness, then the 'party feeling' that destroys a community's 'harmony', this quickly negating the claim that the 'district may be congratulated for the degree of harmony which prevails'.¹⁷³ The final criticism, and the one that is treated at length, is the:

apathy as to all Public matters whether of a social, religious, or political character, greatly to be deplored and which could only be attributed to the soul-absorbing zeal which every man displays in promoting his own immediate and individual aggrandisement.¹⁷⁴

Thus, out of this text of 'progress' there emerges the dark side of European occupation—the greed that at all periods could overwhelm better instincts, and which was so deadly in the early phase of settlement across the region.

Subsequently, the text loses some direction and integrity, with several large selections from other works included. It is possible that the original essay ended at the fourth page and that for its publication additional items were incorporated. The first is

171 Rudder, p. 3.

172 Rudder, p. 3.

173 Rudder, p. 3.

174 Rudder, p. 3.

from Clement Hodgkinson's text, quoting at length the description of the sawyers 'spree', here used as if to reinforce Rudder's point on the current extent of drunkenness.¹⁷⁵ Also added is an original poem by Rudder—'Ode to the Macleay River'¹⁷⁶—followed by an inordinately long petition to the Governor. This latter covers a whole page and addresses the topic of difficulties in obtaining land. Its inclusion serves the function of removing settlement from its possible stigma of supplanting the natives, by keeping the emphasis upon the moral aspect of small people struggling under inappropriate Government practices.¹⁷⁷ There is some further detailed listing, for the record, including names and buildings, and finally, long accounts of the 1864 flood.¹⁷⁸ The late reliance upon the other texts shows an uncertainty of purpose, as though wider support was needed to sustain the task.

Throughout this fragmented second half of the text, the treatment then circles back to some restatement of the earlier theme of progress:

The sound of the axe still resounds and proclaims the war waged with the forest as fierce as ever, but gradually and surely establishing the supremacy of man, by whose industry, skill and energy the wilderness is now turned into the fruitful field and the desert made to blossom like the rose. The black's bark canoes have long since given place to the schooner. The kangaroo has fled to make way for the ox, the horse, the sheep and the pig. Where the wild fowl once claimed sole dominion on land and water the domestic range the air, swim in the waters and roam on the land in perfect safety, and mingle notes as night gives place to day, and welcome the rising sun in peace and joy.¹⁷⁹

This is an eloquent presentation of the perceived battle for settlement. Using imagery from the Bible—'desert' and the change from night into day—the forward progress is waged primarily against the lush and chaotic land. The Aborigines' fate is included, but understated, in what proceeds as a celebration of change to order and so to real achievement. Similarly, the writer returns to the topic again, beginning in conventional fashion:

In bygone days where Kempsey now stands the aboriginal erected his gunyah, danced the corroboree, and fought his battle, the wild dingo howled, the deadly snake crept stealthily through the brushwood and long grass, the kangaroo and wallaby sprang about the forest and scrub, the opossum climbed the tree and lay hid till night ...

¹⁷⁵ Rudder, p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ Rudder, p. 4. The poem is in Lionel J. V. Rudder, *Magnificent Failure*, pp. 99-100.

¹⁷⁷ Rudder, pp. 4-5.

¹⁷⁸ Throughout the text has been cast in first-person plural pronouns, and in lists of names E.W. Rudder is included objectively.

¹⁷⁹ Rudder, p. 4.

However, the accumulation of detail and the delight in the natural descriptions, seem, alike, to subvert and eventually betray the writer's presentation of progress:

and thousands of flying foxes, rushing with a noise like the wind, darkened the evening sky, cockatoos whitened the trees and ground enlivening the forest with their screams, swans and geese migrated through the air by thousands, while the eagle and hawk, soaring high in the blue sky, spread terror throughout the feathered tribes, monster iguanas and lizards basked under the rays of the midday sun, the brushes teemed with the wild turkey, the various coloured pigeons and doves, the gorgeous coloured parrot, regent and satin birds; the rivers surface was covered with flocks of black swans, ducks and cormorants, while the reeds and shrubs which clothed the banks, revealed the crane, Nankeen bird and water hen, shoals of fish rushed the quiet water with the voracious shark and leaping porpoise, the gigantic red-legged crane frequented the swamps, the owl and night hawk broke the stillness of the night, with the croaking of multitudes of frogs, the firefly sparkled in the gloom of night, butterflies and other living creatures of exquisite form and colours too numerous to specify were met with during the gliding hours of day. The river banks were covered with magnificent gum and cedar trees draped in festoons of splendid climates, presented a scene of vegetable magnificence, which only those possessed of taste, who had the privilege to behold them. before destroyed by his brother man, to make way for his fellows, could possibly conceive such was the Macleay, where Kempsey now stands, as we saw it 53 years ago.¹⁸⁰

The evident delight in the natural detail goes well beyond the earlier listing of European-like details, and is here reminiscent of that joy expressed by the early river explorers, but without their hopeful listing of likely produce. Here, late in the work and while celebrating settler progress, the writer feels free himself to express with some nostalgia the richness of the world that had passed.

This content, in addition to the earlier criticism of public life, as well as the approach taken, was likely to have been contentious. Local criticism is seldom accepted as cause for improvement. There is evidence of contemporary or later tension in the (non-)publishing of the work by the *Macleay Argus*. In its second half the work contains three mentions by name of the rival *Macleay Herald*. Whether this was partial cause for the first newspaper declining to publish, or whether the rival's name was subsequently added in pique, the circumstances of publication show tension. The effects may have been long-lasting. Later two of Rudder's sons produced a series of texts, relying in part upon stories from their father, and while they do contain some detail critical of settlement, this is distanced to almost hearsay. Yet these derivative

¹⁸⁰ Rudder, p. 6. The spelling of 'corrobore', 'voracious' and 'climares' [clematis?] are in the original. This section is included in Lionel J. V. Rudder, *Magnificent Failure*, p. 105.

works are used in the standard local history, while the father's more significant original is omitted.

At the end of a long life which was full of adventure, hard work, service to the community, intellectual pursuits and attention to a spiritual life, E.W. Rudder had not received the rewards and ease which he had expected. In his *History* modern readers can see that, despite his determined attempts to list various aspects of progress, that purpose was built on shaky ground—that even a long initial section on geology could not support. The rich natural description that emerged, shows a sensitive and genuine appreciation of the natural landscape, yet it was inadequate to address the role of the Aborigines.

* * *

The harshest recorded edge of European occupation is partly evidenced in the texts of the region's settlement. More complicated than a simple blaming of the initial squatters, or the density of later small scale settlement, rather, the process of appropriation included the irregularities of convict settlement and movement, as well as the traditional informalities of the role of women. The process is long-term, one composed of many individuals, their aims, efforts and even testing of their weaknesses. The texts included show that there are different ways of seeing/recording the settler experience, and, while ultimately tragic, that the White invasion was by no means completely unified or totally destructive. Common elements in these responses form a general cultural mind-set that avoided the darkness of forests, that assumed a right to occupy the land, and often also contained the assumption that the original inhabitants would soon pass on. As rich sources of early North Coast life and of continuing and of evolving different cultural themes, the settler texts of this period are likely to be widely used, when they are brought to a larger audience.

That the texts are clearly part of a discourse with other texts, interacting, incorporating, posing comparisons or claiming to be of the same (literary) world, would suggest that in constructing the region, the textual/publishing context is often an

important modifier of the particular careful observation. That the texts are often constructed in the light of other versions of the white penetration shows how deeply textual was the settlers' construction of the region and of the life within it.