

# *Introduction*

*To look at the symbolic dimensions of social action -- art, religion, ideology, science, law, morality, common sense -- is not to turn away from the existential dilemmas of life for some empyrean realm of de-emotionalized forms; it is to plunge into the midst of them. The essential vocation of interpretive anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus include them in the consultable record of what man has said.<sup>1</sup>*



While Clifford Geertz is primarily concerned with interpretive anthropology, there are similarities in his approach with recent investigations into those who guard ‘other sheep’ in the discipline of history. As part of that endeavour, the aim of this dissertation is to isolate and articulate ways in which women’s life writing, with all its emotional and symbolic dimensions, might be included more prominently in the ‘consultable record’ of Australia’s colonial past. I discuss first some of the genres that come under the heading of women’s life writing, and explore their special characteristics. With these characteristics in mind, I then suggest ways in which women’s writing might add something extra to our understanding of the past, and thus gain more respect as historical source material. I ask too, how non-linear textual structures like anecdotes, pictorial texts, and even silences, might be better understood, analysed, and disseminated productively in historical discourse. I also explore ways in which a woman’s formative years may have impacted upon her writing, within the general framework of Victorian middle-class ideologies, and I look at how some ideals were adjusted to suit the colonial circumstance. In doing this, I argue that a closer study of women’s life writing is necessary if we are to understand the colonial situation from anything other than a fairly narrow, androcentric, and imperialistic perspective – a perspective that has, up until fairly recently, dominated the telling of Australia’s past.

---

<sup>1</sup> Clifford Geertz, ‘Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture’, in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 30.

My main concern is that, while ‘guarding other sheep in other valleys’, the voices of middle-class European women have, at best, been only partly heard. This is in spite of the fact that historians have been attempting to better understand the complexities of colonial life and colonial endeavour. Meanwhile, literary theorists, philosophers, feminists, psychoanalysts, social scientists and, of course, anthropologists, have experimented with new ways of analysing texts, and have been paying more attention to marginal voices and marginal narratives. Because historical and literary texts are both forms of discourse, historians concerned about a comprehensive examination of the past must take into account interdisciplinary research if they are to confront complexities in source material. Although this is happening to a certain extent, there is still a noticeable lack of reference to women’s primary texts in much historical writing, and there is obviously more to be done.

In my honours thesis (2003), and in an article published in the *Journal of Australian Colonial History* (2002), I laid foundations for more comprehensive research into this problem.<sup>2</sup> I briefly examined possible differences in male and female texts, and the importance of involving family and domestic matters in history. Descriptions of first encounters, accommodation, acculturation and power, were also explored. With the use of interdisciplinary insights some interesting concepts came to light, and I determined to investigate further in the hope that ways might be found to introduce aspects of women’s life writing more productively into historical discourse.

In this thesis I look closely at how two women, Adelaide Bowler from Bathurst and Lucy Gray from Ireland, England, and later Queensland, represent themselves and the colonial spaces they occupied, through their writings and (in the case of Lucy Gray) visual art.<sup>3</sup> As well as accessing day-to-day life through the eyes of these women, I use ideas from various disciplines to analyse their texts. The context in which the women wrote is examined, and I explore ways in which their backgrounds, and an expected audience, may have shaped the content, emphasis, and even the silences, within the writings. I also examine pictorial texts such as sketches, drawings and paintings, some of which are embedded in one of the manuscripts.

---

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Vivers, ‘Evidence of European Women in Early Contact History: With Particular Reference to Northern New South Wales and Queensland’, (BA(HONS.), University of New England, Armidale, 2003); Meg Vivers, ‘Dealing with Difference: Evidence of European Women in Early Contact History’, *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 4, no. 2 (2002) 343.

<sup>3</sup> Adelaide Bowler, ‘Bowler (Suttor) Diaries and Memoirs 1840–1890’, (private collection, Sydney); Lucy Gray, ‘Journal, Diaries, Correspondence and Fragments’, *Lucy Gray Papers* (JOL OM 75–123).

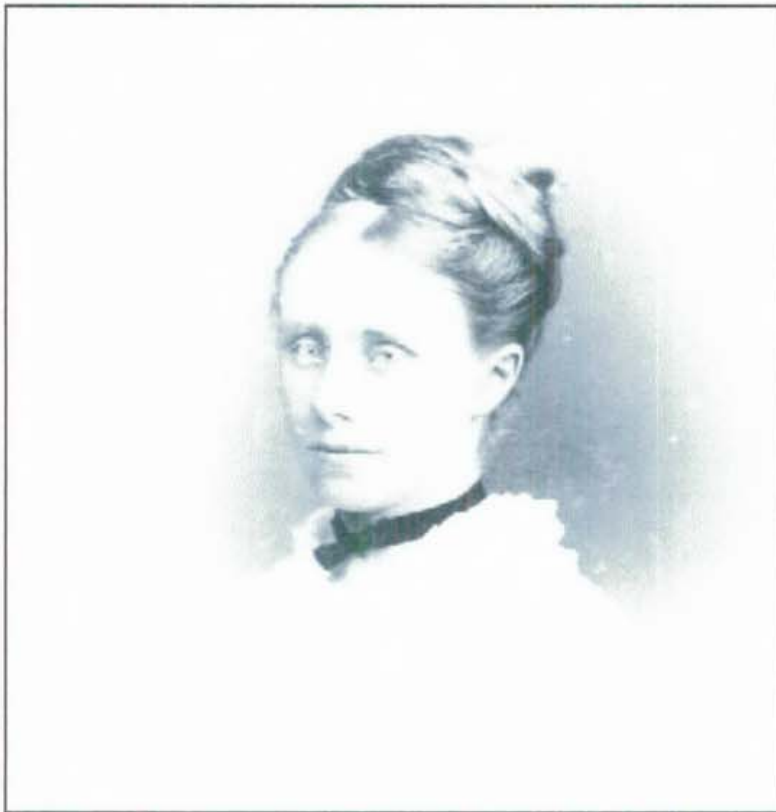


Fig. 1 Photograph of Lucy Gray, née Waters (1840–1879). Dated 1875, the year she and her husband left Australia, Lucy looks younger than the thirty-five she would have been then, suggesting this photograph has been ‘touched up’ by the photographer.

(Photograph: John Hubert Newman, Oxford Street, Sydney (1875). Copy courtesy Jane Putt, Sydney.)



Fig. 2 Adelaide Agnes Henrietta Suttor, née Bowler (1837–1920), as a young woman, about the time she commenced writing her diary in 1857.

(From A.J. Hawksford, *The Bowler Family 1239–1987* (privately published, 1987) 26. Photographer: unknown.)

The manuscripts and textual fragments that I use are relatively unknown. Such works have been chosen to avoid some of the restrictions imposed upon more widely published writings during, and even before formal editing. As Gillian Whitlock has suggested, citing John Thurston, the original intentions of an autonomous author can be lost through the intervention of a series of subsequent authors, editors, texts, environments of writing, market factors and paths of dissemination, all of which can be unstable and open-ended.<sup>4</sup> However, whether published or unpublished, both male and female writers were (and are) still forced to negotiate between their own desire for self expression, and discursive frameworks dictated by matters such as political, cultural and social etiquette. On the other hand, as I will demonstrate, Victorian women's life writing was emancipated to some extent, when compared with much of the male writing of the period, by its very marginality in relation to what was expected of the mainstream.

My principal primary source materials originate from colonial Australia during the period 1837–1890, and consist of the diaries, memoirs, and journals of the two women mentioned above who lived outside the villages and towns of New South Wales and Queensland. Both of these writers could be classified as 'middleclass' or 'upper-middleclass', and they lived with their families, or husbands, on self-purchased or government-granted land. As such, neither could be categorised as urban dwellers, at least not during the period under examination.

I am limiting the number of principal sources intentionally in order to reduce variables that might be introduced by differences in circumstance such as class and colonial environment. My research will be supported, however, by a selection of extracts from the writings of both men and women from elsewhere in Australia and overseas, with some reference to Canadian writers and Canadian research, which is well advanced in this field of enquiry. Ultimately, I anticipate that my findings might be applicable to an even wider range of life writing, as I argue that life writing produced by those who have been seen traditionally as marginal players in the colonial enterprise should be examined more closely, and referenced more often, if we are to gain a better understanding of Australia's complex past. This is based on an assumption made in the early nineteen eighties by Carol Gilligan that:

---

<sup>4</sup> Gillian Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (London: Cassell, 2000) 40. From a discussion on Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*.

The way people talk about their lives is of significance, that the language they use and the connections they make reveal the world that they see and in which they act.<sup>5</sup>

I should stress that, in spite of a substantial literary theory influence, my research is being carried out under the umbrella of the discipline of History. As such, my focus will be on the benefits of my findings to historians. While cognisant of contemporary debates, it is not my priority to examine or question the literary theories that I adopt, but rather to take advantage of various findings to support and inspire my own readings of women's texts. In doing so, I hope to better explore what my primary source material has to offer in relation to the social, philosophical, material, economic, political and psychological milieu that informed the various writings and influenced the way people lived in colonial Australia.

My principal sources consist of a combination of memoir, diary and journal, all of which could be loosely classified as autobiography. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson make some useful comments on life writing in general. They point out that:

The complexity of autobiographical texts requires reading practices that reflect on the narrative tropes, sociocultural contexts, rhetorical aims, and narrative shifts within the historical or chronological trajectory of the text.

Writers of life narratives, they say, perform several rhetorical acts, 'justifying their own perceptions, upholding their reputations, disputing the accounts of others, settling scores, conveying cultural information'. As such, any utterance in an autobiographical text, even if inaccurate or distorted, characterizes its writer.<sup>6</sup> Further, the cultural, social and material environment in which the writer lives and writes contributes to the content and thrust of the discourse, being essentially the driving force behind it. Therefore, although autobiographical truth might appear to be simply an 'intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader', there are other truths waiting to be discovered within the sub-narratives that emerge through a careful examination

---

<sup>5</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1982) 2.

<sup>6</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) 10.

of the language, tropes, emphases, and even the silences and irregularities, in the various genres of life writing.<sup>7</sup> Such matters will be explored in later chapters.

Judith Allen, writing in the 1980s, warned that overlooking or distorting evidence concerning women [and presumably from women] ‘casts doubt on the claim that historical method involves the disinterested research of all available evidence’.<sup>8</sup> Approximately ten years later, Patricia Grimshaw and Julie Evans examined the writings of three British women in the Australian colonies. They discussed how, through their texts, women were able to challenge dominant versions of ‘pioneering’.<sup>9</sup> Grimshaw et al. may have used the impetus of second wave feminism as an incentive for focussing on colonial women and their writing, but the authors appear to have avoided the confusion of the theoretical debate of the 80s and 90s, which soon entered the political arena as dimensions of race, class and gender were included in the discussion.<sup>10</sup> They concentrated instead on colonial Australia, and on a comprehensive study of primary source material. In doing so, together with Allen, they helped clear the way for further research into women’s colonial writing.

Also in Australia, researchers from across disciplines, such as Gillian Whitlock, Joy Hooton, Susan Sheridan, Penny Russell, Lucy Frost and Katie Holmes, have been looking at women’s lives and their writing in the colonial situation. Although these particular scholars concentrate more on published works (except for Russell and Holmes) their research is useful, as they point to some of the unique perspectives and special characteristics of women’s texts. Influences and phenomena that appear to be strongly relevant to Australia are also explored. Women’s history was, according to Whitlock, the first form of identity history taken up with enthusiasm in Australia. She is especially concerned with how the identity of women, and other so-called marginal players, is portrayed through memory in the colonial context. Hooton has examined the sense of immediacy conveyed by women’s writing, particularly in letters and diaries, and Russell discusses the milieu and manners that

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

<sup>8</sup> Judith Allen, ‘Evidence and Silence: Feminism and the Limits of History’, in *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, ed. C. Pateman and Gross E. (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986) 174.

<sup>9</sup> Patricia Grimshaw and Julie Evans, ‘Colonial Women on Intercultural Frontiers: Rosa Campbell Praed, Mary Bundock and Katie Langloh Parker’, *Australian Historical Studies* 27, no. 106 (1996) 79–95. See also Teo Hsu-Ming, ‘Future Fusions and a Taste for the Past: Literature, History and the Imagination of Australianness’, *Australian Historical Studies* 33, no. 118 (2002) 132.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006) 175–78; Susan Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001) 1–20.

controlled the lives of the gentry. Sheridan explores more public writings, such as journalism, lyric poetry, romantic fictions and nationalist novels. She is interested in the cultural production of certain texts, but does not favour less edited, unpublished works in her deliberations. Holmes explores the sensitivities, patterns and relationships revealed through a careful reading of women's diaries.<sup>11</sup> I build upon the work of all these writers as I examine the texts of Lucy Gray and Addy Bowler, also adding a visual dimension as I discuss the pictorial texts of Lucy Gray.

There was an international trend in the 1980s to test old generalizations by examining history from female perspectives. For example, in the United States, Linda K. Kerber and Jane De Hart Mathews edited a selection of essays entitled *Women's America: Refocusing the Past* in which women's participation in the colonial and post-colonial experience was examined. It was concluded that the public-private division was less sharply exaggerated than had been suggested in previous writings. (I explore this concept further in Chapter 2.4.) It was also suggested that, by examining women's private writings, a new perspective and a more complex understanding of traditional categories of historical interpretation, were made possible.<sup>12</sup>

Research into women's life writing has been particularly popular in Canada. This has been made possible with the availability of original women's texts generated in Upper Canada in particular, where a number of middle- and upper-class women joined those who emigrated in the 1830s. Many of these women wrote prolifically, in various genres, about their experiences.<sup>13</sup> Canadians such as Helen Buss, Marlene Kadar, Elizabeth S. Cohen, Christl Verduyn and Alice Van Wart have researched different forms of this life writing. Building upon the work of literary scholars such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, they examine writing previously considered as 'non-literary' – including unpublished texts produced by 'ordinary' men and women.

---

<sup>11</sup> Gillian Whitlock, 'Becoming Migloo', in *The Ideas Market: An Alternative Take on Australia's Intellectual Life*, ed. David Carter (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2004) 236–58; Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire*, especially pages 189, 198, 202; Joy Hooton, 'Life-Lines in Stormy Seas: Some Recent Collections of Women's Diaries and Letters', *Australian Literary Studies* 16, no. 1 (1993) 3–33; Joy Hooton, *Stories of Herself When Young: Autobiographies of Childhood by Australian Women* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990). Also Lucy Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady: Voices from the Australian Bush*, (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble Publishers, 1989); Susan Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s–1930s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1995); Penny Russell, *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994); Katie Holmes, *Spaces in Her Day: Australian Women's Diaries 1920s – 1930s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Linda K. Kerber and Jane De Hart Mathews, *Women's America: Refocusing the Past* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 1–22. See also Sara Mills, *Gender and Politeness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire* 46.

Even fragments from notebooks are taken into account. As part of this work, they see some advantage in the dissolution of boundaries between genres.<sup>14</sup>

Kadar sees particular advantage in examining non-linear narratives, fragments, and unpublished documents (including poetry). She suggests too, citing Susan Winnett, that we must:

begin to question seriously the determinants that govern the mechanics of our narratives, the notion of history as a sense-making operation, and the enormous investment the patriarchy has in maintaining them.<sup>15</sup>

Kadar also stresses the importance of taking into account the 'complex configuration of the reader'.

Cohen goes further. She sees literature's expansion as inviting exchange across disciplinary boundaries, and the acceptance of 'life writing' as possibly breaking down barriers between the disciplines of history and literature. More importantly, she notes that considerable numbers of historians are now open to trying out new ideas from other disciplines. Of particular relevance to this thesis, and to my objectives, she sees the study of life writing as 'permitting us to focus on one or a few individuals', thus providing a 'laboratory on a manageable scale in which to experiment with the problems of interpretation inherent in the relationship between text and its makers'.<sup>16</sup>

Verduyn notes that acceptance of various kinds of writing, where writers find it easier to write *in* their lives, has meant acceptance of texts where women have not always written, or spoken, in a language or style which 'suited the judges of good

---

<sup>14</sup> Helen M. Buss, 'Constructing Female Subjects in the Archive: A Reading of Three Versions of One Woman's Subjectivity', in *Working in Women's Archives: Researching Women's Private Literature and Archival Documents*, ed. Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001) 23–34; Helen M. 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) 86–103; Elizabeth S. Cohen, 'Court Testimony from the Past: Self and Culture in the Making of Text', in *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*, ed. Marlene Kadar (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 83–93; Marlene Kadar, 'Coming to Terms: Life Writing – from Genre to Critical Practice', in *Essays on Life Writing* 3–16; Christl Verduyn, 'Between the Lines: Marian Engle's *Cahiers* and Notebooks', in *Essays on Life Writing* 28–42. See also Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?* 145.

<sup>15</sup> Kadar, 'Coming to Terms' 11.

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, 'Court Testimony from the Past' 83–93.



taste'.<sup>17</sup> In much the same context, Van Wart is impressed by the flexibility of the diary form, in which the social history of people is given in more detail. She notes that:

Unlike the framed, contained, and closed thinking revealed in ... conventional (or male mode), the writing in women's diaries generally proceeds by indirection and reveals female thinking to be eidetic ... open-ended, and generative.

Citing Adrienne Rich, Van Wart says the subjective writing of women, that allows the exposition of thoughts, feelings, or ideas, 'enables a person to understand, to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives'.<sup>18</sup> I return to these ideas in later chapters.

As well as relevant work being done by Canadian researchers, the work of Sara Mills from the United Kingdom is important in the colonial context. In her analysis of women's travel writing Mills sees usefulness in transposing work already done on colonial discourse. However, although she sees some of this work as 'theoretically attractive', she is concerned that the writing of the colonial period is often described in masculine terms and thus it is difficult to fit women's writing into such frameworks.<sup>19</sup> Mills has recently been exploring the nature of spatial relations within the colonial context. In doing so, she has expressed a desire to move away from the psychoanalytical analysis that dominates much post-colonial theory and to concentrate instead on materialist feminist theory. She is particularly critical of the erasure by psychoanalytical theory of the 'specificity of the colonial context' and of the 'materiality of invasion, discrimination, murder, rape, expropriation of land and also of resistance'. She suggests that a more complex model of textuality and interpretation is called for.<sup>20</sup> I return to Mills' use of materialist theories when I explore ways in which female texts record the behaviour of early European settlers in their dealings with Australian Aborigines.

Mills, rather than concentrating on national identity and subjectivity in general, investigates the parameters within which individuals managed to construct

---

<sup>17</sup> Verduyn, 'Between the Lines' 28–31.

<sup>18</sup> Alice Van Wart, "'Life out of Art": Elizabeth Smart's Early Journals', in *Essays on Life Writing* 21–27.

<sup>19</sup> Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 5.

<sup>20</sup> Sara Mills, *Gender and Colonial Space* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) 5–12.

subject positions for themselves and, of particular relevance here, of what behaviour was thought appropriate in an ever-changing colonial society.<sup>21</sup> Although her work is informed by Foucauldian discourse theory, as is the case with many feminist writers, she also endorses general criticism of the Foucauldian ‘seemingly a-political’ position and ‘lack of attention to historical specificity’. She is critical, too, of his failure to address gender, and his ‘implicit, or sometimes overt, misogyny’.<sup>22</sup> However, as Mills says, Foucault’s work is useful in helping to analyse a ‘multiplicity of discursive positionings’, and thus can be relevant when examining different texts that have been generated within an extremely complex colonial situation.

In spite of Foucault’s neglect of gender, his interest in history as a literary form makes much of his work particularly relevant.<sup>23</sup> Importantly, he says: ‘One ought to read everything, study everything ... one must have at one’s disposal the general archive of a period at a given moment’.<sup>24</sup> Also, Foucault’s suggestion that the traditional historian’s ‘apparent serenity’ follows from his ‘concerted avoidance of the exceptional’ and his ‘reduction of all things to the lowest common denominator’, although perhaps a little less relevant today, has ongoing implications. Like Geertz, he points to the importance of the recognition of certain elements which appear to be ‘without history’ like ‘sentiments, love, conscience, instincts’, elements which occur and recur in different scenes and different roles, but which ultimately determine the direction and behaviour of individuals. Even the instances where such elements are absent must be defined. Historians, he says, must be able to recognize the events of history, ‘its jolts, its surprises, its unsteady victories and unpalatable defeats’. Sentiment, he stresses, plays a part, and every sentiment has a history of its own.<sup>25</sup>

Inspired by the groundbreaking work of people like Foucault and Geertz, United States literary critics Gallagher and Greenblatt see the development of New Historicism as providing a licence to study marginal voices, and to look in more detail

---

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 6–7.

<sup>22</sup> See in particular Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989, 1995) xv–xvi. Nussbaum points out that, even in his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault limits himself to discussions concerning male sexuality.

<sup>23</sup> See Michael Foucault ‘Introduction to Rousseau’s *Dialogues*’, ‘What Is an Author?’, ‘The Order of Things’, ‘On the Ways of Writing History’, ‘On the Archaeology of the Sciences: Response to the Epistemology Circle’, in *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994) 33–51, 205–222, 261–268, 279–296, 297–334.

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, ‘The Order of Things’ 263.

<sup>25</sup> D.F. Bouchard, *Michel Foucault – Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977) 139–99.

at what is behind those voices, rather than depending upon the text alone and upon approved 'literary' works. They welcome what they call the 'methodological eclecticism' of New Historicism, which gives access to a wider range of texts and textual fragments, and also a wider range of methods within which to work. Also inspired by earlier findings, Anne McClintock's study of British imperialism gives an excellent overview of gender, race and class relations under British rule. She presents examples of how and why the work of earlier scholars like Lacan and Freud holds an ambivalent fascination for feminists.<sup>26</sup>

Where colonialism is concerned, James Walter, in a chapter entitled 'Biography, Psychobiography and Cultural Space' (1992), speaks of the rupture and reconstruction that can impact on a settler society, as individuals break away from a familiar metropolitan culture.<sup>27</sup> I go further and discuss this adjustment from a female perspective, giving examples of written and pictorial texts that demonstrate how it must have actually *felt* for early settlers to adjust to their new circumstances. For information concerning visual art in colonial Australia I refer in particular to Caroline Jordan's *Picturesque Pursuits* (2005), as I discuss how Lucy Gray represents Australian landscapes through her art.<sup>28</sup> In Chapter 2.2, I explore a special sense of place in women's writing, bearing in mind that Peter Read, in *Belonging* (2000), challenges some assumed differences between European and Indigenous relationships to land. He stresses the special relationship that develops between some Europeans and the Australian landscape, even after a relatively short space of time. I enlarge on this, as I suggest that some representations of landscapes produced by female settlers reveal a certain spirituality almost akin to the Aboriginal sense of place.<sup>29</sup>

Originally from Texas, in the United States of America, Lucy Frost's incentive for producing *No Place for a Nervous Lady* (1989) was her concern that popular stories of both the American frontier and the Australian bush did not encourage readers to ask realistic questions about the women who experienced those

---

<sup>26</sup> Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> James Walter, 'Biography, Psychobiography, and Cultural Space', in *Shaping Lives: Reflections on Biography*, ed. Ian Donaldson, Peter Read and James Walter, (Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, The Australian National University, 1992) 260–286.

<sup>28</sup> Jordan, Caroline. *Picturesque Pursuits: Colonial Women Artists and the Amateur Tradition*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Read, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

environments.<sup>30</sup> In fact, by including stories of and by individuals taken directly from life writing, a hurried and impersonal historical narrative can be slowed down, introducing a more evocative sense of immediacy. This gives the reader a chance to become immersed in the event, stimulating recognition of other ‘truths’ that might lie behind the ‘dry voice of facts’.<sup>31</sup> This thought-provoking system of personalising the past is used to great effect by historian Alan Atkinson in *The Europeans in Australia: A History*, in particular in Volume Two (2004), where personal stories and comments play a major part in this particular telling of Australia’s history.<sup>32</sup> In Atkinson’s work, established historical events are supported by anecdotes involving the experiences and expressed emotions of both prominent and ‘ordinary’ people, and demonstrating that extracts from life writing, although not always representative of the exact ‘truth’, can still be utilised as historically situated practices of self-representation.

In spite of such promising work, women and their writing during the nineteenth century, and the possible use of that writing in historical discourse, are often overlooked by mainstream historians. Of course, the relative ease of accessibility to government documents and other male-generated source material must be considered a contributing factor. It may also be that documents produced under imperial constraints, which aim at so-called scientific objectivity, have been more generally acceptable to historians intent on reaching positive universal conclusions. But is there a possibility also that there is something just ‘too difficult’ in the interpretation of source material where the writer places herself (or himself) within the discourse, rather than standing back to observe with apparent objectivity? Sara Mills sees the latter as an important reason for marginalisation of female texts. She suggests that, because of the subjective, often contradictory nature of women’s accounts of colonial life, historians suspect them of being unreliable, and trivial.<sup>33</sup> However, in this thesis I argue that, although (and even because) women’s life writing is often subjective and imaginative, it enables a closer study of some of the intricacies

---

<sup>30</sup> Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*.

<sup>31</sup> Tom Griffiths, ‘Truth and Fiction: Judith Wright as Historian’, *Australian Book Review*, August (2006) 25. Griffiths quotes from comments by Pat Barker and Kate Grenville, who suggest that fiction is better than historical discourse in getting at the truth. I argue that life writing offers a similar multilayered and thought-provoking access to the past.

<sup>32</sup> Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: A History*, vols 1 and 2 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997/2004).

<sup>33</sup> Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference* 61–63. See also Ann Curthoys, *For and against Feminism: A Personal Journey into Feminist Theory and History* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988) 5.

of the colonial experience and, in doing so, exposes some of the detail passed over in much male-generated source material.

Although women's writing has been marginalised, there has been growing concern about the exclusion in historical discourse of women and other 'marginal' players, including Aboriginal and Asian peoples. With these concerns has come the challenging of some of the radical nationalist myths about European masculinity and its dominance in Australian identity and culture.<sup>34</sup> An important contribution was *Creating a Nation*, published in 1994.<sup>35</sup> This is a history of Australia, from colonial times through to the late 1900s, which questions the traditional view that creating nations was strictly 'men's business'. It asserts 'the agency and creativity of women in the process of national generation'.<sup>36</sup> While an important breakthrough, in this book there is still very little use of primary source material by women, in particular during the colonial period. This is, of course, not the case in other texts that concentrate on the lives of particular women, such as Lucy Frost's *No Place for a Nervous Lady* (1989), Marian Fowler's *The Embroidered Tent* (1982), and Maggie MacKellar's *Core of My Heart My Country* (2004), which explore sense of place and sensibility in women's lives and their writing, and discuss the sometimes subtle ways in which women participate in an historical sense.<sup>37</sup> However, more general colonial histories still privilege primary source material generated by men, not only because men concentrate on public aspects of life and there is more of their writing available, but also because, as Mills has suggested, male discourse is thought to be more reliable. In this thesis, I touch on ways in which more interaction between the individual circumstance and the wider picture might become possible.

Growing recognition of the part women played during early European settlement in Australia began almost twenty years after the groundbreaking work of Russel Ward who wrote, in the 1950s, a landmark history from below. In *The Australian Legend* (1958), Ward situates stockmen, shearers, shepherds, convicts, free

---

<sup>34</sup> For example, Kate Bagnall, 'Across the Threshold: White Women and Chinese Hawkers in the White Colonial Imaginary', *Hecate* 28, no. 2 (2002) 9–32; Miriam Dixon, *The Real Matilda* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1976/99), Patricia Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation* (Ringwood: McPhee, 1994); Janice Wilton, *Golden Threads: The Chinese in Regional New South Wales 1850–1950* (Armidale and Sydney: New England Regional Art Museum with Powerhouse Publishing, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>37</sup> Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady*; Marian Fowler, *The Embroidered Tent: Five Gentlewomen in Early Canada* (Toronto: Anansi, 1982); Maggie MacKellar, *Core of My Heart, My Country: Women's Sense of Place and the Land in Australia and Canada* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004).

settlers, currency men and ex-convicts as part of the Legend.<sup>38</sup> However, women are only mentioned in the context of wives and carers. *Creating a Nation* was indeed a major leap forward from Ward's work, in spite of a gender imbalance in primary source material. As other writers attempt to insert women and women's voices into the historical narrative, work is being carried out in a more localised sense, both in Australia and elsewhere. Female historians have been prominent in this endeavour, as domestic matters, personal relationships and spatial encounters have become matters of historical interest. In that context, Joy Hooton stresses the importance of feminist theoretical studies into women's life writing, which she hopes will help restore some life to the 'condemned-to-death author'.<sup>39</sup> My study into the formative years of my writers contributes to this restoration, placing emphasis on self-consciousness and the private sphere, and questioning the limits of narrative and chronology. But, even as early as 1970, Ann Curthoys and others had begun asking why public life was traditionally considered to be the appropriate focus of history.<sup>40</sup>

The work described above highlights how essential it is that a project like mine be informed and inspired by interdisciplinary and international trends. As Ann Curthoys says, historians are beginning to see the Australian experience as part of a study of relationships, networks and connections, traced back and forth and around the Empire as a whole. There has, says Curthoys, been increased attention to both gender and race in such studies, with collaboration between historians and literary critics, who together attempt to make sense of various writings.<sup>41</sup> With this dissertation I aim to contribute to that endeavour.




---

<sup>38</sup> Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>39</sup> Joy Hooton, 'Women's Life-Writing: Power and Alterity', in *Shaping Lives: Reflections on Biography*, eds Ian Donaldson, Peter Read and James Walter (Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, 1992) 117–32.

<sup>40</sup> See the Introduction to Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*. For essays and summaries on the work of female historians see Mary Spongberg, Barbara Caine and Ann Curthoys, eds, *Companion to Women's Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 427–37. Also, Penny Russell, 'Private Writings', in *Companion to Women's Writing*, edited by Mary Spongberg, Barbara Caine, and Ann Curthoys, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (2005) 427–36.

<sup>41</sup> Ann Curthoys, 'Does Australia Have a Future?', *Australian Historical Studies* 33, no. 118 (2002) 146–47. See also Marilyn Lake, 'White Man's Country: The Trans-National History of a National Project', *Australian Historical Studies* 34, no. 122 (2003) 346–63.

By selecting the writings of Lucy Gray and Adelaide Bowler, I am provided with what Cohen describes as a 'laboratory on a manageable scale'. As indicated, the original texts that I work with have not been formally prepared for presentation to a wider audience, apart from two sections of the handwritten journal by Lucy Gray, which were transcribed and published in a Queensland newspaper in 1964 and 1965.<sup>42</sup> In 1987 Lucy's complete journal and diary, plus fragments, were transcribed by Anne Allingham as part of her Master of Arts degree, initially in preparation for a book that was never published.<sup>43</sup> It appears that Lucy herself may have had eventual publication in mind for her journal, as she has been more careful with editing and with etiquette than one would expect in a document to be sent home only to immediate family. However, publication did not eventuate.

The Bowler family diaries and memoirs, kindly loaned to me by Lin Gourlay of Sydney, had been transcribed when I received them, and are typewritten. Some of these documents may have been intended for publication, however, they have apparently never been published in their entirety. On the other hand, they have been used as reference material for short, privately published, family histories.<sup>44</sup>

I was particularly attracted to the texts of these two women as I feel I have something of an insider's understanding of the language, images and perspectives behind the texts – especially those of Lucy Gray – having grown up on a large cattle station in southern Queensland in the mid-nineteen hundreds. Although my life in the bush, over an hour's drive from Goondiwindi, was surrounded by comforts unimaginable to the early settlers, there remained still, one hundred years later, a feeling of isolation and a need for self-reliance similar to that reflected in the earlier writings. Riding through the bush on scorching summer days, mouths dry with thirst; the relief at reaching the next muddy waterhole for a drink; sitting around the camp fire and boiling quart-pots for tea; listening to the yarns of the stockmen and the sounds of the bush; the sense of relief when the rains came after drought – none of

---

<sup>42</sup> 'Journey to Hughenden', *Queensland Heritage* 1, no. 1 (1964) 11–18; 'Life on the Flinders River (1868–70)', *Queensland Heritage* 1, no. 2 (1965) 17–2. Rebekah Crow, a PhD student at Griffith University, presented a paper 'Lucy Gray's Journal: Writing the Self, Writing the World' at the Australian Historical Association 2002 conference. An abstract was available on 15 March 2006 at <http://www.griffith.edu.au/text/conference/aha2002/Abstracts.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Anne Janet Allingham, 'Victorian Frontierswomen: The Australian Journals and Diaries of Lucy and Eva Gray 1868–1872, 1881–1892' (MA Thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1987). A copy of the thesis was kindly loaned to me by Jane Putt of Sydney, a descendant of Charles Gray and his second wife Emily.

<sup>44</sup> Hawksford, *The Bowler Family 1239–1987* and Frederick Howard, *The Moleskin Gentry* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1978).

this had changed when I lived in Queensland. As such, I feel I am well placed to avoid anachronistic judgements as I analyse the writings of women who describe experiences that were, in many ways, similar to mine.

During previous research I obtained copies of documents from the *Lucy Gray Papers* held in the John Oxley section of the State Library of Queensland. These papers, in original handwriting, consist of various family letters, a short diary by Lucy Gray and her husband Charles, and the quite lengthy journal by Lucy mentioned above. There are also textual fragments in Lucy's handwriting, which contain preliminary notes and sketches for the final journal. Almost all the documents originate from North Queensland, and were written in the 1860s and 70s when the region was still very much a 'frontier' zone. Lucy's journal, with embedded sketches and drawings, will be discussed at length in this thesis, while some of the other documents, especially the diary, will also be referenced. A prolific artist, a selection of other art works by Lucy will also be examined. Copies of these 'independent' works can be found in Appendix II, the originals being held in private collections around the world, and one in the State Library of Queensland.

From Lucy's marriage and death certificates I knew she had been born in Ireland, the daughter of a Dr John Waters and his wife Helena Henrietta, née Robinson.<sup>45</sup> After further extensive research, and a visit to Lucy's home-town of Birr (then Parsonstown) in Ireland, and to Brighton and Dorking in England where Lucy also lived, my understanding of Lucy's formative years, and of how they may have influenced the production of her colonial texts, became clearer. Meanwhile, I gained a deeper insight into the extraordinary transition she and other women from Britain experienced when they left their homes and families to cross the seas and settle in an alien, and often hostile colonial environment. (See Chapter 2.3.)

The first part of Lucy's journal tells of the journey by steamer from Melbourne to Townsville, stopping off at Sydney, Gladstone, Bowen and finally Cleveland Bay (Townsville). Lucy then describes the difficult and dangerous 236-mile trip on horseback through the bush to Hughendon, a station which had been taken up several years earlier by Robert Gray. A cattle station, Glendower, about thirty miles away, was allocated to Charles, who set about building a dwelling there

---

<sup>45</sup> 'Births, Deaths and Marriages', Parish of Brighton, England.



for himself and his new wife. Life at Glendower is recorded in the second part of Lucy's journal, and in her brief diary.

The journal manuscript, although at first chronologically structured as though part of a journal/letter being sent home to England or Ireland, becomes, towards the end, more a retrospective account of various aspects of the Queensland bush and its inhabitants with, perhaps, a view towards future publication. Page numbering is haphazard, and where numbers are repeated I have added the suffix a, b or c for identification. Where numbering commences with, for example, Roman numerals and is then discontinued, I continue with Roman numerals until what appears to be the end of that section. There are also unnumbered page fragments, which I simply refer to in the footnotes as 'Fragment'. Although Lucy's journal and diary had already been transcribed by Anne Allingham, I decided to work directly from the original handwritten versions, which contain cross-outs and other self-editing. I do, however, turn occasionally to Allingham's transcription, and also to the *Queensland Heritage* transcription, for final confirmation when uncertain of my own interpretation of particular words or phrases.<sup>46</sup> When referring to Lucy's writings, repeated footnotes are simply listed as LG, 'Diary', LG, 'Journal' or LG 'Fragment'.

The diary, fragments, journal with illustrations, and a handful of letters, allow for an interesting reading across genres. Lucy's journal is well written with imaginative language and detailed pictorial and written representations of bush life. Her texts appeal to me in particular as they bring to mind some of the familiar sights, sounds and experiences of the still relatively remote bush country of my childhood.

As I said, I also acquired from Lin Gourlay of Sydney, copies of a typewritten transcript of diaries and memoirs written by Adelaide Bowler (or Addy as the family called her). Addy grew up in the Bathurst region of New South Wales, later moving with her husband, William (Willie) Suttor, to a station, Borambil, near Condobolin in the central west of the state. Lin also provided copies of transcripts of a short, fragmented diary written by Frances Bowler, Addy's mother, and the typewritten memoirs of two of Addy's brothers Adolphus (Dop) and Ernest. As far as I can ascertain, apart from documents held by Rick and Pam Martin of Forbes and John Suttor of Bathurst, there are no other copies in existence.

---

<sup>46</sup> Allingham, 'Victorian Frontierswomen'; 'Journey to Hughenden', *Queensland Heritage* 1, no. 1 (1964) 11–18; 'Life on the Flinders River (1868–70)', *Queensland Heritage* 1, no. 2 (1965) 17–27.

With the absence of original manuscripts I have to assume that some editing has occurred during transcription of the Bowler manuscripts. In fact, Book 2 of Addy's manuscript carries the heading 'Extract from the diaries of Adelaide Agnes Suttor (nee [sic] Bowler)'. However, because of the length, it would appear that only trivial or seemingly inappropriate entries have been omitted. The memoirs of Dop and Ernest Bowler appear to be reasonable copies, with again the possibility of some editing during transcription. The document by Ernest consists of sixty-five typewritten pages, with two pages of notes at the end. His brother's memoirs are thirty-five pages long, but there is also a short section without page numbers headed 'Customs, Legends & Superstitions of the Lachlan Blacks, as told by the late A.C.R. Bowler, from information gathered from the blacks themselves'. It is impossible to know whether any of these works were ever intended for publication.

The short diary of Frances Bowler (Addy's mother) is more likely to have been heavily edited, being typed, short and disjointed. In *The Bowler Family* (1978) Frederick Howard appears to have had access to the same short document, because he notes that 'The diary ... covers only the first few months of 1837, and comprises sketchy, disconnected jottings'.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the diary provides useful information as to how and when daughter Adelaide came into the world, and it tells something about the Bowler family's life on board ship as they made their way to Australia. Frances Bowler continued her diary for only a short period after their arrival, describing life in Bathurst. Addy's reminiscences and diary take over some years later. Her writing commences:

The above is the whole of my dear Mother's diary. Her troubles in Australia must soon have begun and I fancy she had no heart to go on with it – I will now write my early recollections.<sup>48</sup>

The recollections cover a period before Addy's actual diary begins, and later on more memories are slotted into the diary, some being written up to thirty years after the event. The diary itself commences on 1 January 1859 when Addy is twenty-two years of age. The diary/memoir document is divided into three 'books', page numbering commencing at the beginning of each book. Therefore, my referencing will contain

---

<sup>47</sup> Howard, *The Moleskin Gentry* 8.

<sup>48</sup> AB, book1: 1.

both book and page number. Although Addy Bowler becomes Addy Suttor during the period of my discussions, for convenience I generally refer to her as Addy Bowler throughout, and as AB in repeated footnotes.



When analysing texts, literary theorists have sometimes disregarded the writer, and the background of the writer, concentrating instead on the text itself. However, in this dissertation the environments in which Addy Bowler and Lucy Gray grew to maturity play an integral part in the discussions, in particular in Chapter 2.3 where I look at some ways in which the formative years may have influenced their representations of colonial life. Therefore, it is necessary to establish these environments now as a reference point for later analysis of the texts.

Lucy Gray was born Lucy Sarah Waters on 8 August, 1840, in Parsonstown, Ireland, a small town approximately sixty-two Irish miles west of Dublin and situated near the junction of the Camcor and Little Brosna rivers. Her father, John Waters, was a physician of Anglo-Irish descent, who was educated as a boy by a Dr Bell, probably in Dublin, matriculating to Trinity College in 1823 at just fifteen.<sup>49</sup> He was then apprenticed to a Dr Carmichael in Dublin, and later studied medicine at Edinburgh, although he may have also gained qualifications elsewhere, as was the custom at the time.<sup>50</sup> In November of 1831 he enrolled at Glasgow University for his final exams, graduating in 1832.<sup>51</sup> He immediately took up a medical practice in Parsonstown, where his father, Thomas Waters, had been a doctor since John was a small boy. John married Helena Robinson soon after his graduation, and their first child, Caroline, was born in 1834.<sup>52</sup> The growing Waters family lived in a house in prestigious Oxmantown Mall, which they rented from the second and third Earls of Rosse of neighbouring Birr Castle. John appears to have moved into this house when his father died, also in 1832. He and his father also rented 'offices, gardens, and

---

<sup>49</sup> Allingham, 'Victorian Frontierswomen', vol. 1: 68. Information concerning the education of John Waters supplied by Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland and Glasgow University Archives, Glasgow, Scotland.

<sup>50</sup> Information concerning medical training of the period from Glasgow University archivist. Apprenticeship with Dr Carmichael from 'Death of Dr Waters', *King's County Chronicle*, 14 January 1857, n.p.

<sup>51</sup> Information supplied by staff at Glasgow University Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Birr Church of Ireland Records; memorial to John Waters, Church of Ireland, Birr.

lands' from the Earls. An 1857 rate book indicates that rent was then thirty pounds a year.<sup>53</sup>

With a large population of soldiers at the barracks in nearby Crinkle,<sup>54</sup> the revolutionary giant telescope that was being constructed in the Birr Castle demesne in the 1840s and was attracting scientists from around the world, and a growing general population, doctors, bankers and other service industries flourished. The population of Parsonstown in 1841, four years before the potato famine and the year after Lucy was born, was 6,336, with another 554 in nearby Crinkle. Officers in the barracks, and in rented Georgian houses in the Parsonstown Malls, along with the scientifically inclined Parsons family in the Castle and prominent professionals like Dr Waters and his family, formed a social nucleus which, combined with the 'pleasantness' of the town, attracted genteel society to come and settle or retire there. 'The town expanded rapidly' and, owing largely to the 'taste and enthusiasm' of Lord and Lady Rosse, it also 'expanded pleasantly'.<sup>55</sup>

In 1856, when Lucy was sixteen, the traveller Thomas Lacy passed through Parsonstown. He observed rows of houses that were 'for the most part of a superior description', and were occupied by 'persons of respectability and independent means'. Lacy's description of the shops, banks, churches, public squares and promenades, together with Birr Castle, indicates a prosperous and well-established town.<sup>56</sup> Gas street lighting was installed in 1852, eight years before nearby Tullamore, a town of similar size, confirming the progressive nature of Parsonstown.<sup>57</sup> (See family trees, maps and archival documents in Appendix 1.)

---

<sup>53</sup> Information from Birr Baptismal Records; 1821 Ballybritt Census for Birr and Surrounding Areas; *Griffiths Valuation*, *Offaly Traders Index 1824–1903*; *The Leinster Express Newspaper 1831–1851*; Dublin Valuation Office, 18 April, 2006. Birr Castle Archives records indicate that John took over the lease of the house from his father, Thomas. See also Fig. 7, Appendix 1.

<sup>54</sup> 'Birr, County Offaly', Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society, County Offaly, Ireland, [http://offalyhistory.com/content/reading\\_resources/books\\_articles/birr.htm](http://offalyhistory.com/content/reading_resources/books_articles/birr.htm) [cited 20 March, 2006]. For historical maps of Birr and surrounds see John Feehan and Alison Rosse, *An Atlas of Birr* (Dublin: University College Dublin, with Offaly County Council, 1992), and Appendix 1 of this thesis.

<sup>55</sup> Mark Gerouard, 'The Parsens [sic] Family and Birr', *Country Life* (1965) 17, extract provided by Lady Rosse of Birr Castle. Margaret Hogan, 'The Great Famine, Birr and District', (National Famine Research Project, Offaly County Library and Birr Historical Society, 1996) n.p.

<sup>56</sup> 'Sights and Scenes in Our Fatherland: Thomas Lacy Visits Birr', Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society, County Offaly, Ireland (1863), [http://www.offalyhistory.com/content/reading\\_resources/books\\_articles/lacy\\_travels\\_birr.htm](http://www.offalyhistory.com/content/reading_resources/books_articles/lacy_travels_birr.htm) [cited 1 March 2006].

<sup>57</sup> Michael Byrne, *Milestones in Offaly History: 1830–1980* (Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society), [http://www.offalyhistory.com/content/reading\\_resources/offaly\\_gen/offaly\\_milestones.htm](http://www.offalyhistory.com/content/reading_resources/offaly_gen/offaly_milestones.htm) [cited 26 June 2006].

Lady Mary, the wife of the third Earl of Rosse, was a pioneer in early photography and won awards for her photographic work (see Fig. 7, Chapter 2.3). She also designed and participated in the building of the ornate iron gates that still stand at the entrance to the Castle demesne.<sup>58</sup> Her accomplishments provided visible evidence to the girls in and around Parsonstown that feats in chemistry and engineering need not necessarily be restricted to men. Although such activities were beyond the financial means of most, Lucy and her sisters could not have failed to be inspired by her achievements.



Fig. 3 Ornate iron gates designed by Mary Countess of Rosse that still stand at the entrance to the Birr Castle demesne. They are within clear view of the Waters' old home in Oxmantown Mall. Girls like Lucy must have been inspired by this unusual female initiative. (Photographer: M.Vivers, November 2006.)

There was, however, another side to prosperous and pleasant Parsonstown. Poverty was threatening the lives of thousands of working-class people. In 1840, the year Lucy was born, the newly established Sisters of Mercy, led by Catherine McAuley, set themselves up in a nunnery adjacent to the Catholic Chapel, to help

---

<sup>58</sup> 'Birr Castle Demesne', <http://www.birrcastle.com/index.htm?mainFrame=http%3A//birrcastle.com/main.htm> [cited 29 June 2006].

alleviate the misery caused by increasing poverty and associated cholera and typhus, for which a fever hospital had also been erected.<sup>59</sup> A union workhouse, capable of housing 800 destitute people was opened on 14 March 1842, but inmates soon spilled out into other premises around the town. The workhouse system had been introduced to Ireland in 1838. Expanding population and increased unemployment had led, by then, to growing poverty all over Ireland. In the late 1830s the diet of labourers consisted mainly of potatoes with milk, and wages ranged from 8 pence to 10 pence per day. The potato famine of 1845–47 was to impact dramatically on those people. During the worst of the famine, over 500 starving men were employed by Lord and Lady Rosse in the extensive Birr Castle demesne, in an attempt to alleviate the situation.<sup>60</sup>

In this precarious but stimulating environment Lucy, along with four sisters, Caroline, Elizabeth, Amy, Adelaide and Georgina and three brothers, Thomas, John and Ernest, was to survive to adulthood. Helen, the fourth child, died at ten years of age. Elizabeth was to die later on at Guildford, England, aged twenty-seven.<sup>61</sup> The Parsons family at Birr Castle suffered even more deaths in the family. Seven of the eleven born did not reach adulthood, including Countess Mary's only daughter Alice, who was born the year before Lucy, and who died at eight years of age.<sup>62</sup> J.C. Beckett suggests that, during the famine, typhus proved more deadly among the middle and upper classes than among the peasantry. Body-louse, he says, carried by the 'swarms of beggars that patrolled the roads', infected everybody.<sup>63</sup> Only a few years separated Alice Parsons, and Helen and Lucy Waters. who were more than likely friends. The deaths of Helen and Alice, not to mention the other Parsons children, no doubt left a lasting impression on Lucy, perhaps hardening her attitude to the plight of Aboriginal children taken from their families in Australia, whom she may have thought well off when compared with the children she had seen orphaned, starving and dying in Ireland. (See Chapter 2.3.)

---

<sup>59</sup> For details, see Nancy D. Blasdel, *The Contribution of Catherine McAuley to Health Care*, [www.faihandculture.us/resources/papers/mcauley.pdf](http://www.faihandculture.us/resources/papers/mcauley.pdf) [cited 28 June 2006].

<sup>60</sup> 'Sights and Scenes in Our Fatherland'. Also Michael Byrne, *Birr and the 1834 Poverty Inquiry*, [http://www.offalyhistory.com/content/reading\\_resources/books\\_articles/birr\\_poverty\\_enquiry.htm](http://www.offalyhistory.com/content/reading_resources/books_articles/birr_poverty_enquiry.htm) [cited 1 March, 2006]. See also Hogan, 'The Great Famine, Birr and District' 1–11.

<sup>61</sup> 'Death Notice', *Leinster Express* 1831 – 1851 (1850), supplied by Irish Midlands Ancestry, Tullamore, County Offaly, Ireland. *Cork Examiner*, 16 November 1863.

<sup>62</sup> 'Mary Rosse and Photography', <http://www.birrcastle.com/maryRosse.asp> [cited 29 June 2006].

<sup>63</sup> Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland* 342–50.



John Waters must have been run off his feet with the cholera and typhoid epidemics, and other illnesses exacerbated by poverty. In 1856, he had a dispensary in Connaught Steet, worked at the Fever Hospital, and also had a dispensary connected to the workhouse. Along with an extensive private practice, he was surgeon to the King's County Militia. In what must have been a terrible shock to his family and patients he died suddenly in 1857, aged only forty-eight, succumbing to 'fever' after surviving the worst of the famine, and only two weeks after being elected to the prestigious position of Master at St Brendon's Masonic Lodge, Parsonstown.<sup>64</sup> According to Beckett, there was a high deathrate amongst hospital and dispensary doctors, evidence that, although there were shortcomings in medical services, 'medical practitioners did not shirk their duties'.<sup>65</sup> There is a memorial to Dr Waters in St. Brendan's Church of Ireland, Birr, erected by the 'inhabitants of Parsonstown and its vicinity', giving thanks for his unselfish contribution during a particularly difficult period in Ireland's history. This provides tangible evidence of his popular standing in the community and his dedication and skill as a doctor. (See Fig. 4 below.) His humanitarian efforts no doubt impacted on his children, influencing their thoughts and actions in later life. I explore this influence in later chapters.

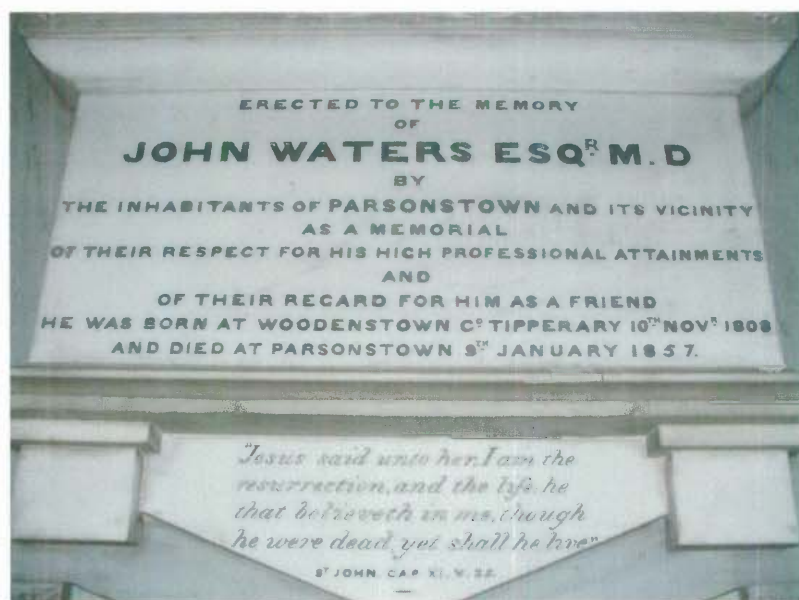


Fig. 4 Memorial in honour of Dr John Waters in the Church of Ireland, Birr. His intelligent and enquiring mind must have had a strong influence on his daughter Lucy. (Photographer: M. Vivers, November 2006.)

<sup>64</sup> 'The Death of Dr Waters', *Kings County Chronicle*, 14 January, 1857 n.p.

<sup>65</sup> Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland* 343.

At the time of his death John Waters was a successful, prosperous and popular man.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, he and wife Helena seemed to have found time to encourage intellectual development and a sense of adventure and enquiry in their children, while they all appear to have received a very thorough, gender appropriate education as children. Scientific discussions and developments taking place, including public lectures in science (see Chapter 2.3), must have opened the children's eyes to endless possibilities – particularly the Waters boys who went on to study architecture and engineering, and to practice in countries around the world.

Soon after John's death, his widow left Ireland for England.<sup>67</sup> At the time, the Waters children ranged in age from five to eighteen. Lucy was sixteen when her father died, an impressionable age to lose a father. The 1861 census has Helena Waters living at Holmwood Cottage, Dorking, just south of London, with four of her children. At that time, Lucy and sister Elizabeth were residing in London with an Oliver Robinson, most likely their mother's brother. Then, between 1862 and 1868, the Waters' address was 17 Belgrave Place, Brighton, although Lucy travelled overseas during that period.<sup>68</sup> Agnes Gray, the mother of Lucy's future husband Charles, had also moved to Brighton after the death of her clergyman husband in 1854.<sup>69</sup> She died in 1862, but some of her family stayed on at 6 Belgrave Place, just across the road from the Waters.

It was at Belgrave Place or perhaps even earlier, that a close friendship developed between the Waters family and the Grays. For Lucy, friendship extended also to the Grays' governess, Miss Elizabeth Butcher, to whom she later wrote from north Queensland, perhaps sharing a common interest in art and literature. Charles Gray, the second son, was employed with the merchant marines, as was his younger brother Mowbray.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> 'Death of Dr Waters', *Kings County Chronicle*, Wednesday, 14 January, 1857, n.p. See also *Offaly Traders Index 1824–1908*.

<sup>67</sup> Allingham, 'Victorian Frontierswomen' vol 1, 68.

<sup>68</sup> England Census, and *Pages* and *Kellys* street directories, held by the Brighton-Hove History Centre. Letters concerning Lucy's travel during this period held by the Tairawhiti Museum and Art Gallery, Gisborne, New Zealand.

<sup>69</sup> From conversation with Mark Blunt, Perth (2006); Allingham, 'Victorian Frontierswomen' vol 1, 68.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Gray, 'Diary Extract' (1863) n.p., transcribed by Errol Gray and supplied by Mark Blunt, Perth. Original held by Tairawhiti Museum and Art Gallery, Gisborne, New Zealand. In 1863 Charles was second officer on the 'Venus', engaged in running the blockade with supplies from Bermuda to North Carolina during the American civil war. He travelled extensively elsewhere with the marines, visiting Australia on several occasions. (Information received from Tairawhit Museum).



In 1865 Charles took leave from his ship in Calcutta to visit his older brother Robert on his sheep and cattle property at Hughenden in North Queensland,<sup>71</sup> finally resigning his commission in February 1868. On 22 May, he married Lucy Waters.<sup>72</sup> After the wedding Lucy and her new husband, accompanied by Mowbray, sailed almost immediately for Australia, where Charles had agreed to assist Robert in his grazing enterprise.



Three years before Lucy Waters was born in Ireland, Adelaide Agnes Henrietta Bowler was born on 4 March 1837, two weeks after her parents landed at Sydney Cove. Captain Bowler, Addy's father had taken up temporary residence with his family at the Military Barracks, Wynyard Square. In April, following his promotion to Major, he was transferred to Windsor with his family, consisting of wife Frances, baby Addy and four other children, Henry, Ernest, Dop and Julia. Then, in June of 1837, they were moved to Bathurst, where they lived until 1839 at what was (and still is) known as Government House.<sup>73</sup> (See Fig. 2, Chapter 1.1.) The first free settlers had arrived in the Bathurst region in 1818, five years after the Blue Mountains were crossed by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth. The Bowler family thus arrived in a town that was less than twenty years old.

Major Bowler soon decided to leave the army, a decision that was to prove unwise, and the family struggled financially from then on. First, he took the lease on an estate, Belle Vue, near Bathurst, an enterprise that failed due to drought and financial depression. In the early 40s, after several years as Magistrate at Carcoar, fifty-two kilometers south-west of Bathurst, Bowler's position as Magistrate was terminated, and he received a government grant of twelve thousand acres. The property, The Meadows, was near where the city of Orange now stands.<sup>74</sup>

Towards the end of the 1840s The Meadows was sold, as it proved unsuitable for profitable grazing. Bowler then rented a farm, Woodside, about seven miles from Bathurst, which was, according to Addy, 'much pleasanter for my dear Mother as she

---

<sup>71</sup> 'Journey to Hughenden', *Queensland Heritage* 12.

<sup>72</sup> Marriage certificate, Brighton and Hove Register Office, Brighton. Information concerning the occupation of Charles: Gray, 'Diary Extract'; England Census 1861; Gray family papers, Tairāwhiti Museum.

<sup>73</sup> Frances Mary Jane Bowler, 'Diaries, 1837-' (private collection, Sydney).

<sup>74</sup> Hawksford, *The Bowler Family 1239-1987* 8-10.

could sometimes see her friends'.<sup>75</sup> Addy writes: 'I had a great desire at this time for education and have regretted ever since that it was not found for me'.<sup>76</sup> In spite of the fact that her education was spasmodic, Addy's account of her life appears to have been quite well written. Although, as I have said, editing during transcription is a possibility.



Fig. 5 Addy's parents, Frances Bowler (née Raitt) and her husband Major John Bowler. The family of Frances Bowler were descendants of Edward I of England. (Hawksford, *The Bowler Family 1239–1987* 5–6. Photographer: unknown.)

The family left Woodside in about 1852, Addy and her mother and father, the latter by then a partial invalid as the result of a shooting accident, going to live with elder daughter Julia and husband John Suttor at Wyagdon, on the Sofala Road north-east of Bathurst. The Bowler boys had received a slightly more structured education than their sisters, which is reflected to some extent in their writings. However, when still quite young, disillusioned with searching for gold and looking for other local work the two younger brothers, Ernest and Dop, sought work along the Lachlan River when still quite young. They eventually took up land, or managed stations there. The eldest son, Henry, joined the army as his father had done, but died while returning to

---

<sup>75</sup> AB, book 1: 5.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

England from India on sick leave.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, Addy helped her sister Julia with her growing family, and began her diary.

Addy suggests that things were awkward at Wyagden at first. Setting up comfortable living quarters for the extended family and beginning a garden were made difficult by continual rain. There were only four rooms in the cottage to house Mr and Mrs Bowler, Addy, John, Julia, a growing family, a maid and, at times the two Bowler brothers. However, before long John Suttor added three more rooms and a veranda, making life easier. Gold had been recently discovered at Sofala and Wattle Flat and 'there was a continuous stream of people passing the house all day long', and crushing machines at nearby Wattle Flat could be heard night and day.<sup>78</sup>

Although the Bowlers suffered hardship they enjoyed a certain status in the Bathurst community, and were included in social activities. 'Major' and Mrs Bowler had come from 'the comfortable upper grades of the British middle-class' and Frances Bowler (née Raitt) had royal connections. This, together with her husband's rank in the army, usually dependent upon 'good' connections, made life at Bathurst easier socially, in spite of the family's embarrassing financial circumstances.<sup>79</sup> Kathleen Lambert, who lived in the nearby Wellington district at the time, comments on the acceptance into colonial society in the Bathurst region of those with 'good' backgrounds who had fallen on hard times. She describes enjoying the company of 'young men who had drifted to the colony, younger sons and ne'er-do-wells, [who] were sent out to "gain colonial experience"'.<sup>80</sup>

Addy's marriage at twenty-five to well-established grazier William Suttor, a nephew of her sister's husband, helped cement her position in society, although, unlike Lucy Waters in Ireland, she did not have the intellectual stimulation or the early financial security that Lucy's father's prominent position in Parsonstown ensured. The first of the Australian Suttors, George, had come to Australia as a free settler in 1800 with virtually no capital. He had secured a passage for himself and his bride through the patronage of Sir Joseph Banks. Banks also arranged for him to receive a grant of 186 acres, which he took up at Baulkham Hills, near Parramatta, where he established a market garden and orchard. In 1823 he took up land near

---

<sup>77</sup> AB book 1: 5–6; Hawksford, *The Bowler Family 1239–1987* 11; Bowler brothers memoirs.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* book 1: 7.

<sup>79</sup> Howard, *The Moleskin Gentry* 1–6; Hawksford, *The Bowler Family 1239–1987* 8–9.

<sup>80</sup> Kathleen Lambert, *The Golden South: Memories of Australian Homelife from 1843 to 1888* (London: Ward and Downey, 1890) 74.

Bathurst, which he called Brucedale, just down the road from what was to become Wyagdon. From there the Suttors were able to expand, and soon became a well-respected pastoral family in the Bathurst district and beyond.<sup>81</sup> Brucedale is still held by members of the Suttor family, being one of the oldest holdings in Australia to remain with the original family.

Addy's young life was a mixture of hardship and fun. Many of the difficulties endured by her mother were not seen as such by Addy when she was a little girl. She recalls with pleasure 'having play houses in a paddock across the road from the house [at Belle Vue]'. But she remembers troubled times too, such as 'being in my Mothers [sic] room one morning [when] she was crying very much and Father came in with a man who took notes of everything and Mother begging for some pictures of places in England'.<sup>82</sup> The bailiff had arrived at Woodside, and with him came the dread that the last tangible evidence of a comfortable earlier life in England was disappearing.

The Bathurst and Orange districts, being relatively central, were renowned for social activities. Dances were held frequently, either in private homes or in public halls. Preparing for such events was fun and, as 'white muslin and ribbons could always be purchased at the stores', appropriate dress was possible. 'Dances were very delightful and we received numbers of bouquets', writes Kathleen Lambert, describing life near Wellington, north-west of Bathurst.<sup>83</sup> Life may have been fun for a young single woman but, in 1862, after marrying her old friend William (Willie) Suttor, Addy's life as a wife and mother on the isolated Lachlan River property began. Social interaction became a thing of the past until, when the family moved back to Bathurst, Addy and Willie became involved in community and charitable works.



In examining the writings of Lucy Gray and Addy Bowler I divide my thesis into two sections. In Section One, which consists of four chapters, I discuss some of the special characteristics of the genres of memoir, diary and journal, which all come under the heading of 'life-writing'. To do this, I focus on the memoir sections and

---

<sup>81</sup> Ken Fry, *Beyond the Barrier: Class Formation in a Pastoral Society* (Bathurst: Crawford House Press, 1993) 117–22.

<sup>82</sup> AB book 1: 7–8.

<sup>83</sup> Lambert, *The Golden South* 66.

then the diary of Addy Bowler, sometimes drawing the writings of her brothers into the discussion for purposes of comparison and contrast. I then look at the journal and the drawings and paintings of Lucy Gray, meanwhile using the short diary to expose some of the shortcomings of the journal. In doing so, I explore ways in which historians might make better use of the different genres, taking their special characteristics into account.

Section Two consists of four chapters that build upon the findings of Section One. First, I discuss how women's writing can add extra texture and colour to our understanding of Australia's past. I then look at ways in which the natural environment is represented by Lucy Gray and, to a lesser extent, Addy Bowler. In Chapter 2.3, I explore Lucy's background further, also touching again on Addy's past, and discuss ways in which the early years may have informed their later texts. In the final chapter, I discuss how the writings of Addy and Lucy highlight the somewhat ambiguous relationship that existed between the Victorian 'ideal' and the colonial 'real', meanwhile examining some of the irregularities, constraints and silences in women's writing dictated by a Victorian sense of loyalty to husband, family, culture and imperial progress. In the Conclusion, I summarise the various findings, bring the life-stories of Addy and Lucy to a conclusion, and argue for greater involvement of women's life writing in the consultable record of Australia's past.

There are two Appendices. Appendix 1 contains the family trees of the Bowler, Waters and Gray families, and maps of the various places in which Lucy and Addy lived. There are also archival documents, and a page containing abbreviations and measurement conversion tables. In Appendix 2 I have put together what I see as a valuable collection of copies of paintings and drawings by Lucy before and after her marriage that were not filed with the *Lucy Grey Papers*. Although there are sometimes connections between the journal entries and these pictures, others are quite independent of the Queensland story, although most become part of the discussions. Created at different stages of Lucy's life, and often untitled and unsigned, the artworks have been assembled after contact with Gray descendants in Canada, England and New Zealand, and in Perth and Sydney, Australia. They are historically valuable, not only because of their subject matter, but also because they help us better understand, in a visual sense, how a privileged middle-class woman from Britain was able to adapt to new surroundings, and depict that adaptation for the benefit of herself and of others.

Through the use of a wider variety of source material and new methodologies, historians have begun examining the past from perspectives other than those bound to the Eurocentric and androcentric tradition. Or, to build upon the Geertz metaphor, they are listening to those guarding sheep in other valleys. To do so, they are stepping outside the familiar themes of exploration, conflict and European progress to look into matters such as the lives of individuals, regional histories, sense of place, first encounters, domestic issues and racial interaction.<sup>84</sup> There has also been experimentation with different methods of telling Australia's past. By analysing the texts of Lucy Gray and Addy Bowler I expect to contribute to these endeavours. Important side issues will be the lives of my two principal protagonists, and the very different backgrounds that informed their various texts – and it is to be expected that other narratives will unravel and inform themselves throughout the dissertation as I, like Geertz suggests, plunge into the midst of some of the emotional, symbolic, cultural and social aspects of colonial Australia as revealed through women's life writing.




---

<sup>84</sup> For example: Alan Atkinson, *The Commonwealth of Speech: Argument About Australia's Past, Present and Future* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002); Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989); Bain Attwood and S.G. Foster, 'Historiography on the Australian Frontier', in *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, ed. Bain Attwood and S.F. Foster (Canberra: National Museum, 2003); Patrick Collins, *Goodbye Bussamarai: The Mandandanji Land War, Southern Queensland 1842–1952* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2002); Julie Evans, Patricia Grimshaw, and Ann Standish, 'Caring for Country: Yuwalaraay Women and Attachments to Land on an Australian Colonial Frontier', *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 4 (2003) 15–37; Maggie Pickering, 'Looking through the Fawn-Skin Window: White Women's Sense of Place in the New Worlds of Australia and Canada', *Australian Historical Studies. Special Issue: Challenging Histories – Reflections on Australian History* 33, no. 118 (2002); Peter Read, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).