THE PROSE OF THE SERVING PROFESSIONALS: DIVINE AND SCIENTIFIC

I have not been able to discover if they have any religion beyond a vague belief in evil spirits, who may do harm to them. ¹

The further establishment of 'colonial' settlement must bring to a more closely organised territory many people beyond the actual settlers. While their earlier lives will not usually have been spent in the region, their service there and the texts then produced give insights into the region, which themselves then become significant in the further shaping of that same zone. These records are important as a transition to the more familiar constructions of the region in twentieth century documents of various kinds. Despite several figures with national reputations, at least within their particular fields, to date there has been but limited attention paid to these specific texts, with their local connection. To some extent this reflects a community unease over the general style of the latter half of the nineteenth century—a time of heightened sectarian differences, the awkward establishment of scientific professionalism, and the tightening of administrative procedures. Those works selected are as comprehensive as the scope of this task permits—keeping in mind that a more exhaustive search of archives, both public and private, may yield further items similar to those of Fr. John Sullivan, Maggie Sullivan and J. Horbury Hunt which are treated herein.

* * *

DIVINES

It should not be surprising that the texts produced by those who might often travel across the region to minister to those who have settled, will at times have an intersection with the prose and concerns of (secular) travellers and with the various waves of settlers. Nowhere is this more so than with the various divines who have left some record of their work.

Rev. Dr. John Dunmore Lang

At a national level, Dunmore Lang is the most widely recognised of the North Coast writers to be covered in this chapter. This is the consequence of a long public life, active in causes and disputation, and not least of his being a prolific publisher. Rather than being remembered for any specific work, his reputation rests on the extensive pattern of his activities, as a most mobile and political recorder. On the North Coast, his specific service included four journeys, at about ten year intervals, from the mid-1840s to the 1870s. On each occasion he re-published his account of the region, with waning interest as political events (Queensland separation) moved ahead of his own grand plans for the long coast to Cape York. His impressions of the North Coast were collected into his first substantial work treating the region—Cooksland.2 Although drawing upon no direct experience of his actual pause within the current region, the work remains as a valuable detailed early description of regional definition. This text is little known locally, being only indirectly mentioned in two of its standard local histories.3 On a national level of interest, the recent extensive biography of Lang makes no mention of his North Coast visits, nor even of his continuing interest in

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publishing on it.4 This is not completely surprising, for the many editions of Lang's work tend to overwhelm any reader early or late, and in this case subsequent political/administrative decisions overtook Lang's vision of 'Cooksland', leaving him to title his later edition of the same work Queensland.

Under its original title, Cooksland, there is reinforced is Lang's attempt to define and promote the establishment of a colony beyond the north of New South Wales (one which ultimately would become Queensland). The publication now looked at draws extensively upon a range of previously published and unpublished works. These pages include extracts from the works of Flinders, Uniacke, Perry (Deputy-Surveyor-General), Wilson (Surveyor), Captain Rous, Oliver Fry, Clement Hodgkinson, and the map provided is that of Robert Dixon (Government Surveyor). At a certain distance from Sydney, and with a wealth of natural resources and early settlement trends established, it seemed reasonable to look for those distinctive features that might define a new separate colony based on Moreton Bay. Part of what we call the North Coast was unusually termed by Lang 'The Three Southern Rivers'.5 In his search to determine a sense of regional commonality 'a complete, compact, and united whole',6 Lang declared a natural boundary at the line of 30°S.7 Specific justification for this line is given, covering a change of plants (based on the evidence of Hodgkinson's text),8 the land being deemed as unified by 'a complete net-work of streams of water' (echoing Hodgkinson in noting the contrast with the usual view of Australia as barren),9 and citing a common coastal feature, where the largest waterways are 'all barred rivers'.10 Yet the key determinant underpinning these aspects is the description of the land form itself. Travelling north from Sydney Lang claims there is a:

5  Lang, Cooksland, Chapter II, 'The Three Southern Rivers—the Clarence, the Richmond, and the Tweed', pp. 37-59.
6  Lang, p. vii.
7  This mark is between the present Coffs Harbour and Grafton, close to Red Rock.
8  Lang, pp. vii-viii.
9  Lang, p. 15.
10 Lang, p. 25.
general barrenness of the coast. But on approaching the thirtieth parallel of south latitude, the character of the scenery undergoes a remarkable change. Lofty, detached, dome-shaped, and high-peaked mountains shoot up their bold and interesting forms in rapid succession into the azure sky, while the high table-land of New England, presenting summits occasionally covered with snow, afford [sic] the voyager some idea of the physical character of the interior.11

Translated though it is into Lang's own exuberant approving language, this general concept is derived from Flinders' text. Even the illustration of Byron Bay, with the pointed peaks of Mount Warning and Chincogan,12 which Lang presented as characteristic, first appeared in Flinders' publication. Yet Lang incorrectly extrapolates this locality into a much wider regional description, and indeed the whole of his 'Cooksland' concept can be seen as stemming from the field of close operation of Flinders' Norfolk journey of 1799 (the area from Shoal Bay to Hervey Bay). More specifically it arises from Flinders' famous published account covering that journey, and in this way Flinders' own hopes for this land fed into Lang's excited language shown above, and so furthered his aim of inspiring a new State for the north.

Lang presents naming as particularly important. 'South Australia' is criticised for its geographical inaccuracy, and lack of imagination. He states a fear that our region will become a new state of 'Eastern Australia' (containing the most easterly point of the continent). He locates the real cause as administrative neglect—'Great Britain has too many Colonial children already to be able to find proper names for any more'.13 So he comes to Cook who as 'circumnavigator' deserves recognition, in a claim based on an Imperial rather than a regional perspective. The Yorkshireman, Cook may well have been more acceptable to Lang. The textual noting of Northern British countrymen appears as a reminder of the rich patterning of then perceived cultural criterion—'Scotch convict', 'Scotch vessel', and 'Scotch mechanics'.14

The text takes time to argue with Hodgkinson's recorded exoneration of those squatters whose arsenic had resulted in Aboriginal deaths. Giving detail as to

11 Lang, pp. 11-12.
12 For the distinctiveness of Mount Chincogan, see the poems 'Homage to a Mountain' and 'Mullumbimby Revisited' in Edwin Wilson, Songs of the Forest (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1990), pp. 23, 25.
13 Lang, pp. ii-iii.
14 Lang, pp. 14, 20, 21.
quantities and applications, Lang will permit no such easing of squatters' consciences, in what seems a bold attack on the prevailing silence. Yet his conclusion on Aborigines and land occupation contains another surprise:

Am I then to be understood as recommending the discontinuance or prohibition of the Squatting system for the preservation of the Aborigines? By no means. "God," we are divinely assured, "made the earth to be inhabited;" and no intelligent person can suppose for a moment that this Divine constitution, in so far as the vast continent of Australia is concerned, can possibly have been fulfilled or carried out by the Aborigines of that country. It is also equally undeniable, that as that extensive portion of the earth's surface, in so far as it can be rendered available for the purposes of man, has evidently been created a pastoral country, it must have been the Divine intention, in regard to it, that it should ultimately be occupied by the flocks and herds of civilized men.15

Out of these statements as to seemingly divine approval, there emerges a practical view of the land and its use. Subsequent argument proceeds to address the needs of accommodation between the races, in what must have been mixed messages for those implicated in earlier genocide.

In short, Cooksland is more a text of political than of any divine service to the region. The work shows how fluid and indeterminate was the nature of any evolving State definition and boundaries, let alone those of that less formal entity of 'region'. The voice in Cooksland suggests that such entities were slowly formed and then supported by the seeming authority of preceding texts, and, finally, forced through by bold assertiveness.

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**Rev. Arthur Selwyn**

The Anglican minister who was appointed to Grafton in 1853 (leaving in 1867) had as his area of responsibility the Richmond River in addition to his specific location on the Clarence River. While serving this large area the Rev. Arthur Selwyn was absent from home on many occasions, and maintained communication by frequent letters to his wife. After his death (1899) his widow prepared a volume of his letters

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15 Lang, p. 290.
for publication.\textsuperscript{16} Intended for a private readership in those years soon after his death, the North Coast section stands out for its general perspective on the region and lends the work a wider usefulness.\textsuperscript{17} Selwyn's life is considered in the local histories, but these have drawn upon certain manuscripts of letters, and appear to be unaware of the breadth of detail in this volume.

Written when either the writer or Mrs Selwyn was away from home, the content is characterised by groups of letters, with long intervals between the groups (or journeys away). Some of the items are placed out of chronological order, without a thematic justification, but what strongly emerges is the warmth of intimate letters—a sharing of stories and of hopes. There is much about negotiation of mails and travel arrangements, wishes, possibilities, and likelihoods. Previous letters are restated in briefer content so that the recipient has confirmation of the arrival of each. Underlying the detail of necessary arrangements, purchases, deliveries, requests to pass on information or to help in some way, there is a modern-sounding respect for the partner's decisions. It is never taken for granted that the partner will reply to the letter, return from afar, or conversely, be there when the traveller returns. Some of this feel comes from occasional statements of self-effacing dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of the letter, such as 'My dear, this is a horrible scribble, full of nothing'.\textsuperscript{18}

In terms of its mapping for the region, the text ranges over the field of operations, covering great distances. Regionally, these are centred on Grafton and Ulmarra, but reaching to Tabulum, Casino and Lismore, and occasionally to 'Richmond Heads'. Other centres are those of the prosperous settlers, Ogilvie, Bundock, Mylne and the like. Actual travel is presented as if it were always an easy progress. Riding through the rain is mentioned several times, but without any real irritation being expressed. Also there are accounts of journeying through rising water but where 'getting wet' has occasional little distress. The floods that delay the Bishop,

\textsuperscript{16} Dean Selwyn, \textit{Letters of the Late Dean Selwyn (of Newcastle): Chiefly to his Wife} (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1902). Also included are letters to and from Mrs Selwyn's family, and also some correspondence with Selwyn's superior, Bishop Tyrrell. The title page is inscribed '(PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY)'.

\textsuperscript{17} This covers pp. 138-207, 236-238.

\textsuperscript{18} Selwyn, p. 177.
and even a message from him, are cause for 'vexation'. 19 This is, perhaps, accounted for by the fact, as Louise Daley notes, that Selwyn had previously been a squatter on the Tablelands and so was at ease with this lifestyle.20

The people encountered make for him a human landscape that was accepting and accommodating, but one related without enthusiasm. He described one tour as:

a wearisome, wearying journey of three weeks amongst people, not one of whom seem to be able to feel, or delight in, the thought of a rest hereafter.21

For the local people, the rareness of visits to the Richmond perhaps meant a lack of seeming commitment by the Church. Yet Selwyn seemingly works through these difficulties, mainly through:

having entirely discarded my written sermons. Of course, travelling about, I am able to preach on the same subject at many different places, and I have quite got over all embarrasments to such audiences as I meet with here. I have not preached a single written sermon, and I almost look forward to the time when I shall never have occasion to do so. The very thought of them at present wearies me. They seem so stiff and formal.22

It is easy to imagine the degree of pleasure with which the isolated people of the Richmond might have accepted this departure from the traditional 'stiff and formal'.

Links with the Tablelands involve discussion on the choice between Tenterfield and Armidale as the better departure point for a still-difficult eastward entry to the region. In an early choice between a position based in Armidale or the one in Grafton, Selwyn declines the New England thus:

it is not to be compared to Grafton, and I do not think you could bear the climate. In fact I see no reason whatever that could tempt me to change, for, in fact, we are nearer Maitland at Grafton than at Armidale.23

The centrality of Maitland for the north of the State is here underscored. (It was also the home of his wife's family.) Oxley's vision of an east-west major route is also shown to be overtaken by the dominant links which, in effect, radiated from Sydney.

The major links from the North Coast are by sea to Newcastle and Sydney, with a rail

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19 Selwyn, p. 190. The word is used in both the opening and the closing sentences.
21 Selwyn, p. 153. This weariness with the Richmond journeys is repeated on p. 173.
22 Selwyn, pp. 156-157. The original has 'embarrasments'.
23 Selwyn, p. 143.
connection to Maitland. The letters present a life which is firmly centred upon his Church, community and family work within the Clarence Valley. Beyond this regional focus there lies the diocesan headquarters in Newcastle with its important overview of all events to the north. The tenuousness of this orientation is revealed in one letter where Bishop Tyrrell noted that if Separation (i.e., Queensland from New South Wales) took place then Grafton would be part of the Brisbane Diocese.24

There is no mention of the indigenous inhabitants in this text, for all its sympathy of voice and ease of movement over large tracts of the land. The prose records service to a community that could well have been as homogeneous as one in England. In letters of this sort, confined to a range of topics dealing with separation and arrangements, the Aborigines could of course well be considered marginal to their purposes. Yet perhaps the very real social marginality of those closest to the land is thus indicated. Such an omission may not be surprising when Selwyn's imperial attitude to a likely war—whether internal or for Britain elsewhere—is considered:

I am sometimes surprised and a little shocked at my own feeling about war. I can't help being almost pleased. I believe it is because I think that war certainly brings out many very noble qualities; it binds a nation together so that in wartime every man counts a countryman a friend, and really looks upon and treats him as such. It quite swallows up many of the little petty jealousies and disputes which often make neighbours and countrymen so angry with each other, and so unhappy. These good results strike me, and never having seen its numberless miseries, I suppose they do not affect me as they ought.25

In this analysis, Selwyn is following a leader-writer in the Sydney Morning Herald, published just over three weeks earlier, in a long piece justifying war:

In a time of national excitement men's minds are turned from their own personal position. Their difficulties and sorrows lose part of their magnitude.

While:

Soft humanity, no doubt, repels views like these, ... It is obvious that the way of Providence is not that which human tenderness would desire, or devotion supplicate.26

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24 Selwyn, p. 189.
25 Selwyn, pp. 179-180. The alarm was over warlike gestures between France and Austria which threatened the involvement of much of Europe. The eventual war was between Prussia and Austria.
26 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 June, 1859, p. 4.
With only little reservation, Selwyn adopts this determination to have the community unify itself by looking outwards. Sadly, too many of his people had already informally unified by looking inwards to erase the original inhabitants—those who now rate not one mention in the minister's text.

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Fr. John O'Sullivan

Less wide ranging than the two previous divines, Fr John O'Sullivan came to the Macleay Valley as in 1871 and stayed until no later than 1877, when he had taken up a position in Grafton. After only two weeks on the Macleay, he wrote a letter home to his family in Cork, Ireland.27 His time in the area is briefly noted in the local histories.28

As with the small settler experience, there was the epistolary need to summarise the whole locale and way of life into a short letter for the information of those far away and for whom much would be inconceivable. Kempsey is located as a 'small seaport' north of Sydney, a place of rich land, and where one in three of the population were Catholics.

Necessarily limited in his knowledge after such a short time in the region, still he was able to list the now familiar wide variety of produce:

besides the sugar we have abundance of oranges and lemons—in fact they throw them to the pigs—bananas, grapes, figs, peaches in the summer—wild and everywhere to be found, new potatoes all the year round and to crown it all beef at two pence a pound the best parts. Yet after all the people are poor and I cannot account for it, but to give them fair play they are generous.29

27 John O'Sullivan, Letter, 7 June 1871, Typescript held by Macleay River Historical Society, Kempsey, NSW. Published in Macleay River Historical Society Journal, 37 (April, 1988), [1-2].
29 O'Sullivan, p. 2.
This is no overstated cornucopia, but rather an attempt to reconcile the availability of produce with the character of the people encountered. In fact the one letter makes two more attempts to explain the observed poverty. The first is natural disasters:

the floods occasionally sweep them out of house and cattle. They would be rich but for the floods.

The second comes after details on the land purchase system, that had by then claimed all the available land:

Though the land is cheap to get, they must have money to go on with and they remain very poor. Fellows begin without capital or badly manage it and then they come to the wall.30

It is a repeated attempt to understand the struggles of his people. Yet so easy does the life of a selector appear from this account that it is not surprising to find that Fr O'Sullivan's brother soon came to the Macleay as a settler.31

Covering the land from the Hastings in the south to the Bellinger in the north, travel is for this divine intensive rather than extensive. A long paragraph is given to details of horses and distances covered in average and exceptional days. While much of this would seem to be based on his previous Tenterfield experience, the pattern of regular rapid movement is implied to also refer to the Macleay:

My district is 110 miles long and about 40 miles wide and a very rough hilly district and, worse than that, you must swim your horses after the boats crossing the rivers. I am nearly always away and find I stay here at the hotel when I am home, and your expenses on the road are always large when travelling. But in many cases you are charged nothing, that is when you come to a squatter's station.32

Without comfort or a true home base, it is a constantly temporary or mobile life of ministering service. Concern for the costs of such service loom large here, being completely absent from the texts of the two earlier treated divines. The difficulty of the region and this type of service is best indicated by his conclusion where he hopes to one day return home—'if this hot climate does not injure me. Now even in the depth of winter, it is very hot'.33 That he survived to serve in Grafton and later Glen Innes is an

30 O'Sullivan, p. 2.
31 Marie H. Neil, Valley of the Macleay, p. 49.
32 O'Sullivan, p. 2.
33 O'Sullivan, p. 2.
indication of his resilience and adaptability. That this letter contains no mention of the Aborigines suggests a conscious omission. With its summary of the region, and distant readers who would be eager for detail on whatever was exotic, it would appear that the Aborigines were an awkward presence and could not be readily taken into an early summary.

Maggie Sullivan

Later in the century came the establishment of convents with nuns, predominantly from Ireland, who came to the region to conduct their orders' schools. Before the First World War the first of these places celebrated jubilees. In an historical summary, for the twenty-five years' celebration of achievement in Lismore, a booklet of extended prose was produced by a seemingly well praised ex-student.34

The text is concerned to record personal experience, and to locate the sites of former buildings and details of their uses. There is a celebration in the achievement of the completed buildings:

And today! One of the finest piles of ecclesiastical buildings in the Commonwealth, with broad acres and a long frontage to the banks of the Richmond River! A Cathedral whose noble proportions are at once the envy and admiration of visitors from other towns and cities, and equipped with a peal of exquisite bells and a grand organ on the most modern principles! A Convent of such beautiful design, blending the architecture of almost every age, and of such majestic proportions as to be unequalled in its kind in the Commonwealth, except by one or two metropolitan Convents... 35

The greatest validation of this construction achievement comes, seemingly, from the response of well-informed travellers:

To tourists and globe-trotters visiting Lismore, the Convent and Cathedral are the architectural giants of the coastal country. "Profound admiration" is the one phrase befitting their sentiments on beholding them.36

The text also draws upon people for its history. There is much reliance on long lists of names, including those who attended the first masses; those who have since

34 Maggie Sullivan, St. Mary's College, Lismore: Jubilee Souvenir: 1886-1911 ([Lismore, NSW]: [n. pub.], 1911). The author's name is also given as 'Mrs. R. V. Kearney', but no further biographical detail could be readily found.
35 Sullivan, p. 4.
36 Sullivan, p. 22.
died; those women who prepared matters for the arrival of the nuns; the first students at the school; names of Catholic men at the consecration of the first bishop; the first students to gain success in University entry exams; ex-students who have pursued an artistic career in Sydney; and finally the chief donors to the rebuilding of the convent after the disastrous fire. It is an attempt at community bonding, through a roll-call which climaxes with those in the present, and not least, for proud country people, through an initial identification with that charismatic horseman/bushman/priest—Fr. Tim McCarthy.37

There is a list of those smaller branch houses established by the convent—Ballina, Coraki, Kempsey, Bangalow and Murwillumbah, 'perhaps the most virile of the four daughters of St. Mary's Mother House, Lismore'.38 The detail suggests a regional view but one closely focussed on the Richmond/Tweed area. The main centre beyond this immediate circle was Sydney, and then further beyond in the distance—Ireland. With statement exceeding Dunmore Lang's attachment to things Scottish, there is in this text open pride in the inheritance of an Irish background:

it is one of the characteristics of true Celtic blood to live in the past and to keep green the memory of the worthy dead. That is the keystone and the secret of the distinguishing trait of Irish nationality.39

The close-knit nature of this background is shown in the description of the arrival of the nuns, beginning with the only element of the text that could be described as criticism:

How primitive were the community and the district may be imagined, when it is stated that only a very small proportion of the people had ever seen a nun before. Everyone was anxious to know what spot in Ireland each nun came from, hoping thereby to at least hear something of their own native parish, or mayhap of someone belonging to them. And, needless to say, some few were successful. Thus another link was established between the Convent and the people.40

Such an assumption of commonality of background if not experience would be rare in other denomination-based texts. Yet it was strongly used for the further benefit of a

38 Sullivan, pp. 18-19. The branch at Kempsey closed within the year.
39 Sullivan, pp. 5-[6].
40 Sullivan, p. 8.
cohesive Catholic community. The desire for continuing sectarian strength is indicated by reference to the 1886 'Edith O'Gorman riots' in Lismore. Despite being 'better left untouched', the need to mention such a public display of religious rivalry was still strong in 1911.\footnote{Sullivan, p. 12. Edmund Campion, \textit{Australian Catholics} (Ringwood, Vic: Viking, 1987), pp. 61-62.}

The text contains rich language of praise—'glorious', 'nuns of very high attainments' and 'teachers of the highest order'.\footnote{Sullivan, p. 7.} There is bold over-statement of the central theme and issue—'The great moments of history are presented as the works of genius and religion',\footnote{Sullivan, p. 9.} and many scholarly quotations are incorporated—from Oliver Cromwell and Emerson to Plato and Victor Hugo. To some degree this display of learning is to evidence the achievement of the school, adding to the internal evidence of the writer's subsequent university studies and career as a journalist, and the longest section incorporated is from the writer's own item, 'Alma Mater', published ten years earlier.\footnote{Sullivan, pp. 12-14.} However, rather than too overtly to reveal personal pride, the writer hopes that for the future Golden Jubilee 'some "old girl" shall have arisen to write a similar work of love and affection'\footnote{Sullivan, pp. 23-24.}—indirectly referring to her own situation.

Nowhere is there any mention of Aborigines. Such an established form of service—one in this case based on buildings, a style of learning that takes one beyond the region, and the maintenance of a supportive lay community—has little if any place for the indigenous people.\footnote{This differed for the evangelical movement. Consider, for example, the Aboriginal mission on the Macleay.} Rather, the predominant memories are summarised, by this writer, revealing its limited form, as 'that Elysium of girl-children'.\footnote{Sullivan, p. [14]. The original has 'Eylsium'.} It seems that the needs for racial protection and for high societal achievement preclude addressing the cultural awkwardness of this little Irish enclave in what had formerly been solely the land of the Aborigine.
SCIENCE

In contrast to the close engagement with community that is seen in the texts with their bases in religions/denominations, one might expect the works of scientific study and about various technologies to give dispassionate comment on the region, in as far as it is investigated by its writers. Rather than being of the people, as seen with the divines, here one might expect to see the region drawn into the larger (world) context of branches of knowledge, through objective study. The passages through the region of such writers are often transitory, where the outside expert has longer-term commitments elsewhere, but their insights are relatively objective and crucial to the developing sense of region in a modern world.

ZOOOLOGY

John MacGillivray

As the naturalist from the Fly and later on the Rattlesnake vessels for their surveys of the Australian coastline, with his collections therefrom already deposited in the British Museum, MacGillivray was at the peak of his scientific skill when he came to the North Coast. Having but a short life (1821-1867), in the latter period of this he was based in South Grafton for twelve months, with the task of procuring specimens (non-botanical) for various museums around Australia. His journeys took him as far north as the Richmond Valley.

A series of his letters survives—those originally written to a young official of the Australian Museum and, much later, published in an article for the Australian
The Prose of the Serving Professionals: Divine and Scientific

Zoologist. They were therein described as 'without doubt, some of the most interesting letters dealing with natural history that have yet been published'. Yet MacGillivray has had no mention in the standard local histories of either the Clarence or the Richmond Rivers.

The letters have a mix of the scientific, of business arrangements and of the personal. Most characteristic are the discussions of many species (with the scientific names in brackets), their bones, skin, eyes, sex and finer species-distinguishing marks. The variety of these ranges across kangaroos, koalas, ducks, birds, bats, nests and eggs, beetles, and fish. The voice is thoughtful, balanced and authoritative. Reference is made to other collectors and reference works in the field. The process of collection and preparation is a recurring topic in the letters. Most surprising for a non-specialist reader is the list of kills, which to modern eyes seems excessive and with a disregard for the species' chance of survival. MacGillivray's own speciality is a three barreled shotgun, and with its coarse 'No. 2 shot' he is able to gain many specimens:

I ... crawled a long way, the animals intently listening and looking another way at one of our blacks higher up. When I had got up to about 100 yards one suddenly bolted, and as there was not an instant to be lost I fired at the other still standing up, a little one beside her. She rolled over towards me into the gully, and when I came up she was dead—my first grey face—the most beautiful of all the kangaroos.

The link between killing and beauty is a strange conjunction. It is a vision of local plenty, where the only natural limit is the seasonal departure of the massive numbers of potential specimens. After several such (from a modern perspective) unpleasant descriptions, at one point the writer appears to join the contemporary reader's unease, by adding in parentheses—'I am heartily sick of shooting at present'. More exhaustion with the process follows soon after:

48 Tom Iredale, 'The Last Letters of John MacGillivray [1865-1867]', *Australian Zoologist*, 9.1 (1937), 40-63. Subsequent references to the Letters, as separate from Iredale's introductory comments, will be to this edition, and attributed to 'MacGillivray'.
49 Iredale, p. 40.
50 MacGillivray, p. 42.
51 MacGillivray, p. 49.
we had two horse loads of game, and I might have got more if inclined, but I took little
interest in the matter and none in the shooting.52

There is considerable detail on the process of preparation, from the selection of
appropriate items, to their cleaning, maceration and stuffing. Similarly there is
discussion of arrangements for distribution, naming the particular museums requiring
specimens. From his outpost, the main receiving centres are the Sydney, Melbourne
and Adelaide Museums, while he is also collecting for the Paris Exhibition
Commissioners.

Aborigines are an important ancillary to the collecting process. Conventionally
referred to as 'blacks' (on one occasion as a 'darkey'), they emerge in some warm
regard, if not quite as partners in the enterprise. One Aborigine has the use of a gun,
and the specifics of their contributions make them sound as if they were the solid basis
of the enterprise. There is evidence of their being made much use of, as in expressions
such as: 'but there was no black about at the time to send up for eggs'53, and:

The blacks come and go in an uncertain manner. Yesterday I was fortunate enough to get
some in the humour, and took 8 away with me in the boat to a reserved island in the river
to hunt for the brush opossum...54

At the other extreme there is a linking of specialised knowledge across the races in:

A black has been looking for Sphecotheres eggs this morning—some young, but no
eggs.55

One native, who is persuaded to procure a pheasant's egg, is referred to warmly by
name as 'Daddy'. The relationship between the races is better seen as part of a wider
network, based on an openness to whatever help was possible in knowledge and
location of specimens. Cedar-getters are similar informants, with one sawyer identified
as 'an old shipmate', revealing a cross-class warmth. Even within his own class, every
opportunity for collection was taken. Referring to a time with the Police Magistrate:

I have not yet forgiven him for causing me to ride 30 miles the other afternoon in 3 1/2
hours in his anxiety to be at a friend's station in time for dinner. I didn't feel very lively

52 MacGillivray, p. 51.
53 MacGillivray, p. 47.
54 MacGillivray, p. 52.
55 MacGillivray, p. 51.
next day, although I had got a fine bat (Rhin. Megaph.) in the room during said dinner and during said ride the dogs caught a kangaroo rat of a kind I had never seen before—Bett. Grayi. Of course I skinned it.56

On a broader sphere, the letters tell us that MacGillivray has been generous to the Grafton community by freely giving his time and (writing) skill in preparing a long public lecture and newspaper report on his work and findings.57

Despite elements in common with texts whose prime concern would be self-described as 'sporting', MacGillivray's letters show an integrity and rigour in his work and a closeness to the land and its people—the indigenous as well as the newcomers.

ARCHITECTURE

J. Horbury Hunt

Critical theory often cites the architecture profession as leading movements of aesthetic appreciation, with similar developments in creative literature following some time after. That alone might justify the examination of the texts written by an architect of the nineteenth century in this present study of the North Coast. J. Horbury Hunt, the celebrated colonial architect, produced remarkable architectural work on the North Coast, from the grandeur of Christ Church Cathedral in Grafton to the simple (climatic) good sense of the Frederickton school buildings (to the north of Kempsey). Some of this skill is variously enshrined in a small body of written texts.

The specific text to be considered is a letter of two hand-written pages which he wrote to the Council of Education regarding deficiencies observed in the construction of West Kempsey School buildings.58 School histories cite Horbury Hunt's role in the Frederickton buildings, but his work receives no mention in the major local history, and the specific letter has never appeared in print. The standard

56 MacGillivray, p. 54.
57 Clarence and Richmond Examiner, 29 May, 1866, p. 2, and 5 June, 1866, p. 2.
58 J. Horbury Hunt, 'Letter to Secretary of the Council of Education', 28 April 1879, AONSW, Kempsey West 1876-1891 School File 5/16448.2. Included herein as Appendix K.
biography of Hunt claims that the letter was a 'hot-headed' response to stinging criticism on the price of his Frederickton School plans.\textsuperscript{59} A closer examination of the actual document from a regional perspective reveals other attributes.

The text presents a voice that speaks confidently to an outside audience, and where concern is with professional pride, and where the balance between criticism and persuasion can be used to good (local) effect. Professional standards/skill allows him to give an almost curt listing of seven major defects, treading that fine line between displaying a great need (within the limits of possible modifications that could rectify the faults) and displaying a querulous and troublesome nature that would make one an uncomfortable appointee. At one level the texts are almost performative in their detailed (numbered) offers of rectifying services. Yet, at another level, there is a vigorous concern for the quality of the structure that will remain in the local area, and that the structure should be a response to the land, its drainage, orientation, and nearness to street—in short, how sensitivity to site can add greatly to the amenity (in this case for public use). Taking a wider view of the site to include the community, there is even a claim of sympathy for the concerned letters that had already appeared in the local newspaper.

Here is a text which engages with the centre from a position of (regional) strength. The presentation of the architect's skills is structured upon local knowledge, and thoughtful observation. By contrast, the letter tends to position the centre as remote, slow moving, unaware of local needs, and needing careful guidance. Ultimately, the flamboyance of the large signature at the end is a bold statement of position and purpose, and of skills that will feel no slight if for whatever venal reason the offer is not accepted.\textsuperscript{60}

Such a text is normally omitted from general evaluations of the region's literature for reasons of a (central) validation of fiction and published prose. From a regional perspective, however, texts such as Hunt's show a careful engagement with


\textsuperscript{60} The offer was declined. Freeland, p. 83.
the specific site, with language codes and as well a positioning that reveals the power of the centre over the local and which itself works to destabilise that force.

BOTANY

H.M.R. Rupp

A young cleric with a strong interest in botany came to the Clarence for the years 1909-1911, performing his duties as the vicar at Copmanhurst. Towards the end of this time he wrote an article on the Clarence River environs for the magazine of his alma mater, Geelong Grammar School. This local text has never been republished, and is still only available in its original, now rare, source. Rupp's botanical interest had developed in the area of orchids, with considerable professional recognition, such that a recent biography of Rupp was titled The Orchid Man. Later this century he had returned to the region for periods of collecting and writing. Due to the limited local availability of Rupp's writing, the short periods of his residence, and a hitherto marginalisation of non-fiction texts, his work is not mentioned in local histories.

The audience and aim of the piece are addressed in the first sentence of this work:

All Geelong "boys," past and present, are river-lovers, and perhaps some account of the finest water-way of New South Wales, by an Old Boy who spent three years on its banks, may be of interest.

With its echoes of Kenneth Grahame's The Wind in the Willows (1908), this introduction sets a scene of delight in nature and in the interaction of men and boys with such a place. The overall structure is based on the physical geography of the valley, which is scanned in two imagined journeys—the first downriver identifying catchments, water-sheds in tributaries; the second is from the Heads upriver as if by

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61 Rupp, H. M. R., 'The Clarence River', Geelong Grammar School Quarterly, 1912, July, 19-21. For ease of access, the text is included hereafter as Appendix L.

62 Lionel Gilbert, The Orchid Man: The Life, Work and Memoirs of The Rev. H.M.R. Rupp, 1872-1956 (Kenthurst, NSW: Kangaroo, 1992). For Rupp's Clarence River period, this work notes 'This appointment made it possible, even obligatory, for Rupp to make his first excursions into subtropical rainforests as he ministered to people associated with timber-cutting, dairying, grazing and mining.' (p. 53).
boat. The work then lingers in description of Grafton, until concluding with a confidential revelation of a personal favourite site. Throughout, the description is praiseworthy, as can be seen from this list of phrases taken in sequence:

- the finest water-way of New South Wales
- the majestic proportions
- one of the most beautifully situated towns in Australia [Maclean]
- the great river
- their noble river
- excellent regattas
- a noble avenue
- excellent taste
- magnificent from one end to the other
- the grandeur and volume of the main stream
- the grandeur of the views
- a fisherman's elysium.

There is clear delight in the location, with repetition showing that the writer has reached the limit of superlatives. This strand is part of an interest in scenery, and what he terms 'show places'.

Rather than a text simply of travel or tourism, Rupp's love of vegetation comes through in what emerges as the most detailed and praiseworthy description in the work. Consider:

The foliage of the native vegetation at once arrests the attention of anyone accustomed to the sombre hues of the western hills and plains. Here all is intense green.63

The short second sentence works to arrest the reader's attention, just as the experience is described in the first. Susan Island maintains a balance between utility and nature, but the description is heavily weighted in favour of the latter:

Grafton has a beautiful park in mid-stream, Susan Island. One end is cleared for a recreation ground, and the other end is left in all its virgin beauty, a mass of dense, luxurious native vegetation.64

The culmination of adjectives shows that the writer sees the real beauty of the island (and by extension of the region) as being in nature.

This delight carries over to the examples of nature evidenced in Grafton itself, and in those species selected and cared for by a long sequence of local people:

You have here no absurd attempt to acclimatise trees of colder climates which grow into mere caricatures of what they ought to be. The camphor-laurel and the plane do well, and

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63 Rupp, p. 19.
64 Rupp, p. 20.
some streets in spring are all ablaze with the purple glory of the jacaranda; but the native red and white cedars, bean trees, pines, and bunya-bunyas are freely used.\footnote{Rupp, p. 20.}

Such expressions with their piling on of detail and their joy in the natural vegetation, almost dominate the work, and the writer feels limited only by fear of the 'editor's scissors'.

In practical terms, with a Grafton population declared as 'rapidly increasing', there is also hope expressed for the arrival of the railway, and for increased tourism into the region. The centre of the text is the highly unusual one of Geelong, in particular, but more generally, that network of those educated and similarly appreciative men who have since spread out from their former Geelong base. Rather than taking either a purely divine or a scientific role (both of which were available to this writer), Rupp performs a distinctive service to his readers, and indirectly to the Valley. Where his audience is predominantly positioned as potential tourists, as lovers of rivers (perhaps of rowing and of fishing), and of scenery, their possible delight is closely linked with the local vegetation. Yet this attractive nature is in a field of operation (be it divine, scientific or for tourism) which is specifically empty of indigenous people.

* * *

ETHNOGRAPHY

R.H. Mathews

Mathews (1841-1918) was a travelling surveyor, one of that group which has not to date been widely recognised for their role as the unofficial explorers of the North Coast (and many other regions). As was the case with the pioneer surveyor Hodgkinson, Mathews also took a close interest in Aboriginal people of the lands in which he worked. For the later surveyor this interest covered a wide area of New
South Wales, in addition to some work in other States, and it led to a lifelong intensive recording and study of Aboriginal languages, artefacts, customs and practices.

A prolific writer on ethnographic issues towards the end of the nineteenth century, Mathews' list of scholarly publications is prodigious, including work in journals in North America and Continental Europe.\textsuperscript{66} Content dealing with the North Coast of New South Wales appears throughout many of these works, but, for its thematic and cultural interest, one specific article which in total addresses the region will be examined.\textsuperscript{67} This text appeared in a scholarly (Victorian) journal and has never been reprinted. Mathews' work has had no place to date in the local histories, with the exception of the regional thematic work dealing principally with early records of Aboriginal people, \textit{The Land of Ulitarra}.\textsuperscript{68}

Analysis of the Mathews' text raises concerns over the status of the material. The close detail on practices is presented objectively, as if carefully and reliably observed and recorded. Unlike previous writings so far considered, for his detail on Indigenous culture, Mathews has no Aboriginal person or informer actually named, or even singled out in any form. This Western dispassionate approach in the scientific account raises questions of which content was it proper for him to observe, and implies a potential for the inappropriate revealing of material that was secret/sacred.

Yet, despite the lack of a named informant, the wealth of detail in the account, combined with the long time frame covered, both suggest that Mathews was a long-term accepted presence in the Aboriginal community, and even respected. The topics of his articles imply considerable knowledge and skills with Indigenous language and culture. The style of his writing suggests an observer/participant with strong cultural sensitivity.

\textsuperscript{66} In what is not an exhaustive coverage, Mathews is indexed for 186 works in John Greenway, \textit{Bibliography of the Australian Aborigines: And the Native Peoples of Torres Strait to 1959} (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1963), pp. 234-241.


\textsuperscript{68} J.S. Ryan, \textit{The Land of Ulitarra: Early Records of the Aborigines of the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales, Together with Various Vocabularies Etc.}, rev. edn (Lismore, NSW: NSW Department of Education, 1988 [1st edn 1964]).
The article specifically addresses arrangements for initiation ceremonies on the Richmond and Clarence Rivers. His aim is given in the first paragraph as the scientific one of enabling comparison with other groups, but the work is initially undercut by the recorder declaring it a 'brief account', as if all too aware that the extensive detail to follow is, ultimately, limited to that obtained by him as opposed to the larger import of the details. The content addresses the site preparation and design, the various movements of people from the summoning to the conclusion, the decorations, procedure and performances entered into. Needing to give the impression of the fullest scientific observation, there is no note in the writing of any suspected secret or withholding. Rather, the only limit Mathews cites is that of insufficient space within one (already long) article. 69

Reading between the lines, with his privileged role, it must appear that he is implying much greater (and deeper) knowledge than circumstances enable him to reveal. For example, his privileged role is clear from the description of the novices' actions when led away for several miles. The details clearly suggest that Mathews is with the group on this men's-business. 70 It could be that he was accepted into the group as a knowledgeable, sympathetic, interested and potentially powerful White man, for the future purpose of taking a close long-term interest in those being initiated. For, indeed, it has been recently noted that:

Men involved in different aspects of the ceremony thereafter have longlasting relationships with those initiated. 71

As detailed by Mathews, there were many aspects to the ceremony, and many men involved, their numbers extending well beyond the specific 'guardians' or sponsors. If he was expected to have obligations for this knowledge and participation, he was either unaware or, in order to give the impression of the dispassionate objective observer, did not record it.

69 Mathews, p. 41.
70 Mathews, pp. 34-35.
As for evidence of his closer knowledge of the ceremony, he does use the word 'sacred' for one object, yet the detail given is particularly brief. While a little more may have been revealed to this sympathetic observer than he chose to convey, the detail given for something presented in the article as 'sacred' falls well short of that which, for example, is common discussion in the nearby Macleay Valley area amongst children, both Aboriginal and their White friends. In short, it appears that the original informants/friends were warm to Mathews, looked for an appropriate response from him, but they were adept at avoiding making available material that was truly secret/sacred—material going well beyond that which is available to today's children.

In the article there is only one moment of possible condescension to the Indigenous people. One section ends with 'men and women around the circle are singing and jumping about, going through various pieces of buffoonery'. This debasing word, with its echo of the familiar portrayal of Aborigines as childlike, has the added force that comes from ending the paragraph, and without any other preparation. It appears that Mathews was either lost for meaning in this section, or possibly that there was a strong carnivalesque element at this point that he wished to (briefly) record. In either case, he was not part of the experience at this time.

Clearly written in the service of scholarship, the text could suggest possible appropriation based on an unequal power relationship, and thereby one could question the propriety of the early publication. Still, the work reveals sufficient spaces to question whether the true centre is the scholarly world or the local—the brief experience of writing a successful article of reportage compared to the rich intensive experience with the group, with perhaps lifelong consequences. It is declared that 'his work forms an important body of information on NSW groups', and if the recorded detail is of use to contemporary Aboriginal people within the region, in adding to their oral traditions, then the consequences may go well beyond one lifetime.

72 This is from personal observations as a teacher in the Macleay Valley, 1979-1988.
73 Mathews, p. 33.
Mary Bundock

It was rare for nineteenth century women in England, let alone Australia, to have the opportunity, training or skills to engage fully in the scientific discourse of the period. With a no less keen interest in Indigenous culture, but without the overview of extensive travel that informed Mathew's study, Mary Bundock had the benefit of experiencing and observing very closely the group of Upper Clarence River Aborigines around her property at Wyangerie. Her sympathy for their plight was profound, as one might expect from the experiences of a niece of Edward Ogilvie, that most thoughtful and respectful of early settlers.

Despite the common limitation of women to but little movement beyond their domestic base, Mary was also informed by a rich cultural circle of settlers. Her mother's artistic skills were well praised, while her father, W.C. Bundock, for his own interest and observations, was elected a member of the Royal Society of New South Wales in 1878. Later, Mary's husband, Tom Murray-Prior, was not only a Queensland politician but also the brother of the insightful writer Rosa Praed from the Burnett district. Not only was Mary's circle artistic and thoughtful, but it was also in contact with and informed by the most contemporary and demanding standards of colonial culture. Her own work has come to wider notice in recent years through the collections of artefacts which she had sent to various museums (Sydney and Leyden, the Netherlands). The comprehensiveness of these collections, their attention to women's life, and their detailed recording startled the Australian anthropologist who came across them. Following on from Isabel McBryde's renewed close attention to Mary Bundock's work, and especially the incorporation of Mary's notes in a work by this
modern scholar,\textsuperscript{75} a wider readership has come late for Mary's work and a like appreciation of her life. The closest attention to the early text is found in a recent article by Grimshaw and Evans,\textsuperscript{76} which contains a detailed analysis of various intercultural relations, with national conclusions drawn from the several examples of regional material. The article is a significant example of the wider insights that can come from the restoration of hitherto marginalised regional works. From a regional perspective, too, there are additional insights. The contents of her writings have helped to inform local history and also the thematic regional women's history.\textsuperscript{77} Just as the collections of artefacts give a sense of wishing to preserve a fragile culture, and particularly women's work, so it is with the writing.

The text, originally written about 1898, charts a perceived decline in Aboriginal culture, and its aim is indirectly stated in the first sentence as to 'remember a good deal of their ways and customs before they mixed much with white people'.\textsuperscript{78} It is a reserved, qualified understanding that informs this personally assigned task. The description of times past begins with details of close involvement and of the vulnerability of the much younger observer. The notes set out with coverage of a battle group of men; the scanty clothing of both sexes; the violent (rape-like) cutting of a young woman's hair; and the variety of daily food gathering and preparing tasks, with an emphasis on the women's part. Attention lingers on the cedar-getters' almost talismanic axes and the sometimes fatal risks that would be taken by the Aborigines to


\textsuperscript{76} Patricia Grimshaw and Julie Evans, 'Colonial Women on Intercultural Frontiers: Rosa Campbell Praed, Mary Bundock and Katie Langloh Parker', Australian Historical Studies, 106 (April 1996), 79-95.


\textsuperscript{78} Bundock, p. 261.
gain such a useful item. The situation is similar to that described by John Oxley at Port Macquarie, but here the understanding is of the natives and their fascination.\textsuperscript{79}

Presented as 'Notes', the work has a clear overall structure. Certainly the form is evidenced in the short paragraphs, which are most often single-sentenced (the first seven being so), but then gradually increasing, occasionally reaching three sentences, before a change to fewer but longer sentences and the use of semi-colons. The effect is as though the writer intends a brief listing of points, but that the topic and its memories keep prompting a fuller treatment. This pattern lends a sadness to the chronicling endeavour—as though the task seemed fruitless, for perhaps the imagined readership was unable to comprehend the sadly passing experience as it has been recorded.\textsuperscript{80}

The recorder is candid as to her own lack of knowledge of their religion:

I have not been able to discover if they have any religion beyond a vague belief in evil spirits, who may do harm to them.\textsuperscript{81}

Yet she moves quickly to consideration of specific instances usually cited in order to dismiss their spirit world as trickery, or misuse of their fellows. Aboriginal medicine is presented in White terms, where the sucking of a painful place on a limb, and the production of a stone from the mouth, is declared to be the practice of 'generally a clever rogue [who traded] on the superstitions of the others'. As if this were not sufficient to persuade a rational European reader, the 'doctor' initiated fear of outsiders having bewitched the patient, and the subsequent cases of retaliation are then presented as escalating into much violence and occasionally deaths.\textsuperscript{82} Yet after all of this detail of mischievous and outright danger, there is the sudden pulling back with these statements of (Western medical) amazement:

\begin{quote}
although it was astonishing what wounds they could recover from! The old men used to have fearful scars of boomerang cuts on backs, shoulders, and arms, but took it quite as a matter of course when hurt; and seemed to heal in a miraculously short time.\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{79} See section on John Oxley in Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{80} The typescript held by the Richmond River Historical Society Library has different paragraphing and some parts omitted, probably the result of efforts to publish the work in newspaper form earlier this century.
\textsuperscript{81} Bundock, p. 264.
\textsuperscript{82} Bundock, pp. 264-265.
\textsuperscript{83} Bundock, p. 265.
This concludes the four paragraphs which begins with some doubting of Aboriginal religion, and which then implicitly recognise some power beyond the reporter's knowledge.

The pattern is repeated with a different weighting in the sections where the danger of crossing boundaries is treated briefly, and quickly gives way to a long discussion of the major exception, the three-yearly Bunya feast. Detail on the Bora ceremony is presented with some awareness of Aboriginal courtesies, as well as their diplomatic guile:

We were never allowed to see the 'Borah' ... tho the blacks were very friendly with my brothers and would promise to take them but always evaded it when the time came.84

After piecing together the few elements of the ceremony that she did know, there is some childlike glee presented in her pointing out that the food taboos operating seem to preserve the tastier items for the older people, rules enforced by those same older people. Rather than presented unpleasantly as showing some trickery, there is here some real warmth in her observations.

The writing becomes more relaxed and discursive from this point, beginning with 'I forgot to mention...'. There is the direct speech of a lively but pleasant exchange of comments between the writer and a 'youngish' Aboriginal woman over the making of a traditional water container, an art forgotten since tin cans were available.85 The prose then uses the present tense, noting practices that were no longer in evidence, and making various links from drink and gambling, to loss of blankets, consumption and death, and to the conclusion 'I fear another generation will see few if any left'.86 In

84 Bundock, p. 265.
85 The young woman who has never learnt the skill is teased because she must ask her mother. Certainly Mary does not have this skill. Not so limited was Rosa Praed, Mary's sister-in-law, who claimed 'I learned, too, at the camp to plait dilly-bags, to chop sugar-bags (otherwise hives of native bees) out of trees, to make drinking vessels from gourds, and to play the jew's-harp; but English life is not adapted to the display of these accomplishments.' Mrs Campbell Praed, My Australian Girlhood: Sketches and Impressions of Bush Life (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1902), p. 66.
86 Bundock, p. 266. Francis argues that late in the century, rather than any simple imperial approval of Darwinism and ethnography, colonial settlers were intellectually and politically free to determine their own situations. This must have thrown a considerable burden upon, or at least have been a serious challenge to the individual local observer such as Mary Bundock. See Mark Francis, 'Anthropology and Social Darwinism in the British Empire: 1870-1900', Australian Journal of Politics and History, 40 (1994), 203-215 (p. 212).
what may seem too easy a dismissal of a whole race as if it were their own fault, the
text lingers on their quick-wittedness and humour. The last finds appropriate
illustration in various nicknames, seemingly often directed against a 'lady or
gentleman'. The very ending is a portrait of an indulgent Aboriginal mother and child,
making a glowing ending to the excursus.

Positioning the whole passage within a very limited local area (Wyangerie, and
the Upper Richmond River), with the only movement beyond as the two hundred mile
excursion northwards, helps to position the group as a contained one and hence
knowable. Yet these latter parts can seem somewhat fragmented, as if the whole
structure of observing and recording past Aboriginal culture were unravelling. The text
then comes to express the White nostalgia for what was seen as a 'dying race', and with
any felt guilt subsumed in the reflective descriptions where a quiet care is evident.
Unlike the formal discourse of R.H. Mathews, Mary Bundock's text openly presents a
dependence upon close engagement with the Aboriginal people for her detail. Such a
view preserves the destabilising elements of the interaction, in particular, albeit
unconsciously undervaluing the dynamic and adaptable nature of Aboriginal culture in
evidence around her.

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With the development of more professional and scholarly interest and activity
in the region, there is available a wider range of such texts of service from this latter
half of the century. This is particularly so in the areas of agriculture, forestry,
engineering, and administration. While the current analysis of these works is limited to
a general view of the region, there is clearly a wide scope for further interpretation and
positioning of these texts. Particularly in the field of divines, ethnography, and
administrative prose, there is a need for more general (usually national) histories

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87 In the United Kingdom already an emerging field, there termed 'Chancery prose'.
within these areas, and regional studies may provide some impetus for further work in such areas.

Unlike those accounts of travel or settlement, where much of their nature is determined by either movement or stasis, the texts of service are largely built upon outside knowledge, and what is interesting is the way in which this is brought to bear upon the local. From the works under consideration, although there evidenced a drawing of the region into national and imperial schemata, yet, at times the voice of service can emerge as a strong assertion of the local against the limitation of knowledge at the centre. There is generally a strong sense of positioning people and culture within the still new land. Few women are to be noted in these tasks, thus reflecting their traditionally limited fields of operation, and particularly as they were lacking professional recognition and voice, in the nineteenth century. The major exception is Mary Bundock who transcended those bounds while still, to some degree, limited to a domestically-based settler life.
MASS READERSHIP PROSE

I came suddenly upon the loveliest bit of river scenery I ever saw in my life ... The half-circle formed by the clear soft river round a cape of dark rich foliage is as perfect in form as if it had been measured and formed by Art. The bank opposite the brushwood is a great green slope falling away with its verdure into the limpid waters. Some one of these days the axe will more than half ruin this wonderful picture, but I dread to think of the time.

In the latter half of the century there was a marked increase in public readership, which had an impact upon both newspapers and the numbers interested in full-length works. The mass circulation of newspapers was encouraged by the Government, where newspapers were carried without charge by Post Offices in New South Wales and Queensland. For regional Australia this meant ready access to the newspapers of the cities, and a high standard set to challenge local publications. For local writers this was met through addressing the specific needs of their own larger local audiences. Going beyond the use of local colour for variety, such works often give evidence of concern to maintain or create a vision of the region. This involved a re-defining the region for the new wider readership, and in part a re-visiting of old sites and modes of constructing those sites. As the century drew to its close, popular works dealing with the North Coast became longer and more detailed in their attempts to capture what was distinctively local.

* * *

The renowned poet Kendall lived in the Clarence Valley on several different occasions. His various times there and their influence upon him have been well detailed in a recent publication. 3 As a young man of talent, and as part of a small literary circle, he had several prose pieces published in the local newspapers. The work to be considered is from this group, published locally and anonymously. It has only recently been attributed to Kendall, and as such was re-published in a collection with other material by and about Kendall. 4 Such anonymity is not possible in a small community, and despite consistent use of the appellations bestowed during the journey, the text acknowledges that 'neighbours will know them, and strangers need not'. 5 Published as a 'Supplement', the work was given some prominence and approval, but its anonymity gave the writer the freedom to pursue ideas, personalities, enthusiasms and issues beyond those comfortably accepted in the towns.

Following from the title with its suggestion of boyish and a very English riparian adventure the text records an inland journey upriver from Grafton, with the vaguely stated aims of seeing the mountains, and of noting the natural history of the area. The group check their progress against a tracing-map from the Government surveyor's official copy, and, Flinders-like, specify the detail in which it was inadequate. Particularly important are the dangers or impediments of unrecorded rapids. Romantic descriptions of the landscape increase as the group moves further from their familiar base, Grafton. They travel:

through beautiful reaches, with the blue hills bounding the view; the noble "scrub" of the Clarence dipping its twisted vines, like braided tresses, into the water; the banks occasionally rising into higher and nobler forms by out sides, and the country showing

4 Henry Kendall, 'A Week on the Clarence: Being the Diary of a Boating Party, between Grafton and Gordon Brook', in Henry Kendall: The Muse of Australia, ed. by Russell McDougall, pp. 89-107. Subsequent references to Kendall's article will be to this edition's pagination. First publication was as a Supplement to Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser, 13 January, 1863.
5 Kendall, p. 89.
that indescribable change which always makes itself felt when passing from a district of newer rock into granitic and mountainous localities.6

The general authority of the last observation is at odds with the assumed novelty of the young men's journey. The general source of the observation, and the familiarity, may well be literary, for broadly it echoes the Lewis and Clark expedition upriver towards the Rocky Mountains, as well as its Thames-like tone of a boating idyll.

Certainly the humour of the piece dominates, yet there is a considerable reliance upon observations of living creatures. One of the participants was likely to be Wilcox, the Grafton naturalist who was working with John MacGillivray in the area two years later.7 Variously throughout the text there is consideration of moths, spiders, many varieties of birds, beetles, fish, eels, and the rare (grey-faced) kangaroo. The 'Cook' (Wilcox) is allowed an afterword, and in it, after a humorous beginning in the spirit of the adventure, it proceeds to give two lists of bird species encountered. Giving both scientific and common names, this serious coda catalogues some twenty three items, with an explanatory commentary.

In the journey's temporary retreat from the commitments of the workaday community, there is an indirect positioning of the expected readership as being limited in its perception to the close surroundings of Grafton itself. There is little evidence presented of any occupation, other than the European names used to identify specific locations. One river ford is presented as 'where the natives of those distant regions cross their horses',8 a description which blurs the use of land by settlers into that of Aborigines (possibly stockmen). A group of sawyers is encountered and helped, but as with the whole journey, the contact is limned in but lightly. On the return journey, even the visit to the named settler's house is briefly treated. Still, the true centre of the work is people, first in the company of the boating companions, and then in the wider local audience in Grafton, and with an eye to the literary world in Sydney or even further off.

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6 Kendall, p, 99.
7 For MacGillivray, see previous Chapter. For Wilcox, see: J.S. Ryan, 'Henry Kendall's Vital Association with the Grafton Area', p. 60; and Iredale, pp. 41, 48.
8 Kendall, p. 92.
No Indigenous person is encountered or given direct reference. There is, however, much indirect reference to Aboriginal people. In the relaxed humorous mood governing the piece, one member of the group (Kendall) is given the 'nom de voyage' of 'Sambo', thereby drawing upon inferred community derision of the Indigenous people for the main humour in the writing. In addition to the ease in walking barefoot over awkward river-rocks, the name 'Sambo' arises from:

the blackfellow instincts, which procured him ultimately that name, (the standing joke of the trip) by stepping out into the dark and rain, utterly in a state of nudity, to inspect the boat's fastenings, and see all right.9

Also referred to as 'our young nigger', this character is given the final afterword of the work, where he proceeds in pidgin to outline the journey and his companions, at length. The unrelieved thrust of this racist humour shows how the local or reading community could position the Aborigines as 'other', by using ridicule for any perceived differences. There is no sympathy expressed for their plight as the dispossessed.

In Kendall's article there is a stronger literary echo, with a title very similar to Thoreau's A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers.10 The American was well known as a writer and naturalist, and particularly after his Walden (1854). Thoreau's earlier 'Week' had not been widely distributed, other than to reviewers in America and England, and consequently the work at this time had a wider reputation than readership. It is quite likely that Kendall, in his playful article, is engaging with this literary reputation of Thoreau. The American had died young (aged forty four) early in 1862, the year at the end of which Kendall undertook his own week-long river journey. So Thoreau's work and life would have been in literary minds at the time of Kendall's writing, and may have even prompted the original idea for the journey. There is no internal or other evidence that Kendall had read 'Week', yet there are general parallels, such as the small boating group (Thoreau's had two, Kendall's three members), the shared interest in natural science, and the aim of approaching the

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9 Kendall, pp. 92, 93.
mountains. These are surface features easily imitated. Yet Kendall's descriptions have none of the historical depth which is such a distinctive feature of Thoreau's work. If Kendall had read the work then he might have felt challenged to engage with the troublesome regional issues of settlement and the Aborigines, and so have addressed his audience differently.

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A minor later text, also published in newspaper form, addresses the lower part of the North Coast of New South Wales. A brief work by Kendall, it sets out to describe the Manning Valley as 'My New Home'.\(^\text{11}\) For this Sydney-based newspaper the audience is broader, and would have been reading for some information, instruction or even amusement based on its particular area. With the Australian community and writer seventeen years older than for the previous piece, one might expect some more mature reflection.

The work commences with a criticism of his previous location, having just spent six years in the Camden Haven:

> a place without books, without society, without variety, and with no remarkable natural beauty. Surrounded by dreary gumtrees, unpleasant types of the bushman, and thriftless cockatoo farmers.

It is somewhat sad that the small Camden Haven town of 'Kendall' was named in honour of this unappreciative resident. This negative description is the reverse in several details of the response given for Grafton and its surrounds in the previous work. The Manning Valley itself is, of course, presented in glowing terms:

> a place of gracious greenness—a land of soft cool lawns falling away into crescents of radiant river. I write this in sight of a stream whose beauty makes the heart ache. South and west of me lies a spacious tract—a great yellow sea of growing maize dotted here and there with snug, comfortable-looking dwelling houses. North and east are vast clear grassy plains running away into a background of remote forest. In the distant west, far beyond the clash and ring of river, stands a magnificent range of mountains; and the stately peaks of these complete a picture of marvellous beauty.

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Despite the sentimental elements, here again is the conventional representation of the picturesque, with its panoramic view, and building towards the familiar three-fold description. Where other writers have used the convention to capture the awe of the scene, in this text the dominant note is ease and comfort. The closer landscape now described has been accommodated to European purposes, with the natural wilderness firmly in a distant background.

Further description helps to build this picture of a rural idyll, but after the opening with its implied passion for books, society and variety, the sustained attempt is unconvincing. The Manning River is characterised by 'grace', while his village (Cundletown):

is a place of gardens, clean streets, charming little cottages, and quiet people. Setting the effects of the local temperance society apart, the peace and beauty of the place seem to have influenced the spirits of these villagers, for their lives are very noiseless. 12

This contains the only humour in the piece, unless a wise reader were to take the whole setting as a wry description of an enforced delight, where a passive charm substitutes for lively interplay. Also a later discovery of a seemingly untouched natural scene—the cause in earlier texts of expression of the viewer's awe—is again strangely understated:

I came suddenly upon the loveliest bit of river scenery I ever saw in my life ... The half-circle formed by the clear soft river round a cape of dark rich foliage is as perfect in form as if it had been measured and formed by Art. The bank opposite the brushwood is a great green slope falling away with its verdure into the limpid waters. Some one of these days the axe will more than half ruin this wonderful picture, but I dread to think of the time .

The desire for the picturesque often leads to expressions such as the last, that Art itself had structured the scene for the passive recorder. Yet here the observer seems limited in enthusiasm to the formulaic, and the claimed dread of the axe is at odds with what elsewhere in the text is unrelieved praise for the landscape as changed by man.

There is some reference to Indigenous people in the piece. The mocking humour seen earlier is here compressed to one detail on the source of the name

'Cundletown'. Coming from the Aboriginal 'Cundle Cundle', its change was declared as 'wisely' done. The work then proceeds to note their history and near demise:

In the early days the blacks seem to have been very troublesome—notably a tribe from the Upper Manning. Now a body of "darkies" is hardly ever seen—rum and bad colonial wine having carried off the most of them.

It is an easy dismissal of the race, as victims to alcohol, but as never a serious threat to the progress of settlement. Despite the recorded rarity of groups, there is no mention of individuals, or of the ways of life of those who had avoided the demon in the bottle. From the viewpoint of a clean, charming, quiet village of 1881, it seems the Aborigines had no part and their passing arouses no sympathy or note of regret.

* * *

'Our Travelling Correspondent'

In the second half of the century, the major city-based newspapers ran various occasional series of reports on regions or towns, and often these were attributed to 'special' or 'travelling' correspondents. For the North Coast there were several of these series, and I propose to consider the most extensive of them—those by the *Australian Town and Country Journal* in 1871. 13 This newspaper was a weekly adjunct to the (Sydney) daily *Evening News* and its aim was to present a summary of the week's events, doing so particularly for a country readership. 14 Thus the regional descriptions would be most keenly read by those within the particular area. The authors of all these regional pieces are still unknown, and there appears to be no current investigation of their work. 15 Most likely the author of this North Coast series was one of that group

15 Personal communication from Professor Elizabeth Webby.
noted by Ken Stewart as being 'talent in exile',\textsuperscript{16} but in this case the British writer was especially sensitive and talented. The style of the pieces is relaxed—reminiscent of Col. Mundy in the 1840s—as well as thoughtful and eminently fair, evidencing a close empathy for the land and all its people.

The geographical scope of the series is near to comprehensive in its land coverage, of the sort promised twenty five years earlier by Hodgkinson's title. Here there is a journey overland from the Manning to the Tweed, but choosing the difficult route via Dorrigo for the Bellingen to Grafton segment, a journey interrupted at the Macleay by a return to Sydney for Christmas (1870), but recommenced from the same point soon thereafter. For a wide readership, this is a text of travel as well as one of local and regional definition. There are many detailed local comments on the 'way', in such matters as making connections, facilities, sights and interests. It is not a comfortable passage through the region, and the writer appears determined to choose and endure the difficult way if it is of more interest. He is particularly interested in those still unsettled areas, and thus in a progress that is physically demanding. This is the case with being camped alone at night in 'swamps' to the east of Bellingen (a description similar to Hodgkinson's in the same area—especially evoking the campfire illustration in that earlier publication). Similarly awkward is the ascent to Dorrigo, and later the overland approach to the Tweed form the west, and finally the long beach walk, from the Tweed to Ballina, crossing the streams while carrying a valise, camping overnight (without food) at Broken Head, and out-walking his local companions.

Despite this being a land journey, the published text is one aware of the by then well-established strong convention of describing rivers (and their valleys) beginning from their mouths and moving upriver—as if recreating the experiences of Oxley and Rous, those original penetrators of the hinterland. Thus there is given the description of the Clarence River within the convention of this fictional progress.

inasmuch as I individually did not come that way, I shall have to alight in an unexpected manner on the deck of the Helen Macgregor outside the South Head, much to the surprise of the captain.17

And as for the next river to the north, the Richmond, the writer similarly 'discovered' it by travelling down river, and in this case discards the convention, preferring the reality to the fiction.

Differences between areas are detailed by geological features, trees and other plants, as well as by soil types. At a regional level, the major zone of change is located south of Grafton:

The Clarence may be said to be the southern limit of tropical indications, for though the Tropic of Capricorn is still 400 miles further north, migratory tropical birds annually visit the Clarence, and the luxuriant vegetation of tropical Queensland puts in an appearance, and then terminates on the Clarence coast. 18

Such an observation echoes Dunmore Lang's southern boundary for 'Cooksland', and it may also have been influenced by the contrast observed after this writer's own detour via Dorrigo and the Tablelands. His own later observation presents a different break, based on the occurrence of impressive rainforest, and a break which is in accord with the limits of this study:

"What a fine foliage this brush is; how many shades of green it presents as it towers on high or droops and dips into the river; and the trees seem quite matted together with parasitical plants—one never sees anything like this down south." I never noticed this brush till I came on to the Manning. 19

These words, we are to believe, were uttered aloud by the writer on the boat while on his (fictional) upriver journey. Still, the device captures the overwhelming density of vegetation, and of its various shadings, that was so characteristic of the North Coast throughout the nineteenth century.

The dominance of Mount Warning over its area, recorded by so many of the early writers, is here signalled by an imagined record of the portfolio compiled by a future tourist/artist:

It would represent Mount Warning from the South, Mount Warning from the Macpherson Range, Mount Warning from the South Arm, Mount Warning from the

17 1 April, 1871, p. 394.
18 1 April, 1871, p. 394. Compare with Lang in previous Chapter.
19 8 April, 1871, p. 426.
Coolaman Plain, Mount Warning from Cape Byron, and in every bit of secondary scenery, cattle, dwellings, foliage, river, and river banks, Mount Warning would be employed to back up the picture.\textsuperscript{20}

It is noted that such views would depend upon the removal of many trees, and this soon ensued. The humorous repetition, intending to tease somewhat, has been largely prescient. This artist/traveller refrained from publishing his version of Mount Warning.

When passing through settled areas, the detail given is predominantly a record of developments, products and progress, as if a coverage of the most significant features. The accumulation of such matter is designed to give the impression of authorial objectivity. Names of people are given increasingly throughout the account, first for prominent officials, isolated settlers passed by (or those who offered special assistance). After having completed the geographical coverage of the coast, then for the more closely settled countryside of the Richmond and Upper Clarence river valleys, the articles change in their titles to what appears an intended and ordered catalogue of the major squatting runs. Particularly in this latter part, the style is that of an eighteenth century English country progress, a journey from one squire's estate to the next, where gentlemen's shared interests in products, machinery and science helps to define what is significant in the region. The writer appears most at home in such squatter company, indirectly deeming it of most significance. Perhaps the editors agreed for, after recording at several points the writer's sketching of various scenes, the only illustration actually published is that of Yulgilbar.\textsuperscript{21} More broadly, these landowners/hosts are rewarded for hospitality by subsequently published lists of their breeding stock, including names and pedigrees.

The North Coast people in general are defined in a democratic and approving manner. This was a text where the most humble of readers would be unlikely to take offence. Yet in bringing the question of readership somewhat to the fore, the text raises questions of the observer/writer's perhaps selective engagement with the local

\textsuperscript{20} 10 June, 1871, p. 714.  
\textsuperscript{21} 15 July, 1871, p. 80.
community, and in particular some concern as to his true objectivity. There is a space in the text for the reactions of the local people/readers, but there seems rather a sense of being judged (by the important outside authority), and of not wishing to seem wanting. Such reactions at times break through the otherwise even controlled text. One example works in spite of the intended humour:

But a great dinner shakes the repose of the town. After the celebration the guests learn with alarm that their speeches will appear in the columns of this journal.22

The horror at this Port Macquarie dinner is contingent on the purpose of the 'great dinner', and the power of the guest's writing, whereby their own words could make them appear as ridiculous. Another indication of the recorder's power comes from the account of a meeting of twelve Nambucca settlers convened to discuss river issues, and seemingly stumbled upon by the writer. It is much more likely that the several had heard of the coming of this visitor who had the power to present problems which then may have been addressed.

Also appearing in this run of the newspaper was a series of articles on North Coast industry, the longest sequence being on the sugar industry, titled in the style 'The Sugar Industry in New South Wales: The Macleay River District', and attributed to the same 'Travelling Reporter'. These pieces had the power to influence political opinion as well as investment, and particularly in the latter half of the journey, may have strongly influenced the behaviour of those who already read the items from further south. There was ample reason for 'Mr Irving's kind invitation [to stay] the night, in order to see the cattle', and for Mr Bundock to accompany him for a considerable distance.

Humour is used to liven the piece. Susan Island's natural beauty is presented as:

a little brush paradise for departed lawyers of ages, supplejacks, stinging-trees and other tentative things, which are apt to ruffle your temper and spoil your clothes.23

This irritation is clearly at odds with the writer's choice elsewhere of demanding and wilder routes. Here it is an aping of an imagined city-excursionist, presumably with

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23 20 May, 1871, p. 619. The 'lawyers' were long vines.
some wry amusement. In the same setting rich with bird life, his guide, the now familiar naturalist Wilcox, is teased thus:

(Sotto voce) 'Suppose we get a gun or two—and—'

Mr. Wilcox: "I won't have one of them touched. That is a reserve for public shade and recreation where the inhabitants of Grafton are to come and study the harmony of nature, each under a vine, a fig or a bean tree."\(^{24}\)

Wilcox, changed in style from his days with Kendall and MacGillivray, is now the defender of native birds, and under the lambent humour, is seen to display an integrity which is not to be swayed by the powerful outsider.

Despite this sometimes playful engagement with multiple levels of meaning, the writer was able to free himself from the prevailing presentations of the Indigenous people. Perhaps at first noted in order to add distinctive local colour, several stereotypes appear, but the accounts given are frequent and clearly show considerable elements of adaptation to European commercial ways.

I visited a camp of blacks gathering honey and wax for the Kempsey market; men, women, and children, were grouped about of all ages and of almost every shade of colour distinctly seen by scarcity of attire, but almost all speaking fair English. I saw the seniors of the tribe afterwards in Kempsey, spending their earnings a-la-mode.\(^{25}\)

In the Clarence Valley the tone of the description avoids any preconceptions, other than perhaps women performing manual labour. A native group on the Clarence is presumably simply part of a commercial activity:

(on smaller patches, varying from one-quarter of an acre upwards, and on some of these I found the blacks employed, both male and female, in hoeing and clearing the ground.)\(^{26}\)

He is helped by Aboriginal guides, a tracker finds his horse, and he hears first hand of their tensions regarding an impending battle. Individuals are named: Moodie, Taylor, and three at Yulgilbar—Bob, Tyndal and Denny.\(^{27}\) While situations may reflect the writer's (or his hosts') somewhat squire-like attitudes to their workers and other orders, the text has gradually developed an ease of presentation and communication with Indigenous people, almost to the point of anticipating them as potential readers. It is a

\(^{24}\) 20 May, 1871, p. 619. Compare Kendall's Clarence River essay discussed above.

\(^{25}\) 4 Feb., 1871, p. 138.

\(^{26}\) 25 March, 1871, p. 365.

\(^{27}\) The younger Denny was part of Ogilvie's close small group in his long departure from Yulgilbar, considered in Chapter 6. For the original reference see Ogilvie, *Diary of Travels*, p. 7.
commercial activity which stops the complete 'othering'. The extent of their adoption of Western skills is unknown to this writer, and of all those people with money some may indeed be purchasing readers.

On the Tweed, after much detail on the early stages of that most exciting of spectator/tourist blood sports, an inter-tribal fight, there comes the following conclusion:

Some of these blacks were tall, others were finely made nuggets of men, several with splendid legs, which they used with wonderous activity; but it seriously detracted from the romance of the affair, when O'Neil, a man in the cedar line, informed us that two of the warriors we had most admired were working for him.\textsuperscript{28}

This revelation in the account is not given for any chivying of the Aborigines, but rather the smile is reflected in the observer's own mis-conceptions that the exotic, be it performance or other feature, would always be so. It is remarkable for a text of this period to show a recognition and acceptance of change. The work shows no awareness of the genocide, previously attempted or imminent, that is seen in other works of the period, but the writing clearly presents a space for the evolving cultural complexities of Indigenous life on the North Coast in the later nineteenth century.

This text suggests questions about the role of anonymity in urban journalism, and is linked with the developing professionalism there and the yet lingering attractions of amateurism of perspective, and at times a near boyish imperial enthusiasm in the reportage.\textsuperscript{29} In considering the role of the real or imagined readership, the interaction of these important visitors with the local community could reveal much on the subsequent textual construction of the area, and in sum of the region. This particular writer shows the triumph of polished art interacting with and guiding the style of presentation from what was often seen as a potentially wayward community.\textsuperscript{30} The latter element comes to the fore in the next text to be considered.

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\textsuperscript{28} 17 June, 1871, p. 747. The original has 'wonderous'.
\textsuperscript{30} Ken Stewart, 'Journalism and the World of the Writer', p. 176.
'Tommy Pipeful'

A final newspaper item is of especial interest for its own attempt at constructing the region. Its source, the *Boomerang*, was published in Brisbane, and adopted the vernacular style as seen in the *Bulletin*. The prose tale, published under the pen-name of 'Tommy Pipeful', casts a rare light upon this period and location with its 1890s view of the earlier cedar-getting days in Ballina. The work has not been treated in local histories of the area.

'Yaller Lizzie and Harry Ansen' is a memory piece, where the text looks south from Brisbane to a wilderness of nature as well as its wild, lawless people of those times. These inhabitants are presented as hard and self-reliant, and with a sense of rough justice. In part, the portrait is similar to many given in Lawson's outback stories, but with a greater density of people, and more fixed in their nevertheless isolated location, Ballina was characterised by 'social depravity and general cussedness'. The land link with Lismore seems to be rarely taken, and for the Ballina people this largely frees them from frequent visits from Lismore's one policeman. More important to local identity is the adjoining Big Scrub, that vast dense brush where an individual could withdraw whenever so desired, or be disposed of by others, but normally the centre of the community is presented as the drinking location, 'The Timber-getters' Rest'. The major link outside Ballina is by schooner with Sydney, and its main role is presented as that of transporting thither large loads of grog. Extensive binges of drinking, on successive Christmases, form the main time settings of the story. These scenes of

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31 At this time A.G. Stephens was in Brisbane writing for the *Boomerang*, before his move to Sydney and *The Bulletin*. See Clem Lack, 'A Century of Brisbane Journalism', *JRHSQ*, 4.4 (1951), 471-493 (p. 485).

32 'Tommy Pipeful', 'Yaller Lizzie and Harry Ansen: A Tale of the Cedar Days on the Richmond River', *Boomerang* (13 Dec. 1890), p. 26. In this story, the setting is titled 'Bellalina [and now known by a name less euphonious].

33 This public house name is fictional, according to personal communication from Maurice Ryan, who is preparing a full-length work on Northern Rivers hotels.
riotous drunkenness are like an expansion of that described by Hodgkinson of cedar-getters on the Macleay:\textsuperscript{34} After sunset the blacks held a corrobboree. Such a drunken, blasphemous corrobboree. It seemed as if hell's choicest demons were out for the night and in their best form too. The blacks fought. Some of the whites interfered, probably with the intention of not improving matters.\textsuperscript{35}

The parallel extends the description of the Aborigines as demonic.

In constructing the view of this outpost, there is emphasis on the role of women. It is calculated that only one tenth of the population were White women, and perhaps to titillate a city readership, the story calmly details the many liaisons with Aboriginal women:

many of the timber-getters contracted morganatic alliances with the sable beauties of the river. This arrangement, which yet obtains in certain aristocratic circles, was most convenient. The bonds were lightly borne and as lightly sundered.

Pre-eminent among these women is the Yaller Lizzie of the title. Her characterisation begins with racial terms overlaid on an element of sexual desire. Her skin had 'that delightful creamy tint', coming from a White father, and a mother who was 'a rather pretty half caste'. Freed of the constraints on White women, 'Lizzie could ride, raft, swim, drink, smoke, fight, swear and run like a deer'. The list has elements that one might find in a hero of the developing Australian Legend, yet the distinctive coastal elements of rafting and swimming appear, as does the trait more usually attributed to Aborigines—fleet-footed running. Indeed the whole story seems an attempt to forge a fuller vision of the complete Australian, and a vision that could include at least one Aborigine. While the Aboriginal people are teased and largely in the background, in this text there is certainly a place for them in interaction with the newcomers.

Against this native heroine is the White hero figure, Harry Ansen. In the style of remittance men, Ansen is presented as a man highly skilled (in medicine) but not qualified, with an essential nobility of character, and an 'indominantable will' for a span of several months, but with a character flawed by drunkenness, and limited in this environment by not being able to swim. His rescue of the injured Lizzie, treatment of

\textsuperscript{34} Clement Hodgkinson, \textit{Australia, from Port Macquarie to Moreton Bay}, pp. 11-12.
\textsuperscript{35} The original has 'corrobboree'.
her injuries, and surprise at her gratitude, bring about a period without alcohol that extends twelve months to the next Christmas. In sentimental terms, Lizzie appears to have been his salvation. When the villains finally take their violent frustration out on Ansen, Lizzie is mortally wounded in attempting to save him, but in extracting a promise that he will not revenge her imminent death, Lizzie again redeems Ansen from slipping down to the brute level of many around them.

Perhaps a source for Macquarie the shearer in Henry Lawson's 'That There Dog o' Mine' published two years later, Lizzie painfully lifts herself up to insist on the proper moral response to the situation. Despite many racist expressions of blood and caste, this story attempts a validation of Aboriginal life partly through interaction with the Whites:

They lie who say there is no gratitude in the Australian aboriginal, nor in those through whose veins flows the tainted blood.

As Lawson's Macquarie will later declare his dog 'a better Christian' than the people around him, so Lizzie is the most Christian of the whole group. The orgiastic perversion of Christmas is a refrain throughout the story, and by contrast, at the end of the work Lizzie explains her calm non-violent insistence as 'You see it Merry Chrismis. Me like—oh!' The sentiment, particularly expressed in pidgin, is a reproach to all the White people of Ballina who should have known better. Her reward is in the hereafter:

Yeller Lizzie had gone—where? Ah, can the wisest of us say? Surely in some corner, and not the most obscure, of the Land of Light. And Dick Cloughs [the villain]—well, who wants to know about him.

The young Henry Lawson was working on the Boomerang at the time this item was published. Given the minor task of summarising country Queensland papers, and with strong literary ambitions, it is easy to see how he may have disagreed with the final statement/question in the work of this writer, one whose place was already assured. To assert an interest in 'Dick Cloughs'—the violent Australian, but with a
rough-hewn sense of what is proper—to some degree is also an assertion of an interest in the anti-romantic view of Australian life.

In this late view from Brisbane, is preserved a vestige of what must have been a common conception of the North Coast, as that wild land in the interval between there and perhaps Sydney. More immediately the work shows that the construction of the 'Bush' in the 1890s was no single vision. Rather, this Ballina tale shows that the hard river-men/cedar-getters were a model that offered some competition in this construction, and suggests how fluid the concept of the 'Bush' was at that time. Ultimately the story of hard men, working independently in the dark brush—and free to shape their own morality—was too far in the past and unavailable to (imaginative) adventurers, and perhaps its vision of some degree of racial interaction and common experience across races was unacceptable to the nationalist mind in the decade before Federation. For those within the region, who are attempting to understand their past, the tale has much to offer.

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**Myra Felton**

The growth in a reading public presented a demand for more extended local writing, which often found expression in the novel form. As seen in the *Boomerang* item above, sentiment and moralising were strands in the popular reading of the late nineteenth century, and nowhere might they be exceeded than in the novel to be now considered. Ken Stewart notes the 'moralising' strand in writing for much of the second half of the nineteenth century. Many of the feelings that found expression in the temperance movement, found expression in the novel *Eena Romney*. Described

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38 Ken Stewart, 'Journalism and the World of the Writer', p. 178.
39 For an obviously fictional account of the same location and period, see E.V. Timms, *They Came From the Sea* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1955).
dismissively as a 'pious melodrama', this work can be seen as an attempt to take Protestant manners to a wider public, and to do so through the modes of romance and melodrama. Nearly half the work is set in the Clarence River district, with its base otherwise in Sydney.

This is the only published work by Myra Felton (1835-1920) who had some renown as a colonial photographer and portrait painter. First published in 1887 in Sydney, 'in aid of the Queen's Fund for Distressed Women' Eena Romney was quickly published in London (1889), and since then has never been reprinted. At the time of writing the work she was a mature woman, and although never married not unlike the mother who is the moral centre of the story. There is no evidence that she ever visited the North Coast. The work has been at the edges of recent women's studies, with their efforts to restore attention to the neglected women's works from that century. The work has not found a place in local histories of the Clarence, nor in Berzins' thematic work North Coast Women, for truly the woman's perspective in Eena Romney is from Sydney. A study of prose of the region can thus draw upon a wider range of material than is otherwise considered.

When the text moves attention away from Sydney to the country station, 'Yarrow', initially there is a strange conflation of the New England region with that of the North Coast, including the Clarence River's broad flow and minor rapids, as if the writer were geographically unaware of the escarpment barrier.

It was to no new half-settled run that Hubert was sent, but to a long occupied station in New England. Fancy to yourself a lordly park with deer grazing, a few wallabies and tame emus quietly feeding, while white and black swans glided about sunning themselves on the glassy surface of a little artificial lake immediately in front of the house. A fine avenue of Moreton Bay chestnuts led you by a gentle ascent to the white marble steps and verandah of a most delightfully English-looking home. And now that I have guided you to the terrace, turn a look upon Nature's handiwork.

The Clarence, winding its way peacefully among the gentle dimples of the landscape, passed the foot of the lawn at some two hundred yards distance from you; nothing in this direction intercepts the glorious view until the blue of infinite space takes it from the ken of man.

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42 Published by Griffith Farran Okeden & Walsh.

A little to the right rise two ever burning volcanoes, upon whose terraced sides, both English and tropical fruits alike are cultivated; and a large shrubbery to the left hides a farm yard and its appliances.44

The volcanoes are the most remarkable element of the description, drawing upon the 'burning mountain' of Wingen,45 an Upper Hunter feature then passed by many on their way to the New England region. In a more general sense the image of two volcanoes may be another echo of the Mounts Warning and Chincogan dominance of descriptions of the far North Coast, and particularly for this artist/writer from the illustrations in Flinders' and in Lang's publications. The tropical vegetation added to the English fruits is another conjunction of New England with North Coast regions. While subsequent shipboard travel to Sydney reveals that the work was intended to have a North Coast setting, the mix of the two regions preserves the history of North Coast pastoral settlement from and as an extension of the New England region.

Otherwise, the description above is an attempt to present an English country home and park, with the minor addition of exotic fauna. It is similar to the country-house landscapes examined by Robert Dixon, where the dominant note is an examination of the fine arts, 'domestic architecture and landscape gardening, which are expressions of wealth, taste, leisure and luxury'.46 Nevertheless, this sits uneasily with the later action where the setting reverts to one of utility and the needs of a working pastoral enterprise, which in Dixon's analysis is the earlier phase of 'useful arts'. The description seems more an aim of control and order than as a reasonable setting for the action that unfolds.

In several respects this description is similar to that of Yulgilbar, Upper Clarence, the North Coast estate which was given so much prominence by 'Our Travelling Correspondent', which has already been treated. Myra Felton's description is at least in the same spirit as this earlier introduction:

Yulgilbar House, perhaps the first country mansion in the colony, is the property of E.D.S. Ogilvie, M.L.C., and is beautifully situated in a bend of the Clarence, which

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44 Felton, pp. 42-43.
45 Near Scone, this is an underground ignited coal seam.
winds, closes, and expands beneath, giving that interest to the landscape which nothing but water can give. The natural advantages of the site have been turned to good account by skill and taste, and the grounds slope to the flood-line, and stretch away in all directions, containing that essential in landscape gardening,—undefined extent.47

There is note of the 'semi-tropical sun' and of eight doric columns and two chiselled lions, all presumably of marble. In both cases there is a vision of a self-contained oasis of culture and taste, and its very survival if not growth being a testament to the power to renew culture within the wilderness.

Regardless of the source of the setting in Myra Felton's work, the main role of the area within her novel is as a counterpoint for the base in Sydney. The purpose of this country setting is a gendered one, and before the departure of Hubert, the hero, the city-dwelling mother consoles the daughter, thus:

Living quietly as we do, and seeing so few strangers, may answer very well for women with the simple tastes that we have, but men are apt to grow narrow-minded and egotistical if they do not mix with their fellows, and take their part in the battle of life.48

The testing has a strand of romance, for Hubert has been a ward since orphaned, and has fallen in love with Eena, the daughter, and has extracted the most qualified of avowals from her before his departure. In the testing of the hero, the North Coast functions as a zone of battle, where almost alone he must confront evil. It is a setting that is sparsely settled, without the towns that were such a feature of the late 1880s. The evil takes the form of the ex-convict overseer who is at ease in the land, skilled, almost indispensable to the property, unchallenged by others, but also one who has succumbed to the opportunity for theft, has a 'half-caste' wife according to Aboriginal not Christian customs, and will murder (through negligence) in order to preserve his comfort. Hubert succeeds with Christian instruction of the 'half-caste', Eilah, and thereafter follows her marriage to the villain. Another success is the physical and moral restoration of a near drowned stockman, who was formerly a helper in the villainous deeds. This man is roused thus:

48 Felton, p. 38.
Thoughts of the past came over him—thoughts of early innocent childhood; of a happy ivy-clad home; of lessons learnt at a mother's knee—lessons of love and truth; of that mother's death.49

More generally than simply this example, the work's aim is to present Christian home-life (identified as Anglican) as the most sustaining moral realm, and to demonstrate how a depth of Protestant piety and a strong sense of personal duty can inform and enrich those many day-to-day life decisions. The hero, Hubert, functions much like a minister, but acting from within secular employment.50 Each chapter begins with a scriptural and then a literary quotation, giving the impression of drawing upon a long cultural tradition of great thought, both spiritual and temporal. Most pages have a brief homily, and the most important of these are on the role of motherhood. See, for example:

Oh Eena! there is no teaching so blessed as that of a true woman; believe me the seed sown in a child's heart as he stands at his mother's knee, with the light of love in her eyes fascinating his gaze, is worth all else that a man learns in his after life.51

In this moral context, the North Coast is presented as a land without Christian values, but where the hero is able to carry the Word, and to assist the local Minister, sustained throughout by his letters from and thoughts of the family in Sydney. There is some sense of urgency in his efforts, for the land is presented as a place where death comes easily, almost matter-of-factly, and hence a place where one needs to be best prepared for one's Maker at any time.

There is a strong racist element throughout, flowing on from that initial description of Eilah as 'half-caste', but in her case always linked to positive elements. At their first meeting, Hubert is saved by Eilah from a likely snake-bite. The attitude to Aborigines in general is suggested by the following conversation between Hubert and the older cook, Mrs Cumphy:

"... I can assure you that in their native state, before they are spoilt by the Europeans, some of them seem to have quite noble feelings."

49 Felton, pp. 78-79.
50 The writer may have had in mind the Rev. John West (1809-1873) (Congregational) who gave up his clerical duties in order to be the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a post which he occupied for nineteen years until his death. Myra Felton had executed two large portraits of the Rev. and Mrs West.
51 Felton, p. 152.
"It seems almost strange that there should be any half-caste children" mused Hubert. "Oh no! sir; think of the poor shepherds, some of them not seeing a human face for perhaps weeks together. ... The whites, at least some of them, become very degraded, in fact, the bullock-drivers especially, seem scarcely like men at all." 52

This is a view valorising White racial purity, and presenting the interface between the races as one that is morally degrading. In its human types, the region is thus constructed as: 'spoilt' Aborigines, 'degraded' Whites, and a small select number of moral leaders. Most interesting here is the fact that it is a city view, presumably not based on any direct personal engagement with the region or the types of people so dismissively referred to, but most likely reflecting a more widely held view from the centre of this still 'wayward' outpost.

The exception to the general view is the developing girl/wife Eilah. Her transformation not only turns her into a frontier version of the more steady Christian Eena, but also empowers her to transform her husband, hitherto the villain. When he can no longer bear to keep the secret of his role in Hubert's presumed death, and confesses to Eilah, her compassionate response leads to his redemption:

"... but I am your wife, your sin is my sin, so he who has gone taught me, for we are one, and I took you for evil days as well as happy days, and naught but death shall part us." 53

From this statement he quickly learns how to find forgiveness, and thus Hubert's good teaching has its effect through the agency of another. Hubert's specific aim in the country setting had been to replicate the pattern of Christian marriage and family (signified by the 'Home-life' in the work's subtitle), and the most eloquent utterance of the bond is given by Eilah, from the mouth of a North Coast Aborigine.

However, Chinese workers on the property receive the familiar racist treatment of the times. When Hubert has to confront a violent group of Chinese workers, he is described as a true son of the Empire. First this is in physical terms:

throwing his head backwards with a proud movement of the neck (thereby causing his broad chest to contrast still more with the puny weak figures of the Chinamen)... 54

52 Felton, p. 54.
53 Felton, p. 176.
54 Felton, p. 68.
and then his prompt self-defence:

Hubert adroitly evading the stroke, dealt the villain a good English left-handed astonisher, thereby felling him to the ground, where he lay wriggling about like a snake among the legs of his fellows.\textsuperscript{55}

In language which is redolent of English Public School boys' jargon, the Chinese attacker is beaten and reduced to the seemingly inhuman. Hubert sympathetically hears their story, which includes this account from one:

"no use asking, nobody listen or tell, all laugh at John Chinaman; nobody care, like to play tricks on him, hurt him, knock him, anything; 'only a Chinaman dog,' dey say." \textsuperscript{56}

It is an impassioned statement of 'othering', with that familiar linking of the 'other' with the dismissive non-human 'dog'.

Ignoring its melodramatic ending with a series of fortuitous events, meetings and sea rescues, \textit{Eena Romney} is ultimately useful for its view of a pastoral wilderness, similar to that of the late 1840s, drawing such a location from the past for its own purposes, much as did the \textit{Boomerang} writer of 1890 consciously looking back in his case to a North Coast water and rainforest wilderness. In Myra Felton's case the characteristics of the earlier period are positioned in the present, to make a field for appropriate action. Initiated by the Protestant hero, the saving of the villain by his Indigenous wife, the text, with admirable missionary zeal, presents the Aboriginal people as potentially the true Christians of the region. The continuing view of the North Coast as a wilderness, and the Aborigines as (now) fit for ready Christian instruction, and married home-life (but not quite extending to the pious widowhood otherwise valorised in the text), are constructions that do not so appear in the other texts of the period, even if they are not untypical of frontier-closing in other parts of the Empire such as the Indian sub-continent.

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\textsuperscript{55} Felton, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{56} Felton, p. 71.
'Louis' Becke

The most prolific of writers addressing the North Coast of this period was Louis Becke (1855-1913), a member of the Bulletin school of realist writers, but someone whose name and fame quickly disappeared from national attention. Born in Port Macquarie and spending his youth there, after his years working on ships in the Pacific, he returned first to marry and, later, for short periods. Many of his works first appeared as short stories, and these were collected into volumes for publication. Combined with his novels and historical works his publications total thirty five volumes (five of which were in collaboration). Best known for his Pacific islands' stories, interspersed throughout these are many which deal with the North Coast of New South Wales, and this same mixture occurs throughout the whole period of his writing (1894-1913). In addition to these whole texts of the region, at times, additional regional material appears as small sections in the stories that are predominantly of the South Pacific. One third of his publications have some North Coast material, and it is clear that this region has a power and resonance for Becke, and that its function in the corpus is significant.

Republication of his writings since the Second World War has seen only a small range of the Pacific islands' works back in print. In Port Macquarie some general attention has been given to his life as a locally-born literary figure, but there is scant attention given to the (locally set) writings. This is also the case at the national level, where that criticism which does mention Becke almost always omits his works with predominantly North Coast settings. The most detailed treatment of the North Coast texts is by the American critic, A. Grove Day, in his full-length study of Becke's life and work, the only such survey. Coming from a frontier Pacific perspective, Day finds an obvious delight for Becke in the North Queensland settings, and in his recording of strange events in Sydney, but has great difficulty with the Port Macquarie settings, content and approach, for example:

Hard to classify or justify is the long piece, "Jim Trollope and Myself," in *The Pearl Divers of Roncador Reef* (1908). It is not a novelette, although some parts sound like fiction; nor is it clearly mere reminiscence of a holiday ashore for a few months in northern New South Wales, although the opening and other incidents sound quite factual.\(^{58}\)

A regional survey of prose will have less difficulty here, but it may also provide insights into Becke's larger project. The most recent study to give substantial treatment to Becke was Robert Dixon's *Writing the Colonial Adventure*.\(^{59}\) While its overview of the 'adventure' approach is illuminating, the only Australian work treated was one set in Townsville and to its north, and this only for its similarities to the Pacific islands' stories. From its national perspective, such a study reveals much about the readership and its construction of 'other' (and hence also of identity) at a crucial time in national formation, but ignores the major and illuminating construction of a particular Australia which one might find in Becke's large number of North Coast texts. Only in *The Oxford Literary Guide to Australia* are the Australian-set works well noted, an emphasis befitting that work's intended focus on regions and specific locations, albeit in skeletal form.\(^{60}\)

In part, this general silence as to the Australian settings (international, national and local) reflects a continuing uncertainty with the appreciation and study of non-fiction, but also there are issues of canonicity and perhaps the hegemonic control of the local from beyond. As a writer of so much fiction set in the region, Louis Becke deserves a fuller treatment for these settings, yet this current treatment can be only a survey of its major features, in its drawing together some late nineteenth century elements of the perception of the North Coast as a discrete location.

Louis Becke's North Coast works take one of two main styles. The first is an imaginative recreation of historical events and themes, and the second is in a memoirs-like style, and a capturing of delight in travelling by foot through the natural landscape of the coast. Unlike those texts of settlers which addressed history through celebration

\(^{58}\) Day, p. 129.


of their own arrival and the development of the area, Becke's historical sense finds expression in frequent denunciations of the convict system, of which he had evidence in the few 'Specials' still in Port Macquarie in his childhood, and in the roads and public works constructed under this system. Against this evidence of oppression, one can imagine that his youthful imagination had been drawn to the story of the Bryants' escape in a small boat along this coast, from Sydney all the way to Batavia. Their story became the subject of his early and first collaborative work *A First Fleet Family* and then reappeared in *By Rock and Pool on an Austral Shore*, and then again in what is a later clear recreation of the escape and journey in his *Helen Adair*:

> her cheeks flushed when she remembered the daring deed of Will Bryant, the transported English smuggler, who, with his young wife and two infant children and five trusted fellow convicts, had seized a small boat in Sydney Cove and sailed her more than three thousand miles to Timor.

> Ah! she thought, how happy would she be to make such an attempt with her father! ...

Becke further identifies the original events, and his book on them, by a footnote. In the event, the fictional group sail quietly past the Port Macquarie settlement, landing at Trial Bay, thus drawing upon both the stories of the Bryant and the *Trial* mutineers for his later work.

Beyond the historical accounts, the major topics are the wildlife and sea creatures of the region. Even with the custom of exaggeration, these descriptions are remarkable. The phlegmatic critic A. Grove Day expressed excitement at the violence of one description, that of 'Orca Gladiator' where killer whales and a thresher shark kill a large male whale. The immediacy of named settings provides a touchstone of

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61 See E.W. Rudder in Chapter 6.
63 See details in Chapter 2. For the only first-hand account see: Geoffrey Chapman Ingleton, *True Patriots All: Or News From Early Australia, as Told in a Collection of Broadsides* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1952).
veracity, while the specific descriptions for a modern reader have an historical wonder in their profusion of wildlife, the sparsity of settlement, and the freedom of operation—movement throughout the area and the ability to 'live off the land', combined with the obvious difficulties of early life. These texts pick up some of the wonder of earlier recorders (e.g., Clement Hodgkinson, or Lieut. Henderson), but by now become more familiar by the writer's ease of passage through the land, if not quite a sustained occupation of it. For a regional audience such concerns are likely to be foregrounded. All his Australian texts with generalised coastal settings have the distinctive feel of the North Coast, and even the 'South Coast', cited for *The Settlers of Karossa Creek*, reads like the Bellinger Valley transposed for publishing variety. Similarly, at many points he becomes coy about using the name of Port Macquarie, variously disguising it as if concerned that his mass readership may not share his own fascination with that locale.

Becke's construction of the region can be defined by that area over which he had walked and then recorded so closely. This is the range itself from the Manning to the Tweed River. Beyond this region, he claims that he covered the whole New South Wales coast, in sum, through his various journeys. This claim is likely to be fictional exaggeration, and can be seen as a continuing attempt to enact the common fiction of extensive coastal travel, as in James Tucker's convict walking to Cape York, where Becke may have drawn upon the same local legends/ hopes as did the convict writer earlier. Becke's claim can be seen in the same light as Hodgkinson's imaginative journey from Port Macquarie to Moreton Bay, and even in the illusion of movement in steady sequence northwards of 'Our Travelling Correspondent'. Becke presents one child as going even further in this aim:

'I should like to ride round it from Port Kooringa [Port Macquarie] right up to Cape York, and along the Gulf of Carpentaria and the coast of Arnhem's Land and Western Australia, and then along the Great Bight back to Kooringa.'

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68 See Chapters 4 and 6.
70 See Chapter 6.
Unlike the increasing trend through the nineteenth century to look inland, Becke's vision is closely bound to the coastline. This is most clearly seen in 'Dulce Est Desipere In Loco'.\(^{72}\) Despite some awkward geography—being thirty miles from Crescent Head and also two hundred miles from the New England ranges—justifiable as the 'racking clamour in [the] brain' of the sick man, the whole story is a sustained recounting of the hero's desire and struggle to get to the coast, culminating in the following:

> Before me was the smooth grassy summit of noble Crescent Head against whose grim, steep face of rock thundered the rollers of the blue Pacific—and I was content.\(^{73}\)

In another work, he describes being in Kempsey and:

> The only way of getting to Port Macquarie from Kempsey was by coach or horseback. Coaches I loathed, and riding through the monotonous bush I disliked almost as much, so I decided to "tramp" it—a distance of seventy miles—along the coast.\(^{74}\)

The walk begins from the Macleay Heads, and with some fictional licence it must be considered a compelling desire for the most narrowly defined coastal zone.

Important to the novelty of Becke's Pacific works are the many inhabitants—natives, traders, missionaries, women, buccaneers. They are shown struggling for survival, in both physical and cultural terms, giving free rein to passions, and of course providing titillation for a Victorian readership in the texts' suggestions of less inhibited sex. By contrast, for the North Coast works there are very few people described. Most often the narrator is either alone or with one other person who is quiet and not well-known to the recorder. While few people are seen or described, even fewer women appear in these pieces. The sketches of childhood are largely of small groups of children (including the narrator), or rely upon the narrator/child and one adult. With

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\(^{73}\) *Under Tropic Skies*, p. 79.

\(^{74}\) Louis Becke, *The Pearl Divers of Roncador Reef* (London: James Clarke and Co., 1908). While on this journey he stays at an abandoned farmhouse, and enjoys the fruit which had run wild. Chief amongst these were Black Isabella grapes, making the whole description a likely source for that subsequent literary newspaperman, Kenneth Slessor in his poem 'Wild Grapes'.

larger numbers of people, there occasionally emerges a degree of disgust at the local culture—"being almost too lazy to live".  

'Jim Trollope and Myself', which confounded the critic A. Grove Day (noted above), is a late work by Becke. It has a group of three together, one of whom is a boy; considerable dialogue; much movement across the land; success in living off it; and successful prospecting for gold, while avoiding competitors. This long story shows more engagement with people and the land than is seen in his earlier regional works, and thus can be seen as a recovery of a concept of (necessary) fellowship in the (partially wild) settings of Australia. This extends to religious toleration, where a glowing recount is given to the narrator about his mother's warmth 'to us folks as is Dissenters'. Thos religious 'others'—the Dissenters—were accepted in the spirit of helping to make all people happy. This is done with Becke's usual mix of the musing memoir and fiction, remembering that memoir is always an unstable category, and particularly if a mass audience is needing to be courted.

There is a similar change in the presentation of the Indigenous people of the North Coast. For most of the stories, and for all of the early ones, there is complete omission. As with many other texts examined, if the Aborigines were not germane to the prime plot of the writing, then they could be readily omitted from consideration. What emerges is a series of brief mentions, and always as a source of information on nature. In one incident, a group of boys is constructing a raft, 'aided by a couple of blackfellows'. It is an incidental recording, not noting whether they were adults or other boys, but revealing a continuing Indigenous presence that was almost taken for granted. On the following page the explanation for the large number of snakes was given by one of the Aborigines, but it is not followed by any reflection by the writer. There is a sense that too much inquiry into native knowledge might lead to greater proximity to the race. Elsewhere some of the language echoes those opinions, recorded

75 Louis Becke, 'Neath Austral Skies, p. 281.
76 Louis Becke, The Pearl Divers of Roncador Reef, p. 106.
77 Louis Becke, By Rock and Pool, p. 160.
elsewhere, which saw the Indigenous people as degraded, and declining. Just how ambiguous was this concept can be seen in the following account set in Sydney:

But we knew better; we were born in the colony—in a seaport town on the northern coast—and the aborigines of the Hastings River tribe had taught us many valuable secrets, one of which was how to catch black bream... but we had not the cunningly devised gear of our black friends...  

No earlier North Coast material has prepared us for these assertions. Distance has lent a safer confidence in claiming closeness, yet, still, this is more open than their erasure from the earlier texts. Yet Becke fiercely criticises those who take advantage of the Aborigines, and on two occasions details the practice of White settlers cutting the Government symbol out of blankets which had been illegally traded. There is never a suggestion that the escapees, settlers, or wandering fishermen and shooters like himself, were in any way impinging upon the land or rights of the Indigenous people. The vision throughout is of a land of plenty for small-scale entrepreneurs and of an effortless colonisation not unreminiscent of R. M. Ballantyne.

With the final works the Aborigines are treated in fuller sections, at one point exceeding two pages in overall length. They are praised for their knowledge of local wildlife, fish and the methods of catching them. With this acceptance of skills, and some amazement, there comes acknowledgement of a named individual ('Yarra'), that first step towards a more social recognition of another. It is notable that a Chinese character, 'Ah Yam', is named in the same story. Despite the Aborigines being presented as living their whole lives in the manner which Becke had chosen merely for his relaxation, he maintains a distance, as though they were fellow-travellers through the land, and ultimately, not of serious consequence. Over time there comes an emerging confidence in finding voice for their place in the land, and perhaps if he had lived longer Louis Becke may have found the interest to create a full story with an Indigenous subject.

79 Ballantyne’s very popular boys’ story, *The Coral Island*, was first published in 1857.
Becke's view is an outward-looking one, where the coast is a boundary to be relentlessly 'probed' through frequent 'tramps' along its length. The coast as a zone has a lingering hold on the imagination, marking it as an area for memories of childhood and fellowship, for activity, closeness to the land and the water, to its bounty, if not quite to its inhabitants.

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As with earlier periods, so too these years of mass readership produced a variety of constructions of the North Coast of New South Wales. There is a continuation and re-assertion of the Edenic garden view—a perspective which set comfortable surrounds for the occupants or for potential investors/dwellers. With Myra Felton's work this view was of a largely comfortable but distant option. While the shadows of uncomfortable ideas were thus kept to the edges, at the same time, several other popular works were able to move their perspective into the forests with their literal as well as figurative darknesses—approaching the uncomfortable aspects of White occupation. The brutal past explored by 'Tommy Pipeful', or the solitary forest journeys recorded by Becke, show a (British) readiness to begin to address topics and views hitherto considered too difficult and better marginalised or omitted.
CONCLUSION

Underneath one's foot the thick carpet of fallen leaves deadens the sound of footsteps, and the pleasant solitude is broken only by the cries of birds overhead in the lofty branches ...¹

The study has unearthed a wealth of prose written within and about the North Coast region in the period to 1914. Comprehensiveness in identification and selection of items has been attempted, with minor omissions noted within, but this all done with awareness of yet unplumbed public and private archives, in addition to unrecorded family or personal holdings.

This survey of regional prose does not build up to an historical or political unity, as do several prior studies in Australia taking a similar broad scope of 'regional', where often the climax is the achievement of statehood. This region was and continues to be a small part of a large state (although early writers could sense some assertion of future potential self-determination) and within what was an increasingly awkward collection of British colonies on this continent (a view that for most of the period under consideration, included New Zealand and the various island colonies of Oceania).

Rather, this attempt to broaden and explore the terms of analysis and discourse for regional historical texts has surveyed a wide range of writers and it looks to some measure of closure within the terms of the social dimensions of spatial analysis and representation. The 'mapping' of the North Coast has been found to be strongly textual, at times drawing openly upon other texts in order to make fundamental constructions of a seemingly new area. This has been evidenced from the earliest maritime works to well into the period of

settlers' texts. While these earlier constructions were part of the discourses which were available to the writers of subsequent texts, it can also be seen as a mapping of the land with the grid-lines of European culture, and in many cases the historical and cultural contexts of the production and for some the publication of these texts was largely outside the region. In common across many of these (British) perceptions was an avoidance of forests, darkness and the nature of the Indigenous culture. The work by Muller, drawing upon Germanic echoes for its audience, stands alone as an early engagement with the depths of North Coast forests. The trend towards British consonance is often seen to be in some measure of tension with the novelty of observed experience—the novum that can not be readily incorporated into a unified text, but is nevertheless present in silences, over-bold statement, and the like. Ultimately this is how the outer 'other' can transform the accepted present 'centre'. The approach taken by the divines and particularly by those of scientific interests provides the opportunity for applying new methods of perception to the region, and this affords some measure of transition into the comparative ease of the mass readership prose late in the century.

Much of the writing across the period evidences a travelling approach—even from those who are physically settled in one particular location. That settler most sensitive to local circumstances/indigenous peoples, Ogilvie, saves his major prose writing for the occasion of travel, and in particular to Europe. In movement there seems safety and confidence, and an openness to new experiences and a shrugging off of niggling doubt.

None of the texts under consideration exhibits complete coherence. All lean towards a world that is yet to be brought into being, as well as preserving spaces for the perceived 'other', and therein lies the nature of the contested development of a regional consciousness. Katherine G. Morrissey's claim that 'contestation and conflict characterise regions more than consensus does'² opens the way for the examination of the many voices

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herein. Rather than a comparatively simple polyphonic construction of the region, some of the difference in voice and perception can be internal.

The North Coast has no overview of Aboriginal regional history (such as James Miller’s *Koori*, 1985, for the region to the south), and in a sense, the works in this current study are representative of a past European-based culture, one now under challenge from other voices. The interrogation of Aboriginal presence or omission in these texts moves one to the cultural limits of the early European history of the North Coast of New South Wales. With the frequent descriptions of ‘shadows’ and the repeated attempts to understand, dismiss, mock, or murder the indefinable Indigenous inhabitants, a mythic power in the landscape is somehow sensed in these texts. It would take a hundred years before European writers, such as Patricia Wrightson, could begin to address such topics in a more comprehensive way. The metaphor of shadows as mysterious spirits of the land (forests) has been popularised to some degree by Bill Scott with his *Shadows among the Leaves*.4

The present research, in effect, is working to examine the further positive cultural construction that is there in the surviving words—a construction that, one suspects, is shared by many more recent writers in the region,5 and by those with control of words and influential in regional cultural transmission. Subsequent to this attempted comprehensive survey of the prose of the North Coast, the methodology could more fully draw upon the concept of ‘spatial history’ for a more intensive/thematic regional study.6 This current study has implication and application across a wide range of other regions. In essence the

3 See the incorporation of (local) Aboriginal legend in the works of Patricia Wrightson—not only the leader in this field, but also living on the North Coast and drawing upon settings from this region.
4 This work uses the forest shadows as spirits. The work uses a stylised river valley setting, somewhere around the N.S.W.—Qld. border. *Shadows among the Leaves* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1984).
6 See for example the detail on the interaction between Aboriginal and White spatial histories in Paul Carter’s *The Road to Botany Bay*, pp. 335ff.
methods used here can be used in any other region, even in the urban sprawl where megalopolises have swallowed up so many earlier discrete communities.

Regionalism provides a field of study that is close to individuals' lives in the late-twentieth century. Anthony Giddens, in this year's Reith Lectures stressed regionalism as a counterpart trend to his main topic:

Globalisation not only pulls upwards, it pushes downwards, creating new pressures for local autonomy. The American sociologist Daniel Bell expresses this very well when he says that the nation becomes too small to solve the big problems, but also too large to solve the small ones.  

In Australia Tom Griffiths describes a link between history and ecology as a likely way to build respect for the needs of our land. This is close to an inversion of the familiar environmentalist slogan, 'Think Globally—Act Locally'. To be truly effectively in action, the ability to 'Think Locally' may be ultimately more empowering, but this would need to be built upon an awareness of the complexity and long-contested nature of the 'local'. 'Region' gives a scope that is broader but appropriate and empowering to such thinking. The intellectual space for regional studies then has its place in what Gayatri Spivak calls 'the explosion of marginality studies'.

The bounds of this study can be summarised in scopic/geographic form—from its first sighting, by James Cook, where the North Coast seemed a series of potential islands, to the delight of that great writer about islands, Louis Becke, in the long sequence of secluded peaceful shadowy forests. The inner geography of social life, of racial contact, and of slowly emerging settler confidence and identification forms a tale which offers much to the many who have come to put down more genuine roots in this space. What the memories of the place might be, have been teased out for them and those who follow.

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