

## 1.2 THE DIARY OF ADDY BOWLER (SUTTOR): WRITING HISTORY FROM THE INSIDE OUT

*Labour well the Minute Particulars, attend to the Little-ones.*<sup>1</sup>



In the previous chapter I used the memoirs of the Bowler siblings to look at some of the special characteristics, anomalies and possible uses for that particular genre of life writing in the telling of Australia's history. In this chapter I examine the diary genre with reference to the writing of Addy Bowler (later to become Suttor), and look at some of the 'minute particulars' that appear to set the diary apart from the memoir. As before, I will be calling on various interdisciplinary findings as I determine how Addy's diary, and women's diaries in general, might be better understood and interpreted as important representations of the social, cultural, material, and even political, milieu of a particular colonial space both from a personal perspective and in a wider sense.

Before looking at diaries in general, and Addy Bowler's diaries in particular, it is worth examining some of the factors that encouraged diary writing, which was one of the ways in which women were able to express themselves in the nineteenth century. As I have already suggested, women during that period were officially excluded from the male world of imperial progress and considered as an 'other' where history making was concerned. In other words, there was an exclusion of women from the linear narrative of time. Their writing, particularly their diary writing, reflects this difference.<sup>2</sup> Excluded from the public sphere, many Victorian women used their writing as a form of self-expression, especially their diary writing – which was intended in many cases to be private, at least at the time of writing.

But was the Australian situation in some ways unique with regard to the kinds of writing women undertook, the ways in which they wrote, and the lack of public recognition, but also criticism, they enjoyed in their writing? Comparing the general

---

<sup>1</sup> William Blake, 'Jerusalem', chapter 3, line 51, in David V. Erdman ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (New York: Doubleday, 1988) 205.

<sup>2</sup> See Katie Holmes, 'Making Time: Representations of Temporality in Australian Women's Diaries of the 1920s and 1930s', *Australian Historical Studies* 26, no. 102 (1994) 1–7.

recognition of women and women writers in Australia and Canada, Beryl Langer suggests that, because of Canada's relatively uncertain national identity, with a 'dual opposition' to both Britain and the United States, men and women presented a more united front in Canada than they did in Australia. Thus, Canadian women (unlike Australian women) were not automatically marginal to the dominant colonial discourse.<sup>3</sup>

As I said in the last chapter, because of its remote location and because of a European population consisting (at least at first) mainly of men, the concept of an 'Australian legend' dominated by male achievements was easily promoted. Langer argues that, whereas the relation of women to culture in the Canadian case has been positive rather than merely neutral, in Australia colonial women were, in a sense, penalised by clearly defined national characteristics that downplayed the British and European emphasis on community life and a woman's role in maintaining it. 'Canadian culture', says Langer, 'has therefore been defined in terms less hostile to women'.<sup>4</sup>

Miriam Dixon in *The Real Matilda* (1976/99) sees women's position in Australia as being especially marginalised alongside a male-dominated national identity that diminished the 'personhood' of women. She suggests that even women in the United States have enjoyed considerably higher standing than women in Australia. She says too that in Australia (and here it must be remembered that *The Real Matilda* was first published at a time when second wave feminism was highlighting such matters), 'historians ... are as much Australians as wharfies, farmers, scientists and businessmen, and share the profound unconscious contempt for women that pervades the Australian ethos'. This, suggested Dixon, has been carried through from colonial times.<sup>5</sup>

In the second revised edition of her book *Damned Whores and God's Police*, first published a year prior to the *The Real Matilda* but revised in 2002, Anne Summers also discusses the Australian male-dominated national identity, although admitting in her latest edition that much has changed since 1975 when her book was

---

<sup>3</sup> Beryl Donaldson Langer, 'Women and Literary Production', in *Australian/Canadian Literatures in English*, ed. Russell McDougall and Gillian Whitlock (Melbourne: Methuen Australia Pty Ltd, 1987) 147–84.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Miriam Dixon, *The Real Matilda* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1976/99) 22, 188.

first written.<sup>6</sup> In a chapter entitled 'A Sexist Culture', she points out ways in which literature is a good indication of how women were marginalised. She notes that women in Australia who did attempt to publish towards the end of the nineteenth century in the genres of memoir and novel, found themselves confronted by editors who insisted on certain limits for female writers, and by readers who expected 'manly' subjects that excluded the domestic and personal, which were seen as frivolous and trivial. However, when Mary Gilmore attempted to write work similar to Henry Lawson he felt threatened and persuaded her to stop and go back to a career of teaching, as *his* livelihood depended upon his writing. Gilmore's apparent reluctance to write within the contemporary female tradition using the genres of memoir, diary and novel which concentrated on matters 'suitable' for women, situated her figuratively and literally in 'no man's land'. Further, through experimentation with a male narrative voice and 'manly' subject matter she effectively denied her own identity. By identifying with male standards, Gilmore not only revealed her own insecurities in her writing, but also an inability to move beyond the stereotypes defined by a male tradition.<sup>7</sup>

Colin Roderick points out that, although her novels 'deviated from the norm', Rosa Praed's editors were only too aware of what was expected of a woman writer. One of them commented: 'Whilst showing one aspect of colonial life, we have to remember that it has your name on the title page, and that you cannot so well say what Mr Praed may'.<sup>8</sup> It was inevitable that such sexist criticism should inhibit women's creative writing. Writers like George Eliot, the Brontë sisters, and Henry Handel (Ethel) Richardson attempted to avoid some of prejudices of editors and readers by simply taking on male (or in the case of the Brontë sisters, androgynous) pseudonyms and thus, at least for a time, disguising their own identity.

Such constraints would appear to be less of an issue with the private diary, which allowed the 'I' of the diary writer more freedom. With the constraints of an immediate audience removed, and only the possibility in mind that the diary might be read after the writer's death, or later on in her life, more creative and imaginative entries were possible. As a result, things were said that might not be said elsewhere.

---

<sup>6</sup> Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1975/2002) 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 81–85.

<sup>8</sup> Colin Roderick, *In Mortal Bondage: The Strange Life of Rosa Praed* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948) 84–85.

In 1988, in her *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*, Kay Schaffer introduced a more complex perspective on the male/female dichotomies that underlie mainstream colonial discourse, dichotomies that generally situated women as marginal.<sup>9</sup> She cites Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake and Judith Allen who found ways to include women in the telling of Australia's history so that women 'as a group' could be taken more seriously. In doing so, she confronted the assumptions of the male myth with regard to national identity.<sup>10</sup>

Although there is a difference in emphasis in some of the above findings, it appears that a special kind of marginality existed with regard to Australian women and their writing during the colonial period and beyond. If nothing more, these discussions alert us to the possibility that Australian women had more obstacles than most to overcome when they sat down to write in anything other than the 'private' diary genre. In fact, they appear to have been twice marginalised – at the time of writing, and more recently by historians. If indeed Australian women have been more marginalised than their Canadian and United States counterparts, their colonial diaries must be seen as particularly valuable to historians seeking to supplement the knowledge that may be assumed from more traditionally 'acceptable' discourse. Such texts reveal events and certain subjective observations that are nonexistent, or at least not so obvious, elsewhere.



Cynthia Huff notes that, while women's diaries 'reinforce and confine women within the strictures of the masculinist beliefs of the lady, their structure is likewise loose enough to accommodate a woman's self-creation'.<sup>11</sup> As such, the diary structure alone provides the writer with a freedom not available to the memoir writer. This is because, as Bunkers and Huff suggest, the diary form avoids closure in the traditional

---

<sup>9</sup> Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 73–76.

<sup>11</sup> Cynthia A. Huff, 'Textual Boundaries: Space in Nineteenth-Century Women's Manuscript Diaries', in *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, ed. Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) 125.

sense, enabling women to envision their narratives and their lives in a different way than is possible in other genres.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most important differences between diary and memoir is that diary entries, although written within a linear chronological framework, consist of fragmented, cyclic, stand-alone accounts of day-to-day life that are not subservient to a specific narrative form or plot – apart, of course, from the obvious progression of time that impacts upon the writer's life and the space in which she (or he) lives. As such, diaries are more amenable to spontaneous and less carefully considered impressions.

In the previous chapter I mentioned how Joy Hooton noted a radical parataxis in the free-flowing, unpunctuated sentences of women's diaries. There is in diaries, she says, an:

indiscriminate mix of significant and trivial events and topics, the juxtaposition of modes and moods – adventure story, elegy, comedy, gossip, earnest spiritual accounting, the interleaving of 'relevant' and 'irrelevant' comments, the eruptions of intense feeling crossed by formalised rhetoric or mundane observation.<sup>13</sup>

These characteristics can be found in Addy Bowler's diary. However, as I noted, unpunctuated sentences are also a strong feature of her fragmentary memoirs, especially the early parts, suggesting that distinctions between these genres of life-writing, particularly unpublished versions, might be more fluid than some theorists allow. In any case, as Hooton suggests, such discursive styles lend themselves to numerous subtle and dramatic effects, which 'frequently dredge up the intimate or graphic detail', thus putting 'flesh on the bones of an experience'.<sup>14</sup> In diaries in particular, such irregularities occur because the diary is a rare space over which the public sphere had no control and, as Katie Holmes says, it was one of the few places where women were allowed to be self-centred.<sup>15</sup>

Generally speaking, the more structured memoir, particularly the more carefully crafted published memoir, parallels traditional historical discourse in that it

---

<sup>12</sup> Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, 'Issues in Studying Women's Diaries: A Theoretical and Critical Introduction', in *Inscribing the Daily* 9.

<sup>13</sup> Joy Hooton, 'Life-Lines in Stormy Seas: Some Recent Collections of Women's Diaries and Letters', *Australian Literary Studies* 16, no. 1 (1993) 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Holmes, 'Making Time' 3.

claims to represent truths from the past seen with hindsight, and attempts to assemble them in a comprehensive narrative form with a beginning, middle and end. This familiar structure, together with the emphasis on one particular subject, has traditionally made such autobiographical writing more acceptable as a truth-bearing genre. Nussbaum points out (citing Hayden White) that the narrative form requires a meaning and a moral, and 'the value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises from the desire to make sense of real events'. Again citing White, she writes:

History proper ... is usually assumed to be a text in which the events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning ...

Because of this, says Nussbaum, the diary and some forms of journal that do not have such a structure have tended to be situated in an inferior position – being seen as not truly representative of the past.<sup>16</sup>

However, the very fact that diary writing has less need for a traditional cause and effect narrative structure must place fewer restrictions on the diary writer, allowing for 'spur of the moment' entries that need have little relationship to other entries, even those written on the same day. Because of this, and because of the usual short time-lapse between diary entries and the events that they represent, one would expect that a more authentic description of the particular events chosen to be recorded would emerge – more accurate at least than in texts which depend upon long-term memory and which are compiled only after careful and selective thought, not only as to subject matter and significance, but also as to composition and audience.



But just how 'truthful' are events described in diaries? Kagle and Gramegna suggest that, although diarists usually pretend to greater truthfulness than do writers of fiction, 'like most people, they color the events of their lives'. Citing research

---

<sup>16</sup> Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989, 1995) 16

carried out on diaries, Kagle and Gramegna conclude that differences in perception 'allow people to write creatively', and the more subjective writing becomes 'the greater the chance that self depiction will involve fictionalization' as events are created or altered.<sup>17</sup>

Alternatively, Verduyn notes one of the most obvious differences between the diary and the memoir is that 'the immediacy of the [journal or diary] entry contrasts with the reflective gaze on the past as is the case with autobiography'.<sup>18</sup> Arguing in support of the truthfulness of the diary, but speaking in particular about eighteenth century diaries and journals, Felicity Nussbaum goes further to state that: 'The diary and journal ... are [more] representative of reality' and should not be seen as 'failed versions of something more coherent and unified [like the memoir]'. This is significant here only if by 'reality' we assume that Nussbaum means historical accuracy rather than realistic effect. This would appear to be the case, as she also says that:

by being written in 'private' they [diaries] affect to escape preexisting categories, [and are able] to tell the 'truth' of experience. By eschewing known narrative codes and opting for discontinuity and repetition, diaries and journals often attempt to seem spontaneous, and thus avoid assigning meaning or a hierarchy of values.<sup>19</sup>

These somewhat different notions concerning the 'truth' value of diaries, as espoused by Verduyn, Nussbaum, and Kagle and Gramegna, rather than suggesting a serious clash of conclusions among individual researchers, are perhaps indicative of the tremendous variety of diaries and discursive styles adopted by many different diary writers during various periods of time and in various contexts. There is also the question, as I have said, as to whether these writers are referring to historical accuracy or realistic effect when they speak of truth and realism.<sup>20</sup> In any case, it is impossible

---

<sup>17</sup> Steven E. Kagle and Lorenza Gramegna, 'Rewriting Her Life: Fictionalization and the Use of Fictional Models in Early American Women's Diaries', in *Inscribing the Daily* 38.

<sup>18</sup> Christl Verduyn, 'Personal Papers – Putting Lives on the Line: Working with the Marian Engel Archive', in *Working in Women's Archives: Researching Women's Private Literature and Archival Documents*, ed. Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001) 94.

<sup>19</sup> Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject* 28.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion on 'reality' in narrative, see J. Hillis Miller, 'Narrative and History', *English Literary History* 41 (1974) 455–73.

to say that *all* diaries are more reliable as accurate accounts of past events than are memoirs. In fact, Kagle and Gramegna acknowledge the possible contradictions inherent in any conclusions they are tempted to make concerning specific characteristics of life writing genres. Diaries, they say, are as likely to be 'routine and rational as emotional, meaningful as trivial, proud as modest, inclusive as restricted'.<sup>21</sup>

From the point of view of my particular source material, I suspect that Addy Bowler's diaries have an advantage over her memoirs as far as accuracy is concerned, especially where concrete historical facts such as names and dates are concerned. It is doubtful that Addy ever consciously invented or exaggerated when writing in her diary. Not only did she appear to be a practical and very busy person, there would seem to be little need for fabrication, particularly when she was young and single, as social events and other exciting happenings like the gold rushes gave her plenty of information with which to fill her diary space. Rather than inventing and exaggerating, gaps in her diary (mostly occurring after marriage) appear to account for periods of either boredom or great family tragedy, such as the death of her first baby. There are also lapses when she was busy with, or giving birth to, her children.

Kagle and Gramegna have noted that women who read widely were more likely to be influenced by what they read when writing their diaries. As such, they were sometimes tempted to obscure the line between imagination and reality by 'borrowing from fictional works ... plot elements, character behavior, and values'.<sup>22</sup> Addy's lack of a sustained formal education and her parents' financial problems suggest that she may have had little opportunity to be influenced in her diary-writing by the more imaginative literary works that were around at the time, although she appears to have had access to some recent publications, as I mention later on.

However, unlike Lucy Gray, who mentions reading to herself and to her husband fairly frequently in her diary, Addy only occasionally quotes from texts she has read, and does not actually write about her reading. For example, an entry on 26 January 1862, part of which reads as follows: 'Woman is the lesser man and all their passions matched with mine are as moonlight unto sunlight and as water unto wine',

---

<sup>21</sup> Kagle and Gramegna, 'Rewriting Her Life' 43.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 41.



is a quote from the Tennyson poem 'Locksley Hall'.<sup>23</sup> Addy's young life was fully occupied with helping her parents on their various farms, and later assisting her sister Julia with a growing family, perhaps leaving little time for extensive reading. Later, when married to Willie Suttor, and with more time on her hands and little or no social activity along the more remote Lachlan River, Addy had both the money and the time to indulge in reading. Ironically, however, it is during this period that her diary writing becomes much less expansive and imaginative, reflecting the influence of loneliness and boredom rather than the stimulus of literary works, which must have been in any case more difficult to obtain so far from the larger towns.

In contrast, Lucy Gray had hours by herself at remote Glendower in North Queensland, and took advantage of the time to read, often reading out loud to her husband.<sup>24</sup> In a list of 'letters sent' Lucy notes the return of books to England.<sup>25</sup> The style and language found in Lucy's journal and diary may well have been influenced by what she was reading, inspired by a more structured education. It is worth considering that, if indeed Addy's reading time and reading matter were restricted, there would be little incentive to 'pad-out' her own writing in imitation of more professional writers.

An attempt at accuracy, in Addy's later diary in particular, might have been influenced by an anticipation, however vague, of a future local audience, many of whom she knew might have seen through any fabrication. There are times, however, when she appears to be confiding in her diary with no audience at all in mind, in which case fabrication and embellishment would appear to have been even less likely.

Therefore, it would seem Addy's diaries provide us with a reasonably authentic and sometimes very personal account, not only of herself as a woman growing in self-consciousness, but also of the colonial spaces that she occupied. Having said that, we must keep in mind that, as with any reporting of past events, the shaping effects of culture, together with personal characteristics and family and social background, are always present and the difference between an accurate rendering of

---

<sup>23</sup> Adelaide Bowler, 'Bowler (Suttor) Diaries and Memoirs 1840–1890' (private collection, Sydney) book 1: 36; Robert W. Hill, Jr., ed., *Tennyson's Poetry: Authoritative Texts, Juvenilia and Early Responses, Criticism* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1971) lines 151, 152 of 'Locksley Hall' 90.

<sup>24</sup> Lucy Gray, 'Journal, Diaries, Correspondence and Fragments', *Lucy Gray Papers* (JOL OM 75–123). See, for example, Lucy's diary, November, 1869: 'Charlie mending saddles on the veranda. I read to him'; March 1870: 'Charlie washed the clothes while I read to him'.

<sup>25</sup> LG 'Diary' 28 December 1869.

events and a creative manipulation of 'reality' is not always apparent, even to diarists themselves.



Anticipated audience, both at the time of writing and later on, is an important issue, and introduces the question of whether a particular diary can ever be classified as strictly private. Who did Addy expect might read her diaries, if anyone? Was she writing for herself as a way of articulating her life, with perhaps an idea too of re-reading the entries in later life? The colonial spaces that are represented in her diary are the Bathurst region from 1859 until her marriage to William (Willie) Suttor in 1862. Then there is a section that covers the period when she and her husband lived further west, on their isolated property, Borambil, on the Lachlan River. There are some quite large gaps in the Borambil section, perhaps, as I have said, due to boredom on Addy's part and lack of things to write about. There are also gaps, which coincide with unsettling events.

In 1873, the couple moved back close to Bathurst, to a property called Cangoura, where they lived until 1890, after which they leased the property out and moved to Sydney. Again, Addy's diary is interspersed with some gaps, some quite large, when daily writing lapsed – gaps which Addy later attempted to fill with memories. It would appear by then that Addy was beginning to have a future audience firmly in mind, as private thoughts occur less often, and normal day-to-day activities take over.

As a younger woman, Addy was more inclined to concentrate in her diary on one or two special events or impressions with which she was personally preoccupied. She appeared to get enjoyment out of writing and sometimes adopted a quite imaginative and romantic style, quite suitable for a wider audience. On 3 June 1859 she wrote:

We started for Sofala this morning in a thick fog but when we got to the top of Wyagdon Hill a beautiful sight met our view as the whole valley was full of dazzling white fog and the tops of the high hill round were standing out bright and clear under a cloudless blue sky – it put me in mind of Hugh Millers [sic] account of the creation in his Testimony of the Rocks – when we got to the top

of the hill at Sofala the fog was rolling up the hills leaving the valley in the sunshine.<sup>26</sup>

The fact that Addy had read Hugh Millers' *Testimony of the Rocks* demonstrates that she was at least reading current natural science/spiritual texts. *Testimony* was first published in 1857 and was part of a trend towards a questioning of creation and a closer examination of the anatomy of plants and animals. That Addy was able to access the book two years after publication is interesting. Perhaps her more affluent sister, Julia, or Julia's husband, purchased newly released texts, passing them on to Addy to read. Miller (1802–1856) was Professor of Surgery in the University of Edinburgh, and his book takes the form of twelve lectures (or chapters) of which the fourth is entitled 'The Mosaic Vision of Creation'. This is the chapter to which Addy is referring in the above extract.<sup>27</sup> A passage at the beginning of the chapter: 'a series of magnificent pictures, that form and then dissolve before the spectator, and comprise, in their vivid tints and pregnant outlines, the future history of a world', is particularly relevant to Addy's experience.

In a diary mainly concerned with day-to-day events, the rather poetic description above stands out as something special – an epiphany of sorts. There is a sense of happiness and peace reflected here, suggesting a change in mood for Addy – a relief, perhaps, from minding her sister's children and doing housework at Wyagdon. Nussbaum notes that, for the individual in colonial times, diaries provided a private space for experimentation, revision, and resistance to prevailing notions of identity, while, from the point of view of today's reader, the diary can reveal changes in the mood of the writer on a daily or at least a regular basis.<sup>28</sup> The diary entry describing the cloud formations on Wyagdon hill suggests some of this, while confirming too that Addy was reading some current texts.

Much later on, as a mature and busy married woman living with husband Willie at Cangoura near Bathurst, Addy wrote the following precise and practical entry. By now Addy was very much taken up with community work and family concerns. On 29 August 1884 she writes:

---

<sup>26</sup> AB book 1: 16.

<sup>27</sup> Hugh Miller, *Testimony of the Rocks: Geology in Its Bearings on the Two Theologies, Natural and Revealed* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1857) 158.

<sup>28</sup> Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject* xxi.

Another cloudless day. I went to town with the girls and brought Miss Mimi Johnston home with us, Mr Clements was very unwell today. Willie has gone to a meeting at All Saints College this evening.<sup>29</sup>

This rather shorthand version of events is typical of Addy's later diary entries. Unlike earlier, where personal feelings and sexual innuendo are obvious, there is nothing now that would preclude her writing from a public viewing. It is, however, less interesting for the reader, as it lacks the imaginative and poetic language of her earlier work. Therefore, parts of Addy's diary are suitable for, and perhaps anticipated, an audience, albeit one of only family and close friends. However, as a younger woman, there appeared to be a desire on Addy's part to keep her writing and her very personal thoughts entirely to herself, and it is these sections in particular that reveal a great deal about how life must have been for a young single woman in colonial Australia.



Thoughts of a personal nature are much more common in Addy's diaries than in her memoirs. In the extract below Addy uses her diary as a way of reviewing a rather private and even philosophic conversation she had with Willie after they were engaged to be married. She writes, on 21 October 1861:

Willie says firmness is only an imaginary virtue – I cannot agree with him there it is the one virtue I crave to possess above all others – not the firmness of obstinacy but that calm steadfast power of doing what I know is right a firmness that could resist all the forms of society and the world with God and duty as its sole aim. I don't wish to avoid the duties and trials of life but to be able to face and perform them solely as a means of happiness hereafter. Willie says an obstinate man is a fool – I quite agree – but obstinacy and firmness are two different things in my opinion – the former is still holding to a thing because we have said or done it – not allowing the experience of others to weigh with us for a moment – and the latter is doing as my conscience dictates.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> AB book 3: 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* book 1: 41.

Is there a suggestion of the strain of sexual abstinence here? Perhaps. In any case, Addy appears to see 'happiness hereafter' as being consistent with 'restraint and control, dignity, taste and morality', attributes which characterised a Victorian lady.<sup>31</sup> This is reminiscent too of George Eliot's description in the novel *Middlemarch* of Dorothea's response when visiting Rome – a response which George Eliot describes as typical of a girl 'brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism' whose 'ardent nature turned all her small allowance of knowledge into principles, fusing her actions into their mould'.<sup>32</sup> Addy's family appear to have been fairly devout Anglicans. Church attendance at Kelso and Brucedale is mentioned frequently in her writing – and Addy may well have had only 'a small allowance of knowledge' due to her lack of formal education.

Sex before marriage was, of course, frowned upon in Addy's day. However, there were many young couples in the colonies (and elsewhere) who, like Addy Bowler and Willie Suttor, were forced to live many miles apart during a long betrothal. Engaged for fifteen months, and with Willie away out west for many months at a time, it was inevitable when they did get together that discussions took place as to whether sex should wait until the wedding day.

Addy and Willie were married five months after the above entry, on 20 March 1862 at Kelso near Bathurst. After that, it was to be over six months before Addy began her diary writing again. However, it was to be almost thirty years later, 28 January 1890, when Wyagdon Station was finally sold, before Addy was to touch again on the circumstances, or at least the surroundings, of her earlier in-depth conversation with Willie concerning obstinacy and firmness. Addy had returned to Wyagdon to help pack up her sister's things after the sale, and writes from memory into her diary. In doing this, she blurs the boundary between memoir and diary:

There was the old wooden cot over the end of which I sat for many an hour trying to keep some child asleep – old boxes of dear Mothers and the remains of the old summer house made by Father and occupied often by Willie and myself in our courting days ...<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Penny Russell, *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994) 92. See also Katie Holmes, *Spaces in Her Day: Australian Women's Diaries 1920 – 1930s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1995), for sexual reference in diaries.

<sup>32</sup> George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. David Carroll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 158.

<sup>33</sup> AB book 3: 4.



Fig. 1 Front view of the old Wyagdon homestead. From the verandah the family could watch the passing activity on the road below. They could perhaps also discretely oversee the courtship of Addy Bowler and Willie Suttor in the summer house. (Photographer: M. Vivers, December 2005.)



Fig. 2 The church at Kelso where Addy and Willie Suttor were married. The grave of John Bowler, Addy's father, is just out of sight to the left between the tree and the church, close to the church entrance. (Photographer: M. Vivers, December 2005.)



Memories come flooding back and, by recording them, Addy introduces a detail not mentioned at the time of courtship – the *place* of courtship. Courtship for colonial gentry, according to Penny Russell, ‘was carried out largely under the public eye’, as part of the ‘social theatre’ required of people like the Suttors and the Bowlers.<sup>34</sup> The summer house provided a private place for Addy and Willie to discuss intimate matters, while at the same time it was in a position that allowed discrete observation from the Wyagdon house. On a recent visit to the old Wyagdon house, I could find no evidence of the summer house, which had apparently been demolished.



Fig. 3 Addy’s husband William Henry (Willie) Suttor (1834–1905) – in later life. (Photograph supplied by John Suttor, Brucedale, Bathurst. Photographer and date unknown.)

---

<sup>34</sup> Russell, *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity* 133.

As we read this brief account of courtship we are reminded of some of the benefits of writing that depends upon the retrospective deliberations of memory, accounts in which certain details are revealed that have been taken for granted and thus not mentioned in day-to-day diary entries. Long-term memory is juxtaposed with a very personal and immediate diary entry, thus combining two different genres – but in an obvious and unproblematic way so that immediate and private thoughts blend easily with memories to reveal an integral part of Addy’s life story. By reading this cross-genre text alongside the earlier entry that relates a private conversation, a side-narrative begins to emerge that tells us more about what it was like to be a European middle- or upper-class single woman in the colonial situation in Australia. At the same time we gain a more intimate insight into the society and culture of the period under discussion.

Not only do philosophical and personal thoughts infiltrate Addy’s diary, there is also sometimes a spiritual questioning. When she becomes pregnant, almost two years after her marriage, Addy questions her own mental and spiritual strength, using her diary as confidant. Meanwhile, her changing body, discomfort, and possible morning sickness, remain unsaid, in accordance with social etiquette. In the entry below, dated 13 November 1864, there is a noticeable questioning of her ability to become a suitable wife and mother, marking a brief return to her more lengthy diary entries as a single woman:

It is a long time since I opened my journal and I feel I am much changed since then – whether for better or worse God only knows. Perhaps it is because I am about to become a mother with so many new and sacred duties to perform that makes me more sensitive to all that is not good and pure – the whole world seems to have grown more wicked – cross and uncharitable – and I look forward in fear and trembling to bringing into such a world of sin and trouble a poor helpless innocent child – how shall I who am so full of sin keep my child pure and holy – it is through Gods help alone that such is possible – then grant me oh Lord that perfect trust and faith that will enable me to guide my child aright in the ways of life and love – so that when it please thee to call us from this world so may meet at thy footstool and I not be condemned for leading my child astray.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> AB book 1: 45.



This self-conscious searching seems to suggest that Addy saw herself as standing on the border between Victorian respectability and something ‘other’ that had ‘grown more wicked’. Is her sense of a threshold heightened by the fact that she and Willie were situated physically on the extreme edge of European civilisation, where an uncivilised ‘other’ extended for miles beyond the homestead gate? Or is the sinful ‘other’ associated with the ‘civilised’ world she has left behind? The American civil war was in process at the time, with all its racial and moral implications, and details were widely reported in Australia. Or is there an inner struggle that Addy is trying to resolve, perhaps an attraction to another man? This passage emphasises her heightened awareness of a woman’s role as the guardian of purity within the home, as the birth of her first baby approaches – with all its associated dangers and responsibilities.

There is an indication too, perhaps, that just too much was expected of colonial women both spiritually and physically, living as they were in conditions much more difficult and complex than those experienced in Britain where the original standards were set. Miriam Dixon suggests that colonial women were often expected to be ‘more British than British’, as they struggled to adhere to ideals already, in some cases, less stringently adhered to back ‘home’. In fact, Cynthia Huff says that the ideal of a ‘separate sphere concept’ for men and women was a fiction that did not reflect the spatial reality of the majority of women living in nineteenth century Britain.<sup>36</sup>

Sara Mills also points out that, in the mid-nineteenth century, many women in Britain were breaking through barriers and challenging perceptions of what was socially acceptable. This applied particularly to women who set off to travel by themselves in foreign countries where they challenged the rules concerning women moving into the public sphere.<sup>37</sup> With the lack of a real aristocracy in Australia, the ‘middle and bottom rungs’ of society attempted to subscribe to basic values deriving from an old hierarchical system, which provided a benchmark for identity. This, suggests Dixon, resulted in an exaggerated version of the Victorian ideal for many Australian women.<sup>38</sup> Anne Summers, referring to colonial women as ‘God’s police’,

---

<sup>36</sup> Huff, ‘Textual Boundaries’ 124.

<sup>37</sup> Sara Mills, *Gender and Colonial Space* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) 3.

<sup>38</sup> Dixon, *The Real Matilda* 195–203.

notes that women were expected to set the moral tone for the family. At the same time, not only did women lose all independence to the authority and economic support of their husbands, they lost all powers of self-determination as well.<sup>39</sup> This contradiction must have placed immense pressure on women like Addy.

While this may explain Addy's insecurities, the extract also shows that, as Kagle and Gramegna suggest, diaries could be a mechanism for handling a woman's inner fears.<sup>40</sup> Because of this, women were able to raise questions that invite speculation on the part of the reader today. For example, isolated homesteads seldom saw a minister of religion, and a certain amount of lawlessness existed beyond the fringes of closer settlement, especially where the treatment of Aborigines was concerned. It must have been a particularly heavy burden for some women to sustain what was traditionally seen by the Church as moral standards. Addy's self-doubt points to a personal desire to adhere to her religious beliefs for the sake of her child. The lack of such musings elsewhere in the diary would seem to confirm this link between the ideological pressures of motherhood and moral guardianship.

There may also have been another explanation for Addy's self-examination and inner doubts. This is associated with the loss of female power and sense of place. After marriage, Addy's separation from her family and friends at Bathurst mirrors, although to a lesser extent, the circumstances of British born women like Lucy Gray who married and went out to the colonies with their husbands. There the extreme loneliness they felt being so far from family and friends in unfamiliar surroundings, was especially painful. Nineteenth-century marriages demanded an 'unquestioning transference of loyalty from the parental family to the husband'. Russell observes that when couples moved to the distant colonies after marriage, 'marriage became not just a dominant but an all-determining relationship, imbued with a particular significance'. Such separation, she says, caused a redefinition of all emotional relationships and assumed 'enormous psychic significance in women's lives'.<sup>41</sup>

Addy's separation from family was not as drastic as that experienced by Lucy Gray. Nevertheless, loneliness may have been part of the explanation for occasional self-examination and requests for spiritual guidance, as Addy struggled to redefine

---

<sup>39</sup> Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police* 359.

<sup>40</sup> Kagle and Gramegna, 'Rewriting Her Life' 42.

<sup>41</sup> Penny Russell, 'Introduction', in *For Richer, for Poorer: Early Colonial Marriages*, ed. Penny Russell (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994) 9–10.

her life in terms of her isolation and her new responsibilities as a wife and expectant mother.

Kagle and Gramegna say that diaries are likely to be used 'by those individuals who feel a lack of, or decrease in, their control of their lives'. Addy's marriage to William Suttor, and their subsequent move to Borambil not only removed Addy from the security and companionship of family and friends, it also plunged her into an environment that was essentially male dominated. Because of her role as Willie's wife and housekeeper, Addy may have felt she had lost control over her own life, a control she had enjoyed as a single woman when living near Bathurst. There, although she was called upon to help with, for example, the preparation of weddings and caring for the sick, not to mention the constant care of her sister's children, she still had certain choices. Her opinion was constantly sought, and she was free to attend social events such as balls and picnics.

It is hard to imagine that someone as active, strong willed and independent as Addy appears to have been as a girl and young woman would find life on a remote outstation too difficult and depressing, whatever the changes in circumstance. In fact, when she leaves the Lachlan River station for good she recalls the good times they had there:

We left Borambil early in Oct. 1873 to come to our new house at Cangoura. I had many regrets as Borambil had been my first home with my dear husband and tho I [was] cut off from most of my other relations I had spent some happy days in the old slab hut.<sup>42</sup>

Interestingly, Kagle and Gramegna suggest that a sense of powerlessness can be a subjective perception independent of the individual's actual freedom of action. They add:

Indeed, many who lack control may have been indoctrinated by their families, friends, and/or societies to believe that they have, do not need, or do not really want such control. Since women are one of the groups that have been routinely subjected to forces that limit their control over their own lives, and since such

---

<sup>42</sup> AB book 2: 10.

forces while clearly present in our own society were more powerful in the past, we must consider such mechanisms when examining ... women's diaries.<sup>43</sup>

Addy may have felt on occasion that she had lost control of her life while out on the Lachlan. However, pessimistic and self-doubting entries are rare with this particular diary writer and, as I demonstrate, once she and her husband move back near Bathurst and become involved in community work she appears to regain the self-confidence and self-esteem that may have been lacking occasionally at Borambil. Both politically and socially she and her husband were to become very public people in later life.



Did a more public life mean that Addy now expected that her diary might eventually become a public document that would be circulated beyond family and friends? This may be so, and may be one of the reasons why, as she grew older and more involved in community matters, she generally wrote more economically, simply recording events rather than elaborating on her feelings. Or did economy of expression simply reflect her age, and the transition from a more self-conscious young woman to a self-satisfied matron? On the other hand, the shorter entries may have simply indicated lack of time and incentive to write more.

There were still exceptions, however. On 10 February 1887, Addy writes about a family argument which occurred when Frank Suttor, a relative, failed to gain parliamentary election. (Frank was opposed to the proposed Free Trade Bill which Willie and Addy and many others were vocal in supporting.) Addy writes:

I went to Bradwardine to express my sorrow for them [Frank's family] but found I was not welcome as Frank and Emily think Willie has done all he could to get Frank beaten and they raked up things of years ago that I had never heard of – I asked Frank for goodness sake to go and have it out with Willie at once for I know well Willie had done nothing he could be ashamed of and I decided

---

<sup>43</sup> Kagle and Gramegna, 'Rewriting Her Life' 42.

I would not repeat to any one even Willie a single word that passed between us.<sup>44</sup>

When writing this entry it seems that Addy was keeping her diary very much to herself and did not expect anyone to read it, thinking of it as a way of working through her feelings about a possible rift in the family. Such entries make a public/private classification extremely problematic. However, at about the same time, she was filling in the gaps of her diary with memories, and we have to assume that the diary and memoir sections were being considered together as a complete document to be eventually handed on to the Suttor children.

It is important to note too that, when the above extract is read carefully, Addy does not repeat the actual *details* of the conversation she had with Frank's family, thus abiding by her decision not to reveal the conversation. As such, although Addy's diary appears very private in some places, certain little constraints indicate she may have anticipated that, at some time (perhaps after her death), the bulk of her writings might be made public – but just how public will always be debatable.

In her essay 'I Write for Myself and Strangers', Lynn Bloom discusses some of the features that she feels distinguish private diaries from those intended ultimately for an outside audience of some kind. 'Truly private diaries', writes Bloom are those:

bare-bones works written primarily to keep records of receipts and expenditures, the weather, visits to and from neighbours, or public occurrences of both the institutional and the sensational sort. Written with neither art nor artifice, they are so terse they seem coded; no reader outside the author's immediate society or household could understand them without extra-textual information.<sup>45</sup>

In some places Addy's diary contains the discursive styles described by Bloom, where details are recorded in a somewhat terse style, and these shorter entries are of less interest to the reader. But, many of her earlier entries go far beyond 'bare-bones' in that they reveal personal feelings, frustrations and joys, as well as day-to-day events. Addy's diary contains some quite delightful and detailed descriptions of events,

---

<sup>44</sup> AB book 3: 52.

<sup>45</sup> Lynn Z. Bloom, "'I Write for Myself and Strangers': Private Diaries as Public Documents', in *Inscribing the Daily* 25.

places and people that make reading a pleasure to the outsider – although the identities of some of the people mentioned are not always clear.

Significantly, in certain places in her diary Addy is able to inject some of her innermost feelings into her writing, providing today's reader with not only a glimpse of a particular female self, but also a unique female representation of a more personal side of colonial life. Notwithstanding the uncertainty of Addy's ultimate plan for her diary and memoirs, her more private entries allow the reader access to a deeper understanding of what it actually felt like to live as a colonial woman. Her writings thereby provide a better understanding of the social and cultural milieu of the time.

Having said that, we cannot expect a comprehensive and complete record in diaries and we remain aware of their selective nature, regardless of expected audience. As Bloom says, the diarist pretends simply to transcribe the details of experience, but clearly some events are more important to the narrative 'I' than others.<sup>46</sup> Lack of time and writing materials may also have influenced the length of diary entries. Moreover, certain matters that are important to us today may not have appeared so to the writer at the time. Recognition of selectivity alerts us to the fact that certain historically useful information may have been excluded – and we are encouraged to ask why. One significant omission in Addy's diary is the mention of Aboriginal people, who must have been very much part of her colonial space, not only during Addy's life near Bathurst, but especially at Borambil on the Lachlan – and, in fact, they are mentioned later on in her memoirs.



The lack of a need by the diary writer to assign meaning, or an hierarchical or cause and effect structure, alerts us to an important break with the traditional public narrative form that is usually structured around, and gives precedence to, a specific subject. While the writer still remains the central figure in the diary, the loose, fragmented structure and stand-alone language and phrases often alert the reader to marginal subjects and side-narratives that are worthwhile investigating, as we search for a clearer insight into a particular period of Australia's history.

---

<sup>46</sup> Bloom, "'I Write for Myself and Strangers'" 28.

As such, while memoirs allow the historian an opportunity to use anecdotes as discursive aids which both energise and personalise a mainstream narrative, side-narratives are less easily recognisable in that genre. Outside issues exist very much in the shadow of the dominant theme, the traditional cause-and-effect structure failing to accommodate them in any meaningful way. In other words, they exist, if at all, only as a discreet support system. However, in diaries, sub-narratives can be brought to the immediate notice of the reader by way of a name or a few words not easily accommodated within the traditional narrative structure of the memoir. Those who wish to pursue such ‘asides’ by searching back and forth through various entries in the same diary source, or by way of other sources, can ultimately write a new narrative for themselves – with a new subject at the centre.

For example, there is a marginal figure in Addy’s diaries, Hylton Suttor, the son of sister, Julia, whose life is worth looking into. We first meet Hylton as a child at Wyagdon.<sup>47</sup> Writing in her diary on 18 July 1859 Addy says:

Hylton has been out toiling all day poor child he finds the saddle is not the softest seat in the world – his face is most melancholy and he says Oh!! I am so sore – he is by no means fond of walking but he was glad to get off and lead his horse today.<sup>48</sup>

Then, two years later, on 25 January 1861, when Hylton was apparently old enough to join in more adult and manly activities, such as horse racing:

John [Suttor, Julia’s husband] Arthur and Hylton went to the Races at Sofala today.

And the next day:

They did not return from Sofala until 2 oclock [sic] this morning.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Julia was married to Willie Suttor’s uncle, John Suttor.

<sup>48</sup> AB book 1: 17.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* book 1: 36.

Much later, 3 June 1887, as an adult 'man about town', perhaps having inherited his father's weakness for alcohol, Hylton is still apparently somewhat averse to honest hard work. He has got himself into serious trouble with the law:

A dull day. Willie came home this morning. Hylton was arrested in Sydney on Wednesday for obtaining money under false pretence and is remanded on bail until next Wednesday.<sup>50</sup>

Then, on 9 June:

Hylton was committed for trial at the Quarter Sessions and allowed bail. I went to town with the girls. Julias [sic] cold is better.<sup>51</sup>

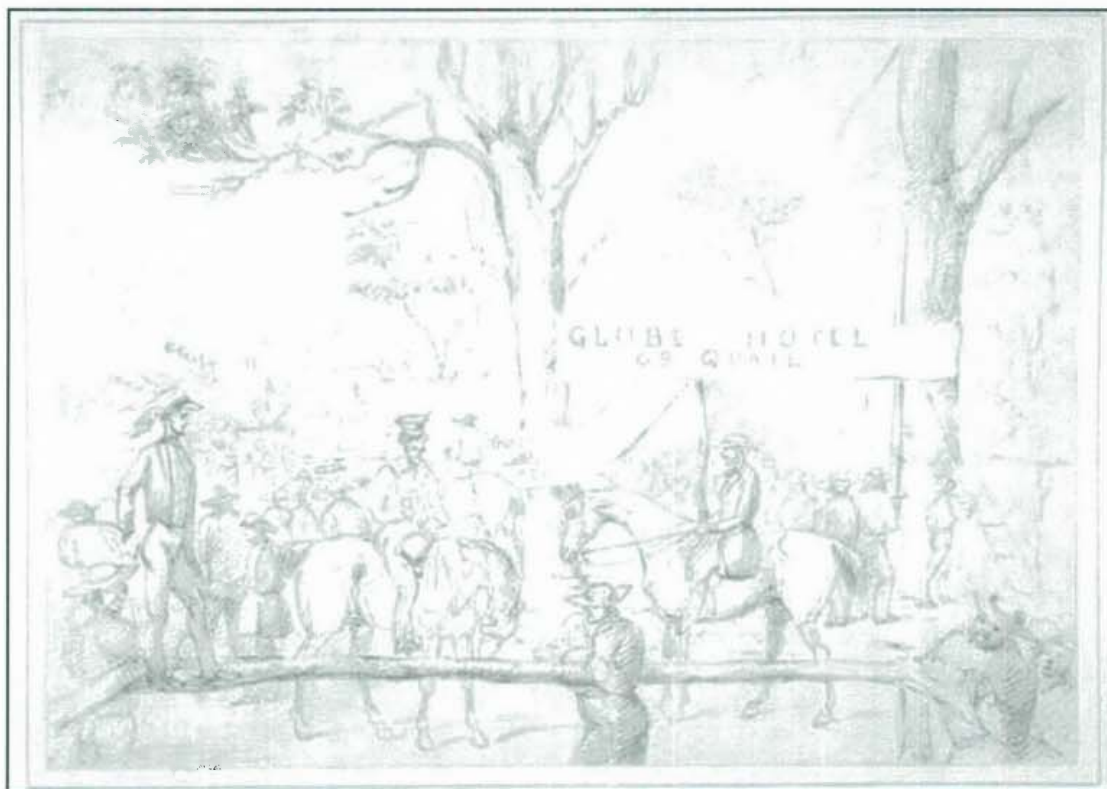


Fig. 4 A pencil drawing of the Sofala races in 1852 by Thomas Balcombe. (National Library of Australia (nla.pic-an4698043-v).)<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* book 2: 59.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> This picture can be accessed at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an4698043>. [Cited 9 June 2005.]



There is then a gap in Addy's diary and, on 29 May 1889, she attempts a 'catch up':

It is now a year and nine months since I wrote in this book... It was three years on Monday since John Suttor died and yet my sisters affairs are as unsettled as ever and all through that wretch Hylton – I think he is near the end of his tether now and things begin to look brighter for Julia.<sup>53</sup>

Court records show that Hylton Suttor had actually come before the Supreme Court of New South Wales before the false pretences case in 1887. Disputes over property and debts, and eventual bankruptcy, are recorded in the Supreme Court *Law Reports* and *Weekly Notes* during the period 1885–1901. Early attempts by Hylton to redeem the stations of Tomanbil and Walla Walla in the Forbes district became part of an ongoing dispute over rights to the estate of his late father John Suttor, Julia's husband. W.H. Suttor (Willie) was a trustee for the Suttor estate. Claims on the estate, and by the estate, must not only have tied up the finances of the rest of John Suttor's family, especially wife Julia, but have taken up much of the time and energy of Willie and Addy Suttor. Addy's hopes that Hylton might be at the 'end of his tether' by May 1889 proved over optimistic, however, as matters pertaining to Hylton's debts were still before the courts in 1901.<sup>54</sup>

More would no doubt be revealed about 'that wretch Hylton' by examining court records and newspapers articles from the period. For example, what actually happened when he did reach the 'end of his tether'? Were things really looking better for Julia in 1887, or did Hylton's problems continue to impact on the whole family? Addy does not dwell on such matters, although the collapse of her husband's grazing enterprises may have been exacerbated by debts incurred by people like Hylton Suttor.

This anecdote demonstrates how diary entries can provide clues to side-narratives that can flesh out a bigger picture of Australian colonial life. Addy's diary introduces a personal aspect to Hylton Suttor's story, and to the story of his mother

---

<sup>53</sup> AB book 2: 61.

<sup>54</sup> For example see: 'Moore V. Suttor', in *Weekly Notes, Vol I* (Supreme Court of NSW, 1885) 107; 'Suttor V. Moore', in *Law Reports, Vol VI* (Supreme Court of NSW, 1885) 198–208; 'Ex Parte Suttor', in *State Reports, Bankruptcy and Probate Jurisdiction, Vol. I* (Supreme Court of NSW, 1901), 13–19; 'Re Suttor', in *Weekly Notes, Vol. VII* (Supreme Court of NSW, 1891) 83–85; 'Re Suttor Ex Parte Suttor', in *Weekly Notes, Vol. XVIII* (Supreme Court of NSW, 1901) 102; 'Suttor V. Moore', in *Weekly Notes, Vol. II* (Supreme Court of NSW, 1886) 53; 'Suttor V. Moore', in *Weekly Notes, Vol. III* (Supreme Court of NSW, 1886) 3.

Julia Suttor. Read in conjunction with the official accounts of trial and counter-trial, we get a more comprehensive picture of the man, and of the social, cultural and legal milieu that surrounded him and his family. By combining the personal and the official, a more comprehensive view of an individual in relation to their environment is possible.

Gillian Whitlock speaks of reading women's autobiographies for connections, and the above analysis demonstrates how that can be done. She notes that women's autobiography (and the diary is particularly relevant here) reveals what it was like to live and write as a colonial woman. But, women's writing has always been 'a matter of negotiation, a balancing act, a process of inventing the self in relation to others'.<sup>55</sup> Side-narratives that introduce other protagonists and their lives juxtapose with the writer's personal narrative and her own sense of self, providing a play of texts that enriches our concept of colonial life.



In spite of certain limitations that might have material, racial, cultural or social causes, relative freedom from the traditions and constraints imposed upon more 'public' writings would appear to place personal, and in particular female, diary writing in a superior position for historical purposes. For one thing, diary entries leave the writer freer to question, albeit in subtle ways, the society and culture that surrounds her. Although remaining bound, both in her writing and in her life, by the restrictions imposed upon her by her Victorian background, Addy tests the boundaries in various ways in her diary. For example, by questioning her ability to live up to the Church's expectations in bringing up her child she highlights an aspect of colonial life that placed impossible burdens on women. This tends to have been overlooked in colonial discourse that concentrates more on how men overcame difficulties and adversity in the colonies .

Smith and Watson have observed a 'testing' in diaries by women. They suggest that:

---

<sup>55</sup> Gillian Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (London: Cassell, 2000) 7.

Even as they wrote about themselves in what appeared to be a 'free space of interiority beyond the boundaries of a gendered hierarchy in the unwomanly, the unspoken, and the undervalued,' their writing of daily selves reproduced gendered ideologies which they both trouble and reproduce.<sup>56</sup>

Addy 'troubles' Imperial and Victorian ideologies in some of the extracts I have discussed above. However, as she gets older and watches her children growing up, she begins to feel a sense of personal achievement. After moving closer to Bathurst she becomes involved in community work, while her husband travels regularly to Sydney as a member of the House of Commons. On 20 March 1887, while living at Calgourra near Bathurst, she writes:

A wet day and our silver wedding day – We went to an opening service in our new Mission room this afternoon – I trust the work will prosper I suppose I shall only have a few more years to labour for it – if I could have had a peep 25 years ago at my present prospect and surroundings – how many doubts and fears would have been set at rest and if my dear husband had less anxiety about money matters I feel there would be nothing left to wish for.<sup>57</sup>

By now we have shared with Addy, through her diary and her memoirs, her relatively carefree life as a young girl and adventurous young woman, and we have shared too some of her doubts and fears as a wife and mother. In this entry it is nice to see that she has grown in self-confidence and recognises herself as a useful, strong and successful human being. Addy's self-creation can be followed throughout her diary and, in a sense, this development can be seen as a useful metaphor for colonial development, both in the Bathurst region and beyond. The life of enthusiasm and relative freedom enjoyed by early squatters and settlers, often single young men, became more complex as male/female ratios began to equalise, and responsibilities for families became an issue. With the discovery of gold, stricter law enforcement was imperative, making individuals more accountable for their actions. Then, as farmers and graziers began to prosper around Bathurst, there was a period when self-

---

<sup>56</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) 98.

<sup>57</sup> AB book 3: 55.

confidence and affluence consolidated an 'elite' class amongst those who had taken up sufficient land to prosper. The Suttor families were very much part of that milieu.

There was to be a sting in the tail, however. The depression and droughts of the 1890s were to adversely affect Addy and her family, as they were to affect many others. Finally, Willie Suttor was forced to put most of his properties on the market, and the family moved to Sydney.



In spite of their selective nature, some doubt as to intended audience and even perhaps a question as to the degree of 'truthfulness', women's diaries are being increasingly recognised across disciplines as valuable for their various representations of everyday life during certain periods of history. For those who read them carefully, they facilitate a better understanding of the social, cultural, material and political milieu that controlled the lives of the writers, and those who shared space with them. By recognising the context and culture that surrounded the writing of a particular diary, and by taking note too of signs of sub-narratives, we can adopt a process which Clifford Geertz chooses to call 'thick description'. Thick description is a form of sophisticated 'reading between the lines' or 'close reading' of texts which allows an event to be 're-read in such a way as to reveal through the analysis of tiny particulars the behavioural codes, logics and motive forces controlling the whole society'.<sup>58</sup> With thick description, 'we can grasp the essential character of ... the various sorts of individuals within each culture', which can give a better overall picture of a particular colonial space – and ultimately the colonial situation as a whole. This is because, as Geertz says, and as poet William Blake suggests in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, 'the road to the general lies through a concern with the particular'.<sup>59</sup>

I suggest that diaries are particularly useful for the analysis of 'tiny particulars and behavioural codes, logics and motive forces'. As such, the diary 'becomes a vehicle for the examination and direction of its author's life' while, at the same time,

---

<sup>58</sup> John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* (New York: St. Martin, 1998) 34; Helen Buss, 'A Feminist Revision of New Historicism to Give Fuller Readings of Women's Private Writing', in *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, ed. Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) 86; Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 3–30.

<sup>59</sup> Clifford Geertz, 'The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man', in *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, ed. Kiernan Ryan (London: Arnold, 1996) 10.

becoming a vehicle for something much broader.<sup>60</sup> By inserting themselves and their more intimate feelings into their diaries, women like Addy Bowler (Suttor) effectively wrote the history of a particular colonial space from the inside out. In the words of Bunkers and Huff: 'women's diaries deserve to be understood and appreciated within the broadest possible contexts of academic discourse'.<sup>61</sup>

But what of journals, which can sometimes be a combination of diary, letter and memoir? In the next chapter I discuss the journals of Lucy Gray, and explore their potential usefulness in providing a better understanding of life and behaviour on the colonial frontier.



---

<sup>60</sup> Kagle and Gramegna, 'Rewriting Her Life' 42.

<sup>61</sup> Bunkers and Huff, eds, *Inscribing the Daily* 1.